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Beyond (mis)-recognition: Muslim youth and religiosity in Australia

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ABSTRACT

Scholarship on Muslim youth is increasingly recognising the different ways they negotiate fluid, hybrid and individualised identities alongside minoritised identities that stem from a politics of mis-recognition. However, less attention has been directed towards understanding how these seemingly contradictory processes might simultaneously arise within culturally diverse societies that have defined frameworks for managing diversity. Drawing on qualitative data from a larger comparative international study on Islamic religiosity in the West, this paper suggests that for the Australian Muslim youth studied, a neo-liberal dictum of self-responsibility pervaded individualised attempts to move beyond the other-ing effects of mis-recognition. The paper argues that while these individualised responses to oppression enabled young Muslims to transcend othering discourses to an extent, they also reflect the emergence of a less visible form of surveillance in the form of self-policing. This paper explores this link by considering Ghassan Hage's concept of mis-interpellation, Ulrich Beck's writings on religious individualisation, and Lori Beaman's concept of deep equality.

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Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition

In the wake of the 2001 September 11 (9/11) attacks and the London bombings of July 7 2005 (7/7), a politics of mis-recognition has been a central defining experience for many Muslims living in the West. This politics of mis-recognition has been conceived as a conceptual blindness to the complexities of Muslims identities, aspirations, and civic and political engagement. In practice, it manifests as a failure to recognise the rights of Muslims within prevailing structures of diversity governance, and the resultant burden placed on Muslims to attain state recognition and social acceptance for their religious needs (Modood 1997; Meer 2012). Mis-recognition overlooks not only the fluid, ambiguous and contested nature of lived religiosity, but also group differences that disadvantage minorities whose 'experience, culture and socialized capacities differ from those of privileged groups' (Young 1990, 136). Discussions of mis-recognition in relation to Islam have taken shape predominantly in Europe, where the backlash against multiculturalism and Muslim presence has compelled many young Muslims to strategically and creatively re-negotiate

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their presence and visibility in the public sphere (Dobbernack, Meer, and Modood 2014). Elsewhere, in places such as Australia, multiculturalism, with its support for minority cultures, has been more positively accepted by the general populace (Markus 2018; Harris 2013). Here, young Muslims have been recognised in scholarship as valued citizens who contribute to the well-being of society (Vergani et al. 2017). However multiculturalism, and the social positioning of young Muslims in particular, has long been scrutinised by left- and right-wing commentators alike, who argue against the 'solidification' of discrete cultures and the 'ghettoization' of minorities respectively (Poynting and Mason 2008). Research has examined the ways exclusionary media and political discourses have frequently constructed Muslims as the 'Other', leading many Muslims to reconstruct their identities in ways that reinforce religion as the most salient marker of identity (Aly 2007). Recent work has also drawn attention to the unequal burden placed on young Muslims to contribute to social cohesion through efforts to 'explain, de-mystify and de-stigmatise Islam and Muslim identity' in Australia (Harris and Hussein 2018, 1). Muslim youth in Australia thus live in an environment where their very existence remains linked to pressures to bridge a so-called cultural 'divide', in ways that treat them as a homogenous group. In such an environment, the issue of mis-recognition remains a vexed topic in relation to Muslim youth.

At the same time, a significant body of work has explored young Muslims' capacities to negotiate depoliticised, hybrid and contextualised identities in multicultural societies (Johns, Mansouri, and Lobo 2015; Kabir 2011; Nasir 2016; Noble 2009; Qureshi and Moores 1999; Ryan 2014). This research often engages with the question of young Muslims' ability to exercise agency and forge cross-cultural ties in the face of ongoing societal stigmatisation whilst preserving an authentic notion of Islamic faith. It recognises the mutual reinforcement and entwinement, often within an oppositional paradigm, of Muslim youth religiosity and Western culture, and the co-existence of progressive, 'do-it-yourself' religious identities alongside the relative stability of Islamic orthodoxy (Pedziwiatr 2011; Ryan 2014). In Singapore and Sydney, for example, young Muslims have adopted individualised views and exemplified 'a plurality of religious rationalities' that reflect the complexities and paradoxes of the interaction between mainstream culture and young urban Muslims' social milieu (Nasir 2016, 6–7). Similarly, young Muslims in London have been able to blend both 'liberal' views with seemingly 'puritanical' practices, negotiating somewhat 'disorganised' and context-specific identities that appear to be 'evolving' along with their development as young people (Ryan 2014, 458). The fusing together of both Islamic values and Australian culture is further emphasised in research which found that young Muslims in Australia developed 'bicultural' blended identities, retaining their religious and ethnic heritage while taking on English language and other aspects of mainstream culture (Johns, Mansouri, and Lobo 2015; Kabir 2011). Evidently, young Australian Muslims are able to draw on the cultural resources available to them to 'weave Islam into the fabric of Australian social, cultural and economic life' (Roose 2016, 133–134). These creative attempts to combine Islam with contemporary Western culture are growing in terms of 'both sophistication and number' (2016, 134). Consequently, there is much to suggest that scholarship on Muslim youth in Australia should unpack the plethora of complex and evolving interactions between agentic, individualised religiosity, religious orthodoxy, *and* responses to mis-recognition as described above.

