

When the Nation Becomes Louder: Everyday Nationalism and the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum

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journals.sagepub.com/home/soc**Minna Liinpää** 

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Abstract

The 2014 Scottish independence referendum provided a sociologically opportune moment to study how nationalist narratives are constructed, expressed and experienced from below – or how nationalism is lived on the ground – as ‘the Scottish nation’ was widely discussed and debated. Drawing on 24 qualitative interviews, this article considers how ethnic and racialised minorities experienced and made sense of the nation on an everyday level around the time of the referendum. Consequently, this article argues that experiencing the everyday as routine, mundane or unremarkable is often a privilege; that focusing on those whose national belonging is not ‘beyond question’ is a revealing angle to take; and that during such hyper-nationalist contexts the nation merely becomes *louder* for ethnic and racialised minorities.

Keywords

ethnicity, everyday, nationalism, race, Scotland

Introduction

This article makes use of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum in an effort to study everyday nationalism. Scotland, as part of the United Kingdom, has its own parliament and government, and powers in certain policy areas have been devolved to the Scottish Government. The referendum was agreed between the Scottish and UK governments in October 2012, and the vote on the issue of Scotland’s independence took place on 18 September 2014 with 44.7 per cent voting for and 55.3 per cent against independence. This political context is important because, while not an everyday

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occurrence itself, the referendum offered a fruitful moment to study nationalism due to the reflexive quality of that context when the conceptual bordering of the nation was explicitly up for discussion. As argued by Fox (2017), everyday nationalism – the capturing of which is methodologically challenging – becomes more pronounced at the edges of the nation which can be spatial, temporal or political. Importantly, Fox (2017: 38) argues that the political edge of the nation can be discernible through the study of immigration and migrants, and that devolution (and Scottish independence specifically) provides ‘fertile ground for tapping into people’s otherwise self-evident assumptions of what the nation is’.

Fox’s (2017) insights are important for this article as it draws on a qualitative study undertaken before, during and after the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. The data come from interviews with ethnic minority voters (both Scottish born and migrants), and pro- and anti-independence campaigners. Thus, this article focuses on ethnic and racialised minorities’ views and experiences, and seeks to tease out the ways in which the nation is made visible in everyday life, and how – in that context – the ideas of ‘race’, ethnicity and nation interact.

In this article, I will advance three interrelated arguments: first, informed by Smith’s (2016) work on everyday racism, I argue that everyday nationalism studies need to become more critical of the notion of ‘the everyday’ itself, and to take into consideration that experiencing the everyday as routine, mundane or unremarkable is often a privilege. To this end, literature on everyday racism and ethnicity provides an important body of work to tap into – especially as ideas about the nation are closely bound up with ideas of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ (Balibar, 1991; Gilroy, 1992; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Second, I argue that focusing on those whose national belonging is not ‘beyond question’ or does not remain unchallenged, is a fertile and revealing angle to take (see also Antonsich, 2018; Skey, 2018). Finally, I argue that during such hyper-nationalist contexts as the Scottish independence referendum – when the nation is publicly debated and discussed – the nation merely becomes *louder* for ethnic and racialised minorities and that, actually, there is not much difference between nationally ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ contexts (see also Benson and Lewis, 2019 on British people of colour living in the EU27 countries).

This article will, first, consider theories of everyday nationalism followed by an overview of the qualitative methodology. The findings will then be discussed in relation to Scotland and Scottishness more broadly in terms of fitting in and being (in)conspicuous, followed by a discussion of the referendum context in particular.

Theorising Everyday Nationalism

Traditionally, those contributing to classical theory in nationalism studies have been interested in questions to do with historical debates of how nations came to emerge *from above*, and these authors are often characterised as either modernists (arguing for the modernity of nations) or ethnicists/ethnosymbolists (arguing for the deeper, pre-modern roots of nations) (see, for example, Day and Thompson, 2004). Nonetheless, although himself a modernist and ‘grand narrativist’, Hobsbawm (1990: 10) notes that even though nationalism is mainly constructed from above, it also needs to be analysed from

below in terms of the ‘assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist’. Everyday nationalism studies – which focus on the ‘from below’ – are generally linked to post-classical approaches in nationalism studies which are united by the ‘belief in the need to transcend the classical debate by proposing new ways of thinking about national phenomena’ (Özkirimli, 2000: 191) and aspiring towards redefining the terms of the debate while posing new and different questions (Day and Thompson, 2004: 13).¹

