Article: Racial capitalism, Islamophobia and Austerity

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"A guy called my wife a letterbox, because she wears the Niqab"

Research participant, May 2018

"[I]t is absolutely ridiculous that people should choose to go around looking like letter boxes […] If a constituent came to my MP's surgery with her face obscured I should feel fully entitled […] to ask her to remove it"

Former UK Foreign Secretary and Mayor of London (now Prime Minister) Boris Johnson, August 2018

"And a bunch of drunks came by and start shouting at my wife, calling her a ninja, calling her the "n"-word, calling her – they're both "n"-words, but the other "n"-word"

Research participant, May 2018

Person A: "Look at all the little ninjas, getting it at the minute!"
Person B: "That's what happens when they don't pay their rent!"
All: [laughter]

Unidentified men narrating the video of a Grenfell Tower effigy-burning, November 2018

1. Introduction

The juxtaposition of quotes in the epigraph above highlights the "webs of significance" (Geertz 1973, 5) that constitute the UK's ingrained and pervasive culture of Islamophobia. The four quotes, drawn from interviews with research participants and from UK media, demonstrate the interconnected forms of Islamophobia as racial and gendered violence that dehumanises Muslim subjects. A diverse range of actors, from high-ranking and ostensibly 'mainstream' politicians of the government, to racists hurling abuse in the street, are engaged together in the production of Islamophobic violence. News media, meanwhile, must be acknowledged as a central source in the construction of a "conceptual Muslim" – a monstrous fantasy figure upon which to foist the blame for a multitude of social ills and divisions (Ali and Whitham 2018).

The intensification of Islamophobic media output is often contextualised against the backdrop of the war on terror, which has seen domestic counter-terrorism regimes governing, disciplining, and excluding Muslim subjects from the body politic in the UK, France, the US and China (Kapoor 2017; Ragazzi 2015; Razack 2008). Islam is constructed as threatening to the prevailing values in liberal democratic societies and

Muslims are represented a "fifth column" force (Mason 2015). A rich body of scholarship has emerged engaging with the connections between Islamophobia and security policy (Sian 2017), Islamophobia and media representations (Ogan et al 2014) and the mainstreaming of far-right politics which relies on Islamophobic discourses (Mondon and Winter 2017). Islamophobia is increasingly conceptualised as structural racism rather than religious discrimination, in both institutional politics (APPG British Muslims 2018) and wider scholarship (Sayyid 2011; Meer and Modood 2009).

Yet there has been a lack of attention paid to the political-economic aspects of Islamophobia. For example, the above epigraph not only underlines the connections between elite racism and everyday Islamophobic abuse, but also points to its economic dimensions. In 2017, a fire at Grenfell Tower killed 72 people, who, according to El-Enany, were "racialised as non-white" and subject to "hyper-segregation and differential quality of life" in affluent North Kensington (2017). Bulley, Edkins, and El-Enany (2019) show how the political economy of Britain relies on the racialised and class exclusion of sections of the population deemed "disposable" putting them closer to harm and death. When property millionaire Paul Bussetti shared a video of himself and his friends burning an effigy of Grenfell Tower, the incident was described as "grossly offensive" (BBC 2019). The effigy was adorned with paper cut-outs of primarily brown faces, including a figure in a niqab. A voice can be heard saying "that's what happens when you don't pay your rent" (Rahim 2019). For Bussetti, the residents of Grenfell were what Robbie Shilliam (2018) calls the underserving poor. Those figures who throughout Britain's colonial and post-colonial history, have been cast as racialized outsiders in the white British nation, taking up space and state welfare belonging to the more deserving.

In this article, we show how such forms of Islamophobia are constituted through processes of racialisation which facilitate both austerity policies (concrete cuts to public spending) and austerity politics (ideological work to frame austerity as a morally correct and "common sense" response to crisis). We argue that Islamophobia has become indispensable to the justification and enactment of what Cooper and Whyte (2017) call the "violence of austerity". This indirect violence which has caused death and illness among vulnerable populations, is both "bureaucratised" and "mundane" (Copper and Whyte 2017, 3). The point of departure for this argument is

Bhattacharyya's contention that "the logics and techniques of racism inform the practices of austerity […] to enable the greater consolidation of systems of dispossession and dis-entitlement" (2015, 111). To this extent Islamophobia, and the designation of Muslims as the undeserving poor, have been indispensable to the violence of austerity.

Drawing on theoretical resources, along with interview and focus group data drawn from the researchers' discussions with 18 British Muslims in east London, UK, the article shows how Islamophobia operates through pre-existing anti-black racism, to reconfigure how racialised populations are (re)ordered and (re)valued. Islamophobia creates an additional burden of vulnerability to violence among those who are racialised as Muslim *and* black or Muslim *and* brown. This "Muslim penalty" (Elahi and Khan 2017) compounds the pre-existing structural effects of racism and extends these in new ways. The article also explores the classed and gendered effects of Islamophobia, particularly how "austerity gentrification" affects Muslim communities, and how Muslim women are positioned both as "victims" with reference to their clothing, but also as threatening "breeders" of Muslim families. The article's central contribution is to show how Islamophobia has become essential to austerity politics through its integration into a wider political economy of racial and gendered violence in the UK.

International political sociology (IPS) emerged as a field of study in part as a result of prior demands placed on the discipline of International Relations (IR) by another of its sub-fields: international political economy (IPE) (Guzzini 2017, 369). There have been calls in recent years for greater engagement between, or recognition of the inherent imbrication of, IPS and IPE (e.g. Stanley 2017). IPE is, after all, rooted in resistance to the "disciplinary separation of politics and economics" and IR's basis in that intellectual division of labour (Rosenberg 1994, 3), while IPS seeks to overcome IR's "anti-social" tendencies, emphasising "the analysis of what people do" (Bigo and Walker 2007, 4) and thus the sociological, as well as the political. More than simply viewing IPS and IPE as cognate but "separate fields of international studies", Graz et al. (2019) suggest that "there is no a priori reason to separate the social, the political and the economic when we aim at making sense of the world in any meaningful way" (589).

