Conditional citizenship in the UK: Polish migrants' experiences of diversity

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Abstract

This paper explores Polish experiences of lived diversities in the UK through the lens of their precarious socio-economic status and ambivalent racial identity. Using the concept of conditional citizenship, the article explores how being only tentatively accepted in British society affects Polish migrants' understandings of British diversity. Drawing on qualitative data from a study of Polish migrants' lived diversities, this paper exposes the repertoires of actions that individuals apply in different social contexts in the process of learning to live with diversity. It advances the academic debate on everyday multiculturalism through an exploration of the relationship between conditional citizenship and lived diversities and contributes to an understanding of migrants' racism by contextualising it within national hierarchies of belonging.

Introduction

The enlargement of the EU in 2004 coupled with the UK's decision to allow immediate access with a few restrictions to the A8 accession state citizens, gave rise to one of the largest recent migratory movements to the UK. Within this movement, Polish migrants constituted the largest group of newcomers, estimated at up to one million people arriving in the UK by 2011 (Knight, 2014). Although Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic have

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led to some reverse migration, Polish people still constitute one of the largest non-UK born populations estimated at between 680,000[7] and over 1 million migrants.[1]

This paper argues that post-accession Polish migrants have achieved only a contingent acceptance in the UK and discusses how this impacts their understandings of British diversity. Prior to Brexit, Polish people enjoyed the privileges associated with their status as white EU migrants, but they have also been racialised as East Europeans (Fox et al., 2012), overrepresented in low-skilled sectors, exploited in the labour market and subjected to poor housing conditions (Cole, 2009). Moreover, their whiteness has not spared them from being subject to racism (Rzepnikowska, 2019). Poles and other East European citizens in the UK 'represent a contingent and degraded form of whiteness' (Anderson, 2013: 45), perceived as culturally inferior and being economically disadvantaged despite high levels of education. At the same time, being nominally white facilitates the potential to use racism in the process of 'becoming British' (Fox and Mogilnicka, 2019). This article explores how the ambivalent status embedded in Poles' conditional citizenship impacts their practices with others, varying from racism to urban solidarities.

This paper, which discusses contingent acceptance in the context of living with diversity, is an important contribution that explores how only partial inclusion by British society shapes people's ambivalent practices with racial and cultural others, including both inter-cultural solidarities and racialisation. By looking at Polish people's ambivalent lived diversities prior to Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, this article reminds us that the conditional citizenship of Central and East Europeans in the UK is not a result of the Brexit referendum but had been shaped by political economic and cultural processes before 2016. It looks at how this conditionality can explain migrants' racialised perceptions of diversity. The paper contributes to the current debate on everyday multiculturalism by exploring ambivalent diversities and contextualising both everyday solidarities as well as everyday racism within a national context of complex, racialised hierarchies of belonging. The discussion in this paper can also improve our understanding of the racialised notion of citizenship in the current challenging political and economic circumstances caused by Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The article begins by discussing the construction of a homogeneous national identity along racial and religious lines in Poland. Following this, the paper provides an overview of the literature on everyday multiculturalism with a focus on ambivalent diversities and offers a conceptual framework for analysing those ambivalences through the notion of conditional citizenship. It then turns to explaining the research method, 'go-along observations', that allowed exploration of a repertoire of ambivalent practices with others, used by individuals in various social contexts. Finally, the article presents rich, qualitative data that demonstrates how Polish individuals living in Bristol understand their conditional citizenship status and negotiate it through their practices with cultural and racial others that comprise both strategies of inclusion and exclusion. It argues that seemingly positive encounters with racial and cultural others can also reflect people's racialised understanding of hierarchies in the UK. The paper draws attention to the complexities of migrants' everyday racism within the wider context of racialised hierarchies of belonging.