Everyday nationalism studies are a constantly growing field, and authors have looked at issues such as bilingual road signs in Wales (Jones and Merriman, 2009), food (Ichijo and Ranta, 2016) and name change practices in Germany (Wallem, 2017). Such studies are important because, as argued by Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008: 537), mainstream nationalism studies have focused on the political, economic and cultural determinants of popular nationalism somewhat at the expense of the people. That is, the popularity of nationalism has not been systematically accounted for, and people are ‘assumed to be attuned to the national content of their self-appointed nationalist messengers’ (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 537). Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008: 537), however, argue that the nation ‘is not simply the product of macro-structural forces; it is simultaneously the practical accomplishment of ordinary people engaging in routine activities’. Thus, it is these routine activities in both ‘ordinary’ and more extraordinary contexts that this article discusses in an effort to advance the arguments outlined above.

How can ‘everyday’, then, be defined? Felski (2000 [1999]: 15) notes that ‘those who use the term [everyday] are often reluctant to explain exactly what it means’. Essed, similarly, points out the everyday is frequently vaguely defined: it has been branded as that which is ‘ordinary’ by Antaki and ‘common sense’ by Furnham (in Essed, 1991: 47). For Scott (2009: 1–2), everyday life can be defined as those sites in which people do (i.e. perform, reproduce, challenge) social life; it is that which is often – but not always – mundane, familiar and unremarkable as well as routine, repetitive and rhythmic. For Felski (2000 [1999]: 18), everyday life is ‘grounded in three key facets’: time, space and modality. While Felski (2000 [1999]: 18–21) argues that ‘the temporality of everyday life is that of repetitions’ – that is, temporality ‘combines repetition and linearity, recurrence with forward movement’ – for her ‘the spatial ordering of the everyday’, in turn, ‘is anchored in a sense of home’ and the ‘characteristic mode of experiencing the everyday is that of habit’. However, this mundaneness or familiarity does not mean that everyday phenomena are ‘trivial, benign or insignificant: Martin (2003) reminds us that the everyday world is infused with power, politics and historical significance’ (Scott, 2009: 2). On the other hand, authors (e.g. Cohen and Taylor, 1992) have also drawn our attention to escape attempts and resistance in everyday life. Importantly, everyday nationalism studies often share a similar focus on the routine and unreflexive as discussed above: ‘the nation’ is seen as ‘operating clandestinely as an unreflexive habit, an unselfconscious disposition, and an embodied practice’ (Fox and Van Ginderachter, 2018: 547–548). But, the question is, unreflexive for whom?

While the taken-for-grantedness and the routine, unreflective quality of everyday nationalism is often foregrounded in literature, Smith (2016: 8) – crucially – urges us to remember that ‘understanding everyday racism’ (or everyday nationalism) ‘requires

us to grasp the complexity and political significance of the concept of everyday itself'. This is significant because the everyday as a site of mundane, unreflective and unremarkable events and happenings is a privilege. Smith (2016: 9), drawing on Essed (1991), notes how those who are racialised are denied the possibility of acting in the unreflective ways 'that characteriz[e] much of what we do in everyday life'. That is, going about one's daily business unnoticed and in an unreflective way is not always a possibility for those who are marked as 'different', as a 'threat' or as 'inferior' due to the colour of their skin or their assumed religion (especially Muslims contemporarily), for example. Those marked out as different often cannot pass through space and time without someone, at some point, challenging them, their very being and their right to occupy a certain space. The same goes with respect to nationalism: those deemed not to belong to the nation are routinely reminded of this, and of their status as a 'stranger' (Simmel, 2004 [1900]). This article, thus, demonstrates how those who do not 'unproblematically' belong to the nation constantly encounter implicit and explicit 'flaggings' (Billig, 1995) of the nation and national belonging that are not merely bypassed in unreflective ways; rather, these often small occurrences impact upon ethnic and racialised minorities' everyday experiences and understandings of the 'Scottish nation' and who does (not) belong to it.

Importantly, when considering the nation, it is crucial to note its intimate connection to 'race'. Paul Gilroy (1992: 44) argues that politics of 'race' in the UK are surrounded by conceptions of national belonging and homogeneity which not only blur the distinction between 'race' and nation but rely on this ambiguity for their effect. There is therefore also a close relationship between everyday nationalism and everyday racism, and it is in everyday situations that ideas around 'race' and nation frequently materialise and are communicated in often overlapping ways. As argued by Smith (2016: 6), the everyday matters because 'it is at the level of the everyday, not at the level of abstract structure, that much of the "persuasiveness" of "race"' – or, indeed, other ideas such as 'nation' – 'happens, socially speaking'. Indeed, as will be seen, there is a pronounced slippage between 'race' and nation in the ways in which nations are made visible in the everyday. However, we must also recognise how racialised national exclusion can become disturbed by hybridity (see Kyriakides et al., 2009) or how the everyday can be a site where the relationship between 'race' and nation can be disrupted in ways that can open up national belonging to racialised Others (Antonsich, 2018).