This article contributes to this emerging analytical synthesis of IPS and IPE in two ways. Firstly, it draws for its theoretical framework from the literatures on intersectionality and racial capitalism. These intellectual traditions pre-date by several decades recent efforts at bridging IPE and IPS (e.g. Robinson 1983; Crenshaw 1989), but similarly constitute efforts to bring the international, political, sociological, and economic together. Their focus on "race", racialisation and racism, however, rendered them beyond the purview of the traditional IR theory field, which was in part instigated precisely as a racist project (Vitalis 2015), and traditional IPE. Secondly, the article employs a sociological methodology, exploring qualitative data collected from depth interviews on lived experiences of Islamophobia and austerity. IR and IPE were traditionally either heavily "theory-laden" or conversely focused on "simplistic hypothesis testing" (Mearsheimer and Walt 2013). Approaches that shed light on the "micro" level everyday constitution of "macro" level global trends, like Islamophobia, remain relatively rare, though scholarship has been moving in this direction (e.g. Jarvis 2019). Explorations of international political economies of "race" and racism that draw on social theory and sociological methods should, in our view, be a key strand of the emergent IPS-IPE research agenda.

2. Methodology

This article's contribution to the extant literatures on racial capitalism, Islamophobia and austerity is broadly twofold. We first offer a novel theoretical contribution (Section 3), demonstrating how under-explored connections between austerity and Islamophobia can be uncovered and historicised through the theoretical frames of racial capitalism and intersectionality, before moving to a discussion of empirical evidence gathered through interviews and a focus group (Section 4).

Section 4 engages the preceding theorisation in an analysis of lived experiences in the political economy of Islamophobia, through narratives collected from research participants based in and around east London.[1] The conceptual framework and argument advanced in this article thus draws in part upon the findings from empirical research with British Muslims who have recently experienced

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[1] The study was initially aimed at exploring experiences of British Muslims in Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest – the three local authority areas with the largest Muslim populations – but was extended to include several participants from other areas through the 'snowball' recruitment process.

discrimination or abuse they considered to be Islamophobic or anti-Muslim[2]. Our aim is to explore lived experiences of Islamophobia through the lens of "austerity", as the set of major political-economic changes that coincided with sharp increases in hate crimes targeting British Muslims in the 2010s. We seek to understand how participants' lived experiences of Islamophobic abuse and discrimination interact with this austerity context.

To this end, we carried out qualitative, semi-structured depth interviews with a small sample (n = 12) of adult British Muslims, in addition to one all-women semi-structured focus group (n = 6). The interviews and focus group focused on specific instances of abuse or discrimination the participants had experienced – including frequency, context and content – and went on to more directly probe the ways in which these lived experiences of Islamophobia are implicated in, and mutually constituted with, austerity. Participants were asked whether abuse or discrimination had been articulated in connection with issues such as access to social housing, welfare benefits or public services, and whether they had experienced Islamophobia during their interactions with the agents of public services themselves. Given the connections between the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership and Islamophobic and other racial hate crime (Devine 2018), we also asked participants whether they felt Brexit had impacted on their experiences of Islamophobia.

The transcripts of the interviews and focus group with our 18 participants were then subjected to interpretive coding by the researchers, with a total of 24 themes emerging[3]. While the extent of the lived experiences of Islamophobia captured through this coding is beyond the scope of this article, in the discussion and analysis that follows we present excerpts from the interview and focus group transcripts to illustrate some of the core ways in which participants' experiences of Islamophobia are connected to austerity.

The rationale for adopting these methods of data collection and analysis is that this research is concerned with intersectionality in experiences of structural

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[2] Participants had answered in the affirmative to the screener question 'Have you experienced discrimination or abuse in the last two years that you felt was anti-Muslim or Islamophobic?'.

[3] Thematic codes manually identified by the researchers using NVivo Pro qualitative data analysis (QDA) software: Austerity cuts; Brexit; Children; Education; Frequency of abuse; Gender and Muslim women; Gentrification; Housing and welfare; In the workplace; London; Media representations; Mental health impact; Physical assault; Police (Islamophobia and response to); Political activism; Prevent and Channel.

inequalities. Kimberlé Crenshaw recently noted that "[i]ntersectionality was a lived reality before it became a term" (Crenshaw 2015). The investigation of the lived experiences of those subject to intersecting inequalities is thus key to understanding these social, structural phenomena. While a research focus on austerity and Islamophobia means a focus on class and "race" in this study, it also necessitates – precisely because of the aforementioned sensitivity to intersectionality – a focus on gender. As became clear at the outset in our interviews, and as has been established statistically elsewhere (Allen 2013a), women are more likely to be subject to Islamophobic abuse and discrimination.

3. Islamophobia and austerity: intersectionality and racial capitalism

This section develops a theoretical framework comprised of three strands. First, it highlights key issues and omissions in the largely separate literatures on Islamophobia and austerity, insisting on the need for an approach better attuned to intersectionality. Second, it explores how the relationship between austerity and Islamophobia can be understood through the literature on racial capitalism, located in the tradition of black radical thought. Finally, this section utilises the lens of racial capitalism to situate the place of Muslim populations within the imperial history of Britain's racial, class, and gender relations. The discussion draws on the work of Virdee (2014),and Shilliam (2018) to chart the British histories of those considered deserving and undeserving of state welfare, laying the groundwork for our analysis of interview data showing how everyday experiences of Islamophobia reproduce racialized, classed, and gendered assumptions about Muslims as a "drain" on public resources in times of scarcity.

3.1 Islamophobia and austerity: key debates and omissions

Islamophobia as a concept is the subject of ongoing academic and political debate (Sayyid and Vakil 2011; Halliday 1999; Runnymede 1997; Berthoud et al. 1997). Divergent conceptualisations have emerged in different contexts, reflecting the social and political concerns of the day (Mondon and Winter 2017). However, Islamophobia is increasingly understood as a form of structural racism entailing religious and cultural features, but not reducible to them (Runnymede, 2017). This change was precipitated by the global war on terror, described as a "racial crisis" (De Genova 2012), which has seen the proliferation of racialised techniques for policing Muslim populations from Kabul to London and Detroit. The global war on terror has

thus undermined assumptions about the distinctiveness of "race", religion, and culture in explanations of the experiences of Muslim populations.

