

Coding Whiteness and Racialization: Living in the Space as an Insider-Outsider

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes whiteness from the perspectives of “politic of location” to understand how it has changed and applied across the globe, rather than ignoring the relevancy of white supremacy for some geographies that have a racially homogenous population. The first part of the article interrogates my personal experiences of whiteness in Turkey which has a racially homogenous population. In Turkey, my experiences with whiteness were not as a result of directly having white bodies, but rather by being a part of the dominant culture, nation, religion, and language. The second part of this study discusses my experiences of whiteness in the United States. I highlight the different ways in which I experienced whiteness that had to do with my position as a Muslim Turkish woman in racially diverse America. In this autoethnography, by showing my relations and experiences within the discourse of whiteness and racialization of Muslims, I show how whiteness has significantly different meanings in different locations, and how whiteness’s ideology affects people’s experiences through local and global power relations.

Keywords: Whiteness, Racialization, Intersectionality, Politic of Location, Autoethnography, Muslim Identity, Islam.

Global racial structure, whiteness, and racialization exist in various forms in nearly all countries but take on a different meaning in different sites. Racial structure and whiteness have been durable, but their meanings have altered over time, in connection with biological, social, cultural, national, and political factors. The existing literature on whiteness has typically focused on a Black-white

dichotomy and certain ethnic minorities' position in the US racial logic, and the dynamics of Western colonialism (Alcoff, 2015; Brodtkin, 1998; Ignatiev, 2012; Jacobson, 1999; Lòpez, 2005; McClintock, 2013; Williamson, 2013). These studies, however, largely miss how religion, ethnicity, nationality, culture, and language have shaped the black-white racial logic in the United States, and the internationalization of whiteness and the hegemonic ways in which whiteness, as an outcome of imperialism, can express identities and locations in "other" worlds (Husain, 2017; Husain, 2019; Shome, 1999; Supriya, 1999). The issue of "politics of location" plays a crucial role to understand "whiteness from a global perspective, where whiteness is being imposed and by whom and how it is being experienced" (Shome, 1999, p.109). Whiteness is not just about bodies and skin tone or is limited in societies settled by white people, but rather it is more about discursive practices. Thus, racial logic affects spaces and individuals' sense of self, identities, experiences, and life chances in different ways in different locations. A global racial hierarchy has a crucial impact on producing the power and the prejudices of each race.

The most important theoretical contribution of this study is to clarify how the complex nature of experiences faced by a Muslim woman who is at the interplay of various places, both as a geographic location and a social space concerning gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and racialization. As Anthias said, "the 'translocational' acts to fissure the certainties of fixed singular locations by constructing potentially contradictory positionalities. The individuals that are placed in each category may occupy a different position in the other categories" (Anthias, 2002, p.495). In this context, it is important to highlight that people who are different from the dominant culture in particular geography are stigmatized as others (Khabeer, 2016). This process also helps individuals to discover a new identity about themselves due to historical, geographical, cultural, national, and religious differences of complex and shifting places in which they have been during their lives (Anthias, 2002). The identities that we have are not stable. It is worth considering whether there is a connection between whiteness, being Muslim, and places. Moosavi's study (2015) explains how Muslims are racialized and identified in different ways based on the position of Islam in different racial, ethnic, national, and political environments. The politic of locations plays a crucial role in whiteness that is culturally, religiously, and historically situated in time and space.

Being a member of a group in society affects people's ideas, norms, beliefs, and expectations in some ways. People are the bearer of social, cultural, and political content in a way that assures the stability of society; if society is evolving along a more or less problematic path, sociologists must be aware of this and able to pinpoint how exactly this connection between the society and the self is being maintained and operates, including in themselves. Otherwise, sociology as a discipline simply perpetuates the basic configuration of society, and rather than illuminating the latter, is integral to the configuration of society in time and space.