This article thus contributes to everyday nationalism literature by critically engaging with the notion of the everyday itself. As discussed, while the routine and unreflective quality of the everyday is often foregrounded in literature, focusing on those whose relationship to the nation is under frequent negotiation and subject to challenges – ethnic and racialised minorities, for example – brings to view that experiencing the nation in everyday contexts as unreflective is a privilege. Crucially, we need to remain attuned to the complexities of the category of the everyday when, on the one hand, studying those who are often seen to unproblematically be part of the nation (often 'white' nationals in white-majority countries – see, for example, Skey, 2011) or, on the other, those whose status is often questioned or challenged (see, for example, Antonsich, 2016, 2018).

Methodology

This article draws on data from semi-structured interviews with ethnic minority voters ($N = 24$) – three of whom were also pro-independence (Yes) campaigners, and one an anti-independence (No) campaigner. Out of the four campaigners, one was a politician – a local councillor² – while others were ‘ordinary voters’ who were active in different Yes or No groups. The interviews were conducted between July 2014 and September 2015, and the interviewees were aged between 19 and 54. Eleven were men and 13 women, nine voted for independence, 10 against it, one did not disclose how they voted, one was not entitled to vote and three did not vote. The study has received ethical approval from the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow.

Although I am fully aware of criticisms regarding ‘groupism’ (Brubaker, 2002), I decided to focus on people from specific ethnic minority backgrounds, namely African, English, Indian, Pakistani and Polish. However, I received two responses to my ads from people outside these ‘groups’ (Iranian, Channel Islander) and decided to include these participants in the sample. Not only was focusing on specific ‘groups’ a pragmatic decision (e.g. managing recruitment process), there were also analytical reasons as these groups are already politicised in Scottish social life.

These processes of politicisation take different forms. The English have been argued to be Scotland’s ‘significant other’ (Hussain and Miller, 2006; Miles and Dunlop, 1986) and during the referendum BBC presenter Jeremy Paxman argued the vote was fuelled by ‘hatred’ against the English (Harrison, 2014). The African minority is the most rapidly growing group in Scotland, while the Polish were the biggest minority group in Scotland in the 2011 census (Simpson, 2014) as well as subject to moral panics about migration (Pijpers, 2006). Indian and Pakistani minorities were included due to their close connection with the British Empire, and Scotland has a long history of Indian and (especially) Pakistani migration stemming mainly from this historical imperial link. Furthermore, it is worth noting that these groups differ in terms of their visibility in the literal sense of the word. While Englishness and Polishness are often imagined as white, Africans, Indians and Pakistanis are often marked out as visibly different in the white majority Scotland. It is this comparison that proved to render rich data which will be discussed in due course.

The sample was made up of both migrants as well as Scottish-born individuals. Participants were recruited by placing an ad in the *Metro* newspaper (a free newspaper available on public transportation) and Gumtree (a free online advertising board). These media were chosen due to their accessibility and potential to reach a wide audience. All interviews took between 30 minutes and three hours, and were conducted by the author at cafes, the university campus and respondents’ places of work. The focus of the questions was, to begin with, on the experience of living in Scotland and, subsequently, on respondents’ views and experiences of the referendum. Drawing on institutional ethnographers’ insights, in order to understand people’s everyday experiences, it is crucial to start from the actualities of people’s everyday lives (Smith, 2005). Thus, interviews were used to ‘tap into people’s expertise in the conduct of their everyday lives’ (Campbell, 1998: 57).

Being white, cis-gendered and able-bodied, I fully acknowledge that my experiences are very specifically situated. At the same time, as a migrant I understand feelings of being ‘in-between’ nations. My positionality was often brought up during the interviews, and I would answer questions truthfully whether they were to do with my background or political outlook. While sometimes participants would refer to a shared experience of difference, at other times my experience as a white migrant was emphasised.