Conceptualising Islamophobia as racism means redefining "what race means", away from biological "realities" and toward a social construct produced through processes of *racialisation* (Cainker and Selod 2018, 168). Racialisation is the process of race-making: populations are rendered as racial subjects, endowed (or burdened) with particular attributes. For example, in the UK context, the term "Muslimness" brings together phenotypical, cultural and religious elements which combine to produce a "racial" imaginary of the monstrous Muslim figure described by Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai (2002). Muslimness reflects the elastic quality of racialisation as a race-making process (APPG British Muslims 2018; Sian 2018; Sayyid 2014; Meer and Modood 2009). There is therefore a growing literature making the connections between racialisation, religion, and culture (Meer 2013; Selod 2018; Cainker and Selod 2018; Garner and Selod 2015; Naber 2006). Yet, what rarely features in these accounts is attention to the political-economic aspects of Islamophobia as structural racism. Questions of how *class* operates in the production, distribution and experience of Islamophobia are rarely broached.

"Austerity" policies, introduced in many countries after the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007-8, involve transferring the vast economic losses incurred by wealthy and powerful traders in financial products onto poorer, more vulnerable social groups; in this sense austerity is "the technical term for class robbery" (Akala 2018, 19). Throughout the 2010s, a programme of public spending cuts was imposed by successive, Conservative-led UK governments. The National Audit Office notes that English local authorities' "spending power funded by government fell in real terms by 49.1% from 2010-11 to 2017-18" (NAO 2018, 15). These councils are responsible for delivering a wide range of public services, from welfare benefits and adult social care to sanitation, transport, and homelessness services.

Cuts to local public services are not the UK's only austerity measure – cuts to welfare, and the lifting of the cap on student tuition fees, were also key to its austerity programme (McBride and Evans 2017) – but they are the biggest cuts to any single part of the public sector, and have meant that cities "have tended to see the deepest cuts" (Centre for Cities, 2019). Austerity may therefore be most keenly felt among the

urban working class, who are more likely to rely on – and to work for – the local public services councils provide. Amidst the 2020 global coronavirus pandemic, in which people racialized as minorities – among both healthcare workers and the general public – have been vastly more likely to die in the UK (Kirby 2020), connections have been drawn to the fact that they are more likely to live in urban working class neighbourhoods, where death rates are double those of wealthier areas (Pidd et al. 2020), and to have already been disproportionately affected by austerity (Hussain 2020).

However, much of the scholarship on austerity relegates "race" and gender as secondary issues, in favour of class-based critiques (Fishwick and Connolly 2018; Blyth 2015). The idea that "race" and gender are epiphenomenal to material class-based analysis is reflected in how scholars theorise the connections between racism, hate crimes and austerity. For example, Cole (2014) argues David Cameron's government engaged in "scapegoating" for the impoverishing effects of austerity by playing the "race card". Racism is rendered as something which happens *after* policies of austerity economics have been implemented. However, we argue to the contrary that, in line with Tilley and Shilliam, analysis of austerity must attend to "how race functions in structural and agential ways, integrally reproducing raced markets and social conditions" (2018, 534). An analysis better attuned to the *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1989) of raced, classed, and gendered inequality is therefore needed. Bassel and Emejulu (2017), and Hall et al. (2017), show that cuts to welfare and reduced public spending disproportionately impact black and minority ethnicity (BME) women. This literature demonstrates the extent to which the impact of austerity is differentially distributed across intersecting raced, classed and gendered lines, but, as Carastathis notes, an account of "the role of gendered and racialised violence in securing the politics of austerity" is still missing (2015, 74). Austerity has not caused the increased circulation of racist and xenophobic ideologies; rather, the prior existence of racialised and gendered inequalities is put to the service of austerity politics, leading to intensified violence for marginalised groups. To flesh out the relationship between Islamophobia and austerity the article turns to the scholarship on racial capitalism.

232 Bridging the gap: insights from racial capitalism

The scholarship on racial capitalism can provide insights into how Islamophobia and austerity intersect. Racial capitalism is rooted in traditions of black radical thought. This includes the work of sociologist Oliver Cromwell Cox (e.g. Cox 1964), whose understanding of capitalism as a world system predates Wallerstein's (1974) canonical contribution. It also influenced the more recognised and frequently-cited Cedric J. Robinson, author of *Black Marxism* (1983). Dissatisfied with orthodox Marxist accounts of the emergence of capitalism – conceived as an endogenous process centred on a territorially bounded set of European nations – Robinson (drawing on Cox) draws attention to two interrelated points (Robinson 2019, 79): that "race" and racism were central to the development of capitalism, and that capitalism itself was to be understood as a world system fundamentally enmeshed in and shaped by global processes. This scholarship connected global (imperial and colonial) histories of slavery, genocide and dispossession, to the production of contemporary racial hierarchies between states, and hierarchies of racialized populations within states.

The lens of racial capitalism offers a way of historicising the global links between "race", class, and gender relations in the formation of contemporary states. Processes of racialisation and gendering are central to the work of organising populations, dividing forms of labour (recognised as "work" and "non-work"), and attributing value to that labour (Bhattacharyya 2018, ix). The resulting racial and gendered hierarchies of life produced through this intersection of capitalism, "race" and gender, ensure that exploitation and dispossession are experienced predominantly by those parts of the population deemed expendable. This point can be briefly illustrated through El-Enany's analysis of the fire at Grenfell Tower (2017). Residents of Grenfell were formed of an international working class, who came to be resident in Britain through histories of colonialism. Working class populations racialised as "non-white" are disproportionately confined to the higher floors of unsafe high-rise buildings, reflecting a "colonial logic of space" and exposing them to "premature and violent deaths" (El-Enany 2017). El-Enany considers the inescapability of the "colonial condition" through the case of Mohammad Alhajali, a 23 year-old Syrian refugee, who escaped a conflict zone only to perish in Grenfell. The case illustrates Danewid's view regarding the underexplored connections between the treatment of marginalised populations in the Global South and Global North, through

practices of urban planning and racialised policing. London, São Paulo and Cape Town are global cities which are historic and ongoing "imperial terrains" (Danewid 2019, 292). As Robinson put it after a 1962 trip to what was then Southern Rhodesia, in present-day Zimbabwe:

> "Will the U.N. understand the pleas of the Blacks in the townships […], where most often three to four families must stay in one room the size of your kitchen […] of the tens of thousands unemployed because they are not educated, uneducated because they are unemployed, both because they are black? Africa understands, Asia understands, you and I and the millions of blacks in the U.S., Brazil and the West Indies understand, not because we are black or brown but because we have lived it and are living it now" (Robinson 2019, xv).

