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ARTICLE

The Racialization of Muslim-Sounding Names

The interaction of names, embodied identities and Islam (religion)

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THE RACIALIZATION OF MUSLIM-SOUNDING NAMES: THE INTERACTION OF NAMES, EMBODIED IDENTITIES AND ISLAM (RELIGION)

Executive Summary

This article discusses the experiences of qualitative interview participants, who have – at different times - borne a ‘white British’ name, and a ‘Muslim-sounding’ one, which has enabled them to compare their experiences of using the different names. With reference to various sociological theory, it posits that having Islamic names, within the UK context, can lead to one’s racial categorization by others and associated feelings of vulnerability. Some participants’ name choices for themselves and/or for their children were affected by fears of Islamophobia and loss of ‘white’ privilege, whilst others took a more defiant stance against Islamophobia and racism. A nexus of name - embodied identity – accent – nationality - religion is used to further analyse the participants’ experiences.

Keywords: Names; racialization; Islamophobia; whiteness; white privilege; racial passing

Introduction

Surnames have more meaning and value than one would generally concede, in usually being one’s oldest possession, and perhaps being suggestive of one’s ancestral roots (Titford, 2009). Kim (2007) and Kang (1971) asserted that names always have social meaning, and Khosravi (2012: 66) argued (in a Swedish context) that names are connected to matters of rights and inheritance: they symbolise privilege and consequently have a ‘commodity-like value’. Lipski (1976) further asserted that names are representative of the bearer: for instance, in signifying the majority language of the place from which they originate. Subsequently, names can be said to also symbolise one’s ‘ethnic origins’ (ibid.; also Kang, 1971; Lieberson and Bell, 1992).

Lipski (1976) additionally stated that names are hierarchized within different regions, and that people with names conceived to have less social worth sometimes alter them in an attempt to gain social benefits. Schettler (1942: 176) argued that name-changing indicates that ‘name status’ exists, and:

Some members of minority groups perceive that only a name stands between them and acceptance in the dominant group. Telling names of nationality and ancestry are displaced by names that have merit and prestige in the judgements of members of the majority group.

The relationship between names and racialized identities has been under-explored within the field of Sociology (Elchardus and Siongers, 2010; Pilcher, 2016), particularly within the UK context. Much of the existing research is quantitative-based. For example, Wood et al’s (2009) UK-based correspondence test research explored the racialization of names in the primary phases of job applications, and found that interview invitations varied according to the ethnicity of the name given on the CV: ‘white’ CVs had a 68% success rate, versus 39% for ‘non-white’ names (also see The Runnymede Trust Report, 2012). Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) and Booth et al (2009) had similar findings in the USA and Australia, respectively. Thrasher et al’s (2015: 413) recent analyses of voting data found that some British local election results were influenced by the respective parties’ choice of candidate: ‘vote share is adversely affected when British candidates

are replaced by those with European and non-European surnames, while the opposite pattern of succession is associated with a boost in votes.' Whilst such research importantly highlights the relationship between ethnicity, as symbolised in names, and job application acceptance rates or election success, it does not explain why this is the case (Levitt and Dubner, 2007). Indeed, Thrasher et al (2015) themselves stated that qualitative work is needed in order to explore their findings further.

The research project (Wykes, 2013), from which this paper derives, set out to qualitatively explore the racialization of names, and to particularly understand the experiences of those who have borne a name, which they and others conceive to differ from their embodied ethnic identity. According to the said research (ibid.), the participants' names interact with their embodied/phenotypic identities in respect of how they are racialized by others. White British participants who changed to 'non-white British' surnames stated that conceptions of their embodied racial identity had accordingly altered, as did those ethnic minority participants who adopted 'white British surnames' (ibid.).

This article specifically explores the relationship between 'Islamic' names and embodied racial identities. This was an emergent theme, which was raised by six participants in the study (ibid.), and is a particularly cogent issue, in the light of sustained Islamophobia in Europe and beyond, over the last decade (Taras, 2013). Whilst there are other definitions of Islamophobia, the following description is most pertinent to the themes raised in this paper: 'stereotypical generalizations about Islam and/or Muslims that can result in Muslims being discriminated against or harassed' (Moosavi, 2015b: 41). A recent small-scale investigation by *BBC Inside Out* suggested that candidates with 'Muslim-sounding' names are three times less likely to be offered an interview than those with an 'English-sounding' name in London (Adesina and Marocico, 2017). This research also found that some job-seekers have experimented with substituting their Muslim-sounding names with 'English-sounding' names on their CV in order to increase their job opportunities (ibid.). Relatedly, Khattab and Johnston (2013: 1370) asserted that there is: 'strong empirical evidence for the existence of religious penalties operating alongside colour racism...Cultural penalties, almost entirely those suffered by Muslims, exacerbate the ethnic penalty in undermining the employability of minorities'. Subsequently, the importance of seeking to further understand the intersection of a Muslim identity, via name, with racialization practices, would seem to be self-evident. Madziva (2017) uses the concept of a 'names-bodies-religion-nationality' nexus (furthering Pilcher's, 2016, work), in order to explore the ways in which names, embodied identities, nationality and religion interact in the case of Christian Pakistani asylum seekers within

the UK. Similarly, this paper considers the relationship between names, bodies, accents and religion (Islam), in the British context.