The thematic analysis process began with the transcription of the interviews and the reading of materials for the content analysis as I came to know the data intimately, and started to notice similarities and differences across the data. Following this, I began with ‘open coding’ (Neuman, 2007: 330) whereby I started to group the data under very broad ‘emergent themes’ such as ‘nationalism’ and ‘Scottish distinction’. I opted for open coding as, at this stage, apart from the general themes guiding the broader focus of the research (nationalism, ‘race’, ethnicity, belonging), I wanted to ensure I captured the different experiences and themes the participants were reflecting on. Indeed, the everyday was not a pre-defined focus of the study, but emerged as one during the fieldwork. During open coding, I also started to think about more focused ‘subthemes’ under these broader themes (Bernard and Ryan, 2010: 54) such as ‘anti-Englishness’ under ‘nationalism’. At this stage I considered the themes tentative and open to challenge and revision. Following this initial stage of identifying themes which gave me an overall picture and sense of the interview data, I immersed myself in the transcripts again in order to undertake a more meticulous and focused reading of them which enabled me to develop and tweak my themes and subthemes further. In addition to the coding process, I also wrote analytic memos because, as Neuman (2007: 334) notes, memos forge a link between the data and theoretical thinking. I began by coding the data by hand, but eventually moved to using a storyboarding software (Scrivener) which helped me organise the data.

I will now move on to discuss the findings, focusing on everyday experiences of Scotland and Scottishness more broadly, before concentrating on participants’ experiences of the referendum specifically.

Being (In)conspicuous

A significant theme running through the participants’ accounts was the feeling of being different, and experiences of being (made to feel) different in everyday spaces and in undertaking mundane activities. Padma (Indian, 36) – who now lives in Glasgow – used to live in southern Scotland in the Scottish Borders. She reflected on her experience of living in a town in the Borders, and I asked if she felt that there was a difference between the two places, to which she responded ‘*absolutely*’ (her emphasis) and went on to explain:

Absolutely. I don’t know, if you’re talking the rural/urban thing, I [laughs] - - I’m gonna be very blunt. (. . .) I was probably one of the few brown faces in [town] (. . .) I remember the first time I walked into the town centre, and I – I’m not even - - kind of feel..your typical brown woman but (. . .) I got a lot of stares and it, it happened for quite a few months (. . .).

Later Padma also discussed a time she walked into a local pub with her group of international friends and it was, she described, like a scene from a western film where ‘people just stop talking’ and ‘you can hear the pin drop’: ‘we literally, we walked in, and we got stared at [laughs] – just turned around so’. Similarly to Padma, Towela (Zambian, 19) explained that ‘even when you’re on the bus, (. . .) it’s so uncomfortable, you get kids like staring [laughs]’.

Both Padma and Towela thus talk about being racialised and being the objects of people’s prolonged looks and stares. Frantz Fanon (2008 [1952]: 82) famously spoke about being ‘an object in the midst of other objects’ and being ‘sealed into that crushing object-hood’. Puwar (2004: 41) explains how Fanon observes ‘the look’ taking place ‘often without verbal communication, in everyday spaces in the city (bars, cafés and trains), as well as more enclosed institutional spaces (lecture halls, doctor’s surgeries and psychiatric hospitals)’. Thus, bodies racialised as non-white and thus marked out as different from the ‘somatic norm’ do not have an undisputed right to occupy a space; rather, they are seen as ‘suspiciously out of place’ – that is, ‘to use Fanon’s vocabulary, they are burdened by the claims black bodies can make on the world’ (Puwar, 2004: 42). Padma and Towela, undertaking routine activities, were marked as ‘out of place’ and reminded of their difference from the ‘somatic norm’ via the looks people gave them, and of which they were very aware and felt uncomfortable with.

In addition to the ‘othering gaze’, Chalwe (Zambian, 46) recalled a time he went to get his hair cut with his wife: ‘This woman looked at us, said “yes, can I help you”. We said we’d like to have our hair done. My wife [wants?] something. She says “wow, okay, umm, sorry, umm, we never done like so hair before” [laughs].’ Chalwe and his wife decided to visit a hairdresser which is a mundane, everyday space where people go to manage their appearance. Chalwe’s remarks show how they – or their bodies – were marked out as different from the national norm; from the type of hair the hairdresser *expects* to work on. In this space, Chalwe and his wife were visibly different, and embodied difference (non-white; different kind of hair). Thus, their difference and, by extension, non-belonging to the (national) norm (rather than visiting ‘standard’ hairdressers, they are expected to visit ‘specialised’ hairdressers) was actively made known. Similarly, Towela also spoke about people wanting to touch her hair (and her skin) at school.

