

WHITE MUSLIM CONVERT IN THE UK: BEYOND INTEGRATION PARADIGM AND THE POLITICS OF “THE OTHER”

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master’s Study Program of Islamic Studies at the Faculty of
Islamic Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

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The notion of Islam as incompatible with British values is still exist in the body of British society. But what occurs when an individual identified as Muslim cannot be categorized as 'outsider' or 'brown'? In what ways does broader society define and interpret their identities? The white British Muslim demographic presents a compelling subject for exploration. Muslims, whether through conversion or heritage from converted parents or grandparents. Their presence challenge racialized representations of Muslims as 'brown bodies.' They also interrogate the implications of being white and English, Scottish, Northern Irish, or Welsh identities that are frequently linked to Christianity. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore how the interplay of "whiteness" and "Muslimness" in contributes to gradual decline while simultaneously sustaining the racial hierarchy. Furthermore, the main argument of this study is that, while white converts challenge the common binaries between Islam and whiteness by embodying both identities, simultaneously, they sustain the racial hierarchy particularly within Muslim community by embodying their white privilege in their daily life. Additionally, I will utilize Leon Moosavi' theory of Re-racialization as the theoretical framework of this research and hope can give more nuance of how white Muslim converts engage with and perpetuate racial inequalities in Britain. This research will address two primary research questions. First: To what extent do white Muslim converts challenge and reinforce racial inequality? Secondly, in what ways do white Muslim converts articulate their identity following their conversion? Conversely, qualitative research will serve as the primary method for this study. I will employ interview data from white Muslim converts, drawing on previous research including journal articles, books, news sources, and online resources. Furthermore, to strengthen the credibility of this research, I will include my in-depth interviews with several white convert students. This approach will allowes me to broaden my exploration and comprehension of the intricate social phenomena related to Islam and British values.

Keywords: Muslim intergration in the UK, white converts, Islam, British identity, secularism and Multiculturalism.

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INTRODUCTION

The interplay between religion and ethnicity in the UK is intricate, evolving, and fundamentally linked to historical immigration, social transformation, and multiculturalism. This relationship influences religious and ethnic identities, as well as patterns of belonging and engagement in public life. Whiteness is frequently perceived as exclusive with Christianity due to a historical amalgamation of European identity, Christian beliefs, and colonial dominance. This association persists not because all white individuals are Christian or because Christianity is intrinsically linked to whiteness, but rather due to the interplay of history, culture, and power that has established this social norm in Western contexts.¹

Religious and ethnic identities frequently intersect. More than a quarter of the population (25.3%) identifies with a religion other than Christianity, particularly Islam (15%) and Hinduism (5.1%) Christianity continues to be the predominant religious group in the UK; however, its demographic foundation has undergone changes. The association with White British identity remains significant, yet its proportion has declined markedly, from 72% in 2001 to 46% in 2021 in England. The majority of this decline is observed within White British, White Irish, and mixed ethnicity populations. Moreover, the majority of British Hindus and Sikhs possess Indian heritage, most British Muslims have Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage, and Black Christians predominantly originate from African or Caribbean backgrounds.²

Contemporary British society firmly upholds the principle of religious freedom; yet, in this particular instance, that was not observed. The view of Islam as a threat or heresy from Christianity was significantly shaped by “The Writings of Bede and the Trading of King Offa,” By Venerable Bede (c. 673-735 CE) was an English monk, scholar, and historian who lived in the Wearmouth-Jarrow monastery in Northumbria. Bede is commonly called the "Father of English History" and is best known for his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (The Ecclesiastical History of the English People), which is a cornerstone of early English history and a primary source of knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon period.³ In his writing, he depicted Islam as adversaries of Christianity, a narrative that has persisted into contemporary British political discourse.

¹ Amanda Sahar d’Urso, “A Boundary of White Inclusion: The Role of Religion in Ethnoracial Assignment,” *Perspectives on Politics* 22, no. 2 (2024): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592722003309>.

² Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, *A Review of Survey Research on Muslim in Britain* (2018).

³ *The Venerable Bede Biblical Scholar and 'Father of English History*, n.d.

Moreover, the portrayal of media suggesting that Islam is at odds with "British society" reinforces this stereotype⁴. In the subsequent stage, Abdul Hakim Murad examines how British Identity perceived in his book "Traveling Home" that is predominantly linked to Christianity by its default, and from the side of British society reports Islam is often understood as not suitable with British values⁵. However, Muslims express a significant sense of belonging to Britain and that there should not be a clash between their faith and British identity⁶.

Unfortunately, within the white Muslim converts, they experienced what Moosavi refers to as "re-racialization" According to him, 're-racialization of white Muslim converts in Britain. It's a process of losing their 'whiteness' and being marked as 'not-quite-white' or 'non-white' after conversion.⁷ In other words, white converts not only experience racism within the white environments but also experiencing the challenges that most life-long Muslim experienced as well, this demonstrate that, when a white Muslim converts join Muslim community, they cannot ignore their race as many other white individuals.

Race has a significant impact on their post-conversion experiences.⁸ Following this, Myfanwy Franks state that white women who convert to Islam and wear a headscarf may face discrimination since they are seen as less white or even as outsiders in their post converts life.⁹ this because the idea of white Muslim did not suggest that they were regarded in this way and most of the time consider as traitor to their race because it is deemed that they have denied their superiority.¹⁰

From the observation I did, this mainly happened because of three factors. Firstly, from the historical context of the majority of Muslim community in Britain was coming from south Asian background, the Middle East, and Africa which have largely non-white populations. This relationship is reinforced by media depictions and public debate, which frequently depict

⁴ "The Development of Muslim Communities," in *Muslims in Britain*, ed. Sophie Gilliat-Ray (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5, Cambridge Core, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511780233.004>.

⁵ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, *A Review of Survey Research on Muslim in Britain*.

⁶ Saffron Karlsen and James Y. Nazroo, "Ethnic and Religious Differences in the Attitudes of People towards Being 'British,'" *The Sociological Review* 63, no. 4 (2015): 18,19, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954x.12313>.

⁷ Leon Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia," *Critical Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2015): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920513504601>.

⁸ Oishee Alam, *'Islam Is a Blackfella Religion, Whatchya Trying to Prove?': Race in the Lives of White Muslim Converts in Australia*, n.d., 19.

⁹ Myfanwy Franks, "Crossing the Borders of Whiteness? White Muslim Women Who Wear the Hijab in Britain Today," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 5 (2000): 925, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870050110977>.

¹⁰ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, *A Review of Survey Research on Muslim in Britain*.

Muslim identity as intrinsically non-white. As a result, whiteness and Islam are socially constructed as mostly incompatible categories in the common mind.¹¹ secondly, racialization of Muslim identity. Muslim identity is frequently racialized in Western society, which means it is perceived not just a religious identity but also as a racial or ethnic characteristic. White converts challenge this racialized norm, causing uncertainty because whiteness is often linked with Christianity or secularism not Islam.

As a result, white converts are perceived as non-normative whites or outsiders by both white and Muslim groups.¹² and lastly, in Britain and abroad, Islamophobia frequently manifest as a type of racial discrimination, with those seen as Muslim being targeted base on obvious markers such as attire or physical traits. white convertst who visibly practice Islam for example risk to lose their “white privilege” and becoming racialized as “Muslim” making them targets of Islamophobic presecution. This demonstrate that anti-Muslim prejudice is placed differently in society than other forms of discrimination, and different definitions of Islamophobia emphasize its connection to racism. And this reinforces the idea that Islam is associated with non-white racial identities.¹³

Yet at the same time, their presence also challenges the traditional racial Hierarchy.¹⁴ white Muslim converts challenge the dominant societal assumption that being Muslim is inherently non-white. Their existence indulges in and becomes an argument for the racialization of Islam as exclusively linked to non-white ethnicities such as South Asian, Middle Eastern, or Arab backgrounds. Thus, by embodying both “*whitness*” and Muslim, they expose the instability and social construction of racial categories, they create a type of reflexivity that sheds light on the underlying assumptions tied to white skin in the UK, and they apply a daily approach to navigate their “*whitness*” and alleviate racial tensions within the Muslim community. showing that ‘white’ identity is not fixed or exclusive to Christianity or Secularism in Britain.¹⁵ At the later stage, this remind me of Peter Sanders, a famous British converts photographer on one of his interview regarding to his legendary work ‘The Art of

¹¹ d’Urso, “A Boundary of White Inclusion,” 560.

¹² Anna Piela and Joanna Krotofil, “White Habitus Among Polish White Female Converts to Islam,” *Sociology of Religion* 84, no. 1 (2023): 74, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srac021>.

¹³ Stephen H. Jones and Amy Unsworth, “Two Islamophobias? Racism and Religion as Distinct but Mutually Supportive Dimensions of anti-Muslim Prejudice,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 75, no. 1 (2024): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.13049>.

¹⁴ Moosavi, “The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia,” 1.

¹⁵ Moosavi, “The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia,” 41.

Integration’ where he imposed that “*Islam is like a crystal clear water, pure and unpolluted and it reflects whatever color of the bottom of the riverbed*” in other words, Islam is not exclusive to one particular races, it has vary of pattern and color, African, Asian and in this case ‘British Muslim’.