I want to examine how people are placed in two different societal contexts, what this means for their perspectives on others and themselves. Situating U.S. racial logic (black and white binary) and whiteness in a politic of location, I want

to discuss how whiteness has structured, contained, and circumscribed my identity in two places: Turkey which is racially homogenous even though it is an ethnically complex and diverse nation, and America a very diverse country based on race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion (Atiya, 2019). Since, where I live, how I live, my relations to the social systems and structures that surround me remain essential both to my identity and sense of self and to my categorization and racialization within a local and global cultural context. By doing this, I want to analyze the differences between being a Turkish woman in the United States and Turkey in terms of how I identify my racial identity. How racial identification of myself has changed and how I lose my whiteness in America where individuals are dominantly Christian, white, and American. Additionally, what is the meaning of being a Muslim woman in Turkey and the United States? Thus, this paper explains the story of my own experiences with whiteness through the lens of a researcher. I attempt to show how it has reshaped the basic part of who I thought I was and who I am now.

During the last decade, like the events of 9/11, the resulting war in Iraq and Syria, ISIS, and the socio-political situation of Muslims in Western countries has caused to racialize Muslims. Muslim women have become more visible in U.S colleges in recent years as prejudice against Muslims has been on the rise (Cole and Ahmadi, 2003; Peek, 2003). Especially Muslim women experience racialization by practicing social and racial exclusion and their racialization outcomes also show differences based on their skin color, hair, clothes, citizenship, nationality, and ethnicity (Karaman & Christian, 2020). Therefore, analyzing Muslim women's experiences throughout whiteness need special attention. Whiteness ideologies have been at the root of economic, social, educational, and cultural inequities, which have been passed down through the generations and continue to have an impact today. This study demonstrates how whiteness has drastically different meanings in different areas, and how whiteness ideology influences people's lives through local and global power relations, by exhibiting my interactions and experiences within the discourse of whiteness and racialization of Muslims.

METHOD

Autoethnography as Methodology

Autoethnography is based on using and analyzing the researcher's own experiences. Writing or reading an autoethnography encourages thinking about the self and the lived experiences of others, which develops a deeper understanding of both others and their own culture (Barakat, 2016; Ellis & Bochner, 1996). "Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p.1). In general, I chose autoethnography because it can shed light on my unique experiences to show how my religious, racial, national, and cultural experiences play a different role in local and global locations and perspectives. I have

personally experienced racialization in a different way than someone who has just had limited exposure to these issues. Insider knowledge does not imply that an autoethnographer can communicate more exact or honest information than outsiders, but rather that as a writer, it gives a chance to convey the stories in unique ways that others may not be able to do (Adams, Ellis & Jones, 2017).

The data gathering strategy is to have a chronological discussion of my experiences that are related to whiteness (Chang, 2008). This data generation exercise help me to discuss these occurrences and how they influenced my cultural self-discovery, as well as the circumstances surrounding me and why they are significant in my life. Cultural rituals and family attitudes are also expressed in sayings that help me analyze my experiences with whiteness from a cultural perspective. Using field notes, I documented not just observations, but also asides, remarks, and persisting memories. I also employed ethnographic writing in the form of rich, thick descriptions to capture my experiences within both contexts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define thick description as a way of achieving a type of external validity. A thick description is a detailed explanation of the field experiences. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that by defining the field experience in sufficient detail, the reader could determine the extent of transferability to other times, settings, situations, and people. Using thick descriptions, I observed and documented a Muslim non-hijabi¹ Turkish woman's experiences in the United States and Turkey through the lens of whiteness. Combining various analytical methodologies, this study aims to increase the validity, depth, and complexity of study results and outcomes.

As a Muslim, Turkish international student in the United States, I had a chance to take a class "race in a global context" and it help me to think about racism in a global context and to understand whiteness through the idea of "politics of locations. After I got my doctoral degree, I came back to Turkey and I started to look at nationalism, minorities, and Turkishness through racial conception. After I had been more than seven years in the United States, I did not only start to write my narratives on my everyday life and my racialization experiences and memories in both countries, but I also analyzed and transcribed racialized experiences of my Muslim friends and minority groups that I observed.