These insights allow a rethink of the relationship between Islamophobia and austerity. Recognising the constitutive role of "race" and gender in capitalist reproduction, and in the construction of hierarchies of lives which are more or less disposable, we can explore how Islamophobia is implicated in the austerity-afflicted political economy of Britain. The next section provides an overview of the place of Muslim populations in Britain's post/imperial history of raced, classed and gendered relations, to help make sense of how Islamophobia has become key to austerity.

3.3 Situating Muslim populations in Britain's imperial history of "race", class, and gender relations.

As the literature on racial capitalism emphasises, Britain's racial, class and gender relations developed in the context of its formation as an empire. Virdee focuses on precisely this imperial and colonial history, underscoring the co-constitution of racial and class relations. He argues that the historic integration of some British workers into the nation was "underpinned by its notion of a singular people united by race and religion" (Virdee 2014, 5). A British identity centred on whiteness relied on the racialized othering of members of the global British working class from Ireland, the Caribbean, East Africa and South Asia (ibid). Virdee charts the history of this national compact in which the entitlements of deserving white workers to employment rights, fair wages and state welfare, made possible by Britain's imperial political economy (Bhambra and Holmwood, 2018), took precedence over the rights of their colonised cousins. He notes that "class as a representational form and material relation was

indelibly nationalized and racialized" (2014, 5). To this end, Shilliam shows constructions of the "white working class" as *the* "indigenous constituency, independent of colonial pasts, and unfairly displaced by multi-coloured newcomers", which hinge on colonial distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor, are relevant today in relation to debates on Brexit (2019, 6). The result of the referendum on EU membership was explained as the revolt of "left behind" white working class voters, let down by a political class who had allowed excessive immigration. It is in this broader setting of "Taking Back Control" of Britain, offered by the Vote Leave campaign, that the experiences of an ethnically heterogeneous and largely working class British Muslim population, constructed as the undeserving poor, can be understood.

Historically, British Muslims came predominantly from the Commonwealth countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh, arriving to fill gaps in the British labour market in the post-war period, in manufacturing, the light industries, and the service sector (Peach 2006, 136). However, data from the last national census in 2011 shows that these groupings make up a falling percentage of the overall Muslim population, which numbers approximately 2.7 million people (MCB 2015). The proportion of Muslims who identify as "Black African" and "Black other" is rising, as is the proportion of those who describe themselves as "Arab" and "Asian other" (ibid.). This includes a growing Somali community, which the Muslim Council of Britain suggests could total 250,000 people (ibid.).

Despite the ethnically heterogeneous makeup of Britain's Muslims, structural inequalities reflected in unequal outcomes in housing, education, health, labour markets and the criminal justice system, cut across these groupings, albeit unevenly. Almost half of the Muslim population lives in the 10% most deprived areas in the UK, with 28% of households in social housing (MCB 2015). Given the link between deprived areas and poor health outcomes, Muslim women over the age of 65 are more afflicted by ill-health and disabilities, relative to the general population (Ibid). Muslims are unemployed at "nearly double" the rate of the general population, with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB 2015) citing a "religious penalty" compounding the broader discrimination faced by BME people in the labour market (Ibid). As Hall et al. (2017) show, groups already reliant on state welfare and public services have been the worst affected by austerity measures.

For Britain's Muslims, the reduction in quality of life has not simply been a consequence of class positioning, but is tied to how they are racialized as the undeserving poor, a process underway prior to the onset of austerity. Baker et al. show there were three "surges of interest in the subject" of so-called Muslim "benefit scroungers", in 2001, 2003 and 2005; the first and last dates coinciding with the start of the War on Terror, and the London bombings (2013, 181), with a further "small peak" in 2008, coinciding with the GFC. They explore how initially it was prominent so-called "preachers of hate" who were maligned for being benefit scroungers, but that later this logic was applied by British newspapers to "any Muslim who receives benefits" (Baker et al. 2013, 187). Furthermore, these constructions were tied to right-wing critiques of a New Labour government accused of generous welfare "handouts" being "exploited by certain Muslims who want to destroy Britain's way of life" (ibid). It is this intersection of "race" and class which has justified austerity politics targeted at the undeserving poor, composed of Britain's racialized others, and within this to the everyday experience of Islamophobic hate crime.

4. Lived experiences of austerity Islamophobia[4]

4.1 Everyday austerity, everyday Islamophobia

Austerity is experienced largely on the social plane of the "everyday" (Bhattacharyya 2015; Hall 2019). That is to say, "within the simplest everyday events in which we routinely participate" (Sztompka 2008, 8). Recent research shows that everyday life is a key terrain or "site of struggle" through which austerity has been materially and ideologically perpetuated since 2010 (Bramall 2013), with the economic crisis to which austerity is a response "constituting *a personal crisis*; lived in, through, and punctuating everyday life" (Hall 2019a, 480). Our research participants' testimony shows how Islamophobia is woven into the banal experiences of everyday life in austerity Britain, rendering their movements through a range of social spaces – from shops to buses and trains, and in some cases even their own homes or neighbourhoods – fraught with fear, anxiety and tension. The experience of

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[4] Early findings from this empirical research formed the basis for an evidence submission to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia in 2018, and are cited in the final report of that inquiry: *Islamophobia Defined* (APPG British Muslims, 2018).

Islamophobia as everyday racism is illustrated by some of the participants' comments on frequency:

> "**It's hard to answer that because it was ongoing, so it was a lot of times**. But, in saying that, just because it hasn't happened recently, it doesn't mean that it's not still happening indirectly or that it's not going to happen. So **I've faced it quite a lot**"

> [On incidents in the last two years] "**It was a lot, I can't really remember the exact times**. I would say it's **more than ten times**".