Therefore, British Muslim identity is based on the flexibility of Islam as a long-standing civilization that can co-exist and enrich the British context. Or as Tariq Modood argues that integration must accommodate cultural and religious distinctiveness, not erase it. In short, the issues faced by white Muslim converts in Britain are not only a matter of Xenophobia but also rooted in the hostility of political identity. Thus, this phenomenon will be the research background with the aim of finding out whether these white Muslim converts indulge in and reinforce the racial hierarchy.¹⁶ Furthermore, in order to fully grasp the idea of this research topic, I will explore the spectrum of how white Muslim converts indulge in or maintain the traditional racial hierarchy in the UK. In the meantime, there are various research studies about British Muslims have been done. Clearly, “Race relation” in this case, it was understood that the default of Britain is a generic that permanently as related to “*whiteness*” identity. Which shift the discourses from race to religion, however, there are not specific report of the unchanging British default¹⁷. Hence, this paper hopefully will give nuance of how the presence of white Muslim convert in Britain

LITERATURE REVIEW.

In the meantime, there are various research studies about British Muslims have been done. Although, as far as I have observed, there are no fix information about where and when the notion of “Race relation” in this case was understood as the default of Britain is a generic that is permanently related to “whiteness” identity. Which shift the discourses from race to religion. however, few well-known recources that is believed has a big contribution of the development of race-relation in the UK is the “The Writing of Bede and the trading of king Offa” he is an English monk, scholar, and writer who contributed to early medieval understandings of Islam in England from his Northumberland monastery, drawing on the earlier writings and perceptions of St. Jerome, a Christian scholar and early church father, who is regarded as a pre-Islamic authority on the Orient.¹⁸. Moreover, W.E.B. Du Bois was a

¹⁶ Moosavi, “The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia,” 1.

¹⁷ ABDAL HAKIM MURAD, *TRAVELING HOME, Essays on Islam in Europe* (The Quilliam Press, n.d.), 72.

¹⁸ ABDAL HAKIM MURAD, *TRAVELING HOME, Essays on Islam in Europe*, 72.

pioneering thinker on racial hierarchy and white dominance, contributing fundamental ideas that are still relevant to the study of race today. Du Bois made a compelling case that racial hierarchy in elsewhere was socially constructed to preserve white rule¹⁹.

He criticized 19th-century scientific racism's belief that races formed a vertical "Great Chain of Being," with whites at the top and blacks progressively demoted to the "lower races." Du Bois opposed these concepts, emphasizing that such hierarchies were not natural or organic, but rather results of specific social, historical, and economic causes aimed to justify dominance and exploitation.²⁰ Following this, Thijl Sunnier on his point out on racism that goes beyond biological ideas, such as cultural essentialism, which views minorities as less evolved or culturally unsuitable. This "symbolic" or cultural racism racializes minorities as foreign and less integrated, which helps to uphold hierarchical social connections. For instance, by "freezing" conceptions of immigrants and their descendants, multicultural policies and social classifications might unintentionally perpetuate these essentialist cultural assumptions, making integration or adaptation challenging. By confining communities to fixed cultural identities that are seen as incompatible or in opposition to the dominant society, this "cultural freezing" upholds a racialized social order.

Likewise, In writings such as "The Souls of Black Folk" and "Black Reconstruction in America," Du Bois demonstrated how the concept of "whiteness" served as a weapon for social stratification. He points to a connection between imperial conquest and racial hierarchy, questioning how the "current theory of colonial expansion" explains why Europe divided the "darker world" for its own advantage. He also talks about white supremacy as a fundamental component of colonial and racial dominance, highlighting how White colonialism and conquest are essential to the structural oppression that Black people and other non-European peoples experience²¹ For example, Du Bois's notion of the "wages of whiteness" represents one of his most enduring contributions to social theory. He noted that, especially following the Civil War, impoverished and working-class whites received a "public and psychological wage" a form of special status, prestige, and privileges solely based on their whiteness—despite experiencing similar socioeconomic challenges as Black workers. This "wage" prompted individuals to align

¹⁹ Christopher White and Matthew W Hughey, "Above the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois's Otherworldly Perspective and a New Racial Order," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 91, no. 3 (2023): 608, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfae019>.

²⁰ White and Hughey, "Above the Color Line," 608.

²¹ Reiland Rabaka, "The Souls of White Folk: W.E.B. Du Bois's Critique of White Supremacy and Contributions to Critical White Studies," *University of Colorado at Boulder*, n.d., 10.

along racial lines instead of collaborating with Black workers to combat shared economic oppression, functioning as a crucial mechanism in sustaining white supremacy.

Du Bois's analysis established a foundation for subsequent advancements in critical race theory and studies of whiteness. He asserted that racism is systematic and deeply embedded within social institutions and structures, rather than merely an issue of individual bias. His work advocated for a race-conscious critique and collective political action aimed at dismantling the persistent structures of white dominance.²² This aligns with Frantz Fanon's thesis as he argued that, Racism is not a biological characteristic but rather a historically constructed and culturally mediated system, established and sustained through ongoing comparisons and contrasts between White and Black, colonizer and colonized. Social and institutional narratives establish a persistent racial hierarchy, wherein Blackness is linked to poverty and inferiority, while whiteness is associated with privilege.²³ To put it another way, Fanon's writings expose racial hierarchy as a continuous, methodical project supported by psychological, social, and economic forces. White supremacy is historically created and continuously maintained by colonial and postcolonial systems; it is neither inevitable nor natural.

In any case, Fanon's analysis of the colonial and psychological landscape and Du Bois's emphasis on the socio-political creation of race jointly explain why postcolonial societies need to address both structural and psychological aspects in order to eliminate racial inequality. W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon's theories of racial hierarchy offer two of the most fundamental frameworks for comprehending white rule, particularly when viewed through the postcolonial lens. Although the social construction and worldwide effects of racial hierarchy are central to both thinkers' perspectives, their approaches, historical settings, and emphases differ.

Thus, Together with Racialization of religions by Jonnas Otterbeck, theory of the lost of white privilege by Leon Moosavi contribute such nuance understanding of the live of white Muslim convert in the UK. In his thesis he refers this process as the “Re-racialization” of identity when they being racialized as “not quite white”. This happened is predominantly shape by what Otterbeck the racialization of religious identities, particularly Islam in Europe, which associates religion with racial and ethnic otherness. Especially in European countries where

²² John C. Fischetti, “W.E.B. Du Bois The Roots of Critical Race Theory,” in *A Critical Pedagogy of Resistance* (BRILL, 2013).

²³ Ibekwe Kenneth Ikenna, *AN APPLICATION OF FRANTZ FANON'S CONCEPT OF RACISM AND NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS TO POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA*, 1 (2021): 46.

Muslims constitute racialized minority, this intersection exacerbates exclusion and upholds hierarchies. Furthermore, Otterbeck examines how Muslim identity is frequently viewed in Europe as a sign of distinction that crosses over into racial and ethnic categories, rather than merely as a religious affiliation. Regardless of their nationality or time of residency, Muslims are framed as "foreign" or "other" by this racialization.²⁴

Therefore, when white people converting to Islam, it gives them both advantages and disadvantages²⁵ Following this stage, similar research by Juliette Galonnier in the American context where she refers this experience as the 'non-normative' whiteness. When white Americans convert, their racial status is changed in contrasting ways. Firstly, they become discordant and deviant. Their decision to convert to Islam causes them to transition from 'normal whiteness' to non-normative-whiteness'. White Muslim are unusual unthinkable people. Most people's mental racial frameworks are disturbed by them, including non-Muslim.²⁶ secondly, white Muslim's attempts to be accepted as true Muslims are put in jeopardy since they are still perceived as white. Because of their complexion, Muslims identify them with a number of traits that are seen as dangerous or un-Islamic, including sexual depravity, privilege, dominance, racism and superiority. They are unable to operationalize and make their spiritual choice real to others because of their race.²⁷

However, Moosavi's thesis emphasize how white converts in Muslim communities perpetuate racial hierarchies, while Galonnier's study indicates that white converts' status in Muslim communities in the United States is more ambiguous or contested. Whiteness and Muslim identity have quite different connotations and racialization process in the UK and the US. While Galonnier emphasizes various interpretations of non-normative whiteness and religious identity, Moosavi's results on 're-racialization' and not-quite-white status in Britain might not adequately convey the subtleties of how whiteness and Muslim identity interact in the United States. In following this case, Galonnier perpetuate that in order to challenge this racial hierarchy, Converts utilise several techniques, like highlighting Islam's universality, regaining ethnic identities, or distancing themselves from racial stereotypes, to contest

²⁴ Jørgen S. Nielsen and Jonas Otterbeck, *Muslims in Western Europe*, Fourth edition, 1 online resource (xii, 215 pages)., New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), no page, WorldCat, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1140069>.

²⁵ Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia," 43.

²⁶ Juliette Galonnier, *WHITE AMERICAN CONVERTS TO ISLAM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF NON-NORMATIVE WHITENESS*, n.d., 33–34.

²⁷ Galonnier, *WHITE AMERICAN CONVERTS TO ISLAM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF NON-NORMATIVE WHITENESS*, 33–34.

conventional perceptions of whiteness and cultivate genuine spiritual identities. These studies demonstrate that race and religion are intricately connected, with converts frequently challenging established racial hierarchies and revealing the manufactured essence of racial and religious identities in Western countries.

