RACE KNOWLEDGE

Racialized Social Legitimacy and Second-Generation Muslim Americans

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Abstract

This analysis addresses *race knowledge* or the connection between race identity and the ability to designate what is socially legitimate. It problematizes race inequality in light of neoliberal, post-Civil Rights racial reforms. Using qualitative data from interviews with second-generation Muslim Americans, the analysis maps their understanding of the racialized social legitimacy of Brown, Black, and White identities. Findings address how racial hierarchy is organized by racial neoliberalism and the persistence of White supremacy. They show that White racial dominance continues in spite of claims of post-racialism. Moreover, second-generation Muslim Americans position their Brown and Black racial identity as subordinate to White racial identity, but Brown and Black races are different rather than hierarchically positioned in reference to one another. The respondents bring neoliberal globalism as well as U.S. racial dynamics to bear on their understandings of racial hierarchy and racialized social legitimacy.

Keywords: Race Knowledge, Racial Neoliberalism, Muslim Americans, Second generation, Race Identity, Race Stratification

> *Okay, umm, they can say all they want that race is long gone, but it's still there. Just because everybody rides on the bus and it doesn't matter where they sit, that doesn't mean that race doesn't exist anymore, it does a whole lot. It exists everywhere you go.*
> —Sarah, Second-generation Muslim American, parents' country of origin: Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

In this epigraph Sarah tells us that America's racial past is the nation's racial present. Its history of land theft, internal colonialism, enslavement, public place segregation, racial denigration, territorial expansion, and imperialist empire building mean that in the past race defined the nation and it continues to define it today. Race still "exists everywhere you go." Sarah's statement highlights a current social quandary: we have supposedly moved beyond the laws, policies, and informal social practices that made

racism societally pervasive; yet race continues to be ubiquitous. In terms of both material realities and affect, race informs social membership. In contrast to the expectations created by civil rights legislation, integration, and even the presidency of Barack Obama, the evidence of racialized social inequality is stark. This is so in terms of, for example, wealth and income, neighborhoods and segregation, educational quality, health care access, and mass incarceration.

In general, between 1979 and 2007 income inequality increased in the United States, with income growing by 200.5% for the top 1% of taxpayers but by only 18.9% for the bottom 99% (Sommeiller and Price, 2015). The racialized consequences of this "New Gilded Age" are glaring, as described by David Goldberg (2008). Between 1984 and 2007 middle-income Whites outpaced high-income African Americans in wealth accumulation. Excluding home equity, in 2007 median wealth holdings in middle-income White households was at $74,000 while for high-income African American households they were at $18,000 (Shapiro et al., 2010). Whites have greater returns to wealth accumulation from home ownership, increases in income, a college education, and even marriage than do Blacks (Shapiro et al., 2013). Following the same families over a period of twenty-five years (1984–2009), Shapiro and colleagues find that "… the total wealth gap between [W]hite and African American families nearly triples" (2013, p. 1). Moreover, Blacks and Latinos bore the brunt of the housing foreclosure crisis of 2005–2012 (Hall et al., 2015; Squires et al., 2009).

Racial residential segregation provides a template for high-cost subprime mortgage loans and subsequent foreclosures (Hall et al., 2015; Squires et al., 2009). According to Matthew Hall and colleagues (2015) the racial patterns of foreclosures were the same in city and suburban neighborhoods. White and Asian neighborhoods experienced the lowest rates of foreclosure, while Black and Latino neighborhoods had higher foreclosure rates. The higher Black and Latino foreclosure rates held even for "…similarly located neighborhoods occupied largely by [W]hites and Asians" (Hall et al., 2015, p. 231). Although there has been a slight decline in racial residential segregation since the 1970, the increase in segregation by affluence has stark racial consequences. Sean Reardon and colleagues (2015) find that even when Black and White individuals have the same income, Blacks live in neighborhoods where the median income is lower. Middle-class Blacks are typically located in "… neighborhoods with median incomes similar to those of poor [W]hite households" (Reardon et al., 2015, p. 94).

Without question neighborhood economic disparities shape inequality in other social context. This is especially true with regard to education and health care. The great change toward educational equality that was supposed to have been brought by the Brown decision (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 1954) has not materialized. School segregation and educational inequality are persistent and driven by the combination of residential and economic segregation (Jargowsky 2013; Rothstein 2015). The connections between neighborhoods, economic resources, and educational resources mean that racialized educational inequality is as much of a reality today as it was when schools were segregated by law (Rothstein 2013, 2015). The failure of policies to take into account how racialized inequalities in wealth and neighborhoods support and reinforce racially segregated schools insures that unequal educational outcomes by race will continue (Rothstein 2013).

As with the *Brown* decision and education, racialized outcomes with regard to health care are likely to continue in spite of the Affordable Care Act. There are racialized and economic disparities with regard to access to and the quality of health care (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality 2013). In comparison to Whites, Blacks and Latinos/ Hispanics fair worse with regard to access to and the quality of care; while Asians are similar to Whites in terms of access to care but worse off in terms of

quality of care (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality 2013). Racial and social class differences in access to health care as well as information about illnesses and treatment options are important aspects of health disparities (Bell 2014). In addition, the amount of time required for an office visit and the amount of paper work needed to see a doctor exasperate racial and social class health care inequalities (Watson 2014; Wilkin et al., 2012). In light of the fact that there are fewer primary care offices in non-White neighborhoods (Ryvicker et al., 2012) and that these neighborhoods are often pharmacy desserts (Qato et al., 2014), the Affordable Care Act, like the *Brown* decision, may have a very limited impact on race inequalities in health care.

