

**The Impact of Islamophobia on Negotiating  
Identity, Belonging and Everyday Life:**

*The Case of British Turks*

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## ABSTRACT

British Turks have received little attention, scholarly and otherwise, in the contemporary context of the post-Brexit UK. Similarly, there are few empirical research studies that focus on the impact and consequences of Islamophobia in the lives of British Turks, despite the diverse Turkish-speaking communities in Britain. Addressing these gaps, this thesis critically examines different manifestations of Islamophobia experienced by British Turks, experiences which are always also negotiated alongside the racialisation of Muslims more broadly in the British context.

The thesis is structured as follows. First, the multiplicity of identities adopted by British Turks -pieced together from various sources, including patterns of diasporic upbringing, cosmopolitan lifestyle and political views such as conservative vs secular- is argued as an important point of reference in discussions within Islamophobia. Second is a critical analysis of the manifestations of Islamophobia in the everyday lives of British Turks, building beyond the notion that the racialisation of Muslims is only accomplished through 'religion'. The significance of this study is that beyond physical appearance and religious clothing associated with Islam, British Turks are racialised via a myriad of other attributes, including a foreign name, occupation and socio-political views. This highlights the context-boundedness and the nuanced and covert nature of Islamophobia, which is not monolithic and/or undifferentiated. Third, I extend my research on how diversity in different spatial scales provides social contexts for coexistence and intercultural mingling for British Turks. These come as a precondition of belonging for British Turks in the face of Islamophobia.

The empirical data upon which this analysis is based consists of 30 semi-structured interviews with British Turks from different cities in England and Wales. Taking into account identity, belonging, and Islamophobia as social phenomena and analytical concepts, this research contributes to the literature on Islamophobia, concentrating particularly on the specific experiences of British Turks.

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## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Following the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001, scholars have provided a comprehensive picture of what Islamophobia means as a phenomenon. They have decoded its etymological components and problematised its definition to describe how it is echoed in the daily lives of Muslims in the West. As a result, Islamophobia has been identified as a relatively new form of prejudice, and in some instances, it may appear that racism is the underlying factor for Islamophobic actions. In other instances, *inter alia*, political factors or actual biases against one's perceived Muslim identity itself may be seen as a motivator for Islamophobic rhetoric or actions (Lean, 2019, p. 11). Given the climate of fear and threat posed by 9/11 and the attacks on 7 July 2005 in London (usually referred to as 7/7), anxiety towards Muslims in the UK has manifested. Muslims have been attributed stereotypical traits as a monolithic and static entity (Allen, 2016, p. 86), and Islamophobia has been increasingly mainstream in the British context (Zempi and Awan, 2019). It is not simply an 'irrational fear' as a phobia, as Saeed (2019) states, but rather rationalised through political and media discourse where the Muslim subject is in a perpetual state of 'vulnerability' to what is problematically termed 'Islamist' extremism, and therefore a potential threat (p.175). In this context, Muslims in Britain have been dehumanised as 'fanatic', posing an ideological threat to a progressive British way of life (ibid). I argue that in order to understand these debates and capture the diverse and slippery articulations of Islamophobia operating in the British context, we need to capture subjective accounts of British Muslims to establish the degree to which Muslims experience anti-Muslim sentiments in their daily lives.

Muslim communities in Britain include a range of different ethno-national backgrounds. However, with a few exceptions, manifestations of Islamophobia in the British context are demonstrated through the analyses of South Asian Muslims and are so far lacking in the case of Turkish-speaking Muslims. It is on this basis that this research aims to explore Islamophobic rhetoric or actions from the perception of British Turks and examine how British Turks navigate and negotiate Islamophobia by looking at the aspects of their everyday life, development of identity, and belonging strategies. This thesis accordingly aims to contribute to the literature on Islamophobia in the UK by examining it on the basis of distinctive responses and experiences of British Turks in the UK. As a new/contemporary type of racism, Islamophobia needs to be conceptualised according to the historical context in which it is expressed; as Solomos (2003) argued, ‘one must speak of racisms in the plural’ (p. 184). It may be added that Gilroy has claimed that in the past 20 years, the ‘new racism’ *such as Islamophobia* has distanced itself from the crude notions of biological inferiority and instead forged links between race, nationhood, patriotism and nationalism by defining a national culture homogenous in its whiteness (Gilroy, 1992, p. 53; Saeed, 2007, emphasis mine). Thus, manifestations of Islamophobia will be conceptualised through the complex interplay between British Turks’ social, cultural, political and ethno-national specificities and the temporal and spatial context i.e., post-Brexit Britain in which they express their understanding of Islamophobia. Accordingly, and more specifically, throughout the research, I seek to answer the following questions in this thesis:

- i. What are the cultural identities which are adopted by British Turks in the UK? How are these identities formed?
- ii. How does Islamophobia manifest in the daily lives of British Turks?
- iii. To what degree, if at all, has this reinforced a sense of exclusion amongst British Turks in the UK?

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

Using reflexive thematic analysis with a big Q approach<sup>1</sup>, in other words, reflexive TA, this research adopts a qualitative paradigm to answer these questions. Based on Braun and Clarke's (2019) distinction of small q/big Q qualitative approach- while the former's tools and techniques are embedded typically within a positivist paradigm, what is distinctive about the big Q approach is that the researcher's role in the knowledge production is at the heart of the research process (Braun and Clarke, 2019). As I discuss in Chapter three in detail, I deployed semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 British Turks from across the UK to gain adequate insights for my research questions. I deployed big Q reflexive TA approach (mostly TA or reflexive TA hereafter) as it allowed for the researcher's engagement with the research process, and I was continuously querying my assumptions while interpreting and coding the data (ibid, p. 594). In short, reflexive TA emphasises the active role and centrality of the researcher in the research process and the importance of embracing researcher subjectivity, i.e., reflexivity, rather than viewing it as a 'problem' to be managed (Harding and Whitehead, 2013, p. 223). Braun and Clarke (2013) note that reflexivity is an essential requirement for good qualitative research; it brings the researcher into the research, making us visible as a part of the research process- unlike in quantitative research where the researcher is typically invisible (p. 84). Research involving a mixture of delicate matters, including faith, identity, any forms of racism, exclusion, belonging and so forth, requires acknowledging who we are as researchers and our

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<sup>1</sup> Big Q qualitative approach involves the use of techniques of qualitative data generation and analysis within a non-positivist framework informed by qualitative research values. Big Q reflexive TA approach, unlike small q approach with positivist elements, embraces and encourages researcher subjectivity as almost another resource for research (hence rejecting positivist notions of researcher bias) Braun, V. and V. Clarke (2022). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health* 1-6.

positionality against these matters. For example, I have an ethnic and religious minority background which contributed to my wider understanding of the manifestations of Islamophobia in a non-Muslim country. Understanding the normative attitudes and structures at play in which biases and prejudices can manifest, I, for example, know how to deflect criticism and biases of those who have little/ no knowledge about my ethno-religious identity. As well as acknowledging that Islamophobia is distinctive from other discriminatory phenomena, my own personal experiences and perspectives as to how it feels to face discrimination allowed me to critically reflect on the knowledge I produced and my role in the project.

In this chapter, I share my personal interest in Islamophobia in the context of British Turks. As I explain in detail in the following section, this work stems from previous research conducted with Dutch Turks in the Netherlands. Therefore, this work is research-driven rather than ideologically-driven. Next, I briefly touch upon the history of the Turkish-speaking community's migration to Britain. I subsequently outline the cardinal concepts starting with 'identity and belonging'. This is mainly to demonstrate that the ways Islamophobia is mobilised and negotiated are not outside the bounds of the various ways British Turks develop identity and belonging. Ideas on Islam, Turkey, Turkishness, perceived British society, Britishness and the meanings attached to them are explored as some of the underlying factors that characterise the disparate ways British Turks negotiate and make sense of Islamophobia in contemporary Britain. This will show that there is no single way to conceptualise Islamophobia, which is constantly produced and reproduced, and therefore is not monolithic or immutable. It is in this context that I go on to outline the complex historical background of the relationship between Turkish Islam, Turkish secularism, and Turkish Islamophobia. This is partly due to the fact that Islamophobia can be a problem in Muslim societies which have undergone a radical modernisation process, like Turkey. Perhaps more fundamentally, covering the political

transition from an Islamic Ottoman Empire to a secular-nationalist Turkish republic can play a constitutive role in the analysis of Islamophobia from many political and social positions of British Turks in contemporary Britain.

## **1.2 Self: Why Islamophobia and the UK**

The more I swept Islamophobia under the rug, the more it came to the surface. I went to the Netherlands in the Summer of 2015 for interviews and fieldwork with 3rd generation Dutch Turks as a Master's student. What I experienced was living proof of Freud's metaphor of 'the return of the repressed'. Perhaps it was inevitable, as reinterpreted by Dyck (2001): 'The very mechanism of language, the sign, it itself split into a signifier and a signified, is the locus of a primal repression that the subject enters and engages willy-nilly every time he or she speaks' (p. 1). Here I was the 'subject', and every time a new respondent mentioned Islamophobia in the Overijssel province of the Netherlands, I unconsciously refused to come to grips with it and repressed the truth- as Lacan asserted 'the unconscious is structured like language [...] where the affair of the unconscious is played out' (Lacan, 1981, pp. 20-45) but it was my 'silence' against what was going on around me in the field mattered. The truth was that people who share the same language and culture as me were suffering because of people like me, who held ingrained biases against the articulations of the perceived Sunni Islam, and this PhD project is part of this 'return' (Dyck, 2001; Jacques, Jan et al., 1988). Writing this thesis accordingly involved merging the personal and empirical for me. I was born into an Alevi<sup>2</sup> family with

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<sup>2</sup> 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 and draw antagonistic political borders against a Sunni -Hanafi-Islamic identity and instead embrace 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 satirised by changing governments as well as in the public sphere. This is essentially because Alevis have been framed as 'heretics' since the onset of the Ottoman regime. Though discrimination against Alevis has not by any means stopped in modern Turkey, the principle of secularism still underlies the loyalty of the Alevi

secular sensitivities. Growing up, listening to Alevi adults recounting the long chain of acts against Alevis caused by Sunni Muslims in Turkey was an inseparable part of my life (Mutluer, 2016). In the collective memory of Alevis, exclusions and massacres<sup>3</sup> occurred for centuries, including Maraş (1978), Çorum (1980), Sivas (1993), have resulted in a tendency amongst Alevis to keep their religion and identities secret (Özata, 2020). Concealing the core of who I was, as I had been constantly reminded of the unfinished process of grieving and an unwavering sense of ‘otherisation’, resulted in me an ambivalent identification with my country of birth, which was the land of the Sunni Muslim majority. Concealing my Aleviness brought about a nebulous alienation in me against Islam and, to a lesser extent, Turkish nationalism, which I viewed as the main ‘culprits’ behind the intolerance against Alevis in Turkey. That being the case, I avoided trying to better understand mainstream Islam, which had been the hideous, ogre-like being in my life, until I went to the Netherlands for the fieldwork of my MA thesis. Listening, relistening and transcribing the third-generation Dutch Turkish youths’ interviews felt rewarding, but at times distressing. Their stories made me realise that feeling discriminated

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community in the belief that secular Turkey, at the very least, could be a guarantee of their continued existence. Tekdemir, O. (2018). Constructing a social space for Alevi political identity: Religion, antagonism and collective passion. *National Identities* 20(1) 31-51.

<sup>3</sup> Alevis were frequently attacked by radical nationalists and Islamists. One of these atrocities took place in Maraş province (officially Kahramanmaraş) in southern Turkey. It was a planned murder of Alevis during the week of 19–26 December 1978 since the doors of Alevi houses had been marked with red symbol weeks before the attack. The massacre lasted one week, 111 were killed, 176 injured, and 552 houses and 289 workplaces were destroyed. The Maraş massacre was not the only atrocity targeting Alevis, and outbreaks of communal violence between Sunnis and Alevis in Ortaca-Muğla (1966), Malatya (1978), Çorum (1980), Sivas (1993) and Gazi Mahallesi (1995) have radically shaped the formation and articulation of the extent of structural and institutional mistrust on the part of Alevis towards 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)

against is germane to many different intentions in different parts of the world but always feels the same.

In hindsight, I was pretty oblivious to how Islamophobia may infect the mundane routines of everyday life amongst third-generation descendants of Turkish guest workers in the Netherlands. This was partly because I was not in pursuit of understanding Islamophobia or anything related to Islam and partly due to the unconscious resistance I seemed to have built up until that time of my life, which sporadically returned during the fieldwork in that small village.

Dutch Turks, regardless of their different identities -secular, Alevi, Sunni, modernised, pious, liberal or atheist- faced Islamophobia and xenophobia. Being ethnically Turkish was enough to face Islamophobic attitudes in their everyday lives, in the workplace, at school or on social media. The increasing Islamophobia they faced was one of their daily concerns, and not only for the female respondents who chose to wear Islamic veils. In fact, I interviewed only one female Dutch Turk who wore the Islamic veil. Furthermore, only one out of thirty in-depth interviews took place through my own search of respondents; the snowballing effect of the presence of a researcher who wants to learn about 'what they have been going through' was spreading so fast that respondents were finding me, not the other way around. I was met in bus stations, called into the cars of respondents, and others who were not actively involved were carefully listening to my questions, interrupting us enthusiastically to spill out their stories and feelings. In one case, I was eating in a pub in the village called Hengelo, and the Turkish waiter sat at my table and recounted how she had to tirelessly counter the racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic attitudes of her Dutch colleagues.

It should be noted, however, that my MA project was not about Islamophobia. I was, very broadly, exploring the matters of integration and acculturation of third-generation Dutch-Turks

in the province of Overijssel. A couple of weeks prior to fieldwork, an Islamic attack took place near Lyon, France, when a man, Yassin Salhi, targeted an American-owned gas factory and left a flag with Islamic inscriptions: ‘There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his prophet’ (CEP, 2021). Some of my then respondents referred to this attack and implied that global terror events impact even upon Dutch Turks living in a small village in the Netherlands:

Two or three ISIS terrorists barged into a French factory and killed some of the workers, also some other workers were left with non-life-threatening injuries. It happened today. If you want, we can log in to my Facebook account; you will see that my Dutch friends have already started accusing us, the Turks and the Moroccans. They easily believe whatever they hear, and although the killer is not a Turk, the news is reflected as if it is a Turk or Muslim. For example, if a native Dutch commits a crime, we don’t hear it at all or hear it through social media only, not via TV or papers. However, if a Turk or a Moroccan commits a crime, the news is forecasted as ‘24 years old Muslim...’

(Mert, 19 years old at the time of this interview)

Mert’s concerns in the aftermath of the incident where Turkish and Moroccans of Muslim origin would be scapegoated reflects a climate in which not only Mert, but almost every respondent, pointed out the rise of Islamophobia in the Netherlands. This seemingly growing self-awareness among young Muslim respondents of Turkish descent, born and raised in the Netherlands, who were in constant fear of Islamophobic attitudes from their Dutch peers, teachers, bosses and so forth, endeavoured to recount their Islamophobic experiences. Their claim on displacement and otherisation linked with their Turkishness, ergo their Muslimness, underpinned my fascination for going forward and digging deeper into Islamophobia in another socio-cultural context. In conjunction with the reasoning discussed in Chapter 3, it was apparent that studying the impact and consequences of Islamophobia in Britain with British

Turks represented a timely and necessary site of inquiry. Turks have been living in the Netherlands for four generations; therefore, there is a great deal of empirical literature designed to analyse the Islamophobic attitudes towards Muslim Turks in the Netherlands (Dekker and Van Der Noll, 2013; Erturk, 2014; Valk, 2012). Whereas in the British context, a review of the literature reveals that there is no empirical research comprehensively interrogating manifestations of Islamophobia represented by the accounts of British Turks in Britain. That there is a significant lacuna of literature on British Turkish individuals in Britain, particularly in contrast to South Asian Muslims, constituted my primary motivation for this research. I believe that this research contributes greatly to the current debate on the societal dimension of Islamophobia through the individual narratives of British Turks.

Reflections on my fieldwork conducted in the Netherlands later enabled me to form the boundaries of my PhD research. One of the boundaries I decided on was the scale of setting I would focus on for my fieldwork in Britain. I considered: was it the microcosmic dimensions of up-close interaction with Dutch Turks, primarily outside of the multicultural and cosmopolitan cities, that determined the unequivocal bounds of Islamophobia? Was it the specific conditions of a singular locality, a small province of the Netherlands, rather than the city of Amsterdam, hence the lesser extent of diversity, that accelerated the acts of Islamophobia against Dutch Turks? (Hall, 2015). Unarguably, the Dutch Turks I worked with during the course of my research in the Overijssel province of the Netherlands made me conscious of the importance of smaller-scale non-metropolitan settings while excavating for phenomena such as integration, acculturation, racism, Islamophobia etc. Building upon the understanding that Islamophobia can be ubiquitous in places on various scales, this research goes beyond the boundaries of a cosmopolitan, super-diverse city like London, without necessarily excluding it, to investigate how diffuse Islamophobia can be amongst British Turks in different settings.

For the reasons outlined above, in this doctoral research, I attempt to look at Islamophobia at different spatial scales, ranging from cities, regions, and localities, without restricting my fieldwork to London and its boroughs. In addition, I seek to understand the diverse responses of British Turks in relation to how they navigate and negotiate Islamophobia. After all, Islamophobic and other discriminatory acts are not developed in a vacuum separated from external factors, and therefore may differ in various environments of everyday life within and across a range of different social spaces and contexts (Kapinga and van Hoven, 2021). The salience of capturing Islamophobia in different spatialities is in line with Hall's (1986) emphasis on historically and spatially shaped racism/s built with Gramscian perspective. He draws attention to the ways in which processes leading up to racisms and social construction of racist ideologies are modified and transformed by the historically specific contexts and environments in which they become active (p. 19). Another reason why I did not limit my sampling to a single site was that it would be doubly difficult to find respondents who were either UK born or emigrated to the UK at an early age if I stopped myself from accessing a wider geographical context. Finally, as noted in the literature review, almost all of the previous research on perceptions, integration, identity formations and various other experiences of Turkish communities are focused on London, especially North London. Therefore, I believe that examining Islamophobia in the daily lives of British Turks who live, study, and work across different cities in the UK can help me to better tease out the distinctive and varied responses to Islamophobia from several different axes.

### **1.3 Background of the Research**

#### ***1.3.1 Characteristics of Turkish Emigration to Britain***

Unlike countries such as Germany (1961), Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands (1964), France (1965), Australia (1967) and Switzerland (1969) (Abadan-Unat, 2011; Dikici, 2021), Britain

was not involved in bilateral agreements with Turkey. This meant that Turks did not move into Britain as guest workers, instead they came to stay. Unlike the large number of Turkish-speaking communities in former countries, the Turkish-speaking population is relatively small and heterogeneous in the UK, and displays distinct historical patterns (Faas, 2007). Three immigrant groups make up the Turkish-speaking population in the UK: Turkish Cypriots, mainland Turks and Kurds from Turkey. Though some demographic trends are regularly presented by several NGOs, think tanks, academics and ONS<sup>4</sup>, the number of immigrants from Turkey and the Turkish part of Cyprus is not exactly known (Sirkeci, Bilecen et al., 2016). In the 2011 Census, the total number of people who associated with ethnic groups from Turkey was 169,771, which represents 1.6 % of the total of minority ethnic groups. Out of the total number, however, some of the Kurdish population were possibly from Iraqi Kurdistan, as Iraq was not indicated separately in the Census. Similarly, there could have been Turkish Cypriots who might have reported within the 'Cypriot' category (ibid). These are some of the reasons behind the vagueness of the figures and the overall lack of clarity. The fact that Turkish-speaking communities in Britain are relatively small and heterogeneous, or the population data lacks clarity, has little significance in the context of this study. However, it is imperative for me to be engaged with the specific aspects of immigration and integration of Turks from mainland Turkey for important reasons, which are outlined below.

With this research, I attempt to understand how British Turks navigate and negotiate Islamophobia in the UK, and I aim to investigate if Islamophobia is suggestive of the identities and belonging strategies British Turks deploy. In that sense, processes that caused Turkish immigration to Britain, the ethno-religious and political identities of those firstcomers, as well as the stance of British Turks as the children of firstcomers are vital and instrumental within

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<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics

the context of this thesis. In other words, besides other sources which are unanticipated at this stage of the thesis, the simultaneous interplay of various identities of parents and their reasons for immigrating can influence the ways in which British Turks perceive and negotiate Islamophobia and other discrimination. In that regard, it is vital to understand the different factors that led to the immigration of Turks to Britain in the first place.

As part of the bilateral agreements, millions of Turks from mainland Turkey emigrated to Europe, mainly to Germany, as guest workers in the 1960s. Turkish immigration in Europe was followed by family reunifications in the following decades. Due to the 1974 oil crisis, European countries stopped receiving labour, which led Turks to look for alternative countries to migrate to, and the UK was one of them. Turkish immigrants that came to Britain in the late 1970s were unskilled or semi-skilled workers, owing to the need for cheap labour in the textile and food industries, both of which were the domains of Turkish Cypriots (Atay, 2010; Crul and Vermeulen, 2006). Turkish Cypriots arrived in the UK much earlier and settled before the 1960s as subjects of the Empire (Dikici, 2021; Enneli, Modood et al., 2005). The presence of Turkish Cypriot immigrants facilitated the settlement and integration of Turks from the mainland.

For the last 50 years, Turkey has become a country of precarity and insecurity, constantly pushing groups of people towards moving abroad (Sirkeci, 2017). The 1980 coup d'état in Turkey was a turning point in Turkish political affairs, and the military saw Leftist movements and communism as a threat against Kemalist secularism (Hemmati, 2013). This resulted in another wave of Turkish immigration, this time mainly to the UK. As Enneli *et al.* (2005) explain, a significant proportion of immigrants from Turkey in the 1980s were intellectuals, including students and highly-educated individuals. To illustrate, a specific group of intellectuals who preferred to immigrate to Britain were the ones in the art industry because of

the lack of opportunities to practise their profession and their general discomfort with the politics of art in Turkey (Sirkeci, Bilecen et al., 2016). In other words, people in the art industry preferred to emigrate to Britain due to the intervention of state authorities in art and culture in Turkey.

In addition to the art world, many other sectors have seen Turkish people use the Ankara agreement to move to the UK- a scheme which entitled Turkish citizens to apply for a residence permit in all EU countries. It was active in Britain from 1963 until its end with Brexit on the 31st of December, 2020. Whilst acknowledging the asynchronous nature of Turkish Muslim settlement and the great deal of distinctions amongst Muslim communities in Germany and Britain, Hackett (2013) suggested that Germany treated Muslim Gastarbeiter as presumptive settlers, whereas Britain was more flexible with the status. Dikici (2021) notes that ‘Turks in Britain found more liberal and accommodative policies of integration in comparison to other European countries’ (p.154). Based on Dikici’s book (2021) titled *Transnational Islam and the Integration of Turks in Great Britain*, I compiled a list of points comparing Germany and Britain over the processes of settlement and adaptation in the context of Turks from Turkey. My rationale behind a comparative perspective on the settlement and adaptation of Turks in the British and German context is to have a better grasp of context-specific conditions- the policies of integration, employment and community- which might potentially underlie British Islamophobia.

Britain	Germany
<p>Firstly, the presence of Turkish Cypriots in Britain as an established community had a significant impact on the subsequent Turkish-speaking peoples' adaptation. Therefore, Turks who emigrated from Turkey followed in the footsteps of the Turkish Cypriots. In terms of industries they eventually entered, they received a remarkable amount of assistance from their Turkish Cypriot comrades. English was taught commonly in Turkey, and Britain believed that learning the language of the country of settlement (i.e., English) is vital for integration.</p>	<p>Turks from Turkey emigrated to Germany through a guest worker agreement, and they had to find employment in particular fields once their initial contracts ended. They were by themselves. Because of the myth of return, Turks in Germany were unwilling to learn a new language. Additionally, German has never been as commonly taught in Turkey as English. This might have tempted some Turks to emigrate to Britain, rather than Germany.</p>
<p>Secondly, Turks in Britain found more liberal and accommodative policies of integration in comparison to other European countries including Germany. Since the late 1980s, immigrants entering Britain have enjoyed more accommodative policies of integration that have provided less exclusive environments for immigrants.</p>	<p>Germany's restrictive integration policies resulted in the majority of Turkish people's strong political orientations and emotional attachments towards Turkey and Turkish politics.</p>

<p>Thirdly, Turks arrived into an ethnically diverse setting- cities like London, which played a crucial role in terms of finding one's place to fit in. The presence of the Turkish Cypriot community and an established Muslim community- for example, Southern Asians—in the UK was significant in terms of providing the Turks with immediate support. Turks in Britain, for instance, were able to attend mosques that had already been established by South Asian Muslims.</p>	<p>Turks in Germany had to establish their own mosques. When they arrived via guest-worker agreements, their presence in Germany was bilaterally considered 'temporary', Turks wished to earn some money and return. Dikici (2021) states that until the last two decades, Turks in Germany had been discouraged from intense interaction with Germans, fearing that they would lose their allegiance to their origin country (Turkey).</p>
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Table 1: Factors in Britain and Germany which potentially influence the initial processes of settlement and adaptation of Turks from Turkey.

Though the table above is broad in perspective, thereby not precise and exhaustive, it nevertheless hints at the aspects which might have contributed to a welcoming environment to make newcomers feel at home in Britain, particularly in cosmopolitan cities like London (Dikici, 2021, p. 132). The socio-political identities of Turkish immigrants in Britain, their distinctive immigration histories and, as Cilingir (2010) put, their relative invisibility as a part of the wider Muslim community were worth exploring, as these can be mobilised by British Turks towards an act of belonging to British society (Yorukoglu, 2014). These factors and others that I am not able to anticipate at this stage may indicate pertinent arguments along which British Turks can express their differences from other Muslim communities in post-9/11 Britain. The following section will explore how the construction of belonging and identity for second-generation Muslims during the years after 9/11 and 7/7 can be performative. This is to say that the identities of British Turks can be constituted by the effects of instances of

displacement caused by Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination, as much as they can be deeply affected by parental values, identities and attachments.

### ***1.3.2 Politics of Identity and Belonging***

There is evidence in the literature that Turkish immigrants in Britain tend to preserve their Turkishness as their ethnic and national identity (Cilingir, 2010; Erdogan, 2009, p. 371; Şimsek, 2012). They take Turkey as ‘where they belong to’. Simultaneously, they consider themselves more self-confident, religiously moderate, and willing to engage positively with the dominant society than, for instance, South Asian Muslims (Cilingir, 2010). For British Turks, belonging and identification can go beyond the limits of Turkey or Britain as well as Turkishness, Britishness, Muslimness and so forth. Within existing literature on second-generation Turkish-speaking communities in Britain there is evidence of Turkish-speaking youth living in London stating their belonging to London over Turkey (Şimsek, 2012, p. 188). However, the last research on Turkish subjects and their belonging practices was conducted over 10 years ago with a specific focus on London, which is the most cosmopolitan city in the UK, and perhaps even the entire globe. Furthermore, the work did not take into account discussions surrounding Islamophobia and racism.

My intention is to understand the ways in which British Turks living across Britain conceptualise identity and belonging. But more importantly, for this study, I also want to explore whether they claim to belong and develop identities or need to position themselves as modernised, secular, Turkish exception *inter alia* as a way of avoiding the impacts of Islamophobia in the UK. To date, no empirical research has paid particular attention to the complexity of identities, particular experiences of belonging, racialisation and Islamophobia while exposing the function of processes of different historical moments from Turkish and British politics that can communicate the multiplicity of personal narratives of British Turks.

It is within the context of this perspective that, before contemplating the ‘politics of belonging’, I need to clarify what I mean by ‘belonging’ in the first place. I follow the footsteps of Yorukoglu (2014) and define belonging as ‘a term which includes multiple forms, and degrees of commonality and connectedness’ (p. 3). Why study belonging and identity to understand how British Turks navigate Islamophobia? This is closely linked to the growing discourses connecting terrorism with Islam, migration and Muslims as ‘potential’ terrorists in the West (Meer, 2010; Yorukoglu, 2014). It is for this reason that British Turks might tap into new ways of coping, such as anchoring in notions of secularism, whiteness, Britishness, and Westernness. Alternatively, I want to know if they seek comfort and acceptance within the spaces they were born in or in environments where they spend most of their lives.

Closely related to this are the multiple identities that Turks might deploy on the basis of how Islamophobic or racist discourses construct Turks in Britain. Brexit and the contestation of migration and Islam created the representation of ‘Turks’ as the embodiment of unwanted ‘Muslims’. This is where we move from the realm of belonging into the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Yuval-Davis (2011) defines the politics of belonging as the construction of boundaries, which could mean the exclusion and inclusion of particular people from these boundaries. She notes that those who retain the power reclaim borders and determine who belongs and who does not through the national narratives of the ‘homeland’ (ibid, p.18). The habitual resort to the narrative of ‘homeland’ can also be a defensive gesture. Gilroy (2004) notes that ‘acceptance that race, nationality, and ethnicity are invariant relieves the anxieties that arise with a loss of certainty as to who one is and where one fits’ (p.4). Identity politics, similarly, denotes the construction of self and, depending on the historical context, can be forced on people. As Awan and Zempi (2017) note, Muslims now live in a British society where Islamophobia has become deeply entrenched and where they correspondingly suffer from emotional stress, anxiety and fear. The Islamophobic attitudes which are now endemic in

British society are not only likely to lead Muslims to view British society as unsafe, but they can similarly destabilise Muslim subjects' sense of self (p. 85). Accordingly, one can passively deny or actively reject their 'Muslim' identity or adopt a victim mentality and, thus, a different self-definition. Consequently, many different identities and attachments can be consciously and unconsciously valued or dismissed by British Turks to be able to continue to live, work, or get the jobs they apply for (Meer and Modood, 2019).

Having said that, the circumstances and ways in which British Turks negotiate identity and belonging can differ from the above. In other words, boundaries and closures in the context of British Turks cannot be as manifestly demarcated to that effect. Their identity and belonging preferences might not be a natural extension of family or solely determined by the debates of Islamophobia. When we talk about multiple or multi-layered identities, it is important not to think of them as permanent, fixed or essential but rather view identity as a permanent site of the contest (Butler, 2011; Hall and Jacques, 1989, p. 236; Yuval-Davis, 2011). This thesis aims to explore the formation of belonging and identity of British Turks. I claim that recognising the uniqueness of immigrant families' religious, cultural and political traditions inculcated into British Turks helps to build a perception of the latter's understanding of Islamophobia. This can, in turn, enable a context-specific analysis of the unfolding and differentiated manifestations of Islamophobia within which specific British Turkish identities emerge.

### ***1.3.3 Questioning Turkish Islam, Turkish Secularism and Turkish Islamophobia***

I will now outline the ways Turks mobilise or break away from Islam, and how its placement in their daily routines can have a bearing on the extent of belonging and adaptation, as well as what Islamophobia represents for them in a Western European country. Sociologist Nilüfer Göle (2005) argues that both Muslims and Europeans, in their process of realisation and self-

definition, are in pursuit of redefinition and permanent adjustment relative to one another. According to Göle, this interaction is not an easy coexistence between cultures (p. 31). When considering the dialectical confrontation between ‘Islamic’ and ‘European’, we should not assume that Islam is a ‘monolithic entity’ - counterposed religio-culturally, geographically and imaginatively against secularism, Europe and the West (Edward, 1978). In broad outline, besides a few other foundations which I will touch upon later, Turkish understanding of Islam has been modelled upon and grounded in Sufism- a discipline that aims to teach one how to live without confining oneself to the materialistic dimension of life (Ozdalga, 1997). The term also represents Muslim sainthood and embraces both fully peaceful, spiritual, moral, and puritan forms of Islam (Erturk, 2022; Zarcone and Hobart, 2017). Some believe that Turkish Islam has retained the legacy of old shamanism to a degree, especially concerning Sufism (Yavuz, 2004; Zarcone and Hobart, 2017). To put it differently, there is no such thing as ‘normative Islam’, and Turkish understandings of Islam are no exception to this rule. In time Turkish Islam has generated its own non-conformist aspects, and does not necessarily fit into immutable categories (Mardin, 2005; Yavuz, 2004) - a point to which I shall return. This section, therefore, aims to show how the foundations of Turkish understandings of Islam may shape British Turks’ perceptions of Islam and Islamophobia. Additionally, it will explore their position towards the coexistence of different faith and ethnic communities in Britain.

The concept of Turkish Islam (*Türk Müslümanlığı*) has long been regarded as normatively ‘exceptional’ and *sui generis*, in the sense that it differs from Persian and Arab Islam and Islamic movements that primarily emerged in Arab-majority countries (Erturk, 2022, p. 223; Yavuz, 2004). Ali Bardakoğlu (2001), the then head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey, without rejecting the universal principles of Islam (such as fasting or pilgrimage), argued for a move away from ‘essentialised and undifferentiated Islam’. He also provided a detailed picture of the Turkish case as the product of both historical legacy and modern

exchanges between religion, secularism, Islam, and democracy (Bardakoğlu, 2008, p. 111). Instead of adopting an essentialist position, Bardakoglu (2001) argued that it seems more useful to examine religion as a living entity dependent on spatial-temporal parameters (Bardakoğlu, 2001, pp. 66-67). This has its basis historically. Yavuz (2004) notes, ‘although Arab invaders brought Islam to the region in the 8th century, the conversion patterns and socio-cultural structure created a specifically vernacular Turkic Islam’ (p. 219). As indicated earlier, before the introduction of Islam to the oasis of Central Asia by the Arabs, Turks were a nomadic community who practised shamanism as their dominant faith (Yavuz, 2004, p. 219; Zarcone and Hobart, 2017). Additionally, the historical legacy demonstrates that when shaman leaders converted to Islam and became Sufi Dervishes, Islam was amalgamated with the vernacular narratives and the syncretisation of older traditions. This symbiosis between different cultures, shamanic ideas, and Islam in the region helped to produce Turkish Sufism/ Islam (Zarcone and Hobart, 2017). The first element, therefore, confirms the uniqueness of the Turkish understanding of Islam as the enduring tradition of Sufism closely combined with shamanic elements (ibid, p. 203).

The Turkish-Islamic identity is also tightly linked with the period of Ottoman expansion. Yavuz (2004) observes that the expansionist Ottoman state was forced to embrace and co-exist with Christians and various other ethnic and religious groups, including Kurds, Croats, Asian tribes, Buddhists, Bektashi/Alevi, and others (Yavuz, 2004, p. 221). The Turkish zone of Islam was a melting pot, and through years of interaction amongst different groups, Islam emerged as a unifying force rather than a source of division (ibid). It is beyond the scope of this research to give lengthy examples concerning the different imaginations of Islam in contemporary Turkey. However, I will look at its impact on public opinion and perceptions of Islam today (Bardakoğlu, 2008). These perceptions can similarly lay the groundwork to show how British Turks make sense of Islam and Islamophobia in a non-Muslim country. In the late Ottoman

and the early Republican era, a series of westernising secular reforms were set out: the Tanzimat (Reorganisation). By the 1890s, this was the marker of ‘change’, referring to the efforts to modernise the Ottoman empire (Ergin, 2016). Tanzimat reforms also meant drifting away from the Shari’a, including ‘deviant’ sects and ‘corrupt’ Sufi orders (Erturk, 2022). Mahmud II challenged the separation of religious groups and signalled the construction of a secular Ottoman identity (Ergin, 2016, p. 60). Remarkably, as Carmikli (2011) notes, the long modernisation period that began with the Ottoman empire in the 19th century paved the way for the foundation of the Turkish Republic and Atatürk<sup>5</sup>/Kemalist reforms (p. 25). Turkish society, especially over the political agenda of Kemalist discourse, had to evolve in such a radical manner that Turkey would eventually appear indistinguishable from the West. This, to put it mildly, was not a favourable context for accommodating Islam in the public sphere; and Islam was considered a barrier to progress and modernisation. Consequently, the secularist transformation of the new Turkish state firmly confined the visibility of religion to the private sphere.

This discussion now brings me to a crucial juncture that ties Kemalist reforms with Orientalism and Turkish Islamophobia. As quoted in Kislali’s book *Kemalizm, Laiklik ve Demokrasi*, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stated that ‘religion is an important institution. A nation without religion cannot survive. Yet it is also very important to note that religion is a link between ‘Allah and the individual believer’ (2007, p. 64). In many ways, the quote grounds the socio-political formation of the Republic of Turkey, thus shaping Turkey’s contemporary identity (Ergin, 2016, p. 5). In the identification of the values of the Turkish Republic, Islam was not discarded but ‘synchronised with the political code promoted by the republic, that of

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<sup>5</sup> Kemal Atatürk, (Turkish: “Kemal, Father of Turks”) original name Mustafa Kemal is the founder of Turkish Republic and its first President.

constitutional legacy' (Mardin, 2005, p. 158). In many respects, the Kemalist regime aligned with the Orientalist views, and Kemalism was constructed on the root cause that the 'West' needed to be caught up with scientifically, technologically, politically, and even morally (Çarmikli, 2011). In this newfound unity (The Kemalist Turkish modern state), Islam in Turkey became a reminder of existential anxiety. The secular Kemalist republic was grounded in the absence of the Ottoman past and Islamic elements. During the heyday of Kemalist reforms around the 1930s, Turkish Orientalism (especially the move towards Western secularism by the country's elite) was blossoming (Yardim and Easat-Daas, 2018). In everyday life, the Kemalist elite endeavoured to keep the fantasy of 'the West' alive. This involved following Turkish news from French newspapers, making characters in Turkish novels as imitations of characters from Western works, speaking to maids in French, decorating a Christmas tree and so on (Gurbilek, 2003). This is where the embrace of the Orientalist discourse can be observed to manifest itself in various ways, including keeping Islam as purely a private faith with little or no social and public dimensions (Çarmikli, 2011). The Kemalist reforms similarly banned the Sufi orders and forbade people from wearing traditional clothing (ibid, p. 260). It was not just religion but the whole Ottoman Turkish tradition and way of life that was transmogrified. This meant that Turkey's position was no longer seen to be at odds with Europe's modernity, science and reason.

'That' interpretation of public life and Islam did not require Turkish women to wear the Islamic headscarf. Headscarves appeared as the antidote to the secularist Republic and thus disturbed the totalising drive of modernisation (Somay, 2014, p. 179). To clarify some terminology: Headscarf/*başörtüsü* is a general term and refers to any type of headcover in Turkey which is used even by secularists. The way that a headscarf is tied marks whether it is an Islamic one or not (Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu, 2008). I prefer to call all forms of religiously motivated female covering 'the veil' or the 'Islamic veil' in the context of my thesis. This is because my female

respondents' choice of wearing a veil reflected their piety and religious observance. It should be recognised that the meanings of veiling follow an interesting trajectory throughout the history of women's attire in the Republic of Turkey. Therefore, it is performatively constituted. From an almost exclusively historical perspective after the establishment of the Republic, veiling symbolised the opposite of urban, modern, well-educated Turkish women. The meaning and style of veiling have been constantly negotiated and 'reinvented' with the onset of the early period of the Turkish Republic, through to the conservative policies of the current AKP<sup>6</sup> government- detailing this, however, is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, keeping the country secular is an important consequence of the modernisation that ensued from the Tanzimat reforms. It has laid down a foundation for current Islamophobia, both conscious and unconscious, amongst secular elites in Turkish society.

I do not intend to overgeneralise the schism between secularists and non-secularists in Turkey, as one cannot reduce multiple or complex identities to just two categories. One does not need to have a comprehensive acquaintance with the 'crystallisation' of multi-layered identities, however, to understand that Islamophobic narratives regardless of its whereabouts find their roots in Orientalist historical constructions of Muslims (Yardımcı and Easat-Daas, 2018, p. 101). In that sense, the constructed alterity of Islam emanating from Western Orientalism is not geographically bound, therefore can equally and ideologically penetrate both 'Western' and 'non-Western' societies. My rationale behind seeking to analyse the nature of the Turkish understanding of Islam and the root causes of Turkish Islamophobia lies in the complex and conflictual nature of the strong harmony/agreement between Turkish secularism and Turkish Islamophobia. Acknowledging the seeds of conflict in Turkey, which is caught between Islam and secularism, can underpin the background narratives to identify distinct attitudes of British

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<sup>6</sup> AKP (Justice and Development Party) is the acronym of the party's Turkish name 'Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'.

Turks towards Islam and Islamophobia. Additionally, it adds depth to the nuanced insights of British Turks on patterns of Islamophobia in Britain. Given the continuous dialogue, negotiation, and collusion of Islamic consciousness, secularism, Westernness, and Turkish values as some of the main determinants of this thesis, specifics of Turkish understanding of Islam and Islamophobia can help us better understand how British Turks negotiate Islamophobia today.

#### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 begins by exploring and reviewing the relevant literature to address my research questions. I offer the late- historical genealogy of Islamophobia in the British context and provide background to identity and belonging practices that British Turks may cultivate as a tool to defy Islamophobia. Observing these practices allows for the expansion of understanding of racialisation embedded in the different forms of discrimination, including the Islamophobia that British Turks may face. Beyond the conceptualisations of Islamophobia, identity and belonging, this chapter details how the racialisation of British Turks can develop through the mechanics of technologies of power. This chapter provides foundational analytical context and critical premise to better understand 1. the underlying dynamics of the shifting and multifaceted nature of identities of British Turks, which are increasingly built with and/or shaped by the impacts of Islamophobia in today's conjuncture. 2. the concepts of 'conjunctures', 'racialisation', 'Fundamental British values' and interactions between and within them to understand the nuanced, subtle and contextually-situated narratives of British Turks.

I move on to provide the framework for methodology, ontology and epistemology for studying the impact of Islamophobia in the everyday lives of British Turks in Chapter 3. It describes the research design, scope and the approach taken to conduct and analyse interviews, sample

participants, sample size, access, and the researcher's positionality and choice of location. It also discusses the ethical approach of the project and addresses the limitations of the methodology. This chapter communicates all aspects of the research process, including the discussion of my reflexive stance in the research with 'whys' and 'hows' as central to the knowledge production. I equally address my deployment of inductive coding, which opens up space for the multifarious nature of Islamophobia and its many determinations woven from cultural, political and social aspects of the Muslim community in question. This chapter argues that reflexive observations, when interwoven with open-coding and inductive analysis, allow for divergences, contradictions and variations in the data and speak to meaning as communicated by the research informants.

Chapter 4 begins with highlighting the fluidity of identity positions and the processes of construction and negotiation of multiple identities that British Turks take on in response to the wider perception of mainstream British society against the Muslim 'Other'. This chapter also explores how British Turks develop their own narratives of identity beyond narrow prescriptions such as 'British' and 'Turkish' and sheds light on the tools of white, cosmopolitan and secular identities used by some British Turks as a strategy of resistance against the likelihood of Islamophobic attitudes. Chapter 4 thinks through why British Turks deploy divergent identities, at times crisscrossed and overlapped with one another, and traces the salience of the multiple political trends in British and Turkish contexts. This highlights and underpins the understanding that identity and culture are not uniform and fixed, with an essence. British Turks' varied and floating identities are sensitive to and conditional on how these identities are perceived in a particular time frame and spatiality. For instance, the merits of cosmopolitanism are cultivated as a getaway from the impacts of Muslimness as a key to acceptance into dominant British society.

Chapter 5 serves two purposes. First, it addresses the role of Islamophobia within the day-to-day lives of British Turks. I here synthesise the other types of discrimination and exclusion with Islamophobia based on my empirical findings. I then illustrate the ways in which British Turks are racialised as Muslim ‘Other’. Secondly, this chapter provides particularly valuable perspectives on the historically-situated nature of Islamophobia in the case of British Turks and highlights that Islamophobia does not have a monolithic character and takes shape within and across a range of social settings and contexts. This chapter is used to challenge the generalised premise of Islamophobic narratives and the belief that the very presence of Muslim communities constitutes a serious danger for the ‘West’ is the monolithic depiction of Islam and Muslims. This chapter, therefore, unfolds the context-boundedness of the term ‘Islamophobia’, which can only be understood through the prism of the particular perspectives of British Turks with their specificities in culture/s, ethnicity, and idiosyncratic articulations of Islam.

Chapter 6 unpacks the multiple discourses underlying the belonging strategies of British Turks. The findings in this chapter demonstrate that British Turks develop a deeper sense of belonging to cities, regions, and localities where intercultural exchanges occur, and diversity is commonplace. I then further examine the reasons surrounding the emphasis on diversity emerging from my data analysis and conclude that diversity, regardless of the different scales of spaces, is used as an anchor to defy exclusion and possible effects of Islamophobia. Chapter 6 is built around the practices of belonging and uses the concept of ‘diversity’, central to which discussions on Islamophobia are broadened out. Emphasis on diversity drawn out as a core theme reveals and hides simultaneously the explicit and implicit functioning of Islamophobia on the basis of exclusionary undertones of conversations, gazes, and spaces.

Chapter 7 draws together the findings of the analysis and brings together the contributions to the field. This chapter organises my findings into two subsections: key contributions, limitations and recommendations for future research. It is through different ways British Turks make sense of and negotiate Islamophobia in everyday life, pushing against closure that Islamophobia is a monolithic and fixed concept. Chapter 7 focuses on the contributions made in understanding identities as fluid and shifting through British Turks' subtle awareness of the possibility of 'unwanted' Other statuses of being Muslim and, to a lesser extent, Turkish and, at times, the overlap between them. As reflected in this concluding chapter, the significant contribution this thesis makes is the situatedness of Islamophobia, which is a projection of the time and space in which it is lived out. Islamophobia, in the specific case of British Turks, is situated within the social, economic and political conditions of 9/11, 7/7 and post-Brexit Britain.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### **2.1 Introduction**

I begin this chapter with an overview of the contemporary debates on cultural approaches to identity as a basis of a conceptual framework for understanding racism/s, including Islamophobia in the British context. This is followed by the different conceptualisations of whiteness as a potential constituent of cultural identities British Turks might adopt in the British context. I then present the processes that have led to the emergence of Islamophobia in Britain, from the 1988 Rushdie Affair to the present day. I argue that the narratives covered in this section resulted in the tendencies to homogenise and racialise many aspects of Muslimness and Islam into a monolithic, one-dimensional, undifferentiated cultural identity. I, therefore, argue that the concept of ‘technologies of power’ constitutes one of the most efficient ways to examine the racialisation of Muslims as an undifferentiated mass and present how the Foucauldian approach to racialisation and power profoundly underlies the various modes of classification and control of Muslim communities in the UK. I opt for the Foucauldian approach to the conceptualisation of racialisation, as Foucault placed the human subject and resistance in the centre of power relations. This is historically contingent- as the historical conditions of our present circumstance motivate and accommodate those who have been racially oppressed or privileged (Foucault, 2019b, p. 326). This thesis presents the potential racialisation of British Turks as another Muslim community and their resistance against racialisation as a technique, a form of power in the British context. I additionally outline intellectual debates where, for instance, Fundamental British Values (FBVs), an extension of the UK government’s overall counter-terrorism strategy, are accepted as a tool for the racialisation and homogenisation of Muslims in the UK. I, therefore, seek to capture the

perceptions of British Turks over FBVs to tease out the nuanced and not-so-overt implications of Islamophobia.

All in all, this chapter is used to situate and underlie how Islamophobia is experienced and navigated by British Turks and is structured as follows: First, potential cultural identities that British Turks might take on are conceptualised in terms of existing literature relating to social and cultural approaches to identity. Secondly, I review literature that addresses the shifting understanding of whiteness in Turkish and British contexts. I show that this opens up a possibility of resistance, if not privilege, in response to Islamophobia across different contexts. From here, the following three sections are used to ground understandings of how Islamophobia emerged, the presentation and conceptualisation of racialisation and Fundamental British Values. Then my analysis of the literature moves on to the everyday lived experiences of Islam based on British Turks. The ways Turks in the UK make sense of and accommodate Islam in their daily routine when it comes to their specificities of identity, morality, tradition, and culture help me construct a picture of British Turks and their interpretation of belonging to a non-Muslim country. I also provide the background of how the historical particularities of Turkishness vis a vis religion, Turkish Orientalism, the secular way of life, and beyond (which I have not anticipated) can equally mediate the ways British Turks negotiate Islamophobia in the UK. This provides a valuable background to appreciate why British Turks' experiences of Islamophobia could be different from South Asian, Kosovan or Nigerian experiences, and also from the experiences of the Turkish diaspora in, for instance, Germany.

## **2.2 Contemporary Debates on Cultural Approaches to Identity and Studies on British Turks**

As the central theme of this work is exploring the manifestations of Islamophobia in the lives of British Turks, I also examine the literature concerning the types of identities British Turks can wittingly or unwittingly deploy in response to (and in the context of) Islamophobia. Our identity, be it ethnic, civic, religious or national, is by its very nature dependent on society (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). It was with the emergence of modernity that the need for recognition of one's socially derived identity came into being. In pre-modern times, people did not speak of 'identity'- not because they did not have one, but because it was too unproblematic to be thematised as such (ibid, pp. 34-35). In other words, recognition of one's identity was rooted in the building blocks of a given society that everyone took for granted. The modern age has meant that our identity can be misrecognised as much as it is recognised or even completely denied. Recognition then requires negotiation through dialogue, partly overtly, partly internally, with others (ibid, p. 34). It is possible to argue that today an identity is a constructed category that takes shape in response to others' reactions to our worldviews, attitudes, behaviours, physical and religious appearance and so forth. Kaya (2001) argues, 'unless others define us, we cannot represent ourselves' (p. 46). To put it differently, the nucleus of one's identity today is the ensemble of dialogical and dialectical processes involving the joint opinions of one's view of the self and the outside narrative.