Nevertheless, this experience cannot be generalized to all white Muslim converts. Many Muslim white converts who have a big influence without losing either one of their identity and whose practices reflect their Muslimness in a 'white' way, and rather become a bridge between long-life Muslims and white society. For example, Peter Sanders, Hamzah Yusuf, and Abdal Hakim Murad are few examples of the embodiment of British and Muslim, as it is how to be Indonesian, Malaysian, Pakistani, or any type of race and color and Muslim at the same time. Moreover, the theory of re-Racialization or the 'non-normative-white' is a representation of the colonial legacy that unfortunately shapes our current socio-politics that we do put so much care of it. Because of our affirmation of its existence is another way of emphasizing the race hierarchy, which is against the values of freedom within the framework of liberalism and religion itself.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the extensive research from my dissertation to fulfill my academic journey in SOAS University & Universitas Islam International Indonesia under the program of Master Dual Degree. The focus research on this research paper is to explore the phenomenon of white Muslim converts in the UK indulge in and help maintain a system of racial inequality (especially white dominance). There have been many news stories, reports, and studies such as: the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies in 2008 and report from the Sunday Express on November 20, 2005, titled "Taunted by Bin Williams," that show how unfairly the media portrays Muslims in general, focusing on their "foreignness" (ignoring where they were born and raised, nationalities, main languages spoken, etc.) and "brownness." Stories that leave Muslims out and make them feel like they don't fit have a big effect on their lives, especially when it comes to building identities and feeling like they belong in a place where being British and being Muslim are seen as incompatible. But what happens when a Muslim person can't be labeled as "foreign" or "brown"? How does society as a whole see them and understand who they are?

There are many bodies of literature that shows us the importance of considering white privilege in contemporary society.²⁸ This approach began in William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (W.E.B. Du Bois) discussion of the wages of whiteness and has led to a realization that racism is not only about how non-white people experience society as outcasts, but also about how white people enjoy structural and everyday privileges for being racialized a member of the supposedly superior race. contemporary society.²⁹ Few research such as the case of Justin and Bakri shown that white Muslim converts cause confusion to both non-Muslim and even lifelong Muslim because of their *whitness* and Islam seen as incompatible. white converts who enter the Muslim community, race is not something they can ignore as the case for many other white people. Rather, their race overtly influences their post-conversion experiences in numerous ways. contemporary society.³⁰

Therefore, qualitative research would be the main method for conducting this research. Qualitative research is a methodological approach within the social sciences and humanities that emphasizes the understanding of individuals' experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, including text, audio, or video. Qualitative research seeks to investigate the "how" and "why" of social phenomena, offering depth, context, and nuance to human experiences. Hence, by utilizing interview data of literature studies, such as journal articles, books, news, and online resources will enhance the credibility of this research, Additionally, I will also present my in-depth interview with a few white convert students. the conversation that I had with them was a discussion session in the classroom from one of my modules titled "Muslims in Britain", at SOAS University of London. The conversion was rich enough and very relatable to my research focus. By doing so, it would help me to synthesize to broaden the theoretical themes

Research Question

Throughout my observation from the data that I have collected, the lives of white Muslim converts show a variety of experiences pertaining to their identity in their post-conversion. Some white converts don't really feel much change in how they define their

²⁸ Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (Indiana University Press, 2006).

²⁹ Steve Garner, "A Moral Economy of Whiteness: Behaviours, Belonging and Britishness," *Ethnicities* 12, no. 4 (2012): 445–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796812448022>.

³⁰ Steve Garner, "The Uses of Whiteness: What Sociologists Working on Europe Can Draw from US Research on Whiteness," *Sociology* 40, no. 2 (2006): 257–75, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038506062032>.

Britishness, while others experience re-racialization and loss of their 'white privilege'. Therefore, there 2 main research questions I would try to answer in this paper:

- a. How does the presence of Muslim converts indulge in and reinforce the racial hierarchy?
- b. How do white Muslim converts define their identity?

FINDINGS

Theoretical Framework.

The topic of identity has garnered significant attention in recent times. This is partly attributable to political developments in Europe, where national solidarities, particularly in the Balkans, are being contested by significant forces of ethnic assertion. During the 1980s in Britain, populist 'English' nationalism emerged within the discourse of the New Right, leading to the marginalization of minority ethnic groups through its racialized definitions of national belonging. Identity discourses regarding British Muslims underwent significant examination, particularly during pivotal events such as the Honeyford affair in the mid-1980s and the controversies surrounding The Satanic Verses and the Gulf War in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Muslims increasingly became conceptualized as 'outsiders', marginalized from the fundamental ideas of 'Britishness', which, imbued with nostalgia, remained viewed as homogeneous, Christian, white, and anchored in historical contexts.³¹

Dominant cultural narratives frequently equate "whiteness" and "Britishness" with Christianity and secularity, whereas "Muslimness" is often racialized and marginalized. White Muslim converts may encounter conflicts between these narratives, creating alternative accounts to affirm their hybrid identities.³² Furthermore, according to intersectionality theory proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, identities such as race, gender, class, religion, and sexual orientation are interconnected and collectively shape distinct patterns of privilege, oppression, and lived experience.³³ In other words, white Muslim converts in the UK experience an identity influenced by their whiteness, which is a historically privileged racial category in Britain, their Muslim faith, which is often linked to racialized minority groups, and potentially by gender, class, and other intersecting factors.³⁴

³¹ H. Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800* (Hurst & Company, 2004), 6, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=IXtoQQt-os4C>.

³² Sarah Lee, "Narrative Intersectionality Guide Understanding Cultural Narratives through Intersectional Lens," *Number Analytics*, n.d., <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/narrative-intersectionality-guide>.

³³ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *STANFORD LAW REVIEW* 43 (2025): 1245.

³⁴ Columbia Law School, *Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later*, n.d., <https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>.

Hence, this research would be conducted based on the theory of “**Re-racialization**” and “**Betweenness**” or “Double Stranger” by Leo Moosavi. “re-racialization” is a process transformation of white people identity after their conversion into other race or ethnicity. While “**Betweenness**” or ‘Double Stranger’ is an explanatory of white converts position both within Muslim community and white environment.³⁵ Their position ascribed by Simmel’s notion of the stranger, who is both near and far, connected yet distinct, and whose identity is always negotiated within social interactions. White converts are not passive subjects as they exercise agency in how they present themselves and navigate social worlds. Some strategically manage their identities, concealing or revealing their Muslimness depending on context to avoid discrimination or to gain recognition.³⁶ Furthermore, white British Muslims may experience a partial loss of white privilege. Their visible Muslim identity can subject them to Islamophobia and exclusion from the white mainstream, leading to experiences of marginality and disadvantage.³⁷ ³⁸ Yet, others actively resist the erasure of their white or British identities, challenging both Islamophobic and intra-Muslim expectations.

Moreover, whiteness can still afford certain privileges, such as being less likely to be subject to racial profiling than non-whites Muslims, or being granted authority or legitimacy within some Muslim spaces.³⁹ This dynamic is not static. In some contexts, whiteness is disprivileging-white converts may be regarded with suspicion by both their families and by born Muslims, who may question the authenticity or permanence of their faith⁴⁰. Furthermore, their depiction by the media, for example, there were times when the fact that they were white was seen as a threat. In these situations, the fact that they are white makes it impossible to tell if they are Muslim (when religious markers are not present), so the racial signs that they might be involved in terrorism or extremism cannot be found. It clearly goes against the common belief that "security threat = brown Muslim" and, in turn, it goes against the belief that "whiteness = unthreatening." Dealing with this somewhat unclear area that challenged power

³⁵ Thomas Sealy, “The Betweenness of the Double Stranger: British Converts to Islam and Patterns of Belonging,” *Social Compass* 69, no. 1 (2022): 95–112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00377686211018436>.

³⁶ Ella Rhodes, *Being Muslim and White*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/being-muslim-and-white>.

³⁷ Sana, *Racialized Muslim Bodies And White Revert Privilege*, April 26, 2012, <https://aristotleslackey.wordpress.com/2012/04/26/racialized-muslim-bodies-and-white-revert-privilege/>.

³⁸ Sealy, “The Betweenness of the Double Stranger.”

³⁹ Sana, *Racialized Muslim Bodies And White Revert Privilege*.

⁴⁰ Ella Rhodes, *Being Muslim and White*.

structures often meant either calling attention to the fact that these people were Muslim to distract from the fact that they were white or making it possible to explore and even dispute the idea that they were a threat.⁴¹

On the other hand, whiteness remains empowering, allowing them to navigate certain spaces with relative ease or to act as cultural “bridges”.⁴² thus, white converts must continually negotiate their identities. They may face ‘misrecognition’ from their families and communities, who might see their conversion as a betrayal or expect them to adopt stereotypically “Asian behaviors”⁴³ within Muslim communities, they may be seen as temporary or not fully authentic, sometimes pressured to adopt a name or questioned about their backgrounds⁴⁴. This negotiation can challenge racialized boundaries, by embodying both “whiteness” and Muslimness, white converts disrupt the common British association of Islam with people of color and force majority society and Muslim communities to reconsider the boundaries of religious racial identity.⁴⁵

Islam and British Values.