Diversity and national identity in Poland

The ethnic compositions of Poland and the UK have been shaped by different political, historical and social processes. Acknowledging that nation, race and ethnicity exist as social and political constructs rather than fixed homogenous entities (Brubaker, 2009), Polish national identity is understood as constructed around notions of whiteness and Catholicism (Jaskulowski, 2020). With ethno-national minorities constituting only 5% of the population and 88% of the nation declaring themselves to be Catholic (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2015), Poland imagines itself as a homogenous nation. People of colour feel excluded from Polish society (Balogun and Joseph-Salisbury, 2021). With no history of modern colonialism, Poland has never experienced a large influx of migrants from former colonies as experienced in Britain throughout the 20th century. As Balogun (2018) argues, Poland is often portrayed as either a coloniser of the East or a colonised nation, which ignores Poland's failed colonial ambitions outside Europe in the 19th century. Colonial influences can also be seen in Polish popular culture from the early 20th century, including in texts that are still considered classic literature for children. The children's poem 'Murzynek Bambo' (Bambo, the little Black/Negro boy published in 1935) by Julian Tuwim, and Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *In Desert and Wilderness* (published in 1911), both still popular and widely used, reinforce colonial discourses homogenising Africa as uncivilised, uneducated and inferior, and Muslim people as dangerous and violent (Moskalewicz, 2005; Ząbek, 2007). Assumptions about the backwardness of Black people are evident in more recent books by Kapuscinski, an internationally reputed war reporter whose stories about violent conflicts in Africa in the 1960s onwards reinforced the idea of Africa as troubled by poverty, crime and chaos (Ząbek, 2007). In current popular culture, Africa remains an uncivilised poor and homogenous place that Polish white saviours want to rescue (Omolo, 2021). In the 21st century, Poland's right-wing populist government continues to peddle a hostile rhetoric of a white homogeneity which is an obstacle to the integration of immigrants and asylum seekers, especially Muslims and people of colour. By contrast, white, Christian Ukrainian migrants, who are mostly employed in low-skilled labour, have been made to feel more welcome, with an estimate of up to three million economic migrants residing in Poland[8] (Polkowska and Filipek, 2020), occupying a similar ambiguous socio-economic position in Polish society as Polish people in the UK. In the context of multicultural Britain found mainly in urban contexts and characterised by the close proximity of people from multiple countries and ethnicities and multiple cultural and religious heritages living together side by side, many Poles who arrived in the UK after 2004 encountered difference on this scale for the first time. Learning to live with diversity has been part of their everyday experience since. And the ambivalent responses to diversity constitute this learning experience.

Ambivalent lived diversities

There is a rich body of empirical work exploring living together in the urban contexts of the 21st century through a bottom-up approach, as opposed to macro theories and policies

such as multiculturalism (Modood, 2007). The effects of super-diversity on people's everyday lives have been captured by the scholarship on 'everyday multiculturalism' as

> [A] grounded approach to looking at the *everyday practice* and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter. Everyday multiculturalism explores how social actors experience and negotiate cultural difference on the ground and how their social relations and identities are shaped and re-shaped in the process. (Wise and Velayutham, 2009: 3)

Many authors draw our attention to 'hopeful encounters' (Wise, 2006) that demonstrate people's ability to accommodate to the growing diversification of their neighbourhoods. These encounters are often conceptualised in the literature as either conviviality or everyday cosmopolitanism[1], both concepts pointing at processes of making ethnic difference banal in everyday lives. As a result, cultural difference has become commonplace, '[r]ather than seeing cultural diversity as something particularly special, it forms part of their everyday lived reality and is not perceived as unusual (Wessendorf, 2014: 2).

The focus of many of these studies on positive encounters and their potential to challenge the discomfort towards ethnic or cultural others and to develop inter-cultural solidarities (Noble, 2009; Wise, 2009) has attracted some criticism. Valentine (2008) argued that portraying urban living as a multicultural achievement risk romanticising encounters with difference. Getting along in public spaces does not necessarily translate into respect for difference nor does it reduce prejudice (Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Valentine, 2008). Similarly, Nayak (2017) warned against the celebratory tone of the scholarship on lived diversities that leaves little room for acknowledging prevailing everyday racism. Framing everyday multiculture as spatial interactions that make difference commonplace does not capture the 'duality which is central in any negotiation with racial difference' (Valluvan, 2016: 15). People are exposed to, and express, both inter-cultural solidarities and inter-cultural conflicts. Although everyday practices that make cultural difference an ordinary feature deserve academic scrutiny, racism and xenophobia as part of everyday life should not be ignored in the analysis.

Wise and Noble (2016: 425) recognise that 'studies of the everyday have the capacity to understand both everyday racism and everyday cosmopolitanism […] as coexisting, as not mutually exclusive.' Although these ambivalences embedded in lived diversities have gained some conceptual attention in recent years, they are still relatively overlooked. One approach to exploring these inconsistent processes is to investigate how people develop solidarities despite facing racism or social injustice (Back and Sinha, 2016; Glick Schiller and Ayse, 2015). The experiences of discrimination can be a backdrop for marginalised people to bond through convivial capabilities or 'urban sociabilities' (Glick Schiller and Ayse, 2015). But often racism and conviviality are expressed by the same individual who, in Wise's words, may be both a good multiculturalist and a bad racist (Wise, 2006: 183). The ambivalences in defining others either in terms of convivial curiosity or hostility have been well documented by studies on urban multiculture (Bloch and Dreher, 2009; Husband et al., 2014; Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Schuerman, 2013; Valentine and

Sadgrove, 2012; Wilson, 2013). Their focus on subjective understandings of encounters gives an insight into how people learn to live with diversity over time and explores living with difference beyond the fleeting positive interactions in public and semi-public spaces that demonstrate civility.