Though of course not overtly and explicitly *nationalist* spaces, experiences on the street, or on the bus, for example, nonetheless feed into and contribute to an individual’s experience and understanding of Scotland and Scottishness – especially when one is already aware of his or her status as a ‘guest’ as Padma put it. The participants, in the course of their everyday activities, pick up (not so) subtle cues as to who can unproblematically move through spaces; that is, whose belonging to Scotland remains unquestioned and unchallenged in the hustle and bustle of the everyday. Crucially, the participants’ accounts highlight the various processes of othering, thus emphasising the ambiguity between ‘race’ and nation as argued by Gilroy (1992). Undergirding these experiences is a sense of what the national norm is: who can access a ‘standard’ hairdresser? Who can walk into a pub without ‘sticking out’?

During fleeting, everyday impressions a person makes on others (who one is assumed to be) those racialised as ‘white’ have the potential to be positioned differently: one may not feel Scottish and therefore does not consider himself/herself to be

part of that particular nation. However, a person who is racialised as white in a white-majority country (which corresponds with an imagined national community) may go unnoticed or remain inconspicuous and outside the kind of othering gaze Padma and Towela were describing or the kind of othering of one's body as beyond the 'national norm' as Chalwe and Towela were recounting. Thus, for some, there is a potential to 'pass': by passing I mean social instances where someone who would otherwise be marked out as 'different' or 'other' passes as what is understood to be the dominant 'norm' or as what is seen to be 'standard' (see also Ahmed, 1999; Epps, 2001; Schlossberg, 2001).

In addition to somatic difference, for many of the participants accent functioned as a (non-visible) signifier of difference. Accent has, of course, been identified as a key marker of Scottishness in much previous research (e.g. Kiely et al., 2005; McCrone and Bechhofer, 2010). I asked Towela whether, after living in Scotland for six years, she identified as being Scottish in any way. She replied no, and went on to explain: 'no, 'cause, (. . .) I struggle with the accent as well' and that, ultimately, 'people would automatically just know that I wasn't born here, or I'm foreign by the way I speak'. I asked if accent was a big part of being Scottish and she said yes – thus, for Towela, 'sounding Scottish' was key to feeling Scottish as well as for other people considering a person to be Scottish. Farnod (Iranian, 39) made a distinction between audible difference and visible difference when he noted that, 'if I walk in the street nobody recognise me as a - - Asian or Iranian guy', and he can therefore 'pass' as a local if he does not have to speak: 'when I started speaking it, everybody says yeah, you're not British'. For him, 'one of the main things in Scotland' is the 'different accent'.

When the putatively white participants did not speak, and their *audible difference* was not made known, they were able to move through spaces with relative ease – or to 'pass'. Some are, thus, able to pass through national space and time without undue attention being paid to them. As was suggested at the beginning of this article (as per Smith's (2016) argument), in order to make sense of the notion of 'the everyday', its political significance has to be accounted for in our understandings. The everyday as a mundane, seemingly unreflective experience is a *privilege* – the ability to be inconspicuous is not open to everybody (or *every body*).³ Thus, the nation should be viewed as a 'differentiated and pluricultural construct' and, when we do so, the value of focusing on those whose membership of the nation may be challenged comes clearly into view: it is important 'for scholarship on banal and everyday nationalism to attend to racially differentiated bodies in order to better understand processes of national reproduction, but also their limitations and what this means for re-signifying the national mainstream beyond its ethnocentrism' (Antonsich, 2018: 450).

'Fitting in'

There was, nonetheless, a strong sense of a desire to 'fit in' among many of the participants – or to become *inconspicuous*, to go unnoticed. Stefania (Polish, 32) talks about her sons' struggles to find friends, and attributes this to their obvious Polishness, due to their names:

But because they were given Polish names, I think that makes - - people don't think like, umm, people - - my son struggles to have friends because they hear, you know - - when someone says even Tomas, or his name is Tomasz, Tomas sounds German, so they still kind of know he's not, he is not from here. And I sometimes wonder, how can I make them . . . it went to the point of I actual- - umm, tell, told my son to introduce himself as Tom. (. . .) So he can blend within the, you know, within the community.

Further, apart from anglicising Tomasz's name to Tom, Stefania also suggests that if Tomasz were to acquire a Scottish accent, that might also alleviate the situation:

And I can clearly see, he's gonna end up - if I stay in Scotland for the next couple of years - he is gonna get that Scottish accent, you know. He, he, he is much more, and maybe then - so maybe that's the solution. (. . .) We can try and mix him. But you know, if I can't mix him, umm, with Scottish children, how am I supposed to, you know, how am I supposed to give him those opportunities? You know, school is not, you know, you, you, you are not gonna make friends, really, if you only see them at school. And I'm trying to make every effort (. . .).