> "I get Islamophobia **quite regularly** […] I remember there were like **four incidents in one night**, as I was, because I was cycling through London, […] and going through town, like just in one night, I had people call me "Taliban", "Bin Laden", one guy came and ranted, threw a punch. […] **Those sorts of things are actually fairly common**, like just comments and things like that […] Most of the time I'd say, **it doesn't go at least a month or so without either me or my wife, one of us receiving some sort of comment**".

But the settings in which the participants experience abuse and discrimination also speak to its instantiation in the everyday. London's busy public transport systems are a particularly common theme, with experiences ranging from an intense sense of threat to direct verbal and physical abuse:

> "There've been instances where… you just, **you just feel it, you feel it in the air**. Especially when you're on the train, you just know, […] there's always like "the last white guy of the east end", who's a West Ham diehard fan with a beer can in his hand and **he's just… he's looking at you like he wants to kill you**"

> "**I was on the bus** and someone told me, as they were about to get off the bus, they were sort of standing before the doors and as the doors opened, they said: "traitors like you should be hung""

> "**Public transport is the worst for me**. Yes, I've, I almost always get some kind of comment. I've been sat **on the train** before with my friend and a couple opposite us were just staring at us, and then they started having a very loud conversation about immigrants taking over the country. Again, I've been called a terrorist multiple times when **using the tube**. And it's **just in passing sometimes and it's almost, you feel like you're being gaslighted, like almost as if, it's kind of like slowly like driving you mad**"

Experiences of racial profiling and abuse when "travelling while Muslim" (Luongo 2016) extend to holidays too. This practice of harassing Muslim air passengers is connected to the counter-terrorism surveillance at airports. Though it is also important to note that people of colour, and especially "visibly Muslim" people of colour, may be subject to more general anti-migrant harassment when travelling to, from, or within majority-white, "Western" countries.

> "**[W]e were going to Turkey, and everyone was telling us, don't go, don't go, because you're going to be stopped**, you're going to be stopped. But why, why? **And then it was true**, I did see it, you know, when **they did question us at the immigration** time".

Participants' comments on the high frequency of abuse and discrimination they experience, and on the "everyday" locations and contexts in which it takes place, do not speak to a causal relationship with austerity, but rather to the fact that Islamophobia is experienced in the same social plane. Mundane practices – walking through a city, going to a shop, or catching a bus – are bound up with political economy inasmuch as the roads, pavements, shops, shopkeepers, and buses are constrained and enabled by economic factors (money, wages), and in turn are themselves the material constitution *of* economy in the sense of systems and circuits of production, exchange and consumption. Who is allowed to circulate through particular everyday spaces of political economy, and how they are treated as they do so, are key moments in the process of racialisation.

The "everyday turn" in the study of political economy (Elias and Rai 2019, 204) has coincided with the period of austerity precisely because the latter has restructured everyday experiences of the former. The political-economic transformation of the UK under the sign of austerity demands that people find new ways to navigate, explain and understand their everyday experiences of political economy. Islamophobia is realised, like all racisms, at the level of both structural or systemic forms of discrimination and targeting, and the "direct" racist words and acts of individuals and groups; with the latter enabled by the former. In austerity Britain, structural racism has been central to contextualising the white majority's lived experiences of a radically changed political economy; in other words, everyday Islamophobia is constitutive of everyday austerity.

This point can be reinforced with historical context. The demonization of "migrants" or people on the move, and hostility toward immigration more generally, pre-dates both austerity and the present phase of Islamophobia. But it was after 2010 that Conservative-led austerity governments in the UK set about building what they called the "hostile environment" (Goodfellow 2019). The onset of the so-called "migrant crisis" or "refugee crisis" from 2014 onward saw an intensification of that hostile environment. But given that large numbers of those fleeing war or poverty to reach European shores during the "crisis" period hailed from majority-Muslim countries like Syria and Afghanistan, the UK hostile environment developed a distinctly Islamophobic inflection. The apex of this intersection of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racisms is the narrative – popularised by right-wing media and political parties – according to which the people striving, and often drowning, to reach the UK in recent years are actually a "suspect community" (Hickman et al 2011), lying about their age and refugee status in order to claim some entitlement of which they are undeserving (Culbertson 2016), and including potentially numerous covert operatives of the "Islamic State" militant group (Dearden 2017). It is this broader social and political context that has enabled the "normalisation" of Islamophobia in austerity Britain, such that it now passes "the dinner table test" (Allen 2013b) as perhaps the most socially acceptable, everyday form of racism. Participants highlight these political connections to their experiences of everyday Islamophobic "micro-aggressions":

> "I think nowadays, how racism or Islamophobia or any other sort of hate crime [is] taking place, **literally, every day there's like a new way it's taking place**".

> "And nobody asks us – we are here – nobody asks us **how we feel on a day-to-day basis**. Nobody asks us how […] **the micro-aggressions** that, you know – every penny makes a pound – **how that builds up**".

> "Now […] **it's like a part of life, you know, as sad as it sounds**. **It's just, OK, I'm going to anticipate it in my journey**. It's not like a conscious thing, it's just, OK, it might happen today".