Looking at ambivalences in everyday practices of immigrants helps unpack complex power relations and hierarchies embedded in lived diversities. Migrants become part of the multicultural pot, 'contributing to new patterns of cultural combination and social connection' (Back and Sinha, 2016: 517). They learn about diversity in the new political and cultural context through everyday encounters with cultural others. Migrants negotiate the cultural repertoires they have brought with them against the new cultural values and practices that shape difference in a particular, localised way. But they also re-learn about themselves, as their socio-economic status changes and they re-construct their own social identities, and these can lead to ambivalent reactions to difference. In her study on post-accession Polish migrants in Britain, Gawlewicz (2016a) argues that Poles respond to cultural difference in complex ways, which challenge and alter their pre-migration attitudes towards diversity. Pointing at 'complicated feelings' (2016a: 269) Gawlewicz stresses that 'shifting from openness to prejudice, respectful to essentialist discourses, these stances remained fluid, selective and contextualised'. However, Poles express conviviality in public and semi-public spaces, where encounters with racial ethnic or religious difference allow Polish migrants to cross cultural boundaries and can help to normalise difference. This does not exclude tensions and even assertions of racism in private spaces (Fox, 2013). Against this backdrop, this article explores Poles' ambivalent lived diversities in the context of a complex set of hierarchies of belonging.

Conditional citizenship in the context of British hierarchies of belonging

The definition of citizenship in this paper is not restricted to the legally defined political membership of a state. Rather it draws on the notion of cultural citizenship (Stephenson, 2003) that expands the understanding of citizenship to the cultural dimension by emphasising the importance of inclusive practices and the recognition of difference. Here citizenship is also understood in normative terms, defining a cultural relationship with a political, economic and social community. This relationship varies for citizens with different social identities. Conditional citizenship has been specified to refer to the normative notion of citizenship that reflects racialised hierarchies of belonging and denies certain privileges or rights to individuals due to their legal status, gender, class or racial identities. Lalami (2020: 23) claims that 'conditional citizens are people whose rights the state finds expendable in the pursuit of white supremacy' and conceptualises it through everyday exclusion and surveillance of citizens due to their racialised identities. The state's symbolic violence towards conditional citizens manifests itself in the criminalisation of people of colour, their electoral underrepresentation or marginalisation. Although Lalami stresses the normative dimension of citizenship, she focuses on legal citizens of the United States. But the notion of conditional citizenship can be also applied to migrants. Burell and Schweyher (2019: 199) use the concept to emphasise 'the

conditionality of […] immigration/welfare regimes' that keep restricting access to the welfare system for Polish and other EU migrants, emphasising the inherent contingency of their status in the UK.

Anderson's (2013) develops the idea of hierarchy of citizenship which is useful in understanding Polish migrants' conditional citizenship in the UK. She argues that the modern liberal state imagines itself as comprised of normatively defined 'good citizens' who are rational, hardworking, law-obeying and contribute to society. Those who do not meet these expectations – 'failed citizens' (criminals or benefit users) and 'non-citizens' ('illegal' migrants, asylum seekers) – threaten the security of the nation and their presence is thus undesirable. However, the 'community of value' is willing to contingently accept 'tolerated citizens' (migrants, refugees), deemed to be positively contributing to the community. Nonetheless, as soon as they are perceived as disrespecting shared values, they can be easily pushed down to the category of non-citizen. Although there is a distinction between the ambivalent figure of tolerated citizens and undesirable non/failed citizens, the typology emphasises the conditionality of all three citizenships, defined by neoliberal economic and immigration policies that construct homogenous categories of insiders and outsiders and rank people's deservingness based on their legal status, gender, class or ethnic identities.

Drawing on these contributions, the paper defines Polish migrants as conditional citizens; that is, they are only conditionally accepted in the UK due to their ambivalent racial identity and socio-economic status in British society shaped by racialised hierarchies of belonging.

Belonging may mean an emotional attachment and feeling that one's social identity is accepted by society and common values are shared, but it is also a politicised concept that nations use to draw boundaries and exclude those individuals or groups who are deemed less deserving (Yuval-Davis, 2006). In the UK, hierarchies of belonging are not fixed but constantly redefined by global migration processes and constructed along racial, class and gender lines. In a 'hostile environment' (Webber, 2019) with tight immigration control measures, immigrants are ranked through the lenses of fear and suspicion (Back et al., 2012). Implicitly racist or whitewashing immigration policies (Fox et al., 2012) rank citizens' deservingness according to ethnicity, race and class (Anderson, 2013). Such policies work to preclude access to citizenship rights for immigrants and ethnic minorities. These structural processes of othering endorse everyday racism, including amongst migrants and ethnic minorities. Often the presence of immigrants may remind more established minority communities about their own contingent position in society, which results in treating newcomers with suspicion and hostility (Back et al., 2012; Charsley and Bolognani, 2017). And yet despite these practices, migrants find ways to develop intercultural solidarities (Back and Sinha, 2016; Glick Schiller and Ayse, 2015). The socio-economic and legal status that places migrants in racialised hierarchies of belonging plays a role in shaping everyday encounters with difference.

