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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

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Jazakumu Allahu Khairun.
This study uses ethnographic research methods to examine Sunni Muslim students and their experiences as a religious minority in the public school system in Canada. Dominant norms and values are encoded into school policies, practices and curriculum. Many of these create areas of contention for Muslims. For Muslim students, the fundamental incompatibility between Islamic ideology and praxis and the secular public school system can create dissonance, alienation, and in many cases, a desire to conform to the cultural practices within schools and society, at the expense of an Islamic way of life. This study, however, focuses on those students who strive to maintain an Islamic identity and lifestyle and will examine how this informs their educational experiences. The focus will also be upon how education has become an arena for contemporary cultural politics, and how Muslims use their religious identities to challenge Eurocentrism in school policies practices, and curriculum.
MUSLIM STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: EDUCATION AND THE POLITICS OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Reconstructing social realities through the ethnographic process, is an exercise in deciphering and decoding the meanings which positioned subjects assign to various facets of their lives as social and cultural beings. As critical researchers, our own location as a positioned subject, is an inherently political space through which we interpret social reality from our own culturally-mediated and historically arrived at, vantage point. This location also determines what, where, and whom we choose to study. Therefore, our affinities and interests also come into play in this process, which allows many of us to take our turn at privileging the discourses which help structure our own subjectivities.

The image of the ethnographer as "detached observer", then, masks the political and ideological imperatives which fuel the sociological imagination. For myself, I can claim no political or emotional detachment from this study. My rationale for conducting this research is based on my own location as a Muslim and my experiences growing up as a minority student in a Euro-centric school system. Through these experiences, I have come to understand very well how the pressures of race and social difference can inform the schooling experiences of minority youth. I also know first hand, how these pressures can lead toward mainstream conformity as a means to distance oneself from an otherwise socially-devalued identity. In my case, this was being a Pakistani. Yet, through these experiences I can claim only to have acquired certain insights into the current research; I cannot claim authority.

Despite being socially categorized as a Muslim, it was only in adulthood that I really
began to know and practice Islam. It was at this point, that I became rooted in a new sense of identity and purpose. Knowing as an adult, the difficulty of leading an Islamic lifestyle in a non-Islamic society, I was constantly amazed by Muslim youth who were able to maintain their Islamic practice and identity while in the multi-pressured context of high school. I wondered how they were able to resist the pressures of mainstream conformity and avoid drugs, alcohol and dating, which were normally considered part of the rites of passage during one’s teen years. And so, I began this research in an attempt to understand how issues of religious identity are negotiated within the context of secular educational systems.

Ethnographic studies have yet to probe the lived realities of Muslims living within non-Muslim contexts from the perspective of their integration within institutions such as education, and with regard to how their identities are negotiated and maintained within this context. Therefore, this study will attempt to fill the ethnographic void of research dealing with the issue of education and the politics of religious identity as it relates to Muslims in the Canadian context.

Knowledge of the Muslim community has often been constructed by those who view Islam from a Western perspective. As a result, Muslims have all to often been misrepresented within both the media and academic discourse. The creation and dissemination of this knowledge enacts a relationship of power based on politics and epistemology, which often subordinates the position of the subject-as-Other. Yet, despite being a member of the Muslim community, as a researcher, I cannot absent myself from the issue of power in representation. Writing and defining the experiences of others, is always an appropriation of knowledge, guided by specific ideological and political designs. The
researcher is by nature of the process, imbued with a form of discursive power over the analytical reorganization and conceptualization of the informant's experience.

The political intent of this work, however, reflects the need to decolonize/deconstruct the intellectual space of knowing the Islamic Other from the confines of Western social and political discourse. It also represents a process of privileging the construction of Islam as a social reality from the perspective of those who by live it. This represents a shift from viewing Islam through the discourse of Orientalism, which as Said (1978) writes represents, "a Western style of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient" (p. 3); that is, through channeling the production of knowledge into a project of political and economic domination. Islam has been used as a foil for the "progressive" "liberated" societies of the West, and politically constructed images of Islam as an oppressive, misogynistic culture have been used to justify Western interventions (Said, 1978, Moors, 1991).

The historical weight of this discourse entrenches politically invented knowledge of what constitutes the "Orient" into an authoritative body of work which renders refuting accounts as apologetic. The ethnographic account presented here must therefore, proceed from a deconstructionist stance, that is, it must first rupture the essentialism of Orientalism in its construction of the Islamic Other, and then reconstruct a new conceptual framework for understanding Islam and how it animates the lives of Muslims.

Examining the transformative goals of ethnography, Anderson (1989) writes of the critical ethnographer's concern as being one of, "unmasking dominant social constructions and the interests they represent, studying society with the goal of transforming it, and freeing individuals from sources of domination and repression..." (p. 254). Critical ethnography,
then, becomes a strategy of resistance which challenges conventional knowledge and the structural relations of power from which this knowledge proceeds. Conventional knowledge of "Other cultures," often represents the hegemonic worldview of dominating cultures. Knowledge construction, then, is often a discursive practice which maintains the preeminence of imperialist structures in both local and global society in their political, symbolic, ideological, or academic form. Ethnographers can contribute to the decolonization of these intellectual spaces by privileging the voices of the subject, yet this does not erase the issues of power or bias in the politics of representation.

Redefining conventional knowledge of Islam involves liberating the discourse from the political domain of Orientalism, and re-examining the meaning of Islamic identity from the perspective of the Muslims who live and understand Islam as a way of life. As a starting point, we must first problematize the homogenous category of "Muslim." The heterogeneity of Islamic ideology and praxis is apparent when examining the ethno-cultural variants of the Islamic tradition through historical and ethno-specific patterns of development in different societies, as well as sectarian divisions and traditional and esoteric interpretations of Islamic doctrine. These represent different ideological avenues for understanding and living the identity of a Muslim. In addition, there are further variants of identification which result from gender-specific constructions of Islamic identity, as well as through transmigration and the development of diasporic identities. These all contribute to diverse and often conflicting definitions of what it means to be, live, and worship like a Muslim. However, it is necessary to balance the understanding of the social reality of Islam as a historical process with a multitude of expressions, and the prescriptive elements of Islamic identity embedded within
the Qur'an, and manifest by the actions and precedents of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). The life of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) is believed by Muslims to be a living blueprint for an Islamic way of life. This contrasts diverse adaptations of Islamic ideology and practice with the more monolithic construction of religious dogma and its corresponding determinants for an Islamic way of life.

Unlike the post-modernist reconstructions of identities as elusive, transmuting forms, Islamic identity, when understood from the perspectives of Muslims who believe in the literal Truth of Islam, is perpetually fixed in terms of specific reference points enacted through the role of the believer as it is scripted by the word of Allah, and an emulation of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). Therefore, there is an essence to this state of being, an unchanging countenance, that is oblivious to time, space, and the material world.

Acknowledging the complexities of identity construction in Islam, there is a need to clarify the position of the Muslim informants in this study in order to further locate the boundaries of this research. This study specifically addresses the issue of how religious identity is constructed among Sunni Muslims living in Toronto, who live Islam according to a literal adherence to the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). It explores the on- and off-school experiences of 13 Muslim students and parents, from various ethnic backgrounds, with a view to understanding how they negotiate the meaning of Islamic identity and praxis, and how this then, becomes implicated within their educational

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1 When the name of the Prophet Muhammed is written or uttered by a Muslim, it is customarily followed by the statement "peace be upon him", this is abbreviated to the letters "pbuh" in written form. As a Muslim, I choose to also follow this practice throughout this work.
experiences.

Within the Canadian educational system, dominant values and norms are encoded into schools policies, practices, and curriculum. These often create areas of contention and conflict for Muslims. Examples of such conflicts include issues such as “mixing” between members of the opposite sex, unsegregated classrooms, Islamic dress codes and physical education, music education and figurative art, sex education and the teaching of alternative lifestyles, as well as the celebration and activities related to Halloween, Christmas, and Easter. The Euro-centric focus of Canadian education is an alienating experience for many Muslim students, whose cultural and religious practices often run counter to the conventional standards of the dominant culture. In many cases this leads to the "split personality syndrome," faced by Muslims who develop a double identity in order to contend with the reality of integration within the dominant society, and at the same time, attempting to maintain the integrity of their identity and lifestyle as Muslims.

Conversely, elements of resistance also exist through Muslim student organizations which have attempted to mobilize and dismantle the ideological and institutional structures of schooling which marginalize their experiences and threaten their identities and lifestyle. Developing Islamic sub-cultures within schools is necessary to maintain social cohesion and support among Muslim students, as well as to accommodate the requirements of an Islamic lifestyle. Developing strategies of resistance which lend to the development of an Islamically-based student sub-culture, provides the necessary ideological, social, and institutional support for Muslim students to maintain their Islamic identity and religious practices while at school. These issues will be taken up further in section 1.4, which lays the
theoretical groundwork for the thesis.

1.1: MAPPING THE THESIS

This study represents the unfolding of student histories as they relate to the experience of being religious minorities in a secular education system. The remainder of the first chapter, reviews the relevant literature dealing with issues of identity construction, ethnic organization and assimilation, as well as studies which deal with Muslims and education within the context of the North American and British diasporas. The theoretical groundwork for this research will also be taken up in this chapter, and focuses on a redefinition of classical resistance theory to introduce a mode of "formalized resistance" which is used as a strategy for Muslim students to resist marginalization and develop the institutional conditions necessary for the development of an Islamic sub-culture within schools. An Islamic student sub-culture, in turn, is viewed as a multi-systemic ideological, social and political organization of students, based on Islamic beliefs and praxis, which provides the religious guidance and social support necessary for students to maintain an Islamic lifestyle and identity, both in and out of their schooling experiences.

Chapter one also examines the ethnographic process and reviews the qualitative research methods used to gather data for this study. This chapter also introduces the informants in the study, and reviews the research protocols used. The rationale for narrative-based textual account will also be discussed, as the primary framework for the study. Finally, a brief historical background of Muslims and Islam in North America is provided as a means to further contextualize the study.
Chapter two, examines the religious/social/ideological basis for the construction of Islamic identities. This chapter focuses on developing an understanding of how these identities are lived at practical everyday level/ through the narrative discourses, and at a symbolic/metatheoretical level, through the analysis of the meanings which are ascribed to the various markers and determinants of Islamic identity. This chapter is based on a sociological need to rethink the theoretical spaces from which issues pertaining to Islam are conceptualized- through sites where meanings are assigned to symbols on the basis of lived experience rather than simply academic conjecture or neo-colonialist politics. Guided by the narratives, there is an attempt to provide a new lens for the examination of Islamic lifestyles which connects the practical and symbolic meanings of religion, culture, and identity, using an Islamic frame of reference.

Chapter three, focuses on the issue of gender-specific constructions of Islamic identity through an analysis of hijab, or Islamic dress, as a marker of Muslim women's identity. While the category of "Muslim" is a gender-neutral construct, Muslim women's identities are differentiated by the practice of veiling, which has often been regarded as a negation of identity (see Govier, 1995, Jeffery, 1979). A full chapter was warranted to deal with the contested nature of Muslim women's identity in relation to the practice of veiling so as to provide the Muslim women interviewed in this study, the space to produce a counter-narrative to the way their dress and way of life is commonly understood. Both the subjective constructions as well as external perceptions of this facet of Muslim women's identity will be explored. The narratives of Muslim women challenge the prevailing images and stereotypes associated with the veil as a symbol of oppression and female subjugation. This
chapter will attempt to reconstruct a different conceptual understanding of practical and symbolic meanings of the veil from the perspective of Muslim women who wear hijab. It will also examine how it has been implicated in their on and off school experiences.

Chapter four continues to explore the issue of Islamic identities and lifestyles as they become negotiated within the framework of a secular public school system. This chapter examines the implications of transporting these internally and externally positioned identities and their corresponding sets of practices into the institutional setting of public education. The issues of peer pressure, "mixing" or gender interaction, and racism and discrimination will be the primary focus of this chapter.

Chapter five delves into issues of representation and inclusive schooling practices, as well as examining the social, ideological, and institutional requirements for the maintenance of an Islamic identity within the context of schooling. The issue of formalized resistance will be examined as it relates to the development of an Islamic student sub-culture in schools. Students use these strategies to resist their marginalization and reform institutional practices in accordance with their religious needs and interests. The narratives in this chapter further deal with the politics of inclusion and exclusion through the framework of a redesigned resistance and sub-cultural theory.

Chapter six looks at how school and community partnerships are formulated and can strengthen and empower the development of resistance. It explores how one Muslim community organization has organized around educational issues and developed a formal relationship with a school board to help facilitate the academic and religious needs of Muslim students. It also provides a broader look at some of the academic concerns confronting the
Muslim community as well as issues of how social class differences and refugee experiences inform the educational lives of Muslim students.

Finally, there is a concluding discussion to the issues and themes presented throughout the narratives which revisits the theoretical discussions pertaining to resistance and sub-cultural theory. Future directives for continuing research on Muslims and education will also be discussed.

1.2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section presents a review of the relevant literature associated with some of the underlying themes in this study. These include the issues of ethnic and religious identity, assimilation, Islamic identity and Muslims and education. There are relatively few studies in the literature which deal specifically with the issue of Muslim students and the public school system. Therefore, the following review cites works which are germane, although not precisely connected to the current study.

ETHNICITY AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY:

Religious identity belongs to the repertoire of social identities which individuals in various societies assume. For many Muslims, Islamic identity is a primary factor in their self identification, yet it is often subsumed under the category of ethnic identity as a corollary to this more dominant form of social grouping. Islam, however, is not so neatly contained within the parameters of ethnic group identification. Islam, as a historical process, has developed a complex syncretic relationship with various cultures which has resulted in internally differentiated modes of belief and practice in various societies that have since been
Islamicized. Islam must be viewed as a culture, a way of life with a complete set of social rules and regulations which govern social, economic, and political life, as well as dress, hygiene, and the celebration and rituals associated with death, birth, and marriage. It therefore mediates the cultural nature of ethnic groups through subjective ties as well as the markers and symbols of identification which represent a connection to a broader ideological form of association.

In this sense, studies of ethnicity represent an analogy for religious identification and the social organization of religiously-based communities. While many studies on ethnic groups deconstruct the ideological and social psychological basis for ethnic group identification, religious identity, particularly Islamic identity, is not offered the same analytical considerations. The issue of religion is all too often seen as being subsumed under the general, seemingly more explicative category of the ethnic group. However, religious communities must be viewed as distinct social networks rather than simply being seen as part of the cultural accoutrements of ethnic group identification.

Royce (1982) draws heavily on the work of Barth (1969) in her study of ethnic identity. She delineates the areas of objective versus subjective definitions of ethnic identity. According to Royce, objective definitions require the material demonstration of ethnic identity such as language, phenotype, dress, food, and religious belief, whereas, subjective definitions relate to ideological positioning and affinity. This dichotomy also correlates to Barth’s (1969) notion of ethnic group boundaries as being distinguished and maintained through a dual process of "ascription," or the identification of overt markers of identification associated with a particular group and "role performance," as an internal basis for judging the criteria of
membership based on culturally appropriate forms of behaviour. (see chapter 2 for further
discussion on Barth’s theory of ethnic group boundaries and identification)

Both the subjective and objective components of identification are applicable to the
constitution of Muslims as a social category with certain modifications. For example, issues
of common phenotype\(^2\) are not applicable to the racially and ethnically diverse groupings of
Muslims. However, commonalities in terms of Islamic dress requirements and use of the
Arabic language in Islam are unifying and distinguishing features of Islamic identification.
Furthermore, Islamic practice organizes the everyday routine of Muslims in accordance with
the ritual observation of prayer five times daily. Therefore, Islam cannot be overlooked as
a determinant in both the subjective and objective, or overt areas of ethnic group
identification, as well as being a supra-ethnic category based on identification with the
beliefs, tenets, and practices of the faith.

The issue of affinity as part of the subjective definition of ethnic group identity, is
also engendered within the construction of Islamic identity. Muslims characteristically refer
to each other as "brothers" or "sisters," in a form of fictive kinship. Affinities can also be
constructed on the basis of primordial attachment, which as Allahar (1994) argues, can be
seen as a socially constructed phenomenon. He argues that the concept of primordial
attachment can be used as a means to understand the embedded class and economic-based

\(^2\) The issue of phenotypical determinants to ethnic group identification over generalizes and misinforms the construction of ethnic group boundaries and the markers of identity. Phenotypical distinctions may be common to various groups of people who actually represent several different ethnic groups. As such, it is an inadequate means to characterize membership within any specific group. Using such a biological basis to classify individuals is an anachronism in social science well dispensed along with practices such as anthropometry.
motives behind group solidarity and social action. Allahar uses primordialism as a metaphor for class-based solidarity. The fact that this represents an oxymoron, is used by Allahar as more than just clever semantics. It is seen as a real phenomenon, Allahar states: "whether or not primordial ties are real, as long as people continue to assume they are, they become real in their consequences" (p. 18). Yet, while the implications of the social constructedness of primordialism are clear as relating more to symbolic ties rather than an assumed biological basis for affinity, the nature of the underlying motives are overdetermined on a class-based model. The primacy of class in Allahar's conceptual scheme erases other forms of identity which may be stronger determinants of group affinity.

In an Islamic context, affinity does not necessarily allude to Islamic practice or the observance of a specific set of religious requirements. Rather, it is often a connection through culture and being born into a "Muslim family," without the necessary trappings of religious practice or even conviction. This represents the diversification of Islamic identity in forms which have little to do with actually practising Islam.

The issue of the reproduction and maintenance of identity are also discussed in the work of Royce (1982) and in Young (1983). Royce describes the phenomenon of "ethnic rediscovery" as "recreating symbols and customs and re-establishing a viable identity..." She further acknowledges the difficulty of such a task (1982:10). Similarly, Young describes how traditionalism became a response among Asian-Americans when faced with economic subordination and structural discrimination. He cites the work of Barrington Moore (1958) on the issue of nativism where he argues that the return to indigenous forms of culture are a retreat from uncontrollable social forces which threaten the integrity of a particular group:
By nativism I mean an energetic and somewhat distorted reaffirmation of the indigenous way of life, a reaction often produced in a society that feels itself threatened by forces beyond its understanding and control (1958:11 cited in Young 1983:39).

Economics and the dynamics of Islamic identification, however, run counter to the Asian American example. Often the desire for overcoming structural barriers and economic marginalization leads to the abrogation of Islamic identity as a response, as opposed to a return to traditionalism. In fact, "traditionalism" is a term which should not necessarily be seen as being synonymous with the notion of revivalism, since as Royce points out, "tradition" is a term which implies stasis. For many Muslims, Islamic revivalism, although it may involve a return to original principles and tenets, is a movement which is nevertheless forward looking and conscious of the vicissitudes of time and space.

ASSIMILATION:

Assimilation represents another factor in the shifting ground of identity construction within the North American context. Whereas acculturation is often defined as a syncretic process whereby co-existing cultural units are involved in a reciprocal relationship which modifies the cultures of both groups, Gordon (1964) defines assimilation as "the process by which different cultures or individuals or groups representing different cultures, are merged into a homogenous unit" (p. 64). Gordon presents a typology of assimilation which centres on the area of "structural assimilation" involving "large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society on a primary group level" (p. 71). He goes on to argue that "once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow." Therefore, all other
forms of assimilation such as "behavioural assimilation" and "intermarriage assimilation," are seen as by-products of structural assimilation. While this imposes a somewhat inevitable structure to what is viewed as a linear process of assimilation and fails to problematize the issue of what embedded social interests underscore the assimilative processes, it also implies that segregation and the creation of separate institutions among minority groups would, therefore, limit their dependency on dominant institutions, and as such, represent a strategy for resisting assimilation. This corresponds with the notion presented here that developing a viable Islamic sub-culture complete with institutional support in both schools and society represents a means to maintain and preserve Islamic identity and praxis and thereby resist assimilation.

Another approach taken by studies of assimilation is the intergenerational approach. Isajiw (1990) argues that by the 3rd generation members of an ethnic group have become incorporated to some extent into the larger society and their ethnic identity has undergone a process of transformation. This he refers to as, "... a shift in identity from a form that is inconsistent with the identity of the total society to one that is consonant with it" (p. 34). His interest dealt specifically with which aspects of identity such as, ethnic friendship and endogamous marriage, are maintained the longest by which groups. Here again, the notion of assimilation seems an inevitable consequence for immigrant and minority groups. Complacent acceptance of this notion is detrimental to the persistence of all non-mainstream forms of ethno-cultural and religious identification. What is needed is a stronger ethnographic focus on strategies of identity maintenance in order to understand through lived experience, the competing forces affecting the continuity of various forms of social
De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1975) write of the "conflicting, centrifugal tendencies in society." They go on to argue that "in almost every social organization there exist tensions which result from pressures to unify versus pressures to maintain differences" (preface p.v). They problematize this view within the framework of the conflict-consensus model of social order, where the "dynamics of disturbance" are seen to be caused by unassimilated ethnic minorities who in their refusal to conform, produce social disequilibrium (p. vi). This view underscored the basis for assimilationist social policies in the United States. De Vos and Romanucci-Ross also argue that more attention should be paid to the psycho-cultural approach to understanding ethnic identity, based on the experiential and subjective forces underlying its construction, rather than historical, social and cultural determinants which, they argue, are inadequate in explicating the nature of ethnic identity.

Identity construction, however, should be viewed as a composite of subjective and external socio-political and historical forces which shape, define and add meaning to the formation of all social groups. The emphasis on subjective definitions is clear in the literature on ethnic identity; yet interestingly, the studies on Islamic identity minimalize, or fail to take into account entirely, the issue of the subjective character of Islamic identity. The concept and construction of Islamic identity is almost immediately taken up in a political form. Little emphasis has been paid to the meanings attached to Islamic identification and practice in anthropological or ethnographic studies. The following review on literature related to Islamic identity overviews some of the existing accounts and issues.
ISLAMIC IDENTITY:

Many of the studies done on Islamic identity are centred in Britain. Both global and national politics create a framework for the negotiation of Islamic identities in many parts of Europe. In Britain, the primacy of Islamic identity over ethnic categorizations became the focus after what has been termed the "Rushdie Affair" and the Gulf War. According to Samad (1996), with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Islam has emerged as the new global nemesis for the Western World (see also Said, 1978, 1981). Samad examines the politicization of Islamic identity among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in Britain in light of these political events and changes. He found that ethnic identities were primarily informed by regional differences within the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent in terms of dialect and village-kin networks, and were supported in Britain through village and kin-based alliances. Islamic identity, however, became regarded as an increasingly salient form of identification first among the British public and press during the Rushdie Affair and the Gulf War, when Muslims were targeted as "dangerous foreigners". As a reaction to this backlash, Islamic identity was a significant form of identification among the youth within the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. Many felt socially and economically disenfranchised within British society, and were in search of solidarity and an alternate form of identification. According to Samad, many of these youth joined pro-Iranian community groups. This was done, however, out of a sense of political purpose stemming from anti-nationalist sentiments, rather than as a religious revival.

In Samad’s example, Islamic identity achieved prominence among these youth as a reactionary movement, fuelled by increasing economic discontent and discrimination. In a
further perspective on Islamic identity in Britain, Neilson (1987) writes that Muslims within
the structures of White British society are viewed either through the "divisive concepts of
ethnicity or the assimilationist concepts of race" (p. 384). He further charges that British
society is "blind to the existence of a Muslim community" (p. 384), and he goes on to
colorize the continuity of Islam in Europe as "the recent British phase of Islamic history"
(p. 385).

Neilson dichotomizes "passive" versus "deliberate" manifestations of Islam in British
society. Passive manifestations are described as the reformation and reinterpretations of
cultural trends which are addressed to suit a particular "niche" in British social life, be it
social, economic, or political. He acknowledges passive manifestations as strengthening
ethno-religious identity in British social life, yet at the same time, resulting in
disadvantagement in the economic sectors of society. He contrasts this with the deliberate
manifestations of Islam which he qualifies as being expressed through Mosques and religious
organizations. He argues that this coincides with "the immigrant's increasing awareness of
local political and administrative power structures and their preparedness to make use of
them" (p. 387). What Neilson has not articulated, however, is the dialectical relationship
which exists between these two levels of identification. The influence of "passive"
manifestations, or the re-negotiation of Islamic identity within the context of British society,
must be seen as inherently political, especially given the antagonistic nature of ethno-cultural
politics taking place within this context. Furthermore, their effect upon the more purposeful
strategies he defines as "deliberate," provides the ideological fuel for using mainstream
"cultural capital," or knowledge of the local structures of authority, as a means to provide for
the specific needs and interests of the Muslim community. This, at the same time, draws attention to what he has recognized as the otherwise overlooked category of a "Muslim community" within an albeit plural society in Britain.

Other studies of Islamic identity in Britain also point to a more politicized mode of articulating concerns within the Muslim community. "New Muslim activism" according to Modood (1993), reveals been a strong trend toward political action in achieving equity in schools and society (p. 513). Much of this activism is geared toward the protection of religious minorities from discrimination, the incitement of hatred, and inclusion within current laws of blasphemy protecting the dominant Christian faiths. In response to Britain’s Commission for Racial Equality’s (CRE) Consultative Paper, which recognized that, "religions identity needs protection in law in a similar way to racial identity" (p. 513), various Muslim organizations which Modood characterizes as representing both "shalwar-kameez Islam" and "suit and tie Islam" (i.e., the traditional Indo-Pakistani groups versus the Muslim business community) were involved in responding to the CRE Paper’s recommendation and in some cases, attempting to add clauses which would enact "a right to a Muslim Family Law for governing the personal affairs of Muslims" (p. 515). Much of this political posturing developed in the aftermath of the Rushdie Affair which had a decisive effect on the relationship between Muslims in Britain and White British society. There seemed to be a mutually recognized need to address issues of social and ideological difference, and to negotiate a new legal means for co-existence. Modood emphasizes the need for greater coalition-building among the diverse ethno-cultural and religious groups in Britain to provide greater strength toward common goals of equity and inclusion, and to resist the
compartamentalization of minority interests.

North American studies dealing with Islamic identity reflect the different social groups influenced by Islam in America. Al-Shingiety (1991) focuses on the Nation of Islam in the United States in order to examine the "dialectic of representation and self-image," in a study of how the Islamization of Black nationalism has engendered a new form of consciousness and identification among the followers of this faith. He writes that:

The threat of the Nation of Islam was its challenge to American social consciousness: its unveiling and deliberate use of the fundamental Western axiom of ethnic difference as the basis for negotiating social reality at a time when race relations were perceived by many as improving. Moreover, there was the cultural shock, the unsettling effect of experiencing the elevation of an oppressed ethnicity to a new cultural space for positive identification, economic opportunity and fuller social and political expression (p. 57).

Again we encounter the politicization of Islamic identity, albeit in a form very much removed from the original tenets of Islam, to enhance a movement of social and political change constructed within a specific racialized discourse. The leaders of the Nation of Islam, however, have appeared far more entranced by the 'idea' of Islam, rather than the tenets of the faith itself, which they use selectively. To them, Islam represents an alternative identity from which to articulate a critique of Western society and domination and represents a form of spiritual and social emancipation. Al-Shingiety writes of the alien nature of Islam in the Western context and how it symbolically affects the African-American community:

Islam, along with those elements of mystification, best represents absolute otherness within American culture. It is a mysterious religion that is absolutely alien to American experience and history and that 'belongs' to an equally mysterious and alien culture. At the same time, Islam, for the African-American, is the symbolic
word or world for emancipation from American culture and history (p. 58).

