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# Living the clash within: secular/conservative divide of immigrant Turkish parents on the identity formations of British Turks

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**ABSTRACT**

This article addresses the identity constructions of British Turks in the context of the inherent fragmentation of Turkish immigrant parents situated within the historically complex secular or conservative divisions of Turkish politics. British Turks raised in the UK maintain identities defined within the parameters of the either/or epistemology forced by their Turkish immigrant parents, who are either in harmony with Turkish moral values and Islamic lifestyles or adopting a modern secular approach to life embedded in secular principles of Kemalism.[1] Accordingly, we see the manifestations of polarity between religious/conservative versus secular principles of Turkish immigrant parents who, in a strictly practical sense, interfere in British Turks' identity constructions. Illustrated through the empirical findings, a fault line appears in the impact of conservative/secular ideologies of Turkish immigrant parents on their British-born children due to the latter's encounter with versions of Britishness and British ways of life. On both fronts, we see that British Turks understand the limits of the certainty of parental ideologies and values and therefore embrace more fragmented and pluralized selves as if the former were the necessary source of the latter .

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## 1. Introduction

Secular and conservative worldviews and ideologies, as a few of the guiding principles of one's Turkish identity, have become some of the dominant themes in questioning the identity formation of British Turks in contemporary Britain. To understand the role of secular and conservative worldviews of Turkish immigrant parents in the identity constructions of the British Turks, I in this article examine the accounts of British Turks-descendants of Turkish immigrants who emigrated to the UK in the 1970s and onwards.

The period following the 1970s in Turkey paved the way for a state-led and stricter emphasis on a combination of Turkish nationalism and Islamic moral values (Kaya, 2018). 1980 military coup, in particular, further entrenched what may be termed as

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the nationalist-conservative ideology, revealing the tensions between secular and religious orientations (Çarmikli, 2011; Gunter, 1989; Yabanci, 2021). We should recognize that the motivations behind the military interventions in 1971 and 1980, while perpetuating the secular establishment of the early republican cultural revolution, were arguably charged with questioning Kemalist certainties and opening space for the religiosity of the masses (Aydin, 2007). The thinning of the wall between the two faces of Turkey, as Göle (2015) beautifully put, brought different cultural codes into contact, albeit with intense conflict, transforming the mutual conceptions of Muslim and secular, limiting the claims of the hegemony of the latter (p. 215). Yet one can speak of a two-way transgression; the military coup d'état of 1980 finally outlawed the headscarf officially. The regime equally abandoned the strict secularism of the early republic (Aydın Düzgit, 2019). It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the political upheavals following the 1970s resulted in the emigration of thousands of asylum seekers from Turkey, including Turks, Kurds, Alevis and radical left-wing and right-wing individuals to the UK. Firstly, a sizeable group of Alevis[2] arrived as refugees following the Maras massacre in the late 1970s. Secondly and not surprisingly, the 1980 military coup brought another wave of Turks to the UK (Sirkeci et al., 2016). Accordingly, the political upheaval and social fragmentation in Turkey forced the displacement of many people in the 1970s and early 1980s. These experiences characterized some of the insecurities and ambiguities of first-generation Turks in the UK, which equally functioned as the active part in the identity construction of the flowing generation- British Turks or second-generation British Turks. This study accordingly interrogates the production of multiple but floating identities of British Turks with recourse to various spectrums, including the religio-cultural and political identities of immigrant Turks situated in the broader discussions of identity politics. In doing so, this article equally reveals the sociocultural paradoxes and challenges the conventional understandings of the concepts of 'secular' and 'conservative' entrenched in Turkish politics and evidenced by the diverse narratives of British Turks.

Turks from mainland Turkey immigrated to Britain as unskilled and semi-skilled labourers owing to the need for cheap labour in the textile and food industries (Atay, 2010; Crul and Vermeulen, 2006). Compared to the high percentage and influence of Muslims of South Asian heritage, Turkish Muslims living in the UK have stayed somehow invisible within the wider Muslim population, not least because of their low percentage population *per se* but also because they largely identify with Turkish national identity built in Turkish people's emotional attachment to Turkish politics, ethnicity and Islam (Dikici, 2021). As discussed above, this means homeland politics are closely intertwined with the immigrant Turks' historically formed Turkish identity, which sometimes forms an obstacle to the identity choices of the main respondents of this paper, second-generation British Turks. Against these particular expectations of Turkish immigrant parents, British Turks appear not completely repudiate nor fully embrace the inordinate influence of parental ideologies.