I transcribed ten stories of mine about racialization. A primary round of coding produced fifteen major codes around whiteness, ethnicity, politic of location, racial identity, racialization outcomes to analyze my experiences within the discourse of whiteness depending on the location have changed. In the second round of coding, I categorized my experiences in both Turkey and the United States in two themes: "me and other worlds" and " a dream country America". First I analyzed the social construction of whiteness in Turkey and how my racial,

¹ "hijabi" is refering to the woman who wears a hijab.

ethnic, religious, national identities and skin color gave me advantages and disadvantages in Turkey. Then, I explained the stigmatized image of a Muslim and/or Turkish woman that I may or may not fit. To explain how Westernization/whiteness have significantly different meanings in Turkey and the United States, I showed how my religion, nationality, and language (speaking English as a second language and having an accent) have caused me to question my whiteness in the United States due to my racialized Muslim identity. As a sociologist, I introduce my autoethnography by showing my experiences, rethinking the past, analyzing the present, and making a suggestion for the future to understand whiteness through the idea of “politics of locations” is crucial to understand how the social world created whiteness in ways that most people are completely unaware of.

FINDINGS

Me and “Other” Worlds

Social Construction of Whiteness in Turkey

Growing up in a country where people are mostly white, Muslim, and Turk put me directly in a comfort zone that I have been completely unaware of the lack of racial/ethnic/religious inequalities. I wasn't aware of the certain privileges that have benefited me because of my nationality, religion, class, and sexual orientation and I have had difficulties trying to understand people who are minorities and disadvantaged in society. This was a privilege I had from my social and educational experiences in Turkey without even realizing it until I moved to the United States because privilege returns to a normal condition, it might be difficult to identify it at first. In Turkey, I am always surrounded by individuals who have similar races, cultures, and languages and I now realize I was not pushed outside of my comfort zone and I understand how global whiteness has an impact on my home country. From the establishment to the present in Turkey, whiteness is constructed through nationality, culture, religion, and discourses and these intersectional identities are as important as skin tone (Gökay & Aybak, 2016). In Turkey, which is a racially homogenous country, being white means being “a Turk” and speaking the Turkish language correctly. My experiences with whiteness were not only a result of having white bodies (I am described as a brunette rather than a white woman) but also being a part of the dominant culture, nation, religion, and language.

Westernization. The first studies on race in Turkey emerged with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. In this period, the idea that Turks did not belong to the white race was dominant in the countries in the West, and Turks were considered as a nation belonging to the yellow race. There was a belief that belonging to the Caucasian race would remove one of the obstacles to Turkey's westernization. For this reason, they have made an effort to scientifically prove that they are included in the white race, and the most important common feature of these studies is that they deal with race not culturally, but biologically (Irmak,

1937; İnan, 1947; Kansu, 1991; Münüsoğlu, 2010). One of the main motivations for their desire to scientifically prove that the Turkish race is a member of the white racial group is to convince them that it is intrinsic and immutable. Another way of showing that they belong to the white race is thought to be related to being close to the West in socio-cultural terms (Arat-Koç, 2018). The concept of race was introduced in the West with modernity. “Hesse argued that modernity is inherently a “racialized modernity” (2007, p. 643) that solidified the discursive and material distinctions between *Europeanness* and *non-Europeanness*” (Christian, 2019, p. 3). Secularism was a watershed moment in the Republic of Turkey's history since it moved the country closer to Western-style economies, politics, and social structures (Karaman, 2021). In the 1990s, the term "white Turks" originally referred to the ruling class, urban, Western, bourgeois, modern, and secular while “black Turks” are considered as a part of the rural, Eastern, feudal, traditional, and conservative (Yorukoglu, 2017). Those who were unwilling to share governmental authority with non-whites from a provincial background were known as white Turks at the time (Güner, 2021). In this context, in Turkey, belonging to whiteness was seen as equivalent to being Western, European, educated, privileged, modern, and democratic. Being white has a strong connection with appearance, clothing, language, religion, culture, and ethnic characteristics as well as having white skin color. In Turkey, culture, class, whiteness in discussions about lifestyle and status / white racial perception plays an important role.