The appropriation of the religion of Islam, by the leaders of the Nation of Islam, has served as a powerful political tool that has been used to support an agenda of racial separation; a goal fundamentally opposite to Islamic teachings. However, the movement began to change after the death of its leader Elijah Muhammad and the succession of his son, Warith Deen Muhammad. Like Malcolm X, who before his assassination had discovered the unadulterated form of Islam which the leaders of the Nation of Islam had sought to suppress, Warith Deen Muhammad was also committed to reforming the doctrines, practices, and organization of the Nation to conform with the basic doctrines of Islam, and at the same time, build a more coherent Muslim movement based on a more accurate understanding of Islam.

According to Al-Shingiety, the consequence of this process of change was the "reconstitution of the Muslim self-image in America" (p. 60). He argues that this new sense of identity transformed Muslims from the position of the "absolute other" to minority status, "from which they could negotiate their social reality or even define the whole cultural space from their position as a Muslim minority" (p. 60). Although the strengthening of an American Islamic identity is seen as positive, Al-Shingiety worries that the particularization of their interests as Americans may put them at odds with the global community of Muslims.

Moore (1994) also addresses the saliency of Islamic identity in the United States and examines issues of adaptation and the implications of isolationism versus interaction on the maintenance of identity. Moore also addresses legal issues as they pertain to Muslims as a
religious minority and the protection of their rights under American law. She cites the growth of a African-American Muslim population in the prisons as first raising the question of "whether Islam is a religion worthy of constitutional protection in the federal courts" (p. 235). Issues of religious freedom pertaining to Muslims in prisons and within in schools were among the legal precedents cited by Moore, which she argues affected not only "the changing role of the courts, but also the developing Muslim identity in North America" (p. 235). Moore notes that the majority of Muslims in the United States have opted for an "accommodationist model" of integration as opposed to what some Islamist feel must be the Islamization of the societies in which Muslims live. She refers to the tension between these divergent points of view as the basis for negotiating identity and "future directions for corporate life in the United States" (p. 241).

Voll (1991) further distinguishes the issues facing Muslims within the North American context into two categories: the "classic" issues confronting Muslims who must adapt to life in a non-Muslim society, and the second category, which involves dealing with the challenges of postmodernity. The first category deals with more practical issues of accommodation and pursuing the requirements of an Islamic lifestyle within American institutions, including schools. This includes things such as the accommodation of Islamic dress codes, and provisions for places to pray and the necessary allotment of time to allow for the observation of prayer. This is contrasted with the second category which deals with the broader issues of values, morals, and ethics and the competing ideals which politicize questions of identity and belief within the changing social mores of post-modern society. According to Voll, it is some of these broader concerns which have made major religious traditions, including
Islam, more visible in the political arena.

**MUSLIMS AND EDUCATION:**

Studies of Muslims in the educational context are again primarily studies centred on the British experience. Disjunctures between the values and norms of the dominant society and the Islamic faith, have lead to numerous areas within school policies, practices, and curriculum which must be renegotiated to become inclusive to the needs of Muslim students. In Britain, this process is impeded by legislation on collective acts of worship in school, which mandates that these acts be "broadly Christian in character." This, according to Parker-Jenkins (1991), has caused difficulties for Muslim parents who often remove their children from public schools rather than have them perform Christian acts of worship. She examines the areas of contention Muslim parents experience in school policies and curriculum with a view to negotiating various accommodations for Islamic practices, such as for prayers as well as exemptions from classes such as sex education, which may have content which conflicts with Islamic sensibilities. The incompatibility of the public system with Islamic beliefs and practices has lead to a movement toward private Islamic schools for Muslim children. To avoid what she terms as "religious apartheid" (p. 578), Parker-Jenkins advocates a greater emphasis on multicultural education which respects all religious and cultural traditions. Yet, this alone done not speak to the issues of power in educational processes which are often masked by the paradigm of multiculturalism.

In a study on Muslim parents’ attitudes towards their children’s education, Joly (1984) examined the educational aspirations of Pakistani parents in Birmingham, England. Joly conducted interviews with 40 families of Kashmiri descent to probe their views on their
children’s schooling. He found parents overall had high aspirations for their children’s education, but were concerned that current educational standards were not high enough. They also had concerns with regard to their children maintaining cultural and religious practices and wanted schools to make accommodations for them. However, although they felt that Islamic education was very important they felt that this was better taught through the community, rather than by non-Muslim teachers.

Racism and differential treatment of Pakistani students by some teachers was also admitted by the parents as a concern, although it was not reported in proportion to the actual incidents of harassment and name-calling which routinely affect Pakistani children. This lead Joly to speculate that many children do not divulge this information to their parents, in many cases for fear of being blamed as "troublesome" (p. 25).

Joly noted that the parents he interviewed were largely ignorant of the British school system, and felt that their disappointment would in fact increase as they became better informed, particularly if their children’s achievements did not meet with their expectations.

Other studies of Muslims and education in the British context continue the theme of religious continuity and implications within the public school system, and primarily stress the importance of Islamic education and Islamic schools as viable alternatives. Anwar (1986) examines the issue of religious/cultural continuity among second generation Muslims in Britain. In examining their educational needs, his findings based on surveys of 549 South Asian Muslim households concurred with those of Joly (1987) cited above with regards to issues such as the need for the accommodation of Islamic lifestyles within schools. However, Anwar noted that his findings also revealed a growing trend toward assimilation among the
second generation South Asian Muslims, as evidenced by their views with regards to issues of religious observance as well as adaptation to Western styles of dress.

Murad (1986) expressed the need for a potent Muslim counter-culture to address the onslaught of negative social pressures which threaten Islamic identity among British Muslim youth. He advocates making Islamic education of youth a proactive rather than reactive strategy designed to transform society by using Islamic knowledge to influence the dominant culture rather than the reverse. Murad advocates the separate school model for Muslim children and lays out a strategy for change based on Islamic immersion programs for Muslim youth. This represents the desire to opt out of the current educational structures, where the accommodation of Islamic lifestyles is seen as inadequate to fully engender the social, cultural, and psychological changes necessary within the youth to ensure the continuity of Islamic practice and identity in Britain.

The following section discusses the issue of developing an Islamic sub-culture within schools as a strategy for maintaining identity and creating a higher profile for Muslim students in public education along with a new conceptual understanding of classical resistance theory which has been readapted from a non-class based perspective as a political strategy used by Muslim students to facilitate their needs and interests within the educational system.

1.3 REDEFINING RESISTANCE: TOWARD AN ISLAMIC SUBCULTURE IN SCHOOLS

The paradigm of resistance theory is traditionally viewed in response to traditional reproductive theories in education (i.e, Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu and Passeron,
1977) which fail to take into account the dialectical notion of human agency in the process of reproducing social class (Giroux, 1983). Resistance has been defined through a dual manifestation of oppositional or anti-school behaviours or "acting out," which is grounded in specific political objectives of "critical consciousness raising and collective critical action" (Giroux, 1983:110). These are designed as a challenge to school authority and the structures of schooling which reproduce the marginality of working class students. This leads to a dynamic of social and economic reproduction through the very acts of resistance which are designed to challenge domination, though in fact, only lead to further subordination. Through their rejection of the dominant middle class school culture, norms and conventions, working class youth are seen to reproduce themselves by embracing manual labour as a means to contest their subordination within schools (Willis, 1977).

Classical resistance theories have traditionally been predicated on the notion that anti-school behaviours are entrenched within class-based motives. Davies (1994), in a study on resistance and rebellion among school dropouts, critiques the position of resistance theorists like Giroux, Apple, Willis, and McLaren whom he charges with making the presumption that a "primordial working class culture" is the catalyst for opposition to school authority (p. 334). He goes on to argue that "resistance theorists over-generalized the experiences of a small number of disaffected youth to the bulk of working class students" (p. 335).

The over-emphasis on class in theories of resistance has since been challenged by studies which examine the dynamics of racial politics in education and the nature of resistance as a racialized phenomenon (see Solomon, 1992; Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac and Zine, 1997). The concept of resistance in this study will also be re-directed to reflect alternative
catalysts for student-based social action and educational critique which reflect the realities and experiences of Muslim students. Developing a theoretical framework for this process embodies a reconstructed notion of resistance removed from a classist, structuralist construction, which acknowledges the need to privilege other forms of social difference when theorizing forms of student opposition. Therefore, redefining resistance involves rupturing the exclusivity of classist, structuralist designs on resistance theory yet still maintaining the attendant principles of its theoretical premise. In particular, this relates to the notion of a social and political critique embedded in specific forms of action, which are then qualified as resistance. This, therefore, challenges the epistemological boundaries of resistance by redesigning/redefining it on the basis of non-class-based social action and critique.

Engaging the development of an expanded critical education theory based on the notion of resistance means locating the different vantage points for social and educational critique. This means moving beyond the framework of neo-Marxist social theory and exploring the multiple sites of oppression, and therefore multiple sites of resistance, which occur under different forms of domination: ideological, patriarchal, political, or economic. Each of these provides foundations for specific modes of resistance which emanate from distinct forms of oppression. Resistance, therefore, cannot be narrowly construed in terms of only specific types of oppositional behaviours related to either working class or racialized sub-cultures.

Currently, school sub-cultures are becoming increasingly varied, and represent the different forms of social identification which become evident as new North American diasporas are created. However, much of the sociological literature on sub-cultures deals with
the radical social trends associated with styles of music: mods, rockers, punks etc; or more recently, with gay and lesbian lifestyles. Racialized subcultures within schools are also beginning to be explored as sites of resistance (see Solomon, 1992).

New communities of students however, are also developing cohesive forms of social organization within schools based on alternate forms of social identification and affinity. The social organizations of Muslim youth in schools, for example, represent nascent forms of Islamic sub-cultures and utilize, to varying extents, the politics of resistance to counteract their marginality and subordination as a religious minority in a secular school system.

There are structural determinants for the development of an Islamic subculture within schools. These form a multi-systemic framework for the continuity of Islamic beliefs and practices within this context. This process involves first, an ideological superstructure, which is based on Islamic knowledge and the formal inculcation of Islamic beliefs and values. This superstructural level of knowledge, then, lends itself to engendering the behavioural correlates of living an Islamic lifestyle as predicated on Quranic injunctions and paradigms found in the Hadith (the documentation of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad). The process of having Islamic study circles and lectures as forums for the analysis and dissemination of Islamic knowledge are related to this ideological level. Movements of "dawah" or spreading Islamic knowledge among both Muslims and non-Muslims are extensions of the ideological integration of Islam within both schools and society. The ideological superstructure, then, creates the nexus for Islamic belief to correlate with religiously-specific forms of action.

The second component of Islamic subculture is the level of student interaction, cohesion, and support, which is represented as the social infrastructure. The social and
cultural life within schools is mediated through the subculture where students organize social activities, as well as providing affectual peer support. The social infrastructure of Islamic student subcultures represents a social network of Muslim students based on common beliefs, practices, and goals. The nature of interaction which takes place among students is structured to conform to Islamic moral codes and conduct which are predicated on rules of gender-based social distance and segregation. In providing alternate activities to mainstream school functions such as dances, which conflict with Islamic practices, the social infrastructure for Muslim students is geared to provide a social and recreational outlet based on Islamically appropriate conventions. This allows Muslims students to participate in the regular forms of sports and social activities which other students engage in, yet in a context which does not compromise their standards of morality or beliefs. The social infrastructure is also the basis for organizing and establishing the necessary framework for Islamic practices in the school setting. This includes places to pray, accommodations for "wudu" or the ritual ablution performed before prayers, as well as requirements for "halal" or Islamically permissible food in the cafeteria, to name a few.

Therefore, unlike other student subcultures, an Islamic subculture requires certain institutional measures be in place in order for Islamic practices to be accommodated. These institutional measures refer to changes within school structures that allow Muslim students to maintain the requirements of their religious lifestyles, such as the requirements for prayers and halal food mentioned above. These changes also refer to the implementation of inclusive schooling practices which reflect the histories, experiences, and interests of Muslim students as part of a multi-centred focus in education. These areas of systemic change lead to the
third requirement for an Islamic sub-culture, that of institutional compliance or the need to reform the policies and practices of the school so that they become responsive to the social and religious needs of Muslim students. An Islamic subculture cannot evolve without making certain structural and pedagogical changes to the system to accommodate and accurately represent the interests of Muslims. This is a mandate which moves beyond simply the superfluous aspects of multiculturalism, and seeks to affect institutional change in terms of policies, as well as the representation of Muslims within school culture, practices, and curriculum, as a means to circumvent bias and exclusion.

This provides a recipe for social change and at the same time, religious and cultural continuity for Muslim students, otherwise marginalized within the context of public schools. In most schools, however, there are only nascent forms of this subcultural model. The development toward a more stable Islamic subculture is fragmented by internal divisions and lack of Islamic commitment on the part of many students for whom Islam remains an anachronism. A large number of Muslim students do not follow the religious prescriptions of Islam and therefore prefer to adhere to the mainstream groups and activities within the school. This impedes the process of developing the ideological, social structural, and institutional basis for an Islamic subculture. Therefore, there is not a sufficient collective political will to transform the structures which marginalize the existence of those students committed to Islamic practice.

The barriers to creating a cohesive student organization for support have lead many Muslim students to derive strength from community ties and social groups outside of school. In some cases the trend toward creating separate organizations for social interaction and
support within the structures of the community, weakens the impetus for locating a base of resistance within schools. In contrast to Black students, for whom race is a basis for political action and consolidation, an Islamic identity can be disunifying where there is a lack of adherence to the religious determinants of that identity. Other issues, such as ethnic "tribalism" can lead to separate social blocks within the broader Muslim community. Also, unlike race, Islamic identity is not naturally overt--it must be asserted, therefore, it can also be erased purposefully, making a more dispensable form of social identification.

In many high schools, however, Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) are in existence and form the basis for developing the necessary ideological, social, and institutional requirements for an Islamic subculture. Strategies of formalized resistance are used to varying degrees to secure the institutional compliance required in order to accommodate the needs and interests of Muslim students. Muslim student organizations represent corporate bodies which are a base for strategies of formalized resistance. Formalized resistance changes the style of resistance from individual anti-school behaviours to a collective means of organizing dissent and directing social action. Within this strategy, the organizational channels of the schools are utilized and in a sense coopted by students to advocate for their needs and interests as constituents in a diverse educational community. Through this process, students are able to affect educational change and transformation within the structures of schooling, which are beneficial to their position as a marginalized religious minority. Gaining institutional compliance through such a process lends to the requirements for an Islamic subculture in schools by directing concerted action towards affecting the structural changes necessary to meet the needs and interests of Muslim students.
The goals of formalized resistance for Muslim students are as follows: 1) To challenge Eurocentrism and racism in school, policies practices and curriculum; 2) To allow for the accommodation of their religious lifestyle, 3) To ensure the inclusion and positive representation of Islam in school curriculum, 4) To empower group members through generating modes of social, spiritual and academic support. This is a largely a prescriptive model, drawing in part from the individual and collective practices cited by Muslim students and parents that challenge and attempt to restructure school policies and practices in a manner which promotes a positive understanding of Islam and accommodations for a religious lifestyle.

While formalized resistance is a process which risks the possibility of systemic cooptation, unlike other forms of anti-authority oppositional behaviours, it is not a self-injurious process. Oppositional behaviours classically defined as resistance, although may contain certain political imperatives, have yet to prove effective in affecting educational change or emancipation. In fact, these behaviours contribute to the devaluation of the students who engage in them by teachers and other school authorities. In many cases, they may only lead to suspensions or disengagement from school.

In formalized resistance strategies, the emphasis is on organizing dissent, whether from school authority or other forms of subordination and marginalization, and utilizing the systemic processes to advocate for collective interests and expose issues of racism and discrimination. This involves utilizing mainstream "cultural capital," or knowledge of systemic processes in schools and societies in order to achieve emancipatory goals. Muslim students, for example, have in some cases used the politics of the educational system to seek
provisions on their behalf, such as prayer rooms. Where they encountered resistance from principals, they threatened legal action and brought in school trustees to apply political pressure for their demands. These were successful strategies which forced the schools to adhere to Ministry of Education policies on ethno-cultural equity in education. In this sense, the goal of resistance was clearly emancipatory and affected institutional change which allowed for religious freedom.

Formalized resistance, then, is a strategy for organizing dissent and using collective social action as means to transform educational structures in a manner more conducive to the needs and interests of the students. From this discussion, a general definition of resistance can be put forward as, "attitudes, behaviours, and modes of action which challenge, dissent from, or de-centre dominant institutional norms, practices, and knowledge, and are constituted as a means to affect social and institutional change."

The issue of intentionality, a key factor in Giroux 's (1983) resistance paradigm, speaks to the issue of whether we can interpret things such as style of dress as oppositional even if individuals do not specifically intend them to be. Giroux rightly argues that "the concept of resistance should not be allowed to become a category indiscriminately hung over every expression of ‘oppositional behaviour’" (p. 110). He further qualifies resistance as containing a "moment of critique and a political sensitivity to its own interests" (p. 110). Often there is, however, an implicit social commentary embedded in the way people dress, interact, and behave socially. The issue of Islamic dress, for example, is often defined by Muslims as a critique of Western fashion and its objectification of the female form, yet it is primarily taken up as a religious prescription for both men and women. Therefore, political
objectives are not the catalyst for adopting an unconventional form of dress; yet it does at the same time implicitly embody a specific form of social critique. Moreover, since the lack of conformity with the dominant culture has the result of being socially perceived as oppositional, it may have the same impact as more explicit forms of resistance. The issue of intentionality, then, whether implicit or explicit is central to any discussion of resistance as a moment of social or political critique.

Unlike classical resistance theories, for Muslims, resistance is not geared specifically toward undermining the logic of capitalism and the structures which reproduce class-based inequality. It is a counter hegemonic opposition to cultural and religious subordination. This represents a greater challenge to the perpetuation of Islam as an integrated social and ideological system in the West, than does capitalist ideology (which nevertheless contains an interest in subordinating certain groups in order to sustain its own rationality and dominance). However, the primacy of the socio-economic basis of resistance which is embedded in the correspondence principle (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) and cultural reproductive theories, does not apprehend the true nature of Muslim resistance. Class-based subordination does not represent the only type of systemic oppression; race, ethnicity, religious identity are alternate social locations for resisting ideological domination and the structural hierarchy of knowledge which disempower and subvert the progress of certain groups in society.

For Muslims, the cultural hegemony of the West threatens a way of life, both locally and globally through ideological and political forms of domination. This becomes a more imperative challenge to some Muslims than does a threat to the economic basis of
subsistence. What this represents in an Islamic context is not only a threat to a temporal existence, but to life in the hereafter. Muslims who conform to secularism and the sole pursuits of the material world risk loosing the promise of Paradise which awaits the believers. This is a theological understanding which extends beyond temporal reality into infinite existence, and is a conception which informs the everyday life of "believing Muslims," mediating thought, action, and behaviour. Therefore, while resistance is a strategy of preserving Islamic identity in a worldly context, the implications are not purely existential.

Recontextualizing the framework of resistance to accommodate alternate, non-class-based forms of domination, lays the theoretical framework for this thesis. The issues of formalized resistance and movements toward developing Islamic subcultures within schools are further taken up in chapter 5, where a better understanding is animated by the student narratives.

The following section contextualizes the study in another way, by briefly examining the history of Muslim presence in North America and presenting a demographic sketch of the population distribution of Muslims in Canada, and the development of Islamic institutions.

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1 See the following chapters and verses in the Qur'an: ix. 38-39, xi. 15-17, xiii.26, xvii. 18, xxviii. 60-61, xlii. 20, lxxv. 20-21, lxxvi. 27.
1.4: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MUSLIM PRESENCE AND ISLAM IN NORTH AMERICA

HISTORICAL PRESENCE:

Demographers say that Islam is the fastest growing religion in North America and around the world. Approximately one billion people, or one fifth of the world's population, are Muslim and Islam is the predominate faith of some forty nations, the area of which extends from sub-Saharan Africa through Indonesia.

According to Hamdani (1990) there are studies that suggest that early Muslim traders from West Africa explored America prior to Columbus's "discovery" of the New World. According to these studies, the Mandingoes of West Africa had established trade with Native Americans along the Mississippi river all the way to Canada. Many Muslims also came from Africa as part of the slave trade in the 18th century. The earliest records of Muslims arriving in North America date back to the 18th century and the presence of Muslims in Canada can be traced back to the mid-19th century. Significant numbers of Muslims from the Middle East, particularly Syria, Albania, Yugoslavia, and Turkey began to migrate to the Canada in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Muslim labourers worked alongside other immigrants in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the late 19th century. Muslims were also among the pioneers who began farming and cultivating in the regions of Alberta and Saskatchewan during the same part of the century. The immigration of Muslims increased during the post-Second World War period. The abolition of immigration quotas and the introduction of objective criteria in selecting immigrants, increased the number of Muslims coming to Canada from
the mid 1960's to the mid 1970's. Since then, significant numbers of Muslims have come as professionals and business people through the Immigrant Investors Program.

**POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS:**

According to a report prepared by Hamdani (1990), the Muslim community is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. Statistics Canada reported that the Muslim population in the country increased by 158% in the decade ending 1991. There are an estimated 200,000 Muslims in Metropolitan Toronto and surrounding areas. Much of the growth of the Canadian Muslim community has come about through immigration. Recent waves of immigrants have included many Muslims from the Middle East, Africa, the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, and Eastern Europe. Some have come fleeing political oppression while others are seeking economic opportunity.

Khan (1995) reported on the 1991 census which showed that one third of all Muslims in Canada are Canadian by birth, including an increasing number of converts. Muslims in Canada represent four dozen countries from across the globe. Forty percent of the total are of Indo-Pakistani origin, with the second highest number being from the Middle East. The census also reports that the Canadian Muslim community is one of the most highly educated in the world, with one in five adults having a university degree. This represents twice the ratio for Canada as a whole.

**ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS:**

A primary goal of Muslim immigrants was the establishment of religious centres. The first Canadian Mosque was built in 1938 in Edmonton. Centres for religious education are set up within Mosques or other facilities on both full- and part-time basis in many Canadian
cities. In the Toronto area, there are two full time private Islamic schools which integrate Islamic studies and Arabic into a regular school curriculum. These are privately funded, although representatives of the Muslim community were recently involved in a multi-faith coalition to access public funding for private religious schools, as has been the case with Catholic schools. However, the federal court ruled against their bid, supporting the rights of Catholics to the privilege of public funding on the basis of their original charter group status. This has left the religious coalition in a formally marginalized position, sanctified by judicial decree. The following section will examine the methodology used within this study through the examination of the interpretative framework used in regards to the narrative discourses which follow, as well as through an overview of the qualitative research procedures used to gather data.

1.5 METHODOLOGY : THE MAKING OF AN ETHNOGRAPHY

Within ethnographic discourse, the narrative has become a theoretically defining space, where the subjects are the architects of knowledge construction, and sociologists/anthropologists are the engineers or planners, structuring the political and analytical forms which organize meaning as it is contextualized in the lives of others. This is often a cooptive process, particularly with topic of Islam.

Understanding Islam, writing about Islam, accepting or rejecting the voices of those who follow Islam, are all inherently political actions which cannot be viewed without understanding broader political/economic and cultural articulations which reproduce the global dynamics of power and subordination, and which are reproduced symbolically within the
framework of various institutional settings in society. Relations of power and systems of domination are entrenched and at the same time, precariously placed within a potentially subversive ideological terrain. Within the global context, Islam as a political and ideological force, has represented a threat to a World Order based on the domination and hegemonic ascendancy of Western imperialism.

Academic authority, when grounded in the same political objectives, contributes to the political processes of domination. Ironically this often takes the guise of liberatory discourse designed to emancipate the Muslims from their "backwardness." The project of ethnography then, for myself as a Muslim writer, becomes redefining the boundaries of knowing Islam through the experiences of those who live and practice it. Also, while the conventional understanding of critical ethnography does not necessarily take into account the social responsibilities of the researcher, it is my view, that it should be an integral part of the process of directing research toward social change.

With regard to the issue of accuracy in ethnographic research, Dorothy Smith (1993) writes:

Claims for the admission of accounts to membership in a textual reality depend upon establishing the proper relations between the original that it claims to represent and the account that has been produced (1990:73).

Maintaining this proper relationship, then, begins with appropriate methods and procedures. In this study, based on a critical ethnographic framework, the research design was based on qualitative research practices which involved interview and some participant observation in a fieldwork context.

METHODS
The sample of eight high school students and graduates were comprised of five female and three males. Access to female informants was easier to facilitate through my own personal contacts in the community. Finding male students, however, was a more difficult process given the rules of social conduct in Islam which restrict male/female interaction.

As a Muslim, I had to take into account my own comfort level in interviewing male students as well as theirs. Therefore, in two instances with male informants, interviews were conducted over the phone and tape recorded with proper consent over a speaker phone. This proved to be the more comfortable arrangement with Tariq and Adam, both single males in their twenties. With Sajjad, 19 and recently married, we agreed to hold the interview be held at his in-laws home where he and his wife lived. This way we would not in effect be alone—a situation which, Islamically, must be avoided between unmarried men and women. Sajjad’s wife in fact, was able to join us for part of the interview.

This is an issue that a non-Muslim colleague of mine, also doing research in the Muslim community, was sensitive to and she avoided interviewing too many males for fear of making them uncomfortable. Interestingly, however, a different non-Muslim colleague whose interview sample included a large number of both Muslim men and women, reported that she had no problem during the interview situations. I, however, recognized this from my experience in the Muslim community as being part of the "double standard," whereby, non-Muslim women are seen as approachable and somehow outside of the rules of social conduct in Islam. For myself, as a Muslim woman conforming to Islamic dress codes, I knew that the reaction would be quite different among the men. While I could say that this limits the type of research I do in the Muslim community, I do not feel compromised since this also
conforms with my own social practices. In fact it would be a greater compromise of my beliefs to do otherwise.

In this sense, I generally felt more comfortable interviewing women. Our discussions became more personal than with the males since being overly familiar or personal with members of the opposite sex would be Islamically inappropriate. Therefore, there are qualitative differences in the interview process with male students, particularly in probing certain issues that could be considered inappropriate for the context. Nevertheless, overall I was very pleased with the candour all of the informants brought to this process.

All of the names presented in this study are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the informants. Of the female informants, Karima and Zeinab were known to me previously, while Amal, Iman, and Tahira became introduced through community contacts. Of the four parents interviewed, all were mothers: Amina, Bushra, Bilquees and Saleha. I had been acquainted with these mothers also through the community at the Mosque and other social activities. All of the female informants were interviewed in their homes. The interviews were conducted informally and were followed by generous Islamic hospitality in the form of tea or lunch, which made the experience very social and hopefully less obtrusive.

All of the informants have lived in Canada for more than 10 years, and many of the students were born here. I tried to ensure that the sample was racially and ethnically representative of the Muslim community in Toronto; therefore the informants come from diverse backgrounds: Indian, Pakistani, Guyanese, British, Arab, and Somali. Social class is not as informative of the issues being dealt with in this study, but the informants do represent both working and middle class families. The issue of social class is taken up in chapter 6
with regard to some of the general areas of concern for Muslims education-wise; however, it is does not figure prominently as a variable in the discussions relating to education and the politics of religious identity. Class-based differences are more salient in a discussion of unequal access to educational and economic opportunities, but, are less relevant with regard to the issues of education and identity addressed here.