At the epistemological level, it is not difficult to recognize the difference between secular and conservative conceptual categories and assumptions Turkish immigrants utilize to raise their children in the host country (Pak, 2004). This is inextricably linked with the early republican era (1923–1950) with its particular agenda against which the discourse of modernization with the outright rejection of Ottoman and Islamic legacies emerged. Given the fact that Turkish secularism is noticeably fashioned around a strict control over, if not some sort of an attack[3] against, the 'superstitious,

backward, irrational, etc.', elements in Islam requires a brief detour to the Turkish state-building process started during the second half of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman empire (Çarmikli, 2011; Göle, 2016, p. 59). According to Göle, Turkish secularism was proclaimed in 1923 by a series of so-called Kemalist revolutions; first, the Caliphate was abolished in 1924, and then family law was thoroughly secularized (a unique experience among Muslim countries) by the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926 (hence religious marriages and polygamy were forbidden); finally, the Turkish Republic was declared a secular state by a constitutional amendment in 1937 (Gole, 2016, 107). Consequently, the Turks' social and political subjectivities over the last hundred years seem torn by tensions and ambiguity. In the case of the conservative camp, this has been done by breaching the legitimacy of secularism through donning Islamic symbols in the public sphere, such as putting on Islamic veiling. For the Kemalist elite/ secular camp, the accommodation of Turkish secularist identity meant a potential breach of the Islamic way of life, a rupture of traditions captured in living a 'truly' pious existence such as veiling in public, besides defending lesser extent of individualism and agency (Göle, 2015, p. 45). It should be reiterated that decades of the conservative-secular divide constructed subjects who were born either into secular values or to the values of traditional Islamic families. This particular expectation built around either/ or is not a near-absolute way of living for British Turks who were born and raised in the UK. Even though British Turks were born into Turkish immigrant families and hence similarly exposed to an image of Turkish identity fixated on either end, accounts of British Turks always also appear to contest and resist shortcomings of the parental ideological messages. The debates above serve as points of departure from which I develop a conceptual framework dealing with clashing values and dualisms of conservative/secular in explanations of how British Turks move beyond the discrete understandings of identity in Britain today. To do so, I posit that identities British Turks deploy cut across the fixity of boundaries and instead offer a dynamic and plural understanding of cultural identity. The following section will address the ideal type of Turkish parenting as one of the conceptual tools blended with Turkish politics of the last hundred years.

### *1.1. The role of Turkish parents on identity construction*

There is a lacuna of literature regarding the clashes between Turkish immigrants and their descendants, British Turks. Similarly, there is only a few empirical research designed to understand the impact of the historical implication of the Turkish identity on British-born Turkish individuals (Babacan, 2022; Dikici, 2021; Küçükcan, 2004; Simsek, 2012). Yet unlike the previous studies, I shift attention from the broader ramifications of the realms of the conservative/ secularist divide embedded in contemporary Turkey by making my focus on the ideal-typical social, cultural and political views of Turkish immigrant parents built on and interwoven with the narratives of British Turks in the present conjuncture in Britain. As the following discussions will illustrate, the family backgrounds of my respondents reflect a microcosm of Turkey in terms of religious/secular polarization. Following the work of Weber (1949), what follows is the ideal-typical construction of Turkish parenting, which does not describe pure reality but aims to give unambiguous means of expressing such a description. The ideal typical Turkish parenting discussed in this paper reflects today's governing values, norms of

subjectivities, and social and political situations rested on the long-standing conservative-secularist divide in Turkish politics fused with the discourses of, amongst others, migrancy, diaspora, hybridity and Islamophobia in the British context (ibid, xv). Hence, I use the term ideal-typical to refer not only to an abstract imagination of division between secular/conservative parenting infused with Turkish politics but also, inevitably, to the making of conservative/ secularist divide as indicative of conscious and unconscious forces shaping the multiple identities British Turks deploy in Britain in real and tangible terms.

As demonstrated in the following sections, many British Turks have pointed to the secularist dreams of their parents in idealist terms. They talked as if those dreams were the imagination of their parents intrinsic to Turkey rather than the reflection of values and doubleness of the identities of their British Turkish children. Others have analyzed the conservative dreams of their parents in the host country, such as discreetness, asceticism and the protection of Turco-Islamic norms transmitted from the homeland. They questioned the scepticism of their conservative parents against Western/European ways of living. Although the Turkish diaspora in Britain is potentially influenced by the ties originating from the homeland, where the long-standing divisions between secular/religious socialization are alive and intact, the experiences of British Turks and the extent to which my respondents accommodate their parental ideologies and identities cannot be generalized as applicable to all British Turks in Britain. It may be that Turkish diasporic individuals themselves, with their commitment to social and political cohesion of homeland, are equally and potentially forging a new way towards social and political cohesion through hybridity.