Drawing on this growing literature, this paper analyses qualitative interview data from a study of Islamic religiosity among young Muslims living in Melbourne to consider how Muslim youth negotiate a politics of mis-recognition in multicultural Australia alongside hybrid, progressive and individualised religious identities. In particular, it identifies the dispositions, attitudes, and practices utilised by these young Australian Muslims to negotiate identities that respond to and resist ongoing mis-recognition and social marginality, while working to transcend the (colonial) structures that contribute to this oppression. While previous research has recognised the co-existence of multiple subject positionings among religious youth, including 'correspondence', 'compliance', 'challenging' and 'conflict' (Hopkins et al. 2010, 325), less effort has been directed towards understanding the links between different subject positionings among religious youth, and what their implications might be for working towards social cohesion in culturally diverse societies. This article outlines four subject positionings among the study participants that take the following forms: (i) mis-recognition as mis-interpellation; (ii) critical theological engagement and the use of religious difference; (iii) pragmatic, hybrid and contextually based negotiations of Islam; and (iv) beyond a politics of recognition. It suggests that while these subject positionings represent varying responses to the othering effects of mis-recognition, they are undergirded by a sense of responsabilisation, or neoliberal processes of self-policing, whereby individuals are expected to take responsibility for addressing structural problems. We suggest that this represents a new and less visible form of oppression, whereby even efforts to transcend mis-recognition remain intimately linked to ongoing racial and religious discrimination against young Muslims. To explain this link, we draw on three key concepts: 'mis-interpellation' in relation to Muslim youth in Australia (Hage 2008, 2010), 'religious individualisation' (Beck 2010) and 'deep equality' (Beaman 2017).

In the first instance, Hage (2008, 2010) asserts that for Australian Muslim youth, mis-recognition takes the form of 'mis-interpellation', whereby racism is directed at them from 'a language and culture that is their own' (2008, 148–149). In these circumstances, Muslim youth are lured into 'dropping their defences vis-à-vis the host culture' (Hage 2010, 125). Accordingly, the rejection that inevitably follows their initial hope of acceptance leads to a shattering and fragmentation of the self that requires them to 'pull themselves together' in order to occupy a socially defined position (2010, 126). To deal with the trauma of this mis-interpellation, individuals begin to look outside 'official ideologies', with Muslim youth in particular turning to religion and faith to carve out a space where they can 'develop a viable sense of themselves', outside the realm of multicultural governance (Hage 2008, 151–152). In later work, Hage (2010, 114, 127) draws on Fanon's (2008) work on the racial politics of colonialism to further argue that young Muslims may paradoxically aspire to a universal cosmopolitanism as a result of being denied a sense of national/local acceptance by the prevailing host culture. This entails an ambivalent mode of relations, whereby one is both emotionally fixated on the colonial/racist dimensions of modernity, yet at the same time, wishes to transcend it both intellectually and politically.

In this regard, Hage entertains the possibility of a range of dispositions that may emerge among Muslim youth in response to racial mis-recognition. These range from the development of 'resistance identities', in response to oppression within the Western polity (Renani 2001), to the envisaging of a universal cosmopolitanism, where they are recognised as equals. However, what is less apparent is how these dispositions are

manifested in actions that may have further effects on mis-interpellated individuals. In particular, we are concerned about the potential emergence of new forms of oppression that may go largely undetected in the current 'era of governmentality' (Foucault 1991, 103), in which marginalised youth, as individual entities, have become the focus of institutionalised distrust (Kelly 2003), and are encouraged, through the rhetoric of 'responsibilisation', to develop individual solutions to structural problems (Stephen and Squires 2004, 352). This possibility is amplified in Australia, where multiculturalism has been largely endorsed as a framework for managing diversity, yet where hyper-securitisation and nation-building agendas since 9/11 have increasingly placed pressure on young Muslims to contribute to social cohesion efforts (Harris and Roose 2014). In such circumstances, perceptions of 'multicultural success' have a greater capacity to conceal ongoing religious and racialized stigmatisation experienced by minorities, and the individual and collective efforts to address this stigmatisation (Lam 2019).