In ethnographic research, we are dependent and in some cases encumbered by technological necessities such as tape recorders and transcribers as tools of the trade. Unfortunately this can lead to mishaps as was my experience with three interviews which were not recorded properly and therefore could not be transcribed fully. My interviews with Saleha, Adam, and Tariq experienced varying levels of technical difficulty; therefore, I relied on my field notes for back up. However, the narratives used for these informants are based on the parts of the tape-recorded interviews that were able to be transcribed, and are not paraphrased.

All interviews were prefaced by obtaining informed consent and an explanation of the research goals and objectives (see appendix I). The interview guide covered questions on identity, Islamic practice, family, school, peer and social activities, Islamic education, and future goals. (see appendix II)

As a final note on the processes and protocols of ethnographic research, an interesting development emerged while undertaking this study. In the course of interviewing Fatima, a community liaison counsellor with a board of education who deals specifically with Muslim students and parents and their concerns in education, I have since been lead into an ongoing path of social action as a advocate for the Muslim community with this particular board. My
involvement with a Muslim community group that advises the board on issues pertaining to education and the needs of Muslim students has moved the academic journey of social research into a phase of social action. In this way, the transformative goals of this research are slowly becoming realized as the sociological information generated throughout the course of this research has now been integrated into a plan of action to address some the areas of incongruence and conflict between Muslims and the educational system. A full discussion of this is process is the focus of chapter 6.

The following chapter moves the discussion into a more specific look at the meaning of Islamic identity as referenced by the narratives. The voices of the Muslim students and parents in the narratives which follow through the remainder of the thesis, are the primary points of reference for understanding the issues concerning Muslims as religious minorities in a secular school system. They have been the architects of this study, and have guided the theory with their own astute understanding of the social realities in which they live.
CHAPTER 2
IDENTITY : THEORY AND PRACTICE

The first section of this chapter locates a theoretical understanding of Islamic identity which is grounded in lived experience by the analysis of student narratives which follow. The narratives in this section speak to the subjective construction of Islamic identity and how it is realized through beliefs, values, and religious practices.

2.1 THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY : LOCATING THE DISCOURSE

One of the paradoxes of the global post-modern world is characterized by the dichotomous development of shifting political borders which revitalize and strengthen historical links with culture, ethnicity, religion, identity, and the struggle for territory (the Balkans are a case in point), and at the same time, the deterritorialization of cultural spaces, occurring through transnational migrations resulting in the creation of diasporic communities. Both provide specific contexts for the negotiation of contemporary identity politics. As such, culture and identity, no longer being seen as confined within the geographic and ideological the boundaries of nationalism, are constructs which have lost their sense of "fixedness " (Gupta and Ferguson,1992).

For migrant communities within the North American context, ethnic status is the central basis for constructing identity- a status ultimately subordinated by the political and cultural hegemony of the dominant Anglo cultural groups. For Muslims in the Islamic
diaspora in North America, however, religious identification is often the primary basis of self- and group- identification.

There are many personal, cultural and sectarian orientations to Islam. As such, it is impossible to view Muslims and their communities in monolithic terms. However, allowing for this variation, I would argue that there is a unitary standard or model for behaviour embedded in the Qur’an and displayed in the well-documented actions and behaviours of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), who is considered by all Muslims to be the living embodiment of Qur’anic principles. The degree to which these behaviours and attitudes are adopted and emulated is then determined by various individual, cultural, and sectarian interpretations of Islam.

This study will focus on those Muslims who choose to emulate the model of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) (known as the "Sunna" or the way of life of the Prophet) and use the guidance of the Qur’an as the basis to construct their lifestyle and identity. These Muslims, whose lives are governed by a strict and literal adherence to the Qur’an and Hadith, have been both popularized and politicized through the media as "fundamentalists." This stereotype, however, supplies another convenient ideological label designed to further distance the sacred from the profane in social discourse, and praxis and thereby protect the sanctity of secularized culture and of course, democracy: the raison d’etre of the Western world.

Islam is in fact a counter-hegemonic movement in the Western World; and thus is perceived as a very real threat to Western norms and conventions. The fact that Islam has a revolutionary ideology, currently fuelled by anti-imperialist and anti-Western sentiments in many parts of the world, has led to its suppression in "democratic" nations such as France.
and Turkey which have banned several Islamic publications as well as the "hijab" or veil worn by Muslim women in public schools and other institutions.

In such instances, Islamic identity is externally perceived and defined around radical political extremism rather than in accordance with the lived realities of Muslims from the ideological mainstream. Social identities, therefore, are often grounded within political objectives as Sorenson (1991) argues. In the case of Bosnia, Chechnya, and other former Soviet republics, Islamic identity has emerged as a means of ethnic identification, political consolidation, and mobilization, as well as a symbol of persecution.

The malleability of Islamic identity and the various frames of reference associated with it as a social construct, contrasts with what I define as the "religious construct" of Islamic identity. This dichotomizes the socially defined, ascriptive characteristics of Islamic identity with those that are divinely ordained and inscribed within the praxis of religious tenets i.e., the "five pillars of Islam," "Shahada" the declaration of the oneness of God, "Salat" prayer, five times daily, "Sawm" fasting in the month of Ramadan, "Zakat" payment of alms tax, and "Hajj" the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The social construction of a "Muslim," therefore, absorbs many meanings and accommodates various orientations to Islam, as well as what can be called the "secularization of Islam" where Islamic identity is simply a social label devoid of any connection to religious belief and practice. In this instance, being a "Muslim" whether as a self-defined or an ascriptive identity, does not necessarily mean one practices Islam. I would argue that the religious construction of a Muslim, however, is based on adherence to Islamic doctrine (Qur’an and Hadith) and the development of a lifestyle in accordance with these tenets. In
other words, within the religious construct, Islamic identity is inextricably linked with praxis, that is, the religious duties and obligations prescribed within Islamic doctrine.

Therefore, as I have attempted to briefly sketch, the notion and construction of identity within the Islamic context is as a social identity, not limited by its religious definition. This then introduces the issue of group identification and the maintenance of boundaries. Barth (1969) examined the issue of ethnic groups and boundaries in terms of the "social organization of cultural difference." He argued that interaction does not lead to the dissolution of ethnic groups through change and acculturation and that cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence. It is therefore, within this context of interaction between diverse ethno-cultural groups, rather than in isolation, that Barth argues that the boundaries of ethnic groups are defined and maintained.

Barth argues that "creating inventories of overt cultural traits" draws attention to the analysis of cultures rather than ethnic organization (p. 12). He views culture as separate from and not necessarily constrained by ethnic group boundaries, and that the boundaries of membership are more significant than the cultural contents contained within. Barth equates boundaries with membership (who's included/excluded) and these are maintained through the continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders.

He isolates two standards for judging criteria for ethnic group identification, "ascription" or the categorization of ethnic units on the basis of markers or signs of overt cultural characteristics, such as dress, language, house form or general style of life; and "performance," or the roles and expected behaviours of individuals within these groups, as based upon and judged by basic value orientations and moral standards (1969:14). Therefore.
what occurs between groups is more a process of self and other ascription based on overt cultural characteristics rather than their underlying values. It is within the inner boundaries of ethnic groups that performance can be judged on the basis of shared cultural knowledge.

Barth's paradigm provides an interesting dichotomy through which to examine the issue of Islamic identity in terms of the ascriptive and performance characteristics of ethnic groups. However, it is important to qualify that while there are many diverse ethno-cultural groups contained under the general rubric of "Muslim peoples," within Islam there exists the concept of the "Umma," or the supra-national, supra-territorial community of Muslims. Within this concept, and within the lives of many Muslims, the primacy of ethnic group affiliation based on national or cultural definitions is subordinated in favour of religious identity as the main factor of self-definition. Therefore Muslims occupy two or more social categories, with one based on their nationality, (i.e., Pakistani, Arab, Malaysian, Somali, Canadian, etc.) and another based on their affiliation to Islam where there are various sectarian divisions (i.e., Sunni, Shia, Ismaili, Druze, etc.). The primacy given to either category of ethnic identification, depends on the extent to which Islam defines the nature of cultural behaviour.

This refers to what can be called the "Islamization of culture" versus the "culturalization of Islam." The "Islamization of culture" has been a historical process where, through both military conquest and "dawah" or the spreading of Islamic knowledge via merchants and migrants across what are now predominately Muslim populated societies, extant cultures became Islamicized; that is, Islam became the definitive force behind cultural development.
This occurs through what can be conceptualized as the "syncretic evolution of culture," where cultures can be said to evolve through the blending of various (often non-indigenous) cultural forms which become incorporated and naturalized as part of the intrinsic structure of that culture. Islam became integrated into many cultures through such a process, where cultural practices were radically redefined in accordance with Islamic principles. However, when I refer to the "culturalization of Islam" it speaks to the phenomenon whereby Islam becomes contained within culture as a malleable component, rather than being the driving force behind its development. Nationalistic culture, then, selectively circumscribes Islamic practice, often depoliticizing it and containing it within certain spheres of practice. The issue for many Islamists, then, has become the "re-Islamization" of culture; often by any means necessary.

By illustrating the dynamics of cultural process within the context of Islam, I lay the groundwork for understanding the development of Muslim society and Islamic culture in Canada. I have attempted to outline the development of a theoretical understanding of Muslims as constituting a religious group, and the dynamics of cultural transformation and its impact on Islamic identity. The models of ethnic identity used here, then, are a paradigm for understanding the mechanisms of religious identity among Muslims who see this as a primary factor in their self-definition.

Isajiw (1990) makes the point, however, that ethnic-identity-loss must not be confused with assimilation. He states that cultural assimilation into the broader society does not necessarily entail loss of ethnic identity. This coincides with Barth's view that culture is separate from and not necessarily constrained by ethnic group boundaries. Therefore
according to both Barth and Isajiw, cultural change, such as that which occurs through assimilation, does not necessarily compromise ethnic group identity.

However, I would argue that in the case of Islamic identity as a religious construct, and to those who adhere to it as such, cultural change in the direction of secular values and un-Islamic forms of behaviour may be seen as negating the basis of an Islamic identity. Yet it would not necessarily have as Barth and Isajiw have suggested, the same impact on their social identity as a Muslim, which would be based largely on ascription rather than role performance.

As I have attempted to illustrate, in Islam, a prescribed set of values and beliefs based on religious doctrine are translated into sanctioned types of behaviour. The majority of these values beliefs and practices are inconsistent with the social mores and conventions of Western society. Schools, as a microcosm of society embody the normative standards of a secular liberal democratic society, provide an environment incompatible with many Islamic principles.

The propagation of an Islamic social order in the North American context becomes problematic in terms of negotiating counter-cultural practices within the social and ideological framework of the dominant culture. This becomes part of the daily struggle for Islamically-practising Muslim students who struggle to balance the social and academic demands of schooling, with the often alienating practices of their faith. The frame of reference through which they are evaluated by teachers and non-Muslim peers does little to validate or positively conceptualize their experience. Muslim students are often confronted with messages of inferiority or "backwardness" which often validates the ambivalence many already develop toward their identities as Muslims. This can lead to the process which Royce
(1982) defines as "identity-switching," or the purposeful subjugation of negatively evaluated forms of identification, and the assertion of a more positive form of identity. This is viewed as, "a strategy used by individuals or groups who feel that they are in an inferior position and seek to improve their situation" (p. 6). Royce further qualifies the designation of "inferior" in terms of both negative images and inferior socio-economic position, although these are often linked. This concept of identity switching relates to the "split personality syndrome," a process of "disengaging" with one's identity, which has been identified among Muslim youth as a strategy to negotiate the social demands of mainstream conformity with their "inferior" yet equally demanding identities as Muslims. (see section 2.4 for a full discussion of this issue)

As a final note on the plurality of identity, Edward Said (1993) writes:

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian or women or Muslim, or American are not more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind (p. 336).

This speaks not only to the multiplicity of social identities within every social and cultural landscape, but also to the ways in which identities and labels have been constructed as static images which mask a much broader and diverse social reality. As Said points out, it is through the framework of lived experience that identities become contextualized and can be mapped throughout individual chains of experience. Such is the work of a critical ethnography, to link these chains to the broader strands of social, political, economic, and ideological systems which mediate and are in turn, shaped by these individual and collective forms of identification.
2.2 : LIVING ISLAM : NARRATIVES ON ISLAMIC PRACTICE AND THE MEANING OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY

This section will examine the meaning and construct of identity within the Islamic context. The connection between "social identity" and "social practice", as outlined in the previous section, is further explored through the narratives. The students and parents interviewed were asked to give their definition of a Muslim and to explain what having an Islamic lifestyle meant to them. Their responses outline the holistic nature of Islamic practice as a comprehensive way of life incorporating physical, spiritual, and behavioural aspects as components of an Islamic identity. The five pillars of Islam⁴ were referred to by all of the respondents when asked for their definition of a Muslim. The five pillars of Islam represent the fundamental elements of Islamic practice and were central to the conceptualization of an Islamic identity. Emulation of the behaviour and practices of the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) were also seen as necessary components of developing an Islamic persona. In the following quote, Karima, a 2nd year university student of Pakistani descent, describes her understanding of what it means to be a Muslim:

[It] means trying to incorporate every aspect that the Prophet has taught in his life, because he was like living Islam, so you try and copy his lifestyle. And that’s what you’re working on in your life, you’re always trying to strive to become closer to the Prophet’s life. That’s your constant effort.

The notion of "living Islam" then, involves a conscious effort to live according to the

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⁴ Five Pillars of Islam:
standards prescribed in Islam and to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammed. All of
the Muslims interviewed based their understanding of Islamic identity on these foundations.
Simply adhering to a system of belief was not considered enough; identity was seen as the
manifestation of practice. Saleha, is a mother of four and was born in Pakistan and raised
in Canada. She made the following remarks on the
relationship between belief and practice in Islam:

[Practice is part of the belief. If there’s belief without practice,
then it’s counter-productive and the person has not really
committed themselves to believing in God, because if you really
believe in God then you will do what he has ordained for you to
do and that is the practice.]

Practice, then, is the expression of one’s belief according to Saleha. Claiming an adherence
to a set of beliefs associated with Islam, but not acting upon them, is construed as Saleha
states as a lack of commitment. In this sense, true commitment to Islam necessitates a
corresponding set of behaviours, actions, and modes of conduct through which an Islamic
identity becomes actualized.

The meaning of the word "Muslim" is often translated as "one who submits to the
Will of Allah." As discussed previously, however, the social construction of a Muslim often
does not depend upon the formal aspects of religious practice; and hence, being a "Muslim"
becomes a social category divorced from its reference to Islam. Certain Muslim writers have
supported the secularization of Islam, and view Islamic identity as being grounded in the
material culture of Islam, (i.e., art, poetry, etc.) and not necessarily having any
correspondence to the religious duties and obligations (see Khan, 1995). The Muslims
whom I interviewed found this to be a superficial sort of "labelling" which does not lend
itself to a deep understanding of Islam.

While Muslims are by and large reluctant to openly make judgements about other Muslims, Amina, 30, a convert to Islam and recent immigrant from Britain, makes the following statement:

Well I don't think that I could ever say this person is a Muslim and this person isn't because it's not up to me-- Allah knows what's in people's hearts, but I have to admit that on a certain level I have a hard time fully accepting people who just have a labelling and don't show it in a practical way in their lives. That's me and my prejudice I guess.

Therefore, there is a sense that if one's internal inclinations (of which only Allah can judge) are not expressed through overt actions or behaviours which then serve to legitimize them, the social perception will be negative. This corresponds with Barth's notion of "role performance" as the internal basis for judging group membership (1969:14). Within the Islamic context, values and beliefs must therefore be translated into concrete forms of action in order to gain legitimacy within group boundaries. As Dei (1996) writes, "formations of identity have always included processes of inclusion as well as exclusion" (p. 23). This process of dichotomizing insiders from outsiders must proceed from certain criteria of membership which consists of both subjective and ascriptive factors. Both represent socially negotiated and mediated determinants of identity. Yet, in the Islamic context, identity construction becomes essentialized by the process of emulation.

Sorenson (1991) argues that while identity formation is premised on locations within both national and ethnic designations it also "involves a set of beliefs about appropriate roles and behaviours and these are fluid" (p. 76). However, the latter notion of "fluidity" with regard to roles and behaviours in Islam, becomes a matter of interpretation. Yet the dominant
mode of interpretation fixes the notion of praxis within distinct parameters based on a literal understanding of Islamic doctrine.

Karima expresses her sense of Islamic identity as one fundamentally rooted within doctrine and praxis:

For me being a Muslim is not just being a Muslim by name, it’s practising every aspect of Islam as much as you possibly can and to work toward becoming even better or closer to Islam which is the Qur’an and the Sunna. That’s the identity that I try and hold.

This contrasts with the secularized model of Islamic identity where there is an attempt to disassociate from religious prescription and redefine Islamic identity on the basis of individual orientation. This often results in what Khan (1995) refers to as process of "negotiating ambivalence." In reference to the construction of Muslim women’s identities, Khan argues that while there is a changing vision of the "authentic" nature of Muslim women’s identities, many Muslim women feel trapped in their inability to reconcile their personal experience as Muslim women with the various antagonistic constructions of their identity (p. 127). This therefore pits personal desire against religious obligation. As such, some Muslims seek to restructure the boundaries of Islamic identification in accordance with a sense of personal choice as opposed to divine ordinance.

Underlying such sentiments seems to be a sense that Islam has a lack of relevance in the lives of people who have been categorized as "Muslim." Therefore, there is an attempt to renegotiate that identity rather than to re-evaluate their understanding of Islam. Feminist writers in particular, namely, Khan 1995, Mernissi 1987, support the various manifestations of Muslim women’s identities whether or not they are consistent with the dominant interpretations of Islam, and they go as far as to advocate the re-invention of Islamic identity
and praxis in accordance with feminist interpretations of Islam. To many Muslims, this is a heretical view which represents a counter-Islamic discourse and challenges the very integrity and inviolability of Islam. There is, nonetheless, a growing political interest in such views which maintains their academic currency and prominence.

Muslim women who approach their sense of identity through a more conventional understanding of Islam, are used as a foil for the more "progressive" women who eschew the traditional elements of Islam in favour of a more Western and hence, "liberating" view of their identity. Muslim women who choose to define their identities in accordance with Islamic tenets have been silenced by the academic imperialism of Western feminism that has often been based on Orientalist constructions of their identity. Many feminist writers within this genre position themselves as the intellectual vanguards of Muslim women, whom they see as subordinate beings in need of emancipation. In doing so, they enact a relationship of discursive power by according themselves the only legitimate space from which to articulate a view on Muslim women. Muslim women, therefore, become sociologically and ideologically categorized as the Other.

The artificial homogeneity created through this discourse on Muslim women fails to analytically separate the realities of these women with regard to social class or education, and therefore, presents a unidimensional construct uniting these women on the basis of their perceived oppression, which is in turn defined by their adherence to a non-Western style of life (Hoodfar, 1995, see also Mohanty, 1991). Acting with this sense of "academic impunity," it is ironic that within the same academic circles, there is very little regard for the damage this does to the agency of these women in the name of female emancipation (Lazreg,
The women in this study articulate a very different sense of their identity; one which extends beyond the oppositional framework and ambivalence cited by Khan (1995). In fact, their lack of ambivalence is characterized by an acceptance of Islamic modes of conduct and behaviour and their ability to negotiate their identities as Muslims within the framework of a secular non-Muslim society. Furthermore, while there is a tendency within feminist discourse to reduce Muslim women’s identities to the practice of veiling, Muslim women themselves articulate a more holistic understanding of the values and beliefs which animate their behaviour and structure their sense of self.

Amal, a 20 year old university student born in Canada of Arab descent, discusses the outward manifestation of Islamic identity versus the inner conditions through which it must be expressed:

[A] lot of people think that you know “Oh I’m a Muslim,” so they have this proto-typical view of what is, like a Muslim woman is somebody who wears a hijab and she covers herself from head to toe. But my definition of a Muslim is not just what you see on the outside, but also what’s on the inside. Your values and your morals and the way you conduct yourself as well, gives a good example of what a Muslim is. I myself, have seen Muslim girls and guys who call themselves Muslim, but they act a different way and they don’t give a good example of what a Muslim is.

Sajjad, a 19 year old high school student of Guyanese descent expresses a similar view regarding the need to make one’s manner and behaviour consistent with Islam, rather than to simply focus on the external markers of Islamic identity:

I used to think that being a Muslim was wearing a thoub\(^5\) or a

\(^5\) A "thoub" is a long robe often worn by men in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States.
kufi\(^6\), or turban or something like this, but those are the exterior things. For me, how do I prove my identity? I think it’s trying to do things that Allah asks us to do, not do things for other people, because that’s very dangerous, because you can do more damage that way. Because when everyone knows you’re a Muslim and you go and steal—not steal but even backbite, you’re automatically associated with Islam. It does more damage. Whereas if you’re incognito, they’ll just think you’re bad, or they’ll try to put you in an Indian group or whatever. But, if they know [you’re a Muslim] they’ll associate it with Islam.

The negative construction of difference in society underscores the way in which Sajjad views the overt expression of Islamic identity. He cites the danger of how negative behaviour on the part of someone identified as a Muslim is automatically associated with Islam. But he also recognizes the fact that even if religious identity is not targeted ethnic identity will serve to categorize people according to negative perceptions and stereotypes. Many of the Muslims interviewed in fact felt conscious of how their behaviour would come to represent Islam and that there would be a tendency to essentialize a negative understanding of Islam based on their actions.

This was more of a concern for the Muslim women who observe Islamic dress or hijab\(^7\), an external marker which makes their identity as Muslims more overt than males. Islamic dress in this sense was seen as a means to help regulate their behaviour in an

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\(^6\) A "kufi" is a hat traditionally worn by Muslim men. It is not a required element of Islamic dress for men, however following the injunction of maintaining a distinct appearance from non-Muslims many Muslim men wear the kufi as a means of expressing their Islamic identity.

\(^7\) "Hijab" refers to the Islamic dress code for women and is specifically used to refer to the headcovering which characterizes the appearance of Muslim women. The meaning of the word also extends to related manners and behaviours considered appropriate for a Muslim women as referenced within Qur’an and Hadith.
Islamically-correct fashion for fear of perpetuating a bad image of Islam. Iman, 22 years old, was born in Somalia and has been living in Canada for 12 years. After high school, she began to practice Islam more seriously and began to wear a form of Islamic face veil called "nikab." Iman's dress is customarily black and covers all parts of her body except for her eyes. She explained how Islamic dress reinforces a consciousness of her behaviour and conduct, which informs how others will evaluate Islam:

I just try to remember that I symbolize Islam everywhere that I go. Even if I get upset I try not to show it just for the reason of me being a poor example of Islam. If I wasn't dressed that way maybe I would have been tempted to act another way, but I always remind myself, that I'm a Muslim, if you're practising Islam show good manners to people, behave well, be patient, because people will say rude remarks to you sometimes and they really test your patience, and you have to be patient as a Muslim.

Realizing that they will be socially constructed in terms of their Otherness, these Muslims strive to give a positive example of Muslims, and hence Islam. There is, then, an inextricable link between how Muslims as actors behave, and how others perceive Islam. The narratives also exemplify the complex of values and behaviours (i.e., refrain from stealing and backbiting, patience, good manners) which Muslims use to construct their identity and develop an Islamic persona. Negative social perceptions, therefore, can in fact serve to regulate Muslims' behaviour, who fear themselves being used as a means to negatively stereotype Islam.

Asserting an Islamic identity was also seen as a means for setting social boundaries with others. Gender relations in Islam, for example, are predicated upon sexual segregation and social distance between members of the opposite sex. Islam curtails the free intermingling of the sexes in order to disallow opportunities for premarital relations and extra
marital affairs, thereby protecting the sanctity of marriage. Maintaining these social boundaries, particularly in a non-Muslim environment, becomes a necessary challenge for many Muslims. Amal explains how this is related to her sense of identity as a Muslim woman:

Well there’s certain conducts with which a Muslim female carries herself. With regards to segregation, inter-mixing, the way I conduct myself with the opposite sex has to be in a sort of modest way. I make sure that is the first thing that everybody knows about me. For example, at school they know not to get too friendly or too close with me, so I conduct myself in that way so they know I am a Muslim and these are my values, and this is how I would like you to act towards me as well.

Muslim women also regard their Islamic dress as a means to maintain these boundaries. As Iman explains, Islamic dress is also a symbol of feminism from the Islamic point of view:

The dress symbolizes modesty. It symbolizes "I don’t want your attention in the wrong way. I’m a person before I’m a body." It symbolizes my respect for my body and I don’t want to flaunt myself everywhere just to satisfy some man’s lust. I mean if you look at the society here, why are men always dressed so well and the women so naked? I mean you really have to ask yourself that question, and why does a woman always have to worry about how she dresses? That shouldn’t be our concern. If you want to look good you want to look good for who you want to look good for--not the whole society. We’re not objects.

Here Iman provides a critique of the objectification of women in Western society. She sees there being an unnecessary emphasis on women’s appearances for the gratification of men. Conversely, Islamic dress is seen as a form of protection from the male gaze and a symbol of self respect. Iman went on to remark, "Since I put my hijab on, men don’t hiss and piss at me -- I am not a victim -- I am the me I choose to be."
Islamic dress, therefore, extends beyond simply being a marker of Islamic identity. For the Muslim women who adopt it, it symbolizes modesty while it discourages negative attention from men. Islamic dress also acts as a means to regulate behaviour as it creates a consciousness that one is representing Islam, and must therefore act in an Islamically appropriate fashion. It is seen in this respect to safeguard the integrity of Islamic practices. Also, as Amal had pointed out, actualizing one's identity as a Muslim means asserting Islamic values as a means to establish the social boundaries which correspond to having an Islamic lifestyle.

Other behaviours and practices were also seen as components of Islamic identity and an integral part of living an Islamic lifestyle. Zeinab, a grade 11 advanced student, speaks of the way she incorporates "taqwa," or the remembrance of Allah into her everyday life and interaction with non-Muslims:

I try to be more Islamic in the way I act. I incorporate Islamic phrases like "Alhamdulillah" and "Inshallah," and non-Muslims ask me: "What does that mean? Why are you saying that?" and I explain it to them.

Phrases used to remember and glorify Allah are an important part of the Islamic lexicon. Zeinab uses these phrases even in her interactions with non-Muslims as a means to assert her Islamic identity and to educate others about her practices as a Muslim.

She sees this as a benefit to both herself and her friends as she explains in the following

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8 "Al-hamdulillah" means "Praise be to Allah".

Arabic is the official language of Islam. The Holy Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and all forms of prayers, supplications and glorifications of God are performed in the Arabic language.

9 "Inshallah", means "God Willing."
quote:

Yeah, so they'll learn and I'll get "thawab"\textsuperscript{10} for teaching them. And even if I have to pray, I'll tell them, "I have to go pray, so I'll be back in a minute." So they know I pray, they even know where the prayer room [at school] is.