During the early medieval period, emerging information regarding Islam and Muslims was integrated into existing pre-Islamic theories concerning the 'Saracens'.⁴⁶ English monk, scholar, and writer Bede contributed to early medieval understandings of Islam in England from his Northumberland monastery, drawing on the earlier writings and perceptions of St. Jerome, a Christian scholar and early church father, who is regarded as a pre-Islamic authority on the Orient. From its inception, Islam was not comprehended on its own terms but was interpreted through pre-existing frameworks of thought regarding 'the Other,' influenced by Christian dogma and biblical exegesis. Muslims were not apprehended objectively as a community adhering to their own values and social norms; rather, they were contextualized within a predominantly Christian framework.⁴⁷

It was nearly unavoidable that Bede would fit his interpretation of the newly emergent Islamic faith into a set of presumptions about the Orient that were initially drawn from Jerome, given that he lived and wrote during a period when textual authority was based on quotations

⁴¹ Amana Amer and Caroline Howarth, “Constructing and Contesting Threat: Representations of White British Muslims across British National and Muslim Newspapers,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 48, no. 5 (2018): 625, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2352>.

⁴² Sana, *Racialized Muslim Bodies And White Revert Privilege*.

⁴³ Ella Rhodes, *Being Muslim and White*.

⁴⁴ Ella Rhodes, *Being Muslim and White*.

⁴⁵ Ella Rhodes, *Being Muslim and White*.

⁴⁶ “The Development of Muslim Communities,” 5.

⁴⁷ “The Development of Muslim Communities,” 5.

from academic works.⁴⁸ The 'Saracens' of the desert and everything 'dark' or in 'shadows' were directly related, according to Jerome. He described Arabia as "evening," the start of night and sin, and compared "the light of scriptural knowledge" with this spiritual gloom. Bede characterizes the "Saracens" (Muslims) as adversaries of the Christians, much like Jerome labeled the "shadowy."⁴⁹

In English-speaking Christendom, these kinds of ties, associations, and prejudices that were formed so early in Christian Anglo-Saxon views seem to have led to a particular kind of hostility and antipathy toward Islam, a legacy that may still be seen in the modern world. When Bede heard about the Islamic world's quickly growing borders in the early eighth century, particularly in southern Europe, he had strong modern data to back up his prejudiced and unfavorable opinions about Muslims. Bede describes the 'hatred'³ that invading Muslim troops held for Christians despite never having met a Muslim.⁵⁰ He makes a clear line between the Islamic 'them' and the Christian 'us' in his works. As early as the eighth century, the Anglo-Saxon peoples' dominant view of the Islamic world was entirely negative, with Muslims being described as an obdurate and heartless 'Other' due to the power and literary influence of a single English monk who was considered the 'father of history'. Several prominent European theologians, like Bede, established the groundwork for anti-Islamic prejudice in the Christian world⁵¹.

On the other hand, Along with the theological and metaphorical 'darkness' brought about in the Anglo-Saxon mentality by the arrival of Islam, there was also a very real fear of threat from Muslim troops. Bede wrote during a period when Muslim troops were rapidly pushing into formerly Christian-controlled regions. Long before the Crusades, Christian Europe had reason to be concerned about the emergence of a 'new world order', particularly as it affected the Mediterranean and Iberia. The first Caliphate witnessed not only the invasion of Sicily and the Balearics, the Maghreb, and Spain, but also an apparent unstoppable push of Muslim forces northward into France. Only the Battle of Poitiers also known as the Battle of Tours - brought an end to a northern march by Muslim armies led by Amir 'Abd al-Rahman.⁵² During the fight, the Franks, headed by Charles Martel, defeated the Muslims. The victory has since been considered as one of the most decisive and significant military exchanges in history.

⁴⁸ "The Development of Muslim Communities," 6.

⁴⁹ "The Roots of Islam in Britain," in *Muslims in Britain*, ed. Sophie Gilliat-Ray (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6, Cambridge Core, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511780233.003>.

⁵⁰ "The Roots of Islam in Britain," 6.

⁵¹ "The Roots of Islam in Britain," 7.

⁵² "The Roots of Islam in Britain," 6.

Martel was regarded as the rescuer of Western Christendom for generations. According to an apocryphal narrative, when news of Charles' triumph at Poitiers spread throughout France, local bakers began baking bread in the shape of the Islamic crescent in celebration. The croissant, which is still popular for breakfast across Europe today, may have wholly unknown origins in an event that occurred 1,200 years ago - a symbol of an imagined epoch-making European victory over the Muslim world⁵³.

Consequently, in British contemporary context, though Islam is a religion and not a race, it is frequently racialised and treated as if it is inherently associated with specific ethnicities, especially those that are considered as "non-white" (e.g., South Asian, Arab). Islam and Muslims are frequently depicted as a threat to western society and culture, which may not come as a surprise to many of you who are reading this. This has been demonstrated in a multitude of news articles, reports, and studies, which frequently underscore the disproportionately negative media coverage of Muslims in general. The media frequently emphasises their "foreignness" (which disregards their places of birth and upbringing, nationalities, primary language spoken, etc.) and their "brownness." The repercussions of such marginalising and exclusionary narratives on Muslims are significant, particularly in terms of the construction of identities and feelings of belonging within a context where Britishness and Muslimness are perceived as conflicting. However, what occurs when an individual who is Muslim is unable to be classified as "foreign" or "brown"? What is the manner in which the broader society perceives and interprets their identities?⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the threat was not exclusively linked to the issues of terrorism and extremism. The threat they posed to British culture was also extensively discussed. Research frequently employed terminology that excluded white Muslim converts from the realm of acceptance and inclusion when discussing conversion. Again, their acceptance of Islam and subsequent "Muslimness" are perceived as a threat. By adopting a religion of the Other, they have deviated from the group norm of whiteness, "or non-normative" white which has almost completely stripped them of their whiteness. This perpetuates the idea that being white British and Muslim is an impossibility and a contradiction.⁵⁵

⁵³ "The Roots of Islam in Britain," 7.

⁵⁴ Amena Amer, "When Racialised Assumptions Don't Fit: White Muslims and the Contestation of Threat," *The London School of Economics and Political Science*, 2018, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2018/10/when-racialised-assumptions-dont-fit-white-muslims-and-the-contestation-of-threat/#_ftn1.

⁵⁵ Muhammad. Anwar and Kenya) Islamic Foundation (Nairobi, *Young Muslims in Britain: Attitudes, Educational Needs and Policy Implications*, Islam in Europe Series ;2, 44 p. (Islamic Foundation, 1994), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007961311>.

After converting to Islam, 'white' converts have both advantages and disadvantages due to their racial classification. The arguments presented are derived from thirty-seven comprehensive interviews conducted with Muslim converts in Britain during the period from 2008 to 2009.⁵⁶ In Muslim societies, 'whiteness' is both revered and viewed negatively, creating a dichotomy.⁵⁷ On the one hand, white converts can lose their whiteness and experience Islamophobia within the white context, yet simultaneously, their sense of belonging within the Muslim community is perceived as alien due to their whiteness. According to Franks, conversion to Islam can mean crossing the borders of whiteness⁵⁸ or can entail being 'Pakistanised' throughout the 'Re-racialization' process.⁵⁹ Though, according to Moosavi, without the process of (re)-racialization, Islamophobia would lack of foundational basis for development. As white converts, like Muslims in general, would not be identified as having an inherent difference that renders them susceptible to being targeted with a specific prejudice that we refer to as Islamophobia⁶⁰

However, it goes beyond that, western mainstream media often depicts Islam and Muslims as a potential threat to national security, social cohesion, and cultural identity. This narrative extends beyond non-white Muslims; it also portrays white converts as potential threats, highlighting their Muslim identity over their racial identity. Furthermore, we can gain insight into how white British Muslims are positioned, described, and, consequently, represented in dominant discourses by examining the process of objectification and anchoring that goes into establishing and validating social representations of this group in media discourses.⁶¹

The media serves as a crucial medium for communication, facilitating the study of the dissemination and reproduction of social representations of groups (Wagner et al., 1999; see Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010 for an example). Research demonstrates that institutions like mainstream media create particular hegemonic narratives that shape and exert influence over socially shared knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies. This occurs through the imposition of identities on groups and the dissemination of negative representations of individuals with limited social power to contest such portrayals.⁶²

⁵⁶ Leon Moosavi, "White Privilege in the Lives of Muslim Converts in Britain," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 11 (2015): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.952751>.

⁵⁷ Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia," 43.

⁵⁸ Franks, "Crossing the Borders of Whiteness?"

⁵⁹ Ali Köse, *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts* (Kegan Paul International, 1996), 135, WorldCat.

⁶⁰ Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia," 43.

⁶¹ Amer and Howarth, "Constructing and Contesting Threat," 616.

⁶² Amer and Howarth, "Constructing and Contesting Threat," 616.

Research conducted by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies in 2008 revealed that from 2000 to 2008, 36% of stories concerning British Muslims pertained to terrorism, and the predominant narratives in the British press link Islam and Muslims with threats. This corroborates earlier research conducted by Elizabeth Poole and John Richardson, which indicated that the media often portrayed Muslims as a security threat linked to terrorism.⁶³ Approximately 75% of the 2,238 news pieces that were produced by searching for all stories that mentioned the terms "convert" and "Islam/Muslim" were irrelevant. Sixty-two percent of those who were relevant associated the convert with terrorism, fourteen percent with fundamentalism, and two percent with a violent or criminal act that had nothing to do with terrorism. About 20% of the pertinent stories were either informational (primarily about why people, especially women, convert) or about well-known individuals who had converted or were rumoured to have done so.⁶⁴

The examination of news narratives concerning converts to Islam uncovers a notable category of reporting that does not focus on specific individuals. Instead, it articulates a generalised perception of threat associated with converts, suggesting that any individual who converts may be viewed as a potential terrorist, albeit in a vague manner.⁶⁵

On February 24, 2002, the Observer reported that Essex youths had signed up for a "holy war."⁶⁶

.... A new generation of white converts is being attracted into British Islam organisations linked to al-Qaeda.