Theory will now be presented, which underpins the data subsequently discussed after the methodological overview.

Names, misrecognition and whiteness, racialization, and racial passing

Mixed-race literature has discussed how an individual's identity can be affected by the assumptions of others: for instance, Song and Aspinall (2012) raise the concept of 'misrecognition', whereby a 'mixed-race' individual's own perceived 'racial' identity is not acknowledged by others. It is not, therefore, just about how an individual identifies themselves, but whether or not others accept this identification. Song and Aspinall (2012) also stated that some of their participants experienced emotional distress as a result of others attributing a racialized embodied identity to them without their permission.

Relatedly, the study (Wykes, 2013) from which this article has emerged addressed how an individual's name can affect the ways in which their 'racial' identification is perceived by others: for instance, some of the 'white British' participants described how others questioned their whiteness, once they had taken a surname not stereotypically considered 'white British'.

Indeed, this paper utilises whiteness theory as a conceptual structure for understanding the racialization practices suggested by this research. According to the 'race' construct, 'races' are not conceived as equal, but as hierarchical, altering in respect of the period and context (Garner, 2010). European-based forms of the whiteness conception (Bonnet, 2008) have situated 'white' people as always bearing the meritorious and valuable human characteristics (Garner, 2007). Consequently, whiteness represents goodness, and blackness/the Other badness (Neal, 1999): traditionally, 'white' people have been considered genealogically (and incongruously) the finest and purest of all humans (Lentin, 2008). Garner (2007) further argues that whiteness is characterised as that

which is normal and that it, therefore, dominates and dictates over the Other (ibid.). Such power can appear imperceptible and unassailable (ibid.).

The coveted nature of whiteness is therefore especially relevant to the research presented here, due to the way names are understood in racialized and hierarchized ways: names considered 'white British' are seemingly conceived as carrying more privilege than Other names, in the UK context (Wykes, 2013, 2017). Pertinently, Islam itself appears to be racialized as non-white, and specifically as 'Asian', within the British consciousness. For example, the preliminary media reports about the murder of Lee Rigby, a white British soldier, in London on the 22nd May 2013 strongly suggested this. The BBC's Political Editor proclaimed, prior to the release of any footage of the perpetrators, that they were "of Muslim appearance" (Robinson, 2013: n.pag.). This utterance infers that there is a predominant racialized image within the UK of a Muslim 'look': 'An Asian man with a backpack and a beard, or perhaps a woman wearing a hijab' (Lodge, 2013: n.pag.).

Franks (2000) covered similar themes, about the racialization of Islam within the UK, in her paper about the mismatch of her 'white' Muslim participants' 'race' and religious apparel. Some of her participants depicted the surprise others expressed about their religious identity (denoted by them wearing the hijab), relative to their

embodied 'racial' identity, and that to be perceived as Muslim is more likely if one looks 'foreign'. Furthermore, some of Franks' (2000) participants reported times when others have assumed they cannot speak English because of their Muslim attire. Franks (2000) argued that her participants' encounters can be conceived as racism through association with Islam: of meeting the racism intended for Others. Moosavi (2015a) considers such a phenomenon to be the removal of whiteness, but he also stated that his participants ('white' converts to Islam) are not necessarily conceived as completely 'non-white', but perhaps are only partly re-racialized: they are deemed white to some degree, but this whiteness is tainted or "not-quite-white" (Moosavi, 2015a: 1923). Moosavi (2015a: 1930) further stated that whiteness, and white privilege, are not absolutely ensured for 'white' people. Particularly of interest in this paper, is to consider whether 'white' people who bear a 'Muslim-sounding' name, feel that their access to white privilege is consequently lessened.

Relatedly, this author has previously written, in the UK context, about how name racialization may influence multi-racial parents' naming choices: the participants (in multi-racial relationships) described 'juxtaposing concerns: a fear of potential discrimination faced by children on the basis of them bearing a "foreign" name, and a desire to reflect the children's multiracial and/or ethnic heritage' (Wykes 2017:198). This will also be a relevant issue to consider in relation to the data presented here, and it additionally relates to North American racial passing theory: African-Americans trying to pass as white so as to gain privileges related to whiteness (Belluscio, 2006) in the era of racial segregation. This notion is specifically relevant to the situations presented in this article: should the 'white British' participants take on their spouse's 'Muslim-sounding' name, thereby seemingly forgoing some access to white privilege, or should they associate themselves with Otherness, by bearing the name? Also, how would they choose to name their children, with the same apparent dilemma in mind?

