'Where are you from?' and 'foreigners': The discursive construction of identity in the personal everyday lives of well established academics living in the UK

Abstract

This paper discusses the discursive ways in which a group of well established academics living in the UK construct their sense of identity in their personal everyday lives-outside the context of academia, by projecting their self perception vis à vis how they believe they are perceived by 'the white perceiving subject' (Rosa and Flores, 2017). While race and accent are the lens through which these academics believe are perceived whereby, they are labelled 'foreigners' and questioned about who they are through what can be described as a politically loaded question of 'where are you from?', they resist being framed within these categories. This is by labelling themselves differently in ways which defy identity ascription and assert their own sense of identity. This paper reveals that experiences of exclusion and discrimination permeate the lives of these professionals who are ascribed identities based on perceptions of how they look and sound.
Keywords: Identity, raciolinguistics, discursive processes, discourse, personal lives of professionals living in the UK.

Introduction

This study focuses on the ways in which a group of well established academics who have been living and working in the UK for a considerable number of years construct their sense of identity in their personal everyday lives-outside the context of academia- not about their experiences in the university context, but rather about their sense of identity when their professional status as academics is not highlighted. They draw on how they perceive themselves and how they believe they are perceived by white perceiving subjects, who I also refer to as the other. This is to say that the other is omnipresent in the ways in which the academics in this study construct their sense of who they are wherein, perceptions of race and accent are imposed upon them. However, these academics resist this categorisation of them and project their sense of who they are beyond the categories of race and accent. I maintain that the processes of relationality, labelling, positioning, resistance, and agency are the mechanisms through which the opposing perceptions between the participants and white perceiving subjects are enacted by the participants. These processes are not an exhaustive list, they are rather based on my interpretation of the ways in which the participants articulate their self perception and respond to how they believe they are perceived by their social environment. Reference to white perceiving subjects has been made by the participants explicitly as well as implicitly, as will be evidenced in the data analysis section.

I use critical cosmopolitan theory (Beck, 2006; Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Delanty, 2006). This cosmopolitan perspective recognises multiplicity and the interaction between the local and the global in the construction of the social world as opposed to the enlightenment version of cosmopolitanism, which has a universalistic orientation and defines the world from a western centred perspective. Therefore, the cosmopolitan perspective which I use in this paper emphasises what Hall (1991a) calls '"the margins" to come into representation' (p.34), as well as resists western centred cosmopolitanism. This view of the world and how individuals interact with the wider world converges with my interpretation of identity as ambivalent, constructed and reconstructed throughout our lives. Also, the relevance of critical cosmopolitan theory lies in the omnipresence of the other in the ways in which the participants talk about themselves, a

relationship which is characterised by conflicting opinions about who they are. This manifestation of self and other relations is understood to be a core principle of critical cosmopolitanism in that, critical cosmopolitanism situates itself within immanent tensions of self and other and problematises the various views instead of taking them for granted (Delanty, 2009:12-17).

The literature drawn on in this paper is discussed in conjunction with the data. I analyse the concepts of race and accent as constructs, which take different meanings in different places and at different times (Frankenberg, 1993:236; Roediger, 2002:336; Garner, 2004, 2007:7, 16, and 1; Holliday, 2017).

I use a raciolinguistic perspective (Flores and Rosa, 2015; Rosa and Flores, 2017) which develops the idea of the white gaze (Flores and Rosa, 2015) to discuss the interplay of language and race in producing hegemonic realities and conaturalising these categories as sets (Rosa and Flores, 2017:16). These categories include a broad range of semiotic signs, such as 'physical features, bodily comportment, and sartorial style' (Rosa and Flores, 2017:5). While racism takes different shapes and forms (Essed, 2002:178, 190; Garner, 2004:190), as far as the data of this study is concerned, both skin colour and accent are the semiotic forms through which the participants are discriminated against and rendered foreigners. Within this raciolinguistic perspective, the white perceiving subject which includes the white listening subject and the white speaking subject are core notions (Rosa and Flores, 2017). The white listening subject hears and enacts language used by language minorised communities as inferior and non normative because of perceptions of race, and the white speaking subject idealises and perpetuates language tendencies linked to whiteness (Flores and Rosa, 2015:151). While these dimensions are interrelated, the white perceiving subject and the white listening subject are manifested in this study to a greater or lesser extent depending on the individual experiences of the participants.