Therefore, with this considered, the formation of cultures and ethnic groups follow a similar path; they are not autonomous totalities- at least no such thing exists any longer (Wicker, 1997, emphasis mine). Therefore, as Hans-Rudolf Wicker (1997) notes, 'we need to free ourselves from the classical concept of culture- that is, the small, strongly integrated, barely differentiated' (p. 36). With the advent of nation-states and the following globalisation,

transnationalism, urbanisation, and the interaction within and with these, identities can no longer be constructed without a dialogue with the 'other'. That is to say, a dialogical and dialectical relationship with the constitutive 'other' is an indispensable condition for forming and representing one's identity and culture. For example, this results in it being impossible to speak of black culture and identity in Britain separately from the culture of Britain as a whole (Solomos and Back, 1996, p. 20). This understanding of 'identity' and 'culture' is directly contrary to an essentialist, fixed understanding of the given concepts. Therefore, in this thesis, I seek to go beyond the essentialist view of identity by drawing from the deep analysis of contemporary discussions of identity and culture in the British context (Bhabha, 1996; Grossberg, 1986; Hall and Du Gay, 1996b). This way of framing identity and culture helps me understand the processes by which the expression of identity is built and situated in particular social and political contexts (Solomos and Back, 1996). This way of framing identity can help examine British Turks' thinking about their own cultural identities concerning the increasing debates on British national identity and the Islamophobic insecurities that led to scapegoating and demonising 'Muslims' (Modood, 2010, p. xiii).

Recent analysis of identity in the British context is situated in the broader framework of a cohesive national identity. This framework is entangled with the debates about Multiculturalism, reinforcing the view that minorities who do not share the dominant values of British society and identity pose a threat to social cohesion (Solomos and Back, 1996, p. 19). It is this issue that results in Islamophobic tensions surrounding identities which are 'different' such as 'Asian', 'Turkish', and 'Muslim'. This way of looking at identity construction highlights the role of the current climate of antipathy against Islam and the racialisation of Muslims (Hall, 1986; Solomos, 1993). For example, Solomos (1993) notes that oppressed communities produce their own discourses on race and identity in the context of their experiences of exclusion. This approach to identity may, in fact, help us understand British

Turks' approach to complex issues in the UK, including the debates stretching into Multiculturalism, British national identity, the politicisation of Islam starting from the Rushdie Affair, and more recently, the distorted image of Turkey via Brexit. We can therefore argue that building one's identity is inextricably linked to how differences in culture, race or faith are recognised and accommodated in a given society (Meer and Modood, 2009). Therefore, the dominant political values of British society contribute to how British Turks construct their cultural identities. This means that identity is a constant site of struggle.

The core idea behind 'identity as a site of struggle' is that one's identity is constantly negotiated and renegotiated. Identity itself is socially constructed and, therefore, in a constant battle against the intrinsic, essentialised construction of identity and contesting negative images/representations with positive ones (Grossberg, 1996). Grossberg (1986) argued that identification is not guaranteed outside of any concrete struggle. Foucault (1954-1984) similarly linked the formation of identity to the 'techniques of self', in which social contexts mediate how subjects are affected by their thoughts and ways of being; subjects transform themselves by what is expected from them in a given society (Foucault, 2019a). This messy complexity deriving from power differentials in a given society comes with a loss of certainty about who one is and where one fits (Gilroy, 2004, p. 6). This inevitable relationship between the notions of identity, difference/constitutive 'other' and dominant political values of a given society can be encapsulated by the Derridean term of *differance*. *Differance* signifies the double process of 'differing' (difference/otherness) and 'deferring'; the term thereby refers to the production of differences and the impossibility of the binary oppositions where the fixity is dissolved and fallen in time (Derrida, 1972; Nuyen, 1989). This time the force behind the construction of an identity is undoubtedly based on the impossibility of negating the difference in the 'self', in other words, the trace of the constitutive 'others' on identity. Considering the perceived incompatibility between Europeans and Muslims dominating public discourse in the

present conjuncture, the prospect of absolute difference, instability and ‘otherness’ can potentially cause an identity battle for Muslim communities when subordinated, marginalised or deemed inferior to that of a dominant group (Collins, 2002; Erdenir, 2010). Consequently, a sense of duality, which Du Bois placed at the core of ‘double consciousness’, can emerge to negotiate and deflect forms of racism/s, including Islamophobia.

Du Bois initially used double consciousness to describe the difficulties stemming from the black internalisation of American identity and to depict the inner ambivalences of diasporic black individuals generated by the practice of white supremacy (Bois, 1897; Gilroy, 1993). Taking cues from Du Bois’s concept of double consciousness, I extend his argument to that of British Turks as another minority group in Britain whose identities and attachments can be informed by the ways they are recognised, non-recognised or misrecognised, accepted or excluded as ethnically and religiously ‘Other’ to mainstream British society. In other words, British Turks’ formation of identities can draw upon the dialectical relationship between Europe and its current constitutive ‘other’, i.e., the Muslim ‘Other’. The acknowledgement of the putative characteristics of Muslim ‘Other’ as violent, backward, and terrorist, among other things, can result in the form of double consciousness that might be defined in opposition to the generalised traits of all ‘Muslims’. In this way, British Turks can distance themselves from the burden of Muslim ‘Other’, or the reality of anti-Muslim racism, and hold onto the traits ‘unmarked’ and ‘privileged’ such as whiteness- which I detail in the following section- to be more congruent with the dominant group as a strategy to fit with the latter.

The concept of identity in late modernities, in direct opposition to essentialist understanding, is thereby a positional and strategic one (Hall and Du Gay, 1996b), in coordination with the interests of a dominant group (Hall, 1986). Hence identity formation is constructed within the groups to which we belong and interact with. Research shows that no known literature has

analysed British Turks' identity formation in the context of double consciousness. Even though the literature is not scarce on ethnic, religious, cultural and socio-political identities and differences amongst the Turkish-speaking communities that live and work in Britain, the most recent work focuses mainly on the identities of the Turkish-speaking community in Britain is now over 10 years old. Küçükcan (1999), in his PhD thesis, focused on 'Turkish Muslims in Britain' and defined the group in question as a 'micro-Muslim community' in Britain. This ethnographic study involved participant observation, in-depth interviews and a survey. Küçükcan analysed how Turkish identity is constructed in the diaspora based on the respondents' attitudes towards language, culture, family, sexuality, and religion. Küçükcan also looked into the transmission of parental values to the younger generations. What was missing in Küçükcan's thesis was filled in by Doğuş Şimsek in 2012; in her PhD thesis. This involved the incorporation of the concept of transnationalism in a manner that is built on the elements addressed by Küçükcan to understand the identity formations of three groups: Kurdish respondents from mainland Turkey, Turkish Cypriots, and mainstream Turks living in North London. In this research, the role of social relations is illuminated, including cultural activities such as traditional dance and drama in community organisations, from the perspective of the aforementioned groups' identities (p.58). The most recent work is Babacan's PhD (2021) thesis, where he investigated the identity strategies Turkish subjects living in London employed in the face of anti-Muslim bigotry. He found that young Turks distinguish between civic and ethnic forms of British national identity due to the colonial dynamics of Britain. They understand Turkish national identity in both civic and ethnic terms because of strong attachments to the ethnic and national symbols of Turkey (p. 176). The weight of emphasis in these studies centre on forms and patterns of identities which are either described through 'hybridity' or demarcated as 'ethnic, national, civic or religious identities', or the ways in which Turkish-speaking communities responded to these ascriptions in the host country.

Furthermore, these works of literature are unable to pay any attention to British Turks who were born/ settled outside London. For this project, the emphasis is on ruptures and breaks of cultural identities British Turks conveniently take on and off, reconstituted by dialogues and issues raised in and by particular historical conjunctures including post 9/11, 7/7 and post-Brexit Britain, as well as referring to early years of the Republican era in Turkey as standpoints underlying the nuanced and multiplicity of identities.

My research, therefore, considers the concept of ‘identity’ that British Turks can relate to in Britain as a matter of ‘becoming’ as much as of ‘being’ (Hall, 1989). In this approach, identity is a dynamic structure neither developed along religiously and ethnically absolute lines nor grounded in parental homeland *per se* but amalgamated and intersected with the dynamic expectations and characteristics of British society. This thesis, therefore, contributes to the social and cultural views of ‘identity’ in the context of British Turks, building from the rising discourse of Islamophobia across the Western world. It is therefore worth briefly visiting the conceptualisations of ‘whiteness’ as a distinct socio-cultural racial identity and potentially an uncontested privilege and leverage to resist Islamophobia in Britain today.

### **2.3 Whiteness and its ‘Others’ in the British and Turkish Context**

This section outlines the literature on the complex processes through which whiteness is negotiated in Britain and some ways in which British Turks can claim whiteness as a category of distinction vis-à-vis the racialisation of Muslims in the British context. In doing so, I demonstrate how constructed articulations of whiteness still continue to underpin dominant understandings of Britishness and enable the perpetuation of racialised hierarchies of belonging (Garner, 2012). Before infiltrating the literature on varying conceptualisations of whiteness, Jacobson (1999) argues that whiteness is a very slippery substance, and its very indeterminacy renders it inevitable to attain. Jacobson goes on to state that ‘race’ is also a social convention,

not a biological fact. It is a product of the perception of others and contingent upon the circumstances of the moment (Jacobson, 1999, p. 11). This study, therefore, takes ‘whiteness’ not as a totality but as more nuanced and flexible than binary maps of identity (Garner, 2007, p. 109). Given the centrality of Islamophobia and the image of ‘Muslim’ that is racialised in multiple ways, including appearance and colour in the ‘West’, British Turks may seek to belong to mainstream Britishness due to the privilege that their putative whiteness is assumed to ensure. To put it differently, they may wield their race-based understanding to assert their belonging to Britain. Their putative whiteness can afford them an important advantage in inserting themselves into Britain’s racialised hierarchies.

The research by Miranda Lewis (2005), completed days before the 7/7 bombings in London, demonstrates that ‘the terms ‘race’, immigration, and asylum are often used interchangeably by the British public’ (p. 4). In Lewis’ research, while no one raises issues about white immigration from countries such as Australia or the US, white British people frequently lump everyone who is not white together into what they feel is an inferior and threatening group (Garner, 2007; Lewis, 2005). To recap briefly, the meanings attached to ‘race’ are always time and space-specific and part of each national regime. Whiteness is no exception (Garner, 2012, p. 1). These meanings are values coalesced into a sense of ‘Britishness’ rooted in the power of whiteness in the British context (Kundnani, 2012). However, there is no consensus on exactly what Britishness entails (Garner, 2012, p. 456). Garner’s fieldwork drawn from around 450 interviews conducted between 2005 and 2011 in provincial cities in England concludes that not only is Britishness a separate, more remote layer of belonging than Englishness, but the latter is also whiter and holds a more ethnic rather than the civic conception of belonging (ibid, 459). In this context, the boundaries of Englishness are not *solely* determined by colour but are also predicated on notions of belonging which do not allow any hybridised identifications (Hickman, Morgan et al., 2005). In a similar manner, whiteness is not only to do with colour,

but is predicated on notions of cultural and economic norms (Garner, 2007; Hartigan, 2020). Whiteness, thus, cannot be a guarantor of the racialised understandings of Englishness and Britishness. These ruptures in whiteness are a way to formulate that whiteness is a multifaceted and fluid identity. That argument is presented below by three groups who share putative whiteness, but meanings attached to their whiteness are differentiated on account of class, ethnicity, education, culture, and so forth.

Literature on the Irish in England addresses the diversity within ‘whiteness’ and how the Irish in England since the Second World War have been engaged in the constant processes of ‘becoming white’ (Hickman, Morgan et al., 2005, p. 179; Walter, 2017). They have been subject to racialising discourses, placing them at a lower level of civilisation than Anglo-Saxons (Garner, 2007, p. 67). A further examination of Irish experiences in England concludes that with their white skin and English accent, second-generation Irish in England reveals the weakness and vulnerability of Englishness (Hickman, Morgan et al., 2005). Because their whiteness was indicative of ethnically Irish whiteness, corporeally white Irish speaking ‘English accent’ could vacate the concept of Englishness as another specific ethnicity (ibid, p.162). Conversely, in his discussion of Jewish immigrants to Britain in the late 19th century and early 20th century, 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; Moore, 2013). The white privilege granted to Jewish immigrants, who enjoyed a national framework of belonging at the turn of the 20th century, is relatively limited for white working-class UK people in the present (Garner, 2012, p. 460). The literature suggests that white working class ‘whiteness’ is viewed with contempt, associated with generalised ‘backwardness’, ‘abject unmodern’ and more specifically, a ‘culturally burdensome whiteness’ vis a vis the expanding cosmopolitan middle classes in the contemporary British context (Garner, 2007; Haylett, 2001; Moore, 2013; Twine,

Warren et al., 2000). Working class whites thus are rendered as ‘very white... naked, pasty, underdone: white white’, embodying a whiteness that is somehow excessive and incommensurably ‘Other’ (Twine, Warren et al., 2000). According to Haylett (2001), where ‘blackness’ was the dominant signifier of danger and disorder in British political discourse, the ‘whiteness’ embodied in ‘white-working class poor’ is viewed as the symbol of burdensome whiteness because of political discourses surrounding poor whites who have become dependent of welfare in the UK (p.351). These poor whites, as Haylett (2001) notes, are racialised as uncivilised, dangerous, and a ‘race apart’, a racialised, irredeemable ‘Other’ (p. 358). Clearly, the relationship between whiteness and ‘racialised’ non-whiteness (always shifting, such as Irishness, Jewishness, or being working class in England) are temporally and spatially distinctive; these relationships are dynamic and susceptible to negotiation rather than fixed. As Elias and Feagin (2020) argue, this ‘colour-coded framing of society is the central operator of contemporary systemically racist societies, operating in the establishment, legitimation, and indoctrination of the socially constructed ‘white world’ (p. 16). It is not misleading, therefore, to question if religious affiliation did not get in the way of constructing Jews as ‘white and British’ in the late 19th and early 20th century in Britain, can we equally and collectively identify British Turks as ‘white and British’ without dealing with the processes of stereotyping, scapegoating, xenophobia and Islamophobia today?

As indicated earlier in this section, the meaning of whiteness is fluid, dynamic and politically constructed; thus, definitions of whiteness will always be context-specific (Moore, 2013, p. 31). In the broader political context, whiteness and Islam are seen as incompatible because Islam in the West ‘occupied the peculiar place of the historical opposition to both European Christianity and modernity’ (Almond, 2008, p. 153 as cited in Meer, 2020; Moosavi, 2015). If we fast forward to the late 1990s and early 2000s, perhaps starting with Samuel Huntington’s (1996) thesis, whiteness, as a privilege, and Muslimness, as the ‘Other’ of everything ‘West’

today symbolises, presumably represents an unsettling convergence. With their putative whiteness, British Turks can still be conceived and treated as inferior, less rational and culturally backward because Muslimness, whiteness, modernity and Westernness are terms that cannot go together anymore (Meer, 2020; Modood, 2007; Yorukoglu, 2017b). The same period also witnessed the growth of the ‘Islamic’ movement in Turkish politics (Mardin, 2005; Yorukoglu, 2017b, p. 8). Yorukoglu (2017) suggests that with the increasing power and authoritarianism of religious government in Turkey since 2002, the concept of white Turk has been denigrated by the current head of state Tayyip Erdogan himself, on the grounds that white Turkishness has always been the marker of the secular and Kemalist segment of Turks. Tayyip Erdogan, therefore, called himself a black Turk in 2003 in a report published by *The New York Times*. He said: ‘In this country, there is a segregation of Black Turks and White Turks... Your brother Tayyip belongs to the Black Turks’ (Brennan and Herzog 2014, p. xvi). In the Turkish context, the racialisation attempts had roots in the late Ottoman and early republican period, negotiated within a distinctly Orientalist vocabulary. In other words, before it was taken for granted, whiteness was aggressively sought after, negotiated and eventually built in the Turkish mindset (Ergin, 2016, p. 106). Thus, one needs to recognise that whiteness was strived to be inculcated into the collective memory of Turks.

Consequently, instead of ‘race’ being a terrain where blackness and non-whiteness are assigned to others, whiteness was allocated, and in years since the establishment of the Turkish republic, it has become central to self-perceptions. Therefore, there is more than skin colour to whiteness; and one can recognise one aspect of ‘whiteness’ in the Turkish context associated with modernity, westernisation, secularism and cultural superiority (ibid. p. 2). Therefore, it is not surprising that the concept of ‘Black Turk’ held up by Tayyip Erdogan in 2003 was a marker of religious and Muslim identifications as opposed to that of secular white Turks- the followers of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Casting himself as a black Turk, Erdogan skilfully

manoeuvred his way into power by tapping into the anxieties of deeply religious, predominantly Anatolian Sunni Muslims (Yilmaz, 2021). He located himself next to the former and credited himself as the underdog, appealing to those who felt rejected by Kemalist principles (Somay, 2014). Drawing on different conceptualisations and functions of ‘whiteness’ in Britain and Turkey, we can say that whiteness can be positively utilised to cultivate belongingness by some segments of British Turks to go against the racialisations of Muslims as a single entity primarily made up of South Asian and Black Muslim groups. In today’s temporal framing, however, the roots of Islamophobia that come with Western hegemony present an irreconcilableness between being Muslim and being in a Western European country such as Britain (Bayraklı, Hafez et al., 2018). This could plague any subject who identifies themselves with devout Muslimness or wears an Islamic veil or beard.

As I go into detail in the following sections, Islamophobia in a British context is historically constant. It is ever-present, culminating in the processes of homogenising Muslims with the same attributes, qualities and capabilities (Allen, 2016b). As Meer (2010) suggests, the intensity of experiences of racism, discrimination and Islamophobia can result in a lack of sense of belonging to society (Meer, 2010, p. 204). On the grounds of the unexpected encounter of privileged whiteness and unprivileged Muslimness (Kosba, 2018), British Turks can potentially engage in reflexive, self-critical practice regarding their belongingness to Britishness. As already detailed in the preceding sections, a sense of ‘double-consciousness’ can emerge (Bois, 1897), this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of the other (Gilroy, 1993), through the eyes of a white British subject. The Islamophobia literature in Britain has not sufficiently focused on the perceptions of Muslims who are putatively white, such as British Turks. To better grasp British Turks’ experiences and whether they defensively dissociate themselves from other Muslims based on factors including their ‘putative’

whiteness, the extensive literature on the nature of Islamophobia in the context of Britain is scrutinised in the following section.

## **2.4 Islamophobia in Britain**

This section briefly considers scholarship examining the emergence and manifestations of Islamophobia in Britain and concludes by turning to literature explicitly focusing on the issue of British Turks in Britain. The Runnymede Trust, with its 1997 report, 'Islamophobia: a challenge to us all', launched Islamophobia as a concept of public discourse in Britain and beyond. The 1997 report was ground-breaking because it played a crucial role in getting people to think about anti-Muslim prejudice. Despite the report identifying Islamophobia as a distinct discriminatory phenomenon, several authors, including Tariq Modood, began using the term in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Modood, 2018). This is unsurprising given that inasmuch as Runnymede Trust has been the leading actor in bringing Muslim concerns and recognising Islamophobia as one dominant form of racism today, it was the Rushdie Affair in 1988 that defined the present-day Islamophobia in Britain (Meer, 2010). Soon after its publication in September 1988, Salman Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses* was criticised by some British Muslims because of the sections portraying the Prophet Muhammed as 'an unscrupulous, lecherous impostor who hoodwinked his followers ... [and] included in the Qur'an certain verses which turned out to be the work of the devil: the satanic verses' (ibid, p.74).

The Rushdie Affair revealed the structure and shortcomings of the British legislative framework regarding 'race relations' and 'anti-racism'. Taylor (1994) argues that liberalism- a term which offers a neutral group on which people of all cultures can coexist, requires almost ruling out differences so that social consensus can be achieved. But the controversy over the Rushdie Affair shows how wrong this view is, as there is no clear division between politics and religion in Islam (Taylor, 1994). That being the case, Muslims in Britain were triggered by

this event and following misrecognition, they felt obliged to fight for their religious heritage. In what followed, Muslims across Great Britain, including Scotland, started mobilising and protesting (Bonino, 2019, p. 162). Consequentially the Rushdie Affair was a turning point for Muslims in Britain, leading to the designation of Muslims as ‘Other’, collectively depicted as radicals who cannot represent Western values. This event was similarly crucial in ‘politicising the Muslim identity’ (see Saeed 2007).

Almost a decade after the Rushdie Affair in Britain, Runnymede Trust Report in 1997 defined Islamophobia as the ‘*unfounded* hostility towards Islam’, therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims (Meer, 2010, p. 101). For some critics, the term neglected the ‘active and aggressive part of discrimination, inferred through the language of ‘-phobias’, with the additional complaint that the term does not adequately account for the nature of prejudice directed at Muslims (Martin and Wodak, 2001 cited in Meer, 2010, p.101). Halliday similarly accepts that Islamophobia is misleading because the attack is not against ‘Islam’ as a religion but against Muslims as a people who were later grouped in all fields as a homogenous entity (Halliday, 1999). Although the thrust of Islamophobia as a concept was testimony to the validity of Muslim hatred and prejudice, the growth of Islamophobia and the current climate of hate has been consolidated after 9/11.

In an interview by Modood and Meer, their journalist respondent from Daily Mirror stated: ‘Everything changed after 9/11 and again after 7/7’ (Meer and Modood, 2019). Indeed, in the aftermath of September 11th, 2001, in New York and July 7th, 2005, in London, Muslims have found themselves bearing the brunt of a new wave of suspicion and hostility in the West (Ali, 2014; Friedman, Werbner et al., 1997; Modood, 2003). ‘West’ as I demonstrate across the chapters of this thesis, provides a convenient framework referring to complexities of simultaneous processes of the negative representation and treatment of the Muslim ‘Other’,

given that Muslims are homogenised and racialised as a single culture group to forge solid political alliances across the West- a point which I will return shortly. As a result of this, I opt to use the term ‘West’, following the footsteps of Chris Allen (2016), as a homogenous entity, sometimes to describe that which is not ‘Islam’; additionally, the ‘West’ as a notion is taken on across the chapters of this thesis in such ways broadly equitable historically to Christendom. It similarly refers to Western Europe and North America, and Western liberalism (Allen, 2016b, p. 14). Although present-day Islamophobia has relied on the events that happened in the not-so-distant past across Western Europe, which immediately characterised Muslims as ‘maddened terrorists’ (Tahir, 2005). One theory suggests that Islamophobia was not designated later on in the 20th century but connected to experiences of colonialism, Orientalism, decolonisation, immigration and racism (Allen, 2016b; Cesari, 2015; Hesse and Sayyid, 2006; Kundnani, 2014). Equally pointedly, in his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said argued that the West’s homogenised and reified culturalist view of Islam has its roots in European colonialism, ‘Islam was militant hostility to European Christianity’ (Said, 1978, p. 92). Doubtlessly, colonialism’s and Orientalism’s joint intention was to control- the intention of the colonialists was to ‘reform Islam’ and to ‘secularise the barbaric, violent and backward followers of it’ (Allen, 2016b). These historical attributes that Allen suggested continue to inform and shape the West’s treatment and representation of its Muslim subjects (ibid, p. 30). Even though Turkish immigration to Britain cannot be understood as rooted in British colonialism, the prevailing representations and treatment of Muslims in Britain in today’s conjuncture, portraying Islam and Muslims in the worst possible light, are inextricably entangled with the historical context of Islamophobia. Consequently, I argue that British Turks may equally suffer from the negative depictions of the ‘Muslim’ Other in Britain today.

Orientalist variants of Islamophobia, the events of the Rushdie Affair, the 9/11 New York bombings, and the 7/7 London bombings were influential in locating British support for the

political and discursive climate of the ‘clash of civilisation’<sup>7</sup> and the ‘war on terror’. The latter term is the name given to the response of Western governments to political violence in the US, Britain and elsewhere (Dwyer, 2008). Legitimising the ‘war on terror’ has led to an atmosphere of fear and hatred against Muslims, unprecedented anti-racist and anti-Muslim state discourses (Pitcher, 2009), fuelling arguments against previous multicultural policies, questioning the idea of diversity and coexistence across cultures and differences (Masters and Regilme Jr, 2020). These, and many other narratives, have all been used as dog-whistle politics to appease far-right voters. They have afforded post-9/11 counter-terrorism, precisely the Prevent strategy, a component of the security approach (CONTEST) in the British context to prevent the radicalisation of Muslim individuals in terrorism (Brown, 2021; Busher, Choudhury et al., 2017; Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011; Meer and Modood, 2011; Mondon and Winter, 2020; Qurashi, 2018; Richards, 2019). In today’s conjuncture, we can argue that conceptualisations of Muslims in the West are not per se reduced to Orientalist accounts where ‘barbaric and inferior’ Muslims were to be enlightened and secularised. We should recognise that Muslims across the West are summarily lumped into essentialised and fundamentally objectified identities, one undifferentiated and threatening group. As literature demonstrates, despite their myriad of distinctive legacies, British Muslim communities have been similarly racialised to turn an ethnoreligious group into a race (Abbas, 2004; Allen, 2005; Allen, 2016b; Birt, 2008; Sian, 2009).

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<sup>7</sup> Huntington's “clash of civilizations” thesis has contributed to spreading the idea that Islamic values contradict core democratic principles. In his influential *Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington emphasizes that Islam in general, and not only its most extreme forms, is in conflict with Western civilization and its cultural heritage, including democracy: “The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam...”. Rafiqi, A. (2019). A clash of civilizations? Muslims, Christians, and preferences for democracy. *Journal for the scientific study of religion* 58(3) 689-706.

In this context, Muslim communities in Britain have been viewed as undifferentiated. As literature demonstrates, Muslims have been racialised in their everyday life, and the racialisation operates in a myriad of different ways, including the Islamic veil as a signifier of 'Islam' or 'Muslims' (Babacan, 2022). There might, however, be other ways of racialisation that have not yet been anticipated, nor has previous research looked into. Babacan's (2022) thesis is illustrative in that his work unravels the racialised experiences of Turkish people in London; however, it neglected the voices and experiences of British Turks living outside of London. I am interested in centring the voices and experiences of British Turks with diverse backgrounds to reflect the complexity of experiences of Islamophobia across different spaces of different scales. I shall specifically attempt to engage in British Turks' perceptions and experiences of Islamophobia and in what ways they have been racialised and fit in with Muslim 'Other' as a supposedly undifferentiated group.

Considering the high-profile events which lay the foundations on which the Muslim communities of Britain have been increasingly accentuated, the large scale of scholarship on Islamophobia and conflicts concerning Muslims has been carried out about the South Asian Muslims who constitute the majority of Muslims in Britain (Abbas, 2004; Ali and Sayyid, 2006; Ali, 2014; Meer and Modood, 2011; Tahir, 2005). The Islamophobia literature in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands concerning the conceptualisations of Islamophobia and other sorts of discrimination experiences are, however, predominantly focused on Turkish Muslims as one of the largest Muslim communities in the countries mentioned above (Cherribi, 2011; Colak, Van Praag et al., 2020; Erturk, 2014; Karayalçın, 2015; Kaya, 2001; Valk, 2012). However, far less attention has been paid to the actual prejudices, frustrations, verbal and non-verbal attacks or gazes stemming from the Muslimness and Turkishness of Turkish communities in aforementioned countries. Assessing the wider context of Islamophobia outside the Turkish diaspora and Western Europe, we come across the victim responses to the

anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia, especially against women with Islamic headscarves. The emergence of this is linked with the ‘clash of civilisations’ discourse and the ‘war on terror’ (Iner *et al.*, 2022). According to this research, Muslim women who grew up in Australia do not simply accept the negative impact of routine Islamophobia on their lives by speaking to perpetrators and resisting the stereotypes that assign them the status of ‘ideal victims’ in the eyes of others (p.302). Distinct experiences of British Turkish Muslims wearing a veil, as well as how they would react to Islamophobic abuse, have not been extensively addressed.

Not dissimilarly, Turks in Britain, including female Turks with the Islamic veil and its impact on Islamophobic victimisation nevertheless, are a relatively invisible Muslim group with many internal distinctions (e.g., the ethnic and racial differences between Kurds from Turkey and Mainland Turks as Sunni Muslims, as well as sectarian distinctions between the former and Alevi Turks/Kurds), and therefore have been neglected by dominant research agendas on Islamophobia. This, I argue, can stem from the fact that Turkish-Muslim communities in Britain display a great diversity in their perceptions and practices of Islam, as well as how they relate their faith to the larger society (Küçükcan, 2004).

As previously mentioned, the Runnymede Trust’s Commission on British Muslims defined Islamophobia (CBMI) (1997) as ‘unfounded hostility towards Islam’. This perspective tends to reinforce a monolithic concept of Islam, Islamic cultures, Muslims and Islamism, thereby ignoring ethnic, cultural, linguistic, historical and doctrinal differences among British Muslims (Meer, 2010). Furthermore, this representation of Islamophobia homogenises British Muslims as static and immutable with cultural absolutes, pushing aside the multi-layered and contested dimensions of Muslim identities (Redclift, 2013). Furthermore, this definition leaves little space to conceive a nuanced and more complicated exploration of Islamophobia in the lives of British Turkish Muslims in everyday scenarios. It is also important to remember that Turkey’s

and Turkish people's relationship with Islam is anything but monolithic (Göle, 2016) (discussed further in section 1.3.3). Therefore, a monolithic reading of Islamophobia which is merely predicated on issues tied up to, for instance, perceived 'Islamicness' such as veiling, cannot provide the differentiated and changing politics of exclusion and marginalisation in the case of British Turks. The result is that the relatively recent vicious vilification of Turks to safeguard the Brexit vote cannot be reduced to the 'irrational fear' towards Muslims, which is deemed unfounded.

Furthermore, Islam for Turks cannot be reduced to perceived Muslimness because of the Turkish republic's sharp break from the discourse of the Islamic way of life in 1923 (Göle, 1997). This explicit secular transformation has created and nurtured multiple and divergent voices concerning Islamic normativity in everyday life for most Turks, regardless of their whereabouts. Considering these issues, and potentially further that I cannot anticipate, this thesis draws upon a nuanced exploration of Islamophobia in the context of British Turks. This approach might allow me to explore the complex and thus far unanticipated manifestations of Islamophobia that might subtly distinguish among individual British Turks in a manner in which the stories are contextualised (Essed, 2008, p. 202). Reducing the understanding of Islamophobia to an unfounded hostility towards Islam and those perceivably Muslim not only racialises all Muslims as one without any internal differences but also fails to recognise Islamophobic incidents and sentiments which might appear in different ways for British Turks in everyday spaces in Britain (Allen, 2016; Meer, 2010; emphasis mine). As Goldberg (1993, p. 103) argued, an extensive set of conditions, often quite different from one another, provide the context (and substance) for a range of racisms. From here, we can similarly suggest that manifestations of Islamophobia as a form of racism cannot always be clearly demarcated and detected; instead, we must constantly explore exclusions embedded in new forms, renewing itself in different ways and for diverse purposes. In what follows, I elaborate on the conceptual

possibilities of how Islamophobia might manifest in the daily routine of British Turks. Thereafter, the literature of earlier scholars working on British Turks are briefly reviewed. Consequently, I locate the lived experiences of Islamophobia in the framework of ‘technologies of power’ as another means used by a few scholars to conceptualise and legitimise Islamophobia in today’s conjuncture.

## **2.5 ‘Technologies of Power’, Racialisation and British Turks**

While there are many definitions of ‘Islamophobia’, there is little research analysing how they function in the lives of Muslims in Britain. As discussed in the Methodology Chapter, this thesis draws from the Big Q approach to reflexive thematic analysis to explore how Islamophobia functions in the lives of British Turks. The idea behind the Big Q approach to thematic analysis is often equated with the study of subjectivity and lived experiences. It is concerned with exploring the truths of the respondents’ contextually situated experiences, perspectives and behaviours (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Concerning this epistemological lens, this thesis aims to explore the manifestations of Islamophobia in the context of British Turks’ distinct experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, this research seeks to contest the fixed and unitary view of Islamophobia as an ‘unfounded hostility to all Muslims’ or as a ‘phobia’, which often presents Islam as monolithic and includes Muslims without making distinctions in terms of the specific belief, background ideology, interpersonal/ social factors, or activity of individuals and subgroups (Mondon and Winter, 2020, p. 62). To date, scholarly discussions of Islamophobia have largely been oriented toward European and, since 9/11, North American contexts in which anti-Muslim views have been profoundly produced by non-whiteness or immigration. What, though, of Islamophobia against people who are not typically different from the majority population and do not constitute a distinct ethnic group? Islamophobia in

India, for instance, is not racialising Muslims based on their phenotypical features but on the basis of distinct clothing and family lineage (Sikka, 2022).

My aim, therefore, is not to assume that British Turks, as another Muslim minority, implacably and necessarily face Islamophobic hostility on account of their appearance as they are putatively white and the fact that wearing an Islamic headscarf is not required in Turkish Republic (see Chapter 1 for a fuller discussion). Neither am I attempting to essentialise Islamophobia as unidimensional and undifferentiated. I prefer to view Islamophobia as a form of contemporary racism, akin to the notion of ‘cultural racism’, which is ‘racism without races’, so it moves from biological to cultural difference and from a hierarchy of races to incompatibility of cultures (Modood, 2018; Mondon and Winter, 2020). Therefore, the literature suggests that Islamophobia can be as encompassing ‘cultural’ racism as ‘contemporary’ racism, contingent on blurry boundaries granted to ‘perceived’ Muslims. What needs to be unpacked here is that Islamophobia is not necessarily and solely confined to the features of ‘cultural’ racism. Even though Islamophobia as a ‘cultural’ racism constitutes a valuable tool of analysis, I prefer not to raise the issue of Islamophobia as a default to culture *per se*. Culture as a concept, at its best, is not an immutable, fixed being, and nor is the culture/s of British Turks.

The power of homogenising and racialising, most evidently Muslims in today’s securitised context, is far from inevitable in the UK context (Garner, 2012). ‘Muslim’ is neither a race nor a putative biological category in the way ‘black’ or ‘South Asian’ is (Modood, 2018, p. 2). Nevertheless, as Modood states, reducing Muslims to racialised identities is commonplace in the West because anti-Muslim prejudice is acute in today’s temporal framing in the same way Jews were racialised, albeit obviously a religious community but seen as a race, with horrific consequences (p. 4). Muslim respondents of Turkish descent can instrumentalise their putative

whiteness as a differentiating strategy to be associated with the white British majority. This view reminds us that a segment of Turks who fiercely defend secularism as one of the six principles of Kemalism, not necessarily the ones living in Britain, can engage with a Westernised identity underpinned by ‘European/ Western’ modes of life and can view themselves as white. Therefore, the notion of Islamophobia in the context of British Turks should consider several components of this type of racism by mapping the historical, national and cultural particularities of British Turks. Given what has been said above, contextualising Islamophobia as a form of ‘cultural or contemporary’ racism transcends biological racism without necessarily being unconscious of physical appearance or descent (ibid, p.2). One could conclude that this way of contextualising Islamophobia can grant a voice to the more nuanced and covert impacts that Islamophobia might have on individuals.

To reveal a fuller view of the role and the impacts of Islamophobia on British Turks, I explore the discourses through which British Turks can develop or recast their sense of identity and belonging. As discussed across the sections of this chapter, this way of framing identity and belonging can be seen as a legitimate basis for mediating Islamophobia or other forms of racism that British Turks may experience in the British context. No empirical study has so far attempted to demonstrate the intertwining of the macro (FBVs and Brexit discourse) and micro (routine Islamophobia, overt and covert) in the context of British Turks and to date, no empirical research has sought to interrogate the causal relation between Islamophobia, identity and belonging strategies that British Turks wittingly or unwittingly take on, making them a Muslim minority that has been poorly understood and scarcely researched in Britain.

Existing literature on British Turks in Britain mainly focuses on the first-generation Turks originating from Turkey and the Turkish part of Cyprus, with an emphasis on a historical detour about what triggered firstcomers from mainland Turkey and Cyprus (Sirkeci and Esipova,

2013), different methods of identification between families and British born Turks in diaspora, i.e., culture clash (Küçükcan, 2004), exploring the migratory background of the Turkish community in Britain in terms of identity formation and the concept of transnational space (Şimsek, 2012). Babacan's PhD thesis (2022) broadly revolves around Islamophobia, and its impact on the identities Turks in Britain develop. His research covered the experiences of both first- and second-generation Turks, and the fieldwork is limited to London.

My thesis draws from what Foucault called 'technologies of power' as a guideline to analyse Britain's political rationality that racialises Muslim communities into one, which I believe is essential in understanding Islamophobia as a contemporary form of racism in Britain. There is enough evidence that the Foucauldian perspective can help me conceptualise other forms of racisms interlinked with Islamophobia that have arbitrarily defined Muslim communities in the West as a unified, homogenous whole, as racialised 'outsiders' (Abbas, 2020; Garner and Selod, 2015; Kaya, 2011; Meer and Modood, 2011; Nabi, 2011). Foucault (1977) claimed that by modes of objectification, human beings are transformed into subjects. Objectivizing of the subject entails processes of marginalisation and endemic discrimination through necessary techniques and tools of power (sexuality, prisons and punishment, morality, unfavourable treatment of asylum seekers, vilifying Muslim societies etc) (Foucault, 1977, Magdalena, 2013). Looking at the period especially starting from 9/11, and the way Muslims, as subjects, have been objectified and homogenised as the 'unwanted' Other in Western 'civilisation' could help us recognise how power evolves and changes to shape us. By contrast, the Marxian approach to power relations is singularly concerned with economic forces, production and class interest as the sole technologies of power (Hall, 2001, p. 76). This thesis, therefore, draws from the Foucauldian approach to the mutating rationalities and tools of power, which constantly change and adapt to ever-changing contexts (Magdalena, 2013). Foucauldian perspective equally helps trace the construction of subjects and power and sheds light on the contemporary

societal and political engagements feeding the formation of racisms and racialisation of Muslims in the present conjuncture in Britain.

According to Meer and Modood (2011), ‘while racism in modern Europe took a biologicistic form, what is critical to the racialisation of a group is not the invocation of a biology but a radical ‘otherness’ and the perception and treatment of individuals in terms of not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences [...] and the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions’ (ibid, 134). The negative characterisations of Muslim minorities in the UK have positioned them as undesirables, and a risk to national security, among other things, which arguably justified dividing and racialising techniques of power. These, in return, have provided perspectives and paved the way for legislation imbricated on anti-immigration, xenophobia and depopulation. Essentially, they have legitimated the racialised discourses of Islamophobia (Abbas, 2020, p. 497). As these factors can be applied to British Turks as another Muslim minority group in the UK, I examine how they are perceived today in Britain and in what ways, if at all, they undergo racialisation processes as another Muslim community. In the following section, I address the literature on Fundamental British values, which have been ostensibly promoted in an ‘inclusive way’ (Yıldız, 2021), albeit another appropriate technical means to identify, control and discipline the ‘Muslim’ other. I explore how ‘British Values’ have materialised in another governing technology reinforcing the processes of the racialisation of Muslim communities within the context of British Turks.

## **2.6 Fundamental British Values as a Racialisation Tool**

In their study, Cohen and Tufail (2017) concluded that ‘to understand Islamophobia in the UK, the state’s relationship with Muslim communities must also be examined’ (p. 41). As was discussed in detail throughout the preceding section, following the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York in 2001 and the July 2007 bombings in London, ‘the clash of civilisations

debate has been called forth and revived by politicians and media in the UK to promote the racialisation of Muslims through stigmatising Islam and its adherents' (Lander, 2019, p. 2). It was partly the result of the July 7/7 bombings, the Ariana Grande bombing in Manchester and the murder of Lee Rigby, of which the perpetrators were Muslims born and raised in Britain. Following these incidents<sup>8</sup>, 'homegrown terrorist' entered political discourse, necessitating a new way of defining 'extremism'. The coalition government's June 2011 review of the Prevent strategy, 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). As pointed out in this section, it would seem that the conceptualisation of British values is constantly evolving and situational and related to changes in government, Prime Minister (PM), Brexit and so forth. Before entering educational discourses, the promotion of British values was aimed at preventing extremism and radicalisation (DfE, 2014b; DfE, 2014a). Before the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government in the summer of 2010, much of the Prevent funding for Muslim civil society organisations remained intact, tightly focused its agenda on 'homegrown violent Islamic extremism' (Kundnani, 2014, p. 77). Current conceptions of FBVs, however, are targeted at preventing non-violent extremism by actively promoting social cohesion in schools (DfE, 2015), deriving from the civic-nationalistic understanding of Britishness as representative of the fear that British values are being lost. Healy (2019) points out that if

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<sup>8</sup> This is not the definitive and sole reason behind the then and still holding definition of 'extremism' albeit first defined in 2011 Prevent strategy; there are several other incidents having led to this definition of 'extremism' lingering today. Amongst the causes behind this are: Young people from Britain travelling to Syria and Iraq to join Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) following the unsuccessful uprisings in Syria (2014), the so-called 'Trojan Horse' affair in Birmingham and Bradford schools (2014) Yıldız, Ü. (2021). An Anti-Racist reading of the notion of fundamental British values. *PRISM: Casting New Light on Learning, Theory and Practice* 3(2) 91-107.

‘social cohesion’ is indeed an aim of this policy, it could cause Muslim communities not to be ‘quite belonging’ or ‘suspect’ in some way.

In *Muslims are Coming!* Kundnani’s (2014) discussion of British values came as a government project to intervene in the cultural dynamics of ‘Muslim life’ to shore up alternatives to ‘Islamism’ legitimised as part of a counterterrorism strategy. Kundnani catalogued which ‘beliefs’<sup>9</sup> would count as indicators of ‘extremism’ (Kundnani, 2014, p. 158) to conceptualise what it is to ‘belong together’ under a shared national identity. Similarly, Healy (2018) examined the extent to which a shared national identity framework has been used in the context of a counter-terrorism strategy as an end goal to prevent extremism amongst Muslim youth. Both positionalities intersect and combine in the ways Muslim identity is viewed in the West *en masse*. At the Munich Security Conference in 2011, David Cameron postulated a similar argument: behind Muslim terrorism lay ‘a question of identity’; ‘the passive tolerance of recent years’ had to be abandoned in favour of a much more assertive defence of British values against ‘Islamic extremism’ (Kundnani, 2014, p. 39). Cameron’s speech, at its heart, refers to the necessary abandonment of ‘multiculturalism’ as the root cause of the worries about radicalisation and terrorism.

Multiculturalism, as I shall explore in the following chapters, arises out of the recognition and celebration of a variety of cultural forms and practices, particularly those of minority groups, which exist within the body of the nation (Hesse, 2000; Parekh, 1994; Seddon, 2010). Politically, it is inadequate, especially since 9/11 and 7/7 following, addressing concerns

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<sup>9</sup> Kundnani illustrates this by referring to Muslim youths choosing to leave the congregation of their parents’ mosque in favour of an attachment to one with a more globalised idea of Islam (also see Shiv Malik ‘My brother the bomber’ for the causes of 7/7 demonstrating younger Muslim generation using Islamism to reject the traditional practices of their parents)

around cultural division and the desire for social cohesion (Noble, 2009, p. 46). Multiculturalism in Britain was described as a ‘failure’ by then prime minister David Cameron, who claimed that multiculturalism encourages ‘different cultures’ to live ‘separate lives’ (Cameron, 2011). The doctrine of state multiculturalism was thereby discredited on political sides on the pretext of Islamophobic belligerence, and the global ‘war on terror’ has been built on the newly invented cultural homogeneity and British Values (Gilroy, 2004, p. 156, emphasis mine). This explains the main factors underlying the enactment of British values in favour of ‘community cohesion’ that emerged directly within Prevent (Government, 2011), bringing education within the realm of the counter-terrorism strategy to engender or, as some might argue, indoctrinate (minority ethnic) commitment to British values (Farrell and Lander, 2019; Maylor, 2016).

Farrell and Lander’s (2019) article ‘We are not British Values, are we?’ helps present the turning point in 2014 when FBVs came to assume greater prominence in education as the government responded to the ‘Trojan Horse’ affair (p. 466). Referring to a series of events in 2014-2015, the Trojan horse affair led to high-level investigations into the allegation that associated individuals attempted to introduce Islamist ethos in several schools in Birmingham, UK (Panjwani, 2016). Ultimately, this amounted to nothing but a hoax, but the state apparatus used the ‘Trojan Horse’ affair to justify the dominant narratives of extremism and radicalisation (Alam, 2022; Yıldız, 2021, p. 8). This marks a turning point stressing resilience and promotion of British values as the heart of preventing radicalisation, which has come to be termed ‘the securitisation of education’ (Revell and Bryan, 2018, p. 13), albeit with little clarity as to the precise boundaries of these terms.

Since 2014, educators in British schools must promote these British values, and Ofsted inspects their promotion. Drawing on and engaging with several bodies of literature, it has been a

difficult task for many educators to articulate and actively promote FBVs because they are broad, vague and rootless (Farrell, 2016; Healy, 2019; Lander, 2019; Panjwani, 2016; Pattison, 2020; Revell and Bryan, 2018; Yıldız, 2021). At the very least, part of the problem is that within the realm of identifying those as a threat to British values or the British way of life lies in fear of lacking national values and the desire for social cohesion (Smith, 2016b). This desire can potentially and inevitably end up privileging the value systems of a particular nation or geographical/cultural body; thus, the dominant group's values inevitably take precedence (Healy, 2016, p. 431). As Panjwani (2016) put it, the differing values of ethnocultural communities are imagined to be contained in the subversive problems of 'minorities', including terrorism and radicalisation. This appears to underpin the notion of 'incompatibility' between 'West' and British Turkish Muslims in this context as a reference point, against which 'common' values propagate the superiority of white and British are persistently reproduced.

Bringing education within the realm of counter-terrorism strategy, the conditions under which FBVs emerged constructed Muslims and Islam as a security threat. This indicated that the promotion of British values, the Prevent agenda, and the use of Ofsted to monitor these are having the effect of closing down spaces for the freedom of expression. This is, of course, contradictory to the values promoting individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This argument also mediates how non-unitary subjects, such as young British Turks born into Muslim parents, navigate the fusion of Turkish-Muslimness when surrounded by policies around extremism and radicalisation linking schools and classrooms to policing (Panjwani, 2016). The question then naturally arises as to how much the distinctive values passed down to British-born Turkish subjects can potentially clash with the values designated as 'British' in educational settings. Arguably, as Maylor suggests, the educator's tendency to downplay/ marginalise minority ethnic cultures/values is likely to occur where there is a lack of emphasis in the curriculum on including and recognising diverse

cultures/ values, despite being citizens, subjects of ethnic communities can feel excluded from the nation-state (2016, p. 46).

Turks and Muslims becoming understandably fearful of exercising their rights to the freedom of expression can be potentially detrimental to their agency (Rights Watch UK 2016, p. 4) and belonging in Britain. One of the critical questions of this thesis is to determine the extent to which Islamophobia and its associations, namely FBVs, enshrined in Prevent strategy, operate in the day-to-day lives of British Turks. Therefore, two interlinked open questions about the impact of the discourses around the (in)compatibility between the hegemonic narrative identified in British values and the values of ‘Others’ remain. First, the debates around British Values as a part of the definition of extremism in the Prevent strategy *with a specific focus on a Muslim minority* remain limited and insufficiently explored. Finlay Green (2017) has made a seminal contribution focusing on the British Bangladeshi Muslims and their understanding of and connections with British values and identity. Also, several authors, including Ajmal Hussain and Nasar Meer, have documented fundamental British values and Muslim identity in public (2018). However, no prior studies have examined the experiences of British Turkish Muslims and their understanding of Fundamental British values. To fill this literature gap, this thesis addresses the subtle manifestations of the implementation of British values on British-born Turkish Muslims. All in all, fears deriving from challenging British values or following their own ethnic and religious values in the educational setting can create an atmosphere conducive to exclusion and ensuing racialisation. In what follows, I elaborate on various notions of ‘lived’ Islam from the literature on Turks in Britain.

## **2.7 Islam-as-Practiced: Belonging Practices of British Turks**

Non-native individuals in the host society negotiate their feeling of spatial belonging based on how much their differences in identity, morality, tradition, culture and religion are

accommodated in their socialisation process. The majority of British Turks are Muslim; hence, for instance, an Islamic headscarf can make devout female Turks feel under the contemptuous gaze of a passer-by or, to a lesser extent, urge them to restrict their behavioural codes in the public sphere in Britain (Sametoğlu, 2015, p. 148). Therefore, I argue that in understanding the main parameters and determinants of Islamophobia in the lives of British Turks, one should inevitably investigate the literature that deals with ‘everyday Islam’ or ‘lived Islam’ in the context of British Turks. Making sense of how British Turkish Muslims ‘live’ Islam, where they ‘place’ it in the host country, as well as what exclusive ‘sources’ they turn to in figuring out what ‘Islam’ represents to them is vital to understand the diverse strategies and multiple modes of belonging that British Turks might develop for acceptance and belonging in Britain.

There is abundant literature that describes everyday lived Islam in Western countries with large Muslim populations, including the United Kingdom, Holland, France, Germany and Canada (Eade, 1994; Göle, 2017; Jeldtoft, 2011; Kapinga and van Hoven, 2021; Toğuşlu, 2015; Toğuşlu and Leman). These scholars consider ‘everyday practices of Muslims’ and ‘everyday Islam’ to bring back the agency of ordinary Muslims, who constantly interact with non-Muslims and are engaged continuously in liberal settings. That is to say, the authors above argue that Muslims navigate and negotiate their sense of ‘being Muslim’ through interaction, cooperation and negotiation in various everyday places across a range of social contexts (Kapinga and van Hoven, 2021). In other words, even though ‘Islam serves as a guideline and a set of actions for Muslims’, Muslims are not a fixed group, and there are plural meanings of Islam in daily life, constantly shifting and dependent upon the ‘subjective value-judgments’ (Modood and Ahmad, 2007). This is what ‘lived’ Islam as a concept is about (El-Bachouti, 2017, p. 107; Toğuşlu, 2015). Experiences of lived religion and what Islam means for Muslims and non-Muslims in the ‘West’ are equally important. They cannot be detached from the anti-Islamic sentiments and Islamophobia today. Only two studies briefly touch upon the everyday

experiences of Turks in Britain regarding Islam, and only one mentions the narrative of Islamophobia.