However, the persistence of the racist past in the racial present (in spite of the integrated bus) may be best evidenced in the criminal justice system and the mass incarceration of Black Americans. The Reagan administration's enforcement of Nixon's War of Drugs in combination with the Supreme Court's expansion of police discretionary power to stop and search individuals without probable cause (*Terry v. Ohio* 1968) has resulted in 13% of the population accounting for half of those who are incarcerated (Cox 2015). The criminal justice system exacerbates racial inequalities through the underfunding of legal services for the poor and racialized discretionary decision making (Ghandnoosh 2015). The effect of the post-civil rights hyper-incarceration of Black men and women retrenches the civil rights of large numbers of African Americans (Alexander 2010; Cox 2015; Wacquant 2001). This is evidenced in the felony disenfranchisement laws of some states. Although they vary by state, with only four excluding felons for life, in 2010, 7.7% of African Americans (compared to 1.8% of non-African Americans) were disenfranchised because of these policies (Uggen et al., 2012). Incarceration decreases both an individual's current income and the growth in their wages across a lifetime (Western 2002). When compared to White men who have been convicted, African American men have their opportunities for employment limited by the combination of their incarceration and their race (Pager et al., 2009). Additionally some states have laws that exclude persons who have been convicted from receiving social services resources (Ghandnoosh 2015). This all combines to support the argument that the increased incarceration of African Americans following the civil rights era has retrenched their citizenship rights and increased their economic disadvantages (Pager et al., 2009; Western 2002).

The evidence is clear that civil rights legislation and the repeal of discriminatory laws have not ameliorated race inequalities, raising the question of how racism continues to be legitimated. In what follows, I examine how second-generation Muslim Americans like Sarah understand racial identities and the implications of this with regard to racism. I argue that Sarah and her peers provide unique insight into racial neoliberalism. I propose that what they say in qualitative interviews about Muslim identity as well as Brown, Black, and White racial identities reveals what I call *race knowledge*. Race knowledge is about the relationship between race identity and social legitimacy. Race knowledge is important to neoliberalism because it allows for the elimination of racist policies and the abhorring of racist social practices. Race knowledge maintains racial hierarchy and White supremacy through affect rather than explicitly racist policies and practices.

I begin with a review of the literature about racialization and the post-1965 Asian, South Asian, and Arab immigrant Muslims to the United States. Next I turn to the second generation and its experiences of identity and race particularly following 9/11. This is followed by an examination of racial neoliberalism. I use this body of work to frame the concept race knowledge. The participants in this research project articulate the race knowledge of neoliberalism. The interview data show their understanding of how racial hierarchy is sustained through the connection between race identities and social legitimacy.

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LITERATURE REVEIW

Identity, Racialization, and Religion

Research findings on identity and racial hierarchy among immigrant and second-generation Muslim Americans can be organized into broad pre- to post-9/11 categories. Prior to 9/11 research focuses on the struggles of Muslims to be placed in or near the White end of the U.S. racial stratification order (Naber 2000). These efforts are informed by policies and social practices that privilege White race identity, and the desire of Middle East/North African migrants to avoid the restrictions imposed by the Immigration Act of 1924. Where White race identification was not an option groups sought middle or intermediate statuses that distanced them from the Black race (Koshy 2001). The policy responses to the 9/11 attacks target and, as a consequence, racialize Muslim identity (Ahmad 2011; Cainkar and Maira, 2005). This pushes the second generation away from the model minority aspirations of their parents and increases the probability that they will not identify as racially White (Alimahomed 2011). Moreover, because 9/11 policies target religion, religion becomes more important to the identity and experiences of second-generation Muslim Americans (Maira 2004). I begin with pre-9/11 research findings.

Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis (1987) provide foundational research on Muslim Americans. They argue that Muslims, like other ethnic immigrants, are assimilating across time in terms of their associations with non-Muslims as well as their economic and political statuses. They find that to a large degree Muslims distance themselves from experiences of discrimination, with some Arabs strategically passing for Italian or Greek White ethnics. Pakistanis, who were a small proportion of the population, cannot pass for White so they mediate discrimination through ethnic associations and religious institutions. Haddad and Lummis (1987) argue that Islam provides an overarching identity for Muslim Americans despite their ethnic and national origin differences. Looking beyond assimilation, researchers have examined how Muslims construct their identity in terms of race and generation in relation to religion.

Researchers have examined the implications of the social constructions of Muslim immigrants' identities as both White and not White. For example, Asians and South Asians are able to take advantage of the economic resources provided by civil rights legislation to position themselves as middleman and model minorities through narratives of cultural exceptionalism while disavowing Brown racial identity (George 1997; Visweswaran 1997). South Asians deploy Aryan ancestry to avoid racialization by skin color (George 1997). Susan Koshy (2001) argues that for Asian Americans, ambiguity around race identification—the disidentification with Whiteness as culture while identifying with it in terms of social class, power, and political interests—facilitates their incorporation into the American Dream. However, for Arabs, Nadine Naber (2000) finds that being classified as either White or as not White limits their ability to advance their own political interests. If they are White they are a part of the majority and their unique political interests go unaddressed. If they are not White then they are a minority group that is likely to be targeted for discrimination. Kristine Ajrouch and Amaney Jamal (2007) make a similar argument, noting that while some Muslims are legally classified as White, adopting that identity does not eliminate their ethnic identities that trigger targeting for discrimination.[1] In contrast, immigrants of African descent use their Muslim religious identity to distance themselves from the negative consequences of being racially Black in American society (Ajrouch and Kusow, 2007; Guenther et al., 2011).

The range of national origins among immigrant Muslims in the U.S. has increased the group's racial diversity; however 9/11 policies are central to the construction of "Muslim" as a not White and racial Other identity (Gotanda 2011). Muneer Ahmed (2011) addresses the post-9/11 understanding of race for Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims arguing that anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant sentiments lead to their strategic assimilation as well as cultural and political accommodation in seeking recognition as Americans. To the degree that their Americanization had rested on their willingness to subordinate Black Americans, after 9/11 Americanization requires that they accept their own subordination by recognizing that they are not White (Ahmad 2011). Louise Cainker and Sunaina Maira (2005) argue that Arab and South Asian Muslims are criminalized and marked as cultural outsiders by 9/11 and the War on Terror. Yet they find that panethnic identification and alliance between Arab and South Asian Muslims are symbolic. Nor do these groups connect to Blacks, Latinos, and Japanese Americans who have longer histories of negative racialization. This is in spite of "Muslim terrorist" signifying the racial trope of the religious identity category Muslim (Gotanda 2011).