Being able to maintain Islamic modes of conduct while in the company of non-Muslims is a challenge for many Muslims. Islamic modes of behaviour, dress, values, and beliefs separate and distinguish the lifestyles of Muslims. Much of this was seen by the Muslims interviewed as a means to inform others of who they are and what they stand for. Often this meant going against socially accepted norms, such as dating, drinking alcohol, and going to parties.

Stating one's views according Islam was also regarded as a way of asserting one's identity as a Muslim. Integrating an Islamic perspective into conversations with others was seen as an important means of communicating values and beliefs to non-Muslims. It was through such informal exchanges where many of the Muslims interviewed found an avenue for articulating views regarding issues such as dating, wearing Islamic dress, or moral issues such as homosexuality from an Islamic point of view. They found it important not to shy away from people's inquiries regarding their lifestyle and beliefs and saw this as a means of performing "dawah" or educating people about Islam.

2.3: BEING CANADIAN AND BEING MUSLIM

As discussed previously, Muslims occupy various racial, ethnic, and national

\textsuperscript{10} "Thawab", refers to a reward or blessing from Allah in return for one's good deeds.
categories. For many, Islam structures their primary sense of personal and collective identity. Islamic standards and behaviours are a way of maintaining group boundaries and determining insiders from outsiders. Membership is also ascriptive, however, and not all Muslims who qualify themselves as such practice or exhibit the behaviours and actions linked to Islam (i.e., Islamic dress, adherence to prayers etc.). While they may still be accepted, the legitimacy of their status may be put into question.

For Muslims growing up in Canadian society, national identification brings another dimension into their self definition. Many, while maintaining their primary identity as Muslims, also identify with being Canadian. However, as Tahira, a 20 year old high school graduate born and raised in Canada explains, many in society find it difficult to accept the "Canadianization" of non-White Others:

I would say I'm Muslim first of all and if a person asks: "Where are you from?" I say: "I'm Canadian", but most people say: "No, where are you really from?", so I say: "I'm Canadian-Pakistani."

Tahira, while acknowledging herself as a Muslim first, sees greater saliency in her identity as a Canadian than as a Pakistani, since she was born and raised in Canada. Yet her legitimacy as a Canadian is not readily accepted, as shown through this exchange, unless it is qualified by an additional ethnic reference. This is the dilemma for many minority youth who are labelled according to an ethnic status which has less relevance to their lives than does their experience as Canadians. Yet, the notion of being an un-hyphenated Canadian also often presumes that one has assimilated into the Anglo-Canadian mainstream. Therefore, it becomes difficult to reconcile cultural diversity with a sense of what is "Canadian." And whose family was from Egypt, felt that because she wore hijab, some teachers regarded her
as an immigrant, even though she was born in Canada. She recalled an incident where an OAC\textsuperscript{11} History teacher was discussing immigration in Canada and asked her to share her "immigration experience":

\begin{quote}
[He] automatically just assumed I was an immigrant and he asked me to discuss my immigration experience with the class. And I thought, "My God, I don't believe this!" And I asked him: "have I ever discussed my place of origin with you?", and he said, "no" and I said, "then why do you automatically assume that I am an immigrant? I'm a Canadian, I was born as a Canadian and I don't think that just because I'm different, the way I dress, that it gives you the right to assume that I'm an immigrant or not a Canadian!" And he apologized, but the whole class was appalled. I was so shocked by his question!
\end{quote}

The social perception of a "Canadian" is often based on the standardized norms associated with the dominant culture. Therefore, as Amal's scenario shows, non-Anglo Canadians are often regarded as immigrants whether or not they were born in Canada.

Increasing demographic change and the cultural diversification of society calls for a re-definition of what qualifies as being "Canadian." Canadian identity must be regarded as part of the repertoire of social identities which differentially empowered individuals and groups from a variety of backgrounds bring and negotiate within the framework of a national socio-economic structure. The nation-state has become the container of diverse cultural expressions; yet these in turn are limited by the structure of power from which they proceed. The artificial homogenization of these competing social categories does little more than mask inequality and justify the cultural hegemony of the Anglo-Canadian mainstream.

Subordination can also lead to assimilation as a means to adapt to the "culture of

\textsuperscript{11} OAC- stands for "Ontario Academic Credit." Students taking these courses are in collegiate level streams.
power" (Delpit, 1988). Many Muslims see cultural adaptation as a means to greater social and economic access within mainstream society, and therefore begin to conform to the rules and structures of the dominant society. Bilquees, originally from India, has been living in Canada for 20 years. She is the mother of Zeinab (quoted previously) and also has a teenage son. She sees cultural conformity as an ineffective means of overcoming barriers:

I think we do have our cultural barriers to begin with...[We] as Muslims are loosing our identity. Let's say the most important thing-- I would call it a barrier too-- because if I'm not keeping my identity as a Muslim and I want to become one of the Canadians I can never be that. I have to understand that dressing up in pants or shirts is not going to make me a Canadian. That's the barrier.

Bilquees feels that Muslims in Canada are trying to be either "too Canadianized or too behind." She advocates a more moderate approach toward integrating, one which would open the channels of communication between Muslims and non-Muslims and which is based on acceptance of one’s own identity and a respect for that of others.

2.4 : DOUBLE CULTURES, DOUBLE LIVES: THE SPLIT PERSONALITY SYNDROME

Another phenomenon of Islamic identity was characterized by a young writer in an Islamic publication as "split personality syndrome" (Al-Jabri, 1995). This refers to a social, psychological, spiritual and emotional crisis which confronts many Muslim youth in North America who grow up in a tug-of-war between the dominant culture and an Islamic way of life. The disjuncture between the two realities which structure the consciousness and daily lives of these youth, leads to a battle between cultural conformity and resistance. Al-Jabri (1995) refers to the clash between the norms and standards of the dominant culture, where
social acceptance is based on: ".. how flashy you dress, how cool you talk, how obscene you joke, whom you befriend- especially of the opposite sex" and what he characterizes as: the "Other side of the Planet.. the world of Mom and Dad- the world of Islam" (p. 28).

Therefore, in order to conform to both conflicting standards, some youth begin to live two different lives in two opposing worlds. The struggle here is not to give up on either form of identification. The end result is that these youth develop a double personality; each tailor-made to conform to the social and cultural demands of home and the outside world.

Al-Jabri goes on to argue that not only do these youth behave differently according to which context they find themselves in, but they also believe differently. These youth avoid dissonance by uncritically accepting both secular and Islamic knowledge; even when they are at odds. By compartmentalizing their beliefs into these separate and opposing spheres they create a double persona complete with ideological back-up. Royce (1982) writes about the notion of "situational specificity" regarding the assertion of ethnic, and we can also argue, religious identity. She writes that ethnic groups represent, "another kind of reference group that individuals may choose to invoke, ignore or oscillate between depending upon their perception of the situation " (p. 24). Shifting the boundaries of ethnic identity is more problematic however, when this includes a comprehensive religious lifestyle such as Islam. The correspondence between values, beliefs, and behaviour and the status of one's identity as a Muslim are intertwined, as discussed previously. Therefore chameleon-like shifts of attitudes and behaviours means negotiating competing frames of reference as well as moral boundaries.

The split personality syndrome, according to Al-Jabri, is a response to peer pressure
and occurs when parents fail to get positively involved with the youth's personal life, and do not provide alternatives to many of the non-Islamic activities which many of their peers are involved in. This, then, impedes their ability to successfully negotiate their identity in both worlds. Also, students who lack the necessary Islamic social infrastructure within their schools, such as Muslim Student Associations (MSA'S), are more likely to participate in mainstream student sub-cultures. This, then, further derails the impetus for developing an Islamic sub-culture within schools since it must compete with the extant dominant group social networks that may appear more alluring.

The mode of transmitting Islamic knowledge as a set of requirements or unsubstantiated rules and regulations was also recognized as alienating many Muslim youth from practising Islam. A critical understanding of Islam was seen as central to avoiding hypocrisy and laying the foundation of Islamic belief and praxis. Many parents who import their knowledge of Islam from "back home" are unable to make this knowledge accessible and relevant to their children growing up in a radically different social order. As such, many Muslim youth redefine their sense of identity in accordance with the dominant culture and Islamic identity becomes merely a detached cultural reference.

The issue of cultural conformity was addressed in the student narratives. The problem of "fitting in" at school and maintaining Islamic standards at the same time was recognized as a major difficulty for Muslim students. When asked if they could relate to the "split personality syndrome" or had seen others go through it, Karima explained:

I've seen it a lot and I went through it myself, because when you're at home it's very easy to do what's Islamic, but when you're at school there's all these other forces that are on you. The way I got over was when I started practising more Islam. I got
more stable with Islam within me. It took me a few years, but now I’m the same, but around me especially East Indians they have to act like they don’t say anything bad or they don’t do anything bad, but when they get to school they have to fit in.

Conforming to the demands of conflicting cultural expectations presents an almost irreconcilable challenge for many Muslim students. For those new to Canada, the pressure to assimilate often lead to the negation of one’s Islamic identity as well as corresponding shifts in social attitudes and behaviour. Zeinab relates the following scenario about a friend who she saw slowly succumb to the pressure of conformity. In response to my question of whether she had ever encountered anyone with the split personality syndrome Zeinab replied:

Oh yeah that happens. I don’t really know what it is I guess it’s just the pressure of the school system. Theres one girl, a really very practising Muslim, actually she just came to Canada a few years ago, she wore hijab and she wore the abaya and everything and slowly, slowly I guess her friends started working on her, and she hasn’t taken off her scarf yet but she’s loosening it and she’s putting on more make-up and someone said they saw her holding hands with a boy. It was upsetting because I know her really well, so I’ll have to go talk to her. But it happens a lot.

The male students interviewed, each reported that they were able to stay within a strong circle of Muslim friends both in and outside of school. This helped them to maintain their behaviours within Islamic boundaries, although Tariq a 23 year old of Pakistani descent. remembers being more lax in his standards during the early part of his high school experience. Coming to an Islamic awareness came later for all the male students than it did for the female students. This may be due, in part, to the prescription for girls wearing hijab

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12 An "abaya" is a long overcoat worn by many Muslim women. It is particularly characteristic of the style of dress of the Middle East, although Muslim women throughout the world have adopted it according to their own tastes as an preferable form of Islamic attire.
at the onset of puberty, which creates a greater self-identification with Islam, as well as making them more identifiable to others. While Islamic dress codes also apply to males who must be covered at all times from the navel to the knee, and are prohibited from wearing gold jewellery and silk, as well as following the Sunnah practice of wearing a beard, they are nevertheless less physically distinguishable as Muslims than the females. The absence of an overt marker of one’s identity means that it only becomes apparent when asserted as an explicit statement of self-identification. The choice to do so, then, is mediated by the social and cultural environment and individual commitment to Islam.

According to Adam, 21 of Guyanese background, who wears fashionable clothing and uses contemporary slang in his speech, people do not necessarily identify him as a Muslim unless he tells them. He asserts this identity when he feels the boundaries which he qualifies as being Islamically significant, are being breached. This includes limiting the forms of social interaction with females. Peer pressure being ever-present, all of the three males interviewed eventually developed strong peer support systems both inside and outside of school which enabled them to avoid the pitfalls of developing a split personality. Zeinab offered another explanation for why some students develop this split personality. She argued that parents are often the role models for such behaviour and many are themselves unable to have a strong sense of identity:

[M]aybe their parents are like that too, like their parents also have like a double personality. They come to the Mosque and they pray and they’re like "oh we’re so religious" and they go outside and they take off their scarf and they take off their dupata\(^\text{13}\) and they

\(^{13}\) The word "dupata" refers to a loose filmy head covering worn traditionally by South Asian women.
just go to parties or whatever. And so their kids see this and say "maybe it's alright if I do this," or "it's O.K if I just show I'm Muslim." So they're kind of putting other people's opinion before Allah's opinion. You know, they don't really care what Allah will think of them.

Therefore, according to Zeinab, parents are also subject to peer pressure and the social demands of conformity. Living a double standard underscores a particular crisis of identity among Muslims. The erosion of Islamic practices represents a loss of identity for many Muslims. Zeinab referred to the different "phases" which Muslims go through in a struggle to reconcile their identity either in accordance with Islam or with the secular mainstream. She saw moments of conformity in her own life as a temporary stage that many Muslim youth pass through:

There's different phases a person goes through, sometimes you just want to be so accepted that you do stupid things you'd never do before like wearing lipstick, and there's other things where you just want to be different from everybody else, because you know how pointless it is and how really unhappy everybody else is. I just feel sometimes, I'm just so happy to be a Muslim, I don't how I'd be if I wasn't a practising Muslim. I don't want to be like that.

Therefore, a seemingly innocuous practice such as wearing lipstick is seen as a measure of gaining social acceptance and essentially viewed as an act of rebellion from within an Islamic context. The process of "negotiating ambivalence" as cited by Khan (1995) comes into play here in a struggle between conformity and resistance, which Zeinab reconciles through her understanding of what struggles her non-Muslim peers were confronting. She felt that her Islamic beliefs better equipped her ideologically to confront the challenges she faced, and felt that her non-Muslim friends were in a sense "lost." She went on to elaborate her views on the identity crisis she saw non-Muslims experiencing, whom she felt seemed to lack guidance
and purpose to their lives:

[T]hey have no identity. Non-Muslims are just kind of like following blindly to whatever happens, they're not following a set course, they're just living...

Karima, similarly felt that a lot of non-Muslims as well as Muslims whom she knew, were just "following the crowd" rather than the "set course" provided in Islam, which Zeinab had mentioned.

They just do anything that people want them to do. They don't ever stand their ground for anything. People can like them for a while, but they won't have inner respect for them, because you could just make them do anything you want as long as you tell them "hey, that's the thing to do." They don't really do anything that's themselves, that makes them who they are.

Being able to "stand their ground" was a key element of maintaining and negotiating an Islamic identity within the framework of a non-Muslim society for many students. This meant not allowing the social conventions of the dominant society to dictate their standards of behaviour, dress, and conduct and instead, maintaining a stronger link with the Islamic community as an avenue for affectual support and cultural expression.

The students interviewed, provided important insights into the social and cultural processes which contribute to the development of the split personality syndrome. They were able to critically evaluate how many Muslims "disengage" with their identity to suit specific social purposes which make them more acceptable to the dominant society. They also recognized that resistance to living double standards could only be affected by stronger parental and community support and by privileging the "Will of Allah" and the requirements of Islam over the perceived temporal benefits of assimilation.

According to Iman, Islamic identity cannot simply be assumed, "it must be claimed."
This implies that it is a social identification which must actively be pursued through certain actions and behaviours which qualify as "Islamic." It also views Islamic identity as non-passive, a dynamic relationship between certain spiritual guidelines and existential reality. According to Dei (1996), "to claim an identity rather than to passively accept one, is a political act which involves oneself and others" (p. 1). The politicization of Islamic identity therefore, is inherent yet, the formal politics of religious identity require a space for articulating strategies of resistance which help sustain the requirements of this identification in specific social and institutional contexts, such as schools. These develop through the politics of student sub-cultures which represent a dialectical, ongoing struggle for identity, representation, and voice within the framework of both schools and society. (This is taken up further in chapter 5)
CHAPTER 3

VEILED SENTIMENTS: UNCOVERING THE MEANING OF HIJAB

The issue of hijab as a marker of Muslim women's identity is as much a political tool as it is a symbol of devotion to Islam. As the narratives will show, images of veiled Muslim women as oppressed and in need of emancipation are largely based on colonial images and outmoded cliches, rather than the lived experience of women spiritually dedicated to Islam. The production of knowledge on Muslim women's identities has largely been located within the domain of Western feminist discourses which attempt to contain the realities of Muslim women within victim-centred stereotypes. This form of scholarship denies Muslim women agency and transforms the subjective construction of their identity into an objectified discourse based on Western values and norms (Cayer, 1995. Zine, 1995. Hoodfar, 1993. Mohanty, 1991. Lazreg, 1988). Katherine Bullock (1995) comments, "when a feminist and/or Westerner concludes that Muslim women are oppressed and degraded by their religion and by the act of covering their hair, they are making an implicit judgement about the intelligence and autonomy of those who remain Muslim and wear Islamic dress" (p. 2).

Euro-centric discourses on Muslim women serve the political intent of justifying Western superiority and domination. This form of academic imperialism sets up a binary analytical framework which juxtaposes the "liberated" women of the West, with the "oppressed" women of Islam. The positioning of Muslim women within this dynamic has been used to frame a particular understanding of Muslim women as second class citizens. The essentialism which is invoked in this process, projects Muslim women as an a priori
social category with embedded qualities that become objectified through a discourse of Otherness (Mohanty, 1991, Moors, 1991, Lazreg, 1988). This connects how social meanings are tied to projects of economic and political domination, and how the production of knowledge reproduces the ideological practices of colonialism.

Many Muslim feminist writers have themselves come to view Islam as contributing to the subordination of women (see Mernissi, 1981). However, little attention has been paid as to whether other Muslim women lend credence to these inferior designations, or how such labelling leads to the canonization of stereotypes.

Within Islam, there are competing constructions of Muslim women’s identities (Khan, 1995). For example, many Muslim women challenge the interpretation of Islamic doctrines which outlines their obligation to cover themselves in a specific manner, including all parts of the body except for the face and hands. However, the voices of Muslim women who are spiritually dedicated to Islam and wear hijab as an expression of their Islamic identity, are silenced by what Marnia Lazreg (1988) has referred to as a "search for the disreputable" (p. 89). In critiquing ethnocentrism and difference as a starting point for academic inquiry, she goes on to argue that the "essentializing of difference between women has resulted in the erasure of the ‘other’ women" (p. 98). Deconstructing these paradigms, she argues, involves seeing the lives of Muslim women and other Third World Women as "meaningful, coherent and understandable instead of being infused ‘by us’ with doom and sorrow" (p.98). Therefore, as part of the First World/Third World balance of power, Western feminist scholarship has often taken on a paternalistic role in its objectification of Muslim and other Third World women (Mohanty, 1991).
In Quebec, a phenomenon dubbed "hijabophobia," became news when in September 1994, a French-Canadian Muslim girl was asked to remove her hijab or leave her high school. The politics of religious difference, therefore, allowed for religious freedom to become a "relative concept in Quebec" (Misbahuddin, 1996:29). What became known as the "Hijab Debate" became politically located in the centre of broader issues regarding Quebec nationalism and francophone hegemony. Similar debates in France, viewed the hijab as a symbol of oppression and Islamic fundamentalism, and hence a threat to French cultural values and civil society. Interestingly, throughout this debate over the place of religious expression within schools, nothing was said to challenge Jewish skullcaps or Catholic crosses (Parker-Jenkins, 1991).

In an article in an Islamic publication, Misbahuddin (1996) charged the French media with silencing Muslim voices in this debate, and also cited the Muslim communities' inexperience as hampering an adequate response to a "cynical and professional media" (p. 29). The issue was eventually resolved by the Quebec Human Rights Commission, which ruled that on the basis of tolerance, the hijab must be permitted in the public school system. However, the matter remains far from closed as Misbahuddin reports that while the Executive of the Union representing French teachers (CEQ) voted in favour of the hijab, the majority of the union membership voted against it.

Therefore in Quebec, the social acceptance of religious difference while legally enforceable, is still fundamentally determined by prevailing views on whether race, language, and ethnic or religious identification can be reconciled within the construction of Quebec as a "Distinct Society." The hijab then, was perhaps simply a casualty of the battle of cultural
politics taking place within a shifting national framework, yet, it remains vilified as a symbol of what French society would prefer to exile into its memories of a vague colonial past.

3.1: SUBJECTIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF HIJAB

The following section is an attempt to deconstruct the meaning of hijab from the perspective of those who incorporate its use as a signifier of their faith and a manifestation of their Islamic identity. The subjective construction of the meaning of hijab, as it is experienced and related by these women, will be contrasted with the external perceptions of its meaning as imposed from the outside the Islamic frame of reference. These external perceptions are often based on colonial stereotypes reproduced through media images of Muslim women, and on popular misconceptions regarding the status and role of women in Islam.

The Muslim women interviewed associated many different adjectives with their conceptions of hijab. These contrast with the derogatory labels of "backwardness" and "oppression" often employed by those who view Islam through the Orientalist construction (see Said, 1978). For Zeinab 17, the hijab represented, "honesty," "responsibility," and "integrity." She felt that wearing the hijab sends the message that "you are a strong person." She explains how the hijab is at once a symbol of Islamic identity and at the same time an act of non-conformity which requires the strength of conviction:

It shows you’re strong because you had the guts to actually put it on. In this society it’s hard to cover your hair, it’s such a symbol of good looks. Your hair is really very important, without a person’s hair they wouldn’t look as good and beauty is such an important factor in this society. So we just look different from everyone else and it shows that we’re pretty strong, confident and
not only that we believe but we actually practice what we say.

As a high school student, Zeinab reported often "feeling like an outcast" at school where Muslim girls in hijab were a small minority. Recognizing how physical beauty is attached to women's notions of self worth in Western society, and reflects how they are treated by members of the opposite sex, some of the Muslim women framed their conception of hijab as a means of de-objectifying women. Karima explains:

To me it means that you're telling everybody that you're not there to be a piece of meat. To me, you're letting all the males know that they can't take you as a thing that they like, like the way you look and then just treat you like you don't have a mind. And so to me the way that I dress is very important because it makes men sort of take me for my intellect more than my physical.

Karima 22, who is in her 3rd year at university, felt her Islamic dress made men deal with her more as an intellectual equal rather than as a sexual object. She elaborates on this point further in the following quote:

[When I look at other women who don't dress the way that I do, I find that there's a totally different interaction where the women are kind of acting very feminine to get men's attention. And when they do get it and they talk it's not very intellectual, it's just like teasing each other and that to me degrades women because it furthers the idea in men's minds that you can't think for yourself or you're not an intellectual equal to them. So that's why dressing Islamically is very, very important to me... It's true that lots of men won't pay attention to me when I dress this way as they would if I didn't, but that's the idea, because the one's that do talk to you talk to you on an intellectual basis and that's what you want from them, you want them to respect you as a woman, but as an equal.

Social relations between men and women in the Western context, according to Karima, allow opportunities for women to be objectified and seen as intellectually inferior to men due to the over-emphasis on women's bodies as sexual objects. The hijab, then, helps regulate men's
attitudes and behaviours toward women and places them within the appropriate context according to Islam. For Muslim women who wear hijab, this provides them with the requisite respect and dignity which they feel must be accorded to them by all men.

Bilquees, a mother of 2 teenagers who were raised in Canada, saw the hijab as her "right" as she explains in the following quote:

It's my right, actually my hijab is my right and I am just exercising my right as a Muslim woman.

She went on to explain how in her experience, wearing hijab accorded her greater respect in certain situations and particularly in her travels:

They show more courtesy, they get up and give me the seat if I'm travelling in a bus or they open the door for me if I'm going in and out and in places. Like Saudi Arabia, the men respect women more-- contrary to the thinking that women are oppressed there, I have seen that they respect women more than they respect them here in this country because they are too conscious that women are to be respected and not to be used as sex objects. Women are properly dressed and they walk in and out. Men don't even stare at women over there they lower gaze like the Islamic practice is.

The respect which Bilquees and other Muslim women feel they are accorded by wearing hijab, would be interpreted quite differently through the eyes of non-Muslim women. For example, Bilquees related a situation where when she was in Saudi Arabia, an American man whom she had met on the airplane and had been chatting to her, saw her later in Riyadh and after one week in the country, did not say more than "hello" and was careful to lower his gaze. The fact that he had begun to adopt the social mores of Islamic society was a sign of respect to Bilquees, as she explains:

I just felt the influence that the society that had on the man. Usually the man will look into your eye in this culture and talk to
you, but this man living for one week in the country was totally changed he didn't even want talk to me, so I do think it gets a lot of respect for a Muslim woman.

Behaviours such as not having eye contact, lowering one’s gaze, and limiting social discourse with women, all have very different connotations within the Western context. More often than not, non-Muslim women from the West would see these behaviours as rude or disrespectful. This clearly illustrates the disjuncture between the appropriateness of certain forms social behaviour with these differing contexts and how this can lead to misapprehensions of intent.

Muslim women who wear hijab often perceive the dress of Western women as leading to the devaluation of women in society. When asked if she thought women who are not dressing Islamically receive respect in society Bilquees responded:

I don't know, this is a complicated question. Maybe- maybe not. Because exposing yourself is not something that will get you respect.

The disjuncture of values related to how women’s bodies should be regarded dichotomizes not only the social norms within Islam and Western culture, but also the vantage points of the women within these cultures. The Muslim women interviewed in this study do not regard their bodies as social property and cover as a sign of self respect and protection from the male gaze. What they view as an empowering choice, however, is delegitimated by popular Western culture, which appears to link women’s liberation with their right to appear publically in various stages of undress. Therefore, as Bullock (1995) argues, "That Muslim women could find their freedom inside Islam, and/or by wearing hijab, is a proposition considered neither worthy of attention, nor approval" (p.30).
The argument has been put to me that the notion of protecting oneself from the male gaze is a reactive rather than proactive stance and therefore, wearing hijab cannot not be considered as an empowered choice. However, using an Islamic frame of reference, I would defend the wearing of hijab as a proactive and empowered choice, by arguing that since the Islam provides women with prior knowledge that by wearing hijab, they could avoid certain negative consequences (i.e., compromising their self respect and dignity, inappropriate attention from males, the objectification of their bodies, etc.) this would qualify their acting upon that knowledge as a proactive, rather than reactive position. This is a debate which further characterizes the competing ideological and political frames of reference used to deconstruct and decode the meaning of the veil. Patriarchal domination has become the mantra of those who refuse to accept the veil as a positive choice for Muslim women. However, when this argument is put up against the voices of the women heard thus far, it begins to ring as somewhat cliche.

Through interactions among non-Muslims, such as those which take place in school settings, Muslims who assert their identities have found that their beliefs have impacted on the behaviour of others toward them, in often surprising ways. The hijab is often a physical reminder of social etiquette-for both Muslims and non-Muslims, and can convey a silent message as to the type of moral conduct expected by those in the company of a Muslim. Zeinab explains how the hijab is an expression of her value system as a Muslim, and how this has come to be respected by others. When asked what the hijab meant to her she explained:

It's a symbol, it shows that I'm a Muslim and I stand for certain values and there are some things I just won't do and they know
that I won't do that. Like if someone's swearing around me they'll look at me and say, "Oh, I'm sorry," so they'll apologize.

Zeinab reveals another way through which the hijab can often regulate the behaviour of others in a way that it becomes more respectful of their Islamic sensibilities. This also involves a corresponding set of behaviours and attitudes on the part of Muslim women which informs the true understanding of hijab, and ensures that people treat them according to that understanding. As Amal explains, the way a Muslim woman conducts herself is the true definition of hijab:

Hijab is not just a head covering. As I said, it's also your actions. People just think "just put a scarf over your head and you automatically become 'muhajaba'". I've seen a lot of Muslim girls who can wear the hijab, but act in totally different ways that non-Muslims would act, which sort of defeats the purpose of wearing hijab and trying to act in a way that a Muslim "muhajaba" should act. So hijab to me, is yes the covering of yourself but also within yourself as well, so you're presenting yourself in a certain way and covering certain things that you shouldn't be expressing in public. Maybe you can express it at home but not in public, you know the way you act, you can't act provocative or anything like that so, it's not just a matter of material, it's a matter of values and morals.