The events discussed in the data section are reported narratives by the participants which emerged from the interviews as an interactional event (De Fina and Perrino, 2011:2).

Research methodology and methods of data collection

This empirical paper is part of a larger piece of qualitative research (Kebabi, 2022). Qualitative research allows a more nuanced understanding of the social phenomena under investigation and acknowledges the researcher's worldviews (Boyatzis, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Holliday, 2016; Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey, 2016). I adopt a social constructivist perspective which promotes reality as subjectively interpreted by people in that, people make sense of themselves and each other by bringing their perspectives and worldviews into interaction and negotiation. This view of reality has long been proposed by Ibn Khaldun (Translated by Rosenthal, 1967) who argues that the individual learns how to make sense of the world through experience with other people and that the individual's existence depends to a large extent on 'his fellow man' (chapter VI, vol. 2, section 3:417). Also, Berger and Luckmann (1966:33) state: 'everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world'. Therefore, our realities and the interpretations we make of things are highly influenced by our relations with other people and the society in which we are.   The data used in this paper is generated from interviews with four participants. This method of data collection which I approach as an interactional event is the most suitable tool to access the ways in which the participants construct their realities through spoken language. This is because I wanted to experience listening to and interacting with the participants in person to see how they manifest their realities and their feelings when they talk about themselves using linguistic and paralinguistic features. Gilbert and Mulkay (1984: 8) argue: 'discourse can never be taken as simply descriptive of the social action to which it refers… rather, any account of experience is a form of interpretation, constituting a

new version of reality.' More specifically, I use semi structured interviews due to their flexible nature which conforms to the tenets of qualitative research of multiplicity of reality and letting the unexpected emerge (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997:305; Kvale, 2007:11; Edwards and Holland, 2013:29). In other words, the data generated from the interviews is jointly constructed by the participants and the researcher rather than being observed by the researcher in the real world.

Researcher positionality

The discussion in the previous section emphasises my involvement in the research. It is important to discuss my positionality and its influence on how the study is framed.

I am aware that my background, beliefs, biases, and understanding of the world are omnipresent in crafting this study. This is to say that this study is not an 'innocent practice' (Denzin, 2000:256), and that it is highly subjective in a way that my views are in constant interaction with the participants' beliefs and ways of constructing their sense of who they are. Despite this interrelationship, I interrogate the participants' views rather than taking them for granted, and I do not claim absolute knowledge of the participants' experiences since, like them and many other individuals, I have experienced instances of othering because of stereotypes about where I come from. I rather illuminate their personal lived experiences which is closely connected with the extent to which discrimination is rooted in society.

Throughout the study, I am aware that the participants' projection of their perception by the white perceiving subject is based on their own lived experiences. This is to say that this study examines the 'insider perspective', that is, the participants' own views on their own personal everyday lived experiences, rather than being 'an investigation from outside' (Wodak, 2008:55), relating what others think of the participants. This study would benefit from 'an investigation from outside' (Wodak, 2008:55), that is, from the perspectives of the white perceiving subject as their omnipresence in the ways in which the participants talk about themselves is central. This is in the sense that diverse data in terms of insider and outsider perspectives could be generated, hence a greater understanding of the relationship between the participants and the white perceiving subject could be obtained.

Before I discuss the data, I briefly present the process of recruiting the participants, how I present them, and how I anonymised the data.

Recruitment of the participants and dealing with the data

I sent email invitation to fourteen male and female well established academics at a university in the UK. These academics come from different European and non European countries and have been living and working in the UK for a considerable number of years. Nine of these academics showed interest in taking part in the research. In this paper, due to the limited space I discuss ten interview extracts from four academics.

Throughout the study, I have considered ethics at the level of complying with the university formal procedures, such as university ethics committee's approval to pursue this research. Prior to meeting the participants, I sent them a participant information sheet which contained open information about the research and the ethical considerations that I will take to ensure their full anonymity and protection. I also sent them the consent form which they signed after meeting them individually for the first time.