Neil Gotanda (2011) argues that the racial category Muslim dislodges the identity from its religious foundation and replaces it with Brown immigrant, descendent of immigrant, visibly marked colored bodies. Moreover, Sangay Mishra (2012) finds that the development of a panethnic response to post-9/11 racial targeting among South Asians is limited by Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh religious differences. Naber's (2012) findings with regard to Arab American Muslims are similar. The model minority and middle-class privileges of Arab Americans are demolished by the 9/11 policy responses. Between the multiculturalism of neoliberalism and the state security apparatuses of the War on Terror, the development of coalitions to respond to the racialization of Arabs and Muslims is suppressed (Naber 2012). Post-9/11 racialization of immigrant Muslim Americans and their children is informed, on one hand, by the Black/White binary that hides Brown race identity and, on the other, by the security state apparatuses that make Brown race identity visible (Brandzel and Desai, 2013).

Second-generation Asian, South Asian, and Arab Muslims are also impacted the post-9/11 security state policies and surveillance; informing their racialization, their positioning within the racial hierarchy, their religious identity, and their perceptions of social membership. For the second generation much is at stake in terms of their social membership because they are U.S. citizens. Selcuk Sirin and Michelle Fine (2008) say that the policy responses to 9/11 create a context of moral exclusion or excluded citizenship for Muslim youth. They caution that the policies associated with Homeland Security may put "… a generation of engaged teens into young adults at risk of becoming more alienated, more religious, and more marginal exiles in their homeland, the United States" (p. 194). Discrimination in and of itself can lead to more religious practice and, therein, a higher level of religiosity (Peek 2005; Sirin and Katsiaficas, 2011). Identifying as Muslim is supported by religious practice, while identifying as American is weakened by discrimination (Mir 2011; Sirin et al., 2008). According to Alimahomed (2011), it is in the wake of 9/11 that Arab American Muslim youth recognize being targeted for discrimination and racialization; not only are they not White but their affinity rest with others who are not White. "Their experiences signal the importance of September 11 in shaping racial identities of Arab American Muslims and also demonstrate a nuanced understanding of race, whereby affiliations with [W]hiteness exemplify particular social and political clout that is not reflected in their everyday encounters with race" (Alimahomed 2011, p. 395). Maira's (2009) findings are similar with regard to South Asian Muslim youth; they experience the construction of Muslim identity through the policy agenda of the War on Terror and they negotiate

being Muslim through expressions of cultural citizenship (i.e., "…transnational ties, popular culture and family networks, interethnic friendships, multicultural and poly-cultural affiliations, youth subcultures, critiques of war, nationalism and human rights as well as U.S. empire." (p. 283–84)). Nitasha Sharma's (2010) analysis of South Asian youth who identify as Desi demonstrates that they engage in the production of hip-hop music that reflects their identity and the identity of African Americans. In this way they fashion a critical response to post-9/11 racism.

The pre- to post-9/11 boundary is useful for understanding how the U.S. state security challenges the content of Muslim Americans' identity. However, it is also important to recognize that the policy agenda of the War on Terror fits well with global and American neoliberal maintenance of White supremacy. Racial neoliberal-ism reveals a larger set of dynamics and implications with regard to race identities, hierarchy, and social legitimacy.

Racial Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is both a global economic system and a set of political policies that inform the relationship between government and the economy. As an economic sys-tem neoliberalism establishes global entrepreneurialism through the protection of pri-vate property rights, free markets, and free trade (Centeno and Cohen, 2012; Harvey 2007). As a political system neoliberalism limits the ability of governments to regulate economic markets and interest rates, while opening domestic markets to global capital (Centeno and Cohen, 2012; Harvey 2007). As a political system neoliberalism advances the privatization of public resources, the decline and elimination of the welfare state, and the dissolution of labor unions and labor protections (Giroux 2008; Harvey 2007). As a racial system neoliberalism is global and local multiculturalism (Melamed 2006), post-racialism, race without racisms, and racisms without race (Goldberg 2008). It is the biopolitics of disposability with regard to the non-White and the poor (Giroux 2008), and the continuation of Western global economic domination without the political structure of colonialism (Goldberg 2009). In other words, racial neoliberalism is, as Dana-Ain Davis (2007) argues, muted White supremacy.

The neoliberal state diverges from the liberal state in that the liberal state was explicit in its adherence to the White supremacy of colonialism, enslavement, racial segregation, and White racial domination (Mills 1997, 2011). The neoliberal state rests on the reforms brought by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the global anti-colonial movements, and the ideals of racial integration and multiculturalism. Racial neoliberalism effectively moves the measure of racial equality from resources to identities allowing integration to stand as the indicator of equality. In other words, the neoliberal state is not characterized by legislated, formal social practices of racism. Nor is it characterized in any sense by racial equity beyond the repeal of discrimi-natory law. Yet when the repeal of discriminatory law is combined with integration and multiculturalism, the everyday evidences of racial domination and subordination are interpreted as indicators of individual deficiency and failure to take advantage of opportunities. The resource inequalities created by White supremacy are intact but the referent (e.g., discriminatory law, colonial administration) that allows for challenges to White supremacy has disappeared. The assumption that the elimination of discrimi-natory laws is equivalent to eliminating racialized disadvantage and privilege renders efforts to challenge racism difficult if not virtually impossible.

Evelyn Alsultany (2012) exposes the implications of racial neoliberalism for Muslim Americans by analyzing media portrayals of the War on Terror that play images of "good" and "bad" Arab Muslims against one another. This racial neoliberal strategy

circumvents acknowledging that Muslim identity is targeted in the War on Terror by placing the blame for targeting on individual behavior. Vijay Prashad (2012) argues that 9/11 signals the re-emergence of racial global dominance and local racialization, yet the failure to recognize this has allowed for the local mass incarceration of Muslims (and others) and global military incursions. Sabrina Alimahoumed (2011) and Naber (2012) note that what appears to be a crisis around Muslim identity in response to 9/11 is really about the connection between internal racial politics and foreign policy that begins with U.S. expansion into the Middle East in the early 1990s. Clearly Sarah is speaking to the reality of racial neoliberalism when she says: "Okay, umm, they can say all they want that race is long gone, but it's still there."