In the preceding quote, Amal also brings out the separation between the public and private spheres which differentiate modes of behaviour and dress according to the Islamic tradition. Personal expression, whether in dress or behaviour changes according to the social context in Islam. In public, Islamic dress and behaviours which protect modesty are to be observed by both Muslim men and women. Within the home, more specifically among certain family members or friends of the same sex, dress codes are more relaxed as is the type of interaction between

14 "Muhajaba" is a word in Arabic which is used to refer to a Muslim women who wears the hijab.
which takes place. Other forms of behaviour also require an appropriate context within Islam, for example, even "provocative" behaviour which Amal referred to as unacceptable in public, becomes acceptable if it takes place in private and within the context of a married relationship.

To understand hijab as it is understood by the women who wear it means dealing with a different cultural construction of concepts such as "nakedness". Saleha, a mother of four of Pakistani descent, felt that wearing hijab extended her "feeling of nakedness." The amount of her body which she could comfortably expose became limited through her practice of wearing hijab and created a new definition of nakedness as she explains:

> It’s more of a part of me [now] that I must cover everything except for my face and my hands, and if more of that is uncovered in front of men or even other women sometimes, I feel naked and vulnerable. Once I have my hijab on I feel much more comfortable with myself and comfortable with what I am and basically, my identity.

The hijab was also seen as a physical reminder of maintaining Islamically-correct modes of conduct as Saleha goes on to explain:

> [I]t reminds yourself that you conduct yourself with the propriety that you need to conduct yourself with. Like you don’t let yourself get carried away. I mean you could be wearing hijab and be acting in a flirtatious manner or in an inappropriate manner among other people. But the hijab is kind of like a physical reminder of curbing your behaviour within the proper restrictions.

While much of the discussion of hijab has dealt with this idea of "proper restrictions" as they are articulated within Islam, the definition of hijab for many Muslim women still amounts to one of "liberation." Amina, a mother of 2 who converted to Islam and later married an Arab, saw hijab as a "liberation from Western tyranny." She also felt hijab had a liberating
effect for women who were otherwise constrained by body-perfect images from the media:

I was always a heavy child and I grew up in a society where thinness was it, and because I was bigger than average I was different, I went through hell at school, and to feel the pressure from the media, from society, to be sexy an all this kind of stuff it was all so liberating to be able to cover up it doesn't matter what you look like and go out there and not be just a body. That's such a relief, to feel that pressure isn't there.

The narratives thus far, have attempted to deconstruct the meaning of hijab as part of the subjective realities of Muslim women who adopt it as part of their religion and identity. They have regarded the hijab as their "right" as Muslim women; as a tool to protect the honour and privacy of their bodies; as a means to regulate their behaviour in accordance with Islam, and as a means to regulate the behaviour of others and maintain the necessary propriety in social interaction and discourse as required in Islam. These definitions of the meaning and social function of the hijab contrast with how it is perceived by non-Muslims who often see it as a threat to women's autonomy and to the Western feminist project.

3.2 : EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS OF HIJAB

The following section will examine the external perceptions imposed upon women who wear hijab and how they are treated based on those perceptions. Most of the women interviewed located negative perceptions of hijab within the context of their schooling experiences. In my own experience of wearing hijab in university, I can recall incidents where I felt that I was being evaluated by professors misconceptions of what a veiled woman was like. I remember an anthropology professor being surprised when I challenged a point in his lecture on the concept of jihad in Islam, as he remarked, "I'm surprised you spoke up
in such a forceful way, I thought you’d be very shy and demure.” His remark betrayed a preconceived notion of veiled women as being socially unassuming, or reticent when it came to their opinions on intellectual matters. I can only hope that our encounter has since ruptured that stereotype for him.

For other Muslim women, encountering negative assumptions about the hijab came much earlier in their schooling experiences. Amal began wearing hijab at an early age and clearly recalled the apprehension she felt in deciding to wear it to school, and the discrimination she ultimately suffered as a result of it. She describes the isolation she felt as the only one in school to be wearing hijab, and the lack of understanding on behalf of the teachers:

I found that a lot of teachers didn’t understand. When I first started wearing my hijab I was in grade 3 and I was terrified. I was really, really scared to go to school because it was in the middle of the year that I decided to wear my hijab. So I went to school that day and I was so scared because I was the only person who was wearing hijab at that time... So I went to school and I put my hood of my coat over my scarf, the teacher told me "you have to take your coat off" and I said "no", and then when I finally did when he told me that I had to he asked me "Oh do you have lice?" and I thought well you just made my experience a lot easier!

Amal recalled being taunted throughout her elementary years and being called things such as "diaper head" or "you’re wearing curtains." Even though she stressed that it was her decision and not her parent’s that she start wearing hijab at such an early age, it was not until grade 7 until she felt comfortable with her identity while at school. She recalled feeling more comfortable wearing hijab in high school, however her sense of security was rocked by an incident where she was publically humiliated by a male student who pulled off her hijab. She explains the incident in the following scenario:
I thought that people were actually becoming more accepting but then my last year, in high school about 3 weeks before I graduated, and a guy came up to me and pulled my scarf off my head and I thought "this hasn't happened to me!" And I just couldn't believe the ignorance-- he was laughing! You know, "ha ha ha, I pulled off her scarf!" in front of all his friends.

For Amal, this represented a violation of her person and rendered her naked in a way which she knew that the male who did it- would not understand. Understanding the meaning and importance of hijab to a Muslim women's sense of dignity may or may not have changed what happened to Amal, however she felt that, "if they were more open-minded, then maybe they could understand where I'm coming from, why I do wear the scarf."

Other women interviewed also recalled the stereotypes relating to Muslim women and how this affected them. Iman, who had moved from Somalia to the United Arab Emirates before coming to Canada, recalled how she felt the teachers in the private English school she attended viewed Muslim women in hijab: "It was like: 'these women are abused! Why is she putting this on?!'" There attitudes later influenced Iman's perception of hijab:

One thing that I remember, like I said I always loved Islam, but the hijab thing, I was like "hijab?!", I was kind of sceptical about hijab. I thought of it as an oppressive thing.

The negative connotations associated with hijab therefore, coloured and ultimately delayed Iman's decision to wear it. Social pressures often inform Muslim women's decisions on whether or not to wear hijab in a society where there is such a negative understanding of its meaning. Karima related how her schooling experiences had a direct impact on her decision to remove the hijab once she started wearing it, and how this ultimately lead to her disengagement from school. She felt that peer pressure was responsible in part for her decision to stop wearing hijab. She remembers being taunted and called names in junior high
school. When asked what sort of names she replied:

Like you know "terrorist" or comments like "they're taking over," or like "whats that cloth on your head" things like that. And this would be like while I'd be walking home and so they'd be far away yelling these things at me. So when you're 12 that can be really hard to deal with, especially since the year before I was totally accepted. I was really rebellious so people liked me! So the thing is, I did worse things just to get attention and then all of a sudden I turn around and I didn't do anything wrong compared to everybody else, and then I was wearing this thing on my head and people were freaking out.

Karima’s experience reveals how certain forms of non-conformity such as the rebellious behaviour she once exhibited, gained approval from her peers, but when her lack of conformity became counter-cultural in a different sense, making her seem more "ethnic," she became ostracized. This makes the point that within schools, there appears to be an unwritten code of oppositional behaviours among students. Which modes are considered acceptable is a socially sanctioned process circumscribed within the boundaries of the dominant society.

Wearing hijab, while an act of non-conformity and resistance to "Western tyranny" as Amina commented earlier, does not exact support from fellow students in the way anti-school behaviours might.

Karima reported feeling alienated by the negative perceptions teachers held of Muslim women. She felt patronized by the paternalistic attitudes of teachers who evaluated her according to their misconceptions that women’s education was not valued in Islam. She recalled a specific conversation with one of her teachers:

[Like one French teacher comes up to me and he goes "Karima, I know that where you come from women don't get educated, but you should go to high school." And I was in grade 7 and I had every intention of going to university at that time, and that's what he was saying to me!}
Differential treatment on the part of teachers toward her was instrumental in Karima’s decision to leave school:

I really felt the teachers thought I was a little weird, because I didn’t want to wear shorts and stuff in gym, they were acting kind of different to me. And so because of that I kind of stopped going to school, I’d just go three days a week or something, because I really hated school. And I was really going through a lot of emotional turmoil.

A lack of acceptance and understanding of the Islamic lifestyle among students and teachers at school lead to Karima’s eventual disengagement from school, and shortly afterward lead to her abandoning the hijab. Karima explained how social pressures lead to her rejecting the hijab after which she stated, "everybody was my friend again." She recalled how later when she returned to school, the teachers were "acting nicer" and would make comments like "oh, you look really nice." She felt that this was a way for them to validate her decision to remove the hijab in favour of a more Western look, and remarked that there was a "world of difference" when she stopped wearing it at school. Karima felt that the teachers could not come to terms with why someone so young, who had grown up in Canada and "knew english properly" would even consider wearing hijab.

Negative stereotypes associated with the hijab informed both the school and work experiences of Muslim women. Faryal, a mother of two, came to Canada 25 years ago from Pakistan. She has a daughter in a public junior high school and a son in a full time private Islamic school. Faryal began wearing hijab a few years ago, but wore it for only one year. She recounted the discrimination she experienced when looking for work while wearing hijab:

I was looking for an administrative assistant job, and walking into an office and they know that you’re going to be the secretary and your wearing hijab and they don’t want that. And they won’t come
out and say it, because they can’t say it, but the ultimate is that well "I’m sorry you know, we’re hiring someone else." "you don’t have the abilities," or some other excuse.

Faryal remembered how their enthusiasm in speaking to her over the phone disappeared when they saw her walk into the office:

I really felt the looks. The way they looked at me- because when I spoke to them on the phone they were friendly, very nice-- "Oh yes, come on in"--because I don’t speak with an accent ...[Then] I think they saw the hijab first before they saw anything else-- before they looked at my resume, before they spoke to me.

Faryal felt that she was evaluated on the basis of negative understanding of the hijab. She expressed the difficulty many women have in disassociating themselves from the stereotypes which label and define them. When asked how she felt Muslim women in hijab were perceived, she replied:

Well this I’ve even heard being said,"they’re not well educated", "they’re beneath other women--they can’t stand up for themselves," "they allow their husbands to rule them."These kinds of perceptions, I felt them a lot, you know,"they’re different."

Negative constructions of difference informed by the persistence of colonial imagery of veiled women, therefore, have significant implications for Muslim women in both schools and the workplace. For Faryal, she felt she did not have the strength to deal with the social pressures, and from a pragmatic point of view, realized that the hijab was hindering her chances of finding employment, so she eventually removed it. While she still wears hijab if she is attending the mosque or at Islamic functions, she no longer wears it as a daily part of her life. A sudden break with Islamic custom left Faryal feeling isolated and rejected by some of the Muslim community. She related how she has come to "rebel" against people’s reaction toward her when she stopped wearing hijab:
[T]hey've seen me out in the store or something and they've said "Oh you're not wearing hijab!" and I think I've kind of rebelled against that. My biggest rebellion pretty much came last year at the Islamic school. I walked in after work and I went to the office and Sr. Farida, the secretary her first impulse was "I don't want to talk to you" and she just turned her face. I took that very rudely because I feel I'm not a bad person, I mean I know a lot of people who wear hijab and I know what they do. And it just really bothers me because when you wear hijab, you're representing Islam and if you're going out there and doing something wrong it looks bad on all Muslims...

Faryal felt a certain hypocrisy in the way she was treated within the Muslim community when she stopped wearing hijab. To her, wearing hijab meant representing Islam, and her "rebellion" was against the fact the hijab accorded those wearing it, a certain legitimacy in the community despite their actions. In her experience, however, she was judged negatively for simply not wearing it.

For converts to Islam from a mainstream culture, adopting overt markers of Islamic identity such as Islamic dress, is a process of becoming "Otherized." This new form of identification often leads to discrimination from members of one’s ethnic group. Amina, who converted to Islam while still living in Britain, encountered discrimination which she, as the member of a dominant culture, had never experienced until that time. She explains the way she was treated when began overtly expressing her Islamic identity:

I was wearing shalwar kameez¹⁵ one day and these kids called me a White Paki. I've been called a f....wog, a race traitor. [L]ater I was wearing hijab and somebody yelled this at me in the street. They saw that I was English and I was wearing hijab and they figured out what I was, so I was called a so and so race traitor and a few other things as well. I recognized this terminology that it is

¹⁵ 'Shalwar kameez' is a style of dress which originates from the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent. It is a long dress worn with baggy style pants underneath.
from the National Front which is has now become a British national party.

For Amina, "becoming the Other" meant that along with racialized epithets, she would also have to contend with people perceiving her as a foreigner, or someone who could not speak english. In the following quote she explains how people have reacted toward her since she's been in Canada:

People look at you, they look at you twice and they'll take this double take and stare at you very obviously, they'll speak to you very slowly, patronizingly, like you don't speak the lingo. It's been quiet entertaining since I've been to Canada because people see the dress and they hear the voice and they can't put the two together.

Although she is a White Anglo, becoming Islamicized in her dress has placed Amina in a new and subordinate social category. Conflicting interpretations of her identity meant Amina was not only regarded as a non-english speaking foreigner, but she was also regarded an anomaly. Being White and Anglo she felt she was not automatically accepted as an "authentic Muslim" by other Anglos, since Islamic identity was usually linked with Arab and other non-White cultures.

Stuart Hall (1996) puts the vicissitudes of identity construction in a clear perspective:

[Identity, although it has to be spoken by the subject-- collective or individual-- who is being positioned, it is not a question of what the inside wants to locate only. And it's not a question of how the outside, or the external dominating system, places you symbolically: but it is precisely in the process-never complete, never whole-- of identification (p. 130).

Understanding the process of identification for Muslims, particularly Muslim women, involves examining the internal symbols and meanings of identity which have relevance to those living them. Yet this also necessitates examining the external frames of reference through which
Muslims are perceived and evaluated as the Other. In other words, this involves seeing how the subject is both internally and externally positioned within specific systems of meaning.

Social group relationships, which are entrenched within cultural and systemic relationships of power and domination, allow the dominant culture to identify itself as the normative referent in what becomes an oppositional dynamic. From this perspective, the designation of "Other" is often a pejorative distinction. To liberate Muslim women from discourses which objectify their reality in such a way means centering their realities and knowledge as the legitimate starting point for academic inquiry.

The preceding chapter has attempted to decode the subjective and external process of identity construction among Muslim women by interrogating the meaning of the veil from both conflicting perspectives. The external construction of Muslim women has occurred through various modes and informs how Muslim women appear within different frames of knowledge (i.e., Western media, popular culture, and feminist discourses). That this differs widely from their self conceptions has rarely been interrogated. As Hooma Hoodfar (1993) writes:

The static colonial image of the oppressed veiled Muslim woman thus often contrasts sharply with women's lived experience of veiling. To deny this is also to deny Muslim women their agency (p. 5).

She goes on to write: "Veiling is a lived experience full of contradictions and multiple meanings" (p. 5); this has been evidenced by the narratives presented in this chapter. Being able to control the meanings of one's identity; to have these meanings become the dominant perspective guiding how you will be perceived by others, is an important aspect of having agency. Allowing veiled women to provide the dominant narrative, then, represents a break from
academic tradition on the subject, and in doing so, reinvests in their agency.
CHAPTER 4

STAYING ON THE "STRAIGHT PATH": CHALLENGES CONFRONTING MUSLIMS IN CANADIAN SOCIETY

The opening verse of the Holy Qur'an, known as "Sura Fatiha" is recited by Muslims at each of their prayers five times daily. Within this sura, or prayer is the term "Siratal Mustaqueem"--the straight path. This refers to "a path of righteous guidance" which Adam, one of the Muslim students interviewed, described as a way of "defying negativity." The importance of staying on the "straight path" becomes particularly germane to Muslims who live in non-Muslim societies. Things such as gender interaction or mixing, dating and alcohol use, which are common factors in societies based on Western value systems, are strictly forbidden in Islam. As such, the disjuncture between the values and lifestyles of Muslims and non-Muslims can create difficulties in a society based on secular norms.

While in many societies, rules and regulations of social conduct and behaviour are socially negotiated products of specific ongoing, cultural and historical processes, in societies based on Islamic Sharia, these rules and regulations are based on divine ordinance, and are understood to transcend time and space. The application of these rules however, is not completely static since the diverse social and cultural contexts in which Muslims find themselves, often require the need to negotiate and accommodate changes within the parameters of Islam. One example might be in terms of style of dress. While there are certain specifications for Islamic dress with regard to either men or women, these can be met within a variety of cultural styles, providing the same guidelines are maintained. Social rules, however, are more difficult to negotiate within a non-Muslim society without compromising

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the fundamental guidelines of issues such as gender-based interaction. Cultural and religious continuity are important factors for Muslims living in diaspora; yet, attempting to create the necessary conditions for this to occur, particularly within institutional settings, is an ongoing struggle.

The following chapter examines the challenges which Muslims face in living in a non-Muslim society. Many of the concerns of the Muslim youth and parents interviewed centred around what they perceived to be negative social influences, such as peer pressure, dating, drugs and alcohol, as well as situations of racism and discrimination. Schools were a primary focal point for these concerns; a challenge to not only the continuity of Islamic values practices, but also to the development and maintenance of an Islamic identity.

Karima spoke of the struggle between conformity and resistance as a part of the process of finally actualizing one's identity:

There’s lots of challenges because I think it’s natural to want to be accepted when you’re growing up when you’re young and you don’t really have an identity. Because first of all your Indian and then you’re living in a White society and you’re also trying to be accepted, but at the same time you want to be practising Islam. It’s a big struggle until you get a very strong identity as a Muslim and it takes a lot of years to build up. Trying to fit in is a hard thing to get over, but once you get over it you’re very strong.

The need to gain acceptance, as Karima points out, is particularly important among minority youth. Muslim youth must struggle to negotiate an identity within three conflicting cultural frameworks: the dominant culture, their ethnic culture, and Islam. Islamic identity was not construed by Karima as being an organic element of identity, but rather as something which must be cultivated over a period of years. For Karima, resistance to cultural conformity was a process which grew out of ambivalence. Becoming grounded in her identity as a Muslim
allowed to her resist the social pressures to conform.

While most Muslim parents feel that public schools are corruptive forces which threaten Islamic beliefs and practices, Saleha preferred her children to attend public schools despite the fact that a full time Islamic school was located very close to her home. She argued that while the public school environment was in many ways inconsistent with the Islamic practices which she wanted her children to maintain, having them confront these challenges would allow them to test their faith and strengthen their identities as Muslims. She felt that she had a very strong role in helping them to resist un-Islamic social pressures by having an open dialogue with them on any issue which concerned them. She explained how watching "tabloid TV" was a way that she used to help her children examine the more unsavoury elements and problems in society using an Islamic perspective. Using the media as part of the "pedagogy of the home" allowed Saleha to provide her children with a critical Islamic framework for understanding social issues. Therefore, Saleha employed what can be seen as a critical pedagogical approach to deconstructing societal problems from an Islamic perspective as a means to provide her children with a frame of reference which they could use in their social life and schooling experiences.

While Saleha found a constructive use for television as a pedagogical tool, other parents like Faryal, felt television had the power to "brainwash" kids into un-Islamic modes of thinking and behaving:

T.V has a big influence. I think the media plays havoc with not just Muslim kids, with all kids. Muslim kids mostly, because you can't find a T.V show anymore where there isn't hugging or this kind of stuff. Also, they put a lot of emphasis on dating, which is something we don't do. There's so much emphasis on it that these kids are almost brainwashed into believing they're supposed to do
Television has been defined as a medium for cultural imperialism, particularly where popular Western culture is exported abroad in Third World societies (Tomlinson, 1991). However, even within the multicultural context of North America, television provides a powerful vehicle for the mass consumption of dominant norms and values. In this sense, Karima felt that television helps perpetuate the "White ideal" of beauty:

I think T.V is not a good thing in general, because there's lots of sexual images in commercials and stuff. And also when there's little boys watching, the idea of White being beautiful, like the White woman being the most beautiful woman, I wouldn't want my sons to have that influence, because it's a very early influence and I think their entire life they'll dream about being with a White woman.

Television then, contributes toward the imperialism of popular Western ideals, such as the normativity of "Whiteness." The subliminal nature of many of these messages, makes them more insidious to the consciousness of the viewer. They are, therefore, more likely to be uncritically absorbed as hegemonic assumptions.

Other concerns regarding the influence of Western culture were expressed by parents who found the celebration and activities related to Halloween, Christmas, Easter, and Valentines Day occupied too much time within elementary school curriculum. Many Muslim parents do not wish their children to participate in celebrations which have their origins outside of Islam. Halloween, for example, is regarded as Islamically unacceptable due to the pagan roots of the tradition and the door to door "begging" which is a custom forbidden in Islam (Hakim, 1996). Amina expressed feeling frustrated by always having to "compromise" her sense of what was Islamically-correct when it came to her children's schooling.
experiences. She explained how the secular, Euro-centric nature of public schools meant she was constantly negotiating parameters for her children’s involvement in school activities. In the following quote, she explains how the multiplicity of social forces affecting her children meant she constantly had to redefine the boundaries of choice:

It's hard. You are up against the schools, the TV, the media. We’re swimming against the tide, I feel like that constantly. You're constantly on your toes and thinking where am I going to draw the line with this one and where am I going to draw the line here, and you have to have reasons for it.

Many Muslim parents, including myself, realize this struggle. Negotiating acceptable parameters for children involves active research into Islamic perspectives on such issues as music, art, diet etc., which often necessitates tracking down doctrinal sources for particular religious restrictions and evaluating the schools of thought on a given topic. It also involves a process of consulting with other, like-minded Muslim parents to learn how they have handled particular contentious issues. The matter is further complicated as Faryal pointed out, by Muslims who are not following Islam the same way:

They see other Muslim kids in their schools that don’t have to practice the way that they do, so then it’s like "well mom they’re Muslims too. How come they don’t have to pray?"

Therefore, Muslim parents who seek to raise their children in a specific manner according to Islam, face multiple challenges, both inside and outside of their communities. Muslims who have become "de-Islamized", and do not follow the religious prescriptions which are seen to accompany the identity of "Muslim," often adopt the cultural norms of the dominant society. For Muslim youth who may view their lack of conformity with Islam as freedom from what can be regarded as a more restrictive lifestyle, it presents a confusing and yet
4.1 PEER PRESSURE

The following section deals with the issue of peer pressure, and examines the influence of various social networks on Muslim youth. Looking at the network of peer relationships experienced by the Muslim youth whom I interviewed, it became clear that peer pressure could be either a positive or a negative force. Positive peer pressure was derived from the social networks which these youth were able to develop within the Muslim community. Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) in high schools, were a form of positive peer pressure and were organized to provide peer support and guidance to Muslim students in both religious and academic matters. These form the core for the development of an Islamic sub-culture within schools as the basis for articulating identity and social action in a mode of formalized resistance geared toward negotiating the requirements of Islamic practice within the context of schooling. (This will be developed further in chapter 5)

Negative peer pressure, on the other hand, came from both Muslim students who followed the cultural norms of the mainstream as well as from non-Muslim friends. My informants were able to resist the negative pressures which they described as: drugs, alcohol, dating and premarital relations, and attending pubs and parties. However, many Muslim youth do succumb to these pressures which creates intense difficulties within their families, many of whom came from countries where such actions are subject to severe punitive measures.

There is, therefore, a very strong tendency for Muslim parents to extend greater
surveillance over their children, particularly girls, and to limit the forms of extra curricular activities and social events they may attend. Pressures to conform are nevertheless ever-present within school cultures. Amal explains some which she had encountered:

I had a lot of problems with students who were always telling me "Oh you know, you could take that scarf off when you come to school, your parents won’t know"—you’ve got to be like us, you’ve got to dress like us, you’ve got to go out with us, we’re going out to a pub tonight, do you want to come?"...

Amal admitted she had at times contemplated going along, although she never actually did she attributes her ability to resist these pressures to her parents. She remarked: "...if it wasn’t for the Islamic base I have ingrained in me, I think I would have fallen into the trap." The "trap," Amal referred to, is one which can lead to the development of the "split personality syndrome," through the gradual erosion of Islamic practices as a means to "fit in" at school. Amal explained that resisting negative social pressures for her meant "I had to start asserting my identity," this meant saying no to activities which were compromising, rather than lying or making excuses to save face among non-Muslim friends.

Amal’s mother, Bushra, had been present during the interview and explained how every morning after fajr (dawn) prayer, she would spend two hours teaching her children Islamic studies before school. She felt that this was necessary to implant Islamic knowledge and ideals into their consciousness, before they became subject to the contrary and conflicting forces which were predominate at school.

Tariq 23, spent the past 21 years in Canada after immigrating from Pakistan in early childhood. Currently an undergraduate student, Tariq reflected on his high school experiences and the peer pressure he experienced. He recalled envying those who attended high schools
where they had predominantly Muslim friends. His friends, he explained, were mainly Sikh, Hindu, and White so he remembered experiencing a lot of peer pressure to go places and do things which violated his beliefs as a Muslim:

There were times-- certain places that they would want to go, and like I've gone with them, but...they would start doing things and try to pressure you into it and if you kind of resisted it wasn’t the same for you as it was for the other guys. There were some guys that would understand and wouldn’t try to pressure you, but then on the other hand there were some that did. [T]he harder part was alcohol and drugs, things like that. The places, well you could just say no and avoid it, but if you’re somewhere and you think it’s O.K., and then they bring their own things [drugs and alcohol], it’s harder.

All forms of drugs and alcohol are strictly forbidden in Islam and Muslims are not allowed to even be in an environment where they are being used (see Al-Qaradawi, 1960:74). Transgressing these boundaries for Muslim youth, then, represents a violation of the Islamic sense of morality and can have greater repercussions for them in the Muslim community than it might for their non-Muslim friends. Therefore, where the social connotations are different, the social costs of conformity are also much higher for Muslim youth than their non-Muslim counterparts.

Other pressures Tariq felt were very present within his social milieux, were male/female interaction and dating. It was the normalcy of these forms of intermingling and social interaction which, according to Tariq, made it particularly difficult for Muslim students. The organizational structure of the classroom encourages interaction among all students, particularly where there is an emphasis of on cooperative learning strategies. This places Muslim students in an inhibitive social setting since after the age of puberty, separation of the sexes is required in Islam. For Muslim students in public schools, this kind of interaction
is difficult to avoid. However many try to situate themselves in same-sex groupings wherever and whenever possible.

In her own estimation, Iman had not properly begun practising Islam while in high school. She explained that while she was very religious in terms of her fundamental beliefs, she had not yet committed fully to practising. Therefore, while she avoided dating, drugs, and alcohol, she was very involved in school sports, basketball, and swimming, as well as school productions where she sang. These activities made her less stringent with her manner of dress and casual interaction with males. Nevertheless, she realized that her value system was often out of sync with her non-Muslim friends. She recalled a particular conversation about sex, where she felt compelled to try to "play along":

In one of my classes, these 2 girls they were discussing sex and they said like "Iman, you wouldn't know what that is" and I would say "thats what you think" and I didn’t know what it was! But I’d still act like I knew what was going on just to fit in. It’s just so shameful to be a virgin!