The production of this everyday structural Islamophobia thus relies also on elite and exceptional expressions of direct Islamophobia. As Boris Jonhson's quote in the epigraph to this article shows, key members of the Conservative-led austerity governments that crafted the hostile environment engage in major symbolic acts of direct Islamophobic racism, which better entrench the structural Islamophobia which

simultaneously provides the cover for their direct engagement. Whereas defending explicitly anti-black racism, for example, on such grounds might be met with outrage from many if not most influential political voices, politically mainstream media is more sympathetic to "free speech" defences of Islamophobia. The following discussion among focus group participants illustrates the extent to which they are conscious of this political normalisation of everyday Islamophobia:

> "**[T]he Government are not protecting us. We are, by and large, the most targeted minority group there are in this country, and there is nothing there by way of law to protect us**.
>
> And I just want to add, even the [APPG on British Muslims] definition of Islamophobia, **a lot of people from the top, they argue, "oh, you know, Islamophobia and Islam is not a race", so discrimination against us is not taken as seriously, and they think it's just rational criticism. But if you're calling a Hijabi woman a terrorist, that's not rational criticism**.
>
> Or **a pillar box**.
>
> Exactly. You're just…
>
> Which is, you know, when our politicians…
>
> Yes, like from top government in, you know, **the Conservative Party, they've been, they're accused of Islamophobia**. You can see it by **Boris Johnson, who, literally, called a woman in Niqab a post box** or what not. **And you're just thinking, wow, even from the top level, no one's even condemning it**. Like **it's become so mainstream now**, like **it's a normal behaviour**, being Islamophobic.
>
> When it comes from them as well.
>
> **It always trickles top-down**, doesn't it?
>
> **Yes, it's top-down**".

Against this political, contextual background of everyday Islamophobia, the next section explores some of the ways in which economic trends associated with austerity, including the "austerity gentrification" of London and consequent migration of inner-city urban, racialized minority communities to more suburban environments, has impacted the lived experience of Islamophobia for our participants.

4.2 Austerity gentrification and Islamophobia

Many young Muslims like those interviewed for this research live in east London because its boroughs – Hackney and Tower Hamlets especially – were key areas for Bangladeshi, and Pakistani, migration from the 1970s onward. Their parents or grandparents moved to the East End when it was a cheap, central place to live, with good transport connections to access work across the city. Gentrification in these areas, which has intensified during the austerity period, is cited by some participants as a key factor in shaping their experiences of alienation, segregation and discrimination. Gentrification has long been tied to racial and "cultural" segregation (Wylv and Hammel 2004; Lees et al 2007), but also what Annunziata and Lees (2016) call "austerity gentrification", resulting in population displacements caused by increased urban costs of living intersecting with recession conditions affecting employment and major cuts to welfare and public service spending. Some participants suggest that austerity gentrification in east London has pushed Muslim populations to leave inner-city boroughs like Hackney and Tower Hamlets for better value homes in far-flung boroughs of Greater London and beyond, while simultaneously rendering inner London spaces increasingly middle class, white and unwelcoming for working class Muslims:

> "**Gentrification, like Saturdays in Dalston, there's just a different vibe**, you know […] **you've got these, the same type of white person in Dalston, just walking in their flocks, right** […] Yes, we have this **influx of white people, and they come in because the area's so diverse, and it's appealing to them** in that sense**. But yet, when they get here, are they actually doing any mixing or are they just sliding pass by each other?**"

> "Yes. So **we used to go there and just like be really working class and loud**, just to like make space, **but then it's just got too much** – it's just got… [Interviewer: **Too gentrified?**] **Yes**, it's just got so crowded and like, oh OK, they've won, and **now we don't hang out there anymore**".

> "Literally, there's no space, there's no place to sit down. And like **it's just become this type of white space now** […] **I just feel like they won**, yes".

> "**White people don't integrate**"

The "whitening" of inner-city London as a consequence of austerity gentrification produces an increasingly hostile environment for its Muslim populations. Participants'

comments invert the popular neo-Nazi narrative – lent greater perceived legitimacy in recent years by UK-based political scientists like Eric Kaufmann – of "white replacement" (Holmwood 2019). On the contrary, in urban areas that have been highly diverse multicultural "melting pots" for decades, austerity gentrification is having a homogenising effect as only wealthy, predominantly white people can afford to live in them. Muslim communities that have been pushed to London's margins, or even out of the city, can experience an intensification of abuse and discrimination. One participant provided a clear illustrative vignette of this phenomenon, drawing upon their own life experience:

> "I think one thing that I have noticed is, especially sort of like **in, like, Dagenham, was as soon as like the, and there's always been kind of like a right wing vibe in that area, because of the BNP** […] and these people trying to make it their forte. But as soon as all the, it was actually, what happened was, **as the cuts started happening after 2008, that was when a lot of the Muslims started to come in**, into the area as well […] So, and **it was this sort of thing of, "look, the country's got no money, the country's full, the country can't take anything else"**. And **that was always how they couched their racism**, it was always like, there's this thing now where the racists don't want to be called racists […] Fundamentally, like the way that they would justify that to themselves, that **"I'm not racist, there's no problem with me, I'm just worried about, do you know what I mean, this country being alright for my kids", and that's how they would justify it to themselves**. And that's how they would square themselves**, that they're not a bad person, that they're not racist**, do you know what I mean? When they're coming out with horrifically racist comments right, left and centre, do you know what I mean? **And so the economy suffers their own justification as well, and that's how they squared those circles**".

Other participants highlighted the ways in which what might be termed the "cultural political economy" (Jessop and Sum 2013) of local areas that Muslim families and individuals moved to as a result of inner-city austerity gentrification were experienced as alien, unwelcoming, or as places in which they were subjected to more intense Islamophobia:

> "So I think she's had incidents where **they've moved to like Uxbridge or whatever, because they are not in an area which is so Muslim, they're out of their comfort zone almost**".

One participant offered a particularly vivid vignette of how austerity gentrification had driven them from a place of safety to the outskirts of Greater London, where they were made to feel unsafe and experienced more direct Islamophobic abuse:

"So **I was born and bred in a really multicultural London borough and I had far fewer incidences when I was in that London borough** than I did when **I moved out to a borough just – it's just fifteen minutes away – but it's not a London borough, and it's, it's a palpable difference**. **We moved out because we couldn't afford to live in that borough anymore**. **We were priced out**, you know, rents were unaffordable. So **since I've moved into this new borough I've, like I said, on the street I've been spat at, I've been called a fucking terrorist, a man and a woman barged me in the shopping centre when I was with my kids and called me a terrorist**. It's, **when the Brexit vote came in, the referendum results, my neighbours were cheering, you could hear them cheering through the walls**".