Firstly, building on the everyday religion amongst Turkish Muslims living in the Northwest of England, Coştu (2022) looked into mixed-married Turkish migrants' experience of 'pet practices' with a further discussion of Islamic views on dogs. It addresses the opposing views of dogs in Muslim society and indicates that religion crosses borders and is constantly reproduced in the new context. It also shows that 'by banning dogs from certain places which Turkish-speaking migrants locate them as a prayer room, a dog-free room', lived Islam is renegotiated for later generations through 'space-making practices' (Coştu, 2022). In the second study, Cilingir (2010) demonstrates different interpretations of Islam, whose boundaries are continuously shifting. In other words, everyday Islam's meanings are multifaceted, adapted to new situations, and shaped by subjective interpretations, different identities and normativity, and various events and local places. According to Çilingir (2010), albeit critical of Islamophobia, Turkish Sunni Muslims do not mobilise around a global *ummah* consciousness or a British Muslim identity at an organisational level (p. 116). She also argued that Sunni Turks have become self-conscious about their neutrality and invisibility on account of their physical appearance and putative whiteness as a privileged vantage point in British society and are content with their anonymity in Britain. British Turks' self-conscious adoption of anonymity substantiates the wide-ranging racialisation of Muslim bodies based on dress behaviour, skin colour, and religious practice in the UK (Allen, 2005, p. 56). Notwithstanding that physical appearance is one marker, as Çilingir puts it, 'Sunni Turks equally take pride in the acknowledgement by the British state that there are no Turkish Muslim extremists' (p. 117).

One of the primary purposes of this section is to demonstrate that, although South Asian groups predominantly represent Islam in Britain, essentialising Islam and arguing that South Asians

are fully representative of how Islam is ‘lived’ in Britain is erroneous. Islam is pan-ethnic, and various Muslim communities in Britain have many differences: national, political, ethnic, and socio-cultural (Abbas, 2005; Peach, 2005). Looking into the evolution of lived Islam in the Turkish context, as a result of the fall of the Ottomans, Turkey became a secular republic. Secularism has manifested in Turkey for over a hundred years, not only in the discourse of state power and army but also in the medium of excessive expression (mystical and religious) in public life (Navaro-Yashin, 2020, p. 203). The Turkish way of secularism was also incarnated in European clothing habits (Göle, 2015, p. 89) (taking off the veil but also banning the fez- traditional headgear for men), which I have covered in the previous chapter. Because of the long-ingrained secular politics in Turkey mentioned above, the Islamic identity of a Turk is not necessarily reflected through their clothing preferences (except for those female Turks who wear a veil). Considering that present-day Islamophobia targets the physical markers of ‘Muslimness’, enjoying the invisibility and anonymity of one’s religiosity in public life in the UK can largely be taken for granted for British Turks and implicitly interpreted by them as a way of belonging to a modern, western, liberal country like Britain.

The ways mentioned above that detail how British Turks presumably and arguably negotiate Islam in public life are not precise and exhaustive and are based only on the literature review. A scant body of literature exists on British Turks’ experience of Islam in the British context; therefore, this highlighted a considerable gap in existing research on Islam-as-practiced and to what extent it impacts the belonging practices of Turks in the face of Islamophobia. Therefore, many questions remained unexplored, so I believe it is vital to address the gaps and shortcomings in the literature on the particular ways British Turks live or negotiate Islam in the context of their everyday lives. Turkish-speaking communities, despite being relatively small in size, are highly visible in certain locales, including Stoke Newington and other areas of inner North London (Enneli, Modood et al., 2005). One could argue that the super diverse

character of cities and the local contexts that British Turks occupy can be accommodated as one of the main strategies that British Turks might be clinging onto in the current Islamophobic climate to belong with mainstream society and to resist Islamophobia. British Turks' distinctive experiences of lived Islam with a focus on their everyday lived perspectives help me tease out the remarkable narratives developed in the salience of Islamophobia. Furthermore, understanding more about how British Turks negotiate and renegotiate Islam, whether they downplay Islam in everyday life to take refuge from Islamophobia, helps understand my respondents' belonging strategies to fit into mainstream British society.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter served two purposes. The first was to review the existing literature relating to this research. The second purpose was to identify a relevant conceptual framework on identity and Islamophobia as useful benchmarks when looking at the identities of my British Turkish respondents and the manifestations and impacts of Islamophobia in their lives in the qualitative interviews. Then, I discussed a clustering of concepts, including whiteness, racialisation, lived religion and technologies of power, which might be further developed through this empirical research.

I have shown that there are several different ways of conceptualising identity and defining it. I have acknowledged identity as a blurred concept and, from early on, distinguished what approach I would adopt for this specific research. I opted for social and cultural understandings to define identity and study it in the context of British Turks. The social and cultural view of identity in the context of British Turks helped to fill in the broader literature gap on the identity formation of Turkish-speaking groups in Britain. This view also provided guidance in order to recognise the underlying dynamics of change in identity. I showed that this was for two reasons: the first is the apparent lack of literature depicting the identity formation process of

British Turks as dynamic, diverse and contradictory, changing in interaction with historical time and social space (Smith, 2016a). The second is that the processes involved in the identity formation of British Turks are not conceptualised purely concerning agendas of identity/ies, but developed within the debates questioning any aspects that make up Muslim identity in Britain.

To grasp the social and cultural conception of identity as being a site of struggle, I looked at the different constructions of ‘whiteness’ simultaneously but variably used in Britain and Turkey to negotiate the constant and ever-changing power dynamics, which culminated in the discourses against British Muslims who do not ‘deserve’ to be white in the British context. To grasp what Islamophobia evokes for British Turks, I felt it was worthwhile to understand the Rushdie Affair within its broader terms dictating the degree to which Muslim identity was politicised in 1988, which still resonates today. As my primary sample is composed of second-generation British Turks or ones who emigrated to Britain far later than the Rushdie Affair, examining 9/11 and 7/7 is what might constitute the main factors for British Turks when determining the impacts of Islamophobia in their everyday lives. Hence, any differentiation one might observe in the ways Islamophobia/s are drawn upon is itself tied to the interplay between the social, cultural, and political characteristics of the Muslim community. One of those complexities, or means of controlling or disciplining the Muslim ‘Other’, is racialisation. I discussed in detail how I reconceptualised racialisation within the context of British Turks embedded in Foucault’s notion of ‘technologies of power’. Understanding the interplay between Islamophobia and racialisation in the legitimate political realm, for instance, in the rationalisation of Fundamental British Values, helps establish the recursively experienced forms of racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia and their manifestations in the everyday lives of British Turks. In the final section of this chapter, I brought forward the Turkish Islam and secularism debate as highly charged concepts for Turks to which potential research respondents

could react in a contradictory manner. These considerations, which are overlooked or obscured in the literature on Islamophobia, could offer invaluable guidance to pinpoint the feelings and reactions of British Turks towards Islamophobia. Thereby, recognising the concepts embedded in this research is also an essential contribution to research methodologies: this requires a qualitative method to research the narratives of British Turks in depth as knowledge producers in this thesis.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research methods used to discover the manifestations and impacts of Islamophobia in the lives of British Turks and is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the reasons behind opting for qualitative methods to provide data for this research, rather than a quantitative approach for addressing the overall research aims. In the second part of the chapter, I highlight the ontological and epistemological scaffolding of the thesis. At this point, philosophical assumptions behind the method selected for this research are uncovered with a discussion of how relevant and meaningful the data generated via semi-structured interviews are. This section concludes with holistic insights guiding the reader through my theoretical framework and intended contribution to knowledge. The final section discusses a range of considerations in relation to collecting qualitative data, including my positionality, access, choice of fieldwork location, participation sampling and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 British Turks to understand their insights, experiences and perceptions of Islamophobia in the British context. Similarly, qualitative interviews gave me an opportunity to tease out British Turks' thoughts and approaches to belonging and identity embedded within the reality of Islamophobia and other sorts of discrimination. The purpose of this study is to critically explore the 'lived experiences' of Muslim British Turks. Therefore, the information accrued in each interview added to the overall understanding of the manifestations of Islamophobia emanating and drawing from British Turks' everyday lives.

Put simply, qualitative research is a non-statistical form of social enquiry focused on people's interpretations of their experiences of the world in which they live (Howell, 2012; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Conversely, quantitative research involves the use of methodological techniques that regard the human experience in numerical categories, sometimes referred to as statistics, and is based on validation and falsification (Marvasti, 2004). The approach taken is determined by what counts as knowledge and what philosophical issues are salient when designing the study. This research co-opts a qualitative methodological position, driven by semi-structured in-depth interviews to find answers to four interrelated research questions:

- i. What are the cultural identities which are adopted by British Turks in the UK? How are these identities formed?
- ii. How does Islamophobia manifest in the daily lives of British Turks?
- iii. To what degree, if at all, has this reinforced a sense of exclusion amongst British Turks in the UK?
- iv. What are the other factors that mediate the difference and belonging strategies of British Turks? And to what extent can these factors be associated with Islamophobia?

These research questions required the discussion of sensitive issues and in-depth descriptions, such as encountered traumatic or devastating events or challenges which are not always easily verbalised. Opting for a qualitative approach to extract themes from the in-depth interviews helped me document the implicit and explicit manifestations of forms of racism, including Islamophobia, as well as negative and positive community attitudes against British Turks. In the remainder of this section, I focus on the main rationale for choosing semi-structured in-depth interviews. Following that, I discuss my ontological and epistemological position underpinning the individual narratives which helped me tease out the manifestations and impacts of Islamophobia in the lives of British Turks. Finally, I highlight why thematic analysis is a common qualitative method, and suitable for analysing my findings.

### **3.3 Data collection: Semi-structured in-depth interviews**

This section frames why I decided to use semi-structured in-depth interviews to find answers to my research questions. Semi-structured interviews use fixed questions, which may be adapted during the interview for various reasons (Howell, 2012). When discussing Islamophobia, its perceived sensitivity akin to other forms of racism, poverty, violence, and crime impaired the sequence of interview questions for most of my respondents during the interviews. At times, I stopped the interviews and shared my personal experiences of being a foreigner (and not living in a very multicultural city in England) to express my sympathy. Therefore, employing semi-structured interviews enabled me the flexibility to make on-the-spot decisions about the content and sequence of the interview as it progressed (Mason, 2017). Apart from the complexity of Islamophobia as a concept itself, several other issues, including one's identity/ies, family life, belonging practices, recreational activities, membership to certain associations and so forth, were not easy to capture without the dialogical aspect of semi-structured interviewing. According to this perspective, meanings and understandings connected to the intimate sphere of an individual and social life are best excavated with a flexible structure rather than a formal question-and-answer format. By using semi-structured interviews, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) claim the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible, such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes.

Qualitative interviews are categorised in a variety of ways, including: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Robson (1993) notes that in-depth semi-structured interviews are flexible and therefore allow researchers to obtain rich and illuminating data by conducting them face-to-face, where the interviewer can respond to non-visual cues as well as elaborate or modify their questions without straying too far from the topic of study (cited in Richards, 2019). I embarked on this research to make sense of British Turks' discussions of Islamophobia

and what sorts of cultural identities they developed in the British context, thus filling gaps and uncertainty surrounding Islamophobia in the literature. Semi-structured interviews gave me the privilege to navigate the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing more leeway for following up on whatever angles were deemed important by my respondents. I accordingly had a greater chance of becoming visible in the knowledge-producing process itself (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) - which I discuss in detail in the following sections. In becoming visible and openly stating my positionality as a Turkish researcher and a foreigner in Britain, I tried to provide a foundation by finding a balance between engaging with the diversity of viewpoints and distancing myself from the various experiences and views in relation to Islamophobia, Turkish secularism, religiosity, and memberships to several community organisations. As someone occupying a minority status both in the UK and in the country of my birth, I acknowledge that my positionality as a Turkish Alevi researcher helped me better understand and negotiate the many ways my respondents cope with the complexity of their lives and resist and combat ethnic discrimination and Islamophobia. In the following section, I outline the epistemology and ontology that informed the research design of this thesis and address the issues that are linked to wider disciplines and knowledge.

### **3.4 Epistemology and Ontology**

This section outlines the epistemological and ontological considerations that ground the various motives and meanings behind this project. In essence, epistemology refers to how we know what we know, and how we create knowledge. It is generally characterised by a division between two competing schools of thought: rationalism and empiricism (Markie, 2004). This study is designed to collect data from individuals holding different values, morals and lifestyles, with the only common ground being that they are of Turkish origin and living in Britain. Considering the nature of the research questions formulated to extract subjectively

constructed meaning, my epistemological standpoint is not built around *a priori* knowledge drawn on the doctrines of rationalist school but instead constructed through the interplay between the subject and the object in a sense to which subjects construct 'reality'. In this respect, social constructionist epistemology is deployed in this thesis to apprehend the less deterministic, more conjunctural way of understanding the main concepts such as 'Islamophobia, identify and belonging' (Hall and Du Gay, 1996a). Ontology is concerned with 'what is', with the structure of existence, and with the structure of 'reality' like parts of a tree or components of ethics (Crotty, 1998). For this thesis, knowledge and themes were drawn from the subjective narratives of British Turks hence, my ontological standpoint is lodged at the heart of differentiated experiences of the agents of this project, which according to Baccarini et al., (2007) refers to a relativist ontology.

The theoretical stance of this study is based on multiple perspectives (or 'realities') and context-boundedness of the findings, therefore, opposed to the positivist paradigm of objectivity defining reality as a single truth. This study assumes a relativist ontology, based on the philosophy that reality is constructed within the human mind such that no one 'true' reality exists, and a subjectivist epistemology where knower and respondent co-create understandings. In this regard, terms like credibility, transferability, reflexivity and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Social constructionist epistemology adopted in this research has the intention of understanding 'the world of human experience' (Cohen and Manion, 2013), suggesting that 'reality is socially constructed' (Martens, 2005). In this respect, the constructionist researcher is most likely to rely on qualitative data collection methods (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). As Blaikie (2000) notes, everyday reality consists of meanings and interpretations given by the social actors to their actions, other people's actions, social situations, and natural and humanly created objects. Thus, knowledge is never *a-priori* or assumed but inflected under concrete

historical and spatial conditions (Hall and Du Gay, 1996a). In other words, epistemology helps researchers understand how to generate knowledge and explanations about ontological components of the social world, be they social processes, social actions, discourses and meanings (Mason, 2017). Additionally, it is the research questions that guide researchers through whatever ontological and epistemological stances they should take. The ways of knowing, under the social constructionist paradigm, are constituted in a sense that meaning is not imposed and the nature of knowledge is not grounded *a priori*.

What we call data in this study unfolds the individual experiences of British Turks, where the reality is reconstructed by them. Existing literature on Islamophobia and its impacts on British Muslims has neglected the case of bicultural Turks living in Britain. Therefore, when interpreting how British Turks relate to Islamophobia and other sorts of discrimination in Britain in a socially constructed way, the themes identified provided a detailed account of the identity and belonging of British Turks constructed in response to the negative repercussions of anti-Muslim and at times, anti-Turkish narratives including Brexit discourse. Consequently, this research's original contribution to Islamophobia literature based on the individual narratives of 30 British Turks is, in essence, underpinned by the tools of relativist ontology and socially constructed epistemology. The following section will present the scientific endeavour, positionality, and the role of the researcher's personal history as critical features of the research process.

### **3.5 Researcher's Positionality**

There are only a few empirical studies solely focusing on the first-hand experience of the Turkish diaspora in Britain (Babacan, 2022; Enneli, Modood et al., 2005; Faas, Küçükcan et al., 2009; Şimsek, 2012) despite the community's rich and diverse histories of migration to Britain. This thesis takes a step to demonstrate the manifestations and impacts of Islamophobia

in the lives of Turkish speaking community through the repeated overtures of overt and covert Islamophobic or racist attacks and through narratives underlining the identity and belonging strategies developed situationally. By filling these gaps and uncertainties in the literature, this thesis presents a snapshot of the everyday lives of British Turks, who were either born in Britain or emigrated to Britain at a very early age. This section focuses on the researcher's stance/position in relation to the wider social, political and cultural context of this research, as well as my rationale behind embarking upon exploring the everyday lives of British Turks with reference to religious and political underpinnings, as someone with no nationalistic values and traditional/ Islamic sensibilities.

I questioned if I should mention that I do not have a strong Islamic background or nationalistic upbringing when scrutinising my interactions with participants. Once I started my fieldwork, I realised these concerns were not reasonable, given that I was a minority back in Turkey and my respondents were a minority in Britain, and we both suffered discrimination in a different sense. Therefore, I needed to adopt a reflexive attitude to be able to address my findings in a mode of continuous self-analysis and religio-cultural awareness (Hertz, 1997). I realised that this was my journey into unfamiliar territory...[which] taught me to recognise ambivalence, and encouraged me to acknowledge different points of view, and thereby stimulated awareness of potential freedoms (Melucci, 1989, pp. 13-14). Indeed, systematically analysing the generated data based on the multiple points of view of my research respondents was not straightforward, and the reflexive gazing of the researcher in the actual delivery of analysis is what makes a qualitative difference (Alvesson, Sandberg et al., 2022).

As a Turkish and Alevi researcher investigating Islamophobia against British Turks in the Western context, my positionality and researcher biography is critical to acknowledge and closely related to subjectivist features. Therefore, I was able to resonate with the tensions and

diverse possible positionings my respondents adopted during their interviews. Nobody wishes to be treated unequally, with the dominant group's social and cultural norms imposed on them. Some of us face inequalities and get to grips with them by pointing to the areas we feel most marginalised. Others do not explicitly reason out the wretched reality of unwanted status and wittingly or unwittingly resist the truth. Acknowledging my own marginalised social position because of my ethnicity and religion in my country of origin required me to approach the individual narratives of each respondent and interpret my findings reflexively rather than following a linear process. This was primarily driven forward through my ontological and epistemological positions, unveiling knowledge only in relation to the context in which it appears.

As I noted in Chapter 1, this study was research-driven with no embedded political-ideological backgrounds. Therefore, when I decided to take on the research about British Turks and the manifestations of Islamophobia in their daily lives, I had not taken into account the many things that would continuously change and develop during my doctoral journey, one example being my positionality as a researcher. Reflecting on my own biography and secular, prejudiced upbringing within the context of the critical interpretation of findings, I had a chance to reflexively interrogate my personal history and standpoints against how marginalisation and exclusion in a given society work. Reflexivity has many meanings, but here is concerned with the critical reflection on research, both as a process and as practice, on one's role as a researcher, and on one's relation to knowledge (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 9) incorporate reflexivity as a skill that makes up a qualitative sensibility. They claim that:

[Reflexivity as a qualitative sensibility] is the ability to reflect on, and step outside your cultural membership, to become a cultural commentator- so that you can see and question, the shared

values and assumptions that make up being a member of a particular society- this involves identifying your own assumptions, and then putting them aside so that your research is not automatically shaped by these.

In confronting my previous biases against mainstream Sunni Islam on the one hand, and growing sympathy for the negative experiences of British Turks, I continuously scrutinised how I made sense of a piece of data, in addition to questioning the plausibility and consistency of my analysis with an ongoing scepticism to my ingrained concepts (Benton and Craib, 2010). Thus, the themes that were identified and the codes analysed were all involved in an iterative process of constructing discussions, arguments and explanations. We should therefore recognise that taking an ‘unreflexive stance’ in an attempt to reach neutrality and objectivity is less plausible and holistic, considering that the researcher is not likely to be excluded entirely from the social world under investigation. In what follows, I discuss how research participants were accessed.

### **3.6 Access and Rapport**

From the onset of the fieldwork, I continuously asked myself why potential respondents should agree to take part in this project and considered what might deter them from agreeing. In order to successfully recruit participants, fears have to be allayed, cooperation must be made easy for the respondents, and good relations must be maintained (Pickering, 2008). Considering my previous fieldwork experience for my MA thesis, I was confident that negotiating access with Turkish respondents could not be difficult, especially considering the fact that we share a common heritage. As this research was proposed in order to allow the individual voices of my respondents to be heard, the overarching goal of discussing the crisis or social disorders, including Islamophobia, was intended to occur naturally. However, things did not turn out the way I expected. As discussed in further detail in the analysis chapters, research designed to

investigate Islamophobia did not attract British Turks politically and effectively. For some potential respondents, discussing Islamophobia was socially and politically charged, as it spells out the unwanted status of ‘Muslims’ in the West. For others, recounting what was experienced by probing below the surface with deeper levels of sensitivity repelled them viscerally from talking about Islamophobia. In a similar vein, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted future plans and forced me to collect data and communicate with my respondents online. Paradoxically, conducting online interviews slightly assuaged the above-mentioned emotional impacts and further constraints that would have otherwise compounded the access to the target group, who appeared to embody sensitivity and resistance to what was going on, especially for some respondents with Alevi background that acted like they had no idea what Islamophobia is.

On the face of it, the Covid-19 pandemic seemed like the biggest deterring impact on face-to-face meetings, hence the change of plans, but it doubtlessly made my respondents much more comfortable using online video technology. Interviews conducted from the comfort of one’s home eliminated environmental and logistical factors, such as geographical location and the feeling of uneasiness due to meeting someone unknown outside the participant’s comfort zone to talk about a sensitive topic (like Islamophobia). As I got on with conducting interviews online, I realised that compared to my previous fieldwork experience in the Netherlands, where I conducted my interviews face to face, building rapport through virtual meetings happened to be far easier. Moreover, my respondents seemed to let their guard down in front of the computer and felt comfortable over the course of the interview.

Reaching out to respondents who are willing to partake in a qualitative study where they share personal life experiences requires the researcher to provide as much information about the research as possible. Through my ethics form, I made it clear that the collected data would not be shared with third parties and that pseudonyms rather than real names were to be used in my

thesis. Also, a summary of the research proposal was attached to the ethics form to provide enough information. It was only after my participants got acquainted with the research that I asked their opinion as to whether they were still willing to take part. Most of my respondents were accessed through social media, where I broadly mentioned what I was investigating and to whom I needed to talk. I reached quite a few participants through Twitter and some through Facebook, especially via Turkish Community groups, which were categorised according to geographical location (e.g., Turkish Community in London, Enfield Alevi Cultural Association, Liverpool Turkish Society etc.). For this research, the Covid-19 pandemic proved that social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, have shaped a new landscape that challenges traditional in-person face-to-face data-gathering (Flick, 2022). The use of social media as a research recruitment tool enabled me to reach out to wider segments of the population that may have otherwise been inaccessible through solely personal contact and gatekeepers (Gelinas, Pierce et al., 2017). The following section will present the sampling approach for this research.

### **3.7 Sampling Methods**

The sampling strategies for this qualitative research were based on two criteria: self-identified ‘Turks’ whose parents originate from mainland Turkey and period of residency. The narratives of this research are based on thirty second-generation British Turks aged between 18 to 55. Multiple interviews were conducted with 16 female and 14 male participants, and all of whom, except one (by choice), had British citizenship either from birth or by naturalisation. The core aim was to recruit individuals whose parents grew up within the borders of Turkey, who were bilingual and have lived most of their lives in Britain. The term ‘British Turks’ in this research refers to those who identify 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 or religion (Islam). In other words, Turkishness as a cultural, civic and national identity is not necessarily defined in reference to Turkish descent or Islam. This means that, for instance, a ‘racially’ Kurdish individual whose parents arrived from Turkey might identify themselves with Turkishness as their civic and/or national identity; likewise, a Turk who defines themselves with ethnic lines might identify themselves as being non-Muslim or non-Sunni Muslim. For instance, Mert identified himself as British Turkish, despite the fact that he and his family are originally from the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey and speak Zaza, a dialect of Kurdish. Emre Can identified himself with Alevism, which is situated at the periphery of ‘normative’ (Sunni/Hanafi) Islam, but he did not associate himself with the religious connotations of Alevism. This study, therefore, set out to include all individuals that called themselves British Turks.

As previously addressed, British Turks from across England and Wales were recruited for this project. The empirical data was obtained from 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews, starting from October 2020 until March 2021. These interviews were collected by video calls, with a few being face-to-face. I had piloted my interview questions with my friends and family members before formally setting out to conduct fieldwork. By doing so, I ensured that the interview questions stimulated conversation and were wide in scope concerning complex issues which could be discussed freely. Each interview started with warm-up questions, which were informal for the sake of introducing ourselves and feeling comfortable prior to the interview. My intention was to build rapport with my respondents, as we had not met before the interview (except for the initial contact through WhatsApp or email to seek their ethics approval retrospectively). Respondents were sent an information sheet and a consent form (Appendix A) combined in one. Respondents were selected through snowball sampling and gatekeepers, as I was not focused on respondents as a representative sample of the wider Turkish diaspora.

Rather, I was looking for diverse narratives of British Turks and their experiences of Islamophobia.

	London	Yorkshire	East Midlands	West Midlands	North-west	South-east	East of England	Wales
Male (12)	8	1	0	0	2	0	0	1
Female (18)	9	3	1	1	2	1	1	0

Table 2: The number of research participants by area

The sampling strategy for semi-structured interviews relied on the common techniques of Snowball and friendship sampling after the initial connections were set through social media tools. The most common form of snowball sampling is where the researcher asks interviewed respondents if they know anyone else who might want to take part (Patton, 2002). As my research was not based on a particular case or a specific experience which is uncommon or private, snowball sampling was quite effective in ensuring that range and diversity were included in my sample. In order to tease out different narratives and experiences of British Turks living across a number of different cities, the locations of my respondents were not limited to a single city or setting. Additionally, acknowledging the fact that the number of Turkish-speaking individuals living in Britain is fairly limited, identifying British Turks who were either born in the UK or emigrated before the age of 10 would have been even more difficult if the location of fieldwork was narrowly defined. Furthermore, this research was inspired by my MA research which was conducted in a small village in the Netherlands, which made me realise that it is significant to hear voices from many locations of different scales. In this regard, I recruited my respondents via snowball sampling to make my sampling frame as far-reaching as possible.

### **3.8 Choice of Location**

As mentioned in section 3.5, from its inception, the research was not limited to a specific location, as opposed to previous research documenting the Turkish community living in London (Babacan, 2022; Şimsek, 2012). Considering the originality of this thesis, as well as the literature gap concerning Turkish communities outside of London, I presented a discussion of Islamophobia through distinctive narratives of British Turks who live in a range of cities rather than limiting my focus to a single geographical context. Having said that, demographics or distinct characteristics of cities are not the focus: it is the micro-scale experiences and relationships that British Turks engage with through these locations that I focused on.

Though widening the scope of location was not a comparative dimension, adopting a multi-sited framework added an extra dimension while analysing and interpreting the data. Another reason to widen the scope of locations for interviews is the limited number of British Turks/Turks who are bilingual and moved to Britain before the age of 10. As a consequence, rather than concentrating on geography, I decided to focus on the context-bound nature of knowledge: how verbal texts collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews generate data and an interest in the phenomena being investigated (see Johnson, 1997; Schofield, 1993) as long as the sampling criteria is fixed. Conducting research with respondents from multiple cities and locations helped me gain knowledge in relation to the impact of diversity; for instance, London being a multicultural city has a positive impact on British Turks' negotiations of Islamophobia and belonging practices. With the help of tools such as Google Maps, I had a chance to visualise where my respondents were located. Below is the overview of respondent locations designated through Google Maps:



Figure 1: Locations of my respondents shown by Google Maps

As this is data-driven inductive research, I could not anticipate what would be important during the data collection and analysis. For example, I could not predict how interviewing respondents from diverse cities and locations would influence respondent reactions, feelings, and findings. Considering the gap between previous data, which mainly focused on the Turkish diaspora from London, I took into account those who live in diverse cities and suburbs besides London. I believed that including respondents from diverse localities and having a diverse sample would result in accommodating narratives and views that might otherwise have been overlooked in the discussions of Islamophobia in the British context. The next section addresses the ethical framework which guided my data collection.

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

This section outlines the ethical standpoint essential to this project due to human participants being the primary source of this research. I followed the University of York's ethical

considerations ranging from the questions of anonymity of the informants, consent, and resolving the concerns relevant to the authenticity of my research in line with my academic credibility and accountability. While the research questions and concepts addressed in this research could be considered to be sensitive (religion, politics, attitudes towards an Alevi respondent investigating Islamophobia etc.), none of my respondents became distressed or withdrew from the interview. In one case, my accessibility to the Alevi community was disconnected because of an Alevi gatekeeper who considered me an outsider due to the theme of my research, e.g., an Alevi investigating Islamophobia. I informed all gatekeepers in advance of negotiating access, as well as people with whom I regularly interacted in my role as a researcher, as to what my research entailed before gaining consent regarding their help with accessing the target respondents (Harrison, 2020). Essentially, I defined the aims of this research in an overt fashion to my gatekeepers, as I did not have any previous acquaintance or contact with my potential respondents. This meant that being clear about the purpose of the research and the researcher's accountability for obtaining the consent of the respondents was crucial. This is known as 'obtaining informed consent' (Marvasti, 2004). Ethical considerations range from providing a short abstract of the research to the consent form, information about anonymisation, privacy and confidentiality, and a commitment to collecting and presenting reliable and valid empirical materials included on the participant information sheet (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Harrison, 2020). I provided as much information as necessary, including the aims of my research, the process for guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality, and detailed information about my research. I also reassured my respondents at the beginning of the interviews that they could withdraw at any point should they experience discomfort or get overwhelmed during the course of the interview.

Given the role I adopted as a researcher, I preferred to operate overtly, and found it necessary to share with my respondents the characteristics of my research. This included what I was

looking for in order to correctly obtain informed consent. No concerns or questions remained unanswered; I resolved prior ‘hunches’ about me, including why I conducted research on Islamophobia with ‘them’ and why not with South Asians or black Muslims. Being transparent from the beginning and having a warm, friendly manner put people at ease and helped me establish ‘rapport’ and trust (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Similarly, reassuring all of my participants verbally about confidentiality, given that pseudonyms rather than real names are used, was significant even though informed consent was obtained before the interviews. All interviews were conducted in English, with the exception of the first couple. All of my respondents spoke English as their first language, but when I started the interview in Turkish, I realised they responded well to it. I decided to ask the rest of my respondents about their language preferences for the interview, and they all preferred to conduct interviews in English because they thought they expressed themselves better.

Additionally, I reminded my respondents from the beginning that I would assign a pseudonym, and no personal information other than their actual age and locations would be exposed within the work. For some respondents, I assigned an appropriate pseudonym to preserve the quote's main idea (once the quote specified a particular case concerning the respondent's name). In those instances, I changed the respondents' occupations under the quotes to protect their real identities. The final section of this chapter addresses the method used to analyse empirical data.

### **3.10 Analysing Data**

The primary data for this study consisted of transcripts of semi-structured in-depth interviews and fieldwork notes. The data collected tells the story of how British Turks navigate and negotiate Islamophobia in their daily routines, drawing on aspects of identity and belonging strategies to form a coherent narrative. Data analysis was carried out using a ‘thematic’ iterative framework. The thematic framework is a method of analysing qualitative data and reporting

patterns (themes) within data (Guest et al. 2012). It is a flexible and useful tool that ‘provides rich and detailed, yet complex account of data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2016, p.5 cited in Richards, 2019). Thematic analysis results tend to be written as a flowing narrative. A list of themes may be provided to the narrative commencing. Quotes from the respondents are also included (Harding and Whitehead, 2013, p. 138). My approach to data analysis can be described as a ‘Big Q’ approach to thematic analysis (TA) to distil out what is vital from a large body of information and engage with the data critically (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Moreover, guided through the six phases of analysis, TA underpinned by Big Q values as a nonlinear process helps the researcher apply flexibility to fit the research questions and data (Braun and Clarke, 2006):

Phase		Description of the process
1.	Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2.	Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3.	Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4.	Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.

5.	Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6.	Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 3: Phases of thematic analysis

Big Q approaches to qualitative research reject the possibility of discovering universal meaning because meaning is understood as always being tied to the context in which it is produced. As I have shown in a detailed explanation of my role as a researcher, a qualitative approach helped me critically reflect on the research process and TA as a Big Q helped me accommodate my personal involvement and partiality (subjectivity, reflexivity) (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This style of analysis is about understanding the overall themes in the data set. The researcher goes back to the data for further analysis and thinking and so on until meaning-making occurs. A qualitative Big Q approach emphasises the active role of the researcher in the research process and the importance of embracing researcher subjectivity, i.e., reflexivity, rather than viewing it as a ‘problem’ to be managed (ibid, p. 223).

Furthermore, my approach to TA as a Big Q derives from the principle that I advocate for the use of an organic approach, underpinning the depth of engagement in coding and theme development. My chosen approach is informed by the unique standpoint of the researcher, which is fluid, flexible and responsive to the researcher’s evolving engagement with their data (Harding and Whitehead, 2013). This helped me critically work on my various insider and outsider roles. Data analysis in this process is iterative in that the researcher moves back and

forth over the data rather than following, as previously mentioned, linear steps (Harding and Whitehead, 2013). In the first analytic phase of TA, I used Microsoft Word’s comment feature, which helped me see the preliminary codes with an analytical eye for possible patterns. One of the advantages of TA is its flexibility in relation to how it is used; essentially, the researcher does not have to follow the linear process in which, ideally, the analysis starts off only after the data collection terminates (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 391). For the second phase, coding and exploring the relationships between codes, I used computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software: NVivo. NVivo enabled me to index and retrieve the data set where necessary and also assisted in the translation of written data into a visual form through its tool of generating a ‘thematic map’. Figure 2 presents an overview of the overarching and preliminary themes that were identified in the thematic map:

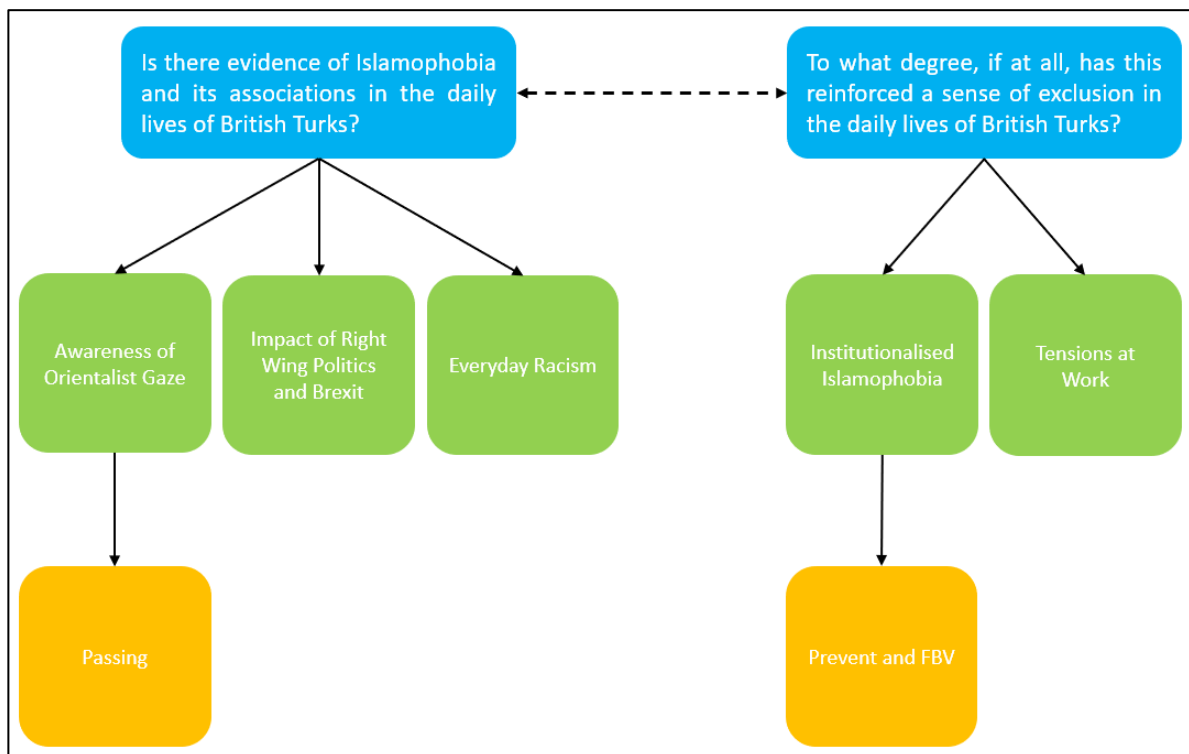


Figure 2: Thematic map

The above thematic map was not followed strictly in the later stages of data analysis but is exemplary in the sense that it added complexity to the analytical and conceptual repertoire of my thesis. The thematic map offered me a road map by steering me towards acknowledging the relations between Islamophobia, identity and belonging, which would have otherwise remained hidden. Thanks to a software-supported analysis including thematic maps, I managed to keep track of the project as a whole and compiled nuanced context and details without wasting time, only to realise I had been digging myself toward a dead-end (Flick, 2022). A further advantage of visual representations for exploring the relationships between codes and themes, sub-themes, and overarching themes is that it is possible to sort and refine the connections between these elements (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 441). This was when I began to think about the ‘relevance’ of a theme as to whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research questions. For example, for the second and third research questions- *How does Islamophobia manifest in the daily lives of generation British Turks? To what degree, if at all, has this reinforced a sense of exclusion amongst British Turks in the UK?* I identified 17 preliminary themes. These 17 themes are not the most prevalent themes across the data set, but together they captured the ways in which young British Turks make meaning of their experiences, demonstrating the potential factors of belonging or not belonging to Britain as their country of birth/ settlement.

As this is a qualitative analysis, there is no hard-and-fast answer to what proportion of the data set needs to display evidence of the theme for it to be considered a theme. So, the researcher's judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Considering that I used an inductive thematic analysis that, by its nature, does not require fixed and structured interview questions or predefined codes as means of investigating the data, the themes were extracted from data with no theoretical commitments (Ganji, 2018). I tended to approach the analysis not entirely separated from the concepts covered in the literature review,

as well as the preconceptions and subjective engagement linking together with the fieldwork data for the purpose of addressing the research questions. In so doing, I regularly moved between themes which required an iterative process (ibid, p.107) to address the research questions. The penultimate stage of analysis was informed by all data collected, the knowledge on existing literature on ‘identity, multiculturalism, islamophobia, whiteness, technologies of power and fundamental British values’, and the ongoing reflexive dialogue on the part of the researcher with regard to these issues (Braun and Clarke, 2006) applied to the analysis in a systematic and transparent way.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter addressed various steps and stages for designing and conducting qualitative research, describing in detail how the primary data was collected, organised, coded and analysed. Additionally, I provided a comprehensive presentation of sampling methods, the interview process, philosophical assumptions, and the researcher’s positionality. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews as a methodological tool was crucial in recognising the broader socio-cultural and political contexts of the research in which British Turks negotiated relations between Islamophobia, identity and belonging. This constituted the conceptual framework of this thesis. Framing findings in a manner that allowed themes to develop inductively helped me identify and capture the multi-layered and ever-changing nature of Islamophobia, similar to other forms of racism. I have used this chapter to set up the methodological focus underpinning social-constructionist epistemology and relativist ontology. I furthermore discussed and justified my data collection method: semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 British Turks from England and Wales.

Additionally, I highlighted my various strategies to recruit research participants, including social media tools and gatekeepers. Because every research project brings together challenges,

especially when the research topic concerns sensitive contexts where political and religious intersect populations who are suspicious about becoming involved, as exemplified by an Alevi gatekeeper, can hinder the process of accessibility. I, therefore, highlighted many negative and positive issues about access, how I reached potential respondents, and enhanced rapport and trust for a dialogical interaction with my research respondents. In this chapter, I also discussed why I relied on the virtues of researcher reflexivity throughout the entire research design process. I adopted an overt attitude regarding my motives behind investigating Islamophobia in the context of British Turks, as the method was data-driven in that the empirical material was drawn upon question-response; my genuine interest in listening to their stories and experiences cultivated a genuine interest from my respondents. Next, I discussed my reasons for not limiting my fieldwork location to one single setting or city, which was built upon a learning point from previous research conducted for my MA dissertation in a small village in the Netherlands. I accordingly collected empirical data from British Turks spread across multiple places, which added another layer of complexity to multiple respondents who were diversely oriented to the reality of anti-Muslim sentiments and Islamophobic narratives. Next, I alluded to ethical considerations in line with the University of York's ethical framework.

I outlined how I secured the privacy of my respondents by replacing original names with pseudonyms, thus ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Following this, I justified analysing my data using inductive thematic analysis with a big Q approach in order to capture and examine the lived experiences of Islamophobia amongst British Turks. As an illustration, I explained how designing a thematic map accentuated the facets of data that developed, which steered me towards analytically acknowledging the nuanced and multi-layered nature of narratives and away from the generic narrative of the experiences. In the next chapter, I draw attention to the question and formation of identity in a dialogical relation to Islamophobia in the British context.

## CHAPTER 4

### NAVIGATING BRITISH TURKISHNESS: CULTURAL SOURCES OF IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESS

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Islamophobia is not a post-9/11 phenomenon, but this event and others have created present-day Islamophobia, which typically pictures Muslim cultures as undifferentiated and monolithic. Therefore, Islamophobia is assumed to be natural and unproblematic (Abbas, 2005). This has caused identity issues, such as: is it possible to be Muslim and British? This chapter focuses on the processes of cultural identity formation among British Turks against the background of the global and local representations of Islam and Muslim minorities in the UK. Accordingly, the questions that guide this chapter are: What are the cultural identities which are adopted by British Turks in the UK? and how are these identities formed?

Since all my research participants identified religiously as ‘Muslim’ despite differences in the way they defined ‘Islam’, I did not have a particular question to gauge the degree of religiosity as I feel this is beyond the scope of this research. However, the ways my respondents approached ‘Islam’, Muslim identity, and positioned themselves in relation to, for instance, the global ‘Muslim’ ummah or a broader Muslim community in Britain was crucial and required further dismantling in the current politico-cultural climate of the UK. The literature shows that the Islamic faith has played a vital role as a shelter identity for large segments of British Muslims in the face of present-day Islamophobia (Alexander, Redclift et al., 2013; Bonino, 2017; Modood, 2007). In contrast, when British Turks talk about ‘identity’ against the backdrop of Islamophobia, the majority tend to align themselves with Britishness, whiteness and cosmopolitanism, if not Western secularism. This tendency becomes even more apparent in their rising detachment from other Muslim communities, particularly non-white Muslim

ethnic minorities in the UK. Having noted that British Turks tend to differentiate themselves from the question of Islamophobia and communities associated with Islamophobia, I argue that the majority of my respondents maintain their religiosity when they construct a self out of multiple sources. Concomitant with this, some British Turks move away from their Turkish parents' religiosity and mix between traditions embedded in, for example, Britishness, Turkishness and Islam. This sense of religiosity is further evident in the trend towards fluid and shifting identities. This chapter accordingly investigates dynamics, ideas and practices from my interview data to understand a series of cultural identities that British Turks developed in response to Islamophobia today.

#### **4.2 Being Cosmopolitan: Last Exit Before the Bridge**

Even though British Turks could not fully describe what makes them British, their accounts of what makes a person 'British' followed a mainly cosmopolitan urban identity. Even though their narratives of Britishness signalled a shift away from the norms and nuances of their parents' culture, some of my respondents described their Britishness through terms which were indicative of cosmopolitan urban identity within metropolitan contexts where they can feel at 'home'. When embraced as a source of identity, Cosmopolitanism is grounded in the acceptance of a multiplicity of roots and on the legitimacy of plural loyalties (Cohen, 1992), acknowledging the right to 'difference'. However, there are some limits to how a cosmopolitan identity is cultivated. Written in the aftermath of September 11 and the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, Gilroy's work of *Melancholia or Convivial Culture* (2004) denotes that the obsessive repetition of key themes -invasion, war, contamination, loss of identity- and the resulting mixture has produced 'an anxious, melancholic mood in contemporary Britain' (Dworkin, 2009, p. 15; Gilroy, 2004). Britain's unique handling of global challenges, including asylum seekers, immigration, violence and terrorism and British Muslims, when inflected by

the postcolonial melancholia's paralysing effects, have cast multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism as a threat to the essentialised notions of Britishness/ Englishness and the assumed cultural homogeneity.

To this end, a multicultural, cosmopolitan Britain would mean unbridgeable cultural differences, being deemed as blurring the national boundaries and posing a threat to national identity. Therefore today, cosmopolitan urban Britishness has been traded in for imperial British nationality (Gilroy, 2004, p. 88). To this end, Gilroy contrasts the term cosmopolitan conviviality against melancholia; the former denotes the ability to live with 'difference 'without becoming anxious, fearful or violent' (ibid, p. xi). In particular, Gilroy writes that conviviality is marked by the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made *multiculture* an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas (ibid). Exploring the narratives over British Turks' identity formations, I argue that my respondents appear to find ontological security and peace in their understanding of cosmopolitan urban identity. In employing a cosmopolitan understanding to define their Britishness, their desire to be acknowledged without becoming fearful and anxious similarly lays bare. As my data suggests, cosmopolitanism is negotiated as building into a stronger sense of 'Britishness' and 'commonality' amongst a large immigration population in London. Additionally, cosmopolitanism is cultivated against discrimination, including Islamophobia. For example, Ayşe expressed her delight as to how much she appreciates living in a global city like London and displayed her feelings about the cosmopolitan spirit in the culture:

In the city I live, people are mostly quite nice because it is very, like a cosmopolitan city and there are people from lots of different backgrounds here, so people have over the years learned living together with each other and adapted to different cultures. Also, the food here unites people, which is a nice, positive thing. You have so many different restaurants, including Chinese, Thai, Indian...

(Ayşe, 41 years old, Interpreter, London)

Living in multicultural spaces that are openly or indirectly branded as cosmopolitan is one of the ways that British Turkish people gain access to the perceived mainstream British culture. Ayşe's account displays the upsides of living in one of the most multicultural cities in the world, depicting the increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures in the flow of different cuisines (Hannerz, 1990). In a similar vein, the following quote emphasises the rising coexistence of people from a range of different cultural backgrounds rather than a strong presence of a single culture:

People argue that the number of white British in London is far less than the number of foreign-born. I don't really care about the demographics of the country. I am happy to be born in London, and to have interacted with people from a range of different cultural backgrounds, be them Arabic, Albanian, African... In case I was to confront an unknown gesture, I would comfortably react in a certain way so that my Arabic friend gets it and vice versa. Coming from many different backgrounds, we have grown up together and learned how to live together in the sense that we respect each other and do not stigmatise one another due to our differences. At the end of the day, I accept the fact that I live in the UK; I do not feel obliged to embrace each and every norm and cultural way of life in the UK, and I don't really care about it.

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

Emre Can, who was born and lived his entire life so far in a global city (London), does not focus on the cultural specificities of individuals whom he has encountered and tends to link individuals from diverse cultures together within the territorial boundaries of London. Additionally, he emphasises cultural varieties and reflects on his openness towards diversity,

hence does not feel ‘obliged to embrace every norm and cultural way of life of the UK’. In his article *The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies*, Beck (2002) notes that the cosmopolitan perspective is an imagination of alternative ways of life, which includes the ‘otherness’ of the other. With its ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, London is the ‘world in one city’. London is special because of its entrenched diversity; therefore, this is a factor as to why people can relate to its global connectedness diversity. Some of my respondents with religiously conservative parents hold onto a sort of moral cosmopolitanism, which involves an ethical sphere rising from ‘national, social and cultural limits’ (Gahir, 2016). Developing ethical cosmopolitanism has the potential to help the younger generation of British Turks who are negotiating disparate lifestyles and mindsets, including LGBT-Q rights. For instance, Begüm talks about how her multiple senses of identification alongside her religious affiliation with Islam and national affiliation as ‘British’ make her more ‘open-minded towards different lifestyles’:

I study meticulously, doing my Master's. However, my parents do not really understand why I study so much, but I don't listen to them. I am certainly British based on my worldview and open-mindedness. I am more flexible towards disparate lifestyles or mindsets as a Muslim British. This part of me helps me tap into issues that Muslim Turks cannot approve of. Let alone acknowledging the LGBT-Q movement; some make fun of it. Homophobia is pretty much common among Turks, which might be due to having their blinders on, whereas I don't mind LGBT-Q, which might stem from my Britishness. Some Turks also don't accept other than their own opinion; I have faced this a lot. I am pretty much British in this regard. Go and try to explain such things to an average Turk living in the UK! young or old does not matter...

(Begüm, 22 years old, Doing a Master's in Computer Engineering, Leicester)

The initial part of the quote indicates that Begüm prioritises her education which, in her view, is something lacking in her parents' outlook on life. Standing against her parents' parochialism, a less-idealistic view of education enables Begüm to obtain a sense of belonging to Britishness as a source of identity. Moreover, education paves the way for access to social mobility for Begüm, which she feels is necessary to assert her agency for a better life and a stronger integration into British society. One of the main reasons she is able to relate to the LGBT-Q movement is its core message of constructing an alternative identity. Additionally, the movement aims to overcome conservative, inward and communal orientations, which can link to the idea of an alleged 'average Turk', and to articulate a more global, outward-looking, all-embracing identity. These self-reflections of Begüm unpack the extent to which she refuses to adopt a passive stance and instead chooses to identify with a flexible, more liberal approach to differing values and ideas. Hence, she exhibits some cosmopolitan traits, such as transcending boundaries based on her parents' religio-cultural values for social mobility in Britain. However, Begüm's Muslimness and Britishness do not seem to be competing discourses, but it seems as if the Muslimness embedded in her Britishness is necessary to differentiate her from what she describes as 'Muslim Turks'. According to Hall (2006), people are not passive masses; they make their own meanings for their own identities. Begüm's version of Muslimness is fluid and dialogical, so it has different meanings depending on the various identities it might be articulated with. Furthermore, Begüm's account invokes the contemporary positioning of Muslimness with opposite qualities in British society; her narrative salvages and empties British Muslimness from the bounds of indiscriminately essentialised understandings of the British Muslim identity by allocating the perceived inflexibility and illiberal traits to Turkishness. Doing that inadvertently and additionally endows her with a more inclusive group of identities within a system of differences.

On the flip side, a weakness within the arguments identified so far is that while some respondents develop accounts of cosmopolitanism in a bid to side with acceptance, respect for diversity, open-mindedness and mutual respect, others embrace cosmopolitan identity to support and perpetuate the power differentiation of the perceived superiority of West and the inferiority of the East (Andreouli and Howarth, 2019). A careful reading of Ediz's statement renders visible how identity is constructed through representation and the play of power (Hall, 1996):

I think it [whether the perception of native British towards Turks has changed since 9/11] depends on who they are. So, if you take my sister and me, we are very liberal. And you know we are sort of westernised, but also when you got Turkish people, they haven't got exactly integrated into British society, and you know, the way they dressed, they have headscarves then yes, they are going to have it yes. But those who have integrated into society, the ones you know, can speak the language fluently.