As a Somali Muslim, Iman had two groups of friends: "the Black crowd and the Muslim crowd." Creating social ties on the basis of both of her identities was often difficult. She often found it difficult to gain acceptance from her Black friends who did not understand Islam:

It was really really hard because, because of my religion somehow they [the other Black students] wouldn’t know how to react to me. For example I didn’t date, I wouldn’t take drugs. Even going out, I remember they would talk about going to all these parties and I would feel so out of place. And you kind of feel vengeful to your parents, like "why can’t I go out?." You want to do what everybody else is doing.

The multiple social identities which we inhabit, therefore, often have conflicting parameters.
Using Barth’s (1969) paradigm, the requirements of "role performance" in the Islamic social sphere (no dating, drinking etc.) conflicted with the patterns of social interaction and behaviour among Iman’s Black friends. Trying to fit in both contexts therefore, would have resulted in a “split personality.” It is in these situations where identities conflict that the primacy of a particular identity is asserted at the expense of other forms of social identification. For continental Africans, such as Iman, the primacy of her identity as a Muslim preceded her ascription to the category of "Black" which only became salient when she immigrated to Canada.

Race, however, is often a stronger determinant of how one is treated in society, since while race remains constant factor of identification, religious identity must be asserted in order to appear overt. Sajjad’s family moved to Canada from Guyana when he was 7 years old. He comes from a mixed racial background, his father being Black and his mother of East Indian descent. Sajjad talked about race and the challenges of growing up as a minority youth in Canada:

[W]here we grew up in ----- , it’s a microcosm of the rest of Canada, and as I said, people don’t look at you in terms of your religion, it’s your colour that’s the first thing. So growing up, my main obstacle was that we were in an all White school. My brother and I were the only 2 coloured boys, and that was our challenge, trying to fit in.

Sajjad recalled the double alienation he underwent trying to fit in being both a racial and religious minority. He became separated from the mainstream on the basis of both skin colour and a culturally divergent lifestyle. Later, in junior high school, the pressures to drink and do drugs further distanced Sajjad from a number of his peers. He formed a "clique" of
friends from the West Indies\textsuperscript{16} while in junior high. Although they were not Muslim, Sajjad felt more of a connection with them because of the similarity of their language and culture:

My junior high was a bit better because we met some kids from the West Indies and I guess we formed our own little clique. So there were a couple of guys we used to kick around. Because it was just that we were a bit different, because the other kids were into drinking and doing all this nonsense and we just were not doing that. We didn’t want to fit in and they didn’t like us anyway.

Sajjad felt more positive about his high school experience since the school he attended had a large population of minorities and Muslim students. He remarked: "It opened my mind to a lot. I mean, for the first time you were the majority in the school because there were a majority of coloured people there."

For Sajjad, peer pressure in high school shifted from drugs and alcohol, to an emphasis on dating and social interaction with female students. By shifting the locus for his primary social relationships from the high school, to the Mosque, Sajjad was able to create a positive social structure and network of friends which enabled him to resist these social pressures.

An important network for Sajjad came through Islamic "halaqas" or study circles at the Mosque. These provide systems of affectual support as well as being a traditional means for the study of Islamic knowledge within the Muslim community. The study circles are conducted separately for men and women, and some are geared specifically for the youth.

According to Sajjad, some of the older, more knowledgeable, brothers who lead the study circles also serve as positive role models for young Muslims, particularly those who have

\textsuperscript{16} The term "West Indies" is used by Sajjad to refer to the Caribbean. While I recognize that this is a contentious designation since it erases the Black and indigenous populations of the area, I have not changed it in order to remain true to the voice of the informant.
been raised in the North American context and can empathize with the dilemmas of Muslim youth.

**POSITIVE PEER PRESSURE:**

Creating systems of positive peer support was viewed through the narratives as essential to the maintenance of an Islamic identity and lifestyle. Positive peer influence and support from fellow Muslims was seen as a means to reinforce Islamic values and codes of behaviour, as well as to develop comraderie among other Muslims who confronted similar challenges. In schools, Muslim Student Associations (MSA) are a primary agency providing social and religious support to Muslim students and provide the basis for the development of an Islamic sub-culture within schools.

These student organizations represent the corporate structures through which students can resist social pressures and organize a mode of formalized resistance to counteract their positions of marginality. Negotiating identity politics and educational policies are necessary corollaries to the function of MSAs as a social network providing a context for Muslim students to find social and religious support and a system of affinity. Some of the social events sponsored by MSAs include study circles as well as social events such as "Iftar" or the breaking of fasting after sunset in the month of Ramadan.

Many of the students interviewed however, complained of how the MSAs were "dwindling." The strength and efficacy of these organizations would decline when certain motivated members would graduate and leave the school. Practising Muslims were acknowledged to be among the minority of the Muslims in most high schools. Those with a more marginal interest in Islam therefore, would not be inclined to revitalize these groups
when their leadership would graduate. Amal recalled how the instability of the MSA in her school caused certain students to band together and take on a more active role in their organization:

In grade 11 we made a big stand. We said we really need an association where the students can come and come back to their own kind and discuss things. So we really needed that support system.

Coming back to "their own kind," meant cultivating relationships on the basis of affinity and mutual interest. Amal went on to explain the role and function of the MSA in her school. She saw it as a medium to address the specific needs of Muslim students:

Any sort of concern that individuals had, like if they were having problems they could come to this group, they could discuss it and we could all think of a solution. Like with prayers, we all had that problem. Some people lived close by so we could go to their house and pray, but...I mean if you didn’t have the right lunch than you could miss the prayer. So we all got together ... and just said "we need a prayer hall, somewhere where we could pray." So the real function was sort of a support group. You knew that there were other Muslim’s in the school that you could depend on. So if you had a problem with teachers, or other students, there was somebody there that could help.

The MSAs then, also formed the basis of organized political action for Muslim students within schools, and served as a means for them to advocate collectively for certain accommodations for their lifestyle, such as places to pray during school hours. Also, as Amal noted, they were an arena for the concerns of Muslim students to be voiced and acted upon.

Iman also commented on the MSA in her school, and felt they suffered by attempting to follow the way mainstream institutions conduct their affairs at the expense of Islamic
principles. She also felt that effective leadership based on Islamic standards was vital to maintaining the integrity of an MSA:

First of all they should choose good leaders. A lot of time people just choose leaders just because they’re popular or it could even be because they look good, or because he’s studying this or that or "he’s from my country." But I think when they choose a leader they should choose a leader for "taqwa" 17. I think we try to follow they way they do things here, in the name of organization, and we then leave a lot of Islamic principles out of the way... leaders have to be good examples.

During the course of doing field research, I had attended a seminar on "High School Influences on Muslim Youth" where Iman had been one of the keynote speakers. She and the other speakers spoke of their experiences as Muslim high school students. Iman’s talk on peer pressure was particularly powerful since her wearing of the nikab contrasted sharply with the bold and forthright delivery of her speech. The other Muslim women I sat with commented that the image of her in nikab, and her strong and well articulated message, was sure to break down many of the popular stereotypes of "backward" or "silenced" veiled women. During our subsequent interview, I asked Iman what sort of message she had hoped to send to the Muslim youth that had been listening to her speak, to which she answered:

Basically I was focusing on educating them about peer pressure, and talking about ways they could go against peer pressure. I advised them to stay close together and remind each other all the time, because your company has a lot to do with who you are. If you make company with people that you want to be like, you will be like them, you’ll learn a lot from them. And also I wanted to encourage them to make their own programs and not always expect other people to do it for them.

17 "Taqwa" is an Arabic word which refers to having consciousness of God.
Resistance and autonomy, were then key elements in Iman’s talk on peer pressure. That is, resisting peer pressure by creating programs and events which reflect the interests and needs of Muslim students, but at the same time, developing their own initiatives, and maintaining a necessary autonomy in the process of organizing group activities. Iman’s point was one of self-sufficiency. Yet it is also important to note that maintaining a certain level of autonomy in an institutional setting when a corporate body, such as an organized minority student group, is gearing to affect any sort of structural change, is necessary to avoid systemic cooptation.

Maintaining cohesive social structures for Muslim youth within schools, and using these as a basis for promoting activities for Muslim youth that are consistent with Islamic requirements, were part of the overall prescriptions for maintaining Islamic identity highlighted at this particular seminar. Creating alternatives to un-Islamic functions like school dances, or having segregated sporting activities for Muslim brothers and sisters, were ways which the speakers identified as being necessary to ensure the healthy development of Muslim youth. These also form part of the social infrastructure necessary in building a subculture in schools based on Islamic principles and rules of interaction.

Many Muslim students are alienated by the social and institutional practices within public schools which conflict with Islamic modes of behaviour. Having "halal" or permissible alternatives available provides a necessary outlet for these youth to engage in activities from which they would otherwise be excluded. The marginality of Muslim students, therefore, becomes minimized through organizations and activities which allow them to maintain their identities without the social and emotional costs of compromise. The
strategy of formalized resistance occurs through the development of a corporate body
designed to subvert negative social pressures and redirect social action toward emancipatory
goals. The functioning of the MSA in this capacity is developed further in chapter 5.

Other issues at the seminar indicated the need to reconceptualize social attitudes
toward dating norms and marriage from an Islamic point of view. Early marriage, for
example, was identified by many youth at the seminar as a means to blend the natural desires
of Muslim youth to have companionship with the opposite sex with a "halal" or Islamically
permissible form of relationship. Iman, in particular, encouraged parents to allow their
children to marry in their teens, rather than fall into the sin of pre-marital relations, pregnancy
out of wedlock, or the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted disease. She saw early
marriage as a means to protect the morality of Muslim youth, by containing sexual behaviour
within the permissible boundaries of marriage. She encouraged parents to help support their
children financially if they marry while still in high school, and suggested that it was not
even necessary for them to live together, but remain with their families until they were able
to support themselves in a halal form of the non-Islamic boyfriend/girlfriend relationship.

Tahira also regarded family support as an essential element of avoiding peer pressure:

They [parents] have to look at, yes we are Muslim but we are in
this society. Especially in school, high school is the hardest stage
a person can go through, because that's where you see so many
people with so many ideals, so many values and it's hard not to fall
into peer pressure if you do not have strong family base... It's two
way street, your parents have to become close to you and you have
to try to become close to them. You can think, oh they are
backwards, they are from Pakistan, they are from India they're from
Iran or Iraq, their life is totally different, but you have to explain
to them if they are from Pakistan or India, this is what's happening
here, how should I handle it?
Maintaining open channels of communication with parents is often difficult, particularly when as Tahira points out, parents who were brought up outside of Canada may have difficulty relating to the experiences their children encounter here. Parents often respond to the changed social circumstances by placing greater restrictions upon their children; a move which is often counter-productive and results in greater rebellion. The narratives have spoken clearly to the fact that the positive support, and the negotiation of halal alternatives to un-Islamic social practices, provide the necessary outlets Muslim youth must have in order to resist pressures to conform to otherwise un-Islamic modes of social interaction and behaviour. These form the core for developing an Islamic sub-culture within schools.

4.2: MIXING

Gender interaction, or "mixing" is clearly circumscribed within Islam and contact between members of the opposite sex is limited. Physical contact between males and females is only allowed among close family members, or one's "mahrem" which refers to the category of people one cannot marry. This excludes cousins, since it is permissible in Islam to marry first cousins. A hadith narrated on the authority of Al-Tabarani reported that the Prophet Muhammed stated:

It is better for one of you to be pricked in the head with an iron pick, than to touch a woman whom it is unlawful to touch. (cited in: Al-Qaradawi, 1960:164-5)

Such sanctions make even situations of casual physical contact between male and females a violation of Islamic moral codes. In the following scenario, Zeinab explains the reaction of a fellow female Muslim student when she was inadvertently touched by a male student:
There was one incident where a sister, she was just standing there and a guy came and put his arms around her and she was just like "don't touch me!" and she just kind of shook him away, and he was just like "oh my God what happened?" and the people around her they were really shocked, like "why'd she do that?" Because it's kind of accepted that guys can come and hug you and touch you and it doesn't really matter. But not all guys are like that, some of them they really understand and even if they just see your hijab, they wouldn't touch you, they wouldn't even really stand close to you that much, so they're pretty good.

Maintaining Islamic rules governing social interaction among males and females is, therefore, particularly problematic since these rules conflict with the conventional norms of the dominant culture. Yet again, as Zeinab noted, the hijab, while often misunderstood, can relay a message to some males which regulates social distance. It is not clear whether these males who almost instinctively honour the rules of distance, do so out of a specific knowledge of the meaning of hijab, or are otherwise unconsciously motivated to respect the symbol of hijab as a physical barrier.

Karima felt the need to establish certain "ground rules" when she was required to interact with males in either school or work situations:

I talk to them very seriously and very businesslike. I don't make my voice feminine, I talk very matter-of-factly. So if you do that with any man, I feel from my experience, they're on a different level with you. They don't try and joke around extra, they don't try and flirt with you, they try and be intellectual back. Because I think you are the one that dictates what ground you are going to talk to them on. Either a ground where you are just flirting with each other, or a ground where you're intellectual with each other. And if you're the one that dictates it, then you should do it by keeping your voice very matter-of-fact, and no nonsense and jokes should be just jokes that are not making you just feminine and weak. And that's what the ground rules are for talking to men I feel.

For Karima, then, by taking the initiative and setting the tone for social discourse with males,
she was able to exercise a certain control over the nature of the interaction which would take place. Acting in a proactive fashion, she was able to exercise a certain power over the dynamics of the interaction which would support her standards of Islamic conduct.

Personal standards also influence the way Islamic prescriptions are taken up. Tahira, for example, stated she had male friends whom she felt comfortable having lunch with at school or joking around with, but she drew the line at any form of physical contact. Setting the boundaries for interaction with members of the opposite sex was an issue dealt with more by the women interviewed than by the men. The male students interviewed were equally conscious of the need to maintain proper Islamic boundaries in their interaction. Yet because males seem to initiate more of these interactions, they paid greater attention to simply avoiding situations of contact, than in developing strategies to deal with female advances.

Tahira spoke of the unification of certain values and practices among the diverse groups of Muslim peoples and how this becomes juxtaposed with the social conventions of mainstream society:

I guess the big cultural difference like even though all Muslims come from various parts of the world we still have the Islamic culture like not going out with guys or not going to dances, not drinking and that's a big thing. People are saying "well I went out with my boyfriend why can't you have a boyfriend?" In some instances there are arranged marriages and they find that very strange. How can you marry a person you don't know?

Due to the fact that dating is prohibited, marriages are often arranged within the Islamic context. There are often many misconceptions regarding the process of arranged marriage in Islam, such as the false notion that you must marry a person you do not know, which further complicates the acceptance of Islamic traditions among Canadian Muslim youth, as
Tahira’s quote shows.

Within the context of school curriculum, the parents expressed concern regarding sex education classes. Many Muslim parents, in fact, will demand that their children be exempt from attending these classes which they perceive as a threat to Islamic norms and values. Faryal, whose daughter Malika is 13, expressed a great deal of reservation about her daughter participating in the class. Her daughter’s school sent home a note asking whether she could take part in the class. Faryal, at the time was considering the idea, but remained ambivalent:

I’m still very double-minded about it. The classes have already started, but I sat down with her the first day and I said "Malika, what they’re going to teach you is very different from what we believe." And of course the response was "yes mom I know that, but if I don’t take it the kids will make fun of me."

While Malika feared being ostracized for not participating in the class along with her peers, Faryal feared that inappropriate messages regarding sexual behaviour would be presented in the class, which might negatively influence her daughter. Muslim children are socialized from an early age to follow practices of sexual segregation and limit contact with boys, and Faryal feared that the conflicting messages her daughter would receive in sex education class might cause her to challenge the moral upbringing she had been given.

This fear is reflected in Islamic publications where public education is under constant scrutiny. The issue of sex education and its perceived implications for Muslim youth is a particularly inflammatory topic. Permissive attitudes regarding sexual norms are seen as a threat to the moral order of Islam and viewed as an added social pressure Muslim students must contend with and resist:
One may well wonder what pressures Muslim children feel in classrooms where sexual practices and experiences are openly and publically discussed without any values attached. Or where homosexuality is learned about, accepted and appreciated as a lifestyle and no harm is seen in breaking down the barrier of modesty (Sulaiman, 1995:22)

The Islamic position on morality, particularly with regard to sexual orientation, has become politically-incorrect and upsets the current social philosophy of certain dominant hegemonic institutions, such as schools. Sulaiman’s expose on the American sex education classroom, revealed that "students who have found the courage to state their own beliefs are told that they are uninformed, naive, bigoted and even laughed at" (1995:21). Such attitudes are silencing for students who maintain moral values which are inconsistent with the current politics of moral order. Sulaiman goes on to explain how Islamic ideals and parental authority are undermined by the dominance and legitimacy of current moral and ideological trends which validate sexual practices forbidden by Islam:

As Muslims we may say that "Allah is the same today as He was yesterday. His commandments and laws do not change," but in the wash of moral relativism, we simply look outdated, provincial, and inconsequential to our children. In this way schools actually work against the parent, parental authority and the family’s religious values (1995:22).

Drawing on her own experiences as a Muslim student in the public school system, Amal also echoed the same concerns regarding the school’s authority to define social and moral rules:

I think that school is an institution where they’re teaching you and giving you skills for a lifelong journey and if they’re teaching you things like "it’s O.K to go out and have sex," you’re going to say that "the school’s taught me that so it must be O.K."

For many Muslims, then, it becomes necessary to interrogate the role of the school as the arbiter of moral values. The role of authority vested within the school, and the knowledge
which becomes disseminated through the formal and informal structures of the institution. Divergent voices are marginalized or often silenced by the new moral hegemony, which legitimates the sexual taboos of many religious cultures. Many Muslim parents, therefore, who feel that the message within the sex education classroom is "it’s O.K to do it so long as you use protection," as Faryal claims, refuse to send their children to these classes.

This situation creates a great deal of tension between schools and the Muslim community. The parents interviewed reported feeling less threatened by the content of the sex education curriculum when they were given an opportunity to review the curriculum and ask questions to the teacher or school nurse. After going through such a process, Bilquees felt more confident in allowing Zeinab to attend the sex education program. Bilqees felt that the information was necessary for young adults to have, and that moral education could further take place within the home if parents had adequate knowledge of the issues being discussed in the classroom.

4.4 RACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND SCHOOLING

One of the most salient features in the school and off-school experiences of the Muslim students interviewed dealt with issues of racism and discrimination. According to Anthias and Yuval Davis (1992) racism can be defined as:

..a set of postulates, images, and practices which serve to differentiate and dominate. These can use all kinds of signifiers and markers. They serve to deny full participation in economic, social, political and cultural life by the essence that they posit. The supposed essence of difference is given a negative evaluation (p. 15).
Religious identification adds another marker to the racialized, classed, and gendered identities which Muslim students must bring and negotiate within the context of their educational experiences. This section further deals with the issue of how certain unfounded "sets of postulates and images" about Islam, lead to specific, discriminating institutional and social practices which inform the experiences of Muslim students in the educational system.

The narratives in chapter 3 have previously illustrated how Muslim women have been negatively construed as the result of Orientalist discourses on the veil. Along the same lines, Rezai-Rashti (1994) writes of her experience as a Anti-Racist and Gender Equity Practitioner in a school board where she was able to witness first hand how negative stereotypes informed how Muslim students were perceived and treated. She writes:

In dealing with teachers, students and administrators, I find their interactions with Muslim students to be based largely on stereotypes of Muslims that are reminiscent of the long-gone colonial era (p. 37).

According to Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac and Zine (1997), negative stereotypes of Blacks students affected how they were evaluated and treated within educational institutions. They write:

Negative racial stereotypes have a historical legacy of permeating the collective consciousness of various societies. These stereotypes can be traced to colonialist discourses and produce a certain frame of reference through which Blacks are evaluated. While there is not universal acceptance of these stereotypes...they can be decisive in the ways in which they inform social and educational practices (p. 149).

The narratives in this study speak to the lived experience of racial and religious discrimination as the by-product of negative racial stereotypes and Islamophobia. The implications of these negative social attitudes surrounding Muslims, will further be examined
NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS:

While Zeinab felt that on the whole she had been treated "pretty fairly" by her teachers, she still reported experiencing patronizing attitudes by certain teachers whom she felt clearly misunderstood Islam and her status as a Muslim woman. She explains how some teachers have initially reacted toward her:

Basically, most of them, when they first see me like on the first day of school, or maybe a supply teacher or something, they just look at me and their initial reaction is just shock, like "my God your allowed out of your house." and then they tend to talk to me like in slow english and I just answer back in proper english, and then they think,"O.K fine, she's been born here she knows english."

Zeinab's quote reveals how she perceives the attitudes of certain teachers towards her. These attitudes include a set of assumptions which have been formulated prior to their encounter. Essentialized images of the "repressed Muslim woman," and the identification of difference as "foreignness," are attitudes which often frame the relationships between Muslim students and teachers.

These attitudes can be understood as being part of the "hidden curriculum" of schooling. This is a tacit mode of relaying the implicit assumptions of teachers and other school agents which silently structure social discourse and educational praxis. This serves the purpose of reproducing status quo social relations of power and authority (Anyon, 1989). In Zeinab's case, she received messages of inferiority or as she later explained, "looks" which translated into: "why is she wearing that? What is she doing? This is Canada! When in Rome you should do what the Romans do."

What can often appear to be subtle messages conveyed through a disapproving gaze,
can have a powerful assimilative effect on students. The moment of "seeing the self as it is inscribed in the gaze of the other" (Hall, 1991:48), has a powerful effect in defining the boundaries of belonging. Being situated outside of the boundaries of social acceptance can lead to feelings of alienation and marginality. Moreover, it can compromise one's ability to acquire the necessary "cultural capital" required to achieve success in mainstream society. Negotiating the rules for participating in the "culture of power" demands conformity with certain "ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing and ways of interacting" (Delpit, 1988:283). Dominant social rules are therefore culturally-mediated within the context of power and privilege. A lack of conformity with these rules and codes can compromise social and academic achievement and lead to a path of conformity or assimilation as a means to enhance the potential of achievement (Fordham, 1988; D'Amato, 1993), or conversely to a path of marginalized resistance (Giroux, 1983; Solomon, 1992; Willis, 1978).

Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi (1986) have argued that Black cultural styles, language forms and identity symbols which students bring along into their schooling experiences, are differentially evaluated according to the prevailing norms of a Euro-centred school system and are therefore, counter-productive to success. The same can be said to hold true for other forms of social difference which distinguish individuals from mainstream norms and conventions. Negative attitudes which are ascribed to racialized, classed, and religious forms of identification can be constructed into modes of differential treatment which can inform the schooling experiences of students from these social locations.

The implications of differential treatment among the students I interviewed, have not lead to disengagement as dropout studies in the Black community have shown (see Dei,
Mazzuca, McIsaac and Zine, 1997), with the exception of Karima who left school for several months in junior high school, due to the discrimination she experienced when she began wearing hijab. Each of the students had strong family support systems. They also utilized social networks in the Islamic community for support which helped them deal with negative experiences both in and outside of school. The emotional costs of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours however, were still salient, even to those who had since graduated from high school. The politics of race, religion, and other forms of social difference contextualized their experiences in both school and society at large, and defined to a great extent, how they would come to evaluate their own social location. This began with a critical understanding of how they were socially constructed as the Other.

When asked to describe how she felt teachers perceived her, Zeinab made the following remark:

Oppressed. Very oppressed. I don't know anything. I'm just an ignorant person come straight off the boat from India or whatever... and that you're treated badly at home. They think that your parents don’t know how to treat you and that we think men are superior to us, and we are ignorant and we don’t know how to act in Canadian society.

It is interesting that despite being confronted with such negative stereotypes and attitudes, Zeinab had still initially stated that she had on the whole been treated "pretty fairly." It may be that she had come to see this as being "par for the course" in the process of schooling in Canada. Nevertheless, Zeinab also stated that she felt that she was able to rupture many of these stereotypes, once teachers began to know her better.

Such negative perceptions of difference are predicated on Eurocentric norms and the dominance of White society. This represents a form of domination which is manifest
simultaneously in varying forms: political, economic, cultural as well as hegemonic and symbolic. These provide multiple vantage points for positions of power and privilege. For Karima, the "White ideal" held a symbolic dominance which structured how she felt others perceived her, as well as her sense of self. In the following exchange, Karima explains how the symbolism of colour is constructed within dichotomous relations of power, and how this is reflected in society and ultimately in her own sense of self:

**Karima:** [L]ike even if you just look at the word "dark" it gives you images of evil of witchcraft, of being not clean... So it comes in every aspect of life, white being clean, good, better, a white dress for weddings to symbolize virginity, and dark is like everything bad. So then when they look at White people and dark people, that's the ideas that come with it, and those are the prevailing ideas in this society.

**Int.:** How did that make you feel growing up?

**Karima:** It made me feel that I could never be beautiful, because I wasn’t born White I would never be able to be that beautiful woman, and being dark was not a very attractive thing. And plus that’s part of Indian culture too, so I had a double whammie! One was being in this environment and then also I’m darker than most Pakistani’s in general and so, the thing is I wasn’t really feeling that good about the way that I looked. And then, I think I stopped really caring about the way that I looked, because I thought, what’s the point I’m never going to be able to be beautiful.

**Int.:** And has that changed now?

**Karima:** Oh yeah, as I’ve grown older like I’ve realized there are all types of beauty. Just practising Islam makes you respect yourself. It doesn’t matter how you look really, it’s just how good of a person you are. And how hard you try and become better.

Being dark skinned, Karima felt a victim to racism in White society and shadism in the Pakistani community. Skin colour, therefore, defined the boundaries of privilege in both cultural contexts.

Saleha recounted an incident with two of her pre-teen daughters which revealed their perceptions about their status in a racialized society. Saleha, who is a writer, had her
daughters accompany her to an informal social gathering at the lake with members of her writer’s club. Saleha participated in the various literary discussions which took place while her daughters watched. She reported feeling as though her opinions were valued and respected by others in the group. Afterwards, her daughters asked, "they were White-right?" in reference to the other members of the writer’s club. When Saleha replied "yes," they continued with surprise: "but they were listening to you! They really listened to what you said, and you’re Brown and you wear hijab!." In seeing that a Muslim woman of colour was able to garner respect for opinions among White peers, Saleha felt that her daughters had learned something important from the experience. She hoped that this would empower her daughters in the future. However, I was left to question and lament the fact that they had internalized such feelings of racial inferiority in the first place.

Sajjad felt that attitudes toward race were deeply entrenched in society. He felt that certain stereotypes were difficult to transcend, and he did not believe in wasting time over them:

See for me personally, I given up along time ago trying to impress other people, or trying to prove to other people that I’m a good Black person, or I’m a good Indian person. Because you just can’t win that way. The world isn’t that way. People have their own ways and the way their mind set is, it’s been set by many events before. Even if I were to be a good person, like they have a certain image of coloured people, so it’s like "well all coloured people are bad, but he’s a good one, ... he’s an exception." So I don’t have time to play those games with people. If they think I’m a nice person, if they don’t like me, then that’s their problem. I’m trying to do the best that I can as a Muslim. But when I meet people, the intention is not to impress them and try to prove that I’m "a good one" because I mean that’s ridiculous. The world has too many people for me to go playing those types of games.
When I accused Sajjad of having a "c’est la vie" attitude toward the politics of race, he replied that he was merely being pragmatic:

I’m not responsible for racism in the world. But, am I responsible for my family and friends who know me? Yes I am. I can’t change the Prime Minister’s attitude toward whoever-- I mean I’m just being realistic, it’s just not possible.