According to a report from the Sunday Express on November 20, 2005, titled "Taunted by Bin Williams,"

Al Qaeda is making fun of Western intelligence services by using its new weapon, Rakan Bin White English converts to Islam who are eager to kill and perish are referred to as Williams.

It claims that these "soldiers" have Christian parents from Europe. "They attended your schools to study. They went to Sunday mass and prayed in your churches. They drank drink,

⁶³ M A Kevin Brice, *A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: A REPORT ON CONVERTS TO ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM*, n.d., 14.

⁶⁴ Brice, *A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: A REPORT ON CONVERTS TO ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM*, 14.

⁶⁵ Brice, *A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: A REPORT ON CONVERTS TO ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM*, 15.

⁶⁶ Brice, *A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: A REPORT ON CONVERTS TO ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM*, 15.

ate pork, and persecuted Muslims, yet they secretly converted to Islam, took up Al Qaeda's ideology, and vowed to follow in their brothers' footsteps by taking up arms."

According to a Sunday, January 13, 2008, article from Scotland titled "Al-Qaeda's White Army of Terror,"

up to 1,500 white Britons are thought to have converted to Islam for the One MI5 source claims that the goal was to finance, plan, and execute surprise terror operations within the United Kingdom. Because they are much less likely to be caught than members of the Asian community, security experts think the increasing secret army of white terrorists offers a particularly significant threat.

In these narratives, the perceived peril is exacerbated by the utilisation of terms that imply the magnitude of the numbers involved. The Scotsman on Sunday suggests that "as many as 1,500" individuals have converted specifically for the purpose of terrorism, while the Telegraph asserts that "significant numbers" have been lured to terrorism. The Observer refers to a "generation" of converts being recruited.⁶⁷ The converts represent a novel threat, as they have undergone conversion discreetly, making them significantly less detectable. They possess the capability to circumvent airport security measures and tend to avoid drawing attention.⁶⁸

These narratives indicate that individuals are embracing Islam with the explicit intention of engaging in terrorism; they enlist for "holy war," identify as "soldiers" who have "internalised the philosophy of Al Qaeda," pursue a "terrorist career path," and have converted "to finance, strategise, and execute terrorist attacks." All but one of the stories exhibit a complete absence of contextualisation; the article in the Sunday Express notes that the vast majority of Western converts to Islam are "law-abiding citizens." This omission leads the reader to infer that any convert to Islam in the United Kingdom may be perceived as a potential terrorist. There are several instances in which converts to Islam have engaged in acts of terrorism, including Nick Reilly, the Exeter restaurant bomber; Richard Reid, the "shoe-bomber"; and Germaine Lindsay, one of the 7/7 bombers. Nonetheless, these individuals constitute a minor subset of converts and should not be regarded as representative of the entire group.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Brice, *A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: A REPORT ON CONVERTS TO ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM*, 16.

⁶⁸ Brice, *A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: A REPORT ON CONVERTS TO ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM*, 16.

⁶⁹ Brice, *A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: A REPORT ON CONVERTS TO ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM*, 16.

It is scarcely surprising that many individuals will have a bad opinion of converts to Islam given the way they are portrayed in the media. The message that converts should be treated with mistrust at best appears to be very apparent. The idea that converting to Islam is something that a "normal" person would not consider is evident even in stories that are less overtly negative (like the "Why do people convert?" type stories).⁷⁰

On the other hand, although white converts experienced negative depiction throughout re-racialization process in UK's mainstream media, white Muslim converts often experience the advantages and sustaining racial hierarchy within Muslim community due their "white privilege". Life-long Muslims particularly Muslim migrant background frequently exhibit high level of enthusiasm towards white converts. However, a comparison of these experiences with those of black converts reveals the significance of race in these reactions. Life-long Muslims often do not extend the same level of welcome to black converts as they do to white converts. The experiences of Bakri, a white holistic therapist aged forty-four, are markedly different from those of Justin, a black individual aged thirty-six software engineer. Both individuals are married to South Asian women and converted to Islam approximately twelve years ago.⁷¹

Meanwhile, Black converts are frequently rejected, as Justin was, while white converts are frequently paraded, as Bakri was. It's no secret that race is a major component in this situation, which is why both Justin and Bakri bring up their race when discussing how lifelong Muslims react to them. White converts say they are constantly asked to serve as "the face" of mosques and other Islamic organisations, attend events, and share their conversion tales. White converts are seen as a distinguished accomplishment that had to be touched and showcased, much like Bakri. Black converts, like Justin, are uninteresting and even shunned out of concern for infection. White converts become celebrities as a result of white privilege, while black converts become liabilities. Even when Justin offers to shake hands, lifelong Muslims stretch out for Bakri's hand but decline. The recurrent exaltation of whiteness as superior to non-whiteness and particularly to blackness is indicated by this contrast, which recurred throughout the lives of multiple converts.⁷² This is very paradoxical because black individuals can be drawn to Islam because it teaches them to be against racism.⁷³

⁷⁰ Brice, *A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY: A REPORT ON CONVERTS TO ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM*, 16.

⁷¹ Moosavi, "White Privilege in the Lives of Muslim Converts in Britain," 19.

⁷² Moosavi, "White Privilege in the Lives of Muslim Converts in Britain," 20.

⁷³ Karin van Nieuwkerk, ed., *Women Embracing Islam: Gender and Conversion in the West*, 1st ed (University of Texas Press, 2006).

Within the Muslim community, whiteness seems to be fetishised while non-whiteness is disparaged, reflecting attitudes reminiscent of those prevalent during the colonial era.⁷⁴ This is not coincidental, as the majority of Muslims residing in Britain now are descendants of South Asian migrants who arrived post-Second World War due to the colonial ties. The racial constructs established during the colonial period continue to shape attitudes of white individuals as virtuous and black individuals as insignificant. Frantz Fanon's insights may elucidate the frequent display of white converts:⁷⁵

‘The black man aspires to be like the white man. There is only one fate for the black man. And it's white. A long time ago, the black guy accepted that the white man was better than him in every way, and all of his efforts are focused on living a white life’⁷⁶.

Although the colonial environments described by Fanon may have dissipated, the colonial complexes he identified appear to persist. White privilege can be conceptualised as a remnant of postcolonialism, or, in the terminology of Shannon Sullivan⁷⁷, a 'phantom' that persists from the colonial period. Consequently, the celebration of white converts takes place within a historical and, arguably, contemporary framework in which white individuals have exerted dominance over non-white populations, including significant numbers of Muslims in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.⁷⁸ Fanon here demonstrated that colonization instills a sense of inferiority in the colonized via cultural, educational, and social institutions. The colonized internalize feelings of inferiority and dependency on the colonizer, a phenomenon referred to as the “inferiority complex.” The “White gaze” reinforces a psychological distortion of Black consciousness, compelling Black individuals to perceive themselves through the standards established by white society, thereby undermining their sense of self and agency⁷⁹.

Furthermore, he posited that in colonial settings, racial hierarchy serves as the principal organizing principle, asserting that the most fundamental division in the world is determined by one's species or race. In the analysis presented, a causal relationship is established between whiteness and wealth: “You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are

⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon and Richard Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth: Frantz Fanon ; Translated from the French by Richard Philcox ; Introductions by Jean-Paul Sartre and Homi K. Bhabha* (Grove Press, 2004).

⁷⁵ Moosavi, “White Privilege in the Lives of Muslim Converts in Britain,” 21.

⁷⁶ Fanon and Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 228.

⁷⁷ Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*, 110.

⁷⁸ Moosavi, “White Privilege in the Lives of Muslim Converts in Britain,” 21.

⁷⁹ Ikenna, *AN APPLICATION OF FRANTZ FANON’S CONCEPT OF RACISM AND NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS TO POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA*, 46.

rich.” The dominant race and dominant class are effectively interchangeable at the apex of the colonial social hierarchy.⁸⁰

Hence, although white converts may experience a reduction in social advantages due to Islamophobia or exclusion from the white mainstream, their capacity to "pass" as white in the wider society can still protect them from specific types of discrimination encountered by non-white Muslims. Stories from Michael Munnik's discussion with Gayle about his work with Islam UK Centre When she arrived in London to visit her son soon after the 7/7 bombings in 2015, she was compelled by her son to take off her headscarf so that she could move through the streets unharmed: "I went with my son in the tube, feeling very miserable [about having removed her scarf]." A poor Muslim man entered with his dinner about four or five stops along, and you could smell it. and he was being glared at by everyone in the carriage. And for me, it was simply too much. I broke down in tears. And my son asked, "What's wrong?" "He's up there being himself," I remarked. I should be sitting next to him, disguising who I am, and receiving those vile glances. And I feel so embarrassed of myself when I witness someone else receive the hate that I know would be directed at me. After this, she replaced her headscarf. In this case, Gayle may have chosen not to cover her head, and it could be reasonable to do so for her own safety. Those on the street would not have recognized her as a Muslim, and "visible" Muslims would have been left to suffer the most from racialization

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However, it goes beyond that, western mainstream media often depicts Islam and Muslims as a potential threat to national security, social cohesion, and cultural identity. This

⁸⁰ "Fanonism," in *Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism*, by William W. Hansen (BRILL, 2023), 285, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004679023_013.