Research on Muslim Americans and the second generation has given us a clear understanding of their pre and post-9/11 identities. Post-9/11 research demonstrates that Muslims are racialized as not White. It shows that Muslim Americans are conscious of their racial subordination, yet they fail to form alliances among themselves or with others who are not White. In some cases, they identify with Blacks because they are now subordinate too, but in other cases they identify with Whites to avoid subordination. But what can second-generation Muslim Americans tell us about the meanings that are attached to race identities and how Blacks, Whites, and Browns are positioned in relation to one another? What can they reveal about how racial hierarchy is sustained?

In the analysis that follows I use the concept *race knowledge* to capture the logic of racial hierarchy under neoliberalism, and to show how second-generation Muslim Americans understand and position themselves within racial neoliberalism. Race knowledge is the combination of the meanings assigned to race identities and the social legitimacy that a race identity confers on those whom it names. Race knowledge communicates legitimacy without explicit validations of race-based social dominations and subordinations; instead, assumptions about social legitimacy are implicit in race identities. Race knowledge is the commonly accepted meaning of a race identity and a signifier of social legitimacy. Race knowledge influences whether an individual or group can confer validity and acceptance of social phenomena as well as whether their judgments are accepted by those who do not share their identity. As a manifestation of racial neoliberalism, race knowledge invalidates claims of racism by making it possible but not necessarily probable that non-race social statuses can mediate race knowledge. Race knowledge silences and privatizes social disadvantages and social privileges by hiding them behind unarticulated meanings or assumptions about race identity.

DATA AND METHODS

I use qualitative interview data to demonstrate the articulation of race knowledge by 1.5 and second-generation Muslim Americans. Interviews were conducted between 2005 and 2009 with Muslim Americans living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the surrounding suburbs. Philadelphia is home to a visible racially and ethnically diverse population of indigenous and immigrant Muslims. The Association of Religious Data Archives estimates the Muslim population in Philadelphia in 2010 at 39,540 or 26 out of every 1000 persons (Grammich et al., 2010). Respondents were recruited for this research based on their Muslim identity and immigrant ancestry.

This analysis is drawn from a subset of participants in a larger project: forty-seven second-generation respondents (thirty females and seventeen males). 60% were born in the United States and 23% were naturalized citizens. Only 10% reported having a high school education, while 55% were currently enrolled in an undergraduate program.

81% were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. Respondents were most likely to identify themselves as upper-middle class or wealthy (40%) and 51% reported household incomes above $65,000 a year. They were overwhelmingly of South Asian (70%) or Middle Eastern descent (25%).[2] 49% identified themselves as Asian, 4% as Black, 4% as White, 13% said they were "in between" race categories, and 30% chose a hyphened identity like Pakistani American. I recruited study participants by attending and participating in organizational events held by the Muslim Students Associations at local college and university campuses, annual and monthly events held by The Council on American-Islamic Relations, Council for the Advance of Muslim Professionals, and other local groups as well as attending events held at mosques in the city and surrounding suburbs.

Muslim identity is salient enough for the respondents to agree to participate in this project based on that identity. Their religiosity can be assessed through their responses to self-administered survey questions about religious practice. Their answers indicate that they are similar to Muslims American who participated in two nationwide Pew Research Center surveys (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2007, 2011). The participants in this project are more likely than those in either Pew study to say that they prayed five times a day and less likely to say that they never prayed (Table 1). They are more like the 2007 than the 2011 Pew respondents in terms of attending religious services. 87% of the respondents in this research indicated that they did fast during the month of Ramadan. 19% said that they read the Quran daily and 45% read it frequently. Overall, what the participants in this project say about their religious practices indicates that they similar to other Muslim Americans in terms of religiosity.

I used Atlas-ti qualitative data analysis software to code and organize responses to interview questions by themes. The analysis that follows focuses on interview questions that yielded information about racialized social legitimacy and the influence of skin color on experiences.[3] The questions about social legitimacy asked study participants about the ability of Black and White American converts to have a positive influence on how non-Muslim Americans perceive Islam. These questions were preceded by a query about the ability of converts to be Muslim in the same way as people who have an intergenerational Muslim ancestry. Overwhelmingly respondents confirmed the ability of converts to be Muslim in the same way as those born into Islam.

Table 1. RELIGIOUSITY (Percent)

	Respondents	Pew 2007	Pew 2011
Prayer			
Five Daily	57.4	41	40
Fewer Daily	8.5	20	20
Less Often	29.7	26	29
Never	4.2	12	10
Service Attendance			
Weekly	38.3	34	47
Monthly	29.8	29	41
Seldom/Never	31.3	37	11

Sources: Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life (2007): Prayer is for all U.S. Muslims (p. 25). Service Attendance is for native born not African American (p. 24). The Pew category "less often" is reported here as monthly attendance. Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life (2011): Prayer (p. 25) and Service Attendance (p. 26) is for those who are native born not African American.

So in answering the questions about the ability of American converts to influence how other Americans' perceive Islam, respondents were assessing the connection between race identity and the ability to confer social legitimacy (i.e., race knowledge). The skin color question came later in the interview; participants were asked whether skin color influences people's lives.

ANALYSIS

This group of second-generation Muslim Americans recognizes what is most important to racial neoliberalism: middle- and upper-class resources can circumvent some of the consequences of not being White; and the presence of people who are not White in otherwise all White groups is used to signify that race and racism are no longer social problems. They label their own racial identity as Brown. They note that the meaning of Brown race identity varies between model minority and immigrant outsider even when a person is an American. They say that Whiteness is equivalent to American even if one is actually an immigrant. This signals that White race identity incorporates one into the nation and that the power of being racially White extends beyond the geographical borders of the United States. They see the meaning of Black race identity as a conundrum: one is both in and out, less than and a full member of the nation. This group of second-generation Muslim Americans argues for a stark difference in the ability of Black and White Muslim converts to positively influence perceptions of Islam. Whites have the highest ability to create positive perceptions but the association of Blacks with American identity is also beneficial. What they say reveals the race knowledge of neoliberalism. Their comments demonstrate the connections between race identities and the ability to confer social legitimacy. Racialized social legitimacy maintains White supremacy without explicitly racist policies and legislation.