Hijab. People that identify with a Western way of life and mindset are known as white Turks. Westernization was seen as both liberating and anti-religious due to the lack of critical thinking on tolerance, liberalism, and democracy (Tatari, 2006). While the Turkish modernization project is supposed to be the enlightenment of the nation, it has led to major divisions within the *Turkish* society such as backward-modern people, and bigot-Kemalist people (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2010). The political, economic, and social concepts promoted by Kemal Atatürk to construct a modern republican secular state are known as Kemalism (Balci, 2021). Beliefs and clothing have had an important impact to categorize people as white (urban, Western, bourgeois, modern, and secular) or black Turks (the rural, Eastern, feudal, traditional, and conservative). The headscarf is a common religious and cultural practice in Turkey. After the Republic of Turkey was founded, Atatürk tried to change the shape of the lifestyles and customs of the society. He encouraged people to adopt Western dress codes and many women give up the headscarf as the new, secular Turkish identity took hold (Tok, 2009). This simply meant dressing, acting, and speaking in a European manner in the hopes of influencing people's beliefs and religious views (Tatari, 2006). While elites showed respect to hijabi women who live in rural areas as traditional and cultural heritage, hijabi women who worked and got an education in urban areas were seen as a danger to the republic, the ideal citizen, and the contemporary way of life by these Turkish secularists (Tok, 2009). The headscarf became more visible in the urban space after people immigrate from rural to urban during the rapid industrial revolution (Tok, 2009). In 1984 the

headscarf was banned from Constitutional Court officially. In the past, they faced exclusion from schools, universities, and working places because of the actions of secularist politicians in Turkey. The education system is a mechanism of perpetuating privilege in society. Human beings are shaped by their societies, and cultural and social norms (Harro, 2010; McLaren, 2003). The social function of the educational institution (and curriculum) is to teach students “how to be”, how to behave, how to feel about themselves, and what to expect concerning their social class (Harro, 2010, p.45). However, Understanding the fluidity and dynamism of race, racism, whiteness, and racialization helps to influence the rebuilding of education and educational experiences in the home and foreign countries more equitably and inclusively (Koh & Sin, 2021). The school system in Turkey showed us what modern, secular, and ideal are. During my undergrad education in Turkey, I saw many hijabi students who took off their hijabs to entrance the campus and attend the classes. I remember that they were crying and saying “that’s not fair” and “wearing a hijab is my choice and I am not oppressed or radical Muslim”. I felt sad for my hijabi friends because rules/laws did not give them a chance to wear whatever they want or feel comfortable. While my hijabi friends were stigmatized as a threat to secularism and an ideal image of modern Turkish woman citizens and I have never experienced being others and had to deal with psychological violence or social exclusion as a non-hijabi woman. In 2013 the headscarf ban was removed in many public places, but the headscarf still has been a contentious symbol of freedom or oppression throughout contemporary Turkish history.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Muslims, especially Arabs are racialized as terrorists, other, non-white, and non-citizen in western countries where the majority of the population is non-Muslim. The 9/11 terrorist attack has also impacted how Arabs and Middle Eastern people are stigmatized as dangerous and radical Muslims globally and hijabi Muslims are more negatively affected due to their visible Muslim identities. The liberation of Muslim women from their old backward faith become a central theme in Western understanding. Turkey, where people are mostly Muslims, has been affected by these stigmatizations because it never wants to challenge secularism and the legitimacy of westernization. Being a non-hijabi in both Turkey where hijabi women are stigmatized as a threat to secularism and America where hijabi women are pictured as a threat to national security prevents me from social exclusion, hate speech, harassment, and discrimination in both countries.

Ethnicity. The media presentation of a Turkish person has played also an important to show a modern, independent, educated, Western, white Turkish person looks like. The Kurd population is the largest part of the diverse population. I grew up seeing this diverse population everywhere in Istanbul and especially the Kurdish people population is estimated at 15 million yet often they don’t find themselves presented correctly in mainstream media. There are some exceptions but they generally represent them as uneducated, low-income, rural, radical Muslim, and non-Western. Even though there are Kurdish people who have blond hair, blue eyes, and white skin, the media presented and represented

Kurdish people who have a darker skin color and do not know “good” Turkish or have a heavy accent (Ergin, 2008; 2014). Since being white is coded to become an act of belonging to “the West”. Kurdishness is also being more connected with criminality. Growing contact between Kurds and Turks in cities, as found in other situations, may lead to a greater fear of crime among Turks. The innate tendency of Kurds towards violence and criminality is an underlying pattern in these charges (Bora, 2003; 2006). My “pure Turkish blood” gave me privilege in my home country, but I have just realized this privilege when I am in a foreign country where my whiteness is questioned due to my religion and nationality.