The notion of addressing structural problems via individual action is of course conceptualised aptly in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) writings on individualisation. For Beck (2010, 122), individualisation as 'institutionalised individualism' reflects the paradox of 'finding biographical solutions for systemic contradictions'. In a post-traditional order, traditions have not disappeared, rather, increasingly they must be chosen by individuals (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 4). Consequently, individuals have become responsible for handling social risks themselves, or for finding biographical solutions to social problems (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 25–26). As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim write:

opportunities, dangers, biographical uncertainties ... must now be perceived, interpreted, decided and processed by individuals themselves ... If they are not to fail, individuals must be able to plan for the long term and adapt to change; they must organize and improvise, set goals, recognize obstacles, accept defeats and attempt new starts. They need initiative, tenacity, flexibility and tolerance of frustration.

Beck (2010) extends his analysis of institutionalised individualisation in *A God of One's Own* to consider the ramifications of individualisation for religion. For Beck (2010, 89), the individualisation of religion entails a paradoxical situation whereby individuals are engaged in the task of constructing 'authentic' religious trajectories by 'choosing from a variety of competing options and biographical experiences or else leaving things as they are'. In other words, countless permutations of individualised religiosity are possible, which are as unique as the trajectories of individuals themselves. The outcomes of religious individualisation are 'highly ambivalent' and unpredictable, reflecting 'the complex nature of the real world' (Beck 2010, 16). At the same time, individualisation is not an egoistic process, nor simply a matter of 'conscious choice' or 'individual preference', but a 'macro-historical, macro-sociological phenomenon' that emerges alongside globalisation and the development of a cosmopolitan mindset (Beck 2010, 16, 94). This cosmopolitan religiosity involves an ability to see and understand oneself through others' eyes and, as Beck (2010, 136, 182) writes, is only possible through the encounter with cultural and religious difference.

As Delanty (2012, 335) stresses, a cosmopolitan disposition of openness to the world 'is not reducible to internationalism, globalization, internationalization or transnationalism'. Indeed, it is a mindset of self and societal transformation in which openness to difference becomes possible. It is here that we might consider moving beyond Beck's (2010) focus on

globalisation as a pre-condition for the emergence of multiple religious trajectories, and consider how a cosmopolitan mindset of openness to difference may develop from more localised contexts for cultural and religious mixing. Scholarship on 'everyday multiculturalism' (Stratton 1998; Wise and Velayutham 2009) and 'ordinary cosmopolitanism' (Lamont and Aksartova 2002) makes clear that encounters with diverse others are not only possible through global mobility; they are also prevalent in the prosaic and unremarkable moments of everyday life in culturally diverse societies. Beaman (2017) focuses on religious, non-religious and cultural difference in particular, foregrounding the need to map out how difference is worked out on the ground in everyday non-events or ephemeral moments. For Beaman (2017, 27), the everyday is brimming with unpredictability and fragility, yet also the possibility of acknowledging and abandoning hierarchical power relations in ways that enable accommodating groups to 'make normative judgments about who is "worthy" enough to receive accommodation'. This 'deep equality', as she calls it, requires a willingness to reshape relations with a view to equality, justice, and fairness (2017, 27), and is located in the forgiveness and suspension of mis-understanding, and assumption of good intentions as others make mistakes (2017, 35). As we seek to show in this article, this possibility is indeed evident in the accounts of the young Australian Muslim participants in this study, and represents a transcendent form of personal politics that moves beyond mis-recognition as mis-interpellation. Yet it also remains mired in an ongoing climate of risk, whereby the possibility of forgiveness and care for others hinges intimately, yet subtly, on the ever-present threat of harm to self and others.

About the study

This paper draws on data collected as part of an Australian Research Council Discovery project, involving 378 participants across Melbourne, Australia; Detroit, U.S.A.; and Lyon/Grenoble, France. The study utilised a mixed-methods approach, involving surveys, individual interviews, focus groups, photo elicitation techniques and participant observations. In this paper we focus on data collected from face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18–34 living in Melbourne, Australia, to explore how processes of marginalisation were embedded into longer-term processes of individualisation and self-making inherent to the youth phase. For a macro-analysis of the data, please refer to Mansouri et al. (2016).

Forty-nine participants were recruited for individual interviews in Melbourne, forming the basis for the findings reported in this paper. They were recruited through relevant community organisations, notably, those focused on youth, women, Islamic education and interfaith dialogue, as well as social service networks. Snowballing techniques were then used to include others not represented by the community organisations. The interviews covered questions on the perceived relationship between religious practice, spirituality, community engagement and active citizenship. With 49% of the participants aged 18–24, a substantial body of data was generated for this demographic cohort, which spoke to processes of individualisation, social risks associated with negotiating religiosity in public spaces, citizenship, belonging and political engagement. There was roughly an equal gender split in Melbourne, and the majority (87%) of participants self-identified as practicing Muslims. Many were of an Arabic-speaking background, although African, Pakistani and Turkish backgrounds were also well represented.