Consequently, one can observe that being uprooted from Turkey due to social exclusions and political troubles does not necessarily negate the main markers of ethnic and cultural affinities. What is worth pointing out here is that immigrant Turks, particularly those who emigrated to the UK from tightly-knit communities outside cosmopolitan cities such as Istanbul or Ankara, and those from other ethnicities, including Kurds, continue to maintain ties with *memleket* (homeland) (Demir, 2012). Maintaining affective attachments with one's homeland (*memleket*) despite its challenges might be a non-nationalist mode of expressing belonging to one's smaller-scale region in Turkey or simply to their ethnic identity rather than to an omnipotent nation-state. This gives us a clue to the divergences of identities of immigrant Turks conditioned by many factors, such as social and cultural divisions and affective attachments to *memleket* come to impact upon the identity constructions of the main respondents of this paper, second-generation British Turks. The following section will further elaborate on the complexity of the conceptualization of identity as 'either/or' in the context of British Turks.

### 1.2. Identity 'not-yet'

We can argue that building one's identity is inextricably 'not-yet', always a 'work in progress' and built with how one's cultural, race or faith differences are recognized and accommodated in a given society (Meer & Modood, 2009). It is of central importance to emphasise that identity 'not-yet' is not something which amounts to 'not-anymore' *(nicht-mehr)* (Somay, 2014). It is the impossibility of concrete, sheer fixity of one's identity as a result of its being constantly negotiated and renegotiated. Identity itself is socially constructed and, therefore, in a constant battle against the intrinsic, essentialised

construction of identity and contesting negative images/representations with positive ones (Grossberg, 1996). Grossberg (1986) argued that identification is not guaranteed outside of any concrete struggle. Foucault (1954–1984) similarly linked the formation of identity to the 'techniques of self', in which social contexts mediate how subjects are affected by their thoughts and ways of being; subjects transform themselves by what is expected from them in a given society (Foucault, 2019). This messy complexity deriving from power differentials in a given society comes with a loss of certainty about who one is and where one fits (Gilroy, 2004, p. 6). This inevitable battle with the notions of identity, drawing from the home-bounded discussions of immigrant Turkish parent values, traversing or simultaneously internalizing fragments of perceived Britishness, taking in 'routes' over 'roots' (Demir, 2022). This continuous absence of closure in one's identity can be encapsulated in the Derridean term of *differance*. *Differance* entails the double process of 'differing' (difference/otherness) and 'deferring'; the term thereby refers to the production of differences and the impossibility of the binary oppositions where the fixity is dissolved and fallen in time (Derrida, 1972; Nuyen, 1989). This time the force behind the construction of an identity is undoubtedly based on the impossibility of negating the difference in the 'self', showing a non-essentialist view of identity.

In order to defuse the perceived incompatibility between the deported values of first-generation (parents) Turks and the values and culture of mainstream British society, British Turks explicitly and implicitly defer fixed and eternalized either/or reflexes of the conservative/ secular understandings of Turkish immigrants. In other words, British Turk's identities are waged through the medium of questioning their parental identities and values shrouded beneath the manifestations of (evolving) dominant values, positions and struggles within present social, cultural, and political situations in Britain. As I examined in the following findings sections, British Turks are the expression of the doubleness implied through the fusion of living in British society yet again born into Turkish politics of identity. This doubleness creates an identity that is 'fragmented and fractured, never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions' (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 4). In the following section, I outline the methodological tools and aims.

## 2. Methods

This article is based on semi-structured interviews with British Turks aged between 18 and 55, conducted between October 2020 and March 2021 in England and Wales. I conducted multiple interviews with 16 women and 14 men, all of whom had had British citizenship either from birth or by naturalization and all of them identified in some way with Britishness and Turkishness at once. The idea of Turkishness in 'British-Turk' has no reference to a common race or common religion. In other words, Turkishness as a cultural, civic and national identity is not necessarily defined in reference to Islam or Turk as a rigid 'race'. This means that, for instance, a 'racially' Kurdish individual might identify themself as being a Turk; likewise, a Turk might identify themselves as being non-Muslim or non-Sunni Muslim. While articulations of one's Turkishness and Britishness varied, all of the respondents self-identified as British and Turkish. Therefore, this study set out to include all individuals who called themselves British Turks. As previously

mentioned, British Turks from across England and Wales were recruited for this project, and respondents were selected through snowball sampling and gatekeepers.

The sampling strategy for semi-structured interviews relied on the common techniques of snowball sampling after the initial connections were set through social media tools. The most common form of snowball sampling is where the researcher asks interviewed respondents if they know anyone else who might want to take part (Patton, 2013). As my research was not based on a particular case or a specific experience that is uncommon or private, snowball sampling effectively ensured that range and diversity were included in my sample. In order to tease out different narratives and experiences of British Turks living across a number of different cities, the locations of my respondents were not limited to a single city or setting. Additionally, acknowledging that the number of Turkish-speaking individuals living in Britain is fairly limited, identifying British Turks who were either born in the UK or emigrated before age ten would have been even more difficult if the fieldwork location was narrowly defined.