Physical Whiteness

Skin Color. Such a play of whiteness was not just restricted to the media, educational, or political sites, but was also prevalent in the larger cultural environment. So far, I talked about the privileges I have in Turkey due to my “pure Turkish blood” and my language, and now I recall examples about the politics of skin color that affect my experiences in Turkey. In Turkey, there is a politics of skin color like in many Western countries, although it performs differently in distinct places in terms of the structure of sexism, heterosexism, and racism. In many parts of Turkey, having a light skin color is just a signifier of “beauty”. I remember so many events when the first question from relatives of the newborn was about the skin color of the baby. Does it have white skin or not; blonde hair or dark hair? When I gave birth, many of my relatives made complimentary remarks about how my baby is beautiful because she has white skin and blonde hair. And interestingly many of my relatives have brown eyes, hair, and skin. I also found my family talked about how my baby looks like “snow white”. Almost everyone knows about the story of “Snow White” who has skin as white as snow...Why is being white/having white skin important for them? How do they get this knowledge?

My mother also has blue eyes, blond hair, and white skin; I do not have any. Thus, she fits a certain norm of “beauty “that reinscribes this white bias” that I do not fit. We have often been in situations when I was growing up in which relatives would comment favorably on my mother’s skin color and eyes, how her appearance resembled that of a white person’s, but they would usually remain silent about me and my appearance. My mother said to me, do you remember when you were a small child, you were crying and saying, “why my eyes are not blue”. Now I understand why I was crying to have blue eyes since I want to have a beauty that society accepted. While I do not think that at that age I fully understood the violent sexist, racist, and heterosexist social assumptions underlying such speeches, they nonetheless created a half-understood awareness in me about the social politics of whiteness. The picture of my experiences of whiteness in Turkey's social context that I have presented so far helps to understand how global racism and whiteness influence other locations and obtains significance only within a certain politics of location. My relations to whiteness in Turkey are an inescapable effect of my country’s history with West and East, which can be differentiated from my relations to whiteness in the United States.

“A dream country America”

I always believed that the United States was a utopia that was brighter, happier, desegregated in all respects and we are seen and valued as we are. One of the explanations for this idea is the movies and advertisements that we used to see them. All we saw were free, smiling, white faces that said we are living much more comfortably than you. Concurrently, we received this implicit message that it's a far reached land, that it's almost impossible or very hard to get there. What I saw in the movies and news made me think that racism is not an issue in today's America. It didn't take a long time for me to find out that I was intended to think like this. Racial and national categories are seen differently in the United States than in Turkey. There is racism, discrimination, and stereotype not only for different racial and ethnic groups but also for Muslims (Cainkar & Selod, 2018; Husain, 2017; Husain, 2021; Karaman & Christian, 2020; Selod & Embrick, 2013; Selod, 2018). Religion is being utilized to establish racial profiles inside and across nations (i.e., the assumption that particular religions foster dispositions toward violence and terrorism). My religious identity in my home country gives me a privilege. I was sure there were going to be new challenges for me as a non-privileged white Muslim woman.

My experiences of whiteness in the United States are very different from those in Turkey. One of the most interesting and my own main experiences in America is how my racial identification changed. In the United States, Middle Eastern people are currently racially identified as “white” by the US Census. However, whiteness stigmatized me as “other” here. What is the problem with my whiteness? The biggest problem is that I experience that “otherness” (losing whiteness) is the ways in which my religion, nationality, external appearances such as long black hair, and language marked me as “other/foreign/Muslim”. My religion, nationality, and language become a site of struggle, a persistently signified as racial identification, in ways that it was not in Turkey because of the absence of racialization of Muslims. Whiteness is a term used to describe a range of cultural behaviors that are often unmarked and nameless (Frankenburg, 1993). Therefore, my experiences with whiteness in both countries are different due to social, racial, religious, and cultural structures. When I came to the United States, I have started to discover new identities that I didn't have to think about before. Now I am a Muslim, Turkish woman and I am out of the circle here because of stereotypes and prejudice against Muslims and Muslim countries (Cainkar, 2009; Karaman & Christian, 2020). My Muslim friends who wear headscarves and practice regularly have faced discrimination and stereotypes in America. Likewise, as a Muslim woman who is a non-hijabi, wearing something a hypersexualized way, and drinking alcohol, I was judged by non-Muslim Americans due to the images of the Muslim woman are represented by a dominant media, social, and political environments.