Furthermore, Harris (1993) and Ginsberg (1996) have written of 'white American' anxiety about African-Americans trying to pass as white, so as to receive 'white' privilege, and Ifekwunigwe (2001: 58) has described an entrenched, yet unsaid, 'White English anxiety concerning "racial" infiltration by Black and Asian "alien settlers"', which she suggested is related to an increasing 'mixed-race' population. Ifekwunigwe (2001) also asserted that having a mixed-race identity is difficult – not due to personal issues of identity – but because of the social stigma, and bias against, the identity. This paper correspondingly reflects upon if/how this idea of the monitoring and regulation of people's access to 'white' privilege could relate to name racialization.



Methodology

Thirty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted during 2011 and 2012 in the UK. The aim was to interview those who were able to compare their experiences between bearing two 'racially' different (sur)names: one the participant perceived to be usually and traditionally conceived within the UK as 'white English/British', and the other surname not so. All but one participant met this criterion (this said interviewee bore a first name that was of 'English' heritage, but which he described was often considered by others to be Islamic. He was included in the sample for reasons discussed later).

A snowball sampling approach was used (Silverman, 2010) because those participants who met the requirements of the project's focus are quite a hidden group (Pope, van Royen and Baker, 2002). This strategy consequently resulted in quite a varied sample in respect of the participants' location, social background, and age. Further discussion of the wider sample and methodology (including reflexive reflections on the researcher's position in relation to the research (Zempi, 2016)) can be

found in Wykes (2013): this can aid other researchers in understanding how the study's context matches others', which arguably helps to increase the generalizability of qualitative research (Schofield, 1994).

The researcher's identity ('white British' ethnicity, female gender and middle-social class) seemingly influenced the sample (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981): the majority identified themselves as middle-class, all but five as 'white', and all but three of the participants were female. Also, as Wilson (2009) asserts, name-changing is still a principally female experience in Britain.

However, this article focuses on the experiences of a (slightly) more balanced selection from the full sample: four 'white British' women, and two multi-heritage men. These participants were chosen due to their reported experiences with names racialized as 'Islamic'. All of them were either using a name conceived as Islamic or were married to someone who bore such a name. Two of the participants had converted to Islam upon marrying a Muslim, whilst the other four interviewees were either married to a Muslim or had Muslim family members, without practising Islam themselves. The participants



were located in one of either: Nottingham, Aberdeen, Liverpool or Leeds. Three described themselves as working-class, one as working-middle class, and the other two as middle-class. Four identified themselves as white British or white English, and the other two as multi-heritage. More information about these participants is given in the data sections below.

In this article, pseudonym names are used, which provide the 'intention and effect' (Edwards and Caballero, 2008) of the participants' actual names. The sole objective behind this process is to help readers to understand the data (despite the ironical incursion into the process of racializing names in so doing!).

Re-racialization on the basis of name, and the policing of white privilege

Suzanne Balester (46, white British, working-class, BA Student, residing in Leeds; formally bore a Moroccan married surname) explained how she had 'had one very big negative experience' regarding her married Moroccan surname, which occurred during pregnancy, when she went for her first scan at the hospital, and the midwife refused to tell her the sex of the baby: 'she sort of hesitated and said, "Well...we don't do that"...and...I said, "Well...what's the problem?...A friend of mine has just found out the sex of her baby". She said, "Oh no, we...don't give out the sex, she must be at a different hospital". Suzanne stated that the hospital never did tell her the baby's sex, and that she:

[F]elt that that was a real discriminatory issue.....it was the biggest thing that's ever got to me...this negativity around what they would consider possibly Asian people, the Muslim background and so on of...getting rid of girls, basically, so not telling what the sex is...Really bizarre.

Suzanne's depiction infers that her surname had been racialized as 'Islamic', and that typecast opinions had emerged about the beliefs that Suzanne would have about the pre-eminence of male children and a potential desire to terminate a female child. Suzanne asserted that the presence of her husband (of 'North African' appearance) had impacted upon the nurses'

behaviour, but she still felt that her surname played a role. Seemingly, the removal of a privilege apparently accorded to her 'white British' friends was distressing.

Another reported instance of racialized policing via name was relayed by Naze Edgerley (21, multi-race (white-black) British, working-class, BA student, living in Liverpool; had not changed his surname, but was incorporated into the sample because he provided a pertinent example of the association between bearing a first name, which is typically conceived as not being white British (despite it being an English place-name), and a surname, which is). Naze stated that people have disputed the origins of his first name, arguing that it is not 'English' but 'Arabic'. He said: 'it annoys me...it's like they're saying I'm not English...because of my name...it just winds me up. I can understand people saying, "Ah it doesn't sound English", but when they're saying, "Oh no it's not English, you're wrong", it's like "Okay...".