The individual interviews were guided by a set of thematic questions around practice and affect, that elicited diverse affective experiences around faith and religious practice from the participants. This individualised approach ensured that all participants were able to articulate, reclaim and maintain an agentic voice in the exchange. The interview data was subjected to a rigorous and systematic thematic content analysis that allowed us to code linguistically key themes associated with Islamic religious practice, spirituality and cross-cultural engagement at different temporal levels of the individual trajectory.

For the purposes of this paper, a systematic thematic narrative analysis was conducted to gain insights into the religious trajectories of individuals and processes of how mis-recognition and individualisation had been negotiated. In particular, the thematic narrative analysis focused on identifying the contextualised strategies participants used to deal with the ongoing challenges of living out a faith that is socially and discursively marginalised. Our interview analysis was undertaken linguistically at two different but related levels, namely a semantic level, reflecting word choice and semantic orientations, and a syntactic-pragmatic level that examined structural orientations of speech in relation to communicative intent of the interviewee. The content analysis was guided by two key principles: an inductive approach, which allowed participants' narratives to yield and shape the final analysis; and a latent perspective, which involved reading into the subtle meanings and assumptions behind the text. This approach ensured that our analysis was at once faithful to the data and well nuanced and reflective of the broader context within which data regarding responses to marginalisation were produced.

In the discussion that follows, we consider how the reported findings locate Muslim youth both within and beyond a politics of mis-recognition, and how a cosmopolitan and religious individualisation perspective may extend the possibilities for Muslim youth subjectivity in a securitised era when care for, and connectedness with, all are increasingly required. We show that these processes are undergirded by an ethic of responsibilisation, whereby individuals, and increasingly marginalised youth in particular, are expected or encouraged to develop individual solutions to structural problems (Stephen and Squires 2004, 352). We then reflect on the potential ramifications of this responsibilisation for recognising ongoing challenges to inclusion for the next generation of Muslim practitioners.

Mis-recognition as mis-interpellation

For many participants, mis-recognition was evident in their accounts of having one-dimensional labels applied to them, and being required to address mis-conceptions regarding their cultural compatibility. For these participants, mis-recognition took the form of mis-interpellation, described by Hage (2008, 2010) as the 'shattering and fragmentation of the self' when racism is directed towards individuals from a language and culture that is their own. This was illustrated in Mustafa's (21-year-old male, Iraqi background) account of the identity changes he experienced as a result of being subjected to racial and religious vilification from his peers:

When I first started I was the only dark-skinned kid in an Anglo Saxon predominant school and so the first thing that came was 'oh your black, you're black'. When I was a kid I took it to heart you know and then when September 11 happened I was being called a terrorist and I was 11 or 12 years old. What do I know about terrorism? I wasn't even praying at the time 'cause I still

didn't know that much about my religion and it was so hard, I was constantly ... I got into fights. I actually failed grade 4 because it was such a distraction and such a hard time for me and I felt everyone was against me, every single person in the school and I just hated school ... And then later on, with more Middle Eastern[ers] coming and more Arab kids, I felt a little bit more comfortable because that pressure of being the only kid kind of went away a little bit and I guess I was still trying to find my identity. When you're growing up you're trying to find that, and it took me only to grade 9 when they accepted me ... I think the only reason they accepted me was cause I was a really good athlete, so yeah, sport teams, you bond and all that and they see you as, when they saw me play soccer with them, 'He's not that different', this is what they thought ... Actually when I got accepted I did change my identity ... In order for me to get accepted ... I played footy with the school team, even when I first came to Melbourne they're like 'Why do you have a Bogan accent?' I didn't realise 'cause I'd been living 7 years in the country so yeah I changed my identity into more of an Anglo Saxon, like outback kind of kid in order for me to get accepted which wasn't easy ... I mean I'm a dark skinned Arab and trying to be an Anglo Saxon and trying hard, you know. I was playing cricket, all that kind of stuff just to be accepted. Deep down, I guess I was in denial thinking 'This is not me', but I had to go along with it in order for me to enjoy my day at school I guess ... I was so happy the day we were moving to Melbourne, I was so happy and the first day at [high school] I was like oh here we go again, 'cause I was thinking it was also going to be an Anglo Saxon school. I didn't know Arabs existed in this area and when I went over there and the majority of them are of my descent, Iraqi, they spoke my tongue and I was so over the moon. The first day everyone loved me, I was happy from there on and I guess I started taking back my own identity. It's like pulling a rope and I got it all back, and I was more happy about who I was.