(Ediz, 31 years old, Teacher, London)

Ediz's remarks which build a picture of a cosmopolitan person, endorse Western modes of being as a proxy. On the face of it, Ediz negotiates an imagined position in the UK by situating himself alongside the Western aspirations of elite secularist Turks as the underlying ideology of the early Republic of Turkey. Having said that, there is an intersection of Turkishness and Islam, destabilising the taken-for-grantedness of Ediz's presumed 'insider status' as westernised, liberal and hence, British. Ediz's quote contributes to the reification of visibly Muslim individuals as irredeemable outsiders and antagonistic to mainstream British culture with an a priori assumption regarding the current functions of Islamic dress as ostensibly unsecular and discomfiting in the West. Based on secular and liberal self-representations, Ediz

seems to register himself as the bearer of the dominant culture's values, such as language and liberalism.

Through adopting cosmopolitanism as a cultural identity, both Ediz and Begüm cultivate a self-orientalist stance, culminating in the vantage point of becoming Western or European as an instrument to protect the Western hegemony over the non-European (Said, 1985). This tendency urges upon disaffiliation from the intersections of Turkishness and Muslimness vis-a-vis the representation of cosmopolitan and secularised individuals holding hope of 'acceptance'. Begüm identifies with western liberal values characterised by supporting 'LGBT-Q', which sides her with Western liberal values without disassociating herself from her Islamic affiliations. Holding secular and liberal values negotiated against Islamic dress codes, Ediz dissociates himself from the intersections of Turkish-Muslim affiliations on the basis that Islam, presented as monolithic and antagonistic to his perceived Britishness, is constantly reproduced by dominant politics as a threat to some equally monolithic version of the 'West' (Evans, 2011).

In that sense, embracing a cosmopolitan identity has potentially liberating effects in transcending the boundaries of Muslimness as well as, for some, Turkishness. Begüm and Ediz's understandings of Turkishness and Muslimness converge to play out the constitutive 'other' to help them reify their Britishness as a less controversial and more accepted identity in the wider Western world (Yegenoglu, 2012; Andreouli and Howarth, 2019). This helps to yield a more muscular cosmopolitan identity. As illustrated by the interviews, some respondents take on a cosmopolitan identity on the grounds that it connotes the international spirit in some British cities and comes with values attached to it, such as accepting multiplicity, being the multiplicity, and accommodating post-national forms of inclusion. For others, cosmopolitanism is a source of acceptance and a matter of hope and power. Hence, it brings

about allegiance to hegemonic western culture and liberal ideology (Yegenoglu, 2012), as well as the negation of less accepted identities.

As Hall (1990) highlights, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, we should think instead of identity in the continuous play of history, culture and power. Cultural identities all come from somewhere and have histories. Therefore, it can be argued that the desire for the fluidity of identity associated with the term cosmopolitan, or the dichotomous relationship between Britishness and Turkishness or Britishness and Muslimness, is contained in contingent notions of inequality and exclusion. Thus, a handful of British Turks strategically detach from identities including ‘Muslim’ and ‘Turk’ that actually constitute them, which is inseparable from moments defining what a Turk or a Muslim is, and these moments are always conjunctural (Binnie, Holloway et al., 2006a; Hall and Du Gay, 1996a). This derives from the fact that for a Turk, becoming a Muslim is not simply a declaration of faith but a declaration of a non-secular non-liberal political representation in the Turkish political scene. Therefore, it is often almost impossible to disentangle ‘Turk’ and ‘Muslim’ as distinct identities (Çarmikli, 2011). The following section seeks to explore the extent to which whiteness as a cultural identity is adopted by British Turks and how the propensity to white Turkishness is manifested through the history of the politics of westernisation.

#### **4.3 Whiteness as a Floating Signifier: You are Either Outside of the Circle (or inside of it)**

My analysis of the propensity to whiteness as another cultural identity in the context of British Turks is underpinned by a postcolonial critique of Orientalism and racialisation. Turks have never been colonised by European powers, but the Ottoman Empire’s territory as the sick man of Europe during World War I offered an attractive colonisation area for Britain and France (Schlenoff, 2015). In this respect, I suggest that any discussion of European history invites us

to plunge into the history of colonialism and its convoluted relationship with racism (Yeğenoğlu, 2012). Whiteness is embedded in the historical and global history of colonial expansion (Frankenberg, 1993; Grosfoguel and Georas, 2000); it is thereby important to explore the ways in which whiteness in a broader view of Islamophobia might be shaped by daily life and current race relations, as well as how this is linked to local, national and international histories of Turks.

Turks, along with other people from the Middle East, retain a claim to being ‘Caucasian’ and are classified as ‘white’ in the analysis of racial imagery (Yorukoglu, 2017b). The Anthropological Research Centre of Turkey, founded in 1925<sup>10</sup> in Istanbul, provided one of the earliest examples of race science in constructing Turkish identity, which resulted in a large scale of cultural mobilisation which began to actively manufacture a ‘white, European Turkish identity’. Turks, in search of identity in the early republican era, rejected, for example, Arabic, Middle Eastern and even a brunette ‘Mediterranean’ quality. It turned out to be a ‘battleground between a ‘white’ European, modern Turkey and an Arab, Eastern, Muslim and backward Turkey’ (Ergin, 2016, p. 106 emphasis mine). Reverberations of the early republican period bifurcations appear to underlie the general picture emerging from my interview data. The respondents with strong Islamic identity that acknowledge the ‘outsider’ status of Muslim migrants do not unquestionably classify themselves as ‘white’ and ‘European’ and profoundly identify themselves with religio-ethnic categories such as ummah and Turkishness. On the other hand, a number of respondents hold on to their putative whiteness as integral to their cultural identity, as it offers a sense of phenotypical inclusion to mainstream British society.

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<sup>10</sup> Two years after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.

This particular section, however, addresses the reflections of the latter group, and the accounts of the former group will be discussed later in the chapter.

As highlighted in the discussion above, some respondents internalise ‘whiteness’ as a privileged ethnic descriptor, which appears to challenge general public suspicions towards perceived Muslims in the UK. Indeed, Begüm confirms this perspective, saying that the discourse of ‘Islamic terrorism’ referring to the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks ‘did not put so much impact on her because she was unveiled then, and that she is ‘white’:

As Leicester is pretty much a multicultural city, the 7/7 and 9/11 attacks did not put so much impact on us here. 30% of my classmates were Muslim; would the teacher have an attitude towards us? We were only children then! I was not veiled, and also, I am white; therefore, it was only while I was walking with my mum that would people outside know that I was Muslim.

(Begüm, 22 years old, Doing Master’s in Computer Engineering, Leicester)

From this perspective, we can understand that the role played in claiming whiteness by non-Western populations such as Turks moves the focus on racialised bodies to a broader understanding of the active role of whiteness in repelling Islamophobia. As a globally flowing signifier, whiteness is intricately associated with a constellation of cultural superiority matched with modernity and has been throughout history. Thus, whiteness necessarily denotes more than skin colour; it is a social positioning that is structurally and racially privileged (Sian, 2013). In the quote above, Begüm’s (and her mother’s) whiteness is rendered accountable until confronted with ‘people outside’, who occupy a ‘more’ privileged, dominant and normatively ‘westernised’ body. In this interview, one can see how whiteness is only relationally determined as a category of distinction; its legitimacy and taken-for-grantedness are contested in its encounter with non-western indicators, such as the Islamic scarf. Such relationality of

whiteness is often expressed in my interviews; the right to whiteness is only in the absence of historically embedded European whiteness:

If I am in central London, they may think I am not white British but a foreigner. Presumably, they might think of me as someone whose parents came as the first generation or were born into an Arabic or a Middle Eastern family. In contrast, if you ask me in South London, they would say, 'he is one of us', Yet in Northern London, they give me a dirty look to show their discontent with white people.

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

Emre Can's narrative on whiteness allows us to interrogate the assumed monolithic status of 'whiteness', reinforcing a more fluid picture. His quote is relevant to a discussion about the racialisation of whiteness in contemporary London (Garner, 2012). Accordingly, Emre Can reminds us that there are 'grades' of 'whiteness' and between whiteness and non-whiteness, which involve racialised physical appearance and evoke clear distinctions of class, nation, religion, and status across specific neighbourhoods of London. In other words, 'white' is part of local contingent hierarchies; in this perspective, 'white' is not a homogenous group (Garner, 2012). Thus, this process can also include exploring how subjects can make themselves 'white' in contemporary Britain and the reasons why. This is perhaps the indication that what 'white' represents is situational, relational and contingent with the increasing normalisation of racist discourses in Western politics. British- Turks' current relationship with whiteness might also reflect an attempt to escape from the racialised depictions of Muslims. This whiteness is bound up with 'civilisation and purity', underscoring the mechanisms as the 'white' European identity is rooted in Orientalist discourse. Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality, with a structure that promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them'): its scope lasts up to present (Said, 1978). However, the

historical definition of Orientalism has gained new meanings and interpretations in the post-9/11 world. In this new world, it is not enough to prove connections to the West by, for instance, skin colour. For some respondents, Turkishness as a cultural identity also needs to be differentiated and distanced from the non-white Muslim 'Others'. Accordingly, some of my respondents aligned themselves with white Britishness situated into the 'idealistic' normalcy of European, white and Christian:

I am pretty white, so I would say I don't get stereotyped. It [stereotyping] is supposedly very prevalent in racism, but I haven't faced any of it so far...I think when it comes to English bias, the main problem is Pakistani and Indians, and then it depends on whom you ask because people are biased about it... I think skin colour makes it much easier to refrain from discrimination for sure. I feel like if someone is actively discriminating or trying to be racist, it is just because you are different, and they noticed it.

(Ahmet, 28 years old, Application Engineer, Nottingham)

A state of double consciousness is evident in Ahmet's quote. Double consciousness is an awareness, which W.E.B. Du Bois put forward in relation to American blacks, of seeing oneself through the eyes of an inferiorising other, a doubling up of a subject's sense of belonging and alienation (Bois, 1897; Gilroy, 1993). I interpret that the above response shows that Ahmet sees himself through the eyes of others, the white British. This is reflective of the multiple discourses and experiences of disruptions and displacements. Ahmet's awareness of the 'eyes of an inferiorising other' engendered a growing realisation of himself as Turkish and Muslim. He, therefore, absolved himself from the inferiorising eyes of 'English bias against Indians and Pakistanis' but rather highlighted features such as being non-white or being perceivably Muslim to underline commonplace racism. Seen in this light, whiteness as a cultural identity

is designed as one way to escape from discrimination against the racialised Muslim body in Britain. In a way, Ahmet positioned himself alongside white mainstream society as a means to guard against the stereotyped view of Muslims. In doing that, Ahmet mentioned ‘Pakistanis and Indians’ as a reference point against which to claim his cultural differences with Muslims and non-white ethnic minorities. It could be argued that ‘difference’ based on distinctive body markers and signs of Muslimness seem like common denominators against which British Turks renegotiate their identities in the British context. This renegotiation further precipitates the biased mechanisms against those which are perceived as the antipode of white mainstream British subjects:

I believe Black people were oppressed by British people earlier. White English ones in the classroom would call them stinky, greasy and dissentious. I refer to the 1980s, and I talk about black people having immigrated from Barbados, Africa, etc. I cannot know their nationalities at that age, of course. I was thinking that we were all white and that there were two countries in the World, England and Turkey.

(Nurcan, 42 years old, Restaurant Owner, Coventry)

While it is true that Muslims suffer prejudice and hostility in today’s conjuncture, the narrative put forward by Nurcan that racism was an everyday experience for many black migrants needs to be reconsidered (Bonino, 2017). As Sherwood (2003) argued, black racism in Britain is an entrenched problem as a result of the propaganda efforts of the government after WWII. In Sherwood’s words, ‘It is hardly surprising that post-war black migrants were seen by native British as intruders into a homogenous and civilised white society’ (p.6). Even though Black people- African, Asian and their descendants- have been part of Britain since roughly 1505, a group of people who moved to the UK between 1948-1971 became known as the Windrush generation, who have gladly absorbed into British industry a result of the demand for labour

post-WWII (Fryer, 1984; Taylor, 2020, p. 378). Fryer (1984) stated that the 1950s settlers were seen as ignorant and illiterate- thus, prejudice against black people was widespread. By 1958, racist attacks were commonplace in black life in London (p.380). By the mid-1970s, two out of every five black people in Britain were born in Britain but were permanently in the area of suspicion as ‘criminals, muggers and illegal migrants’ (p. 400). Fryer described the scale of stereotyping and prejudice against the black population manifesting through ‘the arbitrary arrest of black people, the use of unnecessary violence in arresting black people, the harassment of juveniles’ (p. 402). The race riots, especially during the 1980s, were the direct result of racial prejudice, shameful conditions, and humiliation faced by black communities in the UK. It is not surprising, therefore, that Nurcan pointed to the discussions of oppression and racism against Black immigrants when she was a child in the 1980s. The nature of exclusion and discrimination may evolve, and as Nurcan flagged, racism was predicated mainly on the colour of skin in the 1980s, and neither Turkishness nor Islam was included as markers of discrimination in her quote.

As I mentioned earlier, Turks have never been colonised, but ‘whiteness’ and ‘White Turkishness’ as Eldem (2010) and Yorukoglu (2017) unpack here, are the product of socio-historical events embedded in the view of Turks. Turkey has undergone a successive programme of modernisation to show that the principle of white Turkishness was identified as being more ‘Western’ and its implied European ‘success and superiority’ than Ottoman Turkishness (Eldem, 2010; Yorukoglu, 2017a). Turkish Orientalism portrayed the East (Ottoman Turkey) as irrational, ignorant, fanatical, inefficient, and lazy (Çarmikli, 2011). As a result, Turkish Orientalism developed with an enduring influence on how Turkish society and elites view themselves today.



The [dark and Arab] sweet seller [in an Arab-accented Turkish and holding a bowl marked ‘Syrian Mandate’]: ‘Young ladies, I’ve made them for you. Made in Damascus, sweet as sugar!’ The [White and Turkish] women [representing the cities of Iskenderun and Antakya]: ‘We don’t want any of Neither sweet from Damascus, nor your face.’

(Eldem, 2010)

Figure 3: Cover of Karikatur, 41, 10 October 1936, by Ramiz



A typical example of the urge to convince the Western audience targeted by this magazine that Turks have a ‘European’ physiognomy.

(Eldem, 2020)

Figure 4: ‘La visage turc’ [Turkish faces] from La Turquie Kamaliste, 19, 1937

Oxymoronic as it may sound, Ottoman Orientalism has a very strong logic behind it. From the moment Ottoman elites decided that westernisation was the only (or most efficient) way to catch up with Western material success (a phenomenon that dates back to the early 19th century and gained momentum after the *Tanzimat* (Reorganisation) Decree of 1839), they had implicitly agreed to one of the most basic tenets of Orientalism: that the East was essentially different from the West, and that it was essentially stagnant and lacked the capacity to change (ibid, p. 27). Therefore, Turkish Orientalism still informs much of the way in which British Turks (including those informing this research) view themselves and the world around them. The following quote demonstrates, by referring to this consistent rhetoric based on Turks' whiteness as skin colour and privileged social positioning, that the oriental vision is maintained by the descendants of first-generation Turkish migrants in Europe:

In my opinion, Turks are relatively lucky compared to other Muslims. Our motherland is modernised, [Turkey is a] different sort of Muslim country compared to somewhere like Arabic countries, Arabic friends might feel more discriminated. Nevertheless, I know very well that if we were to look more Muslim, it would be just as bad for us too. We are white in the end; our skin tone is right on the lucky side, very interesting, and our eyes are not slanted. People from the Caribbean, for instance, give off a particular smell; they cook well, so that smell of spices permeates all over them. We don't show any quality revealing our nationality.

(Harun, 22 years old, studying Chemistry, Wales/London)

Under some 'Western' camouflage, Harun maintains a 'white, modernised and different sort of Muslim' image that flirts with Oriental visions. By bringing the 'white and westernised' Turk image into the equation, the ways some of my respondents commit to cosmopolitanism can be observed. Largely imagined in racial stereotypes and political terms, Harun's account locates Turkey and Turks in ways distinct from Arabic countries, Arabic people, and 'other

Muslims'. As Leddy-Owen (2020) notes, cosmopolitan sympathies might risk bypassing enduring racist and discriminatory structures of existing political communities (p. 280). As I have previously suggested, certain identity references, including 'whiteness, Turkishness and 'different sort of Muslim', are employed amongst my respondents as kernels of resistance against anti-Muslim discourse.

For my respondents, the deployment of whiteness as Westernness is an attitude to fortify themselves in enclaves of privilege rooted in white Britishness (Binnie, Holloway et al., 2006b). Orton *et al.* (2021) note that people who (consciously-unconsciously, voluntarily-involuntarily) acknowledge the structures of exclusion in society attempt to use complicity as a part of their resistance. Harun's resistance against internalising the fact that Turkey is a Muslim country and Turks might as well become racialised into the homogenised Muslim subject emerges in the way he perpetuates the ideology of inferiority against people who are perceived as Muslim today. Additionally, his inferiorising comments are also maintained in relation to those excluded along a continuum that stretches from decolonisation to the present day. Giving potency to racial and socio-cultural identities such as 'whiteness' and 'Britishness' over 'Turkishness', Gülkız similarly engages in the tendency to portray herself as more British and whiter while recounting a moment from the lens of a Turkish friend:

I have a Turkish friend who lived in Turkey and came here to study at university; when she came to my house where I was relaxed, maybe, I don't know, and she was like, 'oh my god, you are just like a British Turkish person', and I did not understand what she was saying, I don't know if I used the word 'relaxed' I think it might have just been my approach of relaxed. She just like 'oh, I've got a Turkish friend but who is very British'. I don't know if it was just my actions or talked the way I was. I mean, I know, like, for example, I love my white tea; I drink tea with milk. I've

got a friend who is Iranian, and whenever she comes, she is like, ‘oh my god, you are so white’.

(Gülkız, 32 years old, Working in Local Council, London)

Though it may not be obvious at first sight, one can sense the naturalisation of Britishness as white in Gülkız’s quote- drinking white tea is set as normatively established Britishness. Though it was not explicitly asked, some of my respondents chose to make references to whiteness, stating it is an indication of adaptation to mainstream society and western norms or there is an incompatibility between what they considered to be whiteness and Islam articulated in Western political discourse. Given that my respondents illustrated to what extent they identified themselves with whiteness, this included expressing a claim to being part of Britain instead of the East: to the ‘civilised world’, instead of the world of ‘Islamic terrorism’ (Yorukoglu, 2017b). To this extent, I contend that whiteness as another cultural identity is distinguished amongst some British Turks as superior to serve one’s benefit. In the above quote, whiteness is, wittingly or unwittingly, employed as an epitome of compatibility with the West. Unlike the respondents who pointed to whiteness as one component of their self-identification in Britain, some of my interviewees tend to self-identify with other cultural sources that shape the cultural identity of British Turks: religion and ethnicity. Consequently, as Barker (2002) argues, these young people shift from one subject position to another as they determine it to be situationally appropriate. In the following section, I will discuss what aspects of Turkishness, as a particularly influential source of identity, are negotiated by British Turks.

#### **4.4 Turkishness in the Making: Identity Negotiations of Young Turks**

Previous research has suggested that Turkish youths in Europe acquired a cultural identity which springs from parental, dominant and global cultures (Van de Berghe, Cashmore et al.,

1996; Vertovec, 1997; Kaya, 2001; Doğuş, 2012). This cultural identity can be defined as diasporic. Diasporic consciousness refers to individuals' awareness of a range of decentred, multilocational attachments, of being simultaneous 'home away from home' or 'here and there'. In the 'ideal type' of diaspora, immigrant communities maintain a memory, vision or myth about their original homeland (Safran, 1991, p. 83). This study cannot provide empirical evidence alluding to the 'myth of return'; or diasporic 'home away from home consciousness'; but attention is directed to issues related to the maintenance of 'Turkishness' and Turkish cultural structures in Britain, explained through an exploration of the assumptions about parental culture and upbringing. This section takes a step back from the 'ideal type' of diasporic subject and syncretic cultural identities and examines the assumptions expressed by respondents in discussions of 'Turkish identity' without necessarily laying aside their Britishness. Therefore, it might be argued that British Turks are conscious of the *difference* between the two (Hall, 1990). With that in mind, I decided to explore this section by drawing on Derrida's notion of '*differance*', where difference is positional, conditional, and conjunctural (Hall and Du Gay, 1996a, p. 448).

Therefore, with this considered, elaborating the sheer 'differences' between Turkishness and Britishness is out of the equation and would be too subjective an exercise. I thereby aim to widen the terms of identity politics to include further conundrums, such as Islamophobia and its embedded nature in the wider, non-Muslim, British public via a dominant narrative to unveil its role in relation to questions of subjectivity, power and identity (Puwar, 2004). In doing this, I intend my analysis to be positional, conditional and conjunctural. Against this background, the way in which Turkishness has been employed by British Turks sheds light on the lesser degree of identification with their British side. Taking Britishness for granted seems unlikely based on the discussions of cultural clashes in a broader context of anti-Muslim biases, which is at times juxtaposed with anti-Turk tendencies in wider British society. Thus, in one way or

another, many of my respondents continue to relate to each other and to their parental homeland as another cultural identity. In their discussions, it appeared that my younger participants explicitly linked the degree of their Turkishness to their Turkish upbringing:

Considering my personality, outlook and attitudes, I am 20% British and 80% Turkish. Some of my foreign friends cannot get the way I evaluate certain things; this is because of my Turkish side. My unconscious mind speaks Turkish, and this is undoubtedly related to my Turkish upbringing.

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

First-generation Turks living in Britain have strong emotional connections with their country of origin, whereas young people do not (Küçükcan, 2004; Şimsek, 2012). According to Doğuş (2012), because of the dominance of the English language among their second-generation children, Turkish families face difficulties relating to problems in communication with their children in a different society. Accordingly, upbringing entails a stronger sense of the Turkish language, which simply, instrumentally and unconsciously provides a means for their British Turkish descendants to be exposed to parental values and the parental version of Turkishness. Born and raised in Britain, Emre Can acknowledges that he is attached to his country of origin and its language as a consequence of his upbringing and parental involvement in Turkish language training. Harun similarly notes that the way he was raised by his Turkish mum has some bearing on his affinity with Turkish culture:

There are times when my British and Turkish identities clash with one another. It is mainly to do with my mum in depth. I have picked up my mum's behaviour which I know down to my Turkish upbringing. When I have a girlfriend, I don't get macho and jealous, which is my British side. Yet many of my qualities I observe myself mainly down to the Turkish ways to which I was exposed so much. A gesture of

myself, for instance, reminds me of my mum. It is more of a reaction, not a feeling. I am sometimes intense and passionate. Being extroverted is my Turkish side; hugging and kissing are very important in one's life really. I used to kiss the cheeks of my ex-girlfriend's parents when we would meet up, which they took shockingly at first, and the first couple of times, they were taken aback by my relaxed attitude; you know we kiss, talk and hug.

(Harun, 22 years old, Studying Chemistry, Wales/London)

In both quotes, respondents, besides their Turkish side, also mentioned their British side. To reiterate a point made at the beginning of this chapter, it is the sense of *differance*, (cultural in the case of the above quotes) achieved through the associations of specific practices of Turkishness based on the ways Emre Can and Harun articulate its characteristics. This is defined in terms of 'individuated' processes. In Emre Can's case, it is his way of 'evaluating things' that is Turkish, whereas, in Harun's case, it is his 'attitudes, such as being more intense and passionate and his propensity to traditional Turkish family culture, such as kissing the cheeks of his girlfriend's parents to pay respect. Therefore, both respondents openly allude to the 'differences' between British and Turkish manners and ways of thinking on the grounds of their Turkish upbringing.

As Hall (2000) notes, diaspora identities are all negotiated culturally somewhere along the spectrum of *differance*, in which disjunctures of time, generation, spatialisation and dissemination refuse to be neatly aligned. Against this background, the ways my respondents negotiate Turkishness is in recognition of its difference from Britishness as another cultural identity. In other words, with its 'assumed insurmountable particularities', Britishness for some of my respondents became a reference point to consider what makes them Turkish. For others, being British and Turkish is not conceived as an intact identification, but rather negotiated depending on the social environment:

I feel Turkish only to some extent because it is not enough to identify me. External factors put an impact on identity formation. For instance, there are two different Begüms; the one in the home is different from the one outside... There is such an advantage to having been impacted by two cultures; you get the best of each. This is how I did because both have flaws. I treat different people based on their individual cultures, and doing that helps me compose my identity and conform to both cultures.

(Begüm, 22 years old, Doing a Master's in Computer Engineering, Leicester)

Begüm is aware that she cannot fully adopt both identities, and views this as an advantage. She claims that she cannot fully identify with Turkishness because she lives in Britain. Her experiences with both cultures help her articulate her own interpretation of what identity means to her. Not fully knowing Turkishness and Britishness but negotiating her positioning in different cultural spaces, private spaces and outside, makes her accept different cultural positions easily (Şimsek, 2012). Begüm's account further echoes Derrida's (1972) contestation of fixed binaries which stabilise meaning and representation. Begüm's conceptualisation of her doubleness similarly disturbs the fixedness and oneness of her identities. She defers stabilising what makes an individual British and Turkish, identities which are constantly repositioned depending on the contingency of moments, spaces and conditions. In a similar vein, Ahmet describes a situation where he repositioned and, at times, juxtaposed binaries paving the way for an ideal synthesis of Turkish and British cultures:

I think my two identities used to get in conflict when I was a bit younger, but it is kind of you can pick the best of both worlds, like in the jealousy example; when it comes to relationships, I think it is that you trust your partner you don't need to be jealous on a greater level. I think that might kind of tap into my non-Turkish side. Also, when I was growing up, I knew that in Turkish culture, the son's relationship

with his mother is special and when I grew up, it was ingrained in me that this is how it should be, and mother always comes first, I mean, family comes first it is something else, but I don't have that blinding decision making when it comes to things related to my mother anymore, not so much as in my younger years, blind bondage is not associated with British culture I believe.

(Ahmet, 28 years old, Application Engineer, Nottingham)

Ahmet claims that when he was younger, he felt conflicts between his British and Turkish identities, which seems to stem from cultural issues. He explains that the conflict stemming from his Turkish side is grounded upon certain aspects of the cultural identity of his immigrant parents, mainly his mother. The way he balances his two sides out seems to rest more on a flexible narrative of British identity. Accordingly, he associates Turkishness with strict rules and impermeable boundaries. In the following interview, Harun attempts to provide an answer to his identification with Turkishness embedded in his articulation of Britishness in a cultural context:

According to my mum, I am 100 % Turkish. We sometimes discuss this identity issue with my mum, and my opinion is that I see myself as Turk; I appreciate the Turkish culture, which is interesting. For instance, what makes the British happy is Sunday Roast, whereas we don't have a concept of 'Sunday Roast', so I cannot embrace English culture to a large extent. Therefore, I mainly see myself as Turkish; even so, I was born in the UK, and you adopt certain qualities from where you are born, so I am 90% Turkish.

(Harun, 22 years old, Studying Chemistry, Wales/ London)

While defining what makes him 'Turkish', Harun was also unwittingly addressing the conflation of Britishness and Englishness based on a 'Sunday Roast'. This is partly because

Englishness is imbued with a sense of mono-culture, correlated with English 'traditions' such as a Sunday Roast (Moore, 2013). For Harun, it is unattainable as the child of Turkish parents. The traditional Sunday roast was designed to be eaten after Sunday church services and originates from England (Brown, 2014). So, in the midst of questioning what defines his identities and taking English/ British cultural and religious activities as a reference point, Harun's account emphasises the boundaries of his faith, whether or not he ever practices Islam. The following respondent described another mind-body practice as kissing the hands of the elderly, which captures one of the everyday cultural-religious practices of Turks. This shows how marginal embodied practices of Turkish-Muslimness instigate deeper assumptions in Begüm's adaptability to the typical western life in Britain:

For instance, you being Turkish-Muslim decrees you to be more closed, kissing the hands of the elderly; however, when you are with your British friends, you would not do those and deep inside, you feel uneasy because of that. Very deep this issue is, though, depending on the situation.

(Begüm, 22 years old, Doing a Master's in Computer Engineering, Leicester)

When my respondents discussed cultural dissimilarities and the elusiveness of what typically defines Turkishness, Muslimness and Britishness, it revealed deep identity dissonances in them. Nevertheless, living in Britain with Turkish ethnicity and Muslim faith, British Turks' relations with and exposure to available patterns and symbolic boundaries of Islam, Turkishness and Britishness may cross the threshold of any and every one of the above. For Begüm, Turkish-Muslimness is not in agreement with British culture because conservative Turkish parents raised her. Her Turkish-Muslimness requires her to follow authentic practices based on what is ingrained in her by her parents, including kissing the hands of the elderly. These adherences give Begüm uneasiness when she is with British people.

On the face of it, Begüm appears to engage in certain traditions and performances of Muslim Turkishness taking place predominantly within the domestic sphere. However, it is also the case that such performances of culture might equally disrupt multiple articulations of her identities, including her Britishness. By questioning the manifestations of parental faith and values, my respondents seem to challenge patriarchal authority and reification of Turkish Muslimness. They show predisposition towards pluralism by using cultural elements available to them to understand who they really are (McGuire, 2008). This ambivalence about the value of traditional core practices eventually leads to the diversity of individual versions of religions and traditions. It is worth noting that admixtures, as well as disruptions of Muslimness, Britishness, and Turkishness, can leave British Turks free to become unique. As a result, their Islamic and Turkish values in Britain can be renegotiated and characterised by multiple worldviews (Davidman, 2007). In this section, I attempted to address the extent to which Turkishness is employed as a cultural identity amongst my respondents, mediated through family tradition, faith and upbringing. I also highlighted on what grounds Britishness, as another cultural identity and the site of *differance*, acts as a reference point for my respondents to negotiate their Turkish identity through.

#### **4.5 Constructing Britishness: Con-formation to the Norm**

Beyond historical-political constructions, ‘Britishness’ means different things to different ethnic groups, not least because traditional notions of Britishness are overwhelmingly ‘white and Christian’ (Seddon, 2010). It could also be argued that the lack of a unifying form of British cultural identity which truly embraces religious pluralism and cultural diversity can result in different ethnic groups taking on identities reflecting their own unique national and ethnic legacies. Indeed, British Turks’ responses demonstrated that Britishness is taken on as another

cultural identity, except that they only appeared to be able to frame it in reference to their Turkishness.

Britishness, for the respondents of this thesis, is expressed through personal narratives and individual experiences. Here, Britishness for British Turkish respondents is formed against the grounds of a mixture of Turkish and Islamic heritage, hence not only deconstructed but also infused with hybridity and transculturality, which is the recognition of the heterogeneity of one's identity. For example, Billur demonstrates a transcultural articulation of her identity embedded in her personal experiences in both Turkey and Britain:

When I first came here, when I was small, there was hardly any Turkish or any other cultural (sic), but now it is all mixed; it is different when I go to Turkey, for example, and some of them are not polite and they are very rude sometimes. For instance, when you go to a bank, or when you go to (sic), it is changing now, but when you go to a bank or hospital, you are treated like you've done something wrong. I wouldn't say I like it. Then I feel British. I wouldn't say I like manners and education in Turkey.

(Billur, 53 years old, Property Investor, London)

When comparing the manners and attitudes of Turkish people in Turkey with her everyday experiences in Britain, Billur sees herself as more British. Here, Billur appears to differentiate the alleged 'decivilised' manners of people in Turkey from British manners, which are represented as more modern, 'civil', and culturally superior by comparison (Crawford, 2017). To curb this image, Billur hinted at the likelihood of change, a change promulgating indisputable westernisation embedded into Britishness in this context as standard, thereby acting out an internalised self-orientalism (Göle, 2014). Said (1978) suggests that Orientalism is a mode of representation by which we distinguish ourselves from others, where otherness is

achieved through cultural modes of differentiation (Said, 1978; Yegenoglu, 1998, p. 2). Indeed, some of my respondents differentiated themselves from Turkey and Turkishness based on civil/modern manners and decorum assigned to the representations of 'Britishness'. Nurcan, who moved back to Turkey for good two years ago, highlights her Britishness as an outlet of freedom as opposed to the assumed traditions of everyday life in Turkey, thereby securing her image of a Western woman:

I used to wear revealing clothes in the UK whenever I wanted, whereas, in Turkey, it is accentuated as wrong and inappropriate. I am slowly learning the cultural differences. I used to go to pubs and discos to dance in my 20s; we were all married. We were relaxed. Here they say, 'Why are you going out? Are you looking for a man?'. My parents live in Turkey too, in Akçakoca; when I visit them, I have to return home before 11 p.m. as a 42 year old mature woman. I brought up my oldest daughter just the same way my mum brought me up. She moved to Turkey to study in high school; she returned to England after a year.

(Nurcan, 42 years old, Restaurant Owner, Coventry)

Nurcan's narratives, where we can observe the Orientalist drive, assume the ethical upper hand of 'Western' civilisation by compressing Turks, and Turkish values, into the Orient/ Occident dichotomy (Somay, 2014, p. 30). The power to reduce personal stories and *Turkish individuals* to single narratives and an undifferentiated group, despite dressing and acting like a European woman, was implemented with as much force as possible in the early decades of the Turkish republic<sup>11</sup>, is still power (Garner, 2012, emphasis mine). Adopting a Western/ Orientalist

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<sup>11</sup> Even though the Islamist discourse represented by the Justice and Development party (AKP) has targeted women who dress 'liberally' and have an un-conservative lifestyle, the strong secular legal framework in Turkey still provides the infrastructure for expanding women's rights and opportunities. Arat, Y. (2010). Religion, Politics and Gender Equality in Turkey: implications of a democratic paradox? *Third World Quarterly* 31(6) 869-884.

stance vis a vis dressing and cultural codes of her family living in Turkey, Nurcan stuck close to the enduring impacts of Western/ Orientalist discourse in the construction of Muslims and societies as the subordinated side of the dichotomy. Nurcan's adherence to the Western lifestyle makes her British. When Nurcan says that her daughter could not tolerate studying in Turkey, this is indicative (and consequential) of the desire to cling to Orientalist discourse or a tribute to her Britishness. Emre Can, in a similar vein, construed his British identity by assigning Turkey homogenous subordinated traits. Additionally, for him, liberalism and the absence of religion are the assumed traits of Britain:

The fact that I reason out everything rather than tending to go after religion-oriented solutions presumably is my British side, such that British people are predominantly liberal and are not religious. In my opinion, that I have gone through such a transformation is more to do with living in England. If I were to live in Turkey, I would not have had a chance to dig more into religions and the rationale behind them in general; I have better navigated religions and who I want to become. If I were to live in Turkey, going to any ordinary Djemevi might not have facilitated reading more and helped me become ultimately less religious. Just like my grandparents, I would have continued thinking of Alevism<sup>12</sup> as a part of Islam, and would have read Quran to memorise it.

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

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<sup>12</sup> Alevism is often defined as a mystical, or syncretic, or heterodox form of Islam and Alevis are strongly affiliated with the political left. Some of its members, like Emre Can, claim that Alevism is not part of the Islamic tradition, which has particularly entrenched across Alevi communities in Western Europe. In Germany, there was a stronger tendency than in Turkey to situate and re- imagine Aleviness outside Islam, and to understate its religious dimension (Massicard, 2011)

Emre Can embraces the secular form of Britishness and finds a positive association between British identity and becoming ‘ultimately less religious’. He recounts that living in England has a crucial role in setting him free from the shackles of Islam and a religious-oriented lifestyle. In other words, his assumed Britishness is operative on the grounds that it helps him dissociate from the bounds of Islam, framed around the idea that Western liberalism and secularism need to be defended against. The quote above illustrates that Emre Can’s account of Britishness is grounded within a critique of Islam and the concomitant traditionalist, an illiberal and non-progressive pattern that he believes characterises Turkey today. The way Emre Can reconstructs his particular denomination (Alevism), for it would allow him to dissociate himself from its Islamic roots seemingly, and plays a prominent role in fitting into the shifting boundaries of Britishness (which more recently vilifies Muslims).

For a handful of my respondents, being predisposed to Britishness is profoundly complicated, as family members negotiate their mutual understandings and aspirations according to the shifting spatial and political formations. Emre Can’s parents, as leftist activists, migrated to Britain following the 1980 military coup in Turkey. Emre Can, however, does not share a common political identity to the same extent as his parents, which he believes is to do with his Britishness:

Under certain circumstances, I identify as British, especially when there is a clash of ideas between my parents and me. The fact that I study Sociology helps me gain a further grasp of the differences between us, second generation and our parents-first generation, and this kind of awareness substantiates the fact that I am British even though I was born into a Turkish family. My outlook on life is like English. I am more inclined to support economic conservatism like capitalism which is fair enough considering that I was born into it.

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

Various signifiers, including liberalism, capitalism, and the modernist stance vis a vis 'religion', culminated in Emre Can's identity boundaries between himself and first-generation Turkish immigrants. This shows the complexities between Islam and the West ensuing the possibility of exclusion. With this considered, I argue that relegation to the status of non-Western is not desired among my respondents because difference and otherness are discriminated against. All in all, Turco-Islamic values might reflect the absence of principles of progress and reason and are thereby defined as 'other'-than the norm (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 103). Consequently, developing Britishness along the lines of dichotomies is an essential and unavoidable reaction to remove the plight of exclusion. I show that this is embedded in a comment made by Ediz:

I do feel British. I was born here. I have lived my life, and I have got English friends, but then again, I do have friends from different nationalities. In terms of integrating into the culture, I think I have, you know, I do not know how to describe British culture in terms of the way I act, the way I feel around British people; I have no problems, I have never had any problems integrating into society. I think most of it had to do with, you know, my parents; they did not pressure me into going to the mosque or anything like that. I did go to a Turkish school in England, GCSE and A level in the Turkish language.

(Ediz, 31 years old, Teacher, London)

Though the ways my respondents define their Britishness changes (dependent on personal narratives), they are all circumscribed by the discourses highlighting the complex ways in which my respondents identify Turkish culture/identity and the strategies they developed to cope with the current position of Muslims and Islamophobia. As discussed earlier, British

Turks defined 'Britishness' not by civic, national or racial terms but in binary, dichotomous terms where the boundaries of Britishness are constructed in the negation of assumed distinctive religio-cultural characteristics of Turkishness. British Turks described their Britishness largely in the absence of both religious and ethnocultural particularities pertaining to Islam and Turkishness, and this lack of the former is taken on to form the ways they navigate Britishness, with an implication of its being the 'superior' civilisation. The result is that the utilisation of certain elements of the Turkish and Islamic boundaries of difference indicates the orientalist representation of the lines along which the boundaries of Britishness are drawn.

#### **4.6 Religion and Ummah Consciousness: Togetherness in Difference**

According to Bauman, in order for a person to convince others of their individuality, they must use shared, commonly recognisable and legible tokens (2005, p. 16). Some of my respondents' discussions of their Muslimness, with its shared global dimensions, have been constructed on the basis of its 'universal sense of solidarity' mediated by deterritorialised cultural identity. For them, Muslimness has appeared to help negotiate the complexities of multiple identities as a result of an increasing 'unbelongingness', followed by the racial and ethnic hierarchies in contemporary world systems where the spectre of Western colonial expansion is still ubiquitous (Grosfoguel and Georas, 2000; as cited in Seddon, 2010). Turkishness, for instance, as a specific cultural identity in the diaspora, is devoid of the universalism exhibited in the forms of 'Muslimness'. Also, as I have noted previously, Turkishness for diasporic youth is in constant negotiation, evident in the processes whereby elements of identity formation appear to be circumscribed through parental narratives, upbringing, and summer holidays spent in Turkey. When one considers these boundaries and the fact that their identification with Turkishness would never cut across the above processes, their Turkishness would never traverse the threshold of a split subject: a fractured reality (Gilroy, 1993).

Similarly, most of my respondents position themselves on the ‘margins of Britishness’, which appears to be a contestable national identity with its white native superiority and its concomitant semi-mythical historical constructions (Seddon, 2010). Having the authenticity of one’s Turkishness and Britishness called into question matter-of-factly propelled some of my respondents into prioritising their Muslimness, where they can maintain an ummah consciousness as a replacement for constantly contested and conflictual identities. Throughout my interviews, those who come to terms with the problematic nature of describing their identity seem to coalesce around their religious identity as a relatively bounded and clearly demarcated entity. In the following extract, Ayşe explains why she and her family are more aligned with Muslimness:

I am not English and Christian, and neither are my children. They are Muslim, so I wish them to grow up with Islamic morals; however, I instil in them the fact that they should respect differences. All in all, we are foreigners here, and we live in their country. As long as they respect us, we will respect them, too. We do not have to be like them, be one of them and follow their steps in whatever they do like a selfless person. When I used to work, they would have Christmas parties, and I used to attend every year. I was younger, of course, and was willing to partake for the sake of socialising and did not consider it odd to do. As I grow older now, my enthusiasm has gone down. If I am invited, I thank and turn it down. I basically wished to adapt to this life, but I never had to follow in their footsteps. I am free.

(Ayşe, 41 years old, Interpreter, London)

Though Ayşe emphasised that she is not English and Christian, she hinted at the inability to separate herself from certain attributes of mainstream British society when she suggested that she ‘wished to adapt to this life’. She was basically unable to uncover her true self as someone who is ‘neither Christian nor English’ and could not truly cut away the layers of British culture

imposed on her due to her external social roles as illustrated by ‘Christmas parties’ (Gilbertson, 2007). It is clear that Ayşe desired to be accepted at the expense of her true self.

Ayşe’s quote reflects the process of transition from the tendency to retain elements of British culture, namely Christmas parties, into the practices and values unique to her Muslimness. Interestingly, as someone who arrived in Britain in her early childhood, Ayşe’s suggestion that ‘all in all, we are foreigners here’ allows us to make a detour through Derrida’s conditional hospitality, in which he argues that ‘the host remains the host and the guest remains the guest, the invited guest– ‘Please come in, you are invited’– but of course, as an invited guest you won’t disturb too seriously the order of the house, you are going to speak our language, eat the way we eat etc’ (Derrida, 2001; as cited in Yegenoglu, 2012, p. 178). Clearly, identifying with Ummah as a universal construct transcends the feeling of uprootedness and makes possible the dream of a uniform identity articulated in terms of diffuse Islam. Sayyid (2000) asserts that the overrepresentation of Muslim immigrants in the West, upon decolonisation and the arrival of Muslim refugees to Western Europe, has the effect of producing the conditions for the articulation of a Muslim *Ummah*. In this context, Sayyid reconceptualises what the Muslim *Ummah* is and suggests that the Muslim *Ummah* does not amount to the nation writ large by virtue of its spatially unbounded and universally inclusive nature. A nation, however, is an enterprise based on exclusion rather than inclusion, where the host remains the host and the guest remains the guest. The idea of the *Ummah*, however, rejects all such limits; its universalism and implicit expansionism are constantly reiterated (ibid, p. 36). Indeed, Hale’s comments below indicate that she correlates her stance towards *Ummah* with the ethos of transnational commonalities, the solidarities based on faith rather than division and difference:

I identify myself more with Ummah than Turkishness. My connection to Ummah, then to Turkishness. I was thinking of this a while ago, over a year or so and realised

that being connected to Turkishness, there is no connection other than the town or the village that either I or my parents are from. People are still segregated and divided, and they only think of themselves, e.g., status, colour, food they eat, where they live, friends, and so on. We then become a self-depressed society. However, when I am part of Ummah, I feel connected to the world and belong to a community that is there for me no matter which part of Turkey or the world I am in. Whether I practice or not is irrelevant, and this also gives me the opportunity to connect to other faiths, as we all belong together. Faith connects people, countries and the world. We do so many things, good or bad, for faith.

(Hale, 40 years old, Identity Management Officer, London)

The above discussion implies that appealing to a transnational identity, such as Muslim ummah, challenges the idea that British Turks living in Britain are necessarily ‘different’ based on their distinctive ethnic identity. In addition, the wish to forge a new reality embedded in Ummah’s unified system of representation operates like a myth of common ancestry. Embracing Ummah thus appears to be a magic tool that British Turkish respondents lacked: a transnationally united identity. My respondent’s expression of a desire for ‘inclusion’ rather than a marginalised ‘other’ might also be particularly associated with different forms of racism they might have faced or felt in Britain. The way Hale finishes her extract, therefore, reminds us of the universalist nature of faith delinked from ethnic, racial or national bonds. This means that the logic of Muslim *ummah* cuts across the condition of being Muslim. In other words, it is beyond a one-sided, a-priori form of connection and premised on common moral grounds for the common good. For example, Aslı told me her interpretation of *ummah* is grounded on a shared sense of cohesion and solidarity, like a form of social consciousness:

I will say Ummah because I do a lot of religious things because we are all in this world, and while we are here and what is our duty and responsibilities, I will say,

for Ummah. But there is another way as well sometimes it is so confusing that I had a tenant in here, and I had to call the police to get him out. If you look at him, he had a beard [means he is a ‘devout’ Muslim], *masAllah* he says but nothing, you know. He gave me the biggest headache he was like; I’ve realised you should never judge a person by what they do or how they look; I mean, I went for the ummah part of it, I mean, my neighbours are not Muslim, and a Muslim person far away wanted help from me. I’d help my neighbour first; they are next to me. I don’t know. I am for the Ummah. If I was to be on the street, and this girl with a scarf on got picked on, I’ll step there and argue for her, and I’d protect her. If I saw a person on the street that is open [no veil/hijab] and non-Muslim, and the Muslim one was to pick on her, I’d be angrier maybe, because... This is my personality; I am for humanity. It makes me feel better this way, Allah’ in tüm yarattıklarına<sup>13</sup>... regardless shall I say...

(Aslı, 55 years old, Working with Autistic Children, London)

The point Aslı made may be associated with Ummah’s universality perspective, mediated and moulded by a pervasive moral tone derived from the individual relationship to God and not by old primordial loyalties solely invoked and maintained among Muslims (Hassan, 2018). Here, my respondent displayed an *ummah* consciousness by depicting herself as in the service of humanity, not necessarily for Muslims only. So, Aslı’s illustration of *ummah* consciousness might be conceived as something challenging the injustices, segregation and exclusion when she says, ‘I am for humanity... regardless’.

The current expulsion of Islam in the West is evidence of its function as the ‘constitutive outside’ of Europe. To recap briefly, the constitutive outside refers to the fact that any social

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<sup>13</sup> All God’s creatures.

objectivity, discourse, the system of meaning, or identity is constituted by differentiating itself from what it excludes (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; as cited in Yegenoglu, 2012). The important question, therefore, for this thesis is whether the linkages between cultural identities adopted by my respondents and the quarks of Islamophobia which carries traces of ‘constitutive outside’ could reciprocally exert influence on the process of identity formation of the research informants. This highlights the point made by Mandaville (2009), where he argued ‘for many Muslims in Europe, Islam is indeed an important reference point for self-identity, but one whose strength and meaning are contingent on circumstance rather than fixed’ (as cited in Harrison, 2020, p.30). Against this background, the interview data examined for this section sheds light on the decultured and transnational Muslim identity adopted as a matter of choice, constantly reconfigured in response to personal challenges and preferences. The common thread in three of the quotes is that free choice, solidarity, and humanity are connected to *ummah* characterised by ‘organic solidarity’, whereby individuals who have the freedom to develop independent identities are connected to one another not by their sameness but through their interdependence (Davidman, 2007, p. 53). Thus, when manifested as a matter of individual choice, Muslim *ummah* gives some of my respondents a hook on which to hang their religious identity with its unfixed boundaries and transnational elements.

#### **4.7 The Role of Turkish Parents on Identity Construction**

British Turkish respondents remain heavily influenced by the social, cultural and political views of their Turkish parents, who are fragmented in the same manner as the political scene is fragmented in Turkish society. In other words, ‘homeland’ politics and politics in the Turkish diaspora in Europe continuously feed and affect each other (Akpınar, 2007, p. 134). As the following discussions will illustrate, the family backgrounds of my respondents reflect a microcosm of Turkey in terms of religious/secular polarisation. Accordingly, we see a snapshot

of polarisation in the way Turkish immigrants in the diaspora raise their British-born children, who potentially go through processes of either living according to Turkish traditions and Islamic values or with a modern secular approach to life. Although the Turkish diaspora in Britain is potentially influenced by the ties originating from the homeland, where the long-standing divisions between secular/religious socialisation are alive and intact, the experiences of British Turks and the extent to which my respondents accommodate their parental ideologies and identities cannot be generalised as applicable to all British Turks in Britain. It may be that Turkish diasporic individuals, with their commitment to social and political cohesion of homeland, are potentially forging a new way towards social and political cohesion through hybridity. This new form of cohesion, the diaspora consciousness, breaks the binary relations of minority communities with majority societies, which eventually forms 'identity crises, betwixt and in-betweenness' (Kaya, 2001).

The notion of 'in-between' was proposed by Homi Bhabha (1996) to explain 'going back and forth between the designations of identity'. According to Bhabha, 'subjects' who are held in that abeyance always inhabit a liminal space, thereby preventing subjects from dwelling at either end, and from settling into polarities. In this section, I attempt to address the double consciousness of both Turkish parents and their British Turkish children, which arises from historical, political and cultural tensions in Turkey. But most significantly, I will examine how parental duality stemming from Islamophobic discourses depicting pious Turks and their culture as a threat to the modern secular way of life in Turkey illuminates British Turks' identity formations in the British context. Consequently, albeit limited in its capacity to explain the inner dynamics of Turkish political, social and cultural order, my analysis has been conducted for the following two sections to address the ideal type of Turkish parenting in the diaspora, built from the empirical data. In calling attention to the dangers of reifying differently structured upbringing of British Turks as resonances of long-standing political polarisation in

Turkey, I argue that we need to develop a serious appreciation of differences amongst Turkish diaspora in Britain as products of different circumstances and expressions of different migration histories, and desires.