For Stefania, having her children 'blend in' - that is, remaining inconspicuous in their everyday lives during fleeting as well as deeper impressions - is important because, in her view, there is a lot at stake: making sure that her child is not different from the 'norm' and that he mixes with 'indigenous' children means he will have more opportunities in life.

Noor (Scottish Indian, 45), who was born in Scotland but whose parents migrated to the UK from India, spoke about not wanting to be different from other children when growing up. She explained how people at school would ask 'do you speak a funny language at home and do you dress in a different way' to which her and her siblings would say no. Noor did not want to speak Punjabi out on the street in case anyone heard and she wanted to dress the same way as other children. 'If it was like parents meeting', Noor and her siblings would feel embarrassed as she thought 'everyone is gonna find out my mom's English is not good' - 'because you just want to be like every other child'. However, as she got older she became 'proud of the fact that, you know, that you can speak two languages and then you can, you know, you've got that - - and people are then a bit more fascinated'.

Ahsan (Pakistani, 38), who has lived in Scotland for five years, said he was 'trying to adopt to things' and to speak like 'locals' (I noted to him that I noticed he used a lot of Scottish words, such as 'aye', 'cannae', 'wouldnae'). He explained that he believed that,

when you move to a country and you know you're gonna live there for lifetime, so you should struggle to get their language adopted, and their c- - you try, you have to try to, to mix up with the local people.

This is because 'you don't want to be like a (. . .) *separate* character' (my emphasis). Ahsan recalls that when he arrived from Pakistan, he had a big moustache. He explained how 'back in Pakistan most people have a moustache' but when he came to Scotland, he saw that 'nobody have a moustache [laughs]' which led him to 'feeling like an odd person in this culture, you know, in this environment'. Thus, 'after a couple of weeks, I took

mine off, I just shaved myself and I said no - - because I'm living here, and I have to live here for long, so I need to adopt to things from these local people'.

As discussed previously, some bodies – especially those who are racialised as non-white – are often marked as 'out of place' (Puar, 2004) in different everyday spaces or, due to audible difference, are *eventually* marked out as conspicuous. However, the participants adopted various strategies in relation to the way they spoke or looked in order to 'fit in' with the 'national norm' in their everyday lives; that is, they were seeking to become (more) inconspicuous. Thus, continuous negotiations regarding their relationship to the 'national norm' were taking place in the course of their daily practices. As suggested by Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008), the nation is the practical accomplishment of people. Importantly, those whose membership of the nation – in this case Scotland – comes under scrutiny often closely identify, reflect on and/or manage key markers of Scottishness (e.g. accent, appearance) when negotiating their position vis-a-vis the nation.

The Referendum and the Everyday

So far, this article has focused on participants' everyday experiences in and of Scotland and Scottishness beyond the referendum, and demonstrated how the participants habitually negotiate their (in)conspicuousness in their everyday lives. This and the subsequent section will now contrast these to the participants' reflections and experiences directly connected with the referendum.

It seemed practically impossible to escape the referendum in Scotland in the lead up to the vote. People read about it in the media, overheard heated debates in shop queues and cafes and discussed it with taxi drivers. Although it was an extraordinary event, what is of interest sociologically is that the referendum permeated everyday spaces and, consequently, came to shape everyday experiences. Indeed, what came through strongly in the participants' accounts was the pervasiveness of the referendum. Catherine (Nigerian, 32) summed up many of the participants' feelings succinctly when she explained that she 'felt like there was no escaping them [the campaigners]'. For Catherine, the referendum (and those campaigning around it) became overbearing – especially as she characterised herself as an 'outsider' and thus not fully part of Scotland multiple times during the interview.

This feeling of pervasiveness of the referendum extended to all spheres and spaces of people's daily lives. Agnieszka (Polish, 25) noted that wherever she went, independence 'was the main topic' – 'even if it wasn't, then eventually it became it [laughs]' and 'it wasn't possible to talk about anything else [laughs]'. Similarly, Lukasz (Polish, 21) explained how he ended up having an 'argument all the time' – be it at work or 'just on the streets, you went to post office and you had argument with post lady [laughs] about the referendum'. Here, both Agnieszka and Lukasz were laughing out loud as they made their comments. Indeed, this emotional response signals the all-encompassing nature of the referendum: that is, they find it amusing, on the one hand, how often they ended up discussing (or arguing about) the vote and, on the other hand, how the arguments or discussions took place in unusual places (e.g. the post office) where one would not expect to have such interactions.