Naze suggested his quite tanned appearance (due to having a black Nigerian grandfather (whilst the rest of his immediate family are 'white')), together with his name, had induced these assertions: 'a lot of people' have thought he is 'Asian or North African, Egyptian, Algerian'. He additionally explained that people have frequently asked him, "Are you Asian?", to which he responded:

"No, my granddad was from Africa"...[and] that... changes their perspective...because now they're talking to an African, not an Asian...and... an African is not a Muslim, most people find, even though my granddad himself was actually Muslim...so...in some people's minds, it's like, "Oh right, okay, that's alright then".

This implies that, because of Naze's name and appearance, others had wished to ascertain and/or police his ethnicity against his own will (Song and Aspinall, 2012), and particularly his religious beliefs/heritage. That his heritage was found not to be Asian seemingly signified to others that Naze was not himself a Muslim (as discussed earlier in relation to the apparent equivalence made between Asia and Islam; Lodge, 2013), and was therefore 'alright'. Consequently, his name, embodied ethnicity, and religion are seemingly connected (Pilcher, 2016; Madziva, 2017) in terms of how he is being racialized by others.

Relatedly, Jamal Hassan Hamdaoui (31, multi-heritage British, working-to-middle-class, BA student/musician, residing in Aberdeen; changed to his Arabic name in his 20s from a 'white British' alias) described how, upon arriving at a bed and breakfast in a remote part of Scotland, for which he had made an advanced booking, the landlady exclaimed, "Ohhh!" and said that, because of

his name, 'She [had] expected one of those Iraqi terrorists!'. He also explained that occasionally when he has played a gig people have anticipated it would be, 'some sort of ethnic music...because of my name!', instead of his jazz set. Furthermore, Jamal said he had witnessed 'people puzzling over [his name]...especially the elderly', and that: 'a funny question I find myself being asked, is: "Do you like pork?", and it almost seems like, they're fishing...and it's like, you can just ask, "Are you a Muslim?"'.

Jamal's appearance and Scottish accent are seemingly responsible for the confusion about his religious identity: he depicted himself as Spanish- rather than North African- or Arabian-looking (which he felt were more often associated with Islam). He additionally said that when he has travelled abroad, South Americans and Israelis have often spoken to him in Spanish/Hebrew, due to his appearance. Consequently, Jamal felt his experiences have been 'purely because [people] know the name is Arabic, they're making that connection, Arab and Islam'. Jamal stated that assumptions about his name are usually 'misleading', as he is not a Muslim (indeed, the religious heritage of his father - from whom he inherited the surname - is Catholic). Nonetheless, Jamal felt that 'there's definitely an ascription of Islam to [my] name...and I guess when people see me, you know, I've got tattoos and I'm [chuckles] whatever I am!'. Consequently, he sensed that their prior understanding of him as a Muslim had been 'quickly quenched'. Therefore, the presumptions around Jamal's name, in terms of his inner (religious) beliefs and race, are apparently disrupted by his embodied identity and accent.

Nonetheless, Jamal asserted that his experiences have led to him feeling 'paranoid' about activities such as submitting work at university, particularly since he was originally categorised by his university as an international student, rather than a home student, due to his name (see Wykes 2013): 'you do sometimes think that...they are going to look at this [name] and think of it as perhaps a different...point put from a different culture'. Thus Jamal felt his name might be racialized and understood as being reflective of his internal beliefs and characteristics:

I think that it's going to be harder to break down the borders of expectations for people with a Muslim name in this country, I think there's enough misinformation kicking [around] about what it is to be Arab, what it is to be a Muslim.....that people do sort of automatically maybe think that he's a Muslim and he beats up his wife or...something ridiculous...and...yeah, I definitely would say that there's an issue in the UK with pre-conceptions attached to names, that is without a doubt.



Meanwhile, Suzanne described how her friends 'just laughed about [her surname] really...the fact that it was a difficult name'. She further stated that they quizzed her severally about if they should call her by the full surname, with its prefix of 'Ali': 'that caused more humour than anything, because it was.....like an Asian or a Pakistani, Indian type of a name.....And I know they did mock a bit about "Ali", more than about "Moussamih". Subsequently, Suzanne stated that she decided not to use the 'Ali' prefix, 'probably because of what it represented, if I'm honest', meaning her conveyed conception that 'Ali' was too noticeably Asian, and therefore more vulnerable to racism.

Stephanie AlAsadi's (23, white British, middle-class, BA student, based in Nottingham; Kuwaiti married surname) friends were apparently less jocund than Suzanne's and more explicitly discriminatory: 'they knew I was taking on his [her husband's] surname and I would be joining that kind of [Muslim] culture and stuff, and they...weren't

too keen...they didn't really approve'. Stephanie said this all began when they heard her husband's name, as they had not 'got to know him or anything'. She asserted that her family members were 'accepting and open-minded and stuff', even though her 'nan's...first question is: "Is he brown?", which is a bit of a funny question. I mean just by hearing his name...'. Also, Stephanie said that some of her family members 'didn't agree with it, they didn't want me to change my name, or change my cultural perspective'. Apparently her friends and family had equated the surname to race and to religion, and in taking her husband's surname Stephanie's family/friends feared that she would be racialized in the same way. She would become a Muslim, Othered, would relinquish her white Britishness and associated privileges – that is, racism through association with Islam (Franks, 2000).