#### ***4.7.1 Secular Camp***

Younger respondents frequently emphasised that their parents are concerned about their educational achievement in their country of settlement, and hence intervene in their children's individual autonomy and choices:

Turkish parents here still have the mindset of how they were growing up in Turkey, and it is so different now. It made me uncomfortable just a bit, but not 100%. This mindset of my parents impacted me in a way that certain expectations that Turkish parents would want would probably be normal back then. Turkish parents would want us to be a doctor and a teacher, so they would put that kind of thing on you as the only way to succeed, especially only if you go to university or get your degree then you become successful. No other choice is... what it has to be. This is definitely a Turkish thing; I feel like British parents are freer with what their children do; I feel like they could be more open to choices that they could give to their children than Turkish parents.

(Azra, 17 years old, Studying Law and Business, London)

Azra's parents' attitudes indicate that their child's status in the country of the settlement could be secured or consolidated if Azra moves up the career ladder by ensuring a 'proper' profession such as a doctor or teacher; only then would she 'literally' belong to British society. Parents' desire for their children to 'fit in' as other members of mainstream society is manifest in the ways they limit the line of career opportunities for their children (Şimsek, 2012). What is apparent in the comment made in relation to the Turkish parents' outlook on their children's

future is the fear of seeing them marginalised rather than integrated into the country of settlement. However, the projection of parental ambition onto children for high achievement was frustrating for quite a few of my respondents. This is also similar to the experiences of youngsters who were born and raised in Turkey, as this sort of outlook is arguably rooted in the Ottoman's modernisation efforts based on the ideal of reaching the 'contemporary civilisation'. This would only be assured through education, which is viewed as the benchmark to generate a successful Turkish youth in compliance with the Western ideal.

The aim of progress and a new social order based on modernisation was accompanied by a strong emphasis that targeted westernisation as supreme importance in the *Tanzimat*<sup>14</sup> period. In this respect, education has played a vital role in the rejuvenation of the Turkish nation as the most effective and convenient signifier, as well as the reference point of the western model of modernity for Turkish society. In the ambitious position it occupies, the 'Western model of modernity', moving forward, in other words, needs to be protected by the Kemalist, republican, and secular approaches to life. Having said that, the promotion of the western model was incorporated not only into education but also permeated the way of life with dancing and bridge parties, manners, and dress through the implementation of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926 in Turkey (Göle, 2015). This transformation is a sign of prestige, but also a marker of inferiority. According to Bayrakli et al. (2018), adamantly protecting the secularist character of the Turkish

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14 The Tanzimat reforms hold a unique place in the Ottoman history of modernization. During the Tanzimat period (1839–1878), the state underwent a restructuring process in almost all of its institutions to establish a centralised modern state, and many new institutions were established. The Ottomans paid special attention to education to train the new generation required for the continuity of modernisation and the centralised bureaucratic structure. While they opened modern high schools and higher education institutions, they attempted to reform the existing sıbyan schools, which were the primary education institutions (Samani, 2018)

Republic is embedded in the double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of the other. This explains why secular Turkish parents, albeit not exclusively the ones who immigrated to Britain per se, place a special emphasis on their children's educational credentials, which is the articulation of the Eurocentric model and West-centric power structure that seeks to delegitimise Islam in the Turkish context. Ultimately, Islamophobia is a strategic tool for Turkish individuals who are loyal to secularism, which inadvertently functions to preserve the Western lifestyle and identity. Kerem's father immigrated to England to learn English, and his current lifestyle is translated as integration into Britain through the lens of Kerem:

Some things are difficult because there has been quite a big period of time since I have not visited Turkey. I don't really talk to my Turkish family, and [communication] is kind of stopped in the last few years. So, my Turkish is not fluent, just a bit. My dad did not really speak to me Turkish. I think he is quite integrated into British culture. He goes to the pub and drinks with friends. But when he goes to Turkey, he is a completely different person when he is talking about things with family, but in this country, I feel like he is quite integrated.

(Kerem, 19 years old, Studying Medicine, London)

Kerem's father's allegiance to secular and modern western society, accorded with western habits of eating and socialising, signals a desire to project a secular Turkish image to the West (Bali, 2002). Such a recognition, especially for those who are in this 'in-between-ness' of two distinctive cultures, eventually morphs into what is expected from them, thus emulating western individuals in accordance with parental aspirations. Kerem's geographical and cultural alienation from Turkey points to the orientalist dreams of Turkish parents. The insecurity predominantly featured in the lack of Turkish language and the weakening relationship with

families in Turkey is what invokes Kerem's deracination and alienation from his parental culture, and this undecidability of 'in-betweenness' is pigeonholed by his father's 'integration' into Britain. However, as indicated later in Kerem's quote, when his father 'goes to Turkey, he is completely a different person' shows the subjects who inhabit 'in-between' realities in the diaspora cannot overdo one reality and hence retain their original traditions as well. As Grossberg (1996) argues, 'people who interlace both realities... are forced to live in the interface between the two' (p.92). To capture these 'crossovers' of Turkish parents in relation to political and cultural cleavages in Turkey, the next quote illustrates the escalating frictions between British Turkish respondents and their parents' perspectives of Turkey:

I feel restricted. It is a kind of reaction against me also because my dad is like, 'you cannot say anything bad about Turkey' if I say it is a corrupt country. He hates Erdoğan but if I say it is a corrupt country, the fact that its secular identity is disrupted, institutions are completely eroded, he does not like me saying such things really; it is a kind of reaction against my ideas, obviously. I wish my father had taught me Turkish rather, my cousins are bilingual, for instance, but I am unfortunately not.

(Semih, 36 years old, Engineer, Manchester)

Though Turkey's current internal debates, which are imbued with social, political and cultural conflicts between the secularists and the Islamists, are beyond the scope of this thesis, the problematisation of the process of Turkish modernisation in which the secular way has long excluded the Islamic code of living from the public sphere is useful in addressing the 'in-betweenness' and 'identity-crisis' of Turkish first comers in Britain. Accordingly, the interior of this narrative is the testimony of awareness of Turkish political tensions, which sheds light on modes of Islamophobia in Muslim-majority Turkey. Most notably, my respondents

highlight how their parents occupy an in-between ambivalent zone and forge a sense of displacement and insecurity in their children. Semih's reflection on the friction between the father and son relationship is a reminder of the 'secular' overdetermination of Turkish identity, emblematic of the pro-Western orientation or Orientalism (Yorukoglu, 2017b), which is corroborated by Semih's insights about his father's political opinions. Indeed, it is intriguing to think about the aim to make Turkish identity almost 'more Western' than 'the West itself'. Orhan Pamuk, a well-known Turkish novelist, describes the socio-psychological stance of the people of the early Republic as such (2004, p. 211):

Ours was the guilt, the loss, and jealousy felt at the sudden destruction of the last traces of a great culture and a great civilisation that were unfit or unprepared to inherit [...] in our frenzy to turn Istanbul into a pale, poor, second-class imitation of a Western city.

Indeed, in the last quote, one can see the doubt with which Semih views his father's westernised aspirations. Semih outsteps his Turkish father's social and political stance and resists the taken-for-granted secular Western narratives in a world in which distinctions between the east and the west, the Islamic, the modern, and secular, are no longer empirically plausible, in which established boundaries are continuously shifting (Göle, 2015). The fact that Turkish society has been engaged in a prolonged conversation with Western modernity with shifting attitudes and moods ranging from subservience to anger, from Western mimicry to native authenticity materialises in the ways in which my respondents' self-representations, crossovers and adversities in the country of settlement shape up (ibid, p. 149). Taken together, the results in this section indicate that there is a reciprocal horizontal interaction between first-generation immigrants and their children who grew up in Britain. I found that the tensions that arose in my respondents' identity formations partially stem from the rigid expectations of their immigrant parents, who grew up in a country which is impossible to categorise.

#### ***4.7.2 Conservative Camp***

Ultimately, the cultural identities of my respondents sit in parallel with the values and mentalities of their immigrant parents, underlying the paradoxes in response to fears about Islamophobia, integration, lack of opportunities or career security (Rashid, 2013). Islamophobia is particularly difficult for pious Turks to navigate in their host country because of the Turkish Republic's stress on secularism and a Western-facing future as a precondition to democracy and modernisation (Abdelkader, 2018). Accordingly, the long-standing anxiety of being visibly Muslim within Turkey is evidently reconstituted in the host country and reflected in the narratives of my veiled respondents. Pointedly, in contrast to the respondents whose parents relatively endorse the virtues of western modernity and secularism, some of my respondents pointed out that their immigrant parents showed tenacious valorisation of Islam and Turkishness. Having been raised in a vacuum of parental authority in conformity with traditional Turkish and Islamic norms, Hale critically correlates the protective and authoritative nature of Turkish parents with a certain degree of insecurity and disunity imprinted on their children in the country of settlement:

Not every parent is like that, but most first-generation parents would not let their children out because imagine you were born in a village [in Turkey] and then the freedom to run about the place and then all of a sudden you are like a caged bird, all of a sudden you are wild and free all of a sudden you are caged in [again]. Of course, when you visit other people, you are always criticised; I know that it happens everywhere, even now, in Turkey even, everywhere it happens, so that has not changed, but the freedom where parents were afraid to let their kids out because of what was going on within the community, and they could not trust anybody because they were not one of them, they were not part of the British colony or should I say, British community, even though they were made to feel welcomed, but there was

still unsafe unsureness, they were worried about if something happens to their kid because they don't know the language, they don't know the culture they don't know anything...[...] they don't let you out, so you don't know how to talk to people, you don't know about money or anything, so that was quite challenging.

(Hale, 40 years old, Identity Management Officer, London)

Hale clearly demonstrates the tensions of Turkish parents upon their arrival to Britain, which is alien and foreign, highlighted in a snapshot of the encounter between different language communities, cultural codes, ethnicities and religions (Göle, 2015). Many feared that native British society was vexed over the arrival of Turkish and Muslim immigrants to their neighbourhoods, but moreover, they prematurely doubted the new country's secular cultural values, such as freedom, in an unsettling fear of transgressing the traditional boundaries of the home country. Hale's narrative alludes to the secular anxieties and limitations thereof placed upon conservative Turks in Turkey. Her parents moved out from Turkey, only to confront the European public sphere and public order in Britain, such as secularism, women's status, and private and personal space. Hale's parents feared that their children's engagement to cultivate a 'westernised' lifestyle could pose a challenge to their taken-for-granted cultural values, which Hale expressed by the 'caged bird' metaphor. Consequently, the parental anxiety and discomfort of Turkish parents who adamantly protect the Turco-Islamic heritage in the host country hinder their children's internalisation of difference and identity building.

As Hale indicated, parental anxieties, with their concomitant restrictions drilled into their children, appear to be the backbone of parental identities. These are rooted in traditional cultural practices, as well as in the foreignness of the immigrated lands, mobilised as an insistent factor of limitation. In contrast to the positionalities of the secular parents, who displayed loyalty and cultural belongingness to western culture, the relatively more traditional

Turkish parents try to protect the hybrid culture where Islam and Turkishness play symbolic roles as signs of heritage (Akpınar, 2007, p. 135). This internal battle has doubtlessly been projected onto children raised in Britain in the forms of constant and recurring preoccupation with the representation of themselves (Hall, 1997). This argument would underlie Hale's narrative, where she appears to absolve the premature preoccupations of her parents in the country of settlement:

And there were all other things happening at that time when teenagers were getting pregnant and having kids. It was quite a fashion sort of thing. Every teenager would come out with babies all of a sudden, British ones, of course; parents were afraid that you are out, they are going to keep an eye on you when they send you to the shops because you don't know anything. Each parent is different; my dad has to have us at home; he'd rather [...] he cannot sleep unless all the kids were home sleeping. So, my cousins, they'd come, so they'd come to stay with us, but my parents would only let us go there, but in the middle of the night, my dad would close the shop and pick us up. So that is his nature; it'd be nice if they'd have helped us to bring out our inner confidence at the age of 14, and it would have been nice at 16,18, 20.

(Hale, 40 years old, Identity Management Officer, London)

It is the sense of intimacy and sexual modesty (*edep*) which are the markers of conservative values, that is, the sacredness of interior space, women's *mahram*<sup>15</sup>, and the supervised communities (*mahalles*) that require the limitation of the public self (Göle, 2015). However, Hale's covert desire to 'bring out her inner confidence and to be one of them' is associated with her awareness of the culture clash she sees in first-generation immigrant parents from

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<sup>15</sup> Forbidden to the male gaze.

Turkey (Ngo, 2008). Added to that, as we see in Hale's quotes, the doubleness of culture and identity as a devout Muslim wearing a headscarf, Hale is different from her parents as she can problematise the static and essentialist, internally bounded structures of the conservative camp. Hale appears to recognise the differences in the ways in which she interweaves the traditional values of immigrant parents with the attributions of Western societies. Hale's approach demonstrates that, as opposed to her parents, she takes on a more plural cultural identity. This unifying identity over and above ethnic and religious differences is germane to less restrictive values, and more individualistic aspirations of Hale. Hale was not the only respondent who demonstrated the clash of values between herself and her family:

One thing I do say is, as you can probably guess, I've settled down and got married really early, and I believe that's partly because my mum and my dad did not want us to risk maybe exploring Britain and getting married to somebody who is not Turkish so that is one area I'd say. If I was to go back and my struggle is not that he [her husband]; I think it was the age which was the most important I was not ready for marriage, and the fact that I think it was trying to pull on being that Turkish family, I think that is what they were trying to do. I think about it with my own children, and I am like, what would I do? I question the way I am going to parent and the way I am going to approach maybe their choice of spouse in the future, so yeah, time will show.

(Gülk1z, 32, Working in Local Council, London)

Here, Gülk1z draws attention to the dualisms between parental values mediated by country of origin and herself, who is caught between two worlds, notwithstanding that she exhibits a certain degree of alignment with the traditional values of immigrant parents. That said, the way she started her extract was completely unexpected, considering that we had not met before the interview, and thus, I had no idea what sort of upbringing she might have had in Britain. She

self-assumed that her veil would enable me to situate her premature marriage in context as an affirmation of her conservative upbringing, bringing forth a performative aspect as a marker of the affirmation of her conservative parents. It is obvious in the quote above that the intergenerational conflicts of British Turkish respondents and their immigrant parents, for instance, are manifest through the age of marriage or the choice of spouse. I argue that this underlies the doubleness and intricacies of Gülkız's identity. Here, she neither fully repudiates her conservative parents' decisions nor fully enshrines them to mediate the antagonisms in the ways she raises her kids. This double movement, as Hall states, creates an identity that is fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions (Hall, 1994, p.4 as cited in Ngo, 2008, p.7) Finally, as culture and identity are in a continuous flow, complex identity and cultural formations for British Turkish respondents do not simply and monolithically confide in national, multinational, religious or ethnic imaginations including Islamophobic and Orientalist discourses embedded in Turkish society. Although parental influence is contingent on various cultural-historical stereotypes of the Turkish nation-state against Islam and pious Turks, thereby impacting my respondents' negotiations of identities and lifestyles in Britain, British Turks seemingly develop double loyalties testifying to the uniform and bounded values becoming obsolete.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

Before starting my fieldwork, I wondered whether generalised Islamophobia would diminish British Turkish respondents' capacity to embody Britishness or belonging to Britain. It turned out that my respondents constantly negotiate and take on identities, including whiteness and Britishness, as they benefit from them in the face of racist and Islamophobic hostility, whilst

wittingly or unwittingly reject aspects of identities such as Turkishness or Muslimness if those undermine the possibility of inclusion and belonging into the mainstream society.

Some British Turks adopted Britishness/ Englishness as defined by dominant 'white' versions of reality despite alternative discourses, as these versions hold and have access to 'social, cultural, economic, political, and thus symbolic of power' (Moran, 2007, as cited in Ali and Sonn, 2010). It is not surprising, then, that whiteness has been picked up amongst British Turks as a strategic instrument to resist Islamophobia- the fear or prejudice against Islam, Muslims and matters pertaining to them (Ramberg, 2004; Yorukoglu, 2017a). As such, similar to other Muslim communities in Britain, including Black and South Asian Muslims, the constant shift in identities becomes apparent, especially amongst younger British Turks who become increasingly conscious of group differences as their interaction with 'white' British people increase (Modood, 2018). This way of interpreting the identity shift amongst British Turks can frame identity as a 'notion': as mobile, as a process, not a thing, not a being- it is best understood as an experience of the *self-in-process* (Frith, 1996). I have found that by negotiating particular types of cultural identities within broader dynamics, including the role of family and interplay of ummah consciousness, the homeland, and the socio-spatial underpinnings of cosmopolitan places, British Turks navigate their everyday life to find a balance to fit in the UK and the culture of their upbringing.

It is in this sense that this chapter is useful for understanding the role of Islamophobia and its associations with the processes of identity formation of the British Turkish respondents. It also allows us to challenge the essentialist understandings of identity formation to the point where shifting identities of British Turks map out a particular kind of experience or a way of dealing with a particular kind of experience (ibid, p. 110), including removal from specific geo-cultural origins of their parents towards broader feelings of deploying a cosmopolitan urban British

identity or aspiring to engage in a Muslim identity articulated in terms of a diffuse Islam (Sayyid, 2000). All in all, the empirical data encapsulating the identity formations of British Turks is pivotal in understanding how aspects of British Turks' shifting identities are shaped by the dialogical relations with the political, social and cultural.

As extensively explored in the sections of this chapter, British Turks construct their identities based on a cultural spectrum between parental homeland and country of birth, as well as on broader mechanisms such as cosmopolitanism, whiteness, and ummah consciousness. In doing so, the current political landscape, based on the anti-Muslim rhetoric, along with the extent to which the notion of Islamophobia shapes and also limits their identifications, is addressed in conjunction with the interview data. In the next chapter, I move from exploring the identity formation processes of British Turks to investigating the manifestations of racialised and religious discrimination that makes the British Turks insecure in day-to-day life, and also at the institutional level within the UK.

## CHAPTER 5

### MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF BRITISH TURKS

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I extensively demonstrated the multiple sources of cultural identity and the processes intrinsic to the formation of identities that British Turks deploy in the UK. I concluded that the nuances of Islamophobia are inextricably linked with cultural identities adopted by British Turks and exert influence on the processes of identity formation of my respondents. In addition to the cultural identities taken on by my respondents on an individual level, the impact of social, cultural, and political constraints on the processes of identity formation were discussed when considering what Islamophobia means to my respondents.

This chapter will discuss the extent to which Islamophobia is a concern for British Turkish people and how much it intersects with and shapes the day-to-day lives of my respondents. This chapter is primarily concerned with the definition and manifestation of Islamophobia. This is because I understand that issues concerning daily forms of Islamophobia are differentiated and context-bound and therefore identified across the spectrums dependent on particular histories, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds, which are captured in the notion of ‘technologies of power’. Seen as the typical features of modern Western society, ‘technologies of power’ forge a complex causal intermeshing between a milieu and its population, often determining individuals' conduct and submitting them to certain ends of domination (Foucault, 1988). Accordingly, this thesis focuses on Britain after 9/11 and 7/7. It highlights how ‘technologies of power’<sup>16</sup> in the forms of governmental practices, such as Fundamental British

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<sup>16</sup> This is further discussed in Chapter 2 (Literature Review).

Values (FBV), routine stereotypes of ‘us’ and ‘them’ by the use of racialisation, ‘othering’ and sensational media reporting in the aftermath of Islamic terrorist events, positioning ‘veiling’ as backwardness and violent, among other things, come to objectify and racialise Muslims with superimposed biological, cultural and ancestral affiliations, with a specific focus upon British Turks as homogenous, outside of, and opposed to Britishness (Awan and Zempi, 2019; Foucault, 1977).

My analysis coalesces around the impacts of Islamic activities post-9/11 and post-7/7, and post-Brexit Britain. A thorough historical analysis of Islamophobia anterior to the previously listed events cannot account for my respondents’ experiences and are hence beyond the scope of this research. The ‘ideal’ body wrought by the ‘technologies of power’ in Britain today is accumulated in negating a homogenised ‘Muslim’ as a racialised identity, lumped into one-dimensional, generalising categories with no variation in ‘race’, ethnicity, culture or nationality. These categories are broadly represented through markers, including darker skin, beards and long gowns typically covering the area between the waist and the knees for men and Islamic headscarf (or ‘veil’ and ‘hijab’)<sup>17</sup> for women. Thus, individuals and communities with those visible signifiers are easily recognised and become, in a multitude of different ways, victims of Islamophobic acts (Ramberg, 2004, p. 87). British Turks, except for some female respondents wearing the Islamic headscarf, are not so easily subsumable under such objectivized and essentialised specificities attributed to ‘Muslims’; some of whom are not believers or subscribe to various strands of identification with Islam, which have also been challenged by Turkish secularism<sup>18</sup>. Secondly, it is ‘whiteness’ as a racial category of

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<sup>17</sup> I have highlighted my reasons behind why I opted for a veil or an Islamic veil over a headscarf in previous chapters.

<sup>18</sup> It also came to mean that the Islamic religion, and highly dispersed communities of Muslims, became closely associated with individual national identities and with specific iterations of state identity. Either way, Turks, no

distinction which, to a certain level, helps my respondents claim to be part of the ‘West’ instead of the ‘East’. Effectively, whiteness is used as a ‘racial marker’ to deny, if not effectively deflect, the issue of Islamophobia and its associations from their agenda. However, the frank insightfulness of my respondents is highly reflective of different modes of operation and the context-boundedness of Islamophobia in Britain, revealing how people do not experience Islamophobia as a monolithic system but rather how it is lived out contextually (Aquino, 2020, p. 226). The complexities and intricacies embedded in the ways Islamophobia is defined and contextualised by the respondents of this research are encapsulated at micro levels, such as the Islamic headscarf, microaggressions, and xenophobia in primary and secondary schools, as well as macro levels embedded in key political and policy debates such as ‘FBVs’ and the Brexit Campaign.

## **5.2 Racialisation of British Turks: Everyday Living with Islamophobia**

In this section, I centre on the everyday experiences of British Turkish people, drawn out through their accounts of prejudicial treatment and discrimination across areas of social, religious and cultural life. According to Meer and Modood (2011), the increase in everyday personal abuse since 9/11 and 7/7, in which the perceived ‘Islamicness’ of the victims is central to the abuse regardless of the validity of this presumption, suggests that discrimination or hostility to Islam and Muslims should be understood as a composite of ‘racialisation’ (p.74). Indeed, this means that the period especially after September 11, 2001, has given rise to the ‘consolidation of new identity category that grouped persons who appear to be ‘Middle Eastern,

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matter how religious they are, have as much experience living in a secular society as Germans, Finns, or Italians. This is further discussed in Chapter 6. El-Tayeb, F. (2011). *European others: Queering ethnicity in post-national Europe*: U of Minnesota Press, Yorukoglu, I. (2014). *Acts of belonging: Perceptions of citizenship among queer Turkish women in Germany*: City University of New York.

Arab, or Muslim...’ (Choudhury and Beydoun, 2020, p. 19). What has solidified this identity category is a particular form of racialisation, wherein those who look ‘Muslim’, as well as those who do not particularly ‘look’ Muslim but unravel their religious identity as ‘Islam’, can be potentially identified with symbolic forms, including: ‘fundamentalist’, ‘fanatic’, ‘radical’ and ‘backwards’ as contemporary connotations of ‘Islam’ (Allen, 2016, p. 190). Consequently, exclusionary practices that disadvantage, prejudice, and discriminate against Muslims and Islam in public spaces follow on (ibid). This clearly manifests in my interviews. Ayşe is a veiled woman and has lived in London since the age of two:

My English neighbour was not very welcoming; he did not ever speak to me and never said hello. So, what happened is he was being quite racist towards us and in the middle of the night, he’d put on loud music, and he’d shout from the walls saying swear words, you know, ‘F word’ and saying ‘go back to your country’. I just tolerated it for a long time, and then one day, he always used to come outside the house and wash his windows. When he was cleaning the windows, he’d splash all the water on my windows and make them dirty, and I always tolerated it, and I’ve never said anything. I always cleaned afterwards my windows, but one day I was so fed up I decided to speak, so I went outside, and I said, ‘you realised that what you are doing on my windows because you clean on your side, but you are dirtying on my side’ so then he was very surprised I think I spoke out, he was surprised that I speak English. I said, ‘of course, I speak English’ from day one; you never said hello to us, so how would you know? You just thought in your head, ‘Oh, she is a foreigner she does not know anything she does not speak English; you judged me like that’. It is good to express yourself. He is fine now, and he says hi, and he is not hostile anymore.

(Ayşe, 41 years old, Interpreter, London)

Ayşe's remarks show that she is aware of the possible ideological implications invested in Muslim women who wear an Islamic veil. She recounted her story of her English neighbour's Islamophobic perception of Muslim women as passive and uneducated, and undeserving of basic civility. Indeed, the figure of the 'veiled woman' has long been used as a marker of 'backwardness' to produce 'otherness', especially in post-9/11 'war on terror' Britain. The so-called 'war on terror' refers to Western governments' responses to terrorist attacks in the US and elsewhere and has operated on the level of essentialising Muslims (including the portrayal of Muslim women as inferior and/or oppressed) (Allen, 2016; Dwyer, 2008). From this premise, the global discourse on the 'war on terror' has effectively reproduced and legitimised contemporary perceptions of Islam in the West. Eventually, as Allen (2016) argues, the socio-religious icons of Islam and Muslims came under greater scrutiny at the same time as becoming increasingly recognisable (p. 85). Under this scrutiny, Muslims have been rendered open to incidents of everyday hostility. Consider Begüm, who notes that wearing a headscarf as a visual signifier of Muslimness results in a range of discriminatory practices and exclusionary attitudes at work:

Because I wear a headscarf, customers where I work would like to speak to male representatives. These are mainly white British Islamophobes. What religion male representatives abide by is not visible at the end of the day. For instance, the customer is right in front of me, so I say 'hi'; they might ignore me and go behind me to look for another assistant. Only if it is me working that day, they come to but give me this half-hearted look.

(Begüm, 22 years old, Doing a Master's in Computer Engineering, Leicester)

Above shows how Begüm faces gendered discrimination, which is Islamophobic in character. Therefore, it should go without saying that Muslim women are indicative of Muslim visibility

and hence come to stand as the visible identifiers of omnipresent Muslim culture in the West. The media impacts the ways Muslim women are increasingly identified by markers of religious and cultural difference and goes in line with the right-wing politicians' contributions to these debates. The media converges and makes up a climate of anti-Muslim suspicion in the British context. Veiled women were further dehumanised and criminalised by the former Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who referred to them as 'letter-boxes' and compared them to 'bank robbers' (Johnson, 2018). This is similar to how Ayşe's English neighbour and Begüm's 'mainly white British' Islamophobic customers treated them both. Ayşe was designated as unworthy to exchange words, and in some instances her neighbour displayed Islamophobic hostility in the form of verbal and physical abuse. Likewise, Begüm suggested that her existence was overlooked, with the implication being that she is not capable of rational deeds. More to the point, Begüm also pointed out that Islamophobic customers were reluctant to leave and instead asked for male representatives. This attitude can also be read as a way to accentuate the 'presumed' inadequacies of a Muslim woman. Clearly, however, Islamophobic acts cannot be reduced to the relegation of Muslim women to backwardness, passivity, irrationality and lack of agency. I also suggest that wearing the Islamic veil can be seen as a 'security threat' in conformity with Johnson's remarks.

For Foucault, space is a conceptualisation of 'technologies of power', and it can be used to separate out the unwanted (Crampton, 2012). Especially after 7/7 Britain, the scrutiny of British Muslims in public spaces has been mobilised in the context of the media reporting and representing stereotypical archetypes associated with Muslims (as in the Birmingham 'spy Cam' affair)<sup>19</sup> (Awan and Zempi, 2019, p.8; Hesse, 2018). Tendencies to ascribe archetypal and reductionist traits to Muslims as emblematic of irrational and nonprogressive values, if not

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/libertycentral/2010/jun/23/birmingham-spy-cam-scheme>

a security threat as a ‘suspect community’, contribute to the demonisation and racialisation of Muslims. This naturalises and sustains the current climate of Islamophobia. Muslims have been racialised in terms of visible traits such as the Islamic veil or skin colour, but also in the ways that: ‘It draws a line around all the members of the group; instigates ‘groupness’ and ascribes social and political ideologies because of ideas of where they come from, what it believes in’ (Garner and Selod, 2015, p. 14):

Until now, we talked about religion and background, but in terms of normal debates like societal problems, for example, the rise of homosexuality... LGBT situation. I am not homophobic, but I do not believe homosexuality is natural. That is just my personal belief. Because someone is gay, I would not attack them. This is their life choices. However, a lot of people think this homosexuality is not natural, but they would accept it. Even though there are white people agreeing with us, because of our background, because of where we are originally from, we are not able to explain this like a normal point of view, automatically they would not listen to you, unless you agree with what he agrees, they exclude you, ignorance, extremely selfish, the society we now live is disgusting, cancel culture. They label us [referring to his two Turkish friends sitting next to him] as though we cannot respect LGBT; we are labelled ignorant in the first place, and we have no right to tell our opinions on anything but religion, Islamophobia or racism.

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

Emre Can and his friends were restricted into a set of ‘shared’ affiliations associated with Muslims- incompatibility with Western values, violence, homophobia, misogyny etc. The implication of this was that there could be no authenticity or differentiation in their views. Their views are treated as if they are innate (Garner and Selod, 2014). This respondent concluded that the dialogues and worldviews Muslims are expected to engage with have been

fixated on closure. Emre Can's perspective is in line with how Muslims and Islamophobia are projected explicitly and implicitly in policies, as well as in various forms of media. This is how a religion is 'raced': through the employment of Islamophobia as a set of ideas and practices that amalgamate all Muslims into one group. Garner and Selod (2015) note that 'race' is never finished, never stable and never precisely defined or definable. It is within the context of this perspective that Islamophobic experiences are not solely focused on visible biological or religious markers but also on the country of origin, ethnicity, worldviews, and Muslim names, which are lumped together to 'racially group all Muslims as a single cultural race' (Babacan, 2022, p. 20). Rather than being interpreted as subjective and distinctive views, worldviews such as my respondent's opposing the current scale of homosexuality made their way into the undifferentiated, collective views of 'Muslims' in order to maintain Muslim racial homogeneity. This means that Islamophobia is not about criticism of religion, but rather that 'Muslims are constituted and essentialised as a bounded group in order to manage the relationship between the idea of West and its 'Others' or 'its constitutive outside' (Tyrer, 2013, p. 171).

This could lead to the conclusion that British Turks may experience Islamophobia in different ways; they can be racialised through inscriptions of ethnicity, Islamic clothing, and political and social views. In other words, in today's temporal framing as to which myriad differences and identities are collectively defined within the homogenous marker of 'Muslim'. Thus, in today's Islamophobic climate, a difference can easily be turned into a negative difference in a context where the social image of that difference is explained solely in reference to Islam. One of my male respondents, who is a non-practising Muslim, can be labelled as a secularist white Turk wearing dreadlocks and is hence less visibly ethnically and religiously marked. Nevertheless, he acknowledges the challenges Turkish Muslims have to face:

I don't fear revealing my religion to anybody. My mum is relatively more agitated in terms of revealing the fact that she is Muslim and has recently started telling me, 'Don't mention that you are Muslim'. She perpetually warns my grandma as well, and she goes, 'people do not need to know that you are a Turk and Muslim'. I actually agree with her concerns, considering the hate crime incidents happening to immigrants, especially Muslims. We all have become a little bit unsettled, but I am not fearful.

(Harun, 22 years old, Studying Chemistry, Wales/ London)

The fact that Harun's mother did not remove ethnic identity from the equation to reveal her religion-based social anxiety suggests that Islamophobia is not a single, all-encompassing entity and overlaps with the previously racialised or ethnicised 'Otherness' (Allen, 2016). Consequently, we can understand the plurality of Islamophobia, where contemporary characteristics of 'Islam' and 'Muslims' are always context-bound and overlap with other forms of racism (ibid, p. 72). Beneath the surface, Harun's mother's inclusion of Turkishness in the discussions of anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice contains fear and hatred of Islam and Muslims. Additionally, I observe the conflation and convergence of Turkishness and Muslimness in a manner which contextualises anti-Muslim hate on the basis of the centuries-long British and Russian ambitions to topple the Ottoman ascendancy. After all, the Ottoman Empire was Europe's perennial 'Other' and was often synonymous with Islam (Meer, 2020, p. 372). As such, the plurality of 'Islamophobias' often become dependent on historical enemies, or at least in the case of Turkish Muslims, fears and attributes are constantly reinvigorated and transitionally articulated into the overlapping Muslim 'Other' (Meer, 2020, p. 105). This is encapsulated in the way Harun's mother converges Turkishness and Muslimness in identifying Islamophobia. Islamophobia has also become 'a form of racism' aimed at a group of people on the basis of their 'race... ethnicity, language, culture and religion all at the same time' (Kali,

2011, p.11 cited in Kosba, 2019). The presence of multiple discourses reflecting displays of Islamophobia, therefore, does not differentiate between seculars, Islamists, modernists, or conservatives.

Taking into account the rise of Islamophobia and the processes of the racialisation of Muslims, a male respondent with no visual signifier to be perceived as ‘Muslim’ but who still feels strained suggests that Islamophobia is not confined into identifiable phenomena that underpin one’s ‘Muslimness’. This shows that Islamophobia draws upon consequential effects -the signified- experienced in different ways, at other times, and in different places. Consequently, Islamophobia is exhibited by ‘the thinking and meaning that are inherent within the less explicit and everyday relationships of power that we contemporarily encounter: in the classroom, office, factory...’. It is embedded within the one-to-oneness of daily interactions based on, for example, a Muslim name or the discovery of political and social worldviews (Allen, 2016, p. 196). That said, the Islamic veil, as Allen and Nielson (2002) argue, as one symbolic form of ‘Muslimness’ seems to have become the primary visual identifier as a target for hatred, and the visibility of the veil may be seen as threatening for those who view Islam and Muslims as a threat. However, it is significant to recognise that hate crimes can be the outcome of bias based on multiple lines and not only one distinct identity or feature (Lindström, 2016, p. 11), which I now discuss in detail.

### **5.3 Headscarf: Signalling Oppression or Islamic Extremism?**

When discussing the battle over women’s veiling in the post 9/11 context in Britain, it is crucial to revisit ‘Orientalist discourse’, especially the way it intermingles with national identity and the fears and insecurities regarding terrorism, rather than a marginal issue of personal religious choice (Yegenoglu, 2012; Meer, Uberoi et al., 2015). In his critical essay, ‘Algeria Unveiled’ Frantz Fanon (2004) discussed the French colonisers’ project of removing the Muslim

headscarf from Algeria in the 1930s. According to Fanon, the colonisers perceived the headscarf as a cultural identifier, symbolising the resistance to the embrace of European society (Yegenoglu, 1998, p. 143). Embodied in such compelling narratives, in contrast to the coercive nature of legislations that France enacted against her veiled Muslim citizens with a threat of force, Britain's contemporary attitudes towards Muslim women were deeply rooted in Britain's Orientalist and colonial ideologies and upheld a mainstream political discourse frequently labelling Muslim women as a threat to the security of a nation-state (Masters and Regilme Jr, 2020, p. 354). My interviews provide an empirical illustration of this ever-growing trend of insinuations towards veiled Muslim women as a threat to national security:

I think they are afraid. I work as a driving instructor, and most of my students are English. Recently I experienced something: I went to Mecca to perform Hajj just before starting as an instructor, and on my way back to Brighton, I was wearing a burqa. I had this feeling that one of my students cancelled the lessons due to my appearance; I felt like she was compelled by her mother to be there rather than her own free will. During our first lesson, she was so cold and dull, so I tried to get her to speak but to no avail. When my students cannot look at my face, as I am with a veil, I inside feel discriminated against due to my religion. This student I mentioned could not look at me or talk to me. She was looking ahead only. I was asking questions, and she was just mumbling. We cannot ask them about their religion, so you never know why they cancel the lessons with you. Her mother texted me and said her daughter would not continue taking classes with me. After this instance, I am shy about my headscarf, considering that my students avoid me due to my look.

(Shaz, 40 years old, Former Bus Driver, Brighton)

Shaz argued that she feels discriminated against due to being Muslim and grounded this on her student's cold and dull attitude. This might suggest that Muslim women's headscarves

accommodate multiple connotations, including ‘Muslim woman as a security threat’, and in line with Orientalist discourses, Muslim women wearing headscarves are inherently irrational, thereby may not be capable of teaching someone how to drive. Such colonialist understandings of inferiority and irrationality are merely regurgitated in newer, more resonant frames following the events of 9/11 and beyond (Allen, 2016, p. 31) Shaz’s veiling can be the bearer of more than one perception (Awan and Zempi, 2019, p. 43). For instance, being in close proximity to a veiled woman, considering that the representation of the ‘Islamic veil’ has been perpetually objectified as a security threat’ in the 'West', might have culminated in a sense of fear and anxiety in Shaz’s student. Some of my respondents do not take this image of the veiled Muslim woman for granted and challenge the position that Islam and Muslims have been currently holding:

I got those certain rules in place because people do still push the boundaries that is why I feel like I had to defend the strictness of the approach of Islam and because of how it is highlighted in media, for example. When somebody sees you covered up, they see you ‘oh my god, you are oppressed’.

(Gülk1z, 32, Working in Local Council, London)

It is no surprise that akin to Gülk1z’s narrative, Orientalist fantasies of British colonialism involve the rescue of oppressed ‘veiled Muslim women’ by Western men (Yegenoglu, 1998). As Iner et al., (2022) argue, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, orientalist sentiments have depicted Muslim women as either erotic belly dancers, or secluded and oppressed victims (p. 288). Stereotypes such as these have been compounded by political tensions since the mid-20th century reinforcing the idea of a ‘clash of civilisations’ between the Muslim and Western worlds (Huntington, 1993), within which Muslim women are portrayed as in need of saving from their brutal men and backward culture (Iner et al., p. 288). It, therefore, seems self-evident that

women who wear such clothing of their free will in a secular environment today may come to be perceived as doing so as a resistance embedded in the western/colonialist doctrine (ibid, p. 73).

Notably, the colonial way of seeing the veil serves as a foundation for contemporary debates developed post 9/11, where the ‘rescue’ narrative can be understood as the pretext for enacting ‘technologies of power’ such as FBVs. Seen in this light, a repertoire of common British values maintains the power of the majority. It is defined as a social, political and cultural construct, a racialised discourse designed to maintain the privilege of those categorised as white, Western, and culturally superior (Garner, 2010). It is my contention that the Islamic veil is just another signifier resurfacing whenever the power relations with which it is associated are strained. In other words, the veil is neither oppressive nor liberating; it is a powerful tool resuscitating the craving for controlling the ‘Orient’, reiterating the age-old understanding that ‘there are only people who should be like us’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p.2008 cited in Franks, 2000). Very much aware of the anti-Muslim discourses embedded into the European understanding, Gülkız firmly abides by how she has received and practised her religion so far. In what follows, ethnicity and religion are cited as compounding sources and dynamics underlying how collective identities are attributed to Muslims (Garner and Selod, 2015):

My colleagues were taken aback when they learned that a Turkish woman with a headscarf can actually work independently, and they were surprised when they learned the fact that Turkish men are okay with their wives working. In their preconceptions, Muslim women cannot really work as restricted by the male figures of the household.

(Ayşe, 41 years old, Interpreter, London)

The way Islamophobia erupted in the above context is not independent of the perceptions behind the essentialised negative stereotype of a Turk. Ayşe's colleagues' surprise about a Turkish husband's open-mindedness, which is otherwise coded as a Western man's quality, reinforces the point that there is no single definition of Islamophobia without ethno-racial affiliations and differentiation. The last remarks of Ayşe are a testimonial to the racialisation of 'Muslims altogether' in fermenting the incivility and backwardness of the former along racial, patriarchal and nationalistic lines. As pointed out by Ergin (2016), Turks were long associated with belligerence and bloodshed in British literary works. In forty-seven instances of Elizabethan drama that featured Oriental characters, the Turks appeared in thirty-one and were described as 'valiant, proud-spirited, and cruel'. As Ergin goes on to say, 'demonising representations of Turk in British drama revolved around fears of conversion from Christian to Turk', demonstrating that Turks and Muslims were undifferentiated (2016, p. 91). The image of the 'Terrible Turk' was undoubtedly a gendered one that seems to maintain a traditional essence blended with the dislike of Islam- its oppression, patriarchy, misogyny and so on (Allen, 2016). This results in being the basis of such context-specific differentiated analysis, upon which Islamophobia in relation to British Turks can be generated. In the following chapter, I will address the nuances on the basis of Islamophobic microaggressions, or the subtle and covert manifestations of bias, which are commonplace and convergent with Turkishness in the life experiences of British Turks.

#### **5.4 'I don't feel unhappy in this country, but sometimes I feel misunderstood':**

##### **Microaggressions**

The current section aims to communicate that along with many respondents describing experiences that were clearly and overtly Islamophobic; some respondents shared incidents identified as microaggressions. Microaggressions are defined as the everyday, subtle and

insensitive comments or behaviours enacted in the form of negative stereotypes, social exclusion, assumptions of intellectual inferiority, stigmatisation, jokes or compliments with demeaning and derogatory undertones (Kohli, Arteaga, and McGovern, 2019; Yosso et al. 2009). The multiple narratives recounted by my respondents reveal how the discriminatory actions or statements reveal intersectional perspectives between Islamophobia and Turkishness (Ouassini, 2021). One should note that the images of Turks are converged in the images of East or Muslims in general, resting on how religion, ethnicity, ‘race’, and nationality as categories of identification are inextricably intertwined (Ergin, 2016). As much as the aforesaid categories often converge or overlap as tools of discrimination reflected in my data, Islam is unilaterally mobilised at times in the forms of name-calling and teasing:

...Another thing is that a few years ago, one of my friends kept calling me Muhammed; these were all British calling me Muhammed.

(Semih, 36 years old, Engineer, Manchester)

The accounts of British Turks so far have demonstrated that Islamophobia is a fluid signifier and impossible to bottle up into a single monolithic bloc. Semih’s quote is a reminder that the entire Muslim population is perceived to be dismissively lumped together in multiple ways, one of which is the association of all Muslim men with ‘Muhammed, Islam’s prophet’. What makes microaggressions especially dangerous is that everyday interactions crystallise taken-for-granted racist and/or Islamophobic conceptions, as exemplified in the above case (Ergin, 2016). Calling Semih with the name of Islam’s prophet sporadically, the offender demonstrates how transnational flows of Islamophobic imaginaries have local repercussions. Semih’s quote is a reminder of how all Muslim men, particularly in the wake of Islamic terror events, appear to be associated with the twisted actions of many Islamic extremist movements that claim to act in the prophet’s name. In Allen’s (2016) analysis, over-simplifying, essentialising or

ignoring the individually conceived and practised Islam, he draws attention to the term ‘fundamentalism’ and its use in the media as an inappropriate marker of identification of ‘Muslims’ *en masse* (p. 70). Indeed, Rhodes and Hall (2020) argue that ‘as early as the 1990s, in the context of growing anxieties about Islamic fundamentalism and the purported dangers posed to British society, across the political right, black and minority ethnic communities have been portrayed as embodying a ‘threat to the unity and order of British society’ (Rhodes and Hall, 2020, p. 286). Increasingly all the perceptions blend and circulate around the contemporary understanding of Islam as the bi-polar opposite of British society and ‘the West’. Islam is understood to have no shared values with the latter or, indeed, any other culture or ‘religion’. Making such assumptions and crude differentiations are mobilised to introduce soft policies in the British context, including FBVs and to tighten immigration policies illustrated through the current government’s Rwanda Deal<sup>20</sup> in that most of these asylum seekers are from majority-Muslim countries fleeing war, violence or persecution. They are forced to be sent to Rwanda for offshore processing (Ataï, 2022). Heightening awareness of differences between Muslims as a homogenous entity and the West is directed towards justifying differential rights and Islamophobic attitudes in Britain. Hostile policies and media representations have become conflated to introduce or maintain hostile policies about immigration in the context of security.

With Islamophobia subsequently and increasingly relevant, unique and convoluted types of microaggressions emerge in people’s lives (Nadal, Griffin et al., 2012). In addition to the role of Islam central to which the bombardment of globally circulating perceptions that all Muslims are culturally and ethnically homogenous, some of my respondents pointed out the continued assumptions of the enmeshing of Turkishness and Muslimness. Assumptions that Turks in

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.huckmag.com/perspectives/we-must-stop-demonising-men-seeking-asylum/>

Britain are mainly in the service sector, working as hairdressers or running a kebab shop, all frequently confer to the imagery of monolithic and immutable Turkishness:

Every school has a clown guy who makes everyone laugh; he used to make fun of me, and he used to say butcher and hairdresser for Turkish or Muslim people. He used to come at me and say, butcher. The school would not do anything if you went and reported him; I warned him and said, please stop saying this. They call us Kebabçısı<sup>21</sup> as well, it is a cliché, but after some time, it is annoying... that is it. That butcher thing, the first day all right, the second day all right, but after one or two months, you can piss about it... it is completely normal.

(Burak, 18 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> Form Student, London)

From Burak's quote, I argue that subtle and inferiorising comments and behaviours are not always distinctively Islamophobic, racist, or sexist *per se*, thus suggesting overlap with other phenomena that either may or may not be acknowledged as distinct or differentiable (Allen, 2016, p. 134). Certain occupations listed above, such as 'running a kebab shop, hairdresser or a butcher', are to a greater extent related to the type of visa a large number of Turkish immigrants applied to emigrate to Britain. Under the Ankara Agreement, Turkish nationals were allowed to run a business in the UK (Government, 2018), therefore many Turkish immigrants run businesses in sectors including hairdressing, restaurateurs or butchery. However, what seems to worry Burak might be the perception in which Turks and Muslims are, in effect, homogeneously essentialised and racialised to fit into lower echelons of labour, reduced to the perception that they cannot do any better than what often amounts to unpleasant, 'unskilled' labour. Microaggressions are constant, containing everyday slights, insults and invalidations, and indignities visited upon marginalised groups. As Burak implicated, clearly

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<sup>21</sup> Turkish people who run kebab shops mainly.

over-attentiveness to sweeping convictions associated with Turks and/or Muslims in Britain at the expense of other characteristics adds up to fatigue (Ergin, 2016). Similarly, Azra recounted a story which is an apparent testament to the fact that assumptions and invalidations central to Turkishness go beyond the labour-related clichés and Islam:

I was sitting next to a Turkish girl. She must have said something wrong like it was not correct English. Then I said something that was not correct English either, and then the Business teacher pointed out that girl sitting next to me and said, ‘oh, are you Turkish?’ she was like ‘, yeah’ he then pointed out to me and asked me if I am Turkish too, and I said yeah. I told the teacher it was kind of disrespectful; I don’t know, he is like a joker character, I don’t know... and he did not care and carried on. I don’t think he realised how disheartening what he said was.

(Azra, 17 years old, Studying Law and Business, London)

First of all, the remarks of the Business teacher when Azra’s Turkish friend did not use the ‘correct English’ implies that if one is Turkish, incompetency in English language use is to be only what is expected. Here, the same denigrating message was perpetuated by the teacher to generalise Turks as ‘being unable to speak proper English’ when Azra herself could not use correct English. Azra agreed that this instance was both ‘disrespectful and disheartening’. Whilst meant as a joke, this incident can be viewed as a ‘racial’ microaggression, with vague allusions on the grounds that ‘Turks’ perceived as a collective racial identity share incompetency in speaking proper English. Instead of seeing the case from an impartial teacher’s perspective, where students can make mistakes regardless of their ‘ethno-racial background’, this teacher overtly expressed covertly implied subordination of ‘Turks’, thus legitimising the maintenance of power and superiority. Azra was born in the UK and is bilingual as a result of speaking English from early childhood parallel to Turkish at home with

family (Bilic, 2013). Seen in this light, relying on racial categories to emphasise the exceptionality of ‘British descent’ only taps into hierarchies; this is how racism works. It also perpetuates and amplifies biases in that failures and shortcomings are an inherent quality of groups and countries (Silva, 2020). Azra was not the only respondent who took the insults as ‘jokes’, and in addition to the nuances with racist undertones, some of my respondents correlated ‘jokes’ with Islamophobic undertones, again in a school environment:

Even at school, they regularly make racist jokes. For example, they say Allahu Akbar for no reason. I know it was a joke, and he did not mean to upset me, but my friend is bugging me whenever I am around. I do not understand why they always get on to us and scream Allahu Akbar. They just hear something; they associate with it [terrorism], and they just overgeneralise and assume everyone is the same.

(Ali, 19 years old, Studying 6<sup>th</sup> Form in Biology, London)

This type of microaggression may be viewed as Islamophobic due to the casual use of the phrase ‘Allahu Akbar’, which is inextricably tied to political violence in the contemporary period. It literally means God is the greatest in Arabic and is a core part of a devout Muslim’s vernacular. It is, however, no longer a casual phrase but a verbal identifier underlining the contemporary transnational images of ‘Muslims’ as ‘terrorists’ or security threat. Acknowledging the misinterpretations infused with the phrase itself, Ali seems to become marked not only by religious otherness but also suddenly found himself identified with the unwanted and threatening segments of the population. And similar to Burak’s account, where he was mainly annoyed by the repetitive nature of slights, what is likely to be striking for Ali, as much as being unduly lumped together with terrorists, might be the idea of being conflated with the Arab other. Thus, rejection of being defined by a phrase echoed by millions of Muslims should be considered a part of the broader mobilisation to distinguish Turkishness

from other Muslim identities on the basis of, for instance, Turkish language, secular history and perhaps ‘race’ and culture (Ergin, 2016, p. 106). Notwithstanding that, the constant reference to ‘Allahu Akbar’ in British media often appears in headlines in stories relating to terrorist attacks by so-called ‘Islamist perpetrators’ might account for the causes of Islamophobic microaggressions Ali faced at school.