I also received comments “You don't look and act Muslim or Turkish” or “You are not a dependent woman”. While the expected intention of such comments was to make me “feel good” instead of judging me, they are nonetheless problematic and unhelpful. Since the implicit meaning in such

comments shows that my body is still up for examination concerning some categorized and stigmatized image of a Muslim and/or Turkish woman that I may or may not fit. Either way, it stigmatized me as different because I seem “Muslim or Turkish” or because I don’t express the “right” kind of “Muslim or Turkish identity” that people expect to see. Both these situations distanced me from whiteness because I am racialized as Muslim which means here non-white, religious, radical, oppressed, dangerous, and “other” because of stereotypical characteristics of *being non-white*. These experiences caused me to question my perception of whiteness such as does having white skin make a person white? My experiences showed that it does not. Even though having white skin and are officially identified as white, people might be racialized as non-white due to their religion, culture, dress, language, and nationality. My experiences in the United States do not only shape my perception of the significance of race in social structure as a whole, but they also help me to analyze the racial structure and people from less privileged backgrounds (religious, ethnic, and racial minorities) in my home country.

DISCUSSION

Racism and racialization in transnational identities are linked to differences in places and social interactions, resulting in diverse and unexpected degrees of privilege and disadvantage when combined with structures and agencies (Lutz & Amelina, 2021; Koh & Sin, 2021). This article attempted to explain the complicated experiences of a Muslim woman who lives at the crossroads of numerous locations, both geographically and socially, in terms of gender, ethnicity, country, religion, and racialization. I examine my experiences with whiteness both in Turkey and the United States through the idea of “politics of locations”. In the United States, I had negative experiences due to my Muslim identity that distanced me from whiteness as an outcome of my racialized Muslim identity; in Turkey, while my religious identity, my body, nationality, and language were never a target of violence (at least on the issue of race) as it is in the United States. However, my intersecting identities did not lead to questioning my whiteness in homogenous Turkish society. Focusing on my relations and experiences in the United States of America and Turkey-based on the discourse of whiteness and racialization of Muslims, I hope to have shown how Westernization/whiteness have significantly different meanings in different locations, and how whiteness ideology affects people’s experiences through the local and global power relations. Racism and racial classifications show a great deal of variety based on historical and global racialization processes that intersect with national structures (Christian, 2019).

Fixed classifications can be valuable in illustrating the struggle that occurs in situated settings, but not enough to capture the complexity of these processes (Anthias, 2020). To understand the complexities of whiteness, some researchers highlight the importance of the intersection of place, time, and meaning (Anthias, 2020; Husain, 2017; Husain, 2019; Karaman & Christian, 2020; Karaman & Christian 2021; Selod, 2018; Shome, 1999). Anthias (2020) shows that in the

United Kingdom, Germany, and France, for example, migrants or minorities are seen differently as cultural 'others' due to different social, cultural, and political environments in these countries. The racialization of Muslims in the United States has caused them to question their whiteness and citizenship due to their religion, nationality, ethnicity, and culture (Karaman & Christian, 2020).