Stephanie additionally stated that: 'It's only with people closer to me...they know me, they know what my surname is, they know who my husband is...that's when problems start to arise'. Responses she reported receiving included:

...the usual comments like, "Oh so he's foreign", that "He's going to be using you"...or, "He's just trying to get into the country", lots of rubbish like that...again, that was just by me mentioning his name to them, so they didn't meet him or know anything about him...they just presumed he's some [chuckles] foreigner...that he must be up to something or whatever...I mean no one like... none of my old friends congratulated me, when I got married...there was no kind of positive comments there.

Stephanie stated that none of her friends would interact with her husband, that his name was used to racialize him as Muslim and foreign, and they did not wish to engage with these identities, consequently breaking their long-established friendship with Stephanie. Whilst Stephanie asserted that she 'didn't really have time for' people who do not agree with her choices, she nonetheless expressed some level of vulnerability. When converting to Islam upon marriage she chose an Islamic first name, which she does not use, because she feels that it would be in some way betraying her parents' choice of name, but also that: 'changing your first name...is a bigger step...people would know straight away then [that she had an Islamic name], because first names are much more recognisable'. Arguably, still bearing a 'white British' first name, with the Muslim-sounding surname, did not entirely disassociate her from whiteness.

Marion Stamatis (61, white British, working-middle-class, writer/teacher, living in Nottingham; Greek married

name, with Islamic prefix) relatedly explained that she did not always use her married name for the first eight years of marriage, instead using her former husband's surname (Goodall), which was 'a lot easier to deal with'. She finally took the Greek name, Stamatis, when the payroll at her work insisted she use the name registered with her bank. She spoke of feeling suspicious of people's motivations for questioning her about her surname: "how are they asking it, why are they asking it, what am I going to tell them?". She also depicted feelings of vulnerability: 'you've got to be on guard...Maybe you just feel it, you know, because...I'm not Hawkins or Jones'. She explained that she still tended to:

[U]se whichever name suited me...if I felt like I was in a context that might be tricky I would use an English name...I wouldn't say that I've felt that frequently but it's always an option...Obviously there are people out there that are racist and you just have to use your kind of antennae about it really'.

This relates to Moosavi's (2015a) point, in respect of his white Muslim converts, that they are not totally re-racialized via their religious conversion: similarly, Marion, if she wishes, can adjust her name, and still be conceived as 'white British' in all respects (name, embodied identity, accent, nationality etcetera).

Indeed, Marion spoke of having 'an ambivalence towards' the Islamic prefix (Haj): 'I don't think I've ever comfortably used the full name, Haj Stamatis, I think I get enough reaction from Stamatis really!'. Marion nonetheless stated that she has great regard for her husband's full surname, and that when she is in 'a safe community' (for example, when teaching a class of Muslim children), Haj is 'something that you can celebrate...but you can't do that everywhere...in other contexts it's something that I might have to conceal or play down or feel a bit uncomfortable about'. She further stated that the full name was inconveniently long for spelling out to others, and that her husband uses the Haj as though it were a middle name initial, rather than as part of his surname: 'he calls himself Dr Stamatis, but he'll put PH, so the Haj is...subsumed into H'.

The above interview data infers that having a 'foreign' name can make a white British individual feel exposed to attack, in that they have so overtly linked themselves with Otherness, they now have a tainted form of white Britishness (Moosavi, 2015a). So much so, that some individuals are prepared to alter their names according to anticipated discrimination or hostility in relation to them (a luxury not usually afforded to those who are Othered in all aspects of their identity).

Fear of Islamophobia in relation to name-choice

The participants' concerns discussed above, also related to some interviewees' choice of names for their children. Suzanne Balester asserted that she specifically selected her son's first name in an attempt to avoid discrimination:

I wanted him to have, because I knew how racism exists in this country...more of an English name... because I thought he would be better served if he had...an English name than if he had a name like Mohammed or Husain or whatever...because...I didn't want him to be victimised and...racially abused and stuff like that...so...unbeknown to my husband, I trawled through this book of suitable Arabic names, and found one that I could shorten to an English name....