Race, ethnicity, and religious identity then, are among the multiple sites of oppression for members of the Muslim community. For Amal, who is a light-skinned Arab, the hijab was the primary source of discrimination in her school experiences, which she felt was bred by ignorance:

With public school in elementary, I found that a lot of teachers were just very ignorant. It wasn’t out right discrimination but you’d get remarks like, "Oh, do you have some kind of head injury?", or "are you bald?", or "do you have some kind of disease?"

Stories of such ignorance and more blatant anti-Islamic sentiments within schools were chronicled in an article in an Islamic publication, where Muslim students across the Greater Toronto Area were interviewed regarding experiences of discrimination they had been encountering within their schools. The student narratives revealed overt acts of discrimination on the part of students, teachers, and administrators in various schools. Male students wearing kufi’s as well as female students in hijab, were forced to remove them or leave the school at the direction of both teachers and principals.

Another narrative told the story of a Muslim boy who had the misfortune to be named "Saddam Hussein" during the time of the Gulf War. He was constantly being beaten up at school by White kids. When his friends would attempt to intervene they reported that they would be blamed as antagonists; yet the White kids were never penalized. A different boy
recalled how he had been called "Saddam" by his classroom teacher during the same period, even though it was not his name. After complaining to the principal, the teacher responded jokingly by calling him "Bobby" instead, to which the principal merely laughed.

In another incident, a group of Muslim students and a group of White students got into a fight when the White students made a derogatory statement insulting Allah, a grade 12 student referred to as "Imran" explained what happened:

After the fight, some brothers and I went looking for him, but he ran to the office and claimed that we were harassing him. The principal called me into her office and told me that unless we Muslims can't behave like Christians and turn the other cheek, she would kick us out of school if this kind of thing ever happened again. (cited in, Haneef, 1993:1)

Discriminatory attitudes on the part of students are often supported by teachers lack of response, or the penalizing of the victims. This can lead to isolationist attitudes as revealed in the interview with Tariq, who, when he spoke about inter-ethnic relations in his high school, explained that "it was easier to just be with your own kind."

Three of the students interviewed, Tariq, Adam, and Tahira attended fairly multi-ethnic and multi-racial schools and felt while there was less overt discrimination, the student culture and informal social life was divided along racial and ethnic group lines. Without strong Islamic sub-cultures within the schools, Tariq, Adam, and Tahira primarily associated with other students on the basis of ethnic and language group affinities such as South Asian or Caribbean, stating that there was a higher level of comfort, as well as greater respect for religious lifestyles with students from similar backgrounds.

Bilquees felt that resolving negative evaluations of difference, particularly about Muslims, was a top-down process, which had to begin with the redefinition of teachers
attitudes:

We need to educate our teachers first, the principals, the administrators of the schools and then the students. We have too much negativity in the school system against the Muslims, like "oh you are terrorists, you are fanatics," and I think this is not a proper description of the Muslim.

Through her experience as a parent dealing with the public school system, Bilquees spent a lot of time in the schools, talking with teachers, and trying to negotiate boundaries for her children's involvement in school functions and in the curriculum. She felt that there was a great deal of misconception regarding Islam and would try to explain this to the teachers. She was disappointed in their reaction as she explained:

[I] realized that they [the teachers] are not properly educated, they don't know what Islam is, what Muslims are and I used to educate them, I used to talk to them about our beliefs: "We don't do this" and "this is not something we participate in," and I said the media is stereotyping everybody, like exploiting and giving us a really bad name. I always use to talk to them about that.

When I asked how she was received when she tried to explain her point of view she replied:

You know what, they are so much brainwashed, no matter how much you tell them, they have this belief in them, you cannot change them because I felt with most of the teachers I used to talk to, they would take it very easily and they were never willing to accept what you are saying to them.

Bilquees's experience ends with the same note of fatalism as Sajjad's earlier quote. From their experiences as religious and racial minorities dealing with the public education system, they both maintain a certain amount of cynicism regarding the transformation of social attitudes towards their respective forms of difference.
STREAMING AND THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

Negative constructions of difference based on race have been identified has having decisive implications for academic placement in secondary schools through a system of "colour-coded streaming" (see also Dei, Mazzucca, McIsaac and Zine, 1997). Many of the Muslim students I interviewed reported being evaluated and recommended for placement in lower streams on the basis of what they perceived as being the low expectations teachers and guidance counsellors had for Muslims, and certain other racial minorities in general. This channelling of specific racial and ethnic groups into lower non-collegiate level streams leads to the reproduction of social inequality in society by providing a framework which differentiates, divides and allocates individuals into positions of potential advantage, or almost certain subordination.

Previously, I had seen Karima on CBC documentary along with other minority high school students who were discussing their experiences as racial and ethnic minorities in the Canadian school system. When I later interviewed Karima, I asked her about some of the comments she made on the show in reference to low teacher expectations, and the fact that minority students were as not encouraged to achieve as were White students. When I asked her whether this comment was also true for Muslim students she replied:

It's not only Muslims, anybody coloured. Like if a White kid doesn't do well they'll say, "Oh, you know what's wrong why aren't you doing well? You're supposed to do better". But if a coloured person doesn't do well it's like "O.K, well try harder next time." When I didn't go to school, I wouldn't get phone calls at home telling my parents. My parents didn't know that I didn't go to school. But when one of my Greek friends would miss one day, their parents would be called in like 10 minutes if they were late. Just because they're supposed to be in school and I'm probably not even going to go anymore.
Karima felt she was often treated according to the misconception that education is not valued for Muslim women, and therefore her educational aspirations were not taken too seriously. When Karima left school, she would often accompany her older sister to university and became part of the MSA circle there. She felt more comfortable in the university environment which had a stronger Islamic sub-culture and systems of social and spiritual support for Muslim students. This made Karima more determined to get through high school quickly and move on to university. Anxious to finish high school ahead of schedule and condense a four year program into three years, Karima had many encounters with school guidance counsellors attempting to restructure her schedule. She found little support among the guidance counsellors although she maintains she had always proven herself academically, to be a good and capable student:

So then, I was going to the guidance counsellor to rearrange my schedule, and they wouldn't listen to me. You have every right to get any course you want, but when White friends that I had wanted to do it they easily had no problem. Then at the end when I actually finished-- I did end up taking four years-- a guidance counsellor that I had always been going to said, "Oh, you know you really surprised me, I didn't really think that you were up to anything, but it worked out and you're the most strong headed woman I ever met in my life." He didn't even realize was cutting me up.

Karima found this to be a back-handed compliment since it was predicated on the initial belief that she would not succeed, despite her academic record indicating the contrary. She also recalled with a great deal of resentment, how she had been discouraged from taking maths and sciences and was being directed toward general level, non-academic streams:

They kept on telling me, "you may not be able to handle it, you don't know how hard it is" and like I've never failed a course in high school. And then my junior high guidance counsellor said
,. "you know maybe you should go for general courses because you may not be able to take advanced," but not telling me you can’t go to university without taking advanced courses. They didn’t tell me that, and if I didn’t have an older brother and sister I would have taken general. You think guidance counsellors are there to help you, but they’re not.

Karima felt a lot of distrust and anger toward guidance counsellors whom she felt were subverting the progress of minority students as she stated: "they just put their own ideas into your head and you go there trusting them." Karima felt that her aspiration of attending university was ignored, and that had she not sought advice from her older brother and sister, she would have been consigned to non-collegiate streams.

Sajjad, whom I regarded to be exceptionally bright and articulate, also explained with a great deal of frustration and emotion how he had been put in general level streams not knowing that this would preclude him from having a university education. Sajjad also considered himself to be a good student, but went along with the general placement, not knowing that it would compromise his future academic goals. He eventually found this out when a group of University students who were part of an African-Caribbean Association, came to visit his high school and made him aware that he was in a non-collegiate level stream. He explained, "that was the day I realized I’ve got to get out of this class!". He continued by saying, "academically I had no problems in school, but I kept waiting for a long time until I realized, "hey you don’t have my interest in consideration." He explained why his parents also felt disempowered to change his situation:

[Pa]rents—especially from the West Indies, they trust the teachers so how can they question the teachers if they say this is where you should be, even though you know better.

According to Sajjad, had the students from the African-Caribbean Association not been tuned
into his circumstances, he would have never been aware of how his life chances had been so severely circumscribed through the streaming process.

It took Sajjad an extra two years to repeat the classes he needed for getting into the advanced level. He noted that it was very difficult to upgrade once being streamed into general courses, and that this was a deterrent for many students who felt trapped in lower streams but did not want to commit the extra years of schooling they would require in order to move into a collegiate level stream. At the time of my interview with Sajjad, he had just completed his OACs and was preparing to start university. He commented on the insight which had been given to him by a school teacher who had converted to Islam:

[S]he said a lot of times when they see you, the Black kids or the coloured kids, they already think that you cannot achieve. So the idea is to let you know very early. They don’t want you to go all the way to grade 12, OACs and then realize that you’re just not smart enough. So they’ll do you a favour and push you that direction by streaming you.

Amal and her sister had also been directed by guidance counsellors to take general level courses despite having good academic records. Amal recalled how the guidance counsellor “flowered up” the idea of being in general level courses as being "less stressful" and that she would have a "really good time." Ironically when another guidance counsellor examined her academic profile, Amal was identified as an advanced student and recommended to an enrichment school. Amal explained her confusion and eventual understanding of the two different assessments:

So I looked at both counsellors and I thought, "why is one saying one thing and the other something else?" And I concluded that it wasn’t my grades that the one who told me to go into general was looking at, she was looking at my whole outer appearance, and that meant "dumb," "ignorant," "Oh we don’t want them to succeed,"
that’s what I felt.

Low teacher expectations of racial and ethnic minority youth can lead to negative evaluation and bias in assessment, as well underachievement (Parker-Jenkins, 1991). That these low expectations are informed by negative racialized stereotypes and negative assumptions about Islam can be construed from Muslim students overall experiences within the school system. While the intent is not to essentialize a negative understanding of all guidance counsellors or teachers, it is nevertheless necessary to deconstruct the ways in which minority students come to be differentially evaluated and treated within the school system.

When asked if having more minority guidance counsellors in the system would help, Karima felt that while it would make a difference, minorities in that position may also maintain certain biases in favour of their own group:

I’ve had a minority guidance counsellor who was Sri Lankan, and all she did was tell the Sri Lankans to do math and science, but not every other coloured kid. Like she’d tell the Afghani’s to take basic and general courses, she’ll tell other Muslims the same thing, but then the Hindu Sri Lankan Tamils, you know, "oh you have to take calculus and algebra, biology and chemistry."

Racial and religious bias therefore, are not strictly in the domain of the dominant group. While having counsellors of different racial and ethnic backgrounds is important in terms of equity and representation, culturally-sensitive counselling cannot simply be predicated on the basis of skin colour or religion, since this alone does not eradicate bias between minority groups. Racial and religious politics can not be underestimated in their impact on evaluation and assessment of minority students, irrespective of the background of the counsellor.

According to Karima, ethno-specific counselling, where students are matched with counsellors from the same background would be ideal, so long as the counsellors have been
enculturated in Canadian society. She explains:

> Also I think when you're not born here you're always trying to kiss up to White people. So then you don't really try and do something against them. Whereas, someone who has grown up here is comfortable enough with White people to say "you have to do this right", you know what I mean?

The intimidation felt by immigrants in dominant White society is, in Karima's view, a mechanism which leads to greater compliance with certain rules, or an unwillingness to "rock the boat." She felt that minorities who grew up in Canada are more empowered to affect change by challenging dominant institutional norms.

Often, there are also cross-cultural differences in communication between teachers and students which can lead to negative evaluation of minority students who are not able to conform to the language styles which are privileged within the dominant pedagogical framework (Au and Kawakami, 1994; Heath, 1983; Saville-Troike, 1981). Miscommunication is often based on the disjuncture between the standardization of White middle class communication styles and the communicative styles of ethnic and class-based minority groups. Cultural incongruencies can exist between the "pedagogy of the home," or the mode of transmitting cultural knowledge, social, and behavioural rules, through the culturally-specific socialization practices of the home, and the dominant classroom pedagogy. The latter will often amount to a "re-socialization process" for those students who lack the "cultural capital" required to succeed in mainstream society (see King, 1994). Consequences of the mismatch between dominant cultural communicative styles and those of other groups, can result in the misplacement of minority students in special language-based remedial programs.

Faryal reported being shocked to learn that her 8 year old son, Hashim, had been
placed in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class. Both her children had been born and raised in Canada, and she herself had lived in Canada for over 25 years and had been educated here. She recalls being confused, hurt and angry over her son’s placement in an ESL program:

The worst thing that the school did which finally hurt me the most was they put him in E.S.L. English is the only language he speaks! So they put him into E.S.L, and didn’t notify me and as I understood it, parents have to be notified before children go into the program. And Hashim one day was just talking and I asked him "did you get extra help at this time?" and he said: "I can’t I have to go to a special class" I said "what special class?"-- I was just totally shocked and he goes "E.S.L mom, I have to go to E.S.L." And I said "why do you have to go to E.S.L?" And the next morning I was at the school--I was hopping mad! You know I was really really angry. And they told me he was there because he has difficulty understanding instructions and understanding directions. And I asked him and he said "but mom she doesn’t make any sense, she says this and she means something else."

Heath (1983) found that Black children did not respond to teachers’ styles of asking questions or issuing directives since they were qualitatively different than the style of communication used in their homes. Miscommunication and misunderstanding, due to cultural variations of socio-linguistic style, are often treated as language deficits. Students such as Hashim are, therefore, penalized and required to become "re-socialized" to accept the dominant communicative styles of the teachers through programs such as ESL and ESD (English as a Second Dialect).

Sajjad also had the experience of being placed in ESL although english was his first language. Speaking within the context of how he had felt betrayed by the educational system in Canada, Sajjad reflected with frustration on his experience of being placed in an ESL class, despite being proficient in english:
I mean throughout my entire school career, they did it to me when I first came here and I was put in an ESL class. I mean, I came from an English speaking country! I mean ESL man, ESL messed up a lot of people. I mean I’m sure it’s helped, but the process, the mechanism of selecting people and then the merging of them into a regular program when they get out of ESL are what create problems.

Sajjad recalled feeling stigmatized and academically disadvantaged by being relocated to an ESL class. I asked him why he had been assigned to an ESL class in the first place, to which he replied:

Oh they’d say they couldn’t understand me, this is the thing they say, they couldn’t understand or I couldn’t articulate myself, they weren’t understanding what I was trying to say. And I guess immediately the first thing the means by which they put me in was language, but they forcefully took me out of math, science, French. So later on, when I missed 3 or 4 years of French, and you’ve got to pick it up and come out again, how can you do it? Because you’ve missed those foundation years ...but the whole program (ESL) is so encumbersome that it takes away everything. It did a lot of damage to me, a lot about my self-esteem.

For Sajjad, as a native English speaker, placement in ESL was denigrating and compromised both his academic progress and self-esteem. The social, emotional and academic costs of using ESL programs to "re-socialize" English speaking students whose socio-linguistic patterns lack conformity with the dominant mode of instructional communication, were painfully recalled in these narratives. Saville-Troike (1981) writes that "when differences are understood, they form a base for learning, when they are not, they create a barrier to learning" (p. 72). This has been evidenced throughout the narratives in this section where misapprehensions of cultural, racial and religious understanding, as well as styles of communication can negatively impact on minority student achievement as well as self esteem and emotional well-being.
Bernstein (1977) writes that:

Resistance also calls attention to modes of pedagogy that need to unravel the ideological interests embedded in the various message systems of the school, particularly in the curriculum, modes of instruction and evaluation procedures (cited in Giroux, 1983:111).

The ideological interest of maintaining dominant Anglo-cultural hegemony under the guise of cultural pluralism, can be found in the subtext of these narratives. Schools, as hegemonic institutions, promote a dominant agenda of Anglo-conformity in two ways: 1) Through a Euro-centred curriculum, and 2) Through the standardization of instructional and evaluation procedures on White Middle class populations. Classroom pedagogies, as well the hidden curriculum, are the modes of transmitting and legitimizing the social organization and social styles of learning which privilege White mainstream cultural knowledges and communication styles, while simultaneously distancing minority students from the parameters of inclusion.

The following chapter delves further into curricular content in public education with regard to issues of ideology, representation, and resistance. This chapter will deal with the formal channels of resistance, through which Muslim students are able to form a corporate basis for challenging Euro-centrism in public education, and develop the social and institutional basis for an Islamic sub-culture within schools.
CHAPTER 5

IDEOLOGY, REPRESENTATION, AND STRATEGIES OF FORMALIZED RESISTANCE

The following chapter examines students schooling experiences with regard to the formal aspects of the curriculum and how they have served to construct a particular understanding of Islam within mainstream consciousness. This chapter also examines how Muslim student groups organize to institute the development of an Islamic sub-culture in schools through the use of formalized strategies of resistance.

5.1: CURRICULUM AND REPRESENTATION

When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing. (Adrienne Rich, "Invisibility in the Academy," cited in Rosaldo, 1989:ix)

The sense of invisibility described in the preceding quote resonates not only with the experiences of the Muslim students I interviewed, but also with my own. Growing up as a minority student in Canada, I understand very well the fact that, in order for education to be relevant to all members of society, it must equally represent their histories, experiences and knowledge as a legitimate part of a composite, and multi-focused curriculum. Currently however, Eurocentric knowledge forms the basis for public education in Canada. The centrality and exclusivity of Eurocentric knowledge as the legitimate starting point for understanding history, science, politics, or any other field of academic inquiry, has marginalized the experiences, accomplishments, and achievements of all other groups in
society. Eurocentrism in education then, becomes a vehicle for a culture-based hegemony.

The Muslim students I interviewed showed a very astute understanding of this fact, which was seasoned by their own experiences in the school system. Karima, echoed the same feeling of invisibility when she spoke about the need for greater minority representation in the visual culture of the school. When I asked if it would have made a difference to see minority cultures represented in the books, artwork, and posters found in the school, Karima replied:

Yeah, I think it makes a lot of difference, because if you see other people, than all of a sudden they’re people, but if you act like they’re not there then it’s like they’re not people. They had just White things everywhere and you felt like you weren’t even there.

Amal, who now attends teacher’s college, felt strongly that issues of representation must be taken up in order to balance school curriculum and motivate students:

With regards to what they teach in school, there are a lot of problems. Even now when I’m reading books, I don’t see enough representation of Muslims in the text books. I found that that is something that we really need to be doing. There are a lot of Muslim kids out there who need the role models, who need to see “well I’m part of the history,” or I have been represented, so they can have some inspiration, to be motivated to go on in their education.

Amal felt strongly about the need for Muslim role models in public schools, and although she herself would like to teach one day in a private Islamic school, she felt that it was important for her as a Muslim teacher wearing hijab, to be working in the public school system to serve as a role model for Muslim children. Having Muslim women who wear hijab teaching in the public school system can also help break down many of the existing stereotypes, which as we have seen, have a decisive effect in shaping the schooling experiences of Muslim girls.
Karima pointed out the fact that a textual basis for negative stereotypes of Muslims also exists within the public school curriculum. She commented on the consistency of bias in the representation of Muslims, and in particular, Muslim women in school curriculum:

Every time Islam was ever covered it was totally biased. You know, Muslim women are always covered and have lots of babies.

The image of the archetypal Muslim woman as subordinate and oppressed was constructed through courses which dealt with Third World societies, and essentialized the differences which characterize their Otherness. Karima explains how the realities of Muslim women came to be objectified through the Eurocentric frame of reference applied to the analysis of their lifestyle:

Geography, you know World Geography they’d talk about "those countries where women are covered" like in India, Pakistan, and Africa, and basically they don’t do anything, they just stay home and they don’t do anything. Intellectually they totally make them seem like they’re nothing. And in this society being at home is a negative thing anyway, so if you’re there not even being educated you’re nothing and then when they look at me that’s what they’re thinking, that I’m like that too. It doesn’t seem to change their ideas that if I was like that, what am I doing in O.A.Cs in the first place?

In the latter part of the quote, Karima explains how the negative construction of Muslim women as Third World Others, becomes transferred to her and becomes part of how she in turn, is socially evaluated. The ability of these stereotypes to transcend time and space is revitalized by uncritical educational practices which disregard the political imperatives behind the production of knowledge and, hence, fail to interrogate the issue of power in the representation of the Other.
According to Karima, teachers themselves are often unwilling to change the status quo in education, as she explains:

They're too lazy to change it actually, even if they're good hearted, I mean even if they aren't so pro trying to be negative to Islam--they may even agree with you, but they've been doing that job for such a long time, they're older, they don't really want to go through the effort of changing.

Karima also felt that the Islamic basis of many forms of knowledge in science and arts had been appropriated by Western civilizations who claimed it as their own innovation. She used science as an example:

Sciences, it’s all Euro-centric. All these stars and constellations were already named by Muslims, but then they just renamed them and said that they discovered them. And all of these laws and Pythagoras and all that, but it wasn’t really Pythagoras, I mean all these people knew about the Pythagorean theorem before Pythagoras came up with it. I mean look at the pyramids, how could they even stand up with out knowing that? But some Greek guy gets the credit for it. So, everything seems to have been discovered before the Europeans discovered it, but then they just renamed it and said they discovered it and then that’s how it’s taught.

Karima said that although she had made attempts to point these facts out in class, there was a lack of interest on the part of the teachers who generally dismissed her comments with perfunctory remarks like, "oh, well that’s nice." History was another subject area which Karima identified as marginalizing the experience of non-White inhabitants of North America. Stuart Hall (1991) writes that "there can be no English history with out other histories" (p.48). Karima’s critique of history as being taught from the perspective of the dominant society, makes the same point as Hall as we see in her prescription for changing the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum:
I’d like to see more different culture’s histories. Like there is only Canadian history in high school. I’d like to see different culture’s histories, I’d like to see more science of different cultures, not just, "oh there were these people a long time ago, they lived here these were there cultural practices," I’d like to see the things that they’ve discovered, I’d like to see the science, the astronomy of those cultures. Like the Pharaohs they did a lot more than build pyramids, they knew a lot of different things but you never hear that part of it. And all these things that have been renamed, I think they should be given back to the original people that have discovered them. And even the fact that Columbus "discovered" North America-- how could he discover something that was already inhabited by people? What they are trying to say is, in the "White world" he was the one who discovered it, but you’re just putting that in a White context right away, right from the beginning as if the Natives aren’t people.

Restoring the intellectual property of societies who have had their scientific and cultural achievements appropriated or ignored, as Karima pointed out, must become part of a historical restoration of fact and circumstance which acknowledges and privileges the precedents set by non-European peoples. This is essentially Hall’s point as well, that we cannot understand our own histories without understanding how that history intersected and was syncretized and transformed by the histories of the Other. It also means that for some, the intellectual spaces for knowing one’s past are often products of colonial appropriation.

Amina recalled how one teacher in her son’s school tried to introduce Black history into the curriculum, but was met with resistance from other teachers:

The curriculum is Canadian. Eurocentric. Actually my son this year, his teacher is Black and she wants to do Black history, she told me that she’d raised it in a staff meeting and all the other teachers who are White are not happy dealing with it, they are not comfortable teaching it, which makes you wonder why they expect her to teach Eurocentric history! So, she was teaching Black history to the whole class and I’m very happy that she’s having that because he can grow up with the idea there is different versions of history.
Amina's point uncovers the irony regarding the issue of White teachers not being comfortable dealing with different forms of cultural knowledge, yet Black and minority teachers being expected to teach a Eurocentric curriculum. The inclusion of subordinate cultural knowledges is often regarded by educators as a means to placate specific minority groups. The intrinsic value of this knowledge, therefore, is often overlooked and devalued by attempts at compartmentalizing and exoticizing cultural differences, rather than seeing them as part of an integrated focus in education (Dei, Broomfield, Castagna, James, Mazzuca and McIsaac, 1997).

Library books, in both school and public libraries, were identified as characteristically misrepresenting or distorting Islam. Bilquees made it a point to check library books which dealt with Islam in order to see if they were accurate. She describes much of what she saw as "garbage," and would often sign these books out of the library and not return them, and just keep paying the fines. She felt that it was better to keep these books out of the library and keep paying the fines, rather than have books which misrepresent Islam remain there and misinform the public. She criticized how these books misrepresented Islam under the guise of academic legitimacy:

History books, supposed to be history books, Islamic history and I couldn't even find a page that was authentic, that there was proper information that was given on it. Actually I do have a book, I just now got one with my son from the ---- library, it talks about Islam, Islamic civilization, it's a children's book, I was just reading it and in it says that the man is allowed to beat up his wife and I just circled it and I said "wrong," I wrote it in there and I said this is not right, Islam doesn't say that the men should beat up the women.

Bilquees showed me the book to which she was referring in this quote, and I noticed that there were in fact, many ongoing debates scrawled into the margins of the book. Muslims
who came upon this book attempted to point out the fallacies they saw, by writing their critiques in the margins, these were rebutted by other readers challenging their points of view.

When I asked Bilquees what she intended to do with the book she remarked, "I'll probably burn it, it's not worth having a book like that."

I asked Sajjad how the topic of Islam, in relation to global politics, was dealt with in his media literacy course. When I asked him how Islam had been represented, he replied:

   Well how can you expect? The media controls so much of the way we think, so for a non-Muslim person they have no other outlet to Islam. I mean when they hear that the Hamas blew up a bus killing 20 innocent women in Israel, what alternative source of information do they have? If it were a Christian who did something though, they will never say, but if it's a Muslim they're always identified that way.

As a primary source of knowledge on Islam, the media often presents a distorted view of Islam through the spectre of Mid-East politics. As Sajjad pointed out, religious identity is rarely connected to Christians if violent and newsworthy acts are reported in the media. This makes Muslims feel singled out for having their religion associated with acts of violence.

Tahira proposed ways she felt that schools could help promote a better understanding of Muslims and the Islamic lifestyle. She felt that Islamic information seminars, which would be open to students and staff, would help break down certain stereotypes and misconceptions: 

   [T]here is a very negative image of Islam and by doing that, by having seminars or things like that open to everybody, it would open eyes and it wouldn't be thought of as backwards or women wouldn't be thought of as second, because they consider that women in Islam are second class citizens-- that misconception would be gone.

The fact that certain assumptions about Islam have been disseminated through the media and educational institutions, and have become uncritically absorbed as commonsense propositions
(i.e., Muslim women are oppressed, the religion is backward, violent, etc.) qualifies these as hegemonic assumptions. What Tahira proposes, then, is a counter-hegemonic strategy which promotes the discourse of Islam as it is relevant and understood by those who practice it. According to Tahira, the message she felt that the Muslim community should be sending to the rest of Canada was clear:

[T]hey should become aware that we are here to stay, we are Canadians, and we're gonna stay here and now this is a religion of Canada because it's a growing religion and that they should acknowledge it by introducing it.