Racial Neoliberalism and Social Class

Respondents expose the logic of racial neoliberalism by incorporating social class into how they explain the importance of skin color differences. They make clear that the assumption that eliminating discriminatory law ends racial inequality actually maintains White race dominance. Abdullah and Junayd are clear about the importance of economic resources to quality of life. They know that individuals who are not White have access to those resources, and they are also aware that racial hierarchy is persistent. Note Abdullah's comment:

> See but the thing is, you can buffer it with your status, your human capital, your social class capital, like I told you we buffer it to a certain degree because we have it: We have a certain level of income, my parents, you know. I mean there's, I think class is the big thing you know; access to health, education, jobs. Its class not necessarily race. I mean the rich Black man with his kid will do better than the poor White guy, just simple and straight forward. Now you can pay for those services, you can buy that on the market. So I think class is a big marker for differentiation between people. Not saying race is irrelevant, of course it's relevant and it often subsumes the class issue to all of our detriment. But yeah, it's a part of the puzzle, a part of the oppression; it's a part of the ways we see each other. We keep trying to differentiate ourselves. We're not a community based society. We're a capitalist based society and so we always try to differentiate ourselves. And when we assume that we're merit based, we kind of have these different markers to try

> to push ourselves forward you know; just not find the commonalities, we have to
> find where we're unique, that's what's pushed.

Abdullah begins with an argument about quality of life and economic resources. Quality of life resources are purchasable. Disadvantages outside of economic status can be mediated with middle- to upper-class economic resources. He says that differentiation is a part of capitalism and it is legitimated by assumptions about merit. Race is relevant with regard to differentiation and assumptions about merit. In other words, race knowledge (how race identity informs social legitimacy) can subsume the advantages of social class.

Junayd gives a similar assessment in that he notes the implications of access to resources. What is most important is that he highlights the possibility of those who are not White accessing valued resources. It is the possibility of gaining resources rather than the probability that is important to racial neoliberalism's claim that systemic racial discrimination has ended. Junayd says:

> Um, I think we kind of essentialize it [skin color] … I think it's interesting because it's used now to mask problems or pretend they don't exist. Um, where now we place skin color—we view that the presence of someone of color is a sign that there is justice in society as opposed to looking at deeper issues. And I think that's definitely, like something like, I mean pre-9/11, assuming 9/11 hadn't happened, I'd basically be culturally White in the sense that I would have access to all these institutions. Whereas you could take a White guy from a very poor part of wherever, who, let's say, either had family without resources or just had a tough break. But by virtue of him being White his problem would be ignored. Not necessarily always but I think that color is used in a lot of different ways: either to marginalize people or to pretend that other problems don't exist. 'Hey look, there's a Brown guy at [elite university]'; that means the Brown people are treated equally.

What Junayd describes is racial neoliberalism. It is the elimination of discriminatory laws and the creation of multiracial social spaces to symbolically mark the end of racism, although those who are not White have limited access to valued resources. On the other hand, White race identity continues to grant access to valued resources. He also tells us that the global politics of 9/11 define his identity, insuring that he is seen as not White. Race knowledge insures that the race politics of neoliberalism plays both ways: to include and exclude those who are not racially White. In this regard, Brown race identity adds a globally and locally informed dimension to the U.S. racial hierarchy.

Brownness and Passing

When asked if skin color influences people's lives some respondents' perspectives reflect the assumption that eliminating discriminatory law eliminates race socially. According to some, the influence of skin color on people's lives varies between unnoticeable to very subtle to only an issue when an individual is in a group where they are the only person of their race and everyone else has the same identity. However, the presence of race in spite of the legal repeal of White supremacy is reflected in what the majority of respondents say about Brown skin color and passing. The meaning of Brown race identity varies between being an immigrant non-member to being a like White model minority. Brown race identity signals both the global and local aspects of White race domination. It fits just as smoothly into racial neoliberalism as does

social class inequality. The implications of Brown race identity are informed by how this group of young Muslim Americans understands the relationship between Brown skin and race passing.

For this group of Muslim Americans passing is socially imposed rather than a choice made by an individual. Consider what Aleem says, he begins by connecting skin color to the opportunities that are made available to you:

> Umm, your skin color allows others to make judgments about you which obviously changes how they're going to attract to you and as their attraction changes your opportunities will also change. They're not going to give you the same opportunities or the same things they are going to give someone else of a different skin color.

He goes on to describe the range of skin colors in his immediate family noting that his sister is very "fair skinned" and was often mistaken for White before she started wearing *hijab*. He describes a coworker who is passing for White undetected by their White colleagues. Yet he does not see passing as completely voluntary:

> I think that even though [a person] might not be immediately, they're not White or they're not Black, I think to most people who want to make it, want to think racially, classify them into a category. … So I think you get very easily branded like if you could pass for one or the other, you get pushed into a category. If you can't pass for either, then you get pushed into your separate category. I think that's happening as more and more immigrants come here, as the population increases those categories get developed.

Aleem signals the centrality of racialization itself in American society. People are Black or White when the color of their skin fits or "something else" when it does not. Race is imposed and is expanding as more immigrants come into the United States. Aleem's response signals that both Brown skin color and markers of non-Western cultural identity (e.g., *hijab*) are bringing globalism to bear on America's race categories.

Chimoona agrees on the centrality of Blackness and Whiteness to how people are defined racially, and he notes the implications of failing to pass for White:

> … [F]or me I think the United States is pretty much a Black and White thing and other groups either become Black or become White, and mostly my group becomes White. So like, I think that's a problem, the fact that it has to become that, but most people don't recognize it as a choice that they make. Most people recognize it as simply, you know this is how I become umm normalized, right; and God forbid I become Black you know. I become associated with Blackness, right.