⁸¹ Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia," 43.

⁸² Franks, "Crossing the Borders of Whiteness?"

⁸³ Köse, *Conversion to Islam : A Study of Native British Converts*, 135.

⁸⁴ Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia," 43.

narrative extends beyond non-white Muslims; it also portrays white converts as potential threats, highlighting their Muslim identity over their racial identity. Furthermore, we can gain insight into how white British Muslims are positioned, described, and, consequently, represented in dominant discourses by examining the process of objectification and anchoring that goes into establishing and validating social representations of this group in media discourses.⁸⁵ The media serves as a crucial medium for communication, facilitating the study of the dissemination and reproduction of social representations of groups (Wagner et al., 1999; see Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010 for an example).

Research demonstrates that institutions like mainstream media create particular hegemonic narratives that shape and exert influence over socially shared knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies. This occurs through the imposition of identities on groups and the dissemination of negative representations of individuals with limited social power to contest such portrayals.⁸⁶ Indeed, to neutralize the common stereotype as well as the racial hierarchy in the UK, Muslim mainstream newspaper contest prevailing media narratives by methodologically addressing negative portrayal of Muslim in national outlets, thus fostering alternative discourses and representations. Their narratives challenge the depiction of Muslim as threats and contribute to the formation of positive identities in response to stigma.

On July 1, 2011, the Muslim Weekly published an article with the heading "Majority 100,000 Muslim converts white females" and the byline "Converts involved with terrorism very small minority"—Faith Matters. The essay emphasises that extremists were isolated from British Muslim communities and had little connections to terrorism. The report dismisses white converts involved in terrorism as illegitimate members of the Muslim community, referring to them as a "very small minority" among an otherwise law-abiding majority. This article aims to lessen the perceived threat of Muslim converts and Muslims in general.⁸⁷

The true British Muslim?

According to the Muslim Council in the UK, the Muslim population is projected to reach 4 million by 2025, constituting 6% of the total UK population. For the first time, more than 50% of British Muslims are born in the UK, with significant populations in the North of England Bradford (65% UK-born), Walsall (61%), and Oldham (59%). The population exhibits ethnic diversity, predominantly comprising individuals of South Asian descent, alongside

⁸⁵ Amer and Howarth, "Constructing and Contesting Threat," 616.

⁸⁶ Amer and Howarth, "Constructing and Contesting Threat," 616.

⁸⁷ Amer and Howarth, "Constructing and Contesting Threat," 621.

notable Arab, Black, and White Muslim communities. The Muslim demographic is characterized by a significant youth presence, with 46% of individuals under the age of 24, in contrast to 29% of the general UK population.⁸⁸ While Muslims in Britain are predominantly linked to a South Asian heritage, a Moroccan merchant community had already been established by the late nineteenth century, complete with halal butchers and places of worship. Additionally, by this period, Somalis and Yemenis had started to create distinct Muslim communities in Cardiff and South Shields.⁸⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, a limited number of white individuals had converted to Islam.

Consequently, British Muslims at the beginning of the twenty-first century exhibit neither ethnic nor ideological homogeneity. Generalizations regarding Muslim communities often disproportionately reflect the experiences of South Asian Muslims, primarily those from Pakistan and Bangladesh. These individuals bring specific socio-economic traits, rural backgrounds, and religious beliefs and practices that are significantly influenced by mystical and magical elements. Their socially conservative practices contrast significantly with the more puritanical and legalistic approaches observed among geographically and educationally distinct Indian Muslims, as well as Muslims from other regions globally.⁹⁰

In the 1980s, British Muslims began to challenge the prevailing concept of identity by embracing diversity and creating new *hybrid identities*. Their conceptualizations of identity entailed contesting the simplistic interpretations of communal affiliation evident in discussions of 'Britishness' and in similarly uniform representations of 'the Muslim community.' British Muslims began to present an alternative perspective on belonging that challenged, both locally and within a global framework, the concept of national cultural 'British' predominance.⁹¹

One of the most influential person who shaped 'British Muslim' identity is Abdalqadir as-Sufi (Ian Dallas) He played a crucial role in shaping white Muslim identities in the UK as a Scottish convert. By connecting the British countercultural youth of the 1960s with classical Islamic tradition, A Scottish playwright, actor, and participant in the 1960s British bohemian "Swinging London" scene, he converted to Islam in 1967 in Fez, Morocco. Following his conversion, he emerged as a Sufi leader and Islamic scholar, establishing the Murabitun World Movement and promoting a revival of classical Islamic tradition, particularly in relation to white Muslim converts in the UK.

⁸⁸ "BRITISH MUSLIMS IN NUMBERS: CENSUS REPORT SUMMARY MARCH 2025," n.d.

⁸⁹ N. I. Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), WorldCat.

⁹⁰ Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 2.

⁹¹ Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 6.

Prior to his conversion, Ian Dallas was associated with prominent individuals in the cultural and music scene of 1960s Britain, such as Eric Clapton. Dallas introduced Clapton to the Persian Sufi love story "Layla and Majnun," which served as the inspiration for Clapton's renowned song "Layla." Ian Dallas' spiritual mentor was Sidi Muhammad Ibn Al-Habib. In 1967, Dallas embraced Islam and adopted the name Abdalqadir as-Sufi. Five years later, he founded a Darqawi community in London, modelled after a traditional Moroccan zawiya, located in the Bristol Gardens area of Little Venice. Prior to his conversion, Dallas was employed by the BBC and appeared in Fellini's *8½* as well as a 1963 BBC television play that included a young Bob Dylan.

An anecdote, which may be apocryphal, attributes to Dallas the gift of Dylan's first volume of Rimbaud's poetry. The zawiya drew individuals from London's vibrant creative community, including Richard Thompson, co-founder of Fairport Convention; American Beat poet Daniel Moore; renowned rock photographer Peter Sanders, known for his work with Hendrix, Dylan, and the Rolling Stones; and three members of the psychedelic rock band Mighty Baby, among them multi-instrumentalist Ian Whiteman. Eric Clapton was not a member of the zawiya; however, he operated on its periphery. A translation of Nizami's romantic tale, *Layla and Majnun*, provided to him by Ian Dallas, inspired Clapton's hit song, *Layla*.⁹²

For many children of the sixties, a 'journey to the East' constituted a necessary rite of passage. One significant impact of the counterculture was the incorporation of esoteric religions into Western culture. The integration of Vedanta and Zen Buddhism is extensively recorded, along with the music it inspired, including the Beatles' Indian phase and John Cage's *4' 33"*. However, the counterculture's engagement with Sufism, an esoteric strand of Islam, is less recognised, yet it has yielded significant, albeit overlooked, musical contributions. Despite the current focus on Islam, it is surprising that the emergence of Sufism—a tradition with a positive historical context—in the West during the late 1960s has not received greater attention. However, Abdalqadir, drawing from his Western intellectual and artistic background, played a pivotal role in articulating Islamic concepts in ways that resonated with white British converts. This facilitated the decoupling of Islam from its common racial and ethnic associations as a religion primarily of minority or immigrant communities, enabling converts to embrace an authentic Muslim identity alongside their Britishness. He strongly advocated for adherence to

⁹² Overgrown Path, *Untold Story of the Counterculture's Islamic Connection*, n.d., <https://www.overgrownpath.com/2017/08/untold-story-of-countercultures-islamic.html><https://www.overgrownpath.com/2017/08/untold-story-of-countercultures-islamic.html>.

the Maliki school of Islamic law, regarded as the foundational and original framework of Islamic society, providing converts with a coherent and historically grounded methodology for religious practice that transcended eclectic or purely spiritual approaches. Furthermore, Abdalqadir offered a sharp critique of secular modernity, capitalism, and materialism, aligning with the 1960s countercultural critique and the search for existential meaning. He positioned Islam as a holistic alternative to Western societal decline and argued that Britain's Muslim population, particularly white converts, held the potential to contribute significantly to the renewal of British society.⁹³

Abdalqadir as-Sufi influenced white Muslim identities in the UK by serving as a bridge between 1960s cultural movements and classical Islamic tradition. He advocated for a rigors, traditionalist Islam that was accessible to white converts and encouraged the development of multicultural communities grounded in spiritual and socio-political revivalism. This model broadened the social and cultural dimensions of British Muslim identity, transcending ethnicity and immigration, and facilitating new expressions of Muslimness among white Britons.⁹⁴

In the context of ongoing discussions regarding the negotiation of a British Muslim identity, it is pertinent to examine how converts, likely more integrated into British society, have sought to establish a functional equilibrium between the 'British' and 'Muslim' dimensions of their identities. Upon examining these endeavours, it becomes evident that for these converts, the issue transcends merely rendering Islam local; rather, it involves the more pressing task of reinterpreting Islamic concepts to establish significant links between Islam and British religious standards. In the late Victorian, Edwardian, and interwar periods, Muslims, including converts and immigrants, sought commonalities between Islam and Christianity while intentionally minimizing disruptions to cultural norms through the establishment of connections. Jesus was recognized as a prophet of God, with no differentiation established between him and the Prophet Muhammad as conveyors of the divine message⁹⁵.