Opting for a qualitative approach infused with reflexivity to extract the multiple perspectives to my multiple questions did not dissolve the reality of British Turks into a hodgepodge of narratives (Pak, 2004). Reflexivity has many meanings, but here it concerns the critical reflection on research, both as a process and as practice, on one's role as a researcher, and one's relation to knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As a Turkish researcher with a minority origin, I incorporated reflexivity and let my respondents know about my own identities and reasons for conducting this research before the interview. This approach gave my respondents ample opportunities to bring up matters that they considered important and pertinent to Turkish culture and politics, including demonstrating plural identities or mentioning familial tensions. British Turks' construction of plural identities at times geared in reaction to the values and habits of their Turkish parents as the expression of the conflicts and political tensions in Turkey. In practice, recognizing one's heterogenous identity/ies as children of a diasporic community, intervened in and shaped by various sources, including the culture of the host country and values of parental homeland as an alternative utopia, were not easy to capture without the dialogical aspect of semi-structured interviewing and the element of reflexivity. According to this perspective, using semi-structured interviews with the element of the researcher's reflexivity, as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) claim, the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible, such as people's different identities containing paradoxes and conflicts (Table 1).

Before starting the interviews, ethics approval was received from the University of York ELMPS Ethics Committee (12-2019). Though mentioned in the ethics form shared with my respondents, I once again verbally reassured my respondents before the interview that pseudonyms rather than real names are used. Data analysis was carried out using a 'thematic' iterative framework which is a method of analyzing qualitative data and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It is a flexible and helpful tool that 'provides a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 5; cited in Richards, 2019). Thematic analysis results tend to be written as a flowing narrative; thus, a list of themes may be provided to the narrative commencing. This style of analysis is about understanding the overall themes in the data set. Moreover, guided through the six phases of analysis, thematic analysis as a nonlinear process helps the researcher apply flexibility to fit the research questions and data (Braun and Clarke, 2006):

**Table 1.** Phases of thematic analysis.

| Phase | Description of the process |
|---|---|
| 1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: | Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. |
| 2. Generating initial codes: | Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. |
| 3. Searching for themes: | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. |
| 4. Reviewing themes: | Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis. |
| 5. Defining and naming themes: | Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. |
| 6. Producing the report: | The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. |

Thanks to this flexibility, different phases of TA provide; the researcher goes back to the data for further analysis and thinking until meaning-making occurs. As this paper is a part of my PhD project, I initially identified 17 preliminary themes, out of which the relevant themes for the theme of this paper are 'the politics of identity', 'questioning Turkish secularism and Turkish Islam', 'the role of Turkish parents on identity constructions', 'secular camp and conservative camp'. In what follows, the analysis section begins with the accounts of British Turks raised by Turkish immigrant parents with secular tendencies.

## 3. Analysis

### *3.1. Secular camp*

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

> *Turkish parents here still have the mindset of how they grew up in Turkey, which is so different now. It made me uncomfortable just a bit, but not 100%. This mindset of my parents impacted me in a way that certain expectations that Turkish parents would want would probably be normal back then. Turkish parents would like us to be a doctor and a teacher, so they would put that kind of thing on you as the only way to succeed, especially only if you go to university or get your degree, then you become successful. No other choice is … what it has to be. This is definitely a Turkish thing; I feel like British parents are freer with what their children do; I feel like they are more open to choices that they could give to their children than Turkish parents.*
>
> (Azra, 17 years old, Studying Law and Business, London)

Parents of Azra's attitudes indicate that their child's status in the country of the settlement could be secured or consolidated if Azra moved up the career ladder by ensuring a 'proper' profession such as a doctor or teacher; only then would she 'literally' belong to British society. Parents' desire for their children to 'fit in' as other members of mainstream society manifest in how they limit the line of career opportunities for their children (Simsek, 2012). What is apparent in the comment made in relation to the Turkish parents' outlook on their children's future is the fear of seeing them marginalized rather than integrated into the country of settlement. However, projecting parental ambition onto children for high achievement was frustrating for quite a few of my respondents.

This is also similar to the experiences of youngsters born and raised in Turkey, as this sort of outlook is arguably rooted in the Ottoman's modernization efforts based on the ideal of reaching the 'contemporary civilisation'. This would only be assured through education, which is viewed as the benchmark to generate a successful Turkish youth in compliance with the Western ideal.