The media's ethnocentric portrayal of migrants and discourses about them normalizes racialization through purportedly rational reasoning (Bozda, 2020; Toker, 2019). Ethnic culture refers to shared communal behaviors such as language, symbolism, morals, and philosophy, as well as shared ideas about a common heritage (Zevallos, 2008). During the last decades, the issue of Syrians in Turkey is gradually turning into a problem of cohesion and security based on social, political, and economic dimensions. Even though Syrian refugees are white, they are racialized as uncivilized, backward, and the other who can only taint the dominant culture and civilization. Racist discourses such as "they take our jobs", "they are radical Muslims and threat for secularism", and "the crime rate has increased since they came to our country" and towards Syrians in Turkey is motivated by linguistic, social, national, and cultural disparities (Koca, 2016; Ozduzen, Korkut & Ozduzen, 2021; Şimşek, 2021). Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many studies focused on how minorities' academic performance and well-being have been negatively affected by financial challenges, a lack of social connectivity, and a feeling of belonging (Firang, 2020; Lederer et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2020). However, the majority of studies ignored that Syrians are racialized as a threat to the security and economic crisis as well as public health and disease vectors, causing social marginalization and putting them at greater risk of being dismissed from their jobs (Elias et al., 2021; Karaman, 2020; Kurt, 2021). The problem of "politics of location" is vital to comprehending whiteness from a global perspective to a national one. Racialization experiences of Syrian refugees vary based on the national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of these groups. The result of the racialization of Syrians as Arab, Middle Eastern, radical Muslim, terrorist, dangerous, and backward have caused them to lose their whiteness in different ways in different locations. *White* as color does not become a code for race, but becomes a *code* for power, westernization, and privilege. Differently from previous studies focusing on racialization experiences of Syrians in Turkey and Muslims in the Western countries, this study analyzes the meaning and positionality of whiteness shifts when someone moves through my experiences both in Turkey and in the United States.

My experiences with whiteness that is culturally, religiously, and historically situated in time and space show how I am placed in two distinct societal situations, and what these implications are for my views on others and me. Individuals can also use this method to realize a new identity about themselves as a result of historical, geographical, cultural, national, and religious variations in the complicated and moving areas they've lived throughout their life.

Implications for Future Research

Analyzing whiteness ideology through the politic of location gives a chance to understand how racial dynamics connect at the local, national, and global levels, as well as how the concept of race and its meaning flows across the world. Existing literature mostly ignores applying intersectional perspectives and global whiteness ideology to understand Muslim students' experiences and this makes it difficult to raise awareness for local people, college leaders, and international programs about the difficulties faced by Muslim students in the United States. Additionally, more research and informative seminars on the intertwining forms of the racialization of Muslims and Islam in the United States do not only bring more insight and complexity to race studies but also help to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at international programs and international student community. Community college leaders who have Muslim international students studying on their campuses as well as the international educators should understand intersecting identities of Muslims, their racialization outcomes, and their national racialized social systems by connecting them to the broader project of global white ideology to promote equal, diverse, and inclusive learning environment in international education.

CONCLUSION

I outline some ideas from the discussion above to highlight the social construction and fluidity of whiteness from the perspectives of “politic of location” by using my autoethnography. In the examples that I have shown how whiteness ideology affects me in different ways in both Turkey and the United States. These impacts take place at multiple and often intersecting levels in the United States of America. After I started to study in America, I have been identified as a Muslim woman so, I found myself in this racial project. As an outcome of being racialized Muslim, regardless of my racial conception, my religion, nationality, and language (speaking English as a second language and having an accent) distanced me from whiteness in the United States. However, in Turkey, my religion, the branch of Islam I belong to (being Sunni), nationality, and language provide me certain privileges that I do not experience in America.

My experiences in both countries highlight how sociologists must first understand their national racialized social systems by connecting them to the broader project of global white ideology. This study aimed to highlight the significance of analyzing whiteness from the perspective of locations where populations are racially homogeneous or heterogeneous; people are aware or unaware of the dominance of whiteness; people are a part of the accepted dominant culture or not. As researchers, we must first involve in our own identities by showing our world and identity to understand how each of us is affected by our rapidly changing and contradictory society. Discussions of social problems must have extended into the relationships of national, transnational, and concepts of the self. For race and diversity scholars, international college administrators, and educators, this study is important to bring awareness and understanding of how international students experience whiteness through the intersecting identities of gender, race, nationality, culture, and religion and how

international students are racialized and identified in a variety of ways depending on the place of Islam in various racial, ethnic, national, and political contexts. The studies on international students' experiences in the United States analyze their problem based on their nationality by ignoring their religious, gender, ethnic, and racialized identities. Increasing this awareness and understanding helps to sustain international education and to empower international students to improve their social and educational conditions. To provide an equal, diverse, and inclusive learning environment in international education, much *scholarly attention* has been *needed* to understand the experiences of Muslim international students in terms of the whiteness ideology.

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