I have also considered ethics at the level of practice. I ensured the participants' protection during the research process and that no participant came to harm 'as a result of the actual process of doing the research and/or through publications of the findings' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:213). This was achieved by anonymising any information which might compromise the participants' identity. This information includes their national backgrounds, their names, their religious affiliation, gender, explicit description of their physical

characteristics and accent, their department affiliation and areas of specialism, and the places they live in in the UK. This is by using general references in square brackets. I also use '…', which indicates that some of the original words were cut because they are not important to the analysis. The participants' protection was also achieved by respecting their preference to meet in the places they suggested and their willingness to share with me what they chose to discuss about their personal lived experience. Having said this, despite my attempts to render skin colour ambiguous by anonymising explicit reference to it, I am aware that it can still be deduced from the context.

Methods of data analysis

The data is analysed using thematic analysis, which is 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke 2006:6). My approach to the data analysis is inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006).

They propose six steps; repeated reading, identification of codes, identification of the initial themes and combining them with the relevant extracts, checking and refining the identified themes in relation to the identified codes and the relevant extracts, as well as the whole data set, developing a satisfactory thematic map and defining and refining the identified themes, and having a fully worked-out themes which reflect the story and the argument the research proposes (For more details, see Braun and Clarke 2006:16-22).

My analysis of the data is organised around two main phases, and each phase consists of steps that I have taken to enable myself to generate data and organise it in a way that forms a storyline which reflects the participants' realities. The first phase involves analysing the participants' discussion when I met them for the first time, as well as during the interviews. This consists of writing notes of interesting points, pursuing these points, and generating further questions in the interview meetings. Braun and Clarke (2006:15) state: 'the process starts when the analyst begins to notice and look for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data – this may be during data collection'. When pursuing this interaction, which might be considered as a sort of analysis, I could clearly notice that some of the aspects that the participants drew upon in the first meeting were emphasised during the semi-structured interview meetings. However, there were some other themes that emerged in the interview meetings.

The second phase of data analysis revolves around further analysing the data after the interview meetings were completed. This was accomplished by transcribing, indexing, drawing connections between the data, revisiting the whole data, organising the selected data into a table, and further arranging this data in A3 paper.

After transcribing the interviews, I moved to looking at the data in deeper ways by organising the identified themes and selected extracts into A3 paper. Following this, I revisited the data set to see how far I covered the 'full' picture of the themes. This discursive process emphasises that '[thematic] analysis involves a constant moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:15).

Having said this, I have discussed thematic analysis around two main phases instead of applying the six stages suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). This is because there is no one way of doing thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), and that these two phases, including the steps presented above which pertain to each phase, demonstrate the ways in which I have responded to the emergence of the patterns in the data, and how I have organised them to capture the core focus of the study.

Interpretation of the data: discursive processes of identity construction

The episodes discussed below are narrated by the participants during the interviews rather than being observed by the researcher in the real world. I offer an interpretation of the ways in which the participants construct their identity. While their responses differ to a greater or lesser extent, they all draw on perceptions of them from the perspective of the white perceiving subject, who I also refer to as the other. This is in such a way that they are discriminated against and rendered deviant based on perceptions of race and accent. In this sense, the other is omnipresent in the ways in which the participants make sense of who they are whereby, the processes of relationality, labelling, positioning, resistance, and agency characterise this conflicting relationship between the participants and their social environment represented in the white perceiving subject. My discussion of the concept of identity emphasises its social nature (Hall, 1991b, 1995; Bauman, 1996; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Jones and Krzyzanowski, 2008; Childs, 2013; Jenkins, 2014). The data discussed below emerged from the questions of 'Can you tell me about yourself? How do you think of yourself?

In the following interview extract, Kyle refers to the white perceiving subject when she talks about the way in which she believes she is perceived. She states that she is perceived on the basis of her skin colour, which she resists by claiming to be British:

1) 'For me, the identity is ascribed' Kyle, interview.
1   I sometime go about culture and Britain, and
2   how the idea of my own identity. I say
3   [reference to a skin colour] person is ascribed
4   in my skin that once people see me, the first
5   thought is not associate me being British or
6   English or whatever. They associate me with
7   somebody who does come from outside. Now,
8   for a white person it doesn't matter if your
9   parents have been and whatever or wherever
10 you are or where they come from, whereas, for
11 us even that association is not there. So, for me,
12 the identity is ascribed. Before I even speak,
13 you will already put me somewhere and the
14 same with the whole thing about being British.
15 You tell people you are British, they say, oh no!
16 but where are you from? I'm like; I'm British.
17 Where are you from? I'm: what do you mean
18 where I am from? I'm from [a place in Britain].
19 I live in [a place in Britain]. They want you to
20 say that I'm from [the country Kyle comes
21 from], yeah. So, you get this kind of people
22 who are just ignorant people.