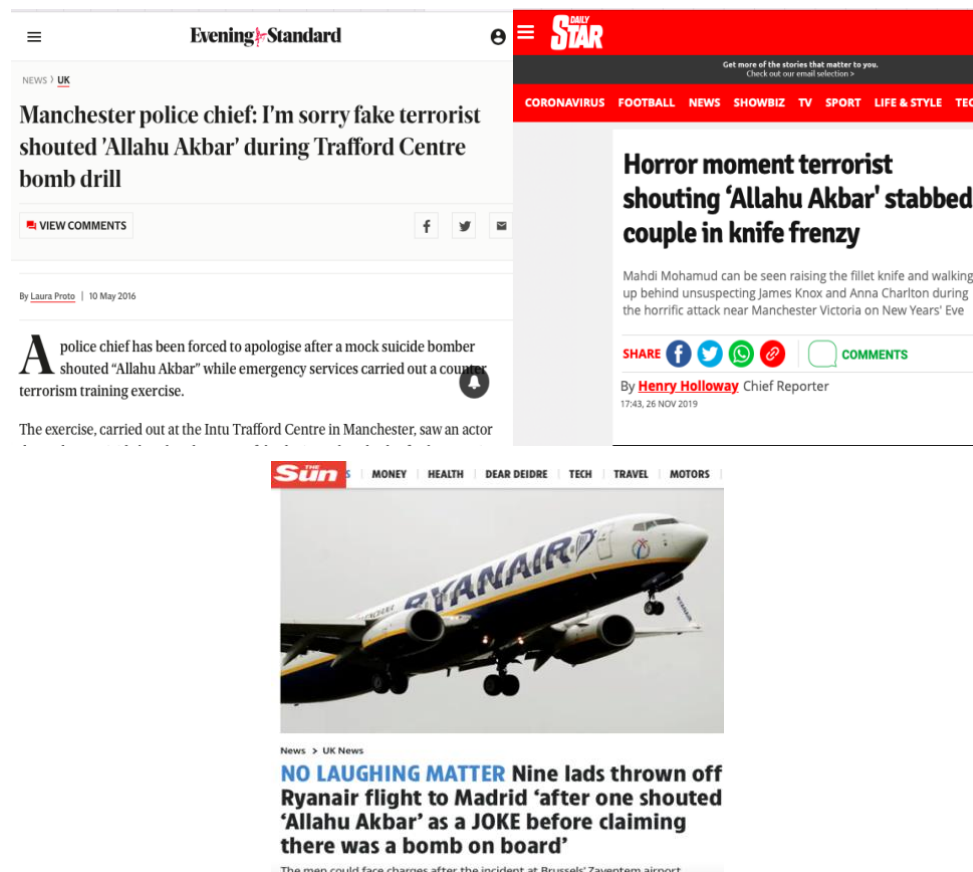


Figure 5: Three selected headlines and articles mentioning ‘Allahu Akbar’ are from the following consecutive sources: Evening Standard, Daily Star, and The Sun

In the above quotes, respondents are not entirely sure whether friends and students make fun of their identities, as the incidents involve elements of humour such as in Burak’s case, the enactor is known as the ‘clown guy who makes everyone laugh’, and in Ali’s case his peers ‘make regularly racist jokes...’ and he claimed that his friends ‘did not mean to upset’ him.

Even if the enactors in the above incidents are or are not malicious, the mere fact that Muslim prejudice is so pervasive in the media normalises the public expression of Islamophobia.

Placed against this background of terrorism and violence, Turks who constitute a strand in collective Muslim identity appear to feel relegated to ‘barbarism and irrational behaviour’ as contemporarily racialised attributes of all Muslims (Allen, 2016, p. 77). The complex position in which the Republic of Turkey was established renders a picture in which individuals and collectivities consume Muslimness in ways that transgress clear-cut distinctions. Since 1923, Turkey’s Ottoman past representing Turkey’s Islamic character has been rejected by secular-leaning Turks to fit ‘almost’ perfectly well with Western values. Indeed, the secularising process of modernisation was conditional on locking Islam in private spheres. Metaphorically speaking, affiliation with Muslim identity by any terms can remind us of pre-1923 Islamic and unwesternised, unmodern heritage. Against this backdrop, the broad idea of Turkishness should not imply unity with Muslim identity for mainly secular Turks. The responses of my respondents to racist and Islamophobic microaggressions, which at times became intermeshed and entangled, were conceived as ‘jokes’ and thereby downplayed as in the narratives of Ali, Azra and Burak. This inclination caused them to deny parts of themselves to reduce the potential risk of victimisation in social milieus (Awan and Zempi, 2019, p. 117). The following section will examine a salient phenomenon, ‘denying’, in other words, ‘passing’, as it is crucial in understanding microaggressions towards Muslims in Britain.

### **5.5 Passing as non-Muslim**

On rare occasions in the interviews, I found expressions where respondents were eloquently removing themselves from the dominating discourses on Islamophobia and decreasing the discomfort associated with it. They successfully represented themselves as a member of a dominant/non-marginalised group employing ‘passing’. Deliormanli (2014) defines passing as

a representation tool developed and sustained by ‘the dominant ideology to maintain ethnic and racial inequalities with a rigid binary and hierarchical structure where people are either privileged or marginalised’ (p. 3). As I map out in this section, passing has been appropriated by a few British Turkish respondents as a possibility of liberation from the burden of Islamophobic narratives in the UK. As flagged up in the introduction of this chapter, objectivising individuals as ‘subjects’, emblematic of modern, efficient technology of power and domination, creates a collective mass. I suggest that the ways British Turks mobilise passing imply a process of breaking with the unwanted and the increasingly homogenised Muslimness. As my data demonstrates, some British Turks implicitly perpetuate the historically privileged position of Turkishness in broader discussions of race and modernity, hoping to bypass the assumed inferiority of other Muslim communities in Britain. A closer analysis of Mert’s quote tells us an instance of ‘passing’:

...then you get some that look at you, all the same, something happens on the TV they look at you, all the same, a couple of years ago it was that stabbing in London [...], I was on the train to go to Leeds, I go on to train, and this woman looked at me weirdly and grabbed the bag and like; I did not want to say anything because I knew exactly what she was doing because it was literally the day after the stabbing, If I’d said something, she’d go ‘oh yeah they are all aggressive, and they hurt people’. I have dark hair and skin, so some people look at you all the same and don’t care where you are from. I wish to be from Italy. Italian people are darker as well; if you are dark, then you are under the label of terrorist, Pakistani, this and that.

(Mert, 23 years old, Working in a Sports Club, Harrogate)

Mert’s wish to pass as ‘Italian’ over ‘Pakistani’ can be seen as a reminder of the Eurocentric vision upon which Turkish national identity was historically built. Essentially, the Eurocentric and Western thought in Mert’s mind led him to wish to be Italian instead of Pakistani. Mert’s

quote is also evocative of how the representation of ‘Pakistani’, as one of Britain's most prominent Muslim communities, has conveniently lumped into the ‘label of terrorist’ (Ergin, 2016). To put it another way, the distinct ‘Muslim’ identifier as cultural ‘other’ is predominantly contingent upon those of South-Asian heritage in Britain, as it is upon Turkish communities in Germany (Allen, 2016, p. 134). This understanding goes along with the understanding that discriminatory categories are contextually and situationally produced and motivated by historical conditions. In today’s temporal framing, a Muslim subject’s general acceptance into the ‘West’ is germane to and contingent upon looking less like a Muslim. The Turkish community in Britain is no exception to that. Mert’s quote is suggestive of the changing social imaginaries contemporarily essentialising ‘Muslim’ societies into an unwanted homogeneity. Mert, therefore, benefited from the fluidity of racial categories in dealing with his insecurities as Turkish and Muslim and their place in the world (Allen, 2007; Tara-Chand, 2015; Yorukoglu, 2017a). Apart from skin colour, the idea of ‘passing’ is mobilised by some respondents on the basis that they are less traditional, with no visible markers of Muslim identification. Thus, they imagine that they would experience Islamophobia to a lesser extent:

Islamophobic hate crime was further focused against Pakistani and Bangladeshi people, and a lot of that had to do with faith. They would dress in a sort of traditional style, call of prayer and practise a lot grander in terms of scale.

(Buğra, 30 years old, Police Officer, London)

Buğra suggests that Islamophobic attitudes are relegated to and condensed into the signifiers ‘skin colour and Islamic dress’, singling out ‘Bangladeshis and Pakistanis’. If Buğra’s parents had emigrated to Germany instead of Britain, for instance, he would not potentially have been able to conceptualise Islamophobia in relation to any other groups but Turks themselves. The dependency upon Muslims in the British context focusing on South Asians in the setting of,

for instance, Bradford, is equated with Turks in German at the setting of Kreuzberg. This shows that the nature of Islamophobia is by no means a singular and unilinear discourse but renegotiated and rearticulated across different geographical locations. ‘Islam’, on the other hand, is taken as a monolithic bloc where Muslim diversity is overlooked, which is the bedrock on which Islamophobia, with all its fluidity, remains intact in the West. Back in the British context, another respondent suggested that living in the UK used to be better; referring to subjects formerly objects of colonialism, she echoed the hegemonic imperialist legacies and reinflated imperial myths demonising and inferiorising ‘Hindus and Pakistanis’. Doing so, Aslı potentially distanced herself from ones who have been objectified and categorised ‘as external threats’, hence allowing her Turkishness to be negotiated within the confines of ‘civility’:

I want to move there [to Turkey] now because this country is not what it used to be. Okay, you are going to say you don’t know life in Turkey; I go to Turkey for a holiday. I’d love it when I have a life there as well; where I live now, there are helicopters up all the time because we got the Hindus, we got the Pakistanis always on drugs and always fighting. Killing each other and stabbing each other, I hear it, but I don’t feel it; when you are in the position, it is a different story.

(Aslı, 55 years old, Working with Autistic Children, London)

Aslı deployed passing by espousing a content which goes in parallel with the overtly Islamophobic narrative perpetuated by British politicians and media commentators in the public eye. In the Summer of 2016, Zac Goldsmith, a politician from Conservative Party, who ran against Labour candidate Sadiq Khan, a British Pakistani Muslim, was accused of racism due to describing Khan as ‘radical and divisive’ (Goodfellow, 2019). Aslı’s passing can be reflective of such Islamophobic stereotypes and negative media messages against certain

Muslim communities, such as South Asians. In passing, she allows herself to become whom she believes herself to be, perhaps as whiter than Pakistanis and Hindus, because, as Ergin (2016) notes, in Turkish eyes, the correlation<sup>22</sup> between whiteness and modernity has been so successfully emphasised. This might explain why Aslı did not refer to Muslims outright but rather pointed out a group of people who do not always have Islam in common but certainly have the same skin colour. Stereotyping through comparing is significant for passing. Aslı revealed her passing codes as ‘white’ to side with the westernised and civilised Turk, which seems to assist in affording more advantage in achieving mainstream Britishness, and also helps her emphasise the reasons why she wants a life in Turkey. To ensure against a stigma or just to be accepted in social groups as ‘white’, Aslı and Buğra isolate themselves from the groups who are historically stigmatised for varying reasons, including coloured racism and Islamophobia. In Mert’s case, he presents the destabilising implications of Islamophobia on specific ethnic communities such as Pakistanis, using a desire of ‘passing’ as Italian to share an unseen and unspoken dimension of the power of ‘whiteness and non-Muslimness, which did not allow him to escape from the stigmatisation. We should, then, recognise that biologically conceived frames that some traditional forms of racism have been rooted in and employed in attempts to identify ‘Muslim’ subjects today (Allen, 2007). Perhaps common and distinctive in the given quotes is that in passing, we see the truth of racial and anti-Muslim discrimination. The following section is an attempt to demonstrate a rising tendency to exclude and discriminate against ethnically Turkish children at schools, with a critical analysis of

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<sup>22</sup> It was in this context that late Ottoman and early republican elites realised that claiming selfhood in the modern world would not be possible without a racial affiliation, Western scientific tradition, using pseudo-scientific methods, examining the racial past and future of Turkey, and fended off ‘Western injustices’ that had to do with the ‘misclassifications’ of Turks under non-white races. Ergin, M. (2016). ‘Is the Turk a White Man?’: Race and Modernity in the Making of Turkish Identity: Brill.

multiculturalism as a social policy entangled in the debate on changing the meaning of Britishness.

## **5.6 Wrestling Stigma and Labelling in Elementary and Secondary Schools**

The following sections are conceptualised on the basis of the interpersonal frictions between my respondents and their peers and teachers, allowing for the analysis of the intersections and discontinuities of multiculturalism, racial and ethnic difference, British national identity and, more recently, Islamophobia. A series of ‘political’ and ‘cultural anxieties’ in relation to the meaning of Britishness, allegedly ‘diluted’ in an increasingly multicultural society, have been mobilised to legitimise and normalise a number of initiatives and measures at schools (Solomos, 2003, p. 2009). In the contemporary period, Muslim populations as a homogenous mass in Britain are positioned as one cause adding up to Britain’s ‘cultural anxieties’, emblematic of an inassimilable threat. This homogeneity of Muslims as a group is disentangled from and seen as antithetical to Britishness which stands for shared values and integration (Meer, Dwyer et al., 2010). This is the stage when traditional xenophobia (which is to say ‘cultural nativism’) is cultivated against British Turks at schools, again interfaced with Britain’s prevailing nationalism. Against this backdrop, I aim to address the interplay of state-constructed post-9/11 British national identity ‘entangled with the controversial demerits of Multiculturalism’ (Hesse, 2000), which arguably characterises the xenophobic tensions and conflicts in the context of British Turks today.

### **5.6.1 Teachers**

My analysis in this section demonstrates the extent to which there have been repercussions of the shift from Multiculturalism to the concept of British national identity. I explore how this shift is undifferentiated, hence obscuring difference, and played a role in the complex matrix

of interpersonal relationships of British Turks with their peers and teachers in primary and secondary education. The relevant shifts in programs and policies in multicultural education in Britain are beyond this thesis's scope, except for ones linked to the interview data for this specific section. As Allen (2016) notes, in today's populist understanding, in addition to questions about state schools, radicalism and extremism, issues surrounding community cohesion and multiculturalism have been just a few issues where Muslim 'difference' has been understood to be threatening to the British 'way of life' (p. 88). At this point, vivid and insightful comments provided by my relatively older respondents help us engage with a pre-9/11 landscape; they pointed out that their struggles, distinct concerns and sensibilities concerning immigration-bound impediments were recognised when they were school children in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Some, for instance, said that educators and the school administrations strived to help them get through to the language barrier:

We had such difficulty at school as English was our second language. A guy called Alan had been hired only for my sister and me to help us with our schoolwork. He was doing this voluntarily, which I always looked forward to. He was a minority group social services teacher. After school, he used to pick us up and teach us English for an hour every day. We loved English and England thanks to him.

(Nurcan, 42 years old, Restaurant Owner, Coventry)

Billur likewise recounted her positive school experience as an ethnically Turkish student:

In the first school I attended, there were not so many ethnically Turkish students in a small town and my older sister and I did not have a good command of English. Studying without proper English in an English school, we were lost, though a German teacher was helping us learn English outside school time and making us feel welcome in our new country.

(Billur, 53 years old, Property Investor, London)

Billur is one of two Turkish children whose parents emigrated from Turkey and was taught English by a German teacher in the late 1970s. Billur's account offers us adequate justification for the multicultural decency to different cultures and identities in Britain in the 1980s, when a multiculturalist sensibility was present, as opposed to the 'incoming-other' perception prevalent today (Gilroy, 2004; Modood, 2007, p. 183). Findings based on the small number of older respondents provide a valid description of the indication of multiculturalism that extended to school environments where British Turks felt that 'difference' was accepted in their adaptation to their country of settlement. However, my research does not support such generalizability; hence, the few quotes from older respondents are intended to be indicative rather than exemplary (Gilbertson, 2007).

The Swann report was published in 1985 as the response of the education service to ethnic diversity and committed to the principle that all children, irrespective of race, colour or ethnic origin, should have a good education to develop their abilities and lead to a true sense of belonging to Britain (Swann, 1985). The report denoted a shift towards a form of inclusive Multiculturalism, as signalled by its formal title, *'Education for All'*, enabling all ethnic minority communities to maintain their distinct ethnic identities, albeit with its limits. The way Nurcan and Billur recounted their experiences of grappling with the English language as ethnically Turkish children in the late 1970s and early 1980s is positive. Their accounts reflect the goal of education, which was prioritised in the liberal attempts of Multicultural Britain to address social accommodation of racially and ethnically marked cultural differences, promoting the values of tolerance without the elements of national agendas then (an 'absolute' Britishness and FBVs) (Hesse, 2000). Both accounts reinforce the discourses of inclusive multiculturalism, where the priority was providing a safe space for racially non-white and/or

ethnically non-British children, making them feel welcomed without rejecting their many differences.

Notwithstanding that linguistic diversity was acknowledged as a 'positive asset', this form of multiculturalism also had its limits. The idea of bilingual education was rejected when the south Asian population grew and wanted bilingual teaching and Muslim schools. Minority languages were restricted to the home and the ethnic minority community (Modood, 2007; Modood and May, 2001). Consequently, by the 1980s, discourses on multiculturalism had been contested with no exception in education, and the emergence of the government's Prevent programme in 2003 as a catalyst further exacerbated the representation of social and cultural specificities of British Muslims. Indeed, a fascinating corollary of this can be observed in the confrontations of my younger respondents with their school teachers based on their unfavourable treatment, especially if we compare them with the experiences of older respondents:

I have a beard and darker skin, so I experienced Islamophobia in my school, for instance. The assistant head principal in my school was my Politics teacher in the first year. This teacher primarily prompted most of the racial discrimination I have experienced. He would disregard me when I raised my hand to answer the questions. As well as that Politics teacher, I have experienced racism several times in my life. While I was in primary school, I was around 6; I could not speak English well. I used to talk with unintentionally too many words, so my teacher called me names such as Chatting Can, meaning speaking Can. This was a white English female teacher, and once she began calling me names, my classmates followed her like lemmings.

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

It would be fair to say that the unfavourable treatment Emre Can suffered at school cannot be encapsulated exclusively into Islamophobia, 'race' and racism. The attitude Emre Can pointed out in his first remarks would appear as Islamophobic by virtue of his beard; however, he did not elaborate on the details. It might thereby be said that there seem to be other factors that caused resentment and a sense of discomfort. A white, English female teacher calling Emre Can a humiliating name on account of his lack of proficiency with the English language might be read as a symptom of arrogance against those of non-British descent. I argue that the traditional badges of inferiority and backwardness associated with postcolonial immigrants can be manifested and resuscitated against Muslims as a multi-ethnic religious group in today's conditions and political conjuncture. Emre Can's remarks provide a reminder that difficulties in dismantling categories of exclusion or the lack of recognition of terrains of racism across different milieus are germane to how one perceives a threat to the notions of 'self' in interpersonal contexts (Ben, Kelly et al., 2020). The white English teacher's name callings and the Politics teacher's attitudes of overlooking Emre Can might stem from multiple racisms built on 'colour' or alleged and real cultural traits of Emre Can (Modood, 2007). Therefore, Emre Can's awareness of his lack of a good command of English as the child of immigrant parents played out as ethnic racism in his mind. This shows that forms of racism are not experienced by people singularly but are lived out contextually, necessitating personal stories to negotiate, for instance, racism across different temporal and spatial circumstances (Aquino, 2020).

A few of my respondents linked the display of discriminatory attitudes by their teachers with their Muslimness. I contend that this results from the understanding that historically, the public manifestation of Islam in Britain is inextricably illustrated by its colonial past and predominantly attached to South Asian Muslims. One, however, cannot assume that 'Muslim' could mean the same thing to every Muslim. Some Muslims are devout but apolitical; some identify more with a nationality of origin, such as Turks. Some Turks do not identify with Islam

and may even be anti-Islamic (Modood, 2007). Their self-representation by no means protects them from experiencing forms of Islamophobia, implicit or explicit. This dynamic character of Islamophobia gained grounds post 9/11 and 7/7, and coincided with the primary and secondary school years of many of my respondents:

This was back when I was in secondary school; I was 14-15 when I was fasting. It was Ramadan. Because my mum was fasting, she asked me to fast, and I said OK. It was a bit easier back then because it was in December. Sun was going down early anyway, it was effortless, so I did not mind that. I went to school and was supposed to be doing PE, but I could not do it. As I was fasting, I didn't want to over-exert myself. The teacher turned around and said, 'people are fasting in other countries, doing their jobs, doing construction work', and stuff like that. So, you will be fine; you are going to do it as well. Not accepted as an excuse, I had to do some PE. It was the only time I felt discriminated against.

(Ediz, 31 years old, Teacher, London)

Ediz did not identify himself as a practising Muslim; when I asked him if he is religious, he replied:

No, but I believe in God. I do eat pork; I drink; I sometimes like to gamble in football and stuff like that.

(Ediz, 31 years old, Teacher, London)

It is telling that the Islamophobia Ediz felt in secondary school arose in the context of the 'month of Ramadan', the time of the year Muslims fast and abstain from all food or drink, from dawn to sunset. His self-representation as a deist rather than a devout Muslim did not make him less vulnerable to the possibility of an Islamophobic attitude from his teacher.

Additionally, Muslim schoolchildren may even represent ‘civil disobedience’ and resistance to the qualities of the civilised West by fasting during Ramadan (Göle, 2015, p. 66). The contexts that lay bare Islamophobia which can unravel in different forms and converge with other forms of racism, and signal the urgency of recognising the differential customs and sensibilities of individuals who practice Islam or self-identify with their nationality instead of religion in various lines (Modood, 2007, p. 71). When there are controversies and contentious struggles against specific religious and cultural, and ethnic differences, those with such differences can be oversensitive to discrimination. British Turks are no exception to that:

I was doing a lecture hall presentation on my lab report's academic skills. Everything went perfectly and smoothly, like my references. I put so many images to make it colourful; I can show you the presentation. It deserved more than 40 marks. And I was friendly and did everything to get the higher mark, and everyone was pleased because of how I spoke, trying to show the images. And the teacher, he is British, he hates me for no reason, I can tell from the way he was speaking to me, and there was one lady, she can't speak English well, you know I don't care if anyone can speak English or not, she is another student like me. I think she is from Europe. We are all the same; however, the teacher gave me 40 marks for the presentation, and she got 70, and she did not do the presentation nicely; she did not even have the references; it was a bit unfair, so everyone was saying to me it was unjust because everything I did was excellent, it was discrimination because it was unfair. Maybe I saw him twice; maybe he did not like how I spoke. He did ask me where I am from, and I said I am Turkish, so his face changed, maybe I did something wrong in the presentation, but I do not think so.

(Beste, 21 years old, Studying Biomedical Science, Leeds)

Similarly, another respondent commented on how he felt discriminated against at school:

Before moving into city centre, we lived in a town in Liverpool; my classmates at school would hate me as I was Turkish, and they would bully me with racist remarks. Even though I ignored them most of the time, they would call me names etc. Even some of my teachers were racist to me. For instance, I was the best-in-class drawing, and everybody knew that once there was a competition, I could never win it. The teacher was indirectly racist as I was Turkish.

(Ergi, 21 years old, Working in his Father's Restaurant, Liverpool)

The extracts above illustrate that students of Turkish descent take their differences as a metric to effectively address why they presume their works are not appraised sufficiently or do not achieve good marks. Drawing on the ways they are received as Turks, Ergi and Beste sought to understand the differentiated attitude of their teachers. This is counter-posed to previously expressed values of multiculturalism embedded in valuing harmonious cultural differences, rather than amplifying them (Hesse, 2000, p. 1). Within the narrative of undeserving status, Ergi and Beste presume that being recognised as Turkish casts them as inferior. Yet as this thesis has previously shown, when marked as 'other', Ergi and Beste self-reflexively intertwined their ethnic difference with the presumed biases and discriminations dependent on the social and cultural climates in which they prevail.

Perceiving their achievements to be lightly appreciated seems to instigate Ergi and Beste to feel that they are not fully conforming to the standards set by their teachers. Expanding our analysis, the default assumption is that Beste and Ergi feel isolated because of their Turkish heritage. The way my respondents presumed their Turkishness was perceived is also dynamic and fluid, and germane in consideration of broader historical processes. As Gilroy notes, it is within the context of this perspective that Britain's obsession with 'race', class, tradition and national identity are resuscitated in today's temporal framing.

Accordingly, distinct cultural particularities destabilise the increasingly promoted assertion of British national identity. The negative experiences that Ergi and Beste assumed as racist can be seen via their differences in opposition to Britishness as a signifier laden with exclusionary paradigms. The perspective where some British Turks view themselves as inadequate in educational performance can, in part, stem from the negative racial and ethnic stereotyping of ethnic minority students by teachers. This resonates with the epistemic shift from multiculturalism against which the ‘homogeneity of British culture’ has been massively overstated. Accordingly, Turkishness as an ethnic identity in a new configuration with religion appears to force young British Turks to navigate their interpersonal relations in convoluted ways. That awareness unselfconsciously causes British Turks to question their place in Britain constantly. I will next demonstrate the ways in which British Turkish students navigate their relationships with their peers at school.

### ***5.6.2 Peers***

In 2017, the Childline Annual Review reported that it held over 2,500 counselling sessions over the last three years for children concerned about race and faith-based bullying (MEND, 2020). Apparent or imagined cultural differences between British Turkish children appear to urge them to reconsider their position in the power structure amongst their native British peers at school. As opposed to the report mentioned above, it is not disproportionately the ‘race’ or faith-based identities of British Turkish children that make them feel like outcasts. Some of my respondents recounted that they were marked on account of a lack of a good command of English, bullied as ‘lesbians’ and provoked to get into fight:

We are two siblings. Learning English was so frustrating; we wouldn't leave home without a Turkish-English dictionary out of obligation because a classmate was saying something ugly, and we would not answer without a dictionary. Having the

language barrier, we would not make friends till we adequately picked up the language. When all is considered, the way we were treated, the general manners of children at our age, and that they would speak dirty and everything was too much for a child from central Anatolia. English kids were constantly messing with us, inciting us to fight with them, saying we were hanging out together all the time, so we were lesbians. They were picking on us every day, saying provocative words behind us, but we were not good at English, so we could not tell them back. We had no idea what they were saying or how we should react. While walking down the corridor one day, one hit Sema [Ezgi's elder sister] with a tree branch in the back, then we began fighting with them and police were involved subsequently.

(Ezgi, 24, Working in her Father's Restaurant, Harrogate)

Ezgi mentioned at the beginning of our interview that when they started school in York, there were no other ethnically Turkish students. In an attempt to understand why Ezgi and her older sister were bullied and frustrated so much that police had to intervene, we should gauge the role of the absence of cultural plurality, how monocultural Ezgi's school was then, and how differences were accommodated. We can only make sense of the experiences of Ezgi and her sister as victims who served as the model or archetypal for all the other native British children in that school; Ezgi and Sema were something 'alien' to the phenotypical (e.g., skin colour) and cultural (e.g., language) characteristics of native British children. While Multiculturalism mobilises a range of racialised anxieties, centring principally upon immigration and, currently, terrorism for the 'indigenous' white British population, lack of it appears to propel the exclusionary forms of sentiments (Rhodes and Hall, 2020). Ezgi and her sister were humiliated for different reasons and seen from different powerful positions: the power of entitlement from white British peers and their command of the English language (Essed, 2020). The lack of plurality in Ezgi's school also conjures up structures of sexism next to nativism, as walking

arm-in-arm with the same sex (which is customarily normal in Turkish culture) is interpreted as a lesbian relationship for Ezgi and her older sister. Schools are one of the most significant social institutions, shaping the perceptions of children of their surroundings and future relationships with others. Consequently, in a setting where British Turkish children are introduced to British culture and English-speaking subjects for the first time, being earmarked as separate can ultimately cause anxiety. The following respondent similarly mentioned how others saw him in the classroom and how he was continuously reminded of his ‘outsider status’ in varied lines:

I experienced discrimination from some classmates. They would call me an immigrant and say, ‘go back home’ my last resort happened to hit them as teachers did not help me sort it out, and this lack of support has ultimately caused such confrontations.

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

Similar to Ezgi’s narrative, Emre Can pointed out how he was excluded in the sense that he was not entitled to be at ‘home’ in Britain from the ‘superior’ position of native British peers at school. In the last two quotes, we can observe the stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes towards British Turkish students in primary and secondary schools; and this usually has knock-on effects. These instances could have had impacts on my respondents, for example, on their abilities to cultivate a capacity to act morally and justly in the face of otherness in response to xenophobia (Gilroy, 2004, p. 75). Xenophobic attitudes amongst pupils can be mitigated by, for instance, incorporating topics that provide *knowledge of cultures and values of ethnically different communities* in multicultural societies into the curriculum (Prats, Deusdad et al., 2017 emphasis mine).

Schools in Britain, however, have been actively promoting Fundamental British Values as norms of state and policy in the contemporary period. It is a requirement placed upon teachers by the UK government to promote FBVs in ways that actively single out and strengthen Britishness through cross-cultural, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (Farrell, 2021, p. 1). Teachers and management direct their attention on radicalisation, to prevent students from becoming drawn into terrorism and to challenge the extremist ideology stated in FBV as not to undermine British values (Government, 2021). This marginalises ethnically non-British children, predominantly Muslim children, due to their overrepresentation in today's temporal framing. This is partly due to political initiatives such as the enactment of the Prevent duty, a strand of the UK government's counter-terror strategy concentrating overwhelmingly on Muslim children in *schools and colleges* (Busher, Choudhury et al., 2017, emphasis mine). Spurred on by this construction of Muslim students through the implementation of FBVs into the curriculum, Muslim pupils and those who are perceived as Muslim (such as children who have relatively darker skin) increasingly face verbal or physical abuse:

There was this boy in my school. That was year eight or nine, and then there was this time he threw stones at my friends and me; I think that was targeted towards us because of this racism kind of idea; it was just this guy extremely ignorant and, you know, very stupid in a way, later on, kicked out of school. In the end, we, as non-white, non-native friends, defended ourselves and confronted others when they tried to harm us. Other than that, I think many people are civil in the country. More than ethnicity, so many people in the UK have different backgrounds, and most people accept that. I guess, for us, we look Middle Eastern, so that is a kind of ethnicity, I think, linked with religion. Nowadays, there is loads of hate crime towards race and religion; it is also interlinked. Asians as well, it is pretty ridiculous; I guess it all depends on the latest events.

(Irem, 21 years old, Studying Medicine, Bridlington)

Circumstances posed by the overrepresentation of the non-conforming traits of different groups, including ‘non-white, non-native peers’ in Britain, as discussed by Irem, increasingly render the latter groups vulnerable targets for racism. Irem said that the reasons behind racism that she and her non-white, non-native friends faced are nowadays in negotiation with religion. This goes beyond the bounds of the undifferentiated conception of racism stemming from phenotypic characteristics, including skin colour. Following the lack of diversity at schools and lack of incorporation and encouragement of multicultural elements, including cultural specificities of non-European children, in a classroom context, this leaves ethnically non-British kids vulnerable and marginalised. The introduction of the term ‘fundamental British values’ within teachers’ standards fails to reinforce different groups’ value systems and understandings of multi-ethnic Britain. The same policy, on the contrary, precipitates contemporary and stereotypical representations of Muslim children and accentuates a ‘go home’ rhetoric. This positioning in teacher training, where teachers are expected to strengthen the aspects of Britishness over promoting respect for all cultures, might underpin the origins of prejudice against non-native, ethnically non-British children. In the following sections, I will provide further arguments and explanations grounded in the notions of FBVs, and Prevent Duty, followed by the rhetoric of Brexit.

### **5.7 Fundamental British Values: ‘As a Vehicle for Expressions of Prejudice’**

‘The national curriculum is a set of subjects and standards used by primary and secondary schools so children learn the same things. It covers what subjects are taught, and the standards children should reach in each subject’ (Government, 2015). As the name suggests, it is also the ground where a sense of nationalism and national identity has been built in and promoted. In that sense, the requirement to promote a model of Britishness through the curriculum is not

unusual (Revell and Bryan, 2018, p. 1; Yıldız, 2021). However, the politicisation of values associated with Britishness and the security agenda is quite recent. Schools and other organisations that relate to all areas of education- unions, professional bodies, resource hubs, national associations- now routinely produce their own guidance on how their members can promote fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and respect and tolerance (ibid, p.2).

While the Trojan Horse affair <sup>23</sup> was the trigger event, the driving factors having led to the emergence of FBVs can be found in the 2001 race riots and 7/7 terrorist attacks <sup>24</sup> in London. The causes of both incidents were later linked to racial divisions and mutual distrust between white British and predominantly Muslim communities. This has also been underpinned by the presumption that there is little daily interaction between the above groups. As a result, state practices of multiculturalism were allegedly problematised and judged to be unviable, having

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<sup>23</sup> In March 2014 the Sunday Times reported the existence of a letter alleging to show evidence of an Islamist plot to take over the governing bodies of some Birmingham schools. Despite indications that the so-called ‘Trojan Horse’ letter was faked, the government commissioned an investigation. For further discussion, see Farrell, F. and V. Lander (2019). ‘We’re not British values teachers, are we?’: Muslim teachers’ subjectivity and the governmentality of unease. *Educational Review* 71(4) 466-482, Yıldız, Ü. (2021). An Anti-Racist reading of the notion of ‘fundamental British values’. *PRISM: Casting New Light on Learning, Theory and Practice* 3(2) 91-107.

<sup>24</sup> These two events were compounded by the murder of a soldier named Lee Rigby in central London by two converts to Islam, Michael Adebawale and Michael Adebolajo. He died as a result of multiple cut and stab wounds following the attack fuelled by Adebawale and Adebolajo's extremist beliefs. Adebolajo had claimed he was a ‘soldier of Allah’ and the killing was an act of war. For further discussion, see McEnery, T., M. McGlashan and R. Love (2015). Press and social media reaction to ideologically inspired murder: The case of Lee Rigby. *Discourse & Communication* 9(2) 237-259.

led to a society where different cultures live in isolation without any common values binding them together. As Gilroy (2004, p.1) puts it, the death of multiculturalism has been proclaimed on all sides and thus has been shifted to ‘civic’ nationalism (p. 1).

Britishness as a shared national identity is problematic because, historically, it was an identity that rested on white supremacy, domination and the division of the world. This explicitly racialised superiority of Britishness centred on whiteness, empire and subjugation has long played out in schoolrooms, as well as in the colonies through textbooks and curriculum. Conditioned by the structures of empire, white men, and ‘bringing civilisation to the rest of the world’, it is easy to dissipate an emergent narrative of civic and liberal values of Britishness in education (Revell and Bryan, 2018). The common British values are, therefore, problematic for two reasons. The first is that common British values defined against the backdrop of mutual tolerance and respect for equal rights have arisen as an outcome over the concerns about radicalisation and ‘home-grown’ terrorism. The directive is grounded in and reflective of, Prevent duty- the UK government’s counter-terror strategy. The second is that promoting ‘Britishness’ articulated in ‘fundamental values’ seems only possible in the absence of ‘difference’, which in turn revalidates the privilege and status of whiteness vis a vis other ethnic/racial identity (Elton-Chalcraft, Lander et al., 2017). These coterminously underlie the vagueness and blurriness of the notion of ‘common’ values of Britishness.

The sense of vagueness has been amplified with the expectation that ‘all teachers should not undermine’ fundamental British values (DfE, 2012). However, it is not clear what exactly counts as *undermining* (Healy, 2019; Lander, 2019; Yıldız, 2021). This is a requirement for all teachers, not just the subject specialists in citizenship, that need to know what it is they are required to do in the classroom, as well as what they should not be doing (ibid, p. 426). Given the broad and ambiguous nature of these values, classifying what acts or thoughts are against

FBVs in these terms may seem to be bound by personal interpretations of educators and students. This was clear in the way Emre Can veered away from articulating FBVs directly:

[...] yet my school, you are not allowed to wear necklaces or jewellery unless it is for religious places, any jewellery including chain, you are not allowed to. But if it is a religious purpose, if it is a cross, then you are allowed to wear it. Buddhist people have their beards; I wear a necklace, but they asked me to take it off, it was a church of England school, and I was in year 11, so I did not use to grow up my beard that much. At that time, though, I had a long beard and necklace with a sword as well, and I had my beard as well, they asked me to shave my beard, and they asked me to take off my Zulfiqar<sup>25</sup> necklace; I said to them, this is religious; so, I am not taking this off. They said, 'but we don't know anything about it,' I said, 'then go research my religion and then come to me and tell me what I know about my religion' how can they explain my religion to me better than me? They were like, 'shave off your beard as well' that is not religion; I said, 'you don't know anything about my religion, they said 'it is not good for the uniform' I said, 'open the booklet and show me what it says about beard', they can't tell, here's the reason, no white person around our age has a beard, white teenagers cannot even grow a beard, those who can grow a beard who tend to be white, then anyone who can grow a beard automatically Middle Eastern. You could be Balkan if you are a little bit dark, Middle Eastern. Straightway...

(Emre Can, 18 years old, Working with Family, London)

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<sup>25</sup> 'The Zulfiqar is one of Islam's oldest and best-known symbols and is particularly important to Shiah Alevi and Sufi.

Emre Can's experience of discrimination demonstrated that his cultural and religious background as a British Turk with Alevi heritage<sup>26</sup> were not fully acknowledged or accepted, and reflected back to him as much as the values of his Christian or Buddhist schoolmates. Emre Can was adamant that the absence of equality caused his identities to not be given the same amount of recognition as the identities of a Buddhist or a white and Christian student. He argued that in a Church of England school, wearing 'a cross'; or 'if a Buddhist student wears a beard' is allowed. The idea that there is no space for a student who is Muslim or affiliated with Islam on the cultural codes has been reinforced and juxtaposed with the educators' personal interpretations as to what is good for the 'uniform'. Consequently, the fact that Emre Can was asked to take off his *Zulfikar* necklace and shave his beard whilst his schoolmates with varying faiths and values enjoyed the liberty to practise what they believe demonstrates that while some are considered to be 'fitted' into British society, some can feel that their position in the eyes of many British people is beyond the boundaries of British values. Hence, it is no surprise that markers, including an Islamic beard and a necklace, seem to have acted as catalysts to single out Emre Can under the pretext of 'that is not for religion' within a national climate of Islamophobia.

Cohen and Tufail (2017) remind us that there are numerous accounts of Muslim students in schools and colleges and at universities being referred under Prevent duty for what emerges as

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<sup>26</sup> Alevi is a mystical belief that is rooted in Islam and Sufism with some traditions of Christianity and Shamanism. That being said, some segments of the Alevi community argue that features of their belief and culture do not follow Islamic or other religious code strictly. For simplicity's sake, I do not delve into further detail about atheist Alevis and Alevis who oppose Islamic religiosity but adhere to Turkish nationalism. Dudek, A. (2017). Religious diversity and the Alevi struggle for equality in Turkey. Retrieved from., Akdemir, A. (2016). Alevis in Britain: emerging identities in a transnational social space.

mundane reasons, including simply reading a particular library book (p.43). In a similar vein, carrying Islamic identifiers on their body as a convention appears to fundamentally contradict 'British' values. The ones wearing Islamic markers have covertly been deemed a threat to normatively established realignment projects and seen as bodies deviating from the patriotic attachment to a shared set of national civic values (Farrell, 2021, p. 2). This might be read as illiberal liberalism, essentialising Muslims as different and against British values (Maylor, 2016). Consequently, many Muslims feel that they are forced into a type of 'we-ness' in a manner that restricts them as 'passive receivers of imposed values' (Panjwani, 2016), almost exempted from the practices of 'mutual trust' and 'individual liberty'. Indeed, my respondents argued that schools demand them to think and act in a certain way and instil British identity through 'indoctrination':

B: We respect poppies and stuff, some school does it [FBVs], but they don't have it at every school; it depends on how much they value British identity, my school is a Church of England school, and it is a denomination in Christianity and in my school, they gave us 4-5 hours of lessons of Britishness like tolerance this and that...indoctrination.

(Burak, 18 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> form Student, London)

A: In our school, we have like a minute of silence for the poppies. They make us put silent for one minute; I do not know. Those poppies... November the 11<sup>th</sup> silence. I don't think they should need to do that; it is pointless in some way. We don't have any option. Britishness and religion... They don't really care about religion and all of that. So, it is just forcing us to do it in some way...

(Ali, 19 years old, Studying 6<sup>th</sup> Form in Biology, London)

Similar to Emre Can, Burak and Ali did not articulate British values in the abstract but rather offered the view that it is ‘poppies, November 11th and religion’ constituting Britishness. Ali raised that Britishness is at odds with religion and implied that he struggled to reconcile religion with the liberal understanding of Britishness. Burak also mentioned the lack of homogeneity and standard in the application of FBVs across schools. He then summed up the link between the religious identity of the schools and the degree to which they actively promote British values, which he associated with ‘indoctrination’. According to Maylor (2016), the emphasis on British values assumes that minority ethnic communities do not share liberal democratic values and, as such, require forced assimilation through the *indoctrination* of British values. The way Burak evaluated the link between the greater extent of application of FBVs in schools is based on ‘how much they [schools] value British identity’, with the implication being that the extent to which FBVs are applied is not consistent across British schools.

Ali similarly struggled to comprehend how the ‘November 11<sup>th</sup> silence’ (the day WW1 ended) could function as a unifying approach to being British (BBC, 2021). As Elton-Chalcraft, Lander *et al.* remind us, there is an implicit assumption that teachers will know how to promote FBVs and indeed articulate them clearly to children and young people without indoctrinating (Elton-Chalcraft, Lander *et al.*, 2017). However, Burak unequivocally demonstrated that the nationalistic elements of ‘Britishness’ embedded in lessons are closed to dissent, as evident in his quote ‘it is just forcing us to do it in some ways’. Perhaps the cause of Burak’s reflexive association of Britishness with the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Day derived in part from the fact that the Battle of Gallipoli was a World War I battle fought between the Ottoman Empire and Imperial Britain and French troops. Standing in silence on November 11th in honour of British Empire soldiers might as well amount to dishonouring the Turkish (then Ottoman) troops who died fighting against British troops. This might be read as an example of the impossibility of a uniform understanding of Britishness under a shared or ‘common’

values, and as Maylor (2010) argues, Britain's youth hold wildly divergent views of what Britishness is and their place in it.

As previously mentioned, adopting shared British values is arguably crucial to eliminating threats of multiculturalism posed, e.g., by British Muslims on 7/7, followed by the murder of British soldier Lee Rigby in 2014 (Maylor, 2016). As such, the presence of messages embedded in fundamental British values is intentionally or unintentionally perceived by my respondents as targeting Muslims and Islam (Green, 2017). For Erdal, FBVs appear to be 'normal human rights' rather than a more 'defined' sense of Britishness; Dilara reflected on the foundations of FBVs through a discussion on Islamophobia:

E: why are fundamental British values released as British at all? It just seems like normal human rights in the world. I feel like it is not working too well...

(Erdal, 21 years old, Studying Pharmacy, Norwich/London)

D: I am just trying to understand if it is kind of came out for, to help everyone just kind of get along because, like where Muslims are facing something and then sure they were trying to give it to the White population, that they should be tolerant and have mutual respect? Values are contradicting each other because one of them is democracy, and that is obviously including the freedom of expression and then if you cannot have a normal conversation, you know, criticise some things, then I don't know then what is the point of FBVs... even the last one tolerance, what does that even mean? Tolerate one another? I think that is even wrong on its own, just tolerating different people when toleration is definitely not enough for people to feel comfortable; like other ethnicities should actually be uplifted and supported for like before they can embrace where they come from instead of just being tolerated, so the whole thing contradicts.

(Derin, 21 years old, Studying International Relations, Norwich/London)

There is a consensus in the above quotes about the ambiguous nature of fundamental British values. For Erdal, the question of British values ‘as British’ is almost irrelevant because it conflicts with ‘normal human’ values that transcend national interest (Farrell and Lander, 2019), and he cited this as the reason why ‘it is not working too well’. Derin, on the other hand, conceptualised the emergence of fundamental British values within articulations of the co-existence of communities, ‘to help everyone just kind of get along’. She then points to the absence of such manifestation in society. Further, she argues that FBVs arose for the ‘white population’ to maintain ‘mutual respect’ and ‘toleration’ in the face of Islamophobic incidents. Derin expands further, stating that the ‘values are kind of contradicting each other’. She points out the controversial nature of fundamental British values, of which she alluded to ‘freedom of expression’, and claimed that it is pointless to mention ‘freedom of expression’ if people are denied the right to ‘criticise’—disengaging from ‘having a normal conversation’ conflicts with what Derin considered as ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom of expression’.

Derin’s analysis of the conflictual nature of FBVs unravels the ways in which FBVs operate as instruments of counter-narratives to identify those who might be at risk of extremism and radicalisation as a proxy for the workings of Prevent duty. This speaks of the irony in the promotion of liberal values where one of the virtues of democracy is ‘freedom of speech and exercising of which, namely rejecting fundamental British values, potentially costs subjects/pupils stereotyping, and being subject to suspicion and Prevent referrals’<sup>27</sup> (Cohen and Tufail,

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<sup>27</sup> Prevent referrals to the Channel programme, experiences of institutionalised Islamophobia, or violent racist attacks, the overt focus on Muslims and Islam in the ‘war on terror’ has energised Islamophobia and enhanced the precariousness of the Muslim experience in Britain. For further discussion, see Qurashi, F. (2018). The Prevent strategy and the UK ‘war on terror’: embedding infrastructures of surveillance in Muslim communities. *Palgrave Communications* 4(1) 1-13.

2017). Derin also contested the limits of tolerance as one of the ‘common’ values. She argued that tolerating one another is wrong on its own, and at the core of her critique of tolerance lies the recognition of who is entitled to ‘tolerate’ and who can only be ‘tolerated’. This can be illustrated through the ‘white nation fantasy’ in which, as suggested by Hage (2012), tolerating ‘other ethnicities’ keeps the idea of ‘empire’ on the surface. This is evident in the way Derin consciously or unconsciously attributed the right to ‘tolerate’ to white British.

The above examples lead us to conclude that the government’s conceptualisation of British values appears to be an uncontroversial list of general, liberal democratic principles (Green, 2017). Its strategy to eliminate threats of multiculturalism to British democracy as posed by, for example, British Muslims in 7/7, targeted at those ‘perceived’ to be prone to Islamic extremism and radicalisation (Maylor, 2016). Racialised as ‘fundamentally British’, the values in question have led to confusion in my respondents in educational settings, as Britishness cannot be confined to a single identity and culture; it is dynamic, akin to any identity, and shaped constantly in interaction with contemporary events. Disseminating discourses culminating in the implication that Muslims and Islam are inherently different to ‘us’ would threaten the country’s diverse identities and histories, moreover, discourage pupils to debate the issues for fear of stereotyping and stigma (Allen, 2016, p. 166). Concerned with such limitations brought about by FBVs, Maylor (2016) asks, ‘does a diverse British society not require diverse values to reflect the actual societal composition?’ (p. 44). This question encompasses the need to reframe fundamental British values as virtues which help carve out other ethnicities’ senses of identity and belonging in the country in which they are born and raised.

## **5.8 Brexit and Turkey's Candidacy for EU Membership as Catalysts of Islamophobia**

Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) was an Ottoman intellectual who hugely influenced Turkish nationalism, although he was of Kurdish origin. His sociocultural theory was influenced by Durkheimian sociology of the 19th century and, more often than not, by its central tenets of harmony and social order, which Gökalp recontextualised around a central problematic roughly from the mid-1910s, a period of transformation in Turkish society: constructing a viable synthesis of Turkism, Islamism and modernism. Gökalp's Turkism was a tool to ease the transition from a multicultural empire to a nation-state. The Islamic ideal was less of a guide to action than an abstract sense of morality. The source of modernism, for Gökalp, had to be Western science and technology, keeping out Western individualism and liberalism (Ergin, 2016, p. 83). Thus, Ziya Gökalp argued, 'the first rule of our social order should be this sentence: I am of the Turkish nation, of the Islamic ummah, of Western civilisation (Gökalp, 1969 (1923), p. 64 cited in Ergin, 2016, pp. 82- 83). Drawn out of Gökalp's version of Turkishness, this section demonstrates multiple discourses illustrating how British Turks interpreted the UK's Brexit campaign. A discussion of the Brexit campaign did not feature amongst the interview questions I prepared. A few of my respondents, however, either demonstrated their stance against Brexit or recounted an instance in relation to Brexit in response to the questions listed below:

1. Have you ever felt that you have been treated unfairly in Britain?
2. To what extent does the perception of British people towards Turkish origin people living in Britain has changed since 9/11 or 7/7?
3. Have you ever withdrawn yourself from certain debates for fear of misinterpretation to avoid stigmatisation, Turkophobia and Islamophobia? Can you give some examples? How did this make you feel?

Aslı, one of my older respondents, preferred to stick with her Turkish ethnic identity as a reaction to the discourses of the Brexit campaign:

They always, for many years, have been scared of Turkey. It goes back to the Ottoman times, especially the French... they have always been scared of Turkey. Obviously, a vast number of Turkish citizens would flee through here. That is what they were scared of, too... but then it does not make sense because they opened doors to Romania and Bulgaria; these are not up countries like Turkey. And also, because Turkey is known to be a Muslim country, they are afraid of that. Because there are no Muslims in the EU, so obviously, there is that too; that's why the UK was scared of Turkey, and that is one of the reasons they have come out of the EU. Turkey might go into the EU for immigration reasons. Basically, they are also scared of the fact that the whole world will be Muslim in the future; it is scary that it will come down to politics in the end. The world as a whole knows that Turkey would fight for their flag to death, it is a commitment, and they know this. As the whole world knows that Turkey is a very powerful country.

(Aslı, 55 years old, Working with Autistic Children, London)

Aslı said little of the Brexit campaign's dominant discourses about the anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish programmes that were circulated to attract Leave voters. If anything, Aslı deflected attention by emphasising the taken-for-granted assumption of Turkish superiority embedded in the Ottoman empire, economy, flag, and army. Aslı built her narrative of the hierarchy of Turkish-Islamic synthesis in a certain way to defy Brexit's use of Turkey and its Muslim population as a threat to British values and culture. She used the element of 'fear' as an antidote to cover up degrading perceptions over Turks/Muslims. Not only did she claim that it is the fears of 'invasion' of Britain by Turkish/Muslim immigrants that resulted in Britain's exit from

the European Union, but through nationalist rhetoric and discourse, Aslı maintained the myth of Islamic and Ottoman threats to Christianity and Europe.