Although Polish migrants are perceived as hardworking and as contributing economically to society (Datta and Brickell, 2009), they are racialised as East Europeans (Fox et al., 2012). Their whiteness is contested, since their low socio-economic status as well as experiences of racism (Rzepnikowska, 2019) makes them 'not quite white' (Botterill and

Burell, 2020: 24). Their ambivalent position carries tensions between the claims of belonging to British society based on their nominal whiteness and the burden of being represented as an outsider, a low-skilled immigrant worker, threatening the British labour market (Parutis, 2011). This 'hierarchy of acceptability' (McDowell, 2009: 29) questions the invisibility of the whiteness of Polish migrants (Botterill and Burell, 2020). The political discourses and immigration policies that construct them as 'less white' expose how British whiteness asserts itself as normatively superior.

Based on a qualitative research study on Poles' lived diversities, the paper identifies ambivalences in their understandings and responses to diversity, explained by their conditional citizenship.

Methods

This article derives from an ethnographic study conducted between 2015 and 2016 with 10 Polish migrants living in Bristol who arrived in the UK after the 2004 EU accession. I developed a method of 'go-along' observations, which involved tracing 10 individuals and their practices across various social contexts throughout their daily routines on up to 10 occasions with each of them. The numerous observations occurred in a variety of social contexts depending on people's lifestyles, for example, home, school, shops, cafés, workplaces, sports centres, pubs, parks, shopping malls and others. In addition, I was invited to attend many social occasions such as birthday parties, nursery and school events, house parties, dance classes, an urban festival performance, Polish friends' club events, sports trainings and English lessons. Additionally, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each individual, one at the beginning, to familiarise me with their routines, and one at the end of fieldwork, to verify my observations. The approach enabled me to observe how the prevalent practices discussed in the literature such as everyday cosmopolitanism (Noble, 2009), conviviality (Wise and Noble, 2016), or civility in the context of diversity (Wessendorf, 2014), intertwine in everyday routines and how these strategies are used alongside racialised or other exclusionary strategies.

By use of snowball sampling, five women and five men were recruited. I diversified the sample regarding age, family/marital status, education, occupation, length of stay in the UK, English language competency and neighbourhoods they lived in. All participants worked in a low waged sector. Their age ranged between 21 and 46 years, and their length of stay in the UK varied between 3 months and 10 years. Some of them were fluent in English, while others could only speak a few basic words and relied on their family members for translation. Even though it is a multicultural city with many diverse and super-diverse neighbourhoods, Bristol is spatially segregated along racial and classed lines (Bristol City Council, 2021). There is a large population of over 6000 post-accession Polish migrants, dispersed across various neighbourhoods. I chose individuals from various localities, less and more ethnically diverse, to understand how frequently they encounter cultural others and in what social contexts and to allow me to explore how these interactions shape their understandings of diversity in Britain.

I conducted thematic analysis of the participant observation data and cross-checked the themes that had emerged from the interview transcripts. I use pseudonyms to ensure the

anonymity of my participants. I also do not name the neighbourhoods where they live and work to further protect their identities. The data presented in this article are mainly from the initial and exit interviews in which individuals reflected on diversity and their own position in British society. The interview quotes include information about participants in the following format: pseudonym, age and length of stay in the UK.

Being Polish was crucial to my ability to conduct the multi-sited observations, and to recruit Poles with a low level of English language skill. Polish language was particularly important in spatial contexts where they employed strategies of exclusion of certain racial or cultural others by speaking Polish. Moreover, my respondents felt comfortable in expressing racism or sharing stories about racial incidents that had happened to them due to our shared heritage, a phenomenon observed also by other scholars (Gawlewicz, 2016). These subtleties would not have been captured if it had not been for my Polish identity.

I consider my role in the research process as co-producing knowledge and acknowledge that my ethnographic analysis offers a subjective narrative, that is interpretation of social phenomena that I, as a researcher, participated in. I recognise that my social identity as a Polish female academic researcher shaped the relationships with my participants as well as the collection and interpretation of the data. Nonetheless, I have not made an assumption that my social markers would grant me an insider status and I would describe my position as occupying 'the space between' the insider and outsider status (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). The relationships with my participants required trust that developed over time and was based on shared social networks, reciprocal interactions, and common experiences in our migration journeys rather than simply on our shared cultural background.

Conditional citizenship discourses

The participants' discourses about their position in British society demonstrated their awareness of hierarchies of belonging, which constructed them as conditional citizens. Regardless of how long they had lived in the UK, the participants all felt they would never feel 'at home' and their response was, by and large, an acceptance of this status.

Simon, a warehouse worker, reflected on his conditional status as a 'guest' when commenting on the upcoming EU referendum. He believed it was justifiable for British people to remove migrants if they wished to do so: 'You know if Brexit happens and they kick us out, I will leave immediately. I will pack my suitcase and go the next day. Nothing keeps me here. I'm just a guest here' (Simon, 31, 4 months).