For both Chimoona and Aleem the option to not have a race identity does not exist. Skin color is interpreted as the indicator of race identity and self-definition is, at best, limited. They both challenge the idea that racelessness, a key assumption of neoliberalism, exists in the United States. Moreover, Chimoona notes a requirement to be White or to become White. Other respondents didn't think that they became White but they did offer perspectives on the meaning of Brown race identity that vary between model minority and immigrant outsider.

For Muhommad and Maleeha, Brown race identity has very different social meanings, creating different experiences for each of them. Muhommad sees Brown race identity as a good thing. It is the model-minority identity and therefore does not carry the negative baggage of Black race identity:

Umm, I think, you know, skin color is something; it's associated, uhh you know, I'm Brown. So I don't think it has that many connotations to be honest, just from my perspective. Just growing up, it just meant that you were smart in math and science and you know, you always got all A's in class and so forth. So it never really carried any negative connotation, but you certainly notice, umm, with African American communities. They are, you know, like have a chip on their shoulder and they always feel like they need to prove themselves in like every opportunity. … [T]o be honest like I don't think Brown people in general, when I say Brown I mean the Indo-Pak community, not really sure if we have anything to prove to anyone.

Muhommad articulates the values of neoliberalism. His race identity is not a site of social relevance and, moreover, the problems of Black race identity are the result of individual Blacks thinking that they have to prove themselves. Ironically—and in concert with the logic of neoliberalism—he is saying that in attempting to prove that they are worthy, Blacks are creating their negative race experiences. Muhommad's assumption that the meaning of Brown race identity is that of a model minority is not shared by Maleeha. She cannot maneuver herself out of the consciousness of being Brown. She is an Other, an immigrant, someone who is culturally marked as different:

You know, I'm definitely very conscious of it. Umm, that you know, umm, although I may present in a certain way by dress or by language, ultimately, I'm still Brown. And because I'm married to someone who's White, my children are much more fair than I, so I'm conscious of that difference. So umm, but I think, you know I will always be Brown. I'm not really a White person and I'm not really, you know, Black. So I think that my Brownness will always have this factor of people thinking about my cultural heritage and my immigrant status.

Although each of these respondents says something different about Brown race identity, they are telling us the same thing with regarded to racialized social legitimacy: Brown race identity carries no social clout in and of itself. Its best valuation rests on being mistaken for or seen as similar to White identity. Otherwise its meaning varies between nothing as argued by Muhommad, and not American according to Maleeha. For Maleeha, Brown race identity says that she is culturally different and therefore not American. Her identity positions her globally rather than nationally. Brown skin color is the marker of global neoliberalism within the geographic borders of the United States.

The importance of the assumption of non-American identity, even if one is in fact American, is highlighted in the comments of Zaynab and Emma. They both say that Brown skin marks them as an immigrant thereby robbing them of their nationality. Emma is aware that wearing *hijab* indicates a cultural identity that is not American. What they say shows that the global conflicts between Muslims and the United States inform their experiences. Yet more importantly they recognized that White race is as much a global identity as is Muslim religion. Zaynab says:

America's different because it's a melting pot, it's expected that there's different races and different ethnicities. But its, no matter where you go, it's always that if you're White you're more American. If you're White or if you're Black you're more American, and if you're something different, you're not necessarily American. … You're kind of are always looked at as a minority. I mean we are minorities but, it's like we're always different. It's always like, whereas I always think of the example

of … a Polish girl from Europe who came here yesterday or something. People would look at her and think, she's American because she's White and she looks like us. Whereas they would assume that I have not been here very long and I'm not American, and probably speak with an accent. You know a lot of people get surprised that I don't have an accent. I'm like, 'No, 'cause I'm an American.' So I mean, you always get kind of labeled as not really American, even when you are because of skin color.

Zaynab is aware that racial and ethnic identity diversity does not eliminate racial hierarchy. She indicates that the neoliberal expectation of diversity is not equivalent to racial inclusion. She points to the importance of White race identity in creating belonging and membership for European immigrants. Emma expands what Zaynab says about European immigrants by incorporating White racial dominance. Emma says:

So when Europeans come into this country they become a part of the racism because they're White. You know, they can lose the accent. … You're next gener-ation; you can be the children of immigrants and hate people of color because you don't have color. Um … like one Russian man rolled down his window once and told me to go back to my country, *in an accent*. So I was like, 'I'm from this coun-try and you're obviously not'. I'm not particularly dark. It's interesting because to White people I'm dark and to Black people I'm not. But just the fact of having your head covered automatically makes you someone of color. And, oh, there was that sort of hierarchy that came in simply because he wasn't of color and I am. And so, yeah, I think people definitely get kind of sucked into those roles.

Clearly Emma is telling us about the classic American hierarchy of Black and White race, but that neither group includes her says that race hierarchy is not what it used to be. Brown race identity is a component of neoliberal race diversity; however, it is not a new category, it is an old one born of colonialism and anti-immigrant senti-ments. What is also significant to racial neoliberalism is the portability of White racial dominance. Whiteness is more than an assumption of membership, as Emma makes clear. White race identity incorporates European immigrants into the relationships of racial dominance when they enter the United States. Just as the global subordina-tion of Brown race moves across geographical boundaries, so does the domination of White race.

White race dominance of the neoliberal racial hierarchy is legitimated by assump-tions that they are the rightful holders and controllers of material resources, and the quality of life that their race and resources grant them. The race legitimacy of those who are Brown is founded on being pseudo-White or immigrant non-member. Race knowledge does not make them members, nor does it absolutely denigrate them. For African Americans, race knowledge circumvents their legitimacy, hobbling their social membership. This is evidenced in what respondents say about the ability of African American Muslims to make Islam an accepted part of American society. Moreover, the divergence in the social legitimacy of Black and White race identities is brought into sharp relief in what respondents say about the potential impact of more White American converts to Islam on the religion's social acceptance.