The political economy of Islamophobia is thus situated in geographies of Islamophobia, and in a multi-scalar politics wherein the urban, the suburban, the national and the international are connected. A simple experience of everyday life in austerity Britain, such as moving to a lower rent area on the outskirts of one's city, can induce an experience of racialized Islamophobic hate wherein such racial "markers" as skin colour and clothing are blended with understandings of terrorism and Brexit. A further significant factor in the lived experiences of austerity Islamophobia that the participants described, which intersects with the classed facet of austerity-gentrification displacements and the racialisation of anti-Muslim hate, is gender. It is to this gendered dimension of austerity Islamophobia that the analysis now turns.

4.3 From Islamophobic misogynoir to colonial tropes of "breeding": the racialized and gendered targeting of Muslim women and children in austerity Islamophobia

A pervasive feature of the interviews and focus group was participants raising the gendered dimensions of Islamophobia. Male participants spoke of their wives and "sisters" experiencing abuse more often, or of a more extreme variety, than they experience themselves, while women participants offered many examples of gendered abuse. While we already know that women are more likely to be subjected to Islamophobic abuse (Allen 2013), the interviews and focus group discussion

illustrate the forms that *gendered* Islamophobia takes, and situate it within the context of austerity Islamophobia.

Participants spoke of being targeted with abuse that references resource scarcity, and discrimination in relation to access to public services and social security. The intersections of "race", gender and class in austerity Islamophobia are thrown into particularly sharp relief where abuse is articulated through discourses of "breeding". European racism, in both the colonial and postcolonial eras, has fundamentally been a project of dehumanisation. Through "othering" and dehumanising, Europeans were able to morally justify their rapacious colonial violence as the paternalistic and benevolent management of weak, "inferior" peoples or "races" (Saini 2019), and wholesome, profitable exploitation of the resources (both natural resources and human labour) present in their lands. Commonly, this dehumanisation took the form of discursive representations of people of colour as non-human animals:

> "[T]he terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms. He speaks of the yellow man's reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of *breeding swarms*, of foulness, of spawn. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to the bestiary" (Fanon, 1967[1961], pp. 22-23, emphasis added).

It was a way of seeing the colonial other that precluded the need for moral concerns and empathy, since they were understood as truly non-human in their otherness. That such bestial racism is alive and well in the present day is evidenced by the UK's then-Prime Minister, and key architect of austerity, David Cameron, referring in 2015 to a "swarm" of migrants crossing the Mediterranean at the height of the European refugee "crisis". That most migration to Europe has in the perceived "crisis" originated from majority-Muslim societies has been part of the anti-immigrant discourse in British media and politics (see Section 3.2, above). In the experience of some participants, the semiotic chains through which racialized difference, migration, terrorism, and economic scarcity are linked together in dehumanising forms of abuse, are discernible. One woman talked about dehumanising anti-black, anti-migrant Islamophobic abuse aimed at her husband:

> "My husband is **a black Muslim man**. **They started calling him a dirty monkey, telling him that he needs to go wash himself**. That they would fuck him up. That we should **go back to our own country**"

Another participant talked about his wife's experiences of what might be called, following Bailey (2018) Islamophobic "misogynoir", where abuse targeted her blackness as well as her perceived Muslimness:

> "I think **for my wife it's a lot worse because she's black, she's Muslim and she wears the Niqab**, do you know what I mean?
>
> **A guy called my wife a letterbox, because she wears the Niqab**
>
> And a bunch of drunks came by and start shouting at my wife, **calling her a ninja, calling her the "n"-word, calling her – they're both "n"-words, but the other "n"-word**"

Notably, this participant described the use of "letterbox" as a term of gendered Islamophobic abuse in an interview several weeks before the publication of a controversial article in which Boris Johnson used the same term to describe "burqa"-wearing Muslim women. This illustrates the mutual constitution of structural and direct forms of racism outlined earlier in this article. Johnson was criticised for mainstreaming a dehumanising depiction of Muslim women via a mass media outlet, further entrenching structural Islamophobia. Yet in his direct Islamophobic remarks in the article, Johnson was drawing upon a well-established term of racist street abuse directed at niqab-wearing Muslim women. This is a case study in the reproduction of structural racism: a powerful individual uses a major media platform to disseminate explicitly racist remarks that are rooted in a wider, existing racist discourse, and in defending those remarks as not-racist, further normalises the racist discursive resources on which he drew in the first place.

The participant's framing of "ninja" as "the other "n"-word" directed a niqab-wearing, black Muslim woman, illustrates the operation of racialisation in experiences of Islamophobic misogynoir. A black Muslim woman has two distinct but intersecting or overlapping racialized characteristics to be constructed and targeted through racist abuse. Both relate to the visible markers of "race" – skin colour and clothing – and each comes with an idiom of abuse. Like "letterbox", "ninja" is a term of abuse commonly aimed at niqab-wearing Muslim women. Several months after the interview with this participant, a video came to light on social media that showed a group of people burning an effigy of Grenfell Tower. As one of the group films the effigy-burning

on their mobile phone, they focus on crude images of niqab-wearing figures in the windows of the tower (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Still image from the Grenfell effigy-burning video, November 2018

Source: Author's screenshot from video shared on social media.

One effigy-burner laughingly narrates: "Look at all the little ninjas, getting it at the minute!", as the camera focuses on a niqab-wearing figure at a window in the tower. Another replies: "That's what happens when they don't pay their rent!" followed by laughter. Since no images of niqab-wearing Grenfell victims were shared by media after the fire in 2017, and given the use of "little" by the effigy-burners, we argue the figures were intended to represent the hijab-wearing women and girls who died in the fire and whose images did appear widely in the media at the time - Grenfell victims like Farah Hamdan, Nura Jamal, and 12-year-old Firdaws Hashim. This speaks to the centrality of Islamophobia in the discursive production of austerity. Grenfell was widely interpreted as an avoidable disaster that was at least partly a consequence of austerity cuts to local authorities responsible for social housing fire safety. The effigy-burner's claim that hijabi Muslim girls deserved to die because they "don't pay their rent" illustrates the essentially political-economic nature of the racist logic inherent to

austerity Islamophobia; it is not only that Muslim women and girls look different, they are also somehow financially "taking advantage".