Although not an everyday, routine occurrence itself, the referendum infiltrated everyday spaces and came to dominate and colour interactions, emotions and dynamics within

those settings. As Tom (English, age unknown) put it, 'I've never known politics just infiltrate every sphere of lives, like couldn't – like, couldn't go anywhere without interacting with it'. As a result, some of the participants noted that people were feeling 'tired' (Lukasz) of the constant focus on independence. Tom explained how:

everywhere was talking about, it was – like you got on a train you hear it, it's on the radio, it was just. . . we couldn't go anywhere with like [unclear] the week before, I was so sick of hearing about it and I just. . . I just don't care about what the outcome is, I just want it to stop.

Thus, the period before, during and after the referendum provided a context in which the nation became more visible and where the edges of the nation became more easily discernible (Fox, 2017) due to the all-encompassing and reflexive quality of the event. However, as will be seen below, in such an extraordinary context (in which participants were eventually longing for the return to 'normality', i.e. where the nation does not explicitly occupy the centre stage) narratives, images and understandings of the nation are merely amplified in everyday contexts. Consequently, for ethnic and racialised minorities the nation is often a constant presence as they navigate their everyday lives, and these lives are not dramatically different between hyper-nationalist or 'ordinary' contexts. Rather, the nation remains salient. While the referendum was an extraordinary event which permeated everyday spaces and social interactions, people's everyday lives nonetheless continued, in many ways, as before albeit in a more nationally heightened context. The referendum is therefore not used as an object of interest as such, but rather as a context in which one might expect the nation to be more readily discussed, debated and reflected on in the everyday because of the broader public focus on the nation.

'Knowing Where My Place Is'

Having a vote in the referendum was regarded as a vehicle for inclusion by many of the participants who were more recent migrants. Ahsan (Pakistani, 38) argued that having a vote was a good thing, and made 'you feel part of' the country. Violet (Zambian, 40) explained that being able to vote gave her a feeling of being included:

Violet: Yeah, honestly, I do feel like home because – I don't know, when I just came I didn't know I was even allowed to vote, do you know – (. . .) so at least with voting it made me feel part of, you know, the crowd – being part of the, you know, the is the nation, yeah. (. . .) So I feel - - I felt a sense of belonging. Okay, I know, I'm not Scottish and stuff but, I just felt like oh, so, I'm also included, I can also decide, you know. Mhm, yeah.

Author: How did that feel, when you got that kind of power to - -

Violet: Yeah, it just felt like oh yes! [laughs] You just - - is, is, you know, it empowers you to have a say in certain things, yeah, to be heard, so – yeah, it's quite, it's quite a. . . good feeling, for feeling and kind of like yes.

Nonetheless, despite the feeling of inclusion or belonging that some people reported as a result of having a vote in the referendum, the participants (especially those who were more recent migrants) also reported a lingering sense of – as Violet put it – not knowing ‘where my place was exactly’. This made her feel ‘scared’ and meant that she shied away from debating issues to do with independence. Agnieszka (Polish, 25) recalled overhearing people’s conversations regarding whether EU nationals should be able to vote and some holding the view that maybe they ‘shouldn’t be really allowed to vote’ which, as a result, made her feel unsure of her status and ability to have a say. Lukasz and Stefania also reported similar experiences, with Stefania (Polish, 32) explaining that ‘people around were quite shocked (. . .) that so many Polish people were able to vote in something which relates to Scotland’.

Beyond feeling removed or unsure of ‘one’s place’, others felt a sense of direct hostility when engaging in debates and discussions about the referendum. Chalwe, though initially excited about the referendum, said he felt ‘alienated’ and came across ‘animosity’ when the debates started. Many people, he thought, expected him not to vote. Specifically, he linked the animosity and the perceptions that he should not vote to being Black in Scotland:

Umm, I think being a . . . black person. . . in Glasgow, showing an interest in a topic which was out of bounds for black folk. I say out of bound because I remember [laughs] – one person that works at the - - ‘are you going to vote?’ and I said yes, and the person went on to ask – she said, umm, ‘but..you’re not, you’re not even Scottish, you’re - - you don’t, you know, you could, you could even go back, you know, this is not really your, your home’.

Chalwe felt that the colour of his skin, thus, marked him as ‘obviously’ non-Scottish – the person ‘judged [him] as a foreigner’ – and thought he ‘wasn’t entitled to vote’. Chalwe explained that he learned to ‘keep quiet’ which was ‘really hard (. . .) because I love politics’. Violet (Zambian, 40) raised similar issues to Chalwe, and explained feeling scared to say how she was voting ‘because it was bringing a lot of problems’. She suggested that ‘maybe if I was Scottish maybe I could say something and nobody would hurt or nobody would say something’. She concluded: ‘But coming from where I’m coming from, and my..yeah. So I was just like..quiet [laughs].’