Suzanne said her husband expected his son to have an Islamic first name, and suggested 'very Muslim names, like Mohammed and Safir', but - whilst she chose a Muslim name (Hamal), which is on all of his official documents - without her then husband's knowledge, she selected this name because it could be informally abbreviated (to Mal) and pass as 'English'. She chose the name because 'I wanted him to fit in more...I'm not daft and I know that there is still a lot of racism in this

country, and even more so now with war on terror and things like that'. Suzanne additionally explained that only her son's father and his paternal family use his full Islamic name, and that she presented his abbreviated name when applying to schools. Suzanne conveyed that lots of people 'make an assumption' that her son's full first name is actually Christian (Malachi), although she considered it '[n]ot Christian, [but] more English'. Suzanne said that her son does usually correct people, and is not embarrassed about his full name.

Suzanne nonetheless explained that her own experiences had informed her fears that her son would be discriminated against: 'my dad...was very racist, came from that era where racism were okay, you know? It were alright to go around calling people disgusting names', and she said that her father told her upon her son's birth that he did not wish him to have a Muslim name, and described him as a Piccaninny. Suzanne also said: 'A lot of my friends were shocked that I was going to be marrying somebody who was Muslim...it was quite a big thing really...'. Suzanne additionally related an incident which occurred when she and her ex-husband went on holiday to Scarborough about 20 years ago, where people were 'openly disgust[ed]' and aggressive at seeing her mixed-race relationship. She said: 'we were living in a...predominantly white area, I knew he [her son] were going to go to that school and I wanted him to fit in with an English name, because I knew there was not going to be another boy or girl in his class who was not English...'. Suzanne inferred here that her son's dual white English-Moroccan heritage kept him from being 'English', made him bodily foreign, and she did not





desire for his first name to symbolise this further: 'had [he] gone to the school that he went to with a name like Mohammed, he would have had problems...as it is, he didn't...'. (See Wykes, 2017, for further discussion about this case). Suzanne asserted that by shortening her son's first name, he was able to pass as being 'English'/white, and consequently be racially invisible - as much as was achievable with his mixed-race looks and Moroccan surname.

Marion Stamatis (white British; Greek married surname) similarly stated that she did not wish to give her child a name that would present her as 'foreign'. As mentioned previously, Marion initially kept her first husband's surname (Goodall, conceived as 'white British'), and she also gave this surname to her daughter, because she considered her second husband's (the child's father) Greek surname with an Islamic prefix (Haji-Stamatis) to be: 'a huge, cumbersome problem really...how could you call this little child Haji-Stamatis...it was so foreign, even to me'. Therefore, Marion said she wanted their daughter to pass as white British, hence the choice of surname. Marion stated that she then changed her daughter's surname to the Greek surname with the Islamic prefix (Haji-Stamatis), when she started nursery, after the headmistress encouraged her to "celebrate this glorious name, this glorious tradition!"...

and the poor little thing...about two foot high and she had to go to school and be registered as Haji-Stamatis!'

Marion explained that she had chosen the shortest first name that she could, Ann, seemingly anticipating that her daughter could one day assume her father's surname. Marion expressed her feeling that, thirty years ago, when her daughter was born, 'there wasn't this Muslim threat... that's come in more recent years'. She said she now regrets that her daughter bears the Islamic pre-fix (Haji), particularly as she feels her daughter is already vulnerable, due to her disability, and she thus has to be 'very careful how [her daughter is] perceived'. Indeed, Marion said children at her daughter's school had abused her name when bullying her.

Marion apparently did not want her daughter to be racialized as Muslim, but had come to accept the Greek part of the surname (perhaps considered not too far down the hierarchy of names, in terms of Otherness; Wykes, 2017). Consequently, Marion would have wished for her husband's family's Islamic heritage to be concealed, due to prevalent Western Islamophobic discourse (Taras, 2013). Although people claiming Christian identities have perpetrated murder in the name of religion (Younge, 2011), in the West terrorism is usually depicted as an

Islamic issue, and therefore, it appears, so are Muslim-sounding names. Marion relayed her more 'imaginative' fear that the family could be targeted because of the Muslim name: 'you know in the last war...Japanese and Germans were interned, well we'd probably be interned if there was a war – because of that...it's not such a far stretch of the imagination really, so you have some degree of that feeling just from day to day really'.

Name choice in defiance of Islamophobia

Lynsey Bridger (40, white British, working-class, education manager, living in Nottingham; did not take her husband's Kuwaiti/Islamic name) explained that she had given her son 'white British' names in an effort to evade racial discrimination, 'to protect [him]'. However, Lynsey said that when her daughter was born over ten years later, her 'awareness, and...understanding of racism, and how it operates', and her own part within this, had changed. She said that her choice of names for her first child meant she was 'colluding with, and supporting – I think – broadly... principles of racism at the end of the day'. Therefore, Lynsey described how she and her husband chose 'three Islamic names and one English name' for their daughter (the reverse of her son's names), despite perceiving that 'the climate in terms of the racism she could experience by having this Islamic name is...more profound and significant now [than when their first child was born], so...it's not a decision I took lightly'. Indeed, Lynsey said she knew, from anecdotal knowledge and formal reports, that there have been attacks against female Asians in the UK since 9/11, and that 'the general climate now is, if you're racist and...have Islamophobic beliefs...you perceive any name that sounds vaguely Middle Eastern to be Islamic now'.