Garner (2007) argues: 'whiteness has two simultaneous borders: one between white and Other and the second separating grades of whiteness' (p.10). The first dimension of whiteness, that is, 'between white and Other' is relevant to this interview extract. In this sense, Kyle appears to be more 'racially visible' (Bond, 2006) compared to white people. This is in such a way that in lines 2-7 she is forcibly ascribed an identity which is associated with her skin colour by the white perceiving subject. However, according to her, the people that she refers to as white in lines 8-10 do not tend to be interrogated about whether they belong in Britain or not because they are white. This exclusion on the basis of perceptions of race from the perspective of white

perceiving subjects can also be evident in her use of the category 'us' in line 11, which implies a tacit 'them' (Amadasi and Holliday, 2017). This positioning shows the omnipresence of the white other in the ways in which Kyle highlights discrimination against her.

The manifestation of racism through a juxtaposition with white perceiving subjects is further reflected in the question of 'where are you from?' in lines 16-17, which Kyle highlights to demonstrate the various ways by which she is ascribed an identity. While this question is not necessarily ideological in nature, and that the social context in which this question arises needs careful consideration, I argue that in the interview extract above this question serves to exclude Kyle and not recognise her self representation as British. This is because this question is situated within a '"tangled" history, memory and expectation imbued and fuelled by power inequality' (Zhu and Li, 2016:449) represented in colonial and postcolonial relations. I also argue that this question communicates racism because, even though Kyle responds to the question by self identifying as British, she is repeatedly questioned about where she comes from. This practice indicates denial of Kyle's self identification as British. It also shows an essentialist understanding of what it means to be British from the perspective of 'white perceiving subjects that target [the] semiotic form…[of skin colour]' (Rosa and Flores, 2017:9). Therefore, as far as the data of this study is concerned, the question of 'where are you from' is problematic because it is situated within colonial and postcolonial relations, as well as because it carries underlying power relations as will be shown in the interview extracts below.

In lines 16-20 and in response to the question 'but where are you from', Kyle resists the persisted questioning of where she comes from by white perceiving subjects. This is by repeatedly self identifying as British. Whilst this questioning persists, she rather interrogates the people questioning her about where she comes from and instantly responds by situating herself in relation to a place in Britain. Here, Kyle is imputing to the question 'but where are you from' an intention to challenge her entitlement to the place she lives in in Britain and to having legitimate identity despite visible differences (Zhu and Li, 2016:468). She is also denaturalising perceptions of race in relation to being British by persisting on self identifying as British.

In this relational process between Kyle and white perceiving subjects which can be explained in terms of 'who we are is often defined in terms of who we are not or who we are similar to' (Bamberg, De Fina and Schiffrin, 2011:7) both parties position each other. One the one hand, when Kyle resists the ascribed identity and identifies as British, she is claiming authority to define her sense of identity. On the other hand, the white listening subjects' resistance to her self representation as British indicates that they are positioning themselves as the decision makers and as members of society who are entitled to say who belongs and who does not.

This discussion of the notion of positioning is pertinent to the rest of the data which relates to other participants. This is because positioning is pervasive in the ways in which they situate themselves and make sense of who they are.

The following extract is another statement by Kyle through which she further consolidates her claim of being British:

2) 'I am British. I have the passport' Kyle, interview.
1 I am British. I have the passport (making a
2 physical gesture of shrugging shoulders and
3 facial expression while laughing).

This is another response which Kyle uses to legitimise her claim of being British, as well as resist others' delegitimisation of this claim. Day (1998:161) suggests that on almost every occasion where a speaker is offered or ascribed the categorisation of an interlocutor, resistance

is an omnipresent category. The physical gesture Kyle made in lines 2-3 appears to carry further insights into what it means to her to be British. I understood this non verbal communication as if she was saying something like: 'there is nothing that can disprove the fact that I am British because I have a British passport'. However, because I wanted to gain an understanding of this physical gesture from Kyle, I interrogated her gesture by saying that as long as she has a British passport, she is British.