The aim of progress and a new social order based on modernization was accompanied by a strong emphasis that targeted westernization as having supreme importance in the *Tanzimat period*.[4] In this respect, education has played a vital role in the rejuvenation of the Turkish nation as the most effective and convenient signifier, as well as the reference point of the western model of modernity and secularism for Turkish society. In the ambitious position it occupies, the 'Western model of modernity', moving forward in other words, needs to be protected by the Kemalist, republican, and secular approaches to life. Having said that, the promotion of the Western model was incorporated not only into education but also permeated the way of life with dancing and bridge parties, manners, and dress through the implementation of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926 in Turkey (Göle, 2015). This transformation is a sign of prestige but also a marker of inferiority. According to Bayrakli et al. (2018), adamantly protecting the secularist character of the Turkish Republic is embedded in the double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of the other. This explains why secular Turkish parents, albeit not exclusively the ones who immigrated to Britain *per se*, place a special emphasis on their children's educational credentials, which is the articulation of the Eurocentric model and West-centric power structure that seeks to delegitimise the 'perceived' Islam in the Turkish context. It is to be recognized that no-Western centric power tried to implement its education system forcibly in Ottoman Empire-later in the Turkish Republic. Equally pointedly, one should not assume that conservative Turkish families, while keeping conservative/religious values, cannot still put emphasis on the education sphere. However, it should be remembered that, from the standpoint of the secular camp, education is the proxy for access to the perceived 'European culture', which is paramount in crossing over to the Western side from the Orient, almost adopting the European body image (Somay, 2014). Ultimately, Orientalism, which Said (1978) defined as the 'Western hegemony over the Orient', is a strategic tool for Turkish individuals loyal to the Turkish brand of secularism, portraying the East (code for Islam here) as irrational in all aspects of the political and social realms (Çarmikli, 2011). Hence, they inadvertently preserve the Western lifestyle and identity. Kerem's father immigrated to England to learn English, and his current lifestyle is translated as integration into Britain through the lens of Kerem:

> *Some things are difficult because there has been quite a big period of time since I have not visited Turkey. I don't really talk to my Turkish family, and [communication] is kind of stopped in the last few years. So, my Turkish is not fluent, just a bit. My dad did not really speak Turkish to me. I think he is quite integrated into British culture. He goes to the pub and drinks with friends. But when he goes to Turkey, he is a completely different person when he is talking about things with family, but in this country, I feel like he is quite integrated.*
>
> (Kerem, 19, Studying Medicine, London)

Kerem's father's allegiance to secular and modern Western society, accorded with Western habits of eating and socializing, signals a desire to project a secular Turkish

image to the West. Such a recognition, especially for those who are in this 'in-betweenness' of two distinctive cultures, eventually morphs into what is expected from them, thus emulating Western individuals in accordance with parental aspirations. Kerem's geographical and cultural alienation from Turkey points to the orientalist dreams of Turkish parents. The insecurity predominantly featured in the lack of Turkish language and the weakening relationship with families in Turkey is what invokes Kerem's deracination and alienation from his parental culture, and this undecidability of 'in-betweenness' is justified by his father's 'integration' into Britain. However, as indicated later in Kerem's quote, when his father 'goes to Turkey, he is completely a different person' shows that the subjects who inhabit 'in-between' realities in the diaspora cannot overdo one reality and hence retain their original traditions as well. As Grossberg (1996) argues, 'people who interlace both realities … are forced to live in the interface between the two' (p. 92). To capture these 'crossovers' of Turkish parents in relation to political and cultural cleavages in Turkey, the next quote illustrates the escalating frictions between British Turkish respondents and their parents' perspectives of Turkey:

> *I feel restricted. It is a kind of reaction against me also because my dad is like, 'You cannot say anything bad about Turkey' if I say it is a corrupt country. He hates Erdoğan, but if I say it is a corrupt country, the fact that its secular identity is disrupted, institutions are completely eroded, he does not like me saying such things really; it is a kind of reaction against my ideas, obviously. I wish my father had taught me Turkish rather, my cousins are bilingual, for instance, but I am unfortunately not.*
>
> (Semih, 36, Engineer, Manchester)

Turkey's current internal debates, which are imbued with social, political and cultural conflicts between the secularists and the Islamists, the problematisation of the process of Turkish modernization in which the secular way has long excluded the Islamic code of living from the public sphere is useful in addressing the 'in-betweenness' and 'identity-crisis' of Turkish first comers in Britain. An added component in this 'in-betweenness' is the element of nationalism[5] as the cohesive dimension of Turkish secularism, evidenced in the quote where Semih's father's nationalism obstructs Semih's freedom to talk freely about Turkey. Turkish nationalism was a glue reflected in the constitutional definitions of Turkish identity in establishing a secular Turkish republic, central to which becoming Muslim was simply a declaration of faith. Accordingly, the interior of Semih's narrative is the testimony of awareness of Turkish political tensions, which sheds light on modes of Orientalism that position the attack against Islam fostered by the legacy of exclusionary politics of secular nationalism. Three concrete narratives illustrate how immigrant Turkish parents, who were engaged in the paradoxes of the Turkish political system, occupy an in-between ambivalent zone and forge a sense of displacement and insecurity in their children. Semih's reflection on the friction between the father and son relationship is a reminder of the 'secular' and 'nationalist' overdetermination of Turkish identity, emblematic of the pro-Western orientation or Orientalism (Yorukoglu, 2017b), which is corroborated by Semih's insights about his father's political opinions. Indeed, it is intriguing to think about the aim to make Turkish identity almost 'more Western' than 'the West itself'. Orhan Pamuk, a well-known Turkish novelist, describes the socio-psychological stance of the people of the early Republic as such (2004, p. 211):