In the above extract, Mustafa describes the ways his peers fail to recognise the complexities of his identity. He is dark-skinned so was therefore perceived as a religiously indoctrinated 'terrorist', despite the fact that he 'didn't know that much about my [his] religion'. Mustafa is then pushed into adopting a series of identity projections that are but a caricature of what he perceived to be his own identity, in order to pull himself together and develop a 'socially defined position' (Hage 2010, 126). Yet his sense of identity-fragmentation is evident in his oscillation between hope, acceptance and rejection, along with his conscious attempts to change his identity. For Mustafa, this shattering of self can be traced over a number of identity changes – from being ostracised as a suspected terrorist, to being alleviated from the pressure of being 'the only dark skinned kid in an Anglo Saxon predominant school', to experiencing social acceptance as a competent soccer player, to 'trying hard' to be an 'Anglo Saxon like outback kind of kid', and then finally, 'taking back my own identity' as an Arab when he moved to an urban environment. The fluidity of identity Mustafa outlines speaks to the slipperiness of his belonging, and his own role in redefining what Hage describes as a 'viable' identity that can withstand racialized exclusion. His experience might be read as a stark illustration of the splintering effects of dealing with mis-recognition; taking personal responsibility for dealing with structural oppression, in this case, is an eventual triumph that is nonetheless imbued with a history of uncomfortable identity manoeuvres.

Mustafa's experience also resonates with what Hage (2010) describes as the 'ungovernability' of young Muslims, insofar that Mustafa was driven, at every turn, to seek his own sense of refuge in response to the racialized power structures that isolated him. Thus he played cricket despite thinking 'this is not me', paying lip service to White-Australian cultural norms until he was finally able to seek redemption among other Iraqi students when he moved to the city. According to Hage, this is a form of self-governance that lies outside

multiculturalism, described in *White Nation* (Hage 2000) as the management of racialized minorities by a White majority. According to Hage, this often involves young Muslims drawing on religion or artistic expression, and was also evident in Lazanda's (27-years-old male, Sri-Lankan background) experience as a Muslim comedian:

I think being, definitely being Muslim in a country like Australia, yeah multicultural but clearly, definitely ... It's an uncomfortable place to be ... to feel entirely comfortable in your own skin, you know when ... your identity is considered sort of ... and you need to validate that ... for me just the expression and you know art has always been a way to present a perspective, or to try and accurately present yourself, despite the public conversations, despite pre-conceptions or, you know, whatever is being said outside of that room. So, yeah, sometimes it's you know comedy written directly in response to a particular ad. Sometimes it's just, you know, stuff that we would joke about amongst ourselves, but when it's presented to a broad audience it's surprising ...

For Lazanda, comedy played a role in affirming his religiosity in ways that a multicultural polity clearly did not. Religious acceptance was experienced as something that lay beyond the bounds of multicultural Australia, and it is perhaps no surprise then that religious practices were also utilised by other participants to recharge from everyday life. Masjid (28, male, Albanian/Greek background, born in Australia, living in Melbourne) for example described prayer as a means to prevent an uncontrollable breakdown:

By doing it five times a day, it constantly reminds you, and keeps the flow of your daily routine ... You disconnect yourself from that daily work, social, money, figures, everything, and say 'Hey, I need a break'. Your body needs a break. It's like a car going all day and running, and running and running. It needs to have a break eventually or it's going to go [makes a breaking down noise].

Although Masjid in the above excerpt does not explicitly refer to racism as one of the challenges he faced, his utilisation of Islamic prayer as a means to 'disconnect' from the struggles of life and to take a 'break' conveys his perception of Islam as an external cultural resource that offers an alternate space for self-constitution, resonating with Hage's (2008, 152) description of Islam as something that provides room for young Australian Muslims to carve out a space for themselves outside the dominant white culture.

The notion of religion serving as a reservoir for the re-constitution of self for these young Muslims has parallels with individualised conceptions of youth religiosity more broadly. Research on British youth, for example, shows that religion illuminates the 'meandering path of young adulthood' (Yip and Page 2013, 138). An individualised approach is further useful for drawing out the theme of self-responsibility for negotiating future challenges in a contemporary risk society. Tariq (25–34 years, male, Lebanese background, born in Australia, living in Melbourne) for example related:

The constant struggle [of fasting] is something that will help us overcome the struggles that we may face in the coming year. So when I look at Ramadan, it's like a little intensive university ... for one month the intensive university allows me to discipline myself so that later on, next month and the month after that, I can overcome these challenges that are in front of me and that's one of the many, many benefits.

Here Islamic religiosity in the form of fasting provided spiritual nourishment for negotiating future challenges. Fasting during Ramadan played an important role in helping Tariq

and others to *overcome the struggles that we may face in the coming year*, to develop the discipline and fortitude required to withstand projected difficult times.

To an extent then, while these examples demonstrate that although Islam in émigré societies is discursively constructed as something that lies outside Western governmentality (Hage 2008, 152), the participants found ways to incorporate Islamic practices of prayer and fasting into their everyday lives in ways that demonstrate their individual efforts to live harmoniously in Australian society while contributing towards their own self-care. Indeed, the notion of using Islamic teachings and practices to facilitate adaptation and social integration into a Western culture challenges the Islam–West cultural incompatibility thesis and indeed speaks to a desire for re-engagement with Western polity, rather than a desire to carve out an alternative space for oneself. This was further evident in participants' use of religious difference as a means to engage productively with diverse others.