She responds to my question as the following:

3) 'Identity is a very fluid thing' Kyle, interview.
1   Well, (deep breath). Yes, no. I mean identity is
2   a very fluid thing, isn't it? It changes as well.
3   I always felt, I mean, see, don't get me wrong.
4   I mean, legally, this passport is the legal thing
5   that's ok you're British. When the British came
6   to colonise most of the colonised world, I mean
7   [the country Kyle comes from] particularly, we
8   were told that we are British subjects. We were
9   subjects of the crown. We were not [a
10 nationality] per se. We were told that we are
11 British subjects. So, when he did that change,
12 did he ask for permission to change that? Did
13 he ask if we want to be British subjects? It was
14 by force.

In response to my question, Kyle offers a discursive explanation of the relationship between her self identification as British and her possession of a British passport. In lines 1-2 she defines the concept of identity as fluid and changing. This understanding of identity promotes plurality and subjectivity, and destabilises an understanding of who we are and our relationship with the wider world in terms of 'either/or' (Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Delanty, 2006, 2009; Delanty, Jones, and Wodak, 2008). In lines 4-5 she suggests what might at a glance seem to be a straightforward relationship between citizenship and identity in the sense that she self identifies as British because she possesses a British passport. However, she tends to link this association with colonial influences whereby, she, including the people who come from the same country as her were and are probably still forced to belong to Britain.

Therefore, I suggest that the relationship between Kyle's identification as British and her possession of a British passport is complex in that, it is situated within history, memories, and power relations.

In the following interview extract, Kyle further emphasises her position in relation to being British by drawing on whiteness, whatever this term means:

4) 'I'm not going to whiten my identity' Kyle, interview.
1   I recognise that I'm not going to whiten my
2   identity to become British. I want to use my
3   identity to become British. I want my identity
4   to merge, to interact with it.

She explicitly dissociates herself from 'becoming' white, whatever this concept means. She rather suggests interaction and negotiation between her sense of identity and becoming British. This indicates that she is agent of the way in which she situates herself in the world despite power relations and forced perceptions on her by others. In this regard, Hall (1991a) discusses

the margins coming into the centre and reclaiming space within it: 'our lives have been transformed by the struggle of the margins to come into representation. Not just to be placed by the regime of some other, or imperialising eye but to reclaim some form of representation for themselves' (p.34). This manifestation of identity negotiation brings into light Bhabha's (1994) understanding of hybridity. He approaches hybridity as a process which reverses the effects of the colonialist realities of difference and estranges the basis of its authority. As such, Kyle creates her own way of interacting with the British context and being British which does not appear to fit in the perception of being British by some people as discussed above.

The following is a further manifestation of the significance of colonial and postcolonial influences in the ways in which another participant, Alex, projects his sense of who he is:

5) 'We try really hard to be accepted' Alex, interview.
1 You know, my wife is English. She learned
2 enough [language spoken where Alex comes
4 From], but very basic. As far as I'm concerned,
5 if I was living here, and if I had come to this
6 country and lived to sixteen years and my
7 English was as basic as her [language spoken
8 where he come from] was, people would say
9 you are not assimilating. That's the postcolonial
10 baggage we carry for us. It's different if we
11 come here and we quickly don't speak the
12 language. Well, then we are just for it, and
13 you're told that you are either not assimilating
14 or you're not refined enough or British enough.
15 People would say, you know, you are not trying
16 hard to assimilate to the British culture and
17 value. So, it's ok for white people to do that
18 and my family will be really over the moon
19 that she could even speak three sentences.
20 That's absolutely right, but that's the
21 postcolonial baggage we carry for us. We try
22 really hard to be accepted.