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

Indeed, in the last quote, one can see the doubt with which Semih views his father's Westernized aspirations. Semih outsteps his Turkish father's social and political stance and resists the taken-for-granted secular Western narratives in a world in which distinctions between the East and the West, the Islamic, the modern, and secular, are no longer empirically plausible, in which established boundaries are continuously shifting (Göle, 2015). The fact that Turkish society has been engaged in a prolonged conversation with Western modernity with shifting attitudes and moods ranging from subservience to anger, from Western mimicry to native authenticity materializes in the ways in which my respondents' self-representations, crossovers and adversities in the country of settlement shape up (ibid, p. 149). In looking for the impacts that Turkish immigrant parents have upon their British Turkish children, we see hints of a self-appointed secularising/modernising mission that secular-leaning immigrant Turks consciously or unconsciously take on as a constitutive part of their child-rearing in the UK. The themes generated through the accounts of British Turks helped me identify the values, norms and codes of parenting of immigrant Turks. Secular-leaning Turks are engaged with a certain sense of nostalgia based on Orientalist narratives that helped implement the transformation of an Empire into a 'modern', Western' and 'secular' state, the Republic of Turkey. This has been crystallised in the sub-themes of ' physical and cultural alienation from Turkey, disconnection from the Turkish language, educational aspiration as a prerequisite to elevating British Turkish children to Europeanness/ Westernness, and finally, reproaching political translations in a manner to keep the secular-nationalist Turkish republic alive'. Taken together, the results in this section indicate that there is a reciprocal horizontal interaction between first-generation Turkish immigrants and their children who grew up in Britain. I found that the tensions that arose in my respondents' identity formations partially stem from the rigid expectations of their immigrant parents, who grew up in a country which is impossible to categorize.

### 3.2. Conservative camp

Ultimately, the cultural identities of my respondents sit in parallel with the values and mentalities of their immigrant parents, underlying the paradoxes in response to fears about integration, lack of opportunities or career security (Rashid, 2013) defined in light of Orientalist and secular framework. Increasing Islamophobia,[6] where being Muslim is defined as antithetical to being British and Western, is particularly difficult for pious Turks to navigate in their host country because of the Turkish Republic's stress on secularism and a Western-facing future a precondition to democracy and modernization (Abdelkader, 2018). Accordingly, the long-standing anxiety of being visibly Muslim within Turkey is evidently reconstituted in the host country and reflected in the narratives of my female respondents wearing hijab. Pointedly, in contrast to the respondents whose parents relatively endorse the virtues of Western modernity and secularism, some of my respondents pointed out that their Turkish immigrant parents showed tenacious valorization of Islam and Turkish nationalism. Having been raised in a vacuum of parental authority in conformity with traditional Turkish and Islamic

norms, Hale critically correlates the protective and authoritative nature of Turkish parents with a certain degree of insecurity and disunity imprinted on their British-born children in the country of settlement:

> *Not every parent is like that, but most first-generation parents would not let their children out because imagine you were born in a village [in Turkey] and then the freedom to run about the place and then all of a sudden you are like a caged bird, all of a sudden you are wild and free all of a sudden you are caged in [again]. Of course, when you visit other people, you are always criticised; I know that it happens everywhere, even now, in Turkey even, everywhere it happens, so that has not changed, but the freedom where parents were afraid to let their kids out because of what was going on within the community. They could not trust anybody because they were not one of them. They were not part of the British colony or, should I say, the British community, even though they were made to feel welcomed. On top of that, there was still unsafe unsureness; they were worried about whether something would happen to their kid because they didn't know the language, they didn't know the culture, they don't know anything … […] they don't let you out, so you don't know how to talk to people, you don't know about money or anything, so that was quite challenging.*
>
> (Hale, 40, Identity Management Officer, London)

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

As Hale indicated, parental anxieties, with their concomitant restrictions drilled into their children, appear to be the backbone of parental identities. These are rooted in traditional cultural practices, and the foreignness of the immigrated lands mobilized as an insistent factor of limitation. In contrast to the positionalities of the secular parents, where they displayed loyalty and cultural belongingness to Western culture, the relatively more traditional Turkish parents try to protect the hybrid culture where Islam and Turkishness play symbolic roles as signs of heritage (Akpinar, 2007, p. 135). This internal battle has doubtlessly been projected onto their children raised in Britain in the forms of constant and recurring preoccupation with the representation of themselves (Hall, 1997). This argument would underlie Hale's narrative, where she appears to absolve the premature preoccupations of her parents in the country of settlement:

> *And there were all other things happening at that time when teenagers were getting pregnant and having kids. It was quite a fashion sort of thing. Every teenager would come out with*