One might argue that the Brexit campaign weaponised Turkey's not-in-near-future accession to the EU to tie together the issue of immigration with the issue of sovereignty (Perra, 2019). Turkey was the perfect rhetorical weapon for encapsulating the narratives of the desire to leave the EU. The reason for this desire was twofold: first, 'a nostalgia for the imperial past, as the basis for calls to restore the nation's sovereignty and wrest back control of its borders'; and second was the annihilation of 'the spectre of a migration crisis tied with the looming threat of terrorism seen as indicative of Muslim presence' (Rhodes and Hall, 2020, pp. 284-285). Therefore, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) released a broadcast warning voter about the possibility of Turkey (*population 86 million*<sup>28</sup>, *predominantly Turkish Muslim*) being a member state by 2020 should they back Remain (Smith, 2019, emphasis mine). We can rightfully claim that Turkey was cited considerably more than any other country in articles about immigration during the ten weeks of the referendum campaign and that 'the most negative depictions of non-UK nationals were of Turks and Albanians' (Ker-Lindsay, 2018)<sup>29</sup>. Ironically, the overtly xenophobic portrayal of Turkey and its citizens at a time of rising anti-Muslim sentiment in Britain was downplayed by my respondents, who talked about Brexit and, at times, defied the Leave campaign's propaganda that singled out the accession of Turkey to the EU as a primary factor to secure Brexit:

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<sup>28</sup> This number does not indicate a definite or approximate number due to the fact that Turkey is currently undergoing a demographic transition, it hosts 4 million refugees, 3,6 million are Syrians. Turkey, U. (2019). Refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey.

<sup>29</sup> Moore, M. and G. Ramsay (2017). UK media coverage of the 2016 EU Referendum campaign. <<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/cmcp/uk-media-coverage-of-the-2016-eu-referendum-campaign.pdf>> (Last accessed, 22 May, 2022).

It is so complicated, my opinion is if Turkey joins Europe, we enter the EU, and it has no bearing on the UK. It is not UK's responsibility; I think we should join the EU; you know all British people want to go to Turkey every summer they go to Turkey, so why would they incite a negative opinion? So, I do not think British people happened to create a hostile environment on purpose, not really. I also did not feel like I was unwelcomed during the Brexit campaign.

(Erdal, 21 years old, Studying Pharmacy, Norwich/London)

Turkey's position as 'likely to be a member of EU' being effortlessly carved out in the Turkish mindset is based on historically nourished discourses around Turkish identity, Turkish Islamophobia, and the sense of it being culturally superior to other Muslim nations (Ergin, 2016, p. 3). Above, a person with Turkish heritage, who was present in this particular setting where xenophobic and Islamophobic views were overtly repeated for ten weeks of the Brexit campaign, denied the perception that Turkey is cast as a straightforward representative of 'vilified undesirables' (Joseph, 2020, p. 59). Against this Orientalist position, perhaps unsurprisingly, Erdal dehistoricised the populist Brexit narratives embodied in Turkey's negative portrayal and, if anything, reconstructed the image of Turkey as an appealing holiday hotspot for British people. Others simply implied instances of disbelief at the magnitude of concerns against a backdrop of Turkey's candidacy for EU membership. Azra, for instance, suggested that the primary focus of Leave campaign was the understanding that 'we can do better by ourselves' rather than xenophobic views:

I personally wanted to stay in the EU; I did not like to think about it like, 'oh, Turkey is joining the EU; we should leave' I don't really understand any of them. I did not understand the rationale behind it, I understand why they have used it, but I have never thought about that whilst, you know, voting stay or leave. I did not think about that while doing that; I rather thought, 'oh, it is just more beneficial to stay in the

EU' white British, I mean, I don't think so; I don't think they have voted because of Turkey, thought 'oh these countries are joining the EU, so we should leave' I don't think that was their thought process, I think they just thought the EU as a whole which was not doing great at the moment, we can do better by ourselves kind of mentality.'

(Azra, 17 years old, Studying Law and Business, London)

Azra rejected the discourse on the 'undesirability of Turkish immigrants' upon Turkey's joining the EU at face value. She evidently reiterated the argument of the Leave campaign, which is encapsulated in the context of the 'we can do better ourselves mentality'. This extract suggests that the discourse on 'sovereignty and autonomy' is so ubiquitous and commonplace that it may even be established in the minds of immigrants and children of immigrants in Britain. This tendency to think of Brexit resulted in a complete denial and disguise that helped the Turkish context to be masqueraded as irrelevant by British Turks. This understanding is the product of a historical process. We should not forget that all of my respondents were raised by parents who emigrated from a country which was firmly and concretely shaped through instruments of modernisation, secularism, whiteness, and Westernisation (Babacan, 2022; Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008; Cagatay, 2006; Göle, 1997). Seen in this light, in Azra's mind, Turkish citizens' unwanted status on the basis of race or modernity cannot necessarily underpin the motives behind Brexit. The formulation of a modernised Turkey, consolidated by the concept of 'whiteness' in the last two centuries, has transplanted Turkish people's perceptions to a large extent (ibid). This might explain the difficulty in understanding why Turkey's EU membership was at the forefront of the Brexit campaign. This also unveils why the narratives of the respondents did not touch upon the fact that Turkey is the perfect instrument to mobilise Islamophobic sentiments for voting intentions. Developed around this blind spot, the next

respondent showed vehement disbelief in the feasibility of putting Turkey on a poster with an image of a UK passport declaring that Turkey (population 76m) is joining the EU:



Figure 6: The controversial Vote Leave campaign poster. Photograph: Vote Leave

I have a memory, basically, it was in secondary school, during Brexit times, and what happened was people who promoted Brexit came to my school and handed out those leaflets, and I remember taking a look at the back of the leaflet; it was saying ‘can you imagine Turkey joining the EU?’ I was like, wow, because when I think about it, okay, I understand their viewpoint, what they might think. After all, obviously, Turkey has a large population and then a lot of problems there happening politically, and in other ways, so I can imagine so many people migrating to the UK. So, I still did not like the way they used Turkey, though. Can you imagine Turkey is joining, like aliens are coming... they did not have to print that way; it was on the leaflet... it is like, why did they feel the need to put that on... I and my Turkish friends talked about it later... like did they really do that?

(Irem, 21 years old, Studying Medicine, Bridlington)

Here, rhetorical questions are asked in order to make a point rather than to get an answer. Irem uttered, ‘why did they feel the need to put that on... [...] did they really do that?’ in order to emphasise the ‘irrational’ character of the Brexit discourse created around Turkey. Irem acknowledged the attitudes around immigration and Brexit were based on the fact that Turkey was abound with the potential of new ‘Muslim’ immigrants to the UK. Similar to other respondents, Irem could not juxtapose the concerns stemming from Islamophobia with Turkey and its candidacy to the EU. Irem’s view was captured as a way of turning a blind eye to the fact that Turkey was not deemed to fit into the prospects of Western civilisation by Britain and, if anything, was merely placed alongside unwanted, inferiorised Muslim countries. In this mindset, Turkish people are viewed with suspicion and Turkey is relegated to the position of an undesirable and unwanted Muslim country, which resulted in my respondents’ disbelief and denial. After all, this feeling has long been absent in the Turkish mindset.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the manifestations and effects of Islamophobia in the day-to-day lives of British Turks in Britain. We can conclude that Islamophobia does not always operate in an overt, apparent fashion in the case of British Turks but manifests in subtle and covert forms. It becomes evident that in the construction of ‘Otherness’, manifestations of Islamophobia embedded in the processes of racialisation overlap or exist together, with different forms of racism in the case of British Turks. An exception to this is that Turkish women who wear the Islamic veil have been subjected to a relatively more overt and blatant form of Islamophobia, contrasted with my respondents who do not carry religious signifiers.

A key argument of this chapter has been that micro (everyday interactions) and macro (state policies and institutions including biased media) mechanisms have been interlinked in ways to identify the multiple forms of Islamophobia that British Turks have been experiencing in

Britain. This chapter was therefore divided into two main parts. The first part of the chapter focused on different forms of discrimination in its overt and covert forms on the micro level. So, the negative circumstances and the feelings of stigmatisation and displacement shared by my respondents have been conceptualised in the normal routine of everyday life. The second part of the chapter has drawn upon the exclusionary ideologies of two state policies, including FBVs (Fundamental British Values) and the Brexit campaign, and explored how macro-level implications of anti-immigrant, anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim politics resonated in the daily lives of British Turks. My data concerning macro-level state policies was discussed within the context of micro-level responses of British Turks to conceive of and account for the negative racial and Islamophobic experiences in their daily lives.

What surfaced from the analyses here is that we cannot situate negative experiences of British Turks as typically Islamophobic, but in many ways, they were compounded and articulated with other forms of racisms, including xenophobia and microaggression. This assumption is based on the Turkish ethnicity of my respondents and is always context-bound. This being the case, the data within this chapter shed light on the intersection between the ‘Turk’ image historically framed in as violent, ignorant, and patriarchal and the prevailing racialised conceptualisations of Muslim subjects in the current conjuncture. As an antidote to forms of racisms, including Islamophobia, xenophobia and microaggressions, as the first half of the chapter suggests, some respondents mobilised ‘passing’ on account of their putative ‘whiteness’. Some other respondents accordingly benefited from the secular and nationalist narratives of ‘homeland’, and integrated Western modernity into the specificities of Turkishness to distinguish themselves from other ethnic and racial groups, especially non-white Muslim communities. As the driving force behind the differentiated ‘passing’ practices, I have shown the realities of racial and anti-Muslim discrimination experienced by British Turks.

The second half of this chapter discussed how macro-level elements draw upon FBVs and the Brexit referendum debate as stimulating state policies with discriminatory nature have made an impact on the daily lives of British Turks. Racialised as fundamentally British, the values in question confined to the superiority of ‘white’ British culminated in the implication where Muslim groups and Islam are inherently different, which some of my younger respondents challenged in their discussions of their multiple identities as Turkish and Muslim. Lastly, considering the mobilisation of Turkey’s EU membership on account of its majority Muslim population at the forefront of the Brexit campaign, it was pointed out that British Turks mainly downplayed, if not totally rejected, the negative impressions held against Turkey. Some respondents accordingly defended their self-image and collective dignity, and none acknowledged the inseparability of the Brexit campaign and Turkey, with its majority Muslim population as the former’s leverage to secure the Leave vote. This, in turn, suggested that for fear of discrimination based on their ethnic and religious identities, all my respondents who offered insights about the Brexit debate defensively challenged the negative perceptions on Turkey embedded within the debates of the Brexit campaign.

## CHAPTER 6

# BRITISH TURKISH MUSLIMS AND INTRICACIES OF BELONGING, CULTURAL MIX AND DISPLACEMENT

*“Tolerance should really only be a passing attitude: it should lead to appreciation. To tolerate is to offend.”*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

### 6.1 Introduction

Bauman (2013), in his analysis of security and safety, posits that ‘ethnic minorities or immigrants search for safety in the ideas of cultural plurality, cross-cultural dialogues, and the community like a besieged fortress in an increasingly insecure world’ (p.15). In this chapter, following on the extracted themes and patterns from my data, I want to advance Bauman’s perspective by shifting its focus to the specific case of British Turks in Britain.

Muslims living in *the West* are seldom represented as a part of everyday life (Saeed, 2019a, emphasis mine); even second and third-generation children of Muslim families are rendered as ‘strangers’ and excluded as ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas, 1966). That matter, as Morley (2001) notes, may be represented by ‘foreign’ cultural objects which are seen to dirty the symbolic space of the nation, by ‘strangers’ who feel alien to their society, community and neighbourhood (p. 432). My respondents mentioned that a lack of diversity across a range of social spaces and contexts made them feel out of place and like strangers (Konstantarakos, 2000). My findings are, therefore, symbolic because a handful of my respondents indicated that they feel like strangers, especially in settings shared disproportionately with white British people. In other words, British Turks’ discomfort, or at times, their alienation, appears to emanate from the gaze of white British people which disavows the difference. As a matter of

fact, multi-ethnic diversity conceals anxieties which arise from the racist and Islamophobic gaze.

The findings discussed in this chapter are mainly rooted in the interview questions focusing on British Turks' responses asking what 'belonging to Britain' means to them and addressing the extent to which they feel disintegrated and unhappy against the backdrop of how mainstream British society views them. To explore the dynamics of Islamophobia in their 'social' life in its widest sense, I contextualised my questions by associating the 'social' with the 'workplace', 'educational institution'- particularly the university, 'social associations', and the general public. This chapter expands on the previous discussions around identity formation and Islamophobia by focusing on the views, gazes, bodies and surroundings that indicate a social context in which Islamophobia emerges. Through these negotiations on how British Turks fit within and beyond the British majority, discussions on Islamophobia are broadened to notions of belonging across different spaces and social contexts.

To explore these and beyond, this chapter has been structured as follows. First, I focus on the negotiations of being British Turkish and Muslim in urban spaces, including multicultural London and a range of different cities in the UK. The focus is not only on the degree of attachment and the sense of 'home' British Turks develop for the cities they accommodate but also why they tend to feel displaced or discriminated against in certain cities or settings socially occupied chiefly by homogeneously white British people. This conversation is continued in the third section, which addresses the racialisation of spatialities of different scales and social relations, shedding light on the stigmatisation, racism and Islamophobia some of my respondents indicated. In the fourth section, I focus on the role of interpersonal experiences and prosaic negotiations with the British majority and other ethnic and racial minority groups generating a higher sense of belonging in British Turks. Finally, I looked at the social contexts

of different activities, including diverse religious holidays and what they mean for the belonging and attachment of British Turks to mainstream British society. The last chapter also offers an opportunity to acknowledge the different modes of Islamophobia that manifest as deeply entrenched perceptions of secular Turks against pious British Turks. It also shows that Islamophobia is not monolithically limited to the ‘Western’ world and can be found heterogeneously across different contexts, including the multi-layered nature of Turkish Islamophobia.

## **6.2 Marginalisation and Belonging in Spatial Contexts: Multicultural London**

Drawing on the conceptualisations of ‘home’, this section addresses the strong sense of attachment carved out by British Turks to London based on certain ‘openness’ towards people perceived as ‘different’ (Wessendorf, 2010). London is exceptional in that it encapsulates a ‘commonplace’ diversity which, according to Wessendorf (2013, p.407), illustrates how ‘ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity [is] experienced as a normal part of social life, and not as something particularly special’ (as cited in Barwick and Beaman, 2019, p.1). In this section, I will address this commonplace diversity of London and discuss how London’s multi-ethnic mix, compared to that of provincial, non-urban spaces, arouses a sense of belonging in British Turks. My findings demonstrate that the reality of super-diversity and heterogeneity in London is a source of acceptance for British Turks. For them, London welcomes differences and makes it easier to fit in; it also allows inter-ethnic mixings. Kerem, a long-term resident of London, appreciates the fact that London is made up of people who are of different ethnic and religious backgrounds:

London is my home not only because it is where I was born and have my education  
but it is where I want to work also because there is so much variety and difference

in London. You would be weird for not being different. I am 100 % happy that there is not one culture in my home city.

(Kerem, 19 years old, Studying Medicine, London)

Kerem's degree of attachment to London is mediated through the city's diverse character, where he argued that 'not being different would be weird'. He also associated London with a narrative of 'home', not as a material space of dwelling but a site where 'there is so much variety and difference'. In other words, it is not only in terms of the great diversity of its physical environments of London making it 'home', but its openness to cultural differences also engenders a sense of home in Kerem. When one is at home, Sara Ahmed (2000) argues, one would be a member of the family, a neighbour, or a friend, and when one leaves home, one becomes the outsider, the stranger, the 'other' (p.88). Ayşe, who also lives in London, describes how she feels like a 'stranger' when she 'travels outside of London':

If I travel outside of London, especially different areas, certain areas, then they can give you a strange look because they know you are a stranger, an outsider, you are a foreigner, and they don't always welcome you. Even if they don't say anything, you can notice by the way they look at you or their body language speaks for itself, so...but you know if you smile at them, usually it is okay.

(Ayşe, 41 years old, Interpreter, London)

As I have suggested in Chapter 4, with conditional hospitality, the guest is welcomed, but still, the ownership of the home/sovereignty is retained (Yegenoglu, 2012, p.14. Unconditional hospitality, however, involves the interruption of full possession of a place called home and the reversal of the owner's position into a tenant in his/her 'own' place. This means that the owner, white British people in this instance, can 'no longer retain their sovereignty' to the fullest extent by the bodily presence of the 'guest' when they are unconditionally welcomed

(p.15, emphasis mine). When Ayşe travels outside of London, she is reminded of being a 'guest', her presence in that domain is put into question 'by the way 'they' look at her, or their body language' serves only to confirm who belongs and who does not. In her account, Ayşe associates her trips outside of London with trespassing.

Moreover, she understands that being an outsider out of London is discomfoting, and her presence as unwanted can remain a constant preoccupation in Ayşe's thoughts unless she takes on a more friendly attitude in public space. This view was captured in Amin's conceptualisations of diversity, which he views as negotiated in a city's public spaces. Amin (2002) notes that urban public spaces are often territorialised by particular groups and therefore steeped in surveillance. The territorial boundaries of public space are often mobilised by those who share a sense of unifying values and beliefs grounded on 'localised ethnicities' and/or virulent nationalisms (Auster and Wang, 1995). Ayşe's quote offers a glimpse into specific territorial boundaries of those who potentially distinguish themselves from the 'strangers' on a number of fronts. Ayşe's Islamic veil potentially haunted the territories that Ayşe previously visited. Here, Ayşe did not expand on the 'areas' in question; she was actually referring to the people belonging to the areas 'outside of London' and her apparent omnipresence in those particular places. The physical marker of 'otherness' assigned to the Islamic veil could make people in the 'areas' mentioned by Ayşe more guarded and cautious, which underscores the absence of inter-cultural contact and interaction to overcome feelings of strangeness (Moore, 2013, p. 179; Sandercock, 2006). In the absence of convivial ethnic interrelations, encountering Islam in the form of a veil might as well awaken a sort of transgression of white society sealed up in a common fantasy of a white nation (Gilroy, 2013; see also Hage, 1998). Seen in this light, independent of variations in 'skin colour, dress style including Islamic attire as in Ayşe's case, and hair colour or gender', and contrastingly London seems to assist in building a sense of belonging in my respondents, contributing to living with diversity (Amin,

2002, p. 976). Erdal was born in, and has lived most of his life in London and is now studying at a university in a less multicultural city. He sees London as his home:

I feel like London is where I feel at home because I feel more accepted here; it is more diverse. It is not England where I feel like a stranger; Britain I like being; it is not Norwich; it is London I like being because Kurdish and Turkish people are the maximum amount as I have seen. There are more English people in Norwich.

(Erdal, 21 years old, Studying Pharmacy, Norwich/ London)

Cresswell suggests that geography and ideology, or the totality of power relations during a particular period of time, intersect... so the effect of a place is not simply a geographical matter (1992, p.8). Erdal 'feels at home in London' because he 'feels more accepted' there. In his account, Erdal prefers to live with an ethnic mixture over the white British majority because of the threads of xenophobia and racism sewn into place (Phillips, 2009). Bourdieu (quoted in Cresswell, 1992) states that 'certain orderings of space provide a structure for experience and help to tell us who we are in society'. He writes, 'the spatial structures structure not only the group's representation of the world but the group itself, which orders itself in accordance with this representation' (p.8). I would suggest that London is a safe harbour that is a product of marginalised and othered people. London functions as a mechanism, a possibility to welcome the outsider inside. Erdal recognises that aspect of London, for it allows him to affirm his distinctiveness if desired; and facilitates an ideal of inclusion based on 'fellow feeling' (Amin, 2005, p.627). It is clear that Erdal acknowledges that particular places are 'heavily demarcated as white places', exemplified by Norwich (Puwar, 2004, p.49). Therefore, as someone who is visibly different to the white British majority, he emphasises how much he feels at home in a context where diversity is the norm. Erdal also takes the demographic composition of London into account, including 'the number of Kurdish and Turkish people', which again relates to the

fact that visible diversity facilitates a sense of inclusion of those who are visibly different and would stick out in areas, like in Norwich, where the diversity is uncommon.

Although racism might exist in areas characterised by visible diversity, less diverse areas highlight the importance of place in showing the workings of prejudice inherent in white space (Wessendorf, 2019, p.142). Belonging to London with its super-diverse society is also projected onto Erdal's attachment to the concept of Britain, 'not to England', where he 'feels like a stranger'. Because the constructed sense of Britishness is an umbrella term compounding religious pluralism and cultural diversity, though London is geographically located in England, it is situated discursively in a different sphere. This public/political sphere, as Hall (1996) describes, eludes and equally lessens the effectiveness of a 'culturally constructed sense of Englishness which is a closed, exclusive and regressive form of national and ethnic identity whereas Britishness extends the margins of ethnicity within multiculturalism' (pp.161-163). This is why in searching for a space of belonging, Erdal naturally gravitates towards the most diverse cities, not only in Britain but elsewhere in Europe, to negate the factors of everyday surveillance and xenophobia. Emblematic of inclusion and diversity, London is primarily associated with the notion of 'civility' by Ezgi, who has lived in York most of her life:

If you live in London, people are not narrow-minded and welcome you regardless of ethnicity. In contrast, in York, foreigners catch even my eye easily because it is predominantly white British, so both foreigners and racism are easily brought into view. The Mayor of London is a Pakistani Muslim for instance. So to speak, London is more inclusive compared to smaller cities in England.

(Ezgi, 24, Working in Her Father's Restaurant, Harrogate)

Ezgi draws on the notion of 'narrow-mindedness', referring to the lack of 'civility' of people living outside of London or outside the areas where diversity is not as common. According to

Buonfino and Mulgan (2009), 'civility can be described as the 'learned grammar of sociability' mediated by the 'capacity of people who differ to live together' independent of factors including ethnicity, skin colour, gender, dress style and so forth (Buonfino and Mulgan, 2009; Sennett, 2005). Ezgi also points out that 'racism' is built in spaces dominated by 'white British', where the visibility of 'foreigners' is limited. In her narrative, London is contrasted with York, and for Ezgi, being a foreigner is not an exception in London, so much so that 'a Pakistani Muslim' can be assigned to the role of mayor. Consequently, following Cresswell, spaces are ideologically charged geographical bases, and two urban experiences can be radically different in terms of their acquisition and celebration of ethnic diversity (Cresswell, 1992). So, for some of my respondents, there is an important distinction between London and British provincial cities. The former is attributed to a sense of home of difference/ multiplicity, the realm of diversity, but the latter is deemed divided: a dimension of separation (Massey, 2005, p. 21). In this way, even though the presence of immigrants or 'others' have long been conditionally welcomed, when they are rendered as something that challenges the idea of national identity by threatening the 'fetishisation of national space that is white', they are less welcome. Space is dynamic and thereby capable of changing perceptions of immigrants (Gilbertson, 2007). London, with its 'commonplace' diversity, appears to enable home/ly space in ways to get around the constraints posed by the absence of convivial negotiations of diversity operating in less diverse cities of Britain. The following section addresses the degree of belonging in different cities of Britain by exploring the workings of conceptualisations such as 'guest', 'the other' or being 'a foreigner'.

### **6.3 Negotiating a Sense of Belonging Beyond a Global City like London**

There are many factors which can have a direct and indirect effect on the degree of attachment and belonging British Turks feel for their immediate surroundings and the cities they occupy.

These include the number of ethnic minorities dispersed across the metropolitan cities of Britain, the nature of social interactions with white British people, and access to labour market opportunities. Ergi lives in Liverpool and highlights his sense of attachment to the city:

English people in Liverpool don't judge me because of my way of thinking; they are eager to talk to you if you need them, especially in Liverpool. People in Liverpool speak to each other in general, they are warm people and ask personal questions such as 'where are you from, what do you do for a living'. Liverpool is very respectful to foreigners.

(Ergi, 21 years old, Working in His Father's Restaurant, Liverpool)

Beste likewise recounted her positive experience in another metropolitan city:

I am happy here in Leeds. Actually, in Leeds, and when we go somewhere different than our local streets, my mum has a veil, so I never see anyone put my mum out of place. No name-calling.

(Beste, 21 years old, Studying Biomedical Science, Leeds)

What is apparent from the above accounts is how normalising living with 'difference' is seen as key to the success of the contemporary city (Binnie, Holloway et al., 2006b, p. 3). The above quotes show that British Turks living outside of London tend to embrace the city they accommodate under the condition that natives of the urban space in question are accepting of ethnic difference and, mainly based on Ezgi's account, minimise the extent of racism with its different forms (Barwick and Beaman, 2019). For Ergi, the positive social interaction with white English people showing open-mindedness towards Ergi's 'way of thinking' engenders feelings of belonging in Liverpool. In his PhD thesis on 'Yemeni Muslims in Contemporary Liverpool', Harrison (2020) notes that Liverpool has a rich migration history with its diaspora

groups. He argues that ‘civic boosterism’ projects, including cultural festivals such as Liverpool Arab Arts Festival, promoting the city and reifying diversity, are commonplace in Liverpool (Harrison, 2020). Ergi’s sense of belonging appears to be reflective of Liverpool’s inclusivity and diversity and resonates with the city’s accommodation of its ethnic minority communities. Beste’s focus on the indifference of the white native citizens about other people’s origins, including her mother’s visible Muslimness, to express her happiness in Leeds could be interpreted as *civility towards diversity*. It is perhaps unsurprising given that Leeds is one of the most diverse cities in the UK, with over 170 different nationalities <sup>30</sup>. The discussions above show that inter-ethnic dialogue and civility towards difference appear to be a fundamental part of my respondents’ feelings of belonging to the cities of Leeds and Liverpool. In her account, Beste took into account the lack of irrational hostility towards Muslims and Islam in Leeds by pointing out the absence of ‘name calling’ against her veiled mother, articulating the normalisation of ‘differences’ in the process of engendering attachment and happiness into her surroundings.

Similarly, in the quote below, Shaz built her narrative around the inclusive nature of her hometown, Brighton. However, as Shaz discussed, what is implied as the multi-ethnic identity of the city of Brighton is limited to inner-city Brighton rather than its outlying towns. This is most apparent in the first half of her quote:

I have a student researching heritage who told me that Horsham, for instance, is the property of the royal family, which is why racism is likely to be ubiquitous there. She told me that the natives of the town must preserve that town to the extent that foreigners should not settle in it as far as possible. So to speak, this heritage is

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<sup>30</sup><https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/opinion/leeds-one-most-diverse-cities-outside-london-and-religion-shouldnt-divide-us-yep-says-1329004>

subject to descend from father to son. The bottom line is they actually don't want to diversify their towns as far as possible as I understand; however, here in Brighton, it is full of foreigners, so if someone faces racism on the street, it would again come from another foreigner, not from a British... maybe from a French or German...

(Shaz, 40 years old, Former Bus Driver, Brighton)

Shaz quoted and reinterpreted her student's remarks about the workings of racialisation in a provincial town called Horsham, a market town located in the county of West Sussex. Bringing Horsham into her narrative, Shaz lays bare the dynamics of institutional racism operating in the designation of 'privileged spaces' of the political realm (Puwar, 2004, p.9). Shaz does not live in Horsham, and it is slightly over a one-hour train ride away from Brighton, which is where Shaz lives. However, she clearly felt an absolute imperative to talk about the whiteness of British institutions (ibid, p. 136) based on the royal family as a backdrop to point out why 'they', implying the 'royal family', 'do not want to diversify their towns'.

As opposed to Brighton's multi-ethnic character, Shaz recognised the 'racist' and enclosed nature of Horsham embedded in broader institutional operations, which is perfectly aligned with the 'late twentieth-century British racism founded on the discourses of cultural difference, which cast blacks as permanent outsiders' in the 'whiteness' of spaces with a comforting of familiarity (Dworkin, 2009, p. 522; Puwar, 2004). Brighton, on the other hand, clearly accommodates a better appreciation of diversity according to Shaz's narrative; residents of Brighton, whether native or non-native, are used to the heterogeneity of the community so much so that 'if someone faces racism on the street, it would again come from another foreigner, not from a British...'. The civic pride Shaz seems to have built around the multi-ethnic character of Brighton is clear, for instance, when she precludes the possibility of discrimination and tension amongst Brighton's local community. In addition to the factors

including positive social interaction with the native majority, as well as respect and indifference about ethnic and religious identities, one of my respondents alluded to the financial opportunities and cost of living contributing to their spatial preferences and attachment to their surroundings:

I am happy in the UK, especially in Wales. I would never think that this place would be this beautiful. England is strong in many respects, such as its currency; this is an interesting country also; Wales, I mean, is smaller, so you can set out your life safely considering the lesser rent and the fact that it is pretty much a student-oriented country. Even as a student, I can work and study at the same time straight upon graduation; it is so much harder living in London because it is quite expensive, much less the stress it creates in you, but here, unless someone has a secure job even, they can still live. It is a good point to start your life.

(Harun, 22 years old, Studying Chemistry, Wales/London)

Harun's decision to 'set out' his life in Wales upon graduation seemingly depends on the socio-economic conditions, such as secure income and cheapness of accommodation. The strains that Harun associated with London, including economic insecurity, obviously obliterate building a sense of belonging to certain urban areas and cut across other factors, such as fear aroused by discrimination along ethnic, religious or racial lines. This section demonstrates that the sense of belonging to urban cities that British Turks developed seems to be determined by inter-ethnic dialogue, civility towards diversity, and positive social interaction. Additionally, socio-economic security can be another factor enabling a stronger degree of belonging. The following section will demonstrate the dialectic between the notion of white space articulated in my interviews and the degree of belonging on the national and local levels.

## 6.4 What Makes White Space so Scary?

This section documents subtle forms of displacement as inextricably linked to the processes of ‘racialisation’. According to my findings, the racialisation 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 (Moore, 2013, p. 45, emphasis mine). Aside from the racialisation of spatial boundaries, the racialisation of social relations similarly circulates in the lives of British Turks based on their ‘foreign’ accent, the colour of their skin, the Islamic veil, and so forth.

Fox et al. (2012) argue that ‘racialisation 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 (ibid). With that in mind, in the specific case of British Turks, racialisation uses cultural and religious traits rather than putative phenotypical differences. In Britain, the Islamic veil is arguably a sign of difference and non-conformity (ibid, 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 racialised imagery of Muslim communities (criminal tendencies, uncivilised behaviours, moral deficiencies) considering the prevailing debates on Islamophobia today (Carr, 2019; Fox, Moroşanu 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 Cornwall or I was to go to

York, or anywhere out of the big city into a little village, I'd 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 'Cornwall, York, and Gosport' enables her to see the undesirability of her religion; constructed nature of her religious difference is invoked in those settings, instead of her 'race' (Murji and Solomos, 2005, p. 13). Hale's membership in those places is denied because her veil denotes racialised 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 preceding sections, the process of racialisation is not linear but situational and contextual. It is contingent upon ideologies of racial, religious, and cultural difference in politics, through which essentialised construction of difference as in 'Muslim subject' is generated (Keith, 2005). This is evident in the anecdotal information provided by Hale about the position of Gosport in history, in which she alluded to 1850-1851 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* (1982), where she addresses 'the horror and fear of 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 result 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 seen as Muslim 'Other' in a more absolute sense, British Turks have putative whiteness and Europeanness they can fall back on. This means that British Turks can undergo the process of racialisation where the 'otherness' or 'groupness' that is appealed to is connected to cultural otherness, such as wearing religious symbols (Meer and Modood, 2019, p. 22). 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 herself through is the gaze that holds power, the gaze of 'too many white people'. Those who hold power can racialise populations and groups by 'creating a sense of the absolute difference between self and other' (Hage, 2005, 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 homogenised and hierarchical spaces.

As Lefebvre (2012) argues, space is never a 'pure', neutral being (p.292). Mandel's (2008) research on Turkish peoples' 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 headscarves; 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 was me wearing a headscarf, I would not feel belonging and comfortable and 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 characterising 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 headscarves 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 centres 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 realisation 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 colour 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 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 which 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 organisations and positions of authority (2004, p. 53, 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 destabilising 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 expected to be potentially recognised as a naturalised component of provincial cities and community 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 emphasised. In the pub Ali and his friends visited, the assumptions of culture are static and essentialised; and white British clientele implicitly designate bodies based on physical appearance, clothing, language and behaviour and prioritise who ‘deserves’ to feel attached to that place (Garner, 2012, p. 457). The converse would have meant unconditional hospitality as well as the ‘assertion of equality’ (ibid, p. 21). Culture is constitutive of the racialisation discourse in Ali’s case.

Aside from the factors such as the Islamic veil and skin colour, which were drawn out to discuss displacement and racialisation 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’s 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 realises 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)

One of the primary functions of this chapter is to holistically understand how spaces at different spatial scales predominated by white natives come to negatively impact British Turks' sense of belonging. When present in homogenous white spaces, British Turks appear to reflexively note the disproportion of white British to non-white 'Other', and the former holds/perpetuates the racialised understandings of the latter. The above narrative of Derin, where she highlights the 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrant Turks' social marginalisation 'when they go somewhere' and when 'they hear their accents', shows Derin's awareness of the cultural modes of racialisation, 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, acknowledging how Turkish firstcomers are dehumanised on account of having a Turkish accent, is reminiscent of Fanon's idea of the occupier's language. He argued that language is a technology of governmentality, assisting the domestication of native people/ culture (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 racialisation 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.

## 6.5 ‘I just felt a bit ‘out-of-place’: University Space

My data shows 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 marginalisation 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 racialised 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 me and my dad and all the other clean-shaven white English people and one other black guy that was it. 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 (ibidem, 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. 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, that is where 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 territorialised by particular groups (Amin, 2002). As Vikki Boliver (2013, 2016) states, the particular group dominating British universities are ‘white-middle classes’, clearly articulating that the disparities in rates of admission remain substantial for white British and BME applicants (cited in Arday and Mirza, 2018, p. 53). Accordingly, as Anderson argues, 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 marginalised 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, demonstrates 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 are 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 realised, you know, that I had never thought about my name before and how much resistance I might have got 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 which does not invoke English/ British superiority, Buğra and Yasmin are concerned that they might be easily associated with stigmatised ‘Other’ migrants, which can be easily confounded with the undeserving ‘Muslim’ once their Turkishness is discovered (Varriale, 2021, emphasis mine). In his PhD 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 institutionalised racism manifests. Accordingly, the dawning realisation 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 mobilising unequal forms of social positions in the context of the university, reproducing racialised hierarchies between those who belong and 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, 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 the 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 colour within the boundaries of a university site. Consistent with a Foucauldian account of governmentality, 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 and Williams, 1997, p. 9). To put it another way, as in Selma's quote, the racialisation of subjectivities in institutional spaces, including universities, involves the allocation of people to certain races (Murji and Solomos, 2005). Rather than a genuinely inclusive institutional culture, as a handful of my respondents noted, the university space has become more polarised 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 racialisation process in the university space.

As a result, I 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' (Amin 2002; Gow 2005; Wise 2009 as cited in Possamai, Dunn et al., 2016). The racism caused by a guy from Manchester in the university deconstructed Selma's own mental image of viewing the university as the symbol of multiculturalism or the

melting-pot. The quotes above reinforce the understanding that universities as institutional spaces can potentially mediate the production of the daily racialised 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*<sup>31</sup>. 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<sup>32</sup>, 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 that wrapping the scarf around the face can be viewed with suspicion 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

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<sup>31</sup> Anatolian folk dance

<sup>32</sup> A Student union in the university of Norwich.

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 the Prevent duty, which has placed a specific legal responsibility on schools and colleges to prevent students from being drawn into terrorism (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 (ibid, p.193). 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 colonised.

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, p. 175). This goes against the conception that universities are the beacon of interfaith tolerance, encapsulating multicultural equality, diversity and harmony (Nabi, p. 248). All the respondents throughout this section expressed feelings of exclusion and unbelonging in their universities. Their accounts uncovered the racialised 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 stigmatised and excluded (Hopkins, 2011, p. 167). The next section will shed light on the entanglements impacting the degree of belonging in the contexts of smaller-scale public spaces.

## 6.6 Creating an Inclusive Society: Coexisting Equally

This section examines dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in various microsites, which contain everyday encounters between British Turks and different groups and identities. Building on the daily negotiation of difference facilitated by spatial proximity through which British Turks navigate interpersonal experiences, this section will specifically look at the role of micro-publics, including apartments, cafes and restaurants, and streets of respondents' neighbourhoods (Hanhörster and Weck, 2020, p. 254). As Amin notes (2002), 'micro-publics are the ideal sites for coming to terms with an ethnic difference, where 'prosaic negotiations' are compulsory such as the workplace, schools, youth centres, and so forth. If these spaces were segregated at heart, the very possibility of everyday contact with a difference would be cut out, as illustrated by faith schools' (p. 969). I argue that everyday shared micro-spaces such as apartment blocks, are the natural and central sites of boundary-crossing practices facilitating multicultural encounters in which inter-ethnic and intercultural exchange can occur. The following quote is a perfect illustration of how apartment blocks similar to schools, street markets, children's playgrounds, local parks, cafes, and restaurants, are spaces of interdependence and habitual engagement (ibid):

My neighbour next door is my close friend, she is English, and I have her key. We moved in here, not right after, but we became friends a bit shortly after, and we have been friends since then for almost 9-10 years. I looked after her dog and took it to the vet. I found flatmates for her. Once her daughter cried her eyes out, I took care of her she rested a bit. We always keep each other posted. English people need to be invited for tea or coffee then they know you, and the friendship is consolidated in time. This is how they are; you should initiate it. They don't show as much love as we Turks do.

(Shaz, 40 years old, Former Bus Driver, Brighton)

The disparate cultural dispositions between Shaz and her English neighbour led Shaz to acknowledge her responsibility to initiate the neighbourly mixing. After she recounts stories of ‘getting her neighbour’s dog to the vet, looking after her daughter once, and finding flatmates for her’, Shaz posits differing dispositions of Turkish and English people, where the reserved nature of English people requires Turkish people to forge friendships. Here we are reminded of the divergent patterns in the making of social connections. Yet, the quote offers a glimpse into the potentialities of a shared space where people of divergent ethnic identities can find common ground, and otherwise unlikely friendships are made possible (Sherman, 2009).

In between her remarks emphasising the negotiation of difference, Shaz makes it clear that the distinctive cultural dispositions between Turks and English are not a barrier to everyday ‘give and take’ relationships (Ho, 2011). Additionally, Shaz likes the trust others have placed in her, and her connectedness with her English neighbour entails intersubjective engagement through helping one another; only then ‘a sense of trust between strangers can be forged’ (Millington and Rizov, 2019, p. 702). This stresses a marked contrast with that of the usual political debates on multiculturalism in Britain that attempt to articulate ideal conditions for intercultural relations, which often reify ‘differences as essences’ that inevitably come into conflict (Semi et al, 2009, p. 66 cited in Ho, 2011). Habitual contact, as in apartment settings where engagement with strangers is prosaic, allows routine negotiation across cultural differences and seemingly helped to disrupt fixed cultural assumptions between Shaz and her English neighbour (Amin, 2002, p. 976). A shared sense of space or micro-publics appears to serve as a foundation for the development of genuine intercultural relationships, something as strong as friendships, as exemplified by Shaz’s narrative. Alongside apartment blocks, the following

respondent emphasised the role of streets as shared open spaces reinforcing everyday intercultural exchange:

Everything is here, in terms of memory and knowledge... me being raised here... my parents did not ask me, 'do you want Turkey or England in the beginning?' they raised me here; I grew up here; all the norms and values were British in the school, I never saw my parents until the weekend, they were always working, we were all street kids, we were always on the streets playing, doing 'Christmas carols', doing 'penny for the guy' if we found the wool, we would play tennis on the wool, we'd never seen the mummy and daddy until the weekend. All our friends, the kids that we grew up with on the streets from different cultures, were like family, asking me about Turkey and how people in Turkey think, I did not know the Turkish way of thinking... or how people are in Turkey. I knew how people were here, how they think, what they thought of me, or themselves. I know the way of their thinking, but I didn't know the Turkish way of thinking...

(Billur, 53 years old, Property Investor, London)

Here, we see how children become intimately involved in diverse play and different social groups in the streets of multi-ethnic neighbourhoods of London, where Billur was born and has lived her whole life. Her narrative exudes a sense of belonging much more, which blurs the boundaries of socio-ethnic distinctions. Moreover, growing up on the streets with kids from different cultures, as Billur recounted, contributes to the incremental and dialogical construction of togetherness, where Billur and others were arguably unaware of the parental cultural orientations involved (Wise, 2009). 'Sometimes, then, social space behaves like a fluid' (Mol and Law, 1994, p. 643, cited in Urry, 2012, p. 187) hence Billur was almost fundamentally unaware of her Turkish parents' cultural traditions to which she was unable to relate. As a consequence, Billur's emphasis on her lack of recognition of Turkey and the

Turkish way of thinking renders streets as micro-publics, sites cutting across ethnic and cultural differences. A shared sense of space signals a more nuanced understanding of multi-ethnic neighbourhoods where, as Westwood (2004, p. 254) argues, plurality is not an endgame, but a beginning, a generative and productive process that forges cosmopolitan sensibilities and citizenship (cited in Noble, 2009). The narratives underlying belonging practices are a salient reminder of how powerful the role of spaces in shifting scales is for British Turks. In looking for the factors used by British Turks to develop belonging, derived from inductive analysis, the theme of 'space' as a marker of belonging was unanticipated. As much as there is a common belief amongst British Turks that inter-ethnic conviviality is over-arching at first glance in micro-publics, one can argue that nuanced accounts of diversity are not devoid of signifiers of inequalities such as those generated by immigration status.

As much as super-diversity entails possibilities for convivial living with differences, everyday interaction between Billur and others on the streets as key sites of encounter signals the precarious socio-economic conditions of immigrant families in Britain, which Billur affirms twice in her quote. In other words, the negotiation of diversity for Billur is partly the inevitable result of the absence of parental caregiving during the day, which lays bare the socio-economic inequalities that become salient in micro-publics (Berg, Gidley et al., 2019). The consequences of this leave no choice for immigrant children like Billur but to spend time on the streets and mingle with kids of immigrants from diverse cultures. It is no surprise that akin to the long-standing social inequalities derived from 'race', ethnicity, and faith, especially Islam in post-September 11, growing socio-economic segregation in multi-ethnic cities of the UK resonates with what Vertovec calls 'super-diversity'<sup>33</sup> (2007, emphasis mine). Examining Billur's

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<sup>33</sup> Super-diversity is partly the result of demographic transformations linked to migration, which in turn is underpinned by global inequality (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014, 5). It references a 'proliferation of migration channels and immigrant legal statuses' (Vertovec 2007, 1028), entailing new inequalities based on the legal status,

narrative requires us to consider the super-diverse neighbourhoods of London as the result of demographic transformations linked to migration, which in turn underpins inequalities and growing socio-economic segregation (Berg, Gidley et al., 2019, pp. 2724-2725). This reiterates the point that notwithstanding encouraging and accentuating inter-cultural understanding and interaction, micro-publics do not necessarily hide in, dissolve, or deconstruct boundaries marking inequalities, social divisions, and exclusions.

Although the following account is only one of the few narratives, we can arguably suggest that public spaces that white English people overwhelmingly occupy can potentially generate a sense of uneasiness in visibly marked bodies. As opposed to Billur, who has spent her entire life in multicultural London, Zerrin grew up in Nottingham, and highlighted the increased sense of the negative image of Muslims face today in comparison to almost no feelings of exclusion in her childhood:

I see a vast difference between now and my childhood. I grew up in Nottingham but never felt the faintest exclusion. They would react when they heard my name saying, ‘oh, that is interesting; where is the name from?’ It did not go beyond that. Nothing overwhelming occurred to me. Let’s say whatever I heard was positive, yet things are different now. Not that I go through racism and Islamophobia myself, but we live amongst predominantly English, and we have lots of friends saying, ‘oh, you don’t look like Turkish’ with a surprised look on their faces, which I constantly question because what does a Turk look like? Maybe they don’t necessarily say it with bad intentions, but the way they look at my husband [with Pakistani origin],

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which are further compounded by growing socio-economic segregation in cities (Tammaru et al. 2016). For further discussions, see micro-publics, Berg, M. L., B. Gidley and A. Krausova (2019). Welfare micropublics and inequality: urban super-diversity in a time of austerity. *Ethnic and racial studies* 42(15) 2723-2742. Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and racial studies* 30(6) 1024-1054.

for instance, because his look says more about his religion, reveals what people have in mind against Muslims. Locals are used to hearing different languages in Cambridge by virtue of the university but going back to Nottingham to visit my dad, people look at him [her husband] in cafes and restaurants carefully as if silently asking what language these people speak and why really. I feel more tense overall now.

(Zerrin, 38 years old, Postdoctoral Researcher, Cambridge)

Zerrin's childhood and adolescence were pre-September 11, 2001, and based in Nottingham, a city in the East Midlands. Zerrin's emphasis on the 'changing' behaviour against Muslims demonstrates the state and media responses to political violence over the last two decades. Confrontation with 'different Other' in the public space is a positional and relational matter, as Balshaw and Kennedy (2000) noted. Nottingham was invoked in Zerrin's memory lane as once a neutral or indifferent city to 'difference'; according to her, the city no longer welcomes outsiders, more specifically, 'Muslims'. The research conducted between 2014-2018 in Nottingham, titled *Still No Place for Hate*, found that three out of five Muslims have been victims of hate crimes. Zerrin's and her husband's feelings of strangeness and difference spurred in the micro-publics, including café spaces, appear to echo the 'Muslim problem' in Nottingham. The focus away from a celebration of cultural diversity towards, as Zerrin recounted, 'what language these people speak and why really' indicates the difference in attitudes towards people who are racialised as 'Muslim' in a climate conducive to reinforcing Islamophobia. In her quote, Zerrin compared Nottingham and relatively multicultural Cambridge to suggest that cultural diversity entails an absence of forms of racism. Zerrin places diversity as a pre-condition, through which she and her husband can constitute themselves as insiders, thus fostering a sense of belonging.

The fact that positive representations of Zerrin's Turkishness shifted into 'oh, you don't look like Turkish with a surprised look' is a reminder of the politics of representation, which are in a continuous process of change and negotiation (Hall, 1990; Bhabha, 1994). As Fatema El-Tayeb (2011) puts it, Muslim Europeans are created as a coherent community only through the discourse about them. This discourse reproduces 'Islam' as a generic term, ascribing a combination of naturalised cultural attributes to 'Muslims' regardless of the ethnic diversity among members (cited in Yorukoglu, 2020). Against this backdrop, it is not Turkishness under scrutiny so much as it is the fact that Turkishness dissolved in Islam that Zerrin has questioned, which might also underlie the ambivalence in Zerrin's narrative which serves as a discursive instrument representing the shifting pattern of representation through spaces where engagement and negotiation of inhabitants of diverse communities are unavoidable. The following respondent, a veiled woman, suggested that she seeks to be 'always' positive when in a restaurant or café:

Possibly but I don't feel... [ any discrimination] because the moment I pop in a restaurant, they look at me pleasantly. Their look is not bad at all due to me always being positive towards people around me no matter where I am. If the employees are Turkish, I say '*kolay gelsin*'<sup>34</sup> upon entrance, and irrespective of the nationality of the workers, I always have eye contact; English people glance away quite often. A friend with a headscarf is pretty much sullen and scowling when we pop into a restaurant or I. That is why she often experiences issues and people tell her she is unfriendly. Once an English meets or comes across a veiled woman for the first time, and if this woman is sullen and frowning all the time, the veiled woman is stereotyped as cold and unfriendly in the eyes of English people.

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<sup>34</sup> Kolay gelsin in Turkish roughly mean 'may it be easy'. In essence, it is used in a context of wishing people well in their endeavours. Having said that, there is no exact equivalent for it in English as long as I am concerned.

(Shaz, 40 years old, Former Bus Driver, Brighton)

As Talhami (2004) rightfully puts it, ‘a veiled woman... is an open advertisement of a belief system that is still regarded as alien’ (p. 157). To overcompensate for labels attached to the Islamic veil, Shaz maintained a sense of exuberance as an alternative representation of her identity in micro-publics, such as cafes and restaurants (Amin, 2002; Ho, 2011). The subtext of Shaz’s remarks, where she deflects potentially negative attitudes by acting ‘always positive’, unearths the prevailing representation of ‘the veil’ in the ‘West’. In this specific context, the veil appears to recall either the imposition of Muslim women or ‘a security threat’. ‘English people glance away quite often’, but regardless of nationality, Shaz ‘always has eye contact’ expresses her desire to build rapport. Her insistence on being ‘friendly’ as opposed to her veiled friend who is ‘frowning all the time’, endows herself with the right to engage with people from diverse backgrounds in cafes and restaurants, again implicating the desire to belong. Though it is expected to be the other way around, Shaz seems to put all the emphasis on her friend to smile and seem friendly, rather than those who are supposed to be her ‘host’. By doing that, Shaz attunes to the unequal power dynamics and patterns of inclusion and exclusion based on religion. Aspiring for inclusion, Shaz gives some credence to British society, and holds her friend accountable for the lack of a positive attitude in public spaces that gets her stereotyped, not the Islamic veil.

Shaz’s quote illustrates resistance to power dynamics pertaining to an ‘allergic reaction against the public presence of headscarf’ (Kandiyoti, 1991, p. 25; Yegenoglu, 2012, p. 25). Shaz attempts to curb possible public reaction in micro-publics by stipulating conditions which would make her exclusion more difficult. The following conversation between Freud and his patient helps us better understand the nature of Shaz’s deflecting of power dynamics: ‘Freud talks about a patient who recounts a dream to the analyst and says: ‘You ask who this person

in the dream can be. It's *not* my mother'. The patient, expecting what the analyst has in mind, is immediately negating that possibility. Can this negation, however, actually be a 'yes'? (Malabou, 2012, p.76). Similarly, therefore, the negation of current political dynamics surrounding the presence of the Muslim 'Other' in public space, means that the insistence on trust in wider British society and its institutions might actually be a way to live because, otherwise, as Shaz acknowledges, she could be 'stereotyped as cold and unfriendly in the eyes of British people'. We can argue that due to the fear of being stereotyped, and hence the likelihood of the sense of exclusion as a Muslim woman, that Shaz smiles to overcompensate for her veil and invites her friend to do the same for acceptance and belonging.