Colonial and postcolonial influences appear to still rule the psychology of Alex. He positions himself in relation to his wife in such a way that perceptions of the colonised by the coloniser and vice versa are salient. In lines 13-19 he is categorised as the colonised other whose 'language practices are unfit for legitimate participation' (Rosa and Flores, 2017:7) in Britain, whereas he tends to categorise his wife, to whom he refers as white people, as a manifestation of the coloniser's authority and privilege [lines 17-22]. Therefore, this manifestation of self representation is intertwined within authoritarian colonialist discourses which fix the identity of the colonised and the realities of difference (Bhabha, 1994). It indicates the imbalance between 'the West' and 'the East' in the sense that, 'the West' dominates and is superior over 'the East'. Said (1978) uses the terms 'orientalism', 'orient' and 'other' to depict the long standing representation of 'the East' as inferior to 'the West'. This representation converges with dominant colonialist discourses that take for granted the superiority of what is European or Western and the inferiority of what is not.

While experiences of racism take different forms and shapes depending on gender among other axes of differentiation, such as race, accent, and nationality (Bastia, 2014), I argue that, overall, what both male and female participants report about their experiences does not

indicate the relevance of gender in the topic under investigation. This is as far as the data of this study is concerned. Nevertheless, the following extract is the only manifestation of the intersection of gender, race, and religion in shaping experiences of discrimination among the participants. I use 'white/western' name (Alex) as an attempt to divert attention from stereotypical beliefs and minimise our unconscious bias which may arise from using names which reflect the participants' cultural and national backgrounds.

6) 'I don't have a bomb with me' Alex, notes from research diary.
1 My name is [Alex], and I don't have a bomb
2 with me (raising his hands in the air and
3 laughing).

This statement by Alex of the way in which he believes his students perceive him can be said to be consistent with the public perception of (im)migrants in that, the stereotype or prototype of a migrant is aggressive male (Szczepaniková, 2006). Also, the intersection of Alex's physical traits and his name which relates to a religious group, as well as his gender appears to contribute to the association of him with terrorism by his students. He responds to this racialised and gendered representation (Szczepaniková, 2006; Gary and Franck, 2019) of him using humour. Humour is a discourse strategy which can be used to construct meaning in sensitive contexts and project the inexpressible (Billig, 2001). In this sense, Alex uses humour to illuminate, confront and resist this representation of him as an immigrant man who is a threat to the host society, as well as to shake his students' stereotypical views of him.

Even though both Jordan and Eli come from European backgrounds, they are both labelled 'foreigners' because of perceptions of accent and/or skin colour.

In the following response by Jordan, he talks about instances of discrimination because of perceptions of his accent:

7) 'As a foreigner' Jordan, interview.
1 As a foreigner, I think, the worst moment was,
2 of course, around Brexit referendum[1].
3 … I was coming from a conference, and I was
4 on the train….I was on the phone talking. There
5 was only one young woman on the train. When
6 she heard my accent on the phone, she looked
7 at me with so much hatred, but she didn't say
8 anything. There was just so much hatred
9 (change of tone, emphasis). So, that was the
10 moment when, you know, I felt really bad. The
11 other moment when I didn't know how to
12 handle the situation was at my GP. What
13 happened was when I was walking out of the
14 GP, a young person, pretty young, passed me
15 and said under their nose: fucking foreigner.

Jordan describes himself as a 'foreigner', a label which represents his everyday encounters with people who do not appear to tolerate his accent. This feeling of discrimination appears to be

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[1] Brexit is a portmanteau of the words "British" and "exit" coined to refer to the U.K.'s decision in a June 23, 2016 referendum to leave the European Union (EU). Brexit took place at 11 p.m. Greenwich Mean Time, Jan. 31, 2020.

exacerbated during Brexit, an event which caused and still causes a 'spike' (KhosraviNik, Wodak and Krzyżanowski, 2012; KhosraviNik, 2014) in hostile and violent attitudes towards migrants in the UK (Fox, 2018; Rzepnikowska, 2019).

Jordan's change of tone of voice when he talks about the look he had from a woman on the train [line 9], as well as his reiteration of the label he was referred to by another person at the GP 'fucking foreigner' [line 15] serve to depict the nature of exclusionary practices towards him. Flam and Beauzamy (2008:222, 224) emphasise the power of the gaze as a central category in the relationship between, what they refer to as, 'natives' and 'foreigners' whereby, the former enacts their power and rejection of the latter by glaring and staring at them. Also, this manifestation of perceptions of difference in accent brings into light the idea of the white listening subject. This is in the sense that, the white listening subject is situated 'within a broader examination of white perceiving subjects that targets both linguistic signs and broader semiotic forms' (Rosa and Flores, 2017:10). In this specific context, discrimination based on linguistic signs is salient in such a way that Jordan is positioned as deviant and inferior from the perspective of white listening subjects because of perceptions of his accent.

