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“Cosmopolitan Islam: Globalization, Transnationalism and Muslim Diasporas”

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**ABSTRACT**

“Cultural Resilience and Ethnic Well-Being:  
Implications for American Muslims”

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American Muslims represent a normative minority, yet, they live in a reality where race and ethnicity loom large. This paper argues that the ethnic dynamics of the American life are highly meaningful in explaining American Muslim reality and their future. Those dynamics include cultural and structural dimensions, which call for a conceptualization of the varied paths of integration that Muslims can potentially assume. Informed by the trajectories of American ethnic minorities, this paper asserts that the integration of a minority group within the majority society is a dynamic process of negotiation. While economics and politics carve structural niches for minorities, their lived reality is ultimately determined by the interaction between the material conditions of those structural niches and the cultural webs in which the collective souls of minority members reside. To analyze such complex terms of integration, the paper revisits the conceptualization of ethnicity, synthesizing elements from the primordial and the constructivist perspectives - interests and circumstances that mold the lives of minority groups are acknowledged as well as the symbolic qualities of their shared memories. Similarly, in order to account adequately for the otherwise fluid use of the concept of culture, their paper differentiates between cultural preservation, cultural maintenance, and cultural resilience. They represent three strategies in which a minority manages its culture in reference to the pervasive societal culture. The stance of the dominant majority and its view of the minority are also considered. This paper argues that the combination of structural violence reflected in the depreciation of the minority's material resources, and cultural violence reflected in the devaluation of symbolic capital, lead to the decay of communities, pushing them into a vicious circle of social decay. The main contribution of this paper lies in theorizing how the well-being of a minority group is predicated upon the level of its cultural reliance.