Critical theological engagement and the use of religious difference

For many participants in the study, the deepening of one's faith commitment served as a springboard for pursuing productive intercultural encounters. More specifically, one's very religious identity as a Muslim youth was used intentionally as a source of agentic strategies to engage productively with culturally and religiously diverse others. This was evident in the participants' active engagement in interfaith practices. Alia (30, Turkish-background female, Melbourne) for example, described interfaith engagement as an opportunity for the Muslim community to 'open its doors' and to show others the common values shared by different faith communities. Participants also saw involvement in interfaith activities as a way to facilitate the development of mutual respect and intercultural understanding. Such interfaith engagement is viewed as critical for challenging Islamophobia, and thereby building bridging capital (Putnam 2000) between young Muslims and mainstream society.

Similarly, intercultural practices were regarded as a means to reduce harmful misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, and were regularly pursued by almost all participants in the study. These intercultural practices included engaging with non-government organisations, inviting individuals from other communities to Ramadan Iftaar dinners and Eid celebrations, or simply reaching out to neighbours and colleagues to explain aspects of Islamic faith and its ritual practices. This resonates with recent research findings (Harris 2016) that show how young people view diversity as a normal status of being in contemporary society, and how they discursively and situationally produce difference as a social construct in order to negotiate belonging in their everyday encounters with others. Indeed, young people may situate themselves within particular cultural identities and draw on these constructions of difference to manage belonging and cross-cultural engagement (Harris 2016, 361). For participants in this study, locating oneself within the Islamic tradition meant engaging critically with Islamic teachings as a key aspect of everyday religiosity. In this regard, it was important to commit to ongoing self-education about Islam rather than engage in blind ritualistic worship. Saba (22, female, Hazara background, born in Afghanistan, living in Melbourne), for example, said: 'In our religion, education is very much emphasised on and, you know, no matter what country you live in, education is very, very important for you. There is also a verse in the Qur'an that says "educate

yourself from the time you are just born to the time you are about to die", so education is very much emphasised'.

This self-education involved critically interrogating certain interpretations of Islamic teachings in order to develop a genuinely authentic understanding of the faith and its core tenets. 'When you look at Islam, as I understand it, disagreement is encouraged in order for you to understand what you believe in and not just believe it for just a fact.' (Safiya, 22, female Iraqi background, born in Iraq, living in Melbourne). This, however, did not mean that Islam was always utilised as a marker of difference by participants. As outlined earlier, scholarship on Muslim youth increasingly recognises the hybridised nature of identity among many young Muslims living in Western contexts. Indeed, it is now possible to speak of hyphenated 'Australian-Muslim' or 'British-Muslim' identities that reflect a desire by young Muslims to be considered both as 'authentic Muslim' and 'legitimate citizen' in Western immigrant-receiving contexts (Kabir 2011). Such identity framings might also reflect the process of negotiating aspects of Islamic religiosity in order to co-exist peacefully within a new social, cultural and political environment that is governed by citizenship requirements and secular legal systems. Within such socio-political settings, the hybridised and contextualised subjectivities can engender an approach to race-relations that moves beyond a politics of mis-interpellation, whereby shared humanity, rather than socially constructed, difference may form the basis of intercultural engagement.

Pragmatic, hybrid and contextually based negotiations of Islam

In the context of increased scrutiny of all things Islam, and against a more salient hyper-securitised global agenda, the visibility of Western Muslims and their everyday practices of faith can lead to daily encounters with stigmatisation, exclusion and outright discrimination in the form of Islamophobia (Mansouri et al. 2016). Yet as Noble (2009, 858) has found, conceptualisations of young Muslim men in Australia that are based on a 'reductive politics of identity' are unlikely to recognise the manifold aspects of their subjective being. Noble (2009, 878) calls for further research that recognises the fluidity, temporality and contextualisation of religious identity – an approach that has been adopted in studies of youth identity more broadly. Efforts to 'map' youth religiosity across different social contexts have also been made by Hopkins et al. (2010, 318), whose research on young Scottish Christians emphasises the need to situate the development of youth religiosity in site-based practices. In the current study, young Muslims' contextualised negotiations of Islamic religiosity were indeed reflective of the complex and multifaceted nature of Muslim identity. Such negotiations of religiosity can be recognised as agentic efforts towards the development of one's own religious trajectory within the context of local laws, social norms and frameworks for managing cultural diversity. For many participants in this study, the negotiation of Islam in Western contexts required them to consider multiple aspects of their fluid identities, religious affiliation and the local contexts within which they lived and practiced their faith. This was described by participants as a process involving the adoption of different subject positions that varied according to the issue at hand, the individual, and their movement across different social contexts. Sharif (21, male, born in Iraq, lived in Saudi Arabia, living in Melbourne), for example, said:

It just depends on the context, but there is an Australian in me, there's no doubt ... I mean some people think I'm bipolar you know with the mixing of identities depending on the issue or the place or the context. But when it comes to opinion, I take into consideration my religious views, my cultural views and my Westernised views. I take that all into consideration and that's when I place my view. But when it comes to patriotism and all that stuff, I'm Iraqi and Australian, either so it's good.