Being a Muslim was portrayed as embodying a 'Better Christian'. The Woking Mission, founded at the Woking Mosque (constructed in 1889), was frequently termed a 'Muslim church'.⁹⁶ It was often run by people who made Islam seem like it could go with being "British" and "Western." So, it got its point across using words that English speakers would understand.

⁹³ Overgrown Path, *Untold Story of the Counterculture's Islamic Connection*.

⁹⁴ Overgrown Path, *Untold Story of the Counterculture's Islamic Connection*.

⁹⁵ Khawaja Kamaluddin and Maulvie Sadrudding, "The Islamic Review and Muslim India, December 1915. Volume 3. No 12," *Working Muslim Mission, England* Volume 3 (n.d.): 60.

⁹⁶ Khawaja Kamaluddin and Maulvie Sadrudding, "The Islamic Review and Muslim India, December 1915. Volume 3. No 12," 607.

Since the end of World War II, people who became Muslims have been a small but important group among British Muslims. Different ways of making a living have been used by them depending on how they see British society. For some, conversion has meant a complete and utter break with their old views, ways of life, and even identities. Many people have romanticized the idea of a stable Muslim family life, a life free of drugs, alcohol, and sexual "excesses," and a life with "discipline" and order in the lives of Muslims. They have also tended to move away from the materialism and liberalism of mainstream society.⁹⁷

However, conversion hasn't generally meant breaking completely with the past or giving up all of their old religious practices. Some people have even found that what they learned in their old religion helped them understand Islam better. They also think that Jesus and Muhammad had pretty much the same purpose. Finding the end of the line that Abraham started and the peak of the Judeo-Christian tradition has been what Islam has meant to these followers. They don't dislike Christians or Jews who are still practicing their religion. According to Kose's study, a lot of regular converts have been pretty picky about how they incorporate Islam into their lives, just like British-born people of immigrant background.

Most of them keep their British names, give their parents Christmas presents, and aren't really "puritans."⁹⁸ Most male converts do not alter their dress significantly. While all female converts donned clothing that covered their bodies, approximately one-third did not wear a scarf.⁹⁹ A notable minority of converts appear to be more comfortable with the prohibitions than with the obligations of Islamic religious prescriptions. They comply with prohibitions on alcohol, pork consumption, and extramarital sex; however, they encounter challenges in maintaining regular practices of prayer (5%) and fasting (27%).¹⁰⁰

It shows that, for many converts, religion is regarded with greater seriousness than the associated cultural traditions, whether they are Arab or South Asian. Muslim Britons appear to be exploring methods to maintain their British identity while integrating elements of their new religious identity. Daoud Owen, president of *the Association of British Muslims*, which represents the majority of converts, posits that a typical convert is 'steeped in British culture.' In contrast to the more ritualistically and politically inclined strands of South Asian Islam, these converts exhibit significantly greater engagement with 'genuine mystic paths and matters.'¹⁰¹ The majority of Kose's respondents exhibited minimal cultural change and perceived little

⁹⁷ Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 15.

⁹⁸ Au KOse, *A STUDY OF NATIVE BRITISH CONVERTS*, n.d., 138.

⁹⁹ KOse, *A STUDY OF NATIVE BRITISH CONVERTS*, 138.

¹⁰⁰ KOse, *A STUDY OF NATIVE BRITISH CONVERTS*, 137.

¹⁰¹ Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 16.

conflict between adhering to British culture and embracing the religion of Islam. For them, identifying as a British Muslim was equally valid as identifying as a Nigerian Muslim or an Egyptian Muslim, or an Indonesian Muslim, or any Muslim from any part of the world¹⁰².

Therefore, this goes against Roger Scruton's thesis on the incompatibility of Islam and Western values. He argued that, that Islam represents a distinct civilizational challenge to the West, emphasizing the hurdles of integrating Muslims into European societies. He asserted that Western citizenship and cultural continuity are rooted in particular historical, religious, and philosophical traditions, which, according to him, can be threatened by forms of multiculturalism and by identities seen as "non-assimilable".¹⁰³ For Scruton, meaningful integration requires Muslims in the West to prioritize national identity and accept secular legal frameworks. Despite he participated in discussions with notable white Muslim converts, including Hamza Yusuf and Abdal Hakim Murad, who exemplified interpretations of Islam that interact with Western thought and tradition¹⁰⁴. And he acknowledged the merits of specific elements within Islamic philosophy and spirituality, particularly Sufism, and recognized the role of institutions led by converts in promoting intellectual exchange and civic values. Regardless, He questioned whether Muslims could "put country before faith community" and criticized what he saw as the maintenance of separate "race temples" or enclaves by immigrant communities¹⁰⁵.

In my point of view, there are some paradoxical results on Scruton's theory. first, on the notion of Multiculturalism can be threat for western/British values. In this case, he basically goes against the idea of integration and challenge the traditional understanding of Secularity which strongly uphold the idea of multiculturalism. Second, yet he simulteneously, insist Muslim in the UK to accept Secular framework. likewise, to some extent, this also challenge Leon Moosavi's theory on the "Re-racialization" process. What I mean by that is, the way Muslim converts choosing their new religious identity is based on their British values on liberal freedom. as Peter Sanders described on behalf choosing Islam as his new religious identity as "if someone invite me to go to dinner, I can choose either to go or no, but I chose to go" or as Lady Evelyn Cobbold, later referred to as Lady Zainab, perhaps the first lady of British descent

¹⁰² Köse, *Conversion to Islam : A Study of Native British Converts*, 142.

¹⁰³ Richard Landes, *Scruton Stumbles through Explaining How the West Should Deal with Islam's Challenge.*, August 3, 2009, <https://theaugeanstables.com/2009/03/08/scruton-stumbles-through-explaining-how-the-west-should-deal-with-islams-challenge/>.

¹⁰⁴ the Roger scruton Estate, "Hamzah Yusu and Roger Scruto on Conversation," *Islam in Europe*, July 6, 2018, <https://islam4europeans.com/2018/06/07/hamza-yusuf-roger-scruton-on-conservatism/>.

¹⁰⁵ Ed Husain, *Roger Scruton Is a Friend, Not a Foe, of Islam*, April 29, 2019, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/roger-scruton-is-a-friend-not-a-foe-of-islam/>.

to perform the Haj, Lady Evelyn Cobbold set the path for others to follow. recognized her Muslim identity in profoundly personal, spiritual, and enduring terms, rather than through a formal or dramatic conversion process. Her identification as a Muslim was grounded in formative experiences, intellectual beliefs, and a deep sense of belonging to Islam as an inherent faith.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, throughout his broader contributions can be contextualized in relation to this issue. Martin Lings's role as a bridge between classical Islamic tradition and the Western intellectual milieu helped establish Islam as a spiritual and intellectual path accessible beyond ethnic and racial boundaries. Through his writings and spiritual teachings, he emphasized the universal and transcultural dimensions of Islam, particularly via Sufism, which focuses on inner spirituality rather than external markers of identity. This orientation inherently challenges racialized conceptions of Muslim identity by framing Islam as a unified spiritual tradition open to all, regardless of ethnic background.¹⁰⁷

Likewise, Lings's emphasis on adherence to traditional Islamic teachings and his involvement with the school encouraged converts—white or otherwise—to understand their faith within a timeless, universal framework that transcends social constructions like race. This could be interpreted as indirectly resisting the re-racialization of white converts by positing a Muslim identity rooted in spiritual and intellectual continuity rather than inherited ethnic traits¹⁰⁸

this demonstrates that, from the internal view which is Muslim converts, they did not consider themselves experience any process of 'Re-racialization' into non-white races or something else, because their core on choosing Islam is based on both their British freedom of life as well the universality of Islam. Following this case, as a prominent white convert in modern western society, Hamzah Yusuf has regularly advocated for the universalism of Islam, highlighting how it transcends racial, cultural, and ethnic divides and how Muslim identity ought to bring believers together beyond these artificial lines. In support of his claim that a meritocratic and anti-racist attitude is fundamental to Islamic teaching, he has cited prophetic teachings that state that there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or white over Black, and vice versa.

¹⁰⁶ Alasdair Soussi, *Lady Evelyn Cobbold's High Road to Islam Lady Evelyn Cobbold Was the First British-Born Woman to Make the Haj Pilgrimage.*, October 12, 2012, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts/lady-evelyn-cobbold-s-high-road-to-islam-1.354773>.

¹⁰⁷ *Martin Lings's Life and Work*, n.d., <http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/authors/Martin-Lings.aspx>.

¹⁰⁸ *Martin Lings's Life and Work*.

In other words, being Muslim doesn't have to be Indonesian, Pakistani, Indian, Arab, Middle Eastern, or any particular race. Moreover, for young British migrant Muslims showing the same method is used as how white converts identify their identity. Islam plays a crucial role in their lives. Vertovec's research on young individuals of Pakistani descent revealed that identification with Islam held greater significance than their Pakistani identity, although this did not necessarily indicate a strong interest in the practice of Islam.¹⁰⁹ they perceived the Muslim identity as empowering within a context where they identified as members of a marginalized minority.