While Simon treated his stay in Britain as temporary with the aim to leave after 2 years, Adam was planning to stay in Bristol for at least a few years and these long-term goals shaped a different approach and perceptions about his status: 'I would like to have this beautiful English accent, but I know I need a few years to pick it up. […] You know, I will always be an immigrant' (Adam, 29, 3 months).

Adam's difference was marked by his accent (Rzepnikowska, 2019). His whiteness which made him otherwise invisible, was questioned when he spoke. Adam was aware of

the negative connotations of the term 'immigrant' and discursively tried to align himself with the British majority by working on his accent.

Respondents deployed discourses of deservingness which were often accompanied by a comparison to those deemed less appreciative of the hospitality of British people. These were often racialised views on who is British, excluding people of colour from the national identity. When asked about her perceptions of diversity, Kasia responded:

> Actually, it depends on the person, some have too much attitude, they think they are masters and rulers and that they can do whatever they want. […] It depends, most *Czarnoskórzy* ['Black-skinned'[2]], but not all, right? […] Recently my husband and I were driving down the road when this one [Black] guy tried to push into our lane and started beeping and calling us names […] if someone has a bit too much attitude, then it annoys me. They are strangers in this country as much as we are, and they should adjust too. (Kasia, 37, 1 year)

Kasia emphasises that not all Black people in her neighbourhood represented the category of bad migrants. But importantly, she does seem to think of them all as not belonging to the British nation. This specific example shows that Kasia does not perceive people of colour as British citizens; they are strangers in the same way she is as a migrant, outsiders who should adjust to the implicitly white British majority. Kasia's racialised lens on her neighbours' aggressive driving manners demonstrates that her understanding of hierarchies of belonging operates along racial lines. Britishness is conflated with whiteness. Even though Kasia acknowledges her conditional citizenship, calling herself a stranger who follows the rules of the host country, she also believes that Black people are strangers which demonstrates that belonging is linked with a strongly racialised account of British citizenship.

The perceptions of being a guest do not necessarily disappear over time. Monika, a 32-year-old support worker who had lived in Bristol for 9 years claimed that she would never belong to the British nation:

> I will never be British […] ehmm, I don't know, how much time needs to pass, how much longer I need to live here…but at the moment I don't feel British. I will always have a different accent, people always ask me where I'm from. I used to feel embarrassed, it upset me in some way that I was not English, but now – no, not at all, why should I feel different? I'm from Poland, simple…I won't change it, I will never have a British accent. I have a different *background* [in English]; I was brought up in a different way, in a completely different country, I have a different history, right? (Monika, 32, 9 years)

The somewhat bitter acceptance of the inherent difference marked by her accent demonstrates the fragility of Monika's conditional citizenship and the permanent precarity of being positioned as not good enough. Contrary to Simon or Kasia who as recent migrants defined themselves as 'guests' or 'strangers', accepting their conditional citizenship, Monika who had been in Bristol for almost 10 years reluctantly admitted her contingent status in British society. In contrast to Adam's efforts to lose Polish accent, she

tried to embrace her accent and cultural background, even though she was aware it placed her below good citizens in the hierarchies of belonging.

Similarly, Daniel who had spent almost 10 years in Britain, felt that his belonging was still questioned:

> At my workplace for example, we have this *policy* [in English] […] For example, when we have training, they talk a lot about *respect and dignity* [in English] […]. So when you talk with people from work […], they won't say it directly, in a rude way but will say only: 'And don't you have plans to go back home?' I say 'No'. And they will say: 'And what keeps you here?' […] 'If I were a Pole, I would go back to Poland.' (Daniel, 29, 9 years)

Daniel worked at a railway station and claimed that the inclusive policies at his workplace did not eliminate exclusionary practices. He was able to pick up implicit strategies that subtly suggested that he was not welcome in Britain. References to Poland as Daniel's 'home' emphasised the temporariness of his stay in Britain, even though he had no plans to move back to Poland.

The Polish respondents understand that they are conditional citizens, only contingently accepted in the UK through their relationship with the British economic and social community. Although they may develop a sense of belonging to British society, their citizenship rights seem to be questioned in everyday life due to their accent, nationality, or cultural background. As the data suggest the duality of the concept of belonging that Yuval-Davis (2006) discussed, that is, the individual attachment on the one hand, and the politics of division on the other, are intertwined in Poles' discourses about their position in British society. Their discourses show that they accept their conditional citizenship and justify the power relations in the status hierarchy. Continually positioned as temporary in Britain, they understand that they have to accept the conditions of their stay in the UK. As long as they make efforts to become part of the British community – that is work on the British/English accent or follow the prevailing code of conduct in public spaces – they will be accepted. This echoes the immigration control discourses that emphasise the expectation that migrants should not abuse the hospitality of the host countries (Capdevila and Callaghan, 2008). Efforts to become good citizens translate into practices that would make them invisible. However, despite these attempts, Poles may never feel like they fully belong to British society or shed their status as temporary migrants. They are never invisible. Even after many years of building their lives here, their conditional citizenship questions their membership in British society. They feel that ascending hierarchies of belonging will never be possible for them as they will always be marked by their social difference.