> *babies all of a sudden, British ones, of course; parents were afraid that you are out, they are going to keep an eye on you when they send you to the shops because you don't know anything. Each parent is different; my dad has to have us at home; he'd rather […] he cannot sleep unless all the kids were home sleeping. So, my cousins, they'd come, so they'd come to stay with us, but my parents would only let us go there, but in the middle of the night, my dad would close the shop and pick us up. So that is his nature; it'd be nice if they'd have helped us to bring out our inner confidence at the age of 14, and it would have been nice at 16,18, 20.*
>
> (Hale, 40, Identity Management Officer, London)

It is the sense of intimacy and sexual modesty *(edep)* which are the markers of conservative values, that is, the sacredness of interior space, women's *mahram*,[7] and the supervised communities (*mahalles*) that require the limitation of the public self (Göle, 2015). However, Hale's covert desire to 'bring out her inner confidence and to be one of them' is associated with her awareness of the culture clash she sees in first-generation immigrant parents from Turkey (Ngo, 2008). Added to that, as we see in Hale's quotes, the doubleness of culture and identity as a devout Muslim wearing a hijab, Hale is different from her parents as she can problematize the static and essentialist, internally bounded structures of the conservative Turkish immigrant parents. Hale appears to recognize the differences in the ways in which she interweaves the traditional values of immigrant parents with the attributions of Western societies. Hale's approach demonstrates that, unlike her parents, she desires to take on a more plural cultural identity with a tolerance for the difference within this new space. This unifying identity over and above ethnic and religious differences is germane to less restrictive values and more individualistic aspirations of Hale. Hale was not the only respondent who demonstrated the clash of values between herself and her family:

> *One thing I do say is, as you can probably guess, I've settled down and got married really early, and I believe that's partly because my mum and my dad did not want us to risk maybe exploring Britain and getting married to somebody who is not Turkish so that is one area I'd say. If I was to go back and my struggle is not that he [her husband]; I think it was the age which was the most important. I was not ready for marriage, and the fact that I think it was trying to pull on being that Turkish family, I think that is what they were trying to do. I think about it with my own children, and I wonder, what would I do? I question the way I am going to parent and the way I am going to approach maybe their choice of spouse in the future, so yeah, time will show.*
>
> (Gülkız, 32, Working in Local Council, London)

Here, Gülkız draws attention to the dualisms between parental values mediated by their country of origin and herself, who is caught between two worlds, notwithstanding that she exhibits a certain degree of alignment with the traditional values of Turkish immigrant parents. That said, the way she started her extract was utterly unexpected, considering that we had not met before the interview, and thus, I had no idea what sort of upbringing she might have had in Britain. She self-assumed that her veil would enable me to situate her early marriage in context as an affirmation of her conservative upbringing, bringing forth a performative aspect as a marker of the affirmation of her conservative parents. It is evident in the quote above that the intergenerational conflicts of British Turkish respondents and their immigrant parents, for instance, are manifest through the age of marriage or the choice of spouse. I argue that this underlies the doubleness and

intricacies of Gülkız's identity. Here, she neither thoroughly repudiates her conservative parents' decisions nor fully enshrines them to mediate the antagonisms in the ways she raises her kids. This double movement, as Hall states, creates an identity that is on a pilgrimage, always not-yet-reached, always in the future (Hall & Du Gay, 1996).

Finally, as culture and identity are in a continuous flow, we cannot expect the complex identity and cultural formations of British Turkish respondents simply and monolithically to be confided in national, multinational, religious or ethnic imaginations of their immigrant Turkish parents *per se,* built through the social, cultural and political discourses of homeland and host country. With regard to the formation of new and double subjectivities, it is important to redefine the 'off-limits' through the particularity of British Turks' mundane routines and experiences in the UK. This section put forward the beliefs and values that are central to the values and norms conservative-leaning Turks adopt in the UK to raise their British-born children. The subthemes on this basis have come to emphasise 'restraint and asceticism, parental authority in conformity with Turco-Islamic traditions, deemphasising individuality and living up to piety, and finally, limiting the confrontation of their children with secular and European life'.

Although parental influence is contingent on various cultural-historical stereotypes of the Turkish nation-state against Islam and pious Turks hence impacts on my respondents' negotiations of identities and lifestyles in Britain, British Turks seemingly develop double loyalties, and interrogate the stiffness and closures of parental values at the very least, testifying to the uniform and bounded values becoming obsolete. They do not adopt the identities at face value but opt for negotiations through multiple ways.