I suggest that the label 'foreigner' used by Jordan appears to be a construction of him by white listening subjects, rather than his own construction of himself. In other words, while Jordan is alienated and framed by these people as someone who does not belong in Britain because of his accent, he resists this representation of him by representing himself as 'transnational'. This label shows agency in claiming ownership of the way in which he self identifies which transcends perceptions of accent and national boundaries.

In the following interview extract Jordan further manifests resistance to others' perceptions of him by moving beyond his national background and asserting his own sense of place in the world:

8) 'I think of myself as transnational' Jordan, interview.
1 I have a massive problem with the idea of nation.
2 I cannot understand why I cannot pick. I love
3 the concept of transnationality. When this
4 concept started operating, I just, it felt some
5 hope. It felt some hope. It felt so much of home.
6 Of course, I love my city where I was born. It's
7 always like anything, you love your bedroom
8 when you were a child, you know. It has all
9 that sentiments and things like that… I think
10 of myself as transnational.

Through the term 'transnational', Jordan resists 'other ascribed identity' and asserts 'self oriented identity' (Zhu, 2016:232). He also equates his feelings towards this term with his feelings towards the place he was born in by constructing both entities as home. The notion of home represents 'place belongingness' (Antonsich, 2010) and holds a sense of attachment and connection. In this sense, it can be said that Jordan's sense of identity and the ways in which he interacts with the wider world is multiple, subjective, and hybrid. Hybridity has been defined as a process which involves different positionings whereby, different elements are combined and negotiated (Bhabha, 1994, p.5, p.26; 1996, pp.54-55; Hall, 1995, p.529; Delanty, 2006, p.33; Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p.5).

Therefore, like Kyle and Alex whose sense of identity is discussed above, Jordan resists to be framed based on categories he did not choose, such as accent and national background. This is by rejecting national boundaries and creating his own ways of interacting with the wider world.

In the following interview extract, another participant, Eli, discusses the way in which she believes she is perceived in the UK whereby, she is labelled 'foreigner' because of perceptions of skin colour and accent.

9) 'I am a foreigner here' Eli, interview.
1 I think it has something to do with how you're
2   received in the UK. Like you are not one of
3 us, you come from somewhere else. I am very
4 aware that I am a foreigner here. I'm actually
5 very aware of that. I wasn't born here.
6 Obviously, the moment that I start talking
7 people know that I am not from here. I mean,
8 it's obvious that I am not English. They just
9 have to look at you, and they just have to hear
10 you talk. I am aware of my accent. I am aware
11 of the way I look. I am aware of it. It doesn't
12 bother me. It doesn't bother me at all, but I am
13 aware of it. I don't think I look like an English
14 person. I think, you know, we (gesture with hands)
15 look Mediterranean.

Garner's (2007:10) argument presented on p.5 that whiteness involves two dimensions; 'one between white and Other and the second separating grades of whiteness' is relevant in the analysis of Eli's statements. More specifically, the second dimension is the most relevant. This is in the sense that, even though Eli comes from a European background which by extension can be said to be associated with whiteness among other things, she is excluded in the UK because, using her words, she 'does not look like an English person'. This perception of her which is also attributed to perceptions of her accent, which she emphasises throughout the interview extract, is reflected in the term 'foreigner'. The white perceiving subject which also encompasses the white listening subject is also relevant in this discussion. This is in a way that the semiotic forms of both accent and physical traits are used to produce a hegemonic understanding of what it means to be English. This is to say that, as far as this interview extract is concerned, perceptions of English whiteness and sounding English, whatever these terms mean, are the parameters used to define who is English and who is not.

While Eli acknowledges that her physical characteristics and accent are not English, whatever this term means, I maintain that she does not exclude herself from British society and that, she is rather excluded by the white perceiving subject. Therefore, like Jordan whose viewpoint is discussed in the previous page, the label 'foreigner' is used by Eli to reflect how she believes she is perceived, which, as will be shown in the following extract, she opposes by asserting her membership in British society and contribution to it through her profession.