This ongoing tension inherent in their conditional citizenship status is reflected in their ambivalent lived diversities that include strategies of exclusion as well as inclusion. These will be discussed in the next two sections.

Strategies of exclusion

The awareness of being only contingently accepted, impacts Poles' negotiations of their place in hierarchies of belonging, evidenced for some in their use of strategies of exclusion of other migrants/minority communities, whom they perceive as less-deserving citizens. These were often depicted in the figure of Muslim or Black minorities and refugees. This is demonstrated well in the quote below from Monika:

> Actually, this is what I don't like in this country. Tolerance pushed to its limits, right? […] They are from Somalia, aren't they? And they try to establish their own rules. Because if you come to this country, you should recognize the laws of this country, respect everything that is here, including the law and religion. If your faith is different and you do not like it, nobody is keeping you here, right? But do not change it, it's not your country, right? I can't stand it. I came to this country and have respected every single piece of this land since. Every single piece of a person who lives here, right? Because I am… [pause]… I was a guest, right? Now I'm a resident of this country, right?

In Bristol, the Somali community is the largest ethnic minority group estimated at around 8000 people (Bristol City Council, 2021). The host/guest discourse Monika used reinforces boundaries between her and Somali people. Monika attempted to overcome her anxieties about her ambivalent status through everyday practices that asserted her status as a 'deserving citizen', and Muslim Somalis as less-deserving citizens. Monika's narrative reinforces integration discourses prevalent in British society that construct 'us' and 'them' based on shared cultural values that certain minorities such as Muslims are excluded from (Anthias, 2013). Monika expressed the subjective understandings of prevalent values in British society, such as obeying the law, appreciating the hosts' tolerance towards its guests, or respecting the dominant religion. By juxtaposing her own normative position as earned belonging by respecting the country and fitting in with the British majority, with Somali people as the lawbreakers, she situated herself within the hierarchies of belonging as more integrated and more deserving of acceptance. The discourse is implicitly racialised as it demonstrates an awareness that racially similar migrants can be more desirable (Fox et al., 2012).

This supports arguments made by other scholars that the A8 accession workers use racism and racialisation as a tool to gain psycho-social and material benefits and position themselves more favourably in the racialised British hierarchies (Fox, 2013; Parutis, 2011). Monika used whiteness, associated with Europeanness and Christianity, as an available status symbol.

Racialised practices are also evident in Adam's narrative:

> I don't have anything against them [Black people], but they can have something against me, against my skin colour. For example, St Paul's[3] is unsafe, that's what I've heard […]. I was passing it and I could feel them [Black males] watching me. When I turned around I realised there were no other white men around. [He paused thoughtfully]. 'You know, there's tolerance, but there also has to be a principle of limited trust.'

In the quote above, Adam explicitly expressed his fears of Black people, what Fanon called 'Negrophobia'. Black men become a phobogenic object that arouses anxieties and terror on a psychological level since '[…] affect has a priority that defies all rational thinking' (Fanon, 2008: 120). These fears were reflected in Adam's narrative which symbolically created a boundary between Adam, a good citizen, and Black men who are dangerous and threatening. Staying safe and away from Black people reflected fears that associate Black male bodies with crime, delinquency and threat (Alexander, 1996). On another occasion, Adam called Black people from his neighbourhood 'Black nationals', which shows that he imagined Britishness and Blackness as exclusive (Gilroy, 2004). Adam constructed symbolic boundaries between 'us' and 'them' in the form of a 'reverse discrimination' discourse (Van Dijk, 1992) as justifications for his own fears.

Similar exclusionary practices are stressed by Tomek who, in the quote below, makes a claim to racial belonging and we-ness, and by extension, racial exclusion and they-ness:

> I respect the British culture and I try to adjust […] When they [Black people] come over to us, they shouldn't interfere. This is our culture and that's it. If I went to Pakistan for holidays and they have a different culture there I would try to do everything so I don't offend their culture. (Tomek, 29, 11 months)

Tomek positions himself in the hierarchies of belonging on the same level as the white British majority by stating that British culture is *ours*, a strategy also observed in Parutis's study (2011). In contrast, people of colour are seen as non-citizens or bad guests, who do not honour their British hosts, implicitly defined as white English. He compared ethnic minorities' lives in Britain to a hypothetical situation of him as a tourist in Pakistan. A tourist symbolises temporariness, the necessity to act upon prevalent rules of conduct and a subordinated status. A tourist is a guest. This analogy nonetheless illustrates his understandings of hierarchies of belonging. The white British culture is the one he aspires to be part of, and from this position, he judges other people as not deserving to belong. Tomek participates in what Hage (1998: 60) called 'governmental belonging', the practice of claiming to hold a legitimate view of who can belong to a nation. His conditional citizenship is negotiated through claims about being a good citizen who contingently accepts people of colour, as long as they do not interfere in *our culture*.