Thus, while the participants who had migrated to Scotland saw political participation as a way to ‘feel part of the country’ (Ahsan) or meaning that ‘*I am* actually treated as a person’ (Stefania; her emphasis), there was a lingering sense of not knowing where one’s place was. That is, there was a hesitancy to speak out on an issue of such national importance. Marissa (English, 28), for example, recounted going to George Square in Glasgow after the vote had taken place and the No side had won:

Umm.. Yeah there was just like a small group of Yes campaigners stand there and it was one guy who made a huge like ‘look, [unclear] get out our feelings, talk about it’ and like one by one going to the middle just express how he felt about it. Which was really interesting but I felt, like, out of place there, especially with an English accent I was like ‘oh crap I need to go’ [laughs].

Therefore, while the nation becomes more obvious to ethnic and racialised minorities in a hyper-nationalist context (such as the referendum which infiltrated everyday spaces and relationships), nationalism for these minorities merely becomes louder. The explicit

and implicit challenges – and open hostility – the participants experienced during the referendum, exist on a continuum which also contains the ongoing negotiations habitually taking place in the participants' everyday lives beyond such an extraordinary moment of national mobilisation.

Conclusion

This article has explored the ways in which ethnic and racialised minorities experienced Scotland and Scottishness in their everyday lives both in a hyper-nationalist context (the 2014 Scottish independence referendum) and beyond it. As argued by Fox (2017), such a political context characterised by the salience of the nation is likely to make the contours of the nation more easily discernible in the everyday. That is, rather than the nation retreating to the edges of our consciousness or fading from view, the nation is likely to be more actively and explicitly reflected upon. However, it is important to consider *for whom* the nation ebbs and flows in such a manner.

This article has advanced three interrelated arguments in an effort to contribute to everyday nationalism literature. First, drawing on ethnic and racialised minorities' experiences of othering in various everyday spaces and situations, it has argued that experiencing the everyday as unreflective is a privilege (Smith, 2016). Whether going to the hairdresser, attending school or walking down the street, the participants reported instances where their (e.g. audible or somatic) difference from the 'national norm' was made known through words and looks, for example. Consequently, many participants made conscious efforts to 'fit in' by adopting various strategies to minimise the perceived differences and remain (more) inconspicuous in everyday situations – be it by anglicising their child's name or altering their appearance. Here, it is important to account for differences of experience between those racialised as white in a white-majority country: moving through space when audible difference is not made known can afford a possibility of going 'under the radar' and thus getting respite from othering gazes.

Following on from this, it is therefore – second – crucial to focus on those whose relationship to the nation, and status within it, is not beyond question and may come under scrutiny, in order to conceptualise the everyday in a more nuanced way; that is, to consider the experiences of those who in Antonsich's (2018: 452) words 'generate surprise'. Whose experiences we, as sociologists, decide to focus on will have repercussions on the ways in which 'the everyday' is conceptualised, and researchers need to recognise and critically engage with this reality.

Third, this article has shown that in a hyper-nationalist context during which the scope and the content of a nation are subject to explicit reflection, the nation merely becomes louder (both figuratively and literally) in ethnic and racialised minorities' everyday lives. The participants found the referendum to infiltrate every sphere of their lives in a pervasive manner, and there was a wish to return to 'normality'. Nonetheless, as discussed above, reflections vis-a-vis the contours of the nation and the experiences of difference from the 'national norm' tend to be ever-present in the everyday encounters of ethnic and racialised minorities. The experiences of people challenging ethnic and racialised minorities' status within, or relationship to, the nation during an event like the referendum may be more pronounced or extreme – such as the explicit manner in which Chalwe's

colleague spoke to him or the ways in which Agnieszka's and others' right to participate was questioned – but they exist on the same othering and exclusionary continuum as the other instances that take place in more 'ordinary' contexts.

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Notes

1. Of course, such a differentiation between the macro 'grand theories' and micro analyses of 'ordinary people' is somewhat artificial, as both the micro and the macro exist in close relationship and impact on one another in fluid ways. I find Dorothy Smith's (2005) work on institutional ethnography especially enlightening in explaining this relationship.
2. Councillors are elected members of local councils representing local communities in their area.
3. This is not to say that putatively white participants are not subject to racialisation and discrimination (see Garner, 2007 on hierarchies of whiteness; Fox et al., 2012, Humphris, 2018 and Rzepnikowska, 2019 on the racialisation of East European migrants).

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