Similarly, Balquees (24, female, Iraqi background, born in Iraq, living in Melbourne) related:

I don't think there is a set sort of being [a Muslim] in Australia or overseas. I think that you notice when people, migrants or refugees settle in a new country, some of them would integrate by assimilating to the new culture. Other ones might try to incorporate the culture they were brought up in, the culture where they lived in another country, and perhaps the new place and coming together with sort of a mix of their own.

These descriptions reflect an adaptation and a fluidity of Muslim identity that resist one-dimensional portrayals of individual Muslims, and draw attention to the role of agency in negotiating individualised religious trajectories. This is exemplified in Sharif and Balquees' accounts of 'mixing' different cultures and supports Ramadan's (2005, 80) claims regarding the contextualisation of Muslim identity as not being 'closed and confined within rigid, inflexible principles. On the contrary, it is based on a constant dialectical and dynamic movement between the sources and the environment, whose aim is to find a way of living harmoniously'. In other words, Islamic religiosity does not require a condition of fixity and uncritical engagement; rather it thrives on the individual's capacity to mediate their understanding of the core fundamentals of the faith with the socio-political specificities of their local environment. Indeed, Islam demands that individuals not only commit to the core of their faith, but to equally display a strong attachment to the political community within which they happen to live (Ramadan 2005).

The growing literature on Muslim youth in the West has mapped out a range of positionalities regarding their engagements within and beyond Western culture. These positionalities range from being subjected to a politics of minoritised mis-recognition (Hage 2008, 2010) to notions of individualised critical understanding of Islamic doctrine (Pedziwiatr 2011), to the emerging trend towards fluid, hybrid and contextualised mixing between Islamic and Western culture, as discussed in the previous section. Along these lines, this paper has examined diversified understandings and practices of religiosity among Australian Muslim youth, with an emphasis on negotiating racialized subjectivities that are nevertheless informed and sustained by a set of Islamic teachings that emphasise notions of care for all. This is perhaps most aptly illustrated in the current study by findings that point towards an externally oriented ethic of care that provides a basis for moving beyond a mere desire for recognition and towards positive intercultural affinity and solidarity.

Beyond a politics of recognition

While social recognition and national belonging continue to be important markers of substantive citizenship (Brubaker 2010), they are not always at the forefront of the approaches Australian Muslim youth take to intercultural engagement. In the current study, many

participants prioritised care for others regardless of their cultural and religious backgrounds, and regardless of whether or not these were reciprocated. Alia, Saba and Ali, for example, reflected respectively:

I think this is the core of religion, which is having love for your fellow human being, being able to transcend those, I guess those fears and doubts and suspicions and say 'You know what? I care for you because I know what that weakness is like'. (Alia, female, 30, Turkish background, Melbourne)

My religion says that you are born to serve everybody in the community that you can, and approach them in a way that's not harmful to them and you. (Saba, female, 22, Hazara background, Melbourne)

Islam is love that you give to people. It does not matter whether you get it in return but it is the love and the share, like what you have to share with people, people who do not have. (Ali, m, 33, African background, Melbourne)

In these excerpts, the qualities of love and care for others undergird cross-cultural relations in ways that resonate with Lori Beaman's (2017, 187) notion of deep equality, whereby differences are understood and negotiated on the ground by ordinary individuals. Here, a more universal conception of care is envisaged that does not differentiate on the basis of ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, gender or any other social category. This necessitates, as Beaman (2017, 196) writes, 'a willingness to acknowledge power differences, privilege, and power sedimentations', and an abandonment of 'a situation in which the accommodating group makes normative judgements about who is "worthy" or "important enough to receive consideration'. These features can indeed be seen in Ali's statement, 'it does not matter whether you get it [love] in return', reflecting a desire to overcome unequal power relationships in which the act of giving might leave individuals beholden to ongoing acts of reciprocity.