Poles' exclusionary practices are analysed here through the lens of their conditional citizenship. My participants use the racialised discourse about other cultures that implicitly stigmatises them due to their race, ethnicity or assumed Muslim religion. They negotiate their way up the hierarchies of belonging by marginalising them through racialised practices and discourses. In the final analytical section, I discuss how positive practices with cultural and racial others are also used as strategies to improve their conditional citizenship in the pursuit to become good citizens.

Strategies of inclusion

Poles' lived diversities are ambivalent and their encounters with cultural and racial others can vary from cosmopolitan openness to racist attitudes and practices. Their appreciation

of multicultural society is often shaped by their understandings of how different Britain's treatment of minorities is compared to Poland.

Adam describes multicultural Britain as a tolerant country and contrasts it with, as he claims, racist Poland. He uses the following example to explain:

> I will tell you this: very often I happened to say: *kolorowy* [colourful/coloured[4]], Black, dirty, *ciapaty*[5] I'm ashamed of it. My family, who now lives in Norway, is very racist, perhaps I got it from them? But since I've been here [pause] OK: *white-skinned, Black-skinned, dark-skinned* [considered as neutral terms in Polish], I think this is normal. But I don't say [with a quieter voice] *n** [in English] because it's not nice. Why? Because here there is a lot of pressure for tolerance. You don't have it in Poland. Here, there is a strong pressure on fighting racism. […] You know, Patrycja [Adam's girlfriend] made me realise that I was a racist. […] So overall, I had to work on myself. In other words, a person who had been here longer than me told me that I need to improve something […] and then I soon realised it myself. Everywhere there are different people.

Adam claims that he has learnt an important lesson about himself. He has become more tolerant since moving to Bristol. This transformation in his perceptions has been possible with the help of his Polish partner who had been in Britain longer and had taught him what the appropriate code of conduct towards people of colour was. He expressed a newly learnt way of appreciating diversity through the conscious use of the language of respect (Gawlewicz, 2015), manifesting an awareness of what an acceptable language of difference in the British context was and translating it into neutral terms in Polish.

Adam makes conscious efforts to demonstrate that he has learnt to feel relaxed around racial and ethnic difference in Britain. Tolerance, learnt from fellow Poles, is perceived as one of the values of multicultural Britain. Even though the concept has been criticised for reinforcing power hierarchies (Hage, 1998; Modood, 2007), Adam learns that in the British context tolerance is an act of hospitality and therefore, a positive approach towards minorities. Hence, he tries to overcome racism by learning tolerance. And as a white European citizen this symbolically puts him in a stronger position within the racialised hierarchies of belonging as the one who can tolerate people of colour. The hospitality discourse is internalised through a strategy of inclusion. Adam's conditional citizen status is mitigated by performing urban civility that he believes will make him a good citizen.

Another participant, Paulina, an assistant manager in a coffee shop, had also invested conscious efforts into being cosmopolitan, another example of strategies of inclusion. Having friends of various ethnic backgrounds was important to her – to demonstrate to other Poles her ease with diversity. Living in a diverse neighbourhood was evidence of her efforts to integrate into multicultural society as the quote below illustrates:

> When people come to visit me, they say: you get on a bus and you are the only white person, everyone else is Black. I don't notice it anymore, even if this is true. Or when I queue in a local shop, I don't pay attention if in front of me there are three Muslim women with three children or, I don't know, two pissed British guys, I don't know, I don't pay attention to it

[…]. You eventually stop categorizing people, you simply see a woman or a man in a queue. (Paulina, 29, 2 years)

Paulina, having learnt to appreciate diversity, claims indifference to difference, paradoxically pointing out cultural, ethnic and religious differences in a very explicit way. She associates Muslim women with having many children and British men with an excessive drinking culture. These perceptions demonstrate that Paulina, in her efforts to embrace diversity and the cosmopolitan practices she manifests, simultaneously learnt about British hierarchies of belonging based on cultural, class, religious and racial identities. Nevertheless, Paulina sees herself as more integrated because of her networks with racial and ethnic others. As she states, her Polish friends were troubled by the diversity in her neighbourhood, whereas she has come to terms with it and has apparently stopped noticing difference. Thus, convivial practices are used to demonstrate that she has become an integral part of a British multicultural society.