Blacks, Whites, and Islam

Overall interviewees' statements about African American Muslims are positive, espe-cially noting their efforts to learn Islamic practices and beliefs. When evaluations are

negative they note: that some Black Americans convert while incarcerated, the history of militancy associated with the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X, and the visibility of women in all black clothing and *niqab*. However, there is a feeling that any American convert can make Islam more acceptable to other Americans simply on the foundation of shared national identity. The logic is that Islam will not be associated only with immigrants. Yet what respondents' comments reveal about the social meanings of Blackness is telling of the ability of African Americans to confer social legitimacy. Consider Abdullah's comment:

> African Americans are demonized regardless; it's like how are you, you respect them now, you respect the religion because African Americans are Muslim? They're an oppressed group, they've been, African Americans will never be accepted no matter what they do. Just like any foreigner, they're not accepted. It's not like intermingling or marriage or what have you. I think it might open people's eyes you know, demographers or whatever looking at trends and statistics. … I shouldn't say it doesn't make a difference. I mean yeah this whole African American, this whole Christian missionary zeal to convert people and yeah they're accepted to a certain degree and 'now [that] we civilize[d] them, they're Christian.' But I think, this is a Christian country, there are a lot of Christian Blacks, you know what I mean. Some are accepted, a lot of them aren't.

Note that Abdullah describes African Americans as "foreigners." Their conversion to Islam might be demographically interesting but if their social clout isn't improved by Christianity, it won't be improved by Islam. Blacks aren't socially accepted so they cannot create social acceptance for Islam. Note Rosa's comments about the ability of African American Muslims to improve perceptions of Islam. On one hand, they are completely rejected as fellow humans and, on the other, they are Americans who might improve perceptions of Islam.

> … I guess in some ways now hopefully Americans are starting to see, like they've accepted the fact that African Americans are also I guess, human. But I think it does help them to see that fellow Americans become Muslim.

However, Chimoona informs us that changing the social meaning of African American identity might be easier said than done, and this has consequences for how non-Muslim Americans evaluate Islam:

> … [I]t suddenly becomes an association of Islam with a peripheral thing in American culture, right, immediately. A lot of Americans frankly consider the idea of urban African Americans to be a threat to their existence which is, like, something that you see a lot in a place like Philly, Chicago, or whatever. It's just, like, as little African American imagery as possible by mainstream White society.

His comment brings to the fore that Blacks are defined as a social threat, and they are absent from the national imagination. Black Americans are present in the nation but they are just barely on the inside of the boundary. As Sarah told us, the bus is integrated but this does not indicate that Black race identity has been invested with social legitimacy or that those named by the identity can designate what is accepted societally.

Just as with Black converts some respondents thought that White converts could not improve perceptions of Islam. This view is supported by the idea that all converts

can be seen as weird and confused by Americans whose knowledge of Islam is limited. Yet the overwhelming majority of respondents think that White converts can improve Americans' views of Islam by making the religion more familiar, decreasing its association with anti-Americanism and militancy. Respondents are keenly aware of the social power and statutes of White race and its association with being an American. In the words of Salma, "…I think they (Americans) would just respect it (Islam) more. I think they (Whites) have a different kind of legitimacy." Whites are respected as individuals, their character as a person rather than their race determines how they are evaluated, especially by other Whites. The legitimacy associated with White race identity is further developed and explained by Lalia:

> … [B]ecause they're White, they're more accepted in society, so for them to become Muslim, if you're in a society where you know there's a certain majority, that majority group, which in this case is White, those people are looked at as individuals, more so than a foreign group or people. Like you know, a White person will judge a White person based on their character, not on their race or anything like that, or if that person was a Muslim. They'd look at that person as an individual. They'd say, 'Oh that person converted, why?' … To me, they'd be like, 'Oh she just came from a Muslim country, so they'd be like, so she's something else still.' They'd still see me as foreign, but they are a lot closer to that White convert than they are to me, you know, they can relate to that person better. Or, they think they can, yeah.

Lalia's comments reveal many things about the social meaning of Whiteness: Whites are free from the boundaries of group-based definitions of identity, so White identity incorporates individual autonomy and embodies liberal ideals. When this is combined with the social power afforded to majorities, Whites have the ability to determine and confer social acceptance. Soma provides a more straightforward assessment that mirrors Lalia's evaluation:

> … Let's be realistic, you know, alright…if like, *to them*, White people, that's it. They're everything, they're the predominate, they dominate everything, they're the *best* people *ever* on earth, everything else is *below* them, no one is better than them, so …

Note that Sarah says "to them." The social power that is invested in Whiteness is maintained by Whites. Her comment indicates how Whites are positioned in the racial hierarchy. Part and particle of their power is designating what is valued and legitimate across society.

As far as the social acceptance of Islam is concerned, Sam says what is implied in the comments of Sarah and others, "This is White America." However he goes on to assess the experience of Whiteness. It is something that he is clearly guessing at and just as clearly longing for in terms of what it would mean for Islam and his everyday life:

> Like if White people were following Islam, aw man, it would make it so much easier on the religion, you know. It would be like wow, we wouldn't have to deal with, like people would understand it better because it seems like White Americans have such a, I don't know, 'cause being White and being American gotta be fun. It's like, what more, you can't really ask for that much more. Umm, like your opinion matters, you're not really wrong in being a Muslim. … If White people became Muslim I think that would change the whole image of Islam.

According to Sam, White race identity confers understanding and validates opinions. It lowers the probability of negative evaluations and assumptions of error. White racial dominance has not died or disappeared, and White race identity still coincides with what is right, valued, and legitimate. Sam is telling us that the meaning of White race identity is consistent with racial neoliberalism. Sarah's integrated bus does not signal equitable social legitimacy between Blacks and Whites. In the transition from the civil rights agenda to racial neoliberalism, the Black and White races are still related through their opposite meanings.

For some interviewees the initial question about the ability of Black converts to positively influence perceptions of Islam among non-Muslim Americans led to comments that capture the related positioning of Blackness and Whiteness. Take Aleem's answer, for example:

> I think that conversion of any people; any American to Islam helps the Americans understand Islam. Probably not as fast as if say Caucasians were accepting Islam. I think if more Caucasians were accepting Islam I think more people would open up and realize there's something going on here. I think part of the sentiment is that African Americans are not as well educated, so they cannot make educated decisions, so if they make a decision people don't really take them seriously … The acceptance level doesn't come in as fine as say if you take a Caucasian doctor or a political figure and he decides he wants to become a Muslim. People would be more accepting of that and more open to the idea because they're like here's an educated individual, a respectable individual and they decided to do this, so there must be something behind that.