The racist dehumanisation of Muslim women and girls by reference to their clothing, in the abuse described by our research participants, in Boris Johnson's *Telegraph* article, and in the Grenfell effigy-burning video, are linked by the "web of significance" that constitutes Islamophobia as a form of structural racism. Gendered Islamophobia connects Muslim women, their clothing and other racial markers to racist stereotypes. Hijab- and niqab-wearing participants described experiences of being labelled "terrorist" based on their appearance while in public:

> "He **came up to me and he leaned in really close to me and he called me a fucking terrorist Paki pussy**, which is quite a mouthful

> And **she said, "you fucking Paki terrorist" […] "You fucking bomb people, you fucking terrorist, I should teach you a lesson"**. And then she came up to me and she was like charging towards me, like she was going to physically attack me".

Women participants (and male participants describing their partners' experiences) often mentioned having been targeted while with their children, and that their children's presence could seem to be an aggravating factor, as well as outlining the impact of Islamophobia upon their children:

> "Because **we sisters, it's the women that get the flak** for it […] Men going out in groups and coming back are a little bit more threatening than the sister, **the sister that's going to school or going to the shopping centre with a couple of kids, and mothers** […] **You've got young children that could possibly – and do, and have – suffered mental health issues, as a result of watching their mothers being abused**, whether it's verbal, children pick up – they have a sixth sense"

> "I've also been walking, **pushing a buggy with my kids, I've been spat at in front of my children, called a fucking terrorist** […] I think **my children have witnessed me being racially Islamophobia-abused four times**, which considering that my youngest is only five…"

> "**It's something that my eldest daughter now is definitely conscious of. She's seen it enough times**"

"After the shopping centre incident, **my five year old woke up at like four o'clock in the morning and he came into our bedroom. And the first thing he said was: "mummy, do you remember the man called daddy a monkey and a terrorist? What's a terrorist?**", and he's five…"

"**I had a three year old with me, as well as an almost-two year old with me** […] **a car, he started revving and moving forward** […] His window was up, I didn't hear what he said. But **I knew, that was obviously because I am visibly Muslim, and more so with the veil**."

A male participant who talked about both his and his wife's experiences of Islamophobia noted the intersection between the targeting of Muslim women and children, and political-economic rhetoric.

"In my experience, […] **the two things that they talk the most about, is benefits and the fact that Muslims are having loads of kids** […] **This idea that they're just having kids to kill the benefit system, and housing**. They'll be the two things that they go to first. That's just been in my experience".

Muslim women are thus represented in Islamophobic discourse as the "breeding swarms" Fanon spoke of. This aspect of the very public dehumanisation of Muslim women is constitutive of the political economy of austerity in that it paints Muslims – and Muslim women and children in particular – as a "drain" on limited economic resources. It can be inferred that in addition to the common explanations for the disproportionate Islamophobic experienced by women (being more visibly Muslim, and being seen as "softer" targets by abusers), we can add their specific dehumanisation as animalistic "breeders" undermining a national economy ravaged by austerity to the point that, as one participant put it in relation to Islamophobic discourse (above) "the country can't take anything else". This is what Bhattacharyya (2015) calls the logics of "disentitlement", referred to earlier in this article.

5. Conclusion: The intersectionality of gendered, classed and racialised austerity Islamophobia

What the preceding sections demonstrate through a discussion of the theoretical landscape of Islamophobia and austerity, racial capitalism and intersectionality, and through an exploration of British Muslims' lived experiences of Islamophobic abuse and discrimination is, first of all, the existence and prevalence of what can be called "austerity Islamophobia". Austerity Islamophobia is a form of anti-

Muslim racism that is co-extensive with and co-constituted with the political economy of austerity. It inflects pre-existing Islamophobic abuse and discrimination – at the levels of both structural and direct forms of racist violence – with austerity economic imperatives, and it operates on the same planes of everyday experience as the political-economic effects of austerity. Furthermore, austerity Islamophobia is experienced in ways that are gendered, classed and racialized. The intersectionality of these structural inequalities in austerity Islamophobia is the clearest finding from the interviews and focus group research carried out. Austerity Islamophobia targets Muslim women, mothers and children especially, and frames them as drains on economic resources. In so doing, austerity Islamophobia draws upon longstanding post/colonial racist tropes around "breeding" and competition for survival in a world of scarce resources. This furthers the social construction of a "conceptual Muslim" figure as that racialized minority which prevents the attainment of cohesive national selfhood.

In addition to what it constructs, what is concealed by this racist discourse is the fact that British Muslims are more likely to live in low income households and areas and thus to have felt the most severe effects of austerity (Social Mobility Commission 2017), and that Muslim women in particular, unlike the white majority, are more susceptible to austerity effects (Hall 2017). Lived experiences of the political economy of Islamophobia among the research participants are characterised by displacement from inner-city communities as a result of a whitening austerity gentrification, and by being pushed deeper into the hostile environment of suburban communities wherein gendered and racialized Islamophobic abuse and discrimination may be more frequent, more intense, or more explicit. That Muslims in general and Muslim women and children in particular are singled out based in part on a perception of taking economic advantage in the context of austerity Britain is therefore not simply a tragic irony, but actually a central feature of the logic of disentitlement as it is manifested through Islamophobia. As some of the discussion and analysis in this article highlighted, elite political voices – from the current Prime Minister to a range of mainstream media outlets – are implicated in the design and (re)production of this logic of disentitlement with regard to British Muslims. While earlier research (e.g. Baker et al., 2013; Ali and Whitham, 2018) illustrates the power of elite discourse in shaping Islamophobia over the last decade, this article has demonstrated how such elite influence is felt in the everyday lives of British Muslims.

This article has demonstrated the potential for understanding Islamophobia through the lens of political economy, and has shown how such an approach might be productive for explaining the operation of intersecting inequalities in austerity Britain. Austerity is a programme of racialized and gendered violence, and Muslims have become one of its central victims. There is scope to extend this investigation further, and future research might usefully explore connections between the political economy of racialized and gendered violence and what Frank Wilderson (2010) and Shirley Anne Tate (2017) call the "libidinal economies" of the same. That is to say: how are emotions, anxieties, desires and fantasies engaged in the production and experience of the political economy of austerity racism?

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