Lynsey explained that she would happily support her son, 'in terms of whatever legal processes were involved', should he decide to substitute his white British names with Islamic ones, whereas she would 'have a lot more concerns about her [daughter] wanting to change her name [to a 'white British' one], and I would tell her that.....Because of my own awareness of the role that that would play'. She likened the notion of her daughter altering her name to the concept of trying to racially pass as white, particularly as her daughter could probably physically pass as white, with it only being her name, her attire, or being seen with her father, which would suggest she was not 'white'.

Nevertheless, Lynsey conveyed that she does not use her own Islamic first name, which she had chosen upon marriage. When asked why she had made this choice, she did not provide a reason. One could present different motivations for this, including that, similarly to Stephanie's case above, it could be challenging for a 'white' individual to fully associate themselves with Islam via name, and thereby lose (some) white privilege (Garner, 2007). Additionally, Lynsey depicted the difficult experiences she had encountered as a consequence of giving her daughter a Kashmiri/Islamic surname, whilst herself using her white British maiden name: 'I hadn't quite realised quite how complicated it would be sometimes...your child having a different name, and within that a culturally different name, just makes things more complicated, and you are asked to explain yourself at various points'. Lynsey asserted that this probing would not 'stop me...naming my children the way I wanted to, but...that I guess does signify that if they're doing that on a[n] overt, conscious level, and they feel free, the amount of times people ask questions, it does make you wonder what's going on that they're not saying...'. Lynsey here implies the covert, yet domineering, power of whiteness in influencing an individual's opportunities in accordance with their allocated race (Dyer, 1999).

Lynsey further explained that she has been questioned about why she and her daughter have different surnames by 'passport control, doctors, anywhere where you go... new for the first time', and that she feels one explanation for this is that her daughter's surname is Islamic, 'it is a different name': 'if a child had a different second name that sounded English, they may just assume that it's an ex-partner or whatever', particularly because 'there is a climate of high levels of divorce in general, it's not unusual for children to have a different second name [from their parent]'. Lynsey said it has astonished her how 'people...feel they have the right to probe...further than they would' if her daughter's surname had been white British. This implies that Lynsey's and her daughter's respective surnames are racialized differently, and that this difference should be questioned, or monitored by others (thereby relating to Song and Aspinall's, 2012, points about misrecognition, and Ifekwunigwe's, 2001, assertions about the policing of identities, as discussed earlier). Moreover, similarly to Suzanne, as previously mentioned, Lynsey described how such questioning has made her anxious that her daughter's surname could decrease the success of her school applications: 'it's a potential opportunity for people to make a decision about who they accept at a school based on a name'.

Finally, Jamal Hassan Hamdaoui described how he used a white British alias name (Mal McKenzie) during childhood, after his parents divorced, but he chose to

begin using the Arabic name on his birth certificate during his twenties, after understanding that 'more than anything...there was no problem with my name':

...I realised the only reason I was McKenzie [his mother's maiden name] was for some reason that would keep me safer than if I was Jamal Hassan Hamdaoui and it seemed to me that it was a ridiculous thing...this notion that...what the thing's called, represents what the thing is...it's absolutely ridiculous.

Nonetheless, Jamal did state that: 'in the context of growing up in Scotland with...a Scottish name as a part-Arab...I definitely would say that to an extent it made it easier for me, because '...even though I looked foreign it was easier for them to bridge the gap...to locate McKenzie, to understand this, the boy speaks in a Scottish accent, everything's fine, you know?...but as Hamdaoui there is definitely...a construct of Hamdaoui [that they have]'

Yet Jamal stated that the name change impacted negatively upon his identity: 'I felt like I was kind of hiding from who I was, through this adopting a Scottish name...especially when your mother...she's instilled it upon you, you think, "Well it must be very serious". Upon reverting back to Hamdaoui, Jamal spoke of feeling 'more empowered':

...I'm not scared of being who I am...and being a McKenzie, you're always kind of on your back foot..."Why am I a McKenzie? Why has everyone else got their dad's name? Why have I got to change? I don't understand..." and then you start to understand and you think, "Well I don't like this!"