## 4. Conclusion

This article finds that Turkish immigrant parents vehemently reproduce, sometimes by default, their imported secular and conservative values in their host country. If anything, we can conclude that the British Turks appear to question the resolute boundedness of parental closures and instead reveal the complex and ambiguous nature of being British and Turkish in contemporary Britain. Their discussions of 'becoming' are centred on resistance and the subversion of the confinement into narrow categories like Turk, British, Muslim, secular and so forth (Bhabha, 1996; Demir, 2022). As discussed above, secular parents desire and long to see their children 'fit' in Britain's 'European way of life' in sync with the long-standing secular modernity in Turkey. To ensure this, some of them strongly emphasised the Western model of education or kept British Turks from advancing their Turkish language, indicative of the secularist rhetoric as the official ideology of the Turkish Republic since 1923. As discussed in the analysis sections, secular Turkish parents, regardless of their whereabouts, look up to the 'West' as the universal standard of modernity and assume that Islam is the barrier towards fully embracing Western ways of life (Çarmikli, 2011). Turkish parents who are secularist-leaning *ergo* insist on their British-born children coming to terms with their strict Orientalist political thoughts where they implicitly and explicitly undermine Islam and Turco-Islamic traditions to their fullest. We can observe those secularist-leaning Turkish parents becoming oblivious to the diverse identifications of their children who, by contrast, embrace pluralistic cultures, including fragments of perceived Britishness rather than

single-mindedly occupying a narrow, monolithic notion of secularist Turkish identity typified in Kemalist reforms and secularism.

In marked contrast to the secularist-leaning Turkish parents, relatively more conservative Turkish parents constructed their way of parenting around the protection of boundaries created around Islam and Turkish tradition and values as reflected by being subservient to parental ways of living over engaging with mainstream British society. Despite their loyalty to their homeland values and Islam, my respondents in this cluster nevertheless wittingly or unwittingly problematized their conservative parents' static and essentialist values. Some implicitly questioned the immature marriage they were lured into, and others documented how their freedom was restricted growing up because of their parents' being restrictive. They noted that their double values of Islam and the Western lifestyle were not recognized, resulting in antagonisms between them and their parents.

As extensively explored in this paper, there is a dialogical relationship between diasporic Turkish parenting in the form of a secular/ conservative divide and the identity formation of their British Turkish children. Following Weber's typology, the secular/ conservative divide came to be conceptualized based on 'ideal-types', not as an end but as a means (Weber, 1949, p. 92). In other words, I used a particular meaning of the concepts secular vs. conservative with special reference to the identity constructions of British Turks based on empirical findings at hand. By constructing Turkish immigrants' ideologies in the British context as 'ideal-types', I sought to understand, analytically and empathically, British Turks' identity struggles tied inextricably to the political and cultural values, and battles of Turkish immigrant parents deported from Turkey yet reconfigured in their new home. We must acknowledge the identity, not as an ahistorical reality, nor even a 'true' reality, but as a historically unique configuration (ibid, p. 93), therefore always deconstructed. The research findings show that identities must remain fluid and operates behind the 'complexity, contradictions and fragmentation implied in difference' (Grossberg, 1986, p. 155; Hall, 1989). Consequently, the identities of British Turks, while displaying an acceptance of Turkish immigrants' distinctive values and ideologies forced upon them, demonstrate that identity construction is in constant circulation, transcending the essentialised understandings of Turkishness, Islam, secularism and so forth.

## Notes

1. Turkish republicanism as the nation-state ideology was founded upon two pillars: secularism and nationalism, referred to as Kemalism [Göle, N. 2015]. *Islam and secularity: The future of Europe's public sphere*. Duke University Press.
2. Alevism is often defined as a mystical, syncretic, or heterodox form of Islam and Alevis as the second largest belief community in Turkey are strongly affiliated with the political left.
3. The argument about Kemalist secularism is the view that Turkey must adopt Western civilisation, in its totality, including music, dress, alphabet etc., and its enactment is a reform and even a revolution for the supporters of this new system. Yet its implementation was inadvertently, or at times, openly rested on the complete erasure of the past of the country symbolised by Islam (Çarmikli 2011).
4. The Tanzimat reforms hold a unique place in the Ottoman history of modernization. During the Tanzimat period (1839–1878), the state underwent a restructuring process in almost all of its institutions to establish a centralised modern state, and many new

institutions were established. The Ottomans paid special attention to education to train the new generation required for the continuity of modernisation and the centralised bureaucratic structure. While they opened modern high schools and higher education institutions, they attempted to reform the existing sıbyan schools, which were the primary education institutions (Braun and Clarke 2013; Richards 2019; Samani 2018; Simsek 2012).

5. While Turkishness was defined through ethnicity under secular Kemalism, population engineering in the service of Turkish nationalism emerged as a valuable concept. The government was acutely aware of the presence of non-Turks and non-Muslims in different parts of the country. Despite this puzzling synthesis, staunch nationalism and secularism led ethnically non-Turks and non-Muslims to embrace the Turkish republic (Cagaptay 2006).
6. Muslims have been attributed stereotypical traits as a monolithic and static entity, and Islamophobia has been increasingly mainstream in the British context. There is no single way to conceptualise Islamophobia, which is constantly produced and reproduced, and therefore is not monolithic or immutable (Allen 2013; Saeed 2007).
7. Forbidden to the male gaze.

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