The conscious and less strategic encounters with difference may over time lead to 'shifts in identity, the acquisition of accommodative forms of everyday practice, and more inclusive ideas of nation, community and belonging' (Wise, 2013: 39). After 10 years of living in multicultural Bristol, Monika appreciated diversity and treated it as an ordinary part of her life. Although she enjoyed the multicultural setting and conveys civility towards racial, religious and ethnic difference that she encountered in her everyday life, she struggled to accept her husband's racism and reprimanded him for making crude racist jokes: 'He is a horrible racist [nervous laughter] […] Sometimes when he says something, especially in front of our daughter, I either tell him off or give him the look'. Monika, who had been in Britain much longer than Paulina or Adam, had learnt, over the years, to be at ease with difference and recognised that the crude forms of racism expressed by other Poles were inappropriate in the British context. Even though earlier she demonstrated strategies of exclusion towards Somali citizens, those were more subtle than the crude form of racism expressed by her husband. Pointing out ethnicity and religion as Somalis' problem is not perceived as racism by Monika as it does not invoke their 'race'. Being a good citizen means not expressing openly racist views. Racist practices could potentially expose Poles as not fitting in to British multicultural society. However, she had policed her husband who would use racial slurs towards people of colour. Although she did not accept crude forms of biological racism, she reproduced racialised discourses about Somali people. Both reprimanding her husband for racism and the racialised discourse about Somalis' culture and religion express 'complicated feelings' (Gawlewicz, 2016a) and can be interpreted as Monika's ways of negotiating her conditional citizenship and asserting herself more favourably in hierarchies of belonging as a more deserving migrant.

Conclusion

The paper makes two contributions to the literature on everyday multiculturalism. Firstly, it investigates migrants' ambivalent understandings of diversity through the lens of normatively defined conditional citizenship of Polish migrants, that is their contingent acceptance due to a precarious socio-economic position and ambiguous racial identity.

Polish people's acceptance in British society is contingent, they are appreciated as hardworking European migrants on the one hand, and negatively racialised as East Europeans who eventually will go back 'home', on the other. These inherent tensions affect Poles' efforts to become good citizens and reflect their subjective knowledge of the British majority as implicitly white, as tolerant towards Muslims and people of colour, condemnatory of explicit racism, and appreciative of diversity. Poles' ambivalent practices demonstrate their subjective understanding of British racialised hierarchies of belonging. While this paper focuses on Polish migrants, the conceptual framework of conditional citizenship can be used for other migrants who have an ambivalent status. Ukrainian migrants in Poland, mentioned earlier, occupy a similar position in Polish society where their economic contributions are praised but their employment in low waged jobs marks their lower ranking in hierarchies of belonging. Hence, the framework is useful to investigate other national contexts of neoliberal economies within which migrants are treated as contingently accepted due to their nationality, race, ethnicity and class.

Secondly, the paper pays attention to positive practices as negotiation strategies of good citizen status. Although racialised practices have already been studied as a means to symbolically maintain migrants' higher position in society (Parutis, 2011), positive encounters with others have gained less attention in this conceptual framework. As I argue, Polish people often learn to express solidarities in the process of seeking to become good citizens. I have demonstrated in this paper that they can negotiate their conditional citizenship by performing civility and by learning to be tolerant towards racial or religious others. However, as this paper demonstrates, some positive practices expose their racialised understanding of hierarchies in the UK and can be interpreted as racialised discourses of tolerance towards people of colour while treating them as culturally inferior. These positive practices are not necessarily conscious strategies migrants apply to fit in to the British majority. Migrants' hostility can be hidden behind politeness and civility and reflects the context of British racialised hierarchies of belonging in which Polish migrants learn to live with difference. This is not to say that all positive encounters of conditional citizens with racial and cultural others are implicitly hostile or racist, but to point out that certain practices expose racialised understandings of multicultural Britain.

Further research in post-Brexit and post-pandemic Britain will demonstrate to what extent these strategies are still in place. Following the Brexit referendum in 2016, many Polish migrants have faced racism (Rzepnikowska, 2019) and anxieties about their future in Britain, which have undermined their sense of belonging (Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021). We are yet to see how Polish migrants will negotiate their conditional citizenship to counteract the uncertainty and anxieties brought by the pandemic and Brexit. No doubt both events could lead to a possible consequence of the intensified racialisation of Poles under new political, health and socio-economic pressures.

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Notes

1. Wise and Noble (2016) offer a detailed discussion about the conceptual debate around conviviality and cosmopolitanism.
2. 'Czarnoskórzy' is one of the preferred terms by Polish people of colour to describe their heritage (Ohia-Nowak, 2020).
3. St Paul's, situated in the Ashley ward, close to the city centre, is one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in Bristol (Bristol City Council, 2021).
4. The term can be translated as either 'colourful' or 'coloured'. However, the latter has offensive connotations in English, the former appears to have a positive undertone. In Polish 'kolorowy' (adjective) seems to be more neutral. I decided to use both 'colourful' and 'coloured' to capture its ambivalent meaning.
5. An ambivalent neologism in Polish language. Although often used without the awareness of its negative connotations (Gawlewicz, 2016b), this is a racist term that refers to the skin colour and is used to describe South Asians or Arabic people.
6. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-december-2021/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-december-2021
7. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/populationoftheunitedkingdombycountryofbirthandnationality
8. The population of Ukrainians was estimated before the war in Ukraine in 2022 and does not take into account recent refugees fleeing to Poland.

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