By aligning with global Islam, they perceived themselves as members of a potentially influential community.¹¹⁰ This offered a sense of stability grounded in historical continuity spanning centuries, along with a symbolic language for articulating their highest ideals. The individuals transcended the negative particularistic ethnic attributions imposed by the majority by positively reaffirming a universal heritage, which simultaneously provided them with a sense of belonging similar to that of an ethnic group. The migrant generation of Muslims has shifted its attachment from their ethnic and cultural heritage to Islamic values and practices. These values are perceived as universal, adaptable, and pertinent to various social contexts, including British society, from which they continue to experience exclusion and alienation. The young individuals have sought to counter the indigenous population's perception of them as outsiders by relinquishing their ethnic identification. Simultaneously, by adopting a Muslim identity, they have contested conventional understandings of racial hierarchy (within British Muslim context). This self-consciousness assists young British Muslims in navigating the ambiguities and contradictions present in British society.¹¹¹

In this case, both converts and young migrant British Muslims shows a similar method on identifying themselves. However, the practice of Islam among converts in Britain has indeed generally diverged from that of Muslim with migrant backgrounds.¹¹² The converts interviewed by Kose expressed a sense of belonging to the broader Muslim community, known as the '*Umma*', rather than aligning with a specific Muslim group. The individuals experienced discomfort with the culture of surrounding Muslim communities, perceiving that immigrant Muslims conflated cultural practices with their religious beliefs. In his discussion of Islam in

¹⁰⁹ Anwar and Islamic Foundation (Nairobi, *Young Muslims in Britain: Attitudes, Educational Needs and Policy Implications*, 17.

¹¹⁰ Amir Saeed et al., "New Ethnic and National Questions in Scotland: Post-British Identities among Glasgow Pakistani Teenagers," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 5 (1999): 826-830, <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198799329279>.

¹¹¹ Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 19.

¹¹² Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 16.

Bradford, Lewis highlighted the challenges faced by notable converts like Rashid Skinner and Sufyan Gent in connecting with South Asian religiosity and culture, which they perceived as narrow and intolerant, particularly in its characterization of dissenters as 'enemies of Islam.'¹¹³

On the other hand, by the end of the twentieth century, a convergence appeared to occur between the convert approach and that of certain Muslims of migrant heritage, particularly those of the second generation and beyond, who increasingly shared the world-view and values of broader British society. The new generation has begun to acknowledge the cultural specificity of the religious behaviours exhibited by the migrant generation and to critically evaluate the necessity of maintaining emotional connections to their non-British heritage.¹¹⁴

For instance, there has been growing criticism of Muslims' reluctance to utilize languages other than Arabic for religious practices. However, efforts to deviate from what Akhtar terms Islam's conventional 'Arab linguistic imperialism' or '*Arabolatory*' have faced significant opposition. Any effort to challenge or disrupt this connection with Arab culture and language is likely to be condemned as heretical.¹¹⁵ This contemporary challenge to established convention aligns with the previous unsuccessful efforts of British Muslim converts to sever the ties that have historically linked Islam to its Arab origins, thereby seeking to liberate Islam from its predominant cultural influences. This would affirm the universality of Islam while facilitating a more organic connection with specific local cultural traditions.¹¹⁶

CONCLUSION

To conclude this paper, I would like to return to the objective of this research, which is to examine whether the existence of white Muslim converts in the UK can reduce or perpetuate racial inequality and hierarchy. Based on the data and information presented in the previous chapters, it can be observed that the presence of white Muslim converts in contemporary society has the potential to diminish racial prejudice and hierarchical inequality, both in terms of white racial exclusivity and the association of Islam with Arab or South Asian identities. However, at the same time, their presence creates a paradox that allows certain forms of racial inequality to persist. This paradox can be seen in how white Muslim converts define their identity within the liberal framework. As one of my interviews argued as well as few other prominent British convert such as Peter Sanders and AbdalQadir As-Sufi (Ian Dallas) that, they declined the exclusivity of the so called “pure Islam” associate Arab ethnicity, and is that Islam

¹¹³ Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain : Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims*, New ed (I.B. Tauris, 2002), 201, WorldCat.

¹¹⁴ Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 17.

¹¹⁵ Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 17.

¹¹⁶ Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 17.

can coexist with all different culture including the white culture. And therefore, they proud to identifying themselves as a Muslim as well as their white cultural background.

in my point of view, embodying this approach on defined one identity was not something wrong. However, in the context of our post-colonialism reality, white people have more privileged over non-white races and therefore, by embodying those idea, it will preserve the 'white privilege' because they can advance their privilege from both identities, particularly within the Muslim community. As a result, despite the undergoing of re-racialization, white converts may continue to possess specific privileges linked to whiteness in their interactions within Muslim communities. Whiteness is occasionally esteemed or regarded as prestigious, leading to converts receiving respect, authority, or leadership positions over non-white Muslims. This dynamic perpetuates white dominance by reinforcing the idea that "white" perspectives and contributions are more legitimate or superior.

Furthermore, due to their position in “*Betweenness*” that they neither fully inside nor outside white or Muslim spaces, converts demonstrate the adaptability and persistence of whiteness as a form of social capital. Their ability to leverage whiteness in some contexts while aligning with marginalized identities in others maintains the privileged status of whiteness as fluid and pervasive. Therefore, in respond this, we can generally see the strategy of how white Muslim converts in which their existence challenges racial inequality from three aspects:

The first strategy is the theological approach, emphasizing the universality of Islam by demonstrating that Islam is for all peoples at all times. This strategy predominantly implemented by white converts who feel comfortable with their white British identity and want to focus on their spiritual path, or by the young migrant Muslim rooted who feel confused of their sense of belonging on both their parents background as well as the values of the nation they are living in.¹¹⁷ by implemented this methodology, they would show the universality of Islam and by doing so, the exclusivity of a religion to a certain race such as Arab to Islam and white attached to Christianity would gradually fadeaway.

The second strategy, termed politico-moral, aims to reject whiteness dominance through the lens of Islam. Through the adoption of this non-normative religion, white British intentionally challenge traditional conceptions of whiteness, thereby constructing a revised self-image. This political initiative is predominantly executed by well-educated white

¹¹⁷ Galonnier, *WHITE AMERICAN CONVERTS TO ISLAM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF NON-NORMATIVE WHITENESS*, 36.

individuals engaged in the anti-racist movement, examining whiteness and white privilege through a philosophical lens.

The third strategy, identity-oriented, seeks to reduce the emphasis on whiteness by highlighting alternative identities considered more aligned with Islam. This serves as a practical counterpart to the second strategy. It aims to connect with other Muslims by highlighting a shared socio-economic status or a common ethnic background characterized by oppression.

These are three strategies that are white converts implement in their daily that coincidentally challenge the common racial inequality in broader society. Yet on the other hand, in some elements they reinforce racial hierarchies, particularly within the Muslim community itself.

Retention of white privilege: Even after conversion, white converts may maintain specific privileges linked to their racial identity, including a reduced likelihood of experiencing racial profiling and the potential to be granted authority or legitimacy in certain Muslim contexts. This may unintentionally reinforce elements of white dominance, despite the emergence of new forms of marginalization.

Reproduction of white norms: In certain instances, white converts may inadvertently replicate white cultural norms or be regarded as "ideal" or "authentic" representatives of Islam. This may marginalize non-white voices and reinforce established racial hierarchies within Muslim communities. As Numerous white converts delineate a clear distinction between what they perceive as the "pure" essence of Islam and the cultural practices associated with heritage Muslim communities, frequently of South Asian or Middle Eastern origin. For example, individuals may evaluate traditional attire, customs, or community standards as "cultural" rather than genuinely Islamic, asserting their interpretations as more authentic or rational. This distinction may favor British or Western cultural sensibilities while marginalizing the lived experiences of heritage Muslims.¹¹⁸

Selective disadvantages:

Although white converts may experience a reduction in social advantages due to Islamophobia or exclusion from the white mainstream, their capacity to "pass" as white in the wider society can still protect them from specific types of discrimination encountered by non-white Muslims. Stories from Michael Munnik's discussion with Gayle about his work with Islam UK Center When she arrived in London to visit her son soon after the 7/7 bombings in 2015, she was compelled by her son to take off her headscarf so that she could move through

¹¹⁸ Micheal Munnik, "Religion, Race, Culture: Islamophobia and British Converts to Islam," *Islam UK Centre*, 2023.

the streets unharmed: "I went with my son in the tube, feeling very miserable [about having removed her scarf]." A poor Muslim man entered with his dinner about four or five stops along, and you could smell it. and he was being glared at by everyone in the carriage. And for me, it was simply too much. I broke down in tears. And my son asked, "What's wrong?" "He's up there being himself," I remarked. I should be sitting next to him, disguising who I am, and receiving those vile glances. And I feel so embarrassed of myself when I witness someone else receive the hate that I know would be directed at me. After this, she replaced her headscarf. In this case, Gayle may have chosen not to cover her head, and it could be reasonable to do so for her own safety. Those on the street would not have recognized her as a Muslim, and "visible" Muslims would have been left to suffer the most from racialization¹¹⁹.

The construction of 'otherness' towards Muslims in the UK regardless of their skin colour was never inherent rather than constructed in the political discourses similar to the construction of Jewish-Arab enmity. However, as Moosavi points out, white Muslim converts in Britain can participate in racialized discourses within both Muslim and non-Muslim communities, retain some privileges, and worship whiteness, all of which can contribute to and perpetuate racial hierarchies, even though they frequently lose some aspects of white privilege and become the targets of Islamophobia. This intricate relationship emphasizes how racial categories are unstable and how social structures and daily interactions simultaneously challenge and maintain racial hierarchy.

¹¹⁹ Micheal Munnik, "Religion, Race, Culture: Islamophobia and British Converts to Islam."

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