Micro-publics are spaces of diversity, enabling belonging and strengthening people's ability to interact fruitfully as equals (Amin, 2002). As the first two quotes reveal, the prosaic negotiations in local micro-publics can potentially increase the 'indifference to difference' and 'side-by-sidedness', possibly enhancing the sources of belonging for British Turks and the following generations (Wise, 2009). We should also understand that micro-publics hold the potential for conflict and exclusion to emerge (Berg, Gidley et al., 2019). Those sites, such as streets, cafes, and restaurants, might witness moments of crisis and points of anxiety based on changing political and social contexts. For instance, in the two narratives above, micro-publics magnified the current climate of Islamophobia. In other words, as Back and Sinha (2016) suggest, micro-publics, where prosaic negotiations, proximity, and encounters take place, could equally surface divisions and inequalities, mediating the coexistence of racism and urban multi-culture all at once (p. 518). The following section will explore the role of major religious and cultural festivals, such as Christmas, Eid and Halloween, as well as events peculiar to Western societies recognised as another factor for negotiation, exchange and coalescence to foster forms of cultural belonging.

## 6.7 Holidays and Modern Forms of Entertainment: Grounds for Dis/engagement

When I asked my respondents about their views and feelings regarding belonging to Britain, many highlighted the role of space in different scales. Additionally, some respondents declared a profound affinity grounded on Western culture, from celebrating Christmas to celebrating Halloween to show their belongingness to Britain. So, the practices of belonging that a handful of British Turks highlighted manifest through social contexts of different activities in an attempt to show their affinity to the socio-cultural environments of Britain. Accordingly, this section will explore the role of festivals, holidays and events peculiar to Western societies that bridge between British Turks and mainstream British society, with regard to the former's sense of belonging and compatibility with the latter. I found that British Turks who identified with two cultures seem to move relatively happily between different milieus and comfortably blend with mainstream British society on the grounds of, for example, celebrating Christian holidays alongside Eid. They are also happy to attend events and festivals prevalent in Western societies. A few pious British Turks who identified strongly with their Islamic orientation refused to appropriate Western lifestyle. To this end, they not only suffer from Islamophobic segments of larger British society<sup>35</sup>, but also struggle against Turkish secularists who are adamantly opposed to anything representing Islamic practices, be it wearing the veil, abstaining from alcohol, or not being assimilated into European culture. This highlights the need for a detour to understand why there are essential differences in the degrees of appropriating some features of the Western lifestyle, which requires us to delve into the past and study the internal dynamics of Turkish society.

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<sup>35</sup> For the detailed elaboration of the extent and impact of Islamophobia on British Turks, see Chapter 5.

Turkey is a Muslim-majority country established on the heritage and principles of secularism; therefore, the implementation of the modern Republic of Turkey is a secularist and modernist project (Yegenoglu, 2012, p. 188). Despite the manifold differences, this project, officially begun in the early 1920s, has made Turkey pull towards Western society. This means that the great majority of the population<sup>36</sup> in Turkey have been exposed to western lifestyle and culture, and Christianity to a lesser extent. That has resulted in some bifurcation between, as has been extensively discussed in the earlier chapters, the secular and the religious<sup>37</sup>, among other things. This section will shed light on my respondents' degrees of engagement in religious and cultural holidays and events pertaining to the Western lifestyle, emphasising exogenous factors in the processes of belonging and acceptance. Many of my respondents have some exposure to Christmas, accepting its secular, cultural and commercial symbolism, although some rejected its religious symbolism (Khan, Lindridge et al., 2018). Consider Billur, who notes that celebrating Christmas is a natural part of her life due to recognising it as a non-religious event with broader cultural connotations:

I love Christmas. I was brought up in a Christian school, so I was really happy; I loved Christmas, and the songs, still today, I am a big woman, and I still love Christmas songs; that is what I grew up with... I also love Ramadan; that is also me. I used to get presents on Christmas, so I made presents for my children on Eid as well; Christmas is warm and cosy; it is a nice period for me. Yes, we are not

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<sup>36</sup> For simplicity's sake, I am not getting into certain segments of larger Turkish society who are non-believers, as well as Turks who identify with different religions, including Judaism or other sects in Islam, including Shi'ism and Alevism. There are also Kurdish people from Southeast rural Turkey with their own internal differences from mainstream Turks, such as religio-ethnic and language affiliations. The Kurds who have long lived in southeast Turkey are commonly uphold their primordial attachments.

<sup>37</sup> ...and in doing so it manages to distance religion from the domain of the public and pushes it to the domain of individual faith. For further discussions, see Yegenoglu, M. (2012). *Islam, migrancy, and hospitality in Europe*: Springer.

Christians, but we live here, and they do not celebrate it for religious reasons, only for entertaining reasons... we used to go to church, and we used to sing, but we never forgot where we came from, our roots and background, and faith...

(Billur, 53 years old, Property Investor, London)

Billur's narrative notes that celebrating Christmas does not lead to any tensions for her, or interfere with her Islamic religious identity. This is rationalised in Billur's attending a Christian school, highlighting the impact of Christmas celebrations integral to the school's culture on her attitude towards Christmas. Billur's negotiation of Christmas on the grounds of recognising it as a cultural and commercial event rather than a religious one manifests through her remarks. She absolves the Christmas celebration and deflects attention from its religious connotations by speaking for the entirety of British society. This might also work to eliminate the significant strain of confronting herself as a Muslim. Central to the preceding argument are Billur's hybrid sensitivities indicated in her remarks. This excerpt underscores a nuanced justification of her involvement in the Christmas celebration, as long as that does not cost her being less devout in her Islamic religious identity. At the end of her remarks, Billur reiterates her participation in 'church, and singing Christmas songs' without compromising her own religious beliefs: 'we never forgot our [...] faith'.

I argue that Billur's constant engagement in dual processes of convergence and differentiation calls for finer-grained distinctions between British Turks and, for example, second and third-generation South Asian British Muslims. The research conducted in 2018 on South Asian Muslims living in Britain notes that 'only a small minority of the respondents willingly engage with and accept Christmas celebrations, and most respondents, even those who only have symbolic engagement with Christmas, refuse to give gifts on Christmas day' (Khan, Lindridge et al., 2018, p. 297). Another study conducted by Pathan (2014) suggests that the trend amongst

second-generation British Pakistanis adopting traditional Christmas traditions, such as feasting, Christmas tree decoration and gift-giving, has been observed only in recent years. My data, however, reveals that it seems more likely, even amongst some religiously conservative respondents, that there is some engagement with Christmas celebrations:

There is no conflict between my Turkish and English identities; I celebrate Christmas just like I celebrate Ramadan or Eid. I invite Turks and gave out presents. I celebrate Noel as well. While my children were growing up, we used to buy gifts for my parents on Christmas. For the past years, we have mainly focused on Muslim holidays compared to the past. Children would go to school and come back home speaking about Christmas; I did not want them to miss out on mainstream English culture. Only when they grew older did I begin mentioning important days and festivals in Islam. As Muslim mothers, some of us, of course, prefer to incorporate Christian norms into our lives, at least until our children can acknowledge the differences between cultures and religions. Only because we don't want them to say that 'we don't celebrate Noel at home' do we mothers fuse Islam and Christianity together to some extent.

(Nurcan, 42 years old, Restaurant Owner, Coventry)

Nurcan's quote documents a hybrid coexistence of diverse cultural forms and realms welcoming Islamic and Christian events in herself, implying different worlds and cultures meet/collide in a hybrid fusion (Khoo, 2009, p. 87). Here, however, a paradox exists: where Nurcan points out that her English and Turkish identities do not clash, she justifies her engagement in Christian norms and English culture with an underlying behaviour where she talks about how living in a Christian country forces her to compromise her Muslimness for her third-generation children. This paradox is akin to, and at the same time, a product of the emancipatory modernist/westernisation project in the early twentieth-century ideals of Turkey,

which has potentially affected and shaped the *emergence* and *consolidation* of a Western imperial image in the majority of Turks (Yegenoglu, 1998, p. 12 emphasis mine). By taking up the English identity, Nurcan seems to initially silence secularist anxiety to pull in the private pious self accordingly. This stems from the trauma built in Turkish society; the Orientalist generalisations about Islam as irrational, superstitious and traditional prevent Nurcan from appreciating Islam and its associations without initially showing her approval of Western culture and habits. This is the product of authoritarian secularism set upon by Kemalism from above in Turkey, which excluded religion from the public sphere, diminished principles retaining Islam as a cultural presence, and sought to reorganise Turkish society according to ‘secular’ rules (Göle, 2015). A closer look into Nurcan’s efforts to engage herself and her children with ‘mainstream English culture, celebrating Christmas’, and only after her kids grow up then she ‘mentions Islam and Muslim holidays’ is not void of power relations defining West as superior, and potentially results from the French model of *laicite*<sup>38</sup> imposed in Turkey since the early twentieth century (ibid).

Alternatively, as mentioned earlier, Nurcan and Billur’s incorporations of Christmas celebrations can be seen as broadly similar to the cultural and market-oriented aspects of celebrating the New Year. Both of them mentioned buying gifts for their family members for Christmas. It is not uncommon to celebrate New Year’s Day in Turkey, notwithstanding a religious or national celebration but a festive time with commercial undertones. And similar to

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Inspired by the French model of *laicite*, one of the characterising features of the model of secularism in Turkey is the insistence on its irreligious nature. The school and other state institutions are deemed to be the privileged domains of secularism. Therefore, they should be neutral and not be permitted to exhibit any sign of religious affiliation. The secularist nature of these spaces of the public sphere, resulting in the removal of any sign of religiosity, including Muslim women’s headscarf/ veil and Ottoman fez from school and public and political institutions, is one of the major characteristics around which French and Turkish secularism concur.’ Yegenoglu, M. (2012). *Islam, migrancy, and hospitality in Europe*: Springer.

young British Turks, in Turkey most people who can be identified as embodying secular norms widely celebrate the coming of a new year by preparing large family dinners and decorating an artificial or real Christmas tree at home with presents under it:

I love Halloween on the one hand but don't want to celebrate it on the other hand. I do not want to set a bad example for my kids. My husband does not want it either... but he also likes it. We went to a winter squash farm the other day and collected pumpkins. I wish I would be able to decorate it. Last year I put one pumpkin on the doorstep so that kids come and knock on the door to ask for sweets. We got in conflict with my husband on this issue, for instance. My elder sisters adapted to English culture once they arrived, and I still have the impact of these festive seasons on me, I imagine. I was so happy and peaceful when I was a kid, and I miss the peace of those days; this is possibly psychological. Having said that, how come my kids would have known such days associated with English culture? Even people in Turkey celebrate Christmas. Even though the religious group of people oppose such Christian traditions, many people in Turkey decorate pine trees and take their photos in front of them. I assume it is mainly related to curiosity. Around 1985 and afterwards, people have been celebrating the new year, perhaps Christmas, in Turkey. A western wannabe group of people they are, in my opinion.

(Shaz, 40 years old, Former Bus Driver, Brighton)

Shaz notes that radical Islamist segments of Turkish society oppose Western influence, including Christmas celebrations and Halloween. While not entirely departing from such religious-traditionalist understanding, and thus calling out those who 'celebrate new year' as a 'western wannabe group of people', Shaz resorts to only partially participating in Halloween traditions 'not to set bad examples to her kids'. Growing up in Turkey means occupying a privileged terrain for observing this choreography of ambivalence, in which 'surprising

crossovers between Islam and secularist-modernity doctrine, between secular and religious takes place, unsettling the fixity of positions and oppositions categories' (Göle, 2015, p. 158). Shaz's quote underlies this ambivalence, being both Muslim and modern without wanting to sacrifice one for the other (ibid, p. 147). This emphasis on the double gesture is remarkable in that participating in traditional celebrations, including Christmas and Halloween, is both denigrated and cherished, thereby pointing to a far more complicated relationship than what we can conceive as a neither/nor position.

The striking feature of Shaz's long quote is the kind of nostalgia for the 'festive seasons' of her childhood. This longing is associated with the warm and peaceful atmosphere of Christmas, filled with positive emotions. However, she is keen to make it clear that the positive feelings and experiences entangled with a nostalgic vision of Christmas were the influence of 'her elder sisters', if not, as she later deflects, 'psychological'. In so doing, Shaz successfully absolves herself from the guilt of rejoicing in the idea of Christmas as a proxy for the Christian/secular code. When our conversations turn to the present, the need and vitality of incorporation of certain holidays resurfaces as potential social credentials for the integration of her children into Britain. Here again- we are reminded of 'people in Turkey' who 'decorate pine trees and take their photos in front of them'. Shaz brings the discussion back to Turkey in an attempt to relegate her eagerness to celebrate Christmas to a secondary role, in doing so, making visible the European secular tradition next to the public presence of Islam in a Muslim-majority country (Yegenoglu, 2012). In other words, this mirrors how much Shaz wishes to see the correspondence of her double values.

Consequently, the common thread in the last three quotes is that some British Turks cultivate an ambivalent relationship navigating Christmas and Halloween on the one hand and Islamic traditions on the other. Essentially, they are responding to a contemporary set of circumstances

central to which the positions my respondents wittingly or unwittingly take on are in a state of considerable flux (Phillips, 2009, p. 67). The truth is that British Turks' ambivalence cannot be seen as demarcated based on the merely de facto boundaries between the religious and secular *per se*. Gaining 'mainstream' exposure and values through, among other things, Christmas and Halloween, which British Turks are capable of incorporating, points to the dynamics of change which occur just as transformations are taking place (Mannheim, 2008, p.61 cited in Göle, 2015). In other words, as well as celebrating Eid, engaging in Christmas and Halloween, as Appadurai put it, is even notable amongst young people who want to seem normal 'amongst their neighbours and peers' (Appadurai, 2001, p.82 cited in Göle, 2015 emphasis mine). These relations and exchanges formed over time underpin a shared understanding that can potentially yield a deeper relationship with mainstream society, shoring up a positive attitude to interreligious and interethnic differences.

For my religiously conservative participants, as I have tried to argue in the preceding chapter, embodying Islamic religious traditions might as well be increasingly about bonding together against the public controversy on Islam in Europe *en masse*. Additionally, the ways some British Turks who have taken on and made sense of certain realms of social and cultural life peculiar to the West are amalgamated with their subjective cultural resources conditioned by the boundaries of the modernist secularist discourse in Turkey, hence inescapably political. Against this backdrop, successfully aligning with mainstream British society on the grounds of socio-cultural realms, including Christmas celebrations, cannot be related to Britain's successful immigration policies skilfully assimilating young Turks into the Western lifestyle. The long-standing commitment to Turkish secularism encompassing a shift from an Islamic to a Western culture is the central motive underpinning the claim to a 'Western' way of life for specific clusters of secular Turks (Kandiyoti, 1991). Thus, a power struggle emerges, encompassing the European lifestyle of 'secular' Turks and the 'Islamic' dress codes and ways

of living. With Atatürk's<sup>39</sup> secular legacies enacted through early republican Turkey being 'secularist', Turks have drifted toward the superiority of 'Western civilisation'. They have felt naturally entitled to intervene in the public sphere, which is institutionalised and imagined as a site for the implementation of a secular and progressive way of life in Turkey (Göle, 2016). The following two accounts encapsulate the perceptions of secularist Turks living in the UK against Islamic lifestyles, becoming another factor potentially shaping the lesser extent of agency and belonging for some of my pious respondents:

I had a Turkish friend, and she was a groomed-up Turkish girl; I am the boring same old, and then a guy approached my friend and said, 'we are going to have a white party tonight' when they say white party, everyone is going to be dressed in white so feel free to come along, she was living near the campus. In contrast, I lived at home, and then he said, 'yeah, invite your friends as well' I just smirked and carried on walking. Then my friend turned around to me goes 'I am not inviting you, so it's cracking up so I said it would be stupid of you inviting me anyways; you know me, I would not be attending such an event; it is a party where you are dancing, clubbing and somebody dressed the way I dressed up that is (laughing) you would never enter. So, I know this is my religiousness as my identity in terms of...She was kind of like,' I'd not even invite you because ... and then I'd just stopped her and said I did not take it rude because she knows then as part of my identity the way I dressed up that I would not belong in that environment, does that make sense? She was born and bred in Britain as well. Still, she was, because of her faith, she did not have a strong-faith background; she was not a practising Muslim; she was happy to [...], that is why I've had friends who were not maybe practising, which is why I probably said resonates with more Muslim and Islam than Turkishness, because I've had

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<sup>39</sup> Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was the founder of the Republic of Turkey and its first president.

Turkish friends but who, because of not practising, there is a lot of, not clashes. Still, there are certain things that you don't share.

(Gülkız, 32, Working in Local Council, London)

This quote is a reminder of the sharp contrast between Turkishness which is appropriately articulated into homogenised Western modernity, and Islam in early republican Turkey. Turkish women's veiled presence, a sign of backwardness and resistance to modernisation and civilisation, had been effectively excluded from the public space until the 'Islamist' government seized power in 2002 and has managed to eliminate old and aggressive secularism in Turkey (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008, p. iii). The affinity established by the decline of Islam from the public sphere and the rise of modern and secular lifestyles in early republican Turkey was no doubt a project of governmentality. Individuals became countable objects, representing the population's ability to modernise as necessary steps for modern governing (Foucault, 1978; Foucault, 1992, p.31; Ergin, 2016). More to the point, during the secularisation process in early republican Turkey, the significance of the body went beyond the concerns of governmentality as they were also intertwined with considerations of consumption, tastes, manners, and clothing style that place individuals and groups who are civilised and secularised and those who are not (Ergin, 2016, p.225). Therefore, the uncanny presence of the veil, 'Muslim women entering the public space with their Islamic headscarves', implies the destabilisation of the principles of secular modernisation in Turkey (Yegenoglu, 2012, p. 197). From this perspective, the story Gülkız recounted for the sake of differentiating her religion from Turkishness comes as a proxy for the destabilising and uncanny presence of a veiled Turkish woman in the public sphere, as an indication of transgressing the spirit of Western secular modernity (p. 88). To this effect, one can only imagine the end of Gülkız's quote where she would have continued her friend's remarks: 'she was not a practising Muslim, she was happy... to attend western-style parties, can blend in that environment unlike me'. With that in mind, we can argue that Gülkız's friend

does not invite Gülkız to a ‘white party’ on purpose. This reflects the aspirations of many Turks in secularist ascendance as the roots of why her friend opted to obstruct Gülkız’s social outreach from activities assumed to reflect the ‘Western lifestyle’. To a degree, Gülkız’s friend maintains the power dynamics tapping into the separation of the sphere of ‘civilisation’ from that of ‘Islam’, central to which is the ‘veiled women’s confinement to private sphere’ is created by the politics of Islamophobia. Shaz makes this point even more strongly when she narrates a kind of ‘judgmental aura’ wrought by her very presence at a party:

English people were so understanding about me not drinking to enjoy myself in a pub or restaurant compared to the reactions of my Turkish friends, who were judgmental. For instance, if there is alcohol in a restaurant, they are supposed to drink, and they cannot get why I cannot... or they do not want to! If you disagreed with them on drinking, they would stare at me in a bizarre way. When I was asked if I had drunk alcohol ever, even the way I was questioned was used to exude a judgmental aura towards my decision not to drink. Turks don’t really get this. A friend of mine invited me to a party, which was highly opposed by another friend of mine, saying that ‘if Shaz comes along, I cannot peacefully drink!’ by that time, I was not veiled, but the way they treated me was totally ridiculous considering the fact that I have never ever told my Turkish friends that I am bothered when people drink around me. It was only because they heard that I do not prefer going to alcohol-selling restaurants as my husband feels bothered.

(Shaz, 40 years old, Former Bus Driver, Brighton)

Alongside new year celebrations, Halloween, and modern forms of leisure and entertainment like parties and clothing style, alcohol consumption has also been the symbol of Turkey’s full secularisation of social life. Alcohol consumption appeared as another trait of the secularist-modernist tradition of the West, invoking modern forms of entertainment in Turkey (Göle,

2017, p. 219). On the flip side, eschewing drinking epitomises one distinctive representation of piety. It potentially conveys a sense of disobedience to secular notions to such a degree that the pious can end up being ostracised from the public space as a reminder of Islamic presence. It is, therefore, probably not a stretch to say that, similar to the transgressive effect of veiling, those who attend a party but abstain from drinking potentially unsettle the religious-secular divide in the Turkish context (Göle, 2016). The rationale behind seeking to compare Turkish and English people's distinctive reactions against her religious sensitivities, including 'not drinking' at a party, is to assert that Islamophobia is not simply a Western phenomenon *per se*, instead, it can be located amongst traditionally Muslim societies (Yardımcı and Easat-Daas, 2018). Islamophobia, thereby, is not a monolithic phenomenon solely coming from the conservative right, and here can be understood as an expression of the general negativity of the Turkish secular left towards Islam and practising Muslims. Shaz was distraught because she had never told her 'Turkish friends that she was bothered when people drink around her'. Hence the mere fact that Shaz abstains from alcohol, in addition to the idea of her affiliation with the Islamic way of life, converges to make the endogenous nature of her anxious secular friends' resentment evident. Here the discussions on alcohol use appear to be racialised. While white non-drinking habits can entail lifestyle or health-related, Muslims' abstinence from alcohol is tightly linked with the racialisation of Muslims and Islam and fixed into a set of cultural essences, where identity is inferred through designated classifications such as avoidance of alcohol. Amongst secularist Turks, alcohol drinking has long been marketed as Western-style consumerism, a natural extension of secular middle-class Turkish identity. Consequently, the latter, defined in opposition to both traditional and Islamic lifestyles, directs outrage towards Islamic sensitivities as a means of emphasising the westernised self and feeds from the aggressive secularism implemented from above, which does not remove the fact that Turkey is predominantly a Muslim country.

The conjoint outcome of the above discussions in the case of pious British Turkish women has been that they can be subjected to Islamophobia deployed by other Turks (Bayraklı and Hafez, 2019). Islamophobia from ‘secularist’ Turks might, to a certain level, constitute another obstacle for my pious respondents in relation to achieving the fullest sense of belonging to Britain in a self-confident way. This brings us to the consideration of a multitude of factors grounding the politics of belonging, in that instrumentalisation of religious holidays and modern forms of entertainment are no exception. Seen together, engaging in social and cultural practices commonplace in Britain might function as a bridge role to inform and shape how British Turks negotiate their belongingness, as well as being accepted and feeling welcome.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

The final analysis chapter reflects that spatialities of different scales, including cities, university campuses, streets, pubs, cafes and restaurants, are spatially and culturally demarcated by the white gaze, which determines between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ to occupy these spaces. In actuality, as Puwar (2004) puts it, the white gaze itself is disorientated and dislocated by the close proximity of these ‘foreign’ bodies (p. 42). Indeed, quite the opposite is the case that relatively multicultural urban areas consolidate the sense of security and belonging for British Turks, as evidenced by repetitive patterns that are developed through my data. As I discuss further in detail in Chapter 3, the data analysis was carried out through multiple readings and interpretation of the raw data, the inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). What was suggested strongly in my findings was that diversity in different spatial scales, from urban spaces to institutional spaces and smaller-scale social locations, came to embody the social contexts of different activities for British Turks. When compounded by intercultural dialogue, these social contexts can result in blending and ultimate acceptance as one of ‘them’. Aside from ‘spaces of belonging’, an elective affinity based on rituals and occasions from Britain and

Turkey and other public events bring people from different backgrounds together and constitute the foremost basis on which British Turks construct their sense of belonging (Shapiro, 2000).

It is within this context that a more profound sense of belonging is notably attributed to civility or, at the very least, to indifference towards specificities of Turkishness and Muslimness. For some respondents, however, the desire for 'roots' and belonging' is at times associated with fluid forms of identification with different aspects of being British, which operates by undermining the ethnocultural, religious values and practices of their immigrant parents. This view was captured in my respondents' awareness of the ubiquitously negative perceptions against Islam in broader British society. Accordingly, some of my respondents inadvertently picked up a part of a western 'cultural offensive' against Islam to side with the British majority- as key to accessing a shared sense of belonging (Morley, 2001, p. 435). Many British Turks emphasised the lack of diversity in public spaces where their markers of difference based on religion or skin colour are accentuated and underpin explicit or implicit prejudice and discrimination in the form of 'staring'. More importantly for this chapter, distinctive challenges of British Turks with stronger Muslim identity become manifest through the difficulty of cohabitation of social space with other Turks who maintain strict, secular ways of living. Consistent with this motivation, the latter consider religion as matters of the private world of the individual and expect other Turks to do the same. To this effect, the experiences of displacement from my pious respondents laid bare within this chapter and are compounded by, and at times, cut across contemporary stereotypes about Muslims, Islam and their associations in mainstream British society. Closely immersed in echelons of power by social status, educational credentials, and economic class, Turkish secular elites' Islamophobic sentiments imported from Turkey but compounded by the Western modes of Islamophobia, become a constitutive element of displacement for pious British Turks in public gatherings. In the following chapter, I reflect on the overall contribution this thesis has made to the Islamophobia

literature in the British context and the limitations and recommendations for future research on British Turks.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 Key Contributions

In this concluding chapter, I bring together the key concepts that weave through my research, and outline the unique contribution that this thesis makes to existing knowledge about the manifestations and impacts of Islamophobia in the lives of Muslim communities in post-9/11 Britain. This thesis set out purely as a simplistic and monolithic study of Islamophobia. However, I realised this sole purpose could not hold given the heterogeneity of my respondents' experiences, identities, and worldviews. Narratives shared and built through the interview process prompted me to carefully interrogate the reflexive and recursive nature of this project to explore where new forms of Islamophobic discourses could come to light. Therefore, this thesis makes an original contribution to existing knowledge about Islamophobia by presenting an alternative view of Islamophobia not as a monolithic, but as a variously contested and manifested concept that, at times, cuts across differentiable qualities of being a 'Muslim'. As evidenced from in-depth interviews with British Turks, this work primarily suggests that Islamophobia is not a single, all-encompassing entity, but builds with and draws upon the broader manifestations of racism, racialisation, colonialism, Orientalism, and Turkish secularism. In other words, this thesis has made clear that even though some British Turks recounted experiences of Islamophobia which were overt in nature, the majority of British Turks' articulations of Islamophobia were founded on subtle and complex expressions. Furthermore, Islamophobia sometimes manifests in the lives of British Turks based on the immutably defined convergence of their Turkishness and Muslimness. As evident from this, subtle messages in mundane interactions, looks, settings and events, manifest in the accounts of British Turks regarding Islamophobia.

In my research, I found that British Turks' expressions of Islamophobia are facilitated by and closely associated with their religious, cultural, and political identities and the emotions attached to them. My detailed analysis of Islamophobia in the context of British Turks, therefore, required me to draw from an intricate play of interactions amongst many dimensions and conceptualisations. More specifically, I drew from, *inter alia*, Turkish families and diasporic upbringing, from Ottoman/ Islamic heritage to Contemporary Turkey, secularisation and Orientalism in Turkey, Turkishness, whiteness, Britishness and Westernness as cultural identities, and British politics from colonialism to Brexit to situate these discussions in the broader context of Islamophobia. Then, the overarching question arises: How do conceptualisations, ones above and beyond, relate to each other and Islamophobia in the context of British Turks? From this consideration, therefore, this thesis is accordingly structured in response to four interrelated research questions:

- i. What range of cultural identities do British Turks adopt in the UK? By which processes are these identities formed?
- ii. How does Islamophobia manifest in the daily lives of British Turks?
- iii. To what degree, if at all, has this reinforced a sense of exclusion amongst British Turks in the UK?
- iv. What are the other factors that mediate the difference and belonging strategies of British Turks? And to what extent can these factors be associated with Islamophobia?

Three key concepts have formed the backbone of my argument: 'Islamophobia, Identity and Belonging'. I must therefore stress that in this thesis, I do not treat Islamophobia as a single, overarching conceptual framework whose boundaries can be easily demarcated. This thesis suggests that without the detailed conceptualisations of identity and belonging, complex, nuanced and diverse manifestations of Islamophobia in the context of British Turks would have been concealed. Therefore, the three core sections of the conceptual framework of this thesis,

including Islamophobia, identity and belonging, are interrelated and interdependent in a causal relation.

The first section (see **Chapter 5**) addresses the conceptualisation of Islamophobia in the context of British Turks, which is built with different articulations of racism in a less deterministic, more conjunctural way. An earlier analysis of Islamophobia suggested a monolithic Islamophobia, which was predicated on the belief that Islam is culturally inherently inferior to the West, hence unresponsive to change, and Muslims are innately irrational, sexist, violent, and supportive of terrorism (Mondon and Winter, 2019; Trust, 1997). Reducing Islamophobia solely to recognisable forms of racism typically originating from the attributes mentioned above, coupled with drawing on the essentialised physical appearance, such as skin colour and the Islamic veil, are a few of the many essentialised markers of Muslimness, which reinforce a monolithic stereotype of a *British Muslim*. Understanding Islamophobia as a monolithic system erases the diversity of religiosity, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sect, political, and cultural worldviews in Muslim communities and concomitantly averts the indirect and covert ways Islamophobia might appear (Saeed, 2019b). Therefore, this research makes an important contribution to the existing literature concerning Islamophobia by identifying the varied and complex factors and discourses giving rise to Islamophobic acts explored by British Turks.

It is assumed that Muslims can be amalgamated into one group based on their religious appearance and religious practices. Through exploring a myriad of factors and subtle differences and specifics that differentiate the many ways British Turks negotiate and respond to the Islamophobic exclusionary practices, I note that Islamophobia does not operate in a one size fits all fashion because it is by nature dynamic and specific to the context in which Muslims experience Islamophobia, and to the various particularities of the group in question. According

to previous literature, most young Turks do not view Islamophobia as something that affects them (Babacan, 2022). I have argued throughout this thesis that Islamophobia is manifest in the lives of British Turks and is often covert and hard to pinpoint. Chapter 5 shows evidence of Islamophobic acts that can manifest in numerous forms, including staring, stigmatising, suspicion, and verbal attacks on veiled Turkish women. This means that among British Turks, Islamophobia is not immediately and only defined through the lens of a monolithically characterised inclusive definition of Islamophobia. I have shown, for example, that some British Turks linked the question of Islamophobia to racial, national and socio-economic microaggressions, with the implication being that the long-standing images of Turks as socio-economically inferior in the lower echelons of British society have intersected with the racialised images of Muslimness as terrorist and violent. My findings also suggest that British Turks are conscious of being a potential target of Islamophobic hate crimes and are thereby reluctant to be associated with the ‘unwanted’ Other image. Therefore, they actively engage in ‘passing’, employing their ‘putative’ whiteness and Europeanness and holding onto prevailing Turkish secularism to detach themselves from homogenous markers of ‘Muslimness’ and ‘Islam’ in the British context.

Consequently, as was stated previously, we can argue that characteristics of Islamophobia, as well as how Islamophobia is negotiated across all walks of everyday life, are dependent upon the distinct attributes of Muslim communities around culture, ethnicity, racial markers, and politics in the country of origin. Given these dynamics and affective attachments, studying Islamophobia from the perspective of British Turks, who were born into the specificities of Turkish tradition, culture, way of life and politics, calls for exploring Islamophobia beyond the experiences of other Muslim communities in Britain. Accordingly, besides indisputable anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic discourses that exist across contemporary British society, ‘passing’ practices of British Turks and their constant deflection of Islamophobia onto other Muslims,

including South Asian Muslims in the UK, are built into Turkish secularisation or ‘Orientalism from within’ (Çarmikli, 2011). Another reason for ‘passing’ might be that the Turkish community in Britain is a relatively invisible group; therefore, except for pious female Turks wearing the Islamic veil, many of my respondents defer the possibility of Islamophobia as irrelevant to their modern/secular lifestyles, manners, and attire.

It is also clear that processes of racialisation fixing Muslim subjects into a race as a form of Islamophobia functions as the social and political discourse concerning British Turks in their everyday social interactions. The racialisation of British Turks cannot be reduced to their visible markers of Muslimness (for example, beard and hijab) in the main but is embedded in a ‘foreign’ accent, the Turkish language, Turkish name, occupation, and social and political worldviews. I argue that racialisation is an exercise of power over those less powerful, and is one of the typical features of modern Western society, which Foucault called ‘technologies of power’ (Foucault, 1982). I concur with Foucault when he says technologies have developed over the years, in various ways, for the possibility of administration and control over the ways people live (ibid, p. 780). I reconceptualise technologies of power as a frame of reference for understanding the impact of the racialisation of British Turks as another Muslim community and negotiate manifestations of Islamophobia in everyday lives, including family, school, work etc. In other words, it is through the racialisation of Muslims in the current climate that Islamophobia has been naturalised. This paved the way for, for instance, the Brexit referendum, with its special emphasis on Turkey’s EU membership with its Muslim heritage.

It was against this general backdrop of growing concerns about Islamophobia that various identity and belonging strategies have arisen amongst British Turks. The second section on identity formation, as explored in **Chapter 4**, underlines the fact that cultural identities appropriated by British Turks in the UK are strategic, thereby informing possible consequences

of Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination in Britain. For instance, some British Turks lean into a diverse and pluralistic cosmopolitan identity as one determinant of their cultural compatibility with dominant British society, rather than positioning themselves solely by the aspects of Muslimness and Turkishness. Under such circumstances, except for a few pious British Turks identifying with Islamic Ummah but in a manner of solidarity with humanity over unity with British Muslims, British Turks' articulation of identity has principally revolved around their attempt to form a bond with mainstream British society. For instance, whiteness as a cultural identity operates as a prominent source of racial differentiation from the markers of Muslimness that many of my respondents associated with South Asian Muslims in Britain. British Turks distinguish themselves from South Asian Muslims, whom they view as the racial and cultural marker of the 'Muslim' Other. However, their claim to their putative whiteness is also a claim of Europeanness embedded in the element of Orientalism built through the modern Turkish Republic. What is distinctive about this research, therefore, is that the meanings British Turks take on to constitute their distinctive identities in Britain are against the backdrop of the reality of long-standing Turkish secularism, as well as anti-Muslim hostility and its consequences in the British context. In other words, informants of this research look to ensure that their attributes tied to their Turkishness or Muslimness do not form a barrier to coming to terms with the perceived dominant British society. Turkishness, for instance, is developed only on the grounds of religio-cultural norms, such as kissing the hands of the elderly, the Turkish language, Islamic sensibilities such as *edep* and *mahram*, and the diasporic tensions of Turkish parents. Although it may be a stretch to refer to the totality of British Turks' processes of identity formation, as discussed in **Chapter 4**, the nuanced and contextualised narratives embedded in various identities British Turks wittingly or unwittingly deploy are reference points to understand what Islamophobia represents for British Turks. But beyond that, being raised in different cities of England, these people are active agents in the construction of

distinctive cultural identities and belonging strategies as fortresses protecting themselves from racialisation, unemployment, exclusion, misrepresentation, and multiple forms of racism, including Islamophobia in the British context.

It is important to remember that this research is data-driven and data-sensitive, where analysis was conducted by inductive coding and inductive inference to inquire into Islamophobia. The intention of conducting inductive research was to be open-minded to propose possible explanations for the surprising findings (Flick, 2022, p. 252). This approach helped me draw from a broad plurality of concepts and themes, which I later treated as conceptual tools to understand the stance of British Turks against Islamophobia. The themes and patterns I have found surprising in the data, including the role of Turkish secularism, Brexit, insightful narratives on FBVs, cosmopolitanism, diversity, settings at different scales, events and various religious holidays, were not embedded in the interview questions. As I have argued throughout the analysis chapters, the monolithic accounts of Islamophobia would do little to enlighten us as to why British Turks responded and negotiated the discourses of Islamophobia distinctively intertwined with other social discourses mentioned above also including marginalisation in certain public spaces, such as universities in the British context. Furthermore, viewing Islamophobia as a monolithic phenomenon would tell us little about why British Turks have addressed Islamophobia by referring to contemporary debates, such as Turkey's not-so-near candidacy for the EU embedded in Brexit discourse, or by offering their logic of belonging in multicultural settings rather than homogenous white settings.

Accordingly, the findings constituting the last analysis chapter address the intricacies of belonging against the backdrop of Islamophobia and helped me reflect critically on the subjective and differentiated approach of British Turks vis a vis Islamophobia. The final analysis chapter (**Chapter 6**) highlights the importance of diversity in different spatial scales

and social contexts in which British Turks imagine a moment of recognition and acceptance. This chapter elaborates upon the concept of belonging practices of British Turks as the last overarching notion of this work, focusing on the implicit and explicit functioning of Islamophobia in the routine of their everyday lives. As discussed in **Chapter 6**, the nuanced understanding of the function of diversity as a condition of belonging means that British Turks are conscious of their differences as they interact with different urban and public spaces, bodies and gazes. Throughout Chapter 6, my explicit focus on belonging practices is therefore connected to the broader grammar of racism and Islamophobia that inform how different bodies, such as British Turks, have been constructed in Britain as separable from white British. As I listened to the narratives of British Turks, I realised London, with its ethnically heterogeneous population, was attributed to a sense of home, safety and belonging. London affords many British Turks I interviewed a means to fit in and find a sanctuary amid the turbulent waters of longstanding racism and Islamophobia. British Turks make a continuous distinction between cities with cultural diversity and smaller-scale cities and spatialities occupied predominantly by white British people. To date, scholarly attention has been limited largely to the unitary articulation of, for instance, London to explore the perception of Turkish-speaking communities. None of the extant studies has paid attention to the interplay between a sense of belonging, cultural plurality, and multi-ethnic diversity in the context of increasing Islamophobia in Britain over the last decades. Diversity and plurality have come as a proxy for home and safety. They have routinely resurfaced as tools to conceal discomfort, alienation and displacement in British Turks arising from racist and Islamophobic acts and abuse in multiple settings not limited to London. For example, Kerem is conscious of his many differences, including racial, cultural, and ethnic, which are entwined with the exceptional diversity of London, so London is home to Kerem. Erdal, who lives in London and studies in Norwich, has

had a chance to compare those cities in terms of their designation and accommodation of *difference*. He highlighted that he does not feel fully accepted in Norwich.

Similarly, when Ayşe travels outside London, her veiled presence is subjected to the surveillance of the gaze operating through Islamophobic ‘othering’; she no longer feels at home. Significantly, when explaining the difficulties they encounter in relatively less multicultural settings, British Turks emphasise that they are particularly conscious of their differences across different spaces as the expression of their double consciousness (see Chapter 2). The discomfort that British Turks feel in certain spaces was illustrated by relatively less diverse cities, including York, Norwich and Cornwall, and by public and institutional spaces, including universities, pubs, cafes and restaurants, and is layered through an awareness where they feel their differences are either not represented or racialised simultaneously and interchangeably as Muslim and non-British. On the other hand, comfort and a sense of belonging have been developed in various microsites, including multi-ethnic streets and apartment blocks narrated by British Turks as spaces enabling prosaic negotiations and intercultural exchange with different groups, including white British people. Furthermore, some British Turks defined their sense of belonging built through certain social and cultural affinities, which they believe are akin to mainstream British culture. In particular, the tendencies of my respondents to recognise and embrace Western-style holidays, including Halloween and their affinity to Christmas, is in perfect harmony with Turkey’s western model of secularism, which plays a defining role in the crystallisation of British identity and compatibility with the socio-cultural environments of Britain. Additionally, I suggest that maintaining some social affinity with British or Western traditions makes possible positive treatment and forms the basis for acceptance – not just tolerance of cultural and religious differences of British Turks. But beyond that, British Turks’ engagement with different aspects

of British society, including religious holidays and festivals, masks racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and other mechanisms of differentiation.

In addition to the conceptualisation of diversity shedding light on the interplay between Islamophobia and a sense of belonging, this work has contributed to the contemporary dimension of intra-ethnic Islamophobia in the Turkish diaspora in Britain. In general, this is a rather neglected area of research. This research brings to the surface Turkish Islamophobia and Orientalism, which has a direct impact upon pious British Turks' sense of belonging. For example, in their discussions of what makes them feel that they do not fully belong to Britain, a few of my respondents who are unwilling to pursue 'the secularist/Westernist' outlook due to their strict adherence to Islamic principles recounted that they get in conflict with Turks that hold secular values. These respondents flagged that their secular Turkish friends intervene in their decisions on various fronts, based on homeland controversies relating to Muslim social life and religious practices. All in all, the Islamophobic rhetoric surrounding British Turks is not only centred on manifestations of Western Islamophobia in the British context, but also points out exclusionary secular values ingrained in Turkish Islamophobia. Here we can conclude that, as a noteworthy contribution to Islamophobia scholarship, this research sheds light on the modes of Islamophobia in Muslim-majority Turkey and underlines that the discourse of Islamophobia is not intrinsically limited to the traditional West or Britain in particular. Most notably, the presence of Islam, the Islamic way of life and tradition was considered an obstacle to the establishment of the secular-modernist Turkish republic, culminating in Turkish Islamophobia. We can thus suggest various angles and discourses from which one can analyse and view Islamophobia.

Methodologically, this research is firmly qualitative in its approach to contextualising the complex ways British Turks in the UK express their views on Islamophobia. To accomplish

this, I adopted semi-structured in-depth interviews to account for the veiled and sometimes opaque insights, feelings, and experiences of British Turks involved in the research. As detailed in **Chapter 3**, through observations based on interviews, I obtained detailed narratives and valuable knowledge addressing the gaps in the literature on how British Turks navigate and negotiate Islamophobia in the British context. On the question of Islamophobia, which can be only defined by its engagement with the very context within which subjects make sense of it, collecting data quantitatively with its clear non-disputed generalisation (Howell, 2013) would not have allowed me to highlight particular, nuanced and conflicting accounts of my respondents or capture various identity and belonging strategies they wittingly or unwittingly take on to tackle Islamophobia and other kinds of discrimination in the UK. With their relative invisibility, and distinctive socio-cultural, national and religious legacies built with homeland politics yet firmly shaped by their engagement with British society, British Turks' nuanced perspectives on Islamophobia are what makes this research unique, yet also an overlooked corner of the Islamophobia literature in the UK.

## **7.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

There is little doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic impacted my research plan made in advance of data collection. Indeed, as discussed in **Chapter 2**, I had to make amendments to my data collection, which had been intended to be done face-to-face and moved online. That made scheduling somewhat easier, but obstructed the possibility of participant observation along with semi-structured in-depth interviews. Though this was a minor issue, additional accommodation of participant observation, as in participating in the daily life of my respondents and steadily observing them, could tap into further discussions and add new dimensions regarding the importance and impact of Islamophobia amongst British Turks. Additionally, apart from the removal of the participant observation method and its situational

nature, the potential of reaching out to more respondents and discussing broader points in relation to Islamophobia, which would have been facilitated through face-to-face meetings, may have been missed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Taking the limitations mentioned earlier into account and reflecting on this work, further research is needed to bring Turkish-speaking communities in Britain to the centre to expand on and apprehend the manifestations and consequences of Islamophobia in the daily routine of Turkish-speaking communities in Britain. Because of a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, sampling for this research equally needed to be adjusted and precisely focused on British-born Turks or Turks who emigrated to Britain before age 10. Even though the overall spread of the interview participants allowed a multiplicity of perspectives regarding the concepts and themes addressed by the research questions and allowed for a rich body of data, sampling from diverse and mixed identity groups- Kurds from Turkey, Turkish and Kurdish Alevis, Cypriot Turks- can help further our knowledge of perceptions, feelings and responses of Turkish speaking individuals concerning Islamophobia in Britain.

There are various groups within the Turkish-speaking diaspora across the UK, including Sunni Kurds from Turkey, Turkish Alevis, Kurdish Alevis and Turkish Cypriots. As implicated across the chapters of this thesis, apart from ethnic and cultural divisions between Turks and Kurds from Turkey, there are religious distinctions between the groups mentioned above. With that in mind, there is further scope for examining Islamophobia and how it is received amongst diverse identities with their intrinsic differences, including sectarian, cultural, and ethnic. I believe further sociological empirical research encapsulating the differences between the above groups can give more insight, and allow us to understand their relationship with Islamophobia in the British context. As implicated by Emre Can, one of my Alevi respondents, the Alevi community under the umbrella organisation of the British Alevi Federation does not establish

Alevism firmly as an Islamic sect, and they reclaim that Alevism is a distinct faith (Kjeilen, 2022). It would be interesting to explore Alevi communities' distinct relationship with Islamophobia in the British context to determine whether their marginal relationship with Islam or Turkish Islam could mean that they can receive and negotiate Islamophobia in different ways.

Although virtual interviews helped me find opportunities to access respondents across from England, only one interview was conducted outside England. Therefore, conducting further research in a range of different regions/cities/settings in Britain can open up avenues to recognise and apprehend contextual commonalities and differences in response to an increasingly global matter of Islamophobia, and in what ways diverse Turkish-speaking communities construe these differences and commonalities. As a final closing recommendation to future researchers, further and more specific research to bring to the forefront the issue of Brexit with a particular emphasis on British Turks' experiences and perceptions can be advised to be conducted, again in different areas of Britain. My findings will serve as a point of departure for future researchers to critically examine the Brexit campaign with its impact on British Turks' economic and social capital in Britain and whether Brexit has intervened in the identity and belonging politics of British Turks.

This research will form the basis for future studies on Islamophobia by liberating Islamophobia from its monolithic and passive image in which Muslim communities have been imprisoned to the prevailing racialised identities such as barbaric, violent, irrational, and uncivilised. In breaking down the monolithic understanding of Islamophobia in the context of British Turks, this research contributes to contesting the boundaries and binary divisions by refusing the existing Eurocentric hegemonic discourses that constantly speak of Muslim identity and culture as inferior to the West. British Turks, or Turkish Muslims in general, cannot be homogenised

along ethnic, racial, and religious lines. This moves us to a broader understanding of Islamophobia, which is constantly shifting and therefore contingent on the ideologies framing Muslims at a specific historical time and social space. It is from this standpoint that we journey outside of the closed world of racialised bodies as the 'Other' towards recognising multiple complexities of our beings.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Consent Form**

#### **“Me: Good, You: Bad”**

#### **“The Negative impact and Consequences of Islamophobia on the integration of the Second-Generation British-Turks”**

#### **Background**

#### **Participant Information Sheet**

The University of York would like to invite you to take part in the following research project. Before agreeing to participate, please read this information sheet carefully and let us know if anything is unclear or if you would like further information.

#### **Purpose of the Research**

The study is designed to find out how Islamophobia is manifested in the daily life and professional life of second-generation British Turks. It will explore the impact of Islamophobic sentiments and discriminatory attitudes, particularly in a ‘war on terror’ context. It will examine these experiences to understand how British Turks' cultural and religious identity is shaped and constructed.

#### **Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to participate because the interviews will provide me with qualitative, in-depth data into understandings of Islamophobia and the changing identities of the British-Turk community.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, participation is optional. If you decide to participate, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records and asked to complete an informed consent form. If you change your mind at any point during the study, you can withdraw your participation without providing a reason. If you agree to participate in this study, the interview will be taped to ensure that information is accurately recorded and transcribed. If you prefer not to be tape-recorded, I will take notes. What you say will be treated in the strictest confidence, and your anonymity will be maintained throughout the research; only I will know your name and the fact that you have participated in the project. Should you wish to, you can contact me at [ok603@york.ac.uk](mailto:ok603@york.ac.uk) to discuss your participation further.

**Supervisor(s) Name:** Gareth Millington, Katy Sian

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### **Appendix 2: Email Consent**

My name is Özge Onay, and I am a doctoral researcher in the School of Sociology at the University of York, and my research background is in Ethnicity, Racism and Islamophobia. I speak fluent English and a native speaker of Turkish. I am writing to invite you to participate in my project. I am currently researching the integration level of second-generation Turkish communities and, more specifically, the role of Islamophobia in their integration and happiness. Participation in the project will involve one long interview, around 45-60mins, and if necessary, follow-up questions in written form if there is a gap to be filled in by getting in touch with you. I have listed some potential topics of conversation below, although this is by no means exhaustive and depends on your personal experiences.

- How do you think a stranger on the street defines you?
- To what extent does the perception of British people toward Turkish origin people living in Britain has changed since 9/11 or 7/7?

For further information, please see attached information sheet (including a consent form) or please feel free to email me. When the project begins, I will ask you to sign a consent form, to ensure that you understand the nature of what I'm asking you to do and that I have your permission to engage you in research. Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please email me or my supervisors.

## Appendix 3: Interview Questions

### Content

Meanings of Identity
Sub-Cultures: Being Turkish, British, both Turkish and British, other.
British National Identity
Collective Group Muslim Identity- Ummah
Social and Political Implications of Islamophobia
Integration to Britain in general
Any Changes in terms of Integration, Peace and Happiness since 9/11 and 7/7

### Questions

1. How would you describe your identity? (multiple or singular, e.g. cultural, ethnic, religious, national; personal or social identity)
2. Are you free to choose/change your identity? If yes, to what extent can you construct an identity in the UK? If no, is your identity fixed by external factors? What is the process of construction of a person's identity?
3. Are you a part of any social groups? Do they make up your social identity? (social groups might be based on nationality, ethnic and cultural background, religion, social class, occupation etc.)
4. Do you sometimes feel like your ('Turkish', 'Muslim', 'Sunni', 'Alevi' etc.) identity is in conflict with your British identity? In what circumstances?
5. How often do you interact with British people, and how deep your relationship with them is? To what extent do you share your private life with them? Do you feel as much comfortable sharing with your Turkish peers?

6. 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?
7. Is there a conflict between your religious Identity (Muslim) and being British? Do you feel close to the idea of Ummah? Can you identify yourself with Ummah? Which one do you feel closer to Ummah, Turkishness and Britishness?
8. How do you think the native British community view you? Do you think native British people put Turks and Muslims in the same spot?
9. Have you ever felt that you have been treated unfairly by the Police, the Court or any officer in Britain (or in Turkey if you have been there) because of your religion? How did you overcome this?
10. To what extent does the perception of British people towards Turkish origin people living in Britain has changed since 9/11 or 7/7?
11. Are Muslims of Turkish origin doing enough to integrate into British society? What should they do?
12. What should the British government do to promote pluralism/ multiculturalism/ integration for Turkish youth in Britain?
13. Do you sometimes feel disintegrated and unhappy? Are there any clichés or harmful stereotypes about the Turkish community from white British people's perspective? Is it relatable to your disintegration?
14. How safe do you feel in the UK? Has this changed in the last decade? What was it before and now?
15. What are your perspectives on 'Fundamental British Values'?
16. Have you ever withdrawn yourself from certain debates for fear of misinterpretation to avoid stigmatisation, Turkophobia and Islamophobia? Can you give some examples? How did this make you feel?