10) 'I am part of that society' Eli, interview.
1 It's a little bit like my own country. It's not
2 my home country, but it's where I live. It's
3 where I work. It's where I've spent most of my
4 adult life, and where I will probably spend
5 most of my life or also going forward. So, of
6 course, I care about it, and I am part of that
7 society and, you know, of course, you have to
8 care. At the end of the day you are contributing

9   to that.

Eli's positioning of herself in relation to the country that she comes from and Britain can be described as hierarchical. This is manifested in the construction of the former as 'home country' and the latter as 'a little bit my own country'. Even though this differentiation suggests connection with both contexts to a greater or lesser extent, it indicates resistance to being positioned by others as 'foreigner'. This differentiation between both contexts also indicates ownership of self identification wherein, different allegiances and shifting positionings are enacted (Delanty, 2006:28; Deppermann, 2013:3). In this process of 'self oriented identity' which is enacted in relation to 'other oriented identity' (Zhu, 2016:232), the social and dynamic nature of identity construction is emphasised.

Therefore, similar to Kyle, Alex, and Jordan, Eli constructs her sense of identity by drawing on conflicting and competing discourses of 'who is in control' (Schiffrin, 1996:167; Bamberg, 2010:7). This is represented in the ways in which she perceives herself and the ways in which she believes she is perceived by others wherein, the white perceiving subject is omnipresent in this process of identity articulation.

In other words, while these participants are framed and ascribed an identity as 'foreigners' because of perceptions of race and accent by white perceiving subjects, they resist this identity ascription and exhibit agency in projecting their sense of identity in ways which transcend these constructed categories of race and accent.

Discussion and concluding remarks

This paper illuminates the personal everyday lived experiences of well established academics living in the UK by focusing on the discursive ways in which they construct their sense of identity. The interpretations of the ways in which these academics make sense of themselves are constructed in nature and are based on reported narratives by the academics which emerged during the interviews. I have discussed the concept of identity around the processes of relationality, labelling, positioning, resistance, and agency whereby, conflicting perceptions of who the participants are are enacted. The participants and 'the white perceiving subject' (Rosa and Flores, 2017) draw on 'narratives' (Amadasi and Holliday, 2017:258) in 'producing' each other, including themselves as 'social beings' (Bamberg, 1997:336). This is in the sense that when the participants discuss their self perception, they draw on the ways in which they believe they are perceived by the white perceiving subject wherein, they are ascribed an identity based on perceptions of race and accent. In this sense, the participants are discriminated against by being associated with terrorism and threat (Alex), labelled as 'foreigners' (Jordan and Eli), and denied their own self identification through the question of 'where are you from?' (Kyle). However, they exhibit resistance and agency by asserting their sense of identity through labelling and positioning themselves as 'British', 'transnational', 'I am part of that society' as shown in the data discussion section. These labels indicate that the participants enact their sense of identify beyond race, accent, and national background.

This manifestation of identity construction through resistance and agency as shown throughout conforms with a critical cosmopolitan understanding of identity. It emphasises the interaction between the local and the global (Delanty, 2006), as well as acknowledges that how we make sense of ourselves in the wider world 'emerges neither from the native culture nor from the culture of the other, but from the interaction of both' (Delanty, 2009:11). This understanding of how we interact with the world, including the social environment interrogates the perception that the core dominates the periphery. Researchers such as Abu Lughod (1991); and Delanty (2009) argue that this polarised relationship, being the core and the periphery, is multidimensional and emerging instead of static. I argue that this view of the relationship between the core and the periphery is manifested in this paper. This is in the sense that despite

authority by the white perceiving subject in framing the participants based on perceptions of race and accent, the participants exhibit resistance from a bottom-up stance, decentre perceptions of them on the basis of these constructed categories, and locate themselves within the core.

Having said this, uncovering the personal everyday lived experiences of these academics enables us to gain an understanding of how discrimination is manifested in their personal lives and the ways in which they respond to it. It also illuminates the deep societal prejudices with which they are inflicted.

Notes

Tabulated word count of the data used in this paper which has been taken from a larger piece of research	
Participants	Word count
Alex	768
Eli	927
Jordan	828
Kyle	1540

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