Aleem clearly connects the ability of converts to influence other Americans' views of Islam to their race and the social meanings that are attached to those identities. One identity can confer legitimacy and the other cannot. However, Aleem also connects professional status to White race identity signaling that dominance of the racial hierarchy corresponds to other aspects of social power. Like Aleem, Fatimah makes the comparative aspect of racialized social legitimacy clear:

> I think that the influence of just a White person is so much greater than African Americans. And I think that's due in part to like the discrimination that still exist in this country, because I mean the weight of a White man is still much, much more than a Black man.

For Aleem the comparison of Blackness and Whiteness is about assumptions of who has the knowledge needed for decision making; for Fatimah it is about who has the social clout needed to have their decisions accepted. Muhommad puts all of this in a nut shell—social legitimacy is reserved for those who are thought to embody the image of the nation regardless of the contributions of other races:

> Uh, you know it's unfortunate but African Americans aren't viewed as mainstream American. Don't get me wrong like I mean, I know they are an important member, contributing people of this community of American society at large. Uhh, but for whatever may be the reasons like, they're not, you know, in that epicenter that people look to. You know when they see an American they automatically think blonde hair, blue-eyed Caucasian. And it really helps when one of those, someone who fits that profile gets up there and says [the Islamic declaration of faith in Arabic].

For this group of interviewees White Americans win hands-down in comparison to Black Americans in terms of which group has the legitimacy necessary to positively influence the perceptions of Americans generally. This group of second-generation Muslim Americans demonstrates that the social meaning of Black and White race identities is consistent with racial neoliberalism. White supremacy is sustained by racialized social legitimacy, even if it has been muted by the repeal of discriminatory law and racial integration.

Neoliberal Race Knowledge

The value of Junayd and Abdullah's comments in revealing racial neoliberalism should not be taken lightly. Abdullah notes the normality of hierarchy to capitalism and the assumption that middle- and upper-class resources can trump racism. Junayd highlights the symbolism of multiracial public spaces and their importance to the assumption that racism no longer exists. White supremacy is protected by the belief that it has been eliminated in the repeal of legal discrimination and the end of colonial domination by European nations and the United States. Race knowledge insures that what is deemed socially legitimate is determined by those who are racially White, and not those who are Black or Brown. The denigration of Islam that emerges from the War on Terror can be mediated by White American converts but not Black Americans. Both Black and Brown Americans are below White Americans on the racial hierarchy but neither is above the other, nor are they adjacent. Instead the subordinate status of each is contextually different. The social meaning of Black race identity, its affect, is grounded in slavery, legal segregation, and the defamation of African Americans. The social meaning, or affect, of Brown race identity is grounded in colonialism, immigrant foreigner, and cultural outsider. They are both subordinate to White race identity but the race knowledge about each identity is different. This ensures racial neoliberalism and the continuation of White supremacy locally and globally.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis reveals how second-generation Muslim Americans understand the racial hierarchy of the United States and how they position themselves in it. What they say about racial hierarchy exposes the race knowledge of racial neoliberalism. The American racial hierarchy is not linear, subordinate groups are not ranked one above the other, nor are they juxtaposed at the bottom of a pyramid. The Black/White binary does not hide Brown race, as argued by Amy Brandzel and Jigna Desai (2013), nor is the failure of those who are racially Brown and, in this case, Muslim to form alliances with Black Americans an anomaly in light of shared oppression.

The foregoing analysis reveals that White dominance of the racial hierarchy is composed of the combined power of White race identity within the United States and globally. European immigrants carry the power of Whiteness with them when they enter the United States. Black Americans are, as they always have been in the United States, materially disadvantaged and socially subordinate. They are, as they were historically, second-class Americans. Americans who are racially Brown can access status through the model minority identity but only because it positions them as *like* Whites. They are not the same as Whites nor does their ancestral culture or identity increase their status. In fact, their ancestral culture is disempowering because it makes them a foreigner thereby placing them outside of the boundaries of the nation even when they are American. This is not the classic model-minority identity of hard working

immigrants who were beating Black Americans to post-civil rights opportunities. It is instead the model minority identity of racial neoliberalism where globalism has placed the conflicts between the West and the Others within the geographical boundaries of the United States.

Race knowledge is essential to racial neoliberalism. Racial neoliberalism sustains White supremacy through the possible but not probable. Eliminating formal race discrimination makes it possible but not probable that those who are the inheritors of a history of racist discrimination will be able to improve their quality of life. When race identities are connected to social legitimacy—the ability to name what is valid, accepted, and valuable in society—then racial status and hierarchy do not need to be named. Racial domination and subordination can in fact be denied as an outcome of eliminating legal discrimination while it is sustained through affect. Race knowledge is as essential to racial neoliberalism as is White supremacy. Sarah can be on an integrated bus and keenly aware that sitting where you want has not ended racism.

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NOTES

1. In relation to the 2010 Census, Arab American activists and the Arab American Institute Foundation began a campaign to add a Middle East/North African ethnic category to the U.S. Census. The new ethnic category would mean that Arab Americans would not be designated as racially White automatically. Persons of Middle East/North African ethnicity would respond to a separate question to indicate their race identity. The new ethnic category would be a reversal of the historic push among Arab Americans to be classified as racially White to avoid the anti-Asian immigration policies that were a part of the Immigration Act of 1924 (Krogstad 2014).
2. The parents of South Asian respondents are from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. Middle Eastern ancestry is Palestinian, Syrian, Moroccan, Egyptian, and Saudi Arabian. 70% of the respondents are of Pakistani descent.
3. Interviews lasted for one to two hours and covered a range of topics: immigrant narratives, family and friendship relationships, 9/11 policies, media and Muslims, national origin and religious based discrimination, American identity, Islam, and Muslims in the United States. Interviewees designated their pseudonyms.

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