Jamal's depiction of racially passing as white British via his previous name supports Ginsberg's (1996:2) assertion that 'passing is about identities: their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection'. Jamal has apparently lived with a 'double-consciousness' (Du Bois, 1999:126) and, in using his Muslim-sounding name, has selected the more testing route of being Othered: 'McKenzie to me was...it did kind of represent an attempt at hiding from oppression...and turning back to Hamdaoui it was kind of like a rite of passage, like I was over it'. This can be related to African American history, whereby some who were inspired by the Black Power Movement in the 1970s, chose typically 'black' names (Fryer and Levitt 2004), in order to reassert an affirmative black identity. Jamal's decision is in contrast to that of his sister, whom Jamal explained had chosen to officially change to her 'white British' alias, and had seemingly internalized racist discourse. This is perhaps not surprising when considering Jamal's depiction of his

school teacher's actions: that upon learning his official Muslim-sounding name, they conceived it was Islamic, and forced him to pray for the absolution of his ancestors' sins (whom the teachers supposed to be Muslim).

Conclusion

The data presented in this paper suggest that names are significant in the process of racialization, along with embodied identity (phenotypes, skin colour, attire), accent, and nationality. Religion is also seemingly integral to the monitoring of race by others: Islam appears to be conflated to having an 'Asian' appearance (as suggested by Lodge, 2013), and perhaps to not speaking English (as argued by Franks, 2000). These connectors of racialization relate to Madziva's (2017) afore-mentioned expansion of Pilcher's (2016) nexus: the data presented in this paper suggest an extended nexus of 'name - embodied identity - accent - nationality - religion'.

As participants have expressed, the policing of one's identity, in respect of this nexus, can be emotionally challenging (as asserted by Song and Aspinall, 2012), particularly when one's own identification differs from that which is determined by others (i.e. misrecognition; *ibid.*). This is perhaps even more so when someone with a 'white British' embodied identity, and with a 'white British' name is later associated with a Muslim identity through their name-change: these experiences can be likened to Moosavi's (2015a) assertion that claims to white privilege are fragile, and that 'white British' people's access to it can be sullied, or partially removed, if they convert to Islam - and/or, in this case, take a Muslim-sounding name.

Some of the participants likewise struggled to choose a name for their children (as also discussed in Wykes, 2017), and considered the notion of providing a name which would help them to racially pass as 'white British' (particularly if their embodied identity, accent and nationality may enable this). This is reminiscent of African-American attempts to pass as white (Belluscio, 2006), as discussed above.

It is striking that most of the participants discussed in this paper were not actually practising Muslims, and that in many cases the name itself was all that was required from the afore-stated nexus, for their access to white privilege to be questioned and/or reduced. Whilst the participants may have had varying identities and circumstances, which conceivably makes it difficult to generalize their experiences, this differentiation arguably strengthens the assertion of name racialization: all of these participants, despite their differences, had encountered

the disprivilege of bearing a Muslim-sounding name, and the attempts to police their identities by others, who were seemingly confused by their inconsistent identities on the nexus of 'name - embodied identity – accent – nationality - religion'.

The findings presented here and in Wykes (2013, 2017) suggest that name-blinding government policies (gov. uk, 2015) do not go far enough in tackling racialization processes, because even if someone does not have a Muslim-/foreign-sounding name, if they meet some/all of the other criteria on the nexus that determines Otherness (foreign embodied identity-foreign accent-foreign nationality-non-Christian religion) then they are left vulnerable to prejudice and reduced access to opportunities (privilege). It, therefore, seems imperative that more is done to educate those with biases against Muslim and Othered identities, in order to challenge the heart of the problem (racialized biases), rather than the symptom (discrimination against names).

Policy Recommendations

- It is positive that the government, in its promotion and usage of name-blinding on job applications, has started to take steps towards addressing the way name racialization differentially affects individuals' chances in the UK job market.
- However, this paper's research findings have shown that it is integral that the government's equality work should transcend the job market. It should seek to research about, and consequently better understand, how racialization processes are negatively impacting upon many other areas of individuals' lives. Indeed, more awareness needs to be raised of how name racialization is merely a symptom of the prevalent and underlying racialization of individuals.
- Furthermore, it seems that there is a hierarchy of privilege in relation to ethnic names, and those nearer the bottom of the hierarchy should be given more support e.g. those with Muslim-sounding names.
- The government should acknowledge that name racialization is a form of racism, which interacts with other aspects of a person's identity, as indicated in the following nexus: 'name - embodied identity – accent – nationality – religion'. For example, the accepted spectrum of racism should be scrutinised and revised

to see if, pertinently, names should be added onto the list, and become a 'protected' characteristic: i.e. be officially acknowledged as an attribute about which racism can occur, and about which victims of such racism can seek redress.

- Schools, colleges and universities should further educate students about the importance of having mutual respect for different cultures and ethnicities, including aspects of individuals' identities such as names, skin colour, ethnic phenotypes, accents, religions, and nationalities.
- Companies should do more diversity training, in order to understand how employment practices may be affected by the desire of decision-makers to employ people who have a similar ethnic identity to themselves. Again, mutual respect towards different cultures and ethnic identities needs to be more strongly encouraged.
- The efficacy of the above measures should be critically scrutinised, and continually monitored, in terms of visible and measurable metrics, because name racialization is real, and has far-ranging impacts on people's lives.

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