Consistent with Beaman's (2017, 188) description of deep equality, these engagements with diversity are also far from unreal or utopian visions, but grounded in participants' experiences and knowledge of the paradoxical Australian cultural climate, in which multicultural difference is recognised yet racial and religious tensions prevail. In the examples above, there is an underlying recognition of the potential harms that might emerge in spaces of encounter with the other. Alia speaks of the potential *fears, doubts and suspicions*, while Saba talks about approaching others in ways that are *not harmful to them and you*. These statements foreground the notion of risk, which Beck (1992) argues has become a central and pervasive organising feature of modern societies. For the young Muslims discussed here, action is constrained and is subject to ongoing monitoring and management in a securitised environment. While a transcendent cosmopolitan ethic may offer new opportunities for productive intercultural encounters, new and more complex tensions may emerge that will require creative and critical engagement with others but also with one's own religious and cultural repertoires.

Conclusion

This article has argued that while mis-recognition may indeed be the reality for many Muslims who are exposed to processes of racialisation, for others, it is possible to forge productive inter-connections and hybrid identities whereby there is no perceived

conflict between engaging with majoritarian Western culture on one hand and upholding one's religious beliefs as a practising Muslim on the other. This article has explored the interweaving of tradition and creative performativity, examining the strategies deployed by young Muslims living in Melbourne, Australia to deal with the challenges of negotiating individual Muslim identities in a prevailing climate of securitisation. In particular, it has looked at the ways participants used the resources available to them to simultaneously promote mutual respect and understanding, and repair the damage to themselves resulting from an immersion in multicultural Australia. The findings identify a set of relationships that indicate both a shielding from and engagement with aspects of Australian and Western culture, as well as a deepening of religious difference to promote social cohesion and mutual respect.

This paper identifies four key ways participants in this study embody subjectivities that reflect, yet also move beyond a politics of mis-recognition. Regarding the use of faith to negotiate the challenges of contemporary risk societies, Islamic religiosity was utilised as a resource to navigate the fragmentary effects of mis-recognition as mis-interpellation in risk societies. In this case, Islamic teachings were invoked to deal with marginality and to formulate ongoing and pre-planned strategies of self-care and personal autonomy within the context of broader processes of self-making in neo-liberal times. Relatedly, Islamophobia emerged as the 'fuel' that motivates young Muslims to deepen their faith, to engage in interfaith and intercultural activities, and to seek creative ways to resist and disrupt experiences of marginalisation, for example, through art and comedy. Concerning pragmatic and contextually based negotiations of Islamic teachings and practices, the young Muslims in this study developed and deployed creative strategies to manage their constructed 'otherness' in the face of highly securitised national agendas.

To unpack these complexities, and consistent with recent scholarship that emphasises the entwinement of Islamic religiosity and Western culture, we suggest that for the participants whose negotiations of mis-recognition and intercultural engagement are analysed in this paper, the responsabilising consequences of moving beyond mis-recognition become more apparent by simultaneously considering Ghassan Hage's framing of mis-recognition as mis-interpellation, Ulrich Beck's account of individualisation as a method of self-management in risk societies, and Lori Beaman's work on deep equality. The use of Islamic teachings as a point of productive difference and reservoir for the constitution of self speaks to both the entwinement of Islamic religiosity with Western culture, and the ethic of responsabilisation that underpins this entwinement. Actions that might transcend hierarchical power relations in the form of 'deep equality' too, are also not free from the risk of harm that participants in this study were aware of and sought to transcend.

Here, we do not wish to overlook the importance of mis-recognition for understanding the marginalisation of young Muslims, and similarly subjugated individuals. Additionally, we do not rule out the possibility that for some or many young Muslims, the cyclical journey of hope followed by misrecognition Hage describes is a defining feature of their everyday experience of living in the West. Indeed, data from our research to some extent supports Hage's argument that young Muslims' engage with Islam as a source of solace and refuge outside of Western culture. This could be observed in young Muslims' development of strategies of self-care as informed by Islamic teachings to deal with the splintering effects of mis-interpellation. However, in many cases, participants' accounts also suggested a deepening of faith commitment that was intertwined with, rather than

distinct from, their civic engagement with mainstream society. As the examples in this paper demonstrate, individualised and religiously-informed self-care practices were simultaneously other-oriented, aimed at reducing mis-understandings and enabling young Muslims to live well with others.

Yet, these proactive engagement attempts were not always sufficient for bridging the supposed divide between Muslims and non-Muslims, nor did they capture the wholeness of their subjectivities. Even more cosmopolitan attempts to dissolve perceptions of Otherness were undergirded by the ever-present threat of conflict, limiting the extent to which religiously informed aspirations could be lived out in a securitised environment. However, there is perhaps a darker, more sinister aspect in the form of regimes of surveillance and securitisation that can become internalised into neoliberal processes of self-policing. The incorporation of a sense of Otherness into individualised religious trajectories may represent a new form of discrimination, whereby oppression becomes internalised and made less visible in the public sphere. Even with special provisions that multiculturalism currently offers, the young Muslims discussed in this article were required to exert extra effort to construct meaningful religious identities capable of withstanding the challenges of mis-recognition, and of allowing them to be recognised just as any other generational religious group.

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