The need to regard Islam as part of the social-cultural structure of Canada and North American society is imperative in demystifying the notion of "foreignness" associated with Islamic practice. By focusing on Islam as a Canadian reality, rather than as a product of Arab, African or South Asian societies, the process of developing an "Islamencan perspective" can lead toward a more unified and salient Islamic presence in Canada and North America (Abdur-Rahim Ocasio, 1996). This also helps solidify a base for concerted political action in both schools and societies, which can be used to develop a viable Islamic sub-culture in both contexts.

WORLD RELIGION COURSES

Knowledge of Islam is formally taught within the context of World Religion courses. Muslim students who have taken these classes often have reported bias in the representation of Islam as well as factual inaccuracies in the curriculum. Tahira, although she herself did not take the course, reported on the comments of her friends who found the course to be "totally biased" and were angry with the casual way the Qur'an was handled by the teacher. They saw this as a lack of respect for the Qur'an as Tahira complained, "the way they would
casually hold the Qur’an like it was nothing, whereas it was something to us."

World Religion teachers were also viewed as lacking proficient knowledge of Islam.

Sajjad also had not taken the course himself, but reported on his friends comments:

[There were quite a few Muslims who did take the class and they complained a lot about the teaching also. The course really just gave bits and pieces of Islam, things about Shias and Ismailis. Everything was just mumble jumbled in his head, so that made it even more distorted because his train of thought was very unclear. Even the sisters were saying some of his use of Islamic terminology was incorrect, and the texts and stuff like that.

According to Sajjad, the MSA in his school had organized around this issue and tried to point out inaccuracies in the curriculum. Sajjad reported that the teacher had in fact been "very reasonable," and that he was open to debate and discussion on the matter. The collective organization of dissent related to matters of representation in the curriculum was a strategy of formalized resistance used by the MSA to begin a process of redefining the base of knowledge used to objectify Islam.

During my interview with Amal, her mother Bushra had commented on the idea of non-Muslims teaching about Islam. She felt that there was a greater potential for bias and misrepresentation:

[I]f non-Muslims come and teach that information, it could be wrong. I knew a teacher and she was proud of herself because she was teaching our Muslim girls about hijab. And I told her "what did you say?" and she told me "oh you know the story of how the Muslim ladies got captured and they were afraid that the men would rape them so they covered". This is a teacher in the ------ Board! And she was proud of herself that she upgraded her curriculum with Islam. She misrepresented everything! The concept of God, the concept of hijab, the concept of where we’re coming from.
Often knowledge of Islam is integrated into the curriculum in a cursory fashion without proper research or documentation and reference to religious sources. This further mystifies the understanding of Islam and reproduces inaccuracies regarding Islamic practices which often lend themselves to a reconstruction of the Orientalist agenda. In this way, representations of the Other are often partial and yet become totalizing at the same time. Amal was quick to point out, however, that she had once had a Muslim teacher for a World Religion course whom she felt painted a very negative picture of Islam, and was himself critical of Islamic practices such as hijab for women. Therefore, it is difficult to essentialize the attitudes Muslims themselves will have regarding Islam, and how they will become implicated in their pedagogy. Politics and ideology, therefore, are often more salient factors in determining how these issues are represented, than are nationalistic origins and presupposed affinity.

5.2 : INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Ethno-cultural equity in education, is mandated by the Ministry of Education and Training and is stated clearly in the Common Curriculum:

The Common Curriculum is designed for all students; that is, a school’s programs must accommodate the various abilities, needs and interests, as well as the differing racial and ethno-cultural backgrounds of all students in the school (p. 1).

Inclusive schooling, which embodies these principles, is a process which attempts to bring school policies, practices, and pedagogy in line with the socio-cultural demographics of Canadian society. It is an educational process which attempts to create a more global perspective in a world of increasing cultural and economic integration. Inclusive schooling
is a means of redefining the structures of schooling and the politics of representation.

Contemporary cultural politics in education centre around issues of identity, voice, and inclusion. The emphasis of multicultural education on racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity is now balanced by an antiracism pedagogy which focuses on the production and reproduction of class, race, and gender-based systems of power and subordination. Yet, while the politics of the margins are redefining educational theory and praxis, there is also an increasing awareness emerging at a grassroots level, with student and community groups beginning to mobilize around collective issues in education.

Social and educational change is, nevertheless, a piecemeal approach. Awareness and social activism are latent forms of resistance in many communities. The Muslim community has only recently begun to organize around their collective concerns in education (see chapter 6). How a Muslim child's needs will be addressed differs from school to school. Some school boards in the Greater Toronto Area, have implemented policies that allow prayer rooms in the schools. However, there is resistance within individual schools where teachers and administrators prefer to see a clear demarcation between the secular nature of public schooling and the religious customs and practices of the students.

Amal recalled the struggle of the MSA in her school to secure a prayer room for Muslim students. They encountered a great deal of resistance from the principal, as Amal relates the story:

We had an MSA group at my high school and we wanted a place to pray and he [the principal] just refused. He was so adamant in his decision. He said "no this is not a place for religion it's a place for education". And we told him it's obligatory, we have to do this- - they had allowed the prayers at school before but he was just adamant that "no, I'm not going to let you do this." We told him
that if we don't pray dhuhr\textsuperscript{18} prayer at school then we're going to miss it. And he was just so adamant in his decision, so we said "O.K fine we're going to take you to court." Well, we threatened the principal with going to the board and he got a little nervous so, it took about 2 weeks before he said it would be fine we could have this room to pray in, but we can't always guarantee that you'll get it. So we said, "well you're going to have to guarantee a room--I don't care if we have to change rooms everyday, just so long as we get a room," and in the end we did get it.

Amal's story is an example of how effective student organization can lend to political mobilization as a strategy for inclusion. Threatening to take the issue of a prayer room to court, and raising awareness of the principal's negative attitude at the board level, were political strategies which proved to have a decisive effect on the outcome of this particular situation. By collectively organizing dissent, and utilizing systemic processes to resist their marginalization within the framework of the school culture, these Muslim students have articulated a strategy of formalized resistance which enabled them to achieve institutional compliance with their needs and interests.

At the elementary school level, however, negotiating change and accommodation falls primarily into the domain of the parents and community. Faryal explains the difficulty she and the students encountered when they attempted to get a place for Muslim children in her daughter's school to go to when they were fasting:

Before I went there, there were other Muslim children there, but nobody had established a place for them to go during Ramadan. And I didn't get a lot of hinderance when I tried to do this, but the kids were treated badly by some teachers. At one point I had finally got them a room, a classroom to go into, those who were fasting, announcements were made at lunch. But there was 1 or 2 teachers that would come in and say "get out of here" "what are

\textsuperscript{18} "Dhuhr prayer" refers to the afternoon prayer.
you doing here?"

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims over the age of puberty are required to fast from sunrise to sunset. Often, some children below the age of puberty may voluntarily fast one or two days a week or half days. During this time, accommodations are often asked to be made, allowing these children to spend lunch hour away from the lunch room where others are eating. Faryal’s experience shows that while the school administration allowed these accommodations, certain teachers were still not supportive.

Faryal’s daughter Malika attempted to try to change these attitudes by getting involved in an anti-racism group and by implementing initiatives which would facilitate the integration of different cultures in the school. Faryal explained her efforts:

This past year Malika was involved in an anti-racist group and she made a big difference, because she had them start up a day where they would recognize all of the important dates. So they did a whole poster, bulletin board and information was requested on different religions.

Faryal felt that these efforts helped to generate more understanding and commented that the school had begun to recognize the Islamic holiday of Eid, and students were no longer marked absent that day. As well, announcements were made to inform the school of the day of Eid, and the Islamic greeting of "Eid Mubarek" was offered. Faryal and her daughter gave talks in the school on the celebration of Ramadan and Faryal was asked to write an article for the school newsletter. Whether or not these changes amount to "meaningful inclusion" is questionable. Nevertheless the process of educational change and transformation must build on first generating awareness and increasing representation though localized sources in the school (i.e., students, parents and community) which lay the groundwork for more
substantial changes in school policies, practices, and curriculum.

Iman felt strongly that Muslims were not equally represented in the schools, particularly with regard to the celebration and accommodations made for Islamic holidays:

Since the law of this land respects all religions, then there should not be a bias in the schools. One example I could say is religious holidays, for Christmas they get 2 weeks off, we don't even get one day! And even if we get the day we still have to do the work or make up the test and that's enough pressure as it is.

An over-emphasis on Christmas in school was noted by the all the informants. Yet Amina, who had immigrated from Britain, felt that the Canadian system of Multiculturalism allowed for more cultural freedom than in Britain:

I actually found it easier here to some because of the multiculturalism, England says it's multicultural, they don't really want to be. They want people to assimilate whereas in Canada there is this idea of a mosaic and of integration as opposed to assimilation which I hope is the case. In England now they made it that the acts of worship in school, has to be broadly Christian because the heritage of the country is Christian. For a while it was a bit of a free for all and they might have prayers from different religions in the assembly something like this, they are not to do that now by law, it has to be broadly Christian. There are Muslim organizations in Britain who are trying to help parents cope with all this. My son was in a school for a while who had 80% Muslim children, mostly from the Indian subcontinent but at Christmas they did a nativity play. I wouldn't let my son take part, because it was a Christmas story.

Amina found many of the schools her son attended in Britain unwilling to accommodate changes for their Islamic lifestyle, and recalls being referred to by one headmistress as a "fundamentalist Muslim." In Canada she felt there was a more cultural approach to Christmas in the school, and she felt that she was better able to negotiate her son's participation according to her own Islamic frame of reference. Despite a greater
acknowledgement of cultural diversity in Canada, Amina still found too much emphasis on Christmas and was dubious of certain customs such as Halloween, which she had not known in Britain. Often she felt compelled to remove her son from school on days where she felt the activities were not Islamically-appropriate. She would attempt to compensate for his absence certain class parties or events by buying special treats or letting him watch videos. She was resentful for having her son miss school days but found she did not always want to keep compromising her Islamic ideals and values. She felt nevertheless that her son’s teacher was fairly accommodating towards them:

[T]he teacher he has at the moment is very good, she's quiet open to hear our concerns and she tries to reassures us that she's not doing anything religious with them.

In Bilquees’s experience as a Muslim parent dealing with the school system, she found that schools tended to be more accommodating of the Islamic dress code during physical education activities than they were for cultural issues:

With the clothing they were pretty accommodating but other issues like Halloween and Christmas they were not so accommodating. They were, "oh well this is how we do it," this is our heritage or culture or whatever.

In both Bilquees’and Amina’s experience, challenging the cultural determinants of the curriculum was not always well received. Attempting to negotiate the boundaries of their children’s participation in the school curriculum was difficult since, despite being characterized as secular, many cultural elements that are related to specific religious or pagan customs such as Halloween, provide much of the pedagogical framework of elementary education.

Having the Islamic lifestyle accommodated within school policies, practices, and
curriculum; that is having regular places to pray, respecting the Islamic dress code and rules of segregation, having halal food in the cafeteria, creating alternatives to contentious areas in the school curriculum, are necessary to achieve the development of a viable Islamic subculture within the schools, and hence, to maintaining an Islamic identity. Issues of representation are also an important part of this process. As a student teacher, Amal spoke of being a role model for Muslim students as well as being able to use her knowledge of Islam to augment the school curriculum and make it more representative of the Islamic lifestyle and culture. She spoke of how she saw her role as a Muslim teacher:

If I have Muslim students they know they can come to me if they have a problem. I can be there to sort of ward off some of the negative pressures that are coming from Western society. In regards to curriculum, this year what I’ve done is I’ve tried to incorporate as much of the Islamic background into my teaching. Things like teaching what Ramadan is. I was teaching kindergarten this year and they picked up on the concept just like that. It needs to be incorporated right from the beginning, right from kindergarten I think. Because if they don’t than they’re not going to feel like they can accept others. There’s not going to be that notion of acceptance.

Amal felt that education had to be restructured from early elementary education in order to make it more valid and representative of the diverse student body found in many Canadian schools. She felt it was time to recognize the realities of Muslims in public schools by centring their experiences in the curriculum alongside other marginalized groups. She also questioned the pedagogical value of over-emphasizing dominant cultural celebrations. She began by first commenting on how the exclusion of marginalized cultures would impact on the students:

They’re going to be ignorant to it and therefore they’re just going to follow in they’re parents footsteps, “Oh they’re all just
immigrants, we don't have to deal with them." So incorporating such things as Ramadan, other celebrations that we have like Eid, other things that happen within the life of a Muslim. I think has to be incorporated into the public school system as well. Why are we always talking about Christmas? Why are we always talking about Easter and Halloween? I mean those are such huge units in the curriculum that I think it takes up most of the year! I mean Valentines, all these things and I think well, sure you can use Valentines cards and do math concepts with them, but what are you teaching these children?

For Zeinab, the idea of inclusion also meant giving Islam a higher profile within the school culture, and at the same time, educating non-Muslims about Islam. She suggested having a visual display of Islamic art and culture set up in the school display cases and also having an "Islamic Awareness Week," where Muslim students could set up an information booth during lunch hour to talk to students and staff about Islam and hand out information. This sort of representation zeroes in on the issue of negating the invisibility of Muslim students in the school culture, and is simultaneously a way to disseminate accurate information about Islam, to counteract the bias which many students reported encountering in the public schools. However, inclusive practices which compartmentalize non-White cultures into the framework of a "multicultural week," lend to the exoticizing of the Other and are therefore still marginalizing.

The organization of Muslim students around issues of representation and religious accommodation, helps structure the strategies of formalized resistance which enable them to affect change and transformation within the status quo culture of schools. The process of developing a corporate body to resist their marginality and subordination within the structures of schooling is elaborated in the following section.
5.3: FORMALIZED RESISTANCE

If schools are viewed as a microcosm of society, then the social structures which are used to support the values, activities and interests of minority groups within this framework, can be seen as sub-cultures. Solomon (1992) writes of the "cultures of resistance" which Black students develop within high schools. He describes how "student sub-cultures...use oppositional behaviours to dismantle the social and institutional structures of schools and replace them with ones that are more compatible with their own needs and desires" (p. 12). Resistance, which is seen as the "opposition, confrontation and struggle between student cultures and the school's authority structure" (Solomon, 1992:11), is manifest through certain oppositional and anti-school behaviours which are clarified by Giroux (1983) as containing a "moment of critique", or embodying certain socio-political imperatives (p. 110). Solomon goes on to say that, "when students refuse to follow school rules and routines and refuse to embrace school ethos that they perceive as acts of subordination, they are engaging in acts of resistance" (1992:11).

Therefore, while students may be united through common systems of oppression: racialized, classed, gendered, or religiously-based, resistance is not characterized as an organized mode of concerted action directed toward a specific strategy for change. On the contrary, resistance is characterized as a set of specific oppositional behaviours which are taken up informally by individuals and guided by the political intent of resisting authority. And yet they come with no guarantee of actually affecting institutional change. As argued in chapter 1, however, formalized modes of resistance are an alternate means of characterizing student resistance through the utilization of organized social formations, such
as student groups, as new locations for corporate action and struggle. Therefore, increased student participation within school structures, (such as student council or student groups) when done as a means to affect institutional and social change, can also be regarded as a means of resistance (although this has the potential of being coopted). Formalized resistance, then, involves utilizing the institutional channels of the school to organize dissent and structure decisive political action directed toward change and emancipation.

For Muslim students, the maintenance of their identity and lifestyle in schools requires a corporate system for resisting marginalization by negotiating the appropriate requirements/accommodations for an Islamic sub-culture. These include, places to pray, halal food, the celebration of Islamic holidays, as well as a cohesive social network, based on gender segregation, where Muslim students can develop social events and activities which are consistent with their Islamic practice. It also involves unbiased representation in school curriculum, as well as inclusion within the visual culture of the school. The development of such a sub-culture, involves a combination of isolationist practices (i.e., social segregation) and inclusive strategies (i.e., accommodation). Ideally, Muslim Student Associations constitute a corporate body which can provide the social, ideological, and political framework necessary for the development of an Islamic sub-culture within the schools.

As discussed chapter 1, development of an Islamic sub-culture requires three primary elements. The first is an ideological superstructure based on Islam, and supported by study circles, lectures, and dawah or the dissemination of Islamic knowledge; secondly, a social infrastructure, geared toward peer support and Islamically acceptable social and recreational activities; and thirdly, negotiating institutional compliance, which is necessary in order to
allow for accommodations for Islamic practices and knowledge. Modes of formalized resistance are necessary to achieve the latter goal of institutional compliance, and form the basis for solidarity and concerted political action through the systemization of resistance as a socio-political process. The goal of formalized resistance for the Muslim Students Association is one of negotiating the institutional foundation for an Islamic sub-culture in schools. However, since having a strong Islamic sub-culture is often what engenders a strong cohesive Muslim student organization, this can become a catch-22 situation.

There are certain barriers to Muslim students organizing collectively within schools. Karima explained how in one school she attended, only Christian groups were allowed to organize on the basis of religious affinity:

One thing I didn’t really like was that they were allowed to have a Christian group, but they weren’t allowed any other religious groups. Like you couldn’t start up a strictly religious group you’d have to call it something like the “literary group of Muslims”, you couldn’t say it’s a Muslim group.

In certain cases, forming a student organization on the basis of religious identification other than Christianity may be seen as a challenge to the Euro-centric social organization of schools and, therefore, is subject to containment, or as Karima explained, a reidentification of its purpose which subordinates the religious nature of the group.

Tahira saw the need to revitalize Muslim students’ understanding and commitment to Islam as a necessary precondition to the development of a strong student organization. This can also be seen as reinforcing the ideological superstructure upon which an Islamic student sub-culture must be predicated. Tahira felt that the MSAs in her school, were Islamically weak:
Like the guys and girls that came they weren't into the Islamic frame of mind because those were the guys and girls that actually went after the girls, after the guys.... there was no real commitment to that committee....sort of thing, their primary goal was just to have salat\textsuperscript{19} in school and stuff like that, I didn't find any real commitment and that really turned me off.

The lack of commitment to Islam was therefore a discentive for students like Tahira to get involved. Many students rely on the MSAs for religious and social support, as a means to help them maintain their identity and practices as Muslims. When the ideological basis for this movement is absent (i.e., development of Islamic knowledge and praxis), then the political will to develop a social infrastructure and organize strategies to achieve institutional compliance are also usually weak. For Muslim students like Tahira, half-hearted commitments do not go the distance to achieve the goals she feels are necessary to develop a strong Muslim student sub-culture.

Outlining the boundaries of membership is also problematic for Muslim student groups. Sectarian divisions in Islam, such as Shia and Ismaili, represent conflicting ideological differences, which can be problematic when subsumed under a singular organizational structure. Differences between sects, in terms of ideology and praxis, can be difficult to negotiate, particularly when they become contradictory, as is the case with the Ismailis, who have differing social and spiritual practices which are not predicated on the traditional Islamic norms of segregation, or emulation of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). Muslim student groups, therefore, generally organize themselves on the basis of common practice and belief according to sectarian distinctions, as does the Muslim community at

\textsuperscript{19} "Salat" is the Arabic word for prayer in Islam.
large.

Sajjad spoke of the difficulties inherent in organizing a Muslim student group. He made reference to the issue of sectarian divisions, and other divisive issues within the membership. He also made note of the fact that it was a core group of people who were truly committed to the process. Sajjad also spoke of the barriers which the MSAs he was involved in had encountered:

[T]here were a lot of barriers. At --- a lot more because there weren’t as many Muslims, just getting a room to pray was a challenge. We were constantly kicked out and pushed around, but I think also the leadership at ---- was more mature and so we were stronger in that sense. If there were problems at ----, we got trustees involved, sat with the principals and we let them know where we were at, we were not going to get kicked out of any room at any time, this is our room, if you want to come in you can, but there was no pushing us around. We had a formal organization, we made our announcements on the P.A., it was really well organized and we were respected to the point where we had more influence than the student body organization, Alhamdulillah.

Here, Sajjad has exemplified the way in which a group such as the MSA can organize their dissent into a mode of formalized resistance by utilizing the political structures of the school system to challenge school policies. By, in a sense, coopting the schools authority structures (i.e., taking issues religious and cultural conflict to the level of school trustees), these students were using institutional channels to further their own goals and bypass the principal’s authority. Being able to manipulate the structures of authority in the school to concede to their demands was a strategized act of resistance, formally executed by a collective body. Conventionally, however, resistance has been seen as manifest in individual acts of random, anti-school behaviours; more of a symbolic threat to authority. The more purposeful strategy
of formalized resistance reforms and channels random individual acts of resistance into a concerted form of political action predicated on goals of institutional change and educational enfranchisement.

To formulate such strategies, however, student association leaders require a certain amount of "cultural capital," in the form of knowledge of how the educational system operates on a political level. They also must have the ability to communicate effectively with school authorities and negotiate solutions which benefit the student body which they are representing. However, for many minority students who are recent immigrants and have not acquired the requisite skills for achieving these goals, being able to organize resistance effectively becomes a difficult process. Nevertheless, for the MSA to which Sajjad had referred, the efficacy of this strategy ultimately resulted in greater respect and influence for their student organization, than the organization representing the regular school student body.

To examine other functions of the MSA, Sajjad explained how in his school, they had been involved in monitoring and regulating the books which the school used that related to Islam. In an attempt to control the bias and misinformation regarding Islam which they routinely encountered, Sajjad explained how the MSA attempted to regulate the type of books on Islam in the school:

[O]ne of the things that we also tried to do in the MSA was try to get books that we wanted in the library. We tried to make an effort to buy books and put them in the library. We put them there to be an alternative. If anyone wanted a reference we’d tell them "this book is written by a Muslim and if you want to know about Islam read this one."

Tahira also saw the goal of the MSA as one of transforming negative social perceptions of Islam and disseminating knowledge of Islamic beliefs, practice and history:
Their goal should be to promote Islam, like whenever significant
days come up, like the month of Ramadan people know about that,
it's the fasting month of the Muslims they should explain why we
are fasting, like as it being a pillar of Islam and that's when they
can bring the history of Islam, the goals and morals of Islam,
things like that. Have seminars at lunch, put up posters. That's how
they can awaken people to what Islam is. There are a lot of people
who are ignorant about Islam, they think we are totally backward,
we hide away from men and things like that.

Sajjad characterized another important role of the MSA as one of providing cohesion and
support to the students. He explains how the breakdown of an effective MSA resulted in
negative social consequences for many students who then lacked a source of social and
spiritual support:

Well, at ---- we didn't have very many Muslims but we had 20 or
30 that were very, very close. And the good thing in retrospect,
looking at the year after, myself and my brother we left, and a lot
of it fell and we saw pregnancies with sisters and a lot of the
problems we didn't have before happened. I think because that was
an organization for them, an alternative and we were extremely
close in that sense.

As a system for providing peer support in a religious framework, the MSA often acts as a
social safety net for Muslim students. Peer relationships, such as those fostered in the MSA,
can help act as a buffer, guarding Muslim students from negative social pressures such as
alcohol, drugs, dating, and pre-marital relations. As Sajjad explained, when the social
structure breaks down, many of the problems which the group was designed as mechanism
to circumvent begin to resurface.

On a both a social and political level, the MSA in Sajjad and Tahira's school,
sponsored social events and invited staff and other students to attend. The school community
had been invited to a dinner hosted by the MSA where there were various talks given on
Islam. This is process of dawah for the Muslim students, and an opportunity for the school staff to acquire greater knowledge and sensitivity toward Islam, and the religious practices of Muslim students. Creating awareness of the saliency of religious identity among educators and administrators is a step towards validating the experience of Muslim students, and reveals the importance of the continuity of Islamic practices to Muslims, even within the secular context of public schools. Tahira reported that she felt that this was a very positive event, well attended and received by the broader school community.

Networking between MSAs in different schools was also an important means to develop a cohesive community of students. Sajjad explained how inter-school MSA relations included friendly competitions and cooperative social endeavours. He also remarked on the role of the Mosque as a base for many social gatherings:

Yeah, we'd network plan all our stuff there, invite each other to our programs. That's where the Mosque played a very important role. That's where we all genuinely loved each other very, very much, we were very close. So the Mosque facilitated that, spending a lot of time together. That's where the support came from.

Therefore, these formalized social networks which reinforce commitment to Islam lay the social and ideological groundwork for the development of a multi-systemic Islamic sub-culture within schools, and form the basis for formalized strategies of resistance. By facilitating the ideological and social structural elements of an Islamic sub-culture, MSAs provide the political structure necessary to generate corporate modes of resistance. These strategies are designed to achieve the institutional compliance necessary to cater to their needs and interests as a religious minority in the public school system. They are also sites for contesting negative constructions of social difference. Giroux (1983) writes:
Elements of resistance now become the focal point for the construction of different sets of lived experiences in which students can find a voice and maintain and extend the positive dimensions of their own cultures and histories" (p. 111).

As the narratives have shown, Muslim student resistance takes on various dimensions based on the goal of religious continuity and accommodation within the context of public schooling. Issues of representation and inclusion as referred to by Giroux in the preceding quote, have been cited as part of the collective goals of Muslim students. These support the type of identification they are trying to maintain as a religious minority in a secular school system, and challenges the current structures of power and the Eurocentric focus of schools and knowledge.

Dei (1997) writes that, "language, religion, culture and ethnicity, are redefining the boundaries of racial groupings as well as strategies of political/social action" (p. 23). These forms of social action, then, represent the politics of social location as a distinctly diasporic phenomenon. The reformation of social identities in this context requires corresponding shifts in social and institutional structures and the diversification of practices therein. The resistance of institutions toward accommodating such change engenders a dialectical relationship between agencies of change and structures of power.

In redefining strategies of resistance, the narratives have shown that, through the framework of student organizations, oppositional strategies are corporate and often explicitly political in nature, as opposed to individual, ad hoc challenges to school authority. Muslim Student Associations are formalized groups, where the style of opposition can be confrontational but is directed into the appropriate institutional channels in order to systematize resistance and coopt the process of exclusion and marginalization. Channelling
the struggle of religious identity within the political framework of education by seeking institutional compliance with religious requirements, is a strategy which seeks to hold schools accountable for their own inclusive policies based on the mandate of ethno-cultural equity in education. The efficacy of organized dissent and resistance as an oppositional strategy, then, has greater potential to achieve desired outcomes than the random acts of defiance or "acting out" which are usually characterized as the quintessential forms of resistance, but are often counter-productive.

Willis (1989) argues that "institutional opposition has a different meaning according to its class location and expression" (p. 255). Yet, these classist notions essentialize the causes and modes of resistance, and narrowly reproduce neo-Marxist interpretations of how informal acts of student dissent must be constructed in terms of class-based imperatives. This not only over-emphasizes the saliency of class in post-modern societies, but further contains the sociological imagination from exploring resistance as it is grounded in alternate forms of identification and their corresponding forms of expression. Formalized student resistance among Muslim students, however, is an inconsistent phenomena. Muslim student sub-cultures are, by and large, underdeveloped or simply absent. A viable Islamic sub-culture must depend on formalized strategies of resistance in order develop a strong institutional basis for Islamic practice. This is compromised by a lack of Islamic commitment and political will among many students, as the narratives revealed. Community support systems which are intended to revitalize the movement of Islamic integration in schools are discussed in the following chapter as a point of articulation between the mobilization of the broader Muslim community and the identity conflicts experienced by Muslim students in public schools.
CHAPTER 6

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Studies of student experiences of schooling must take into account the relationship between schools and the broader communities to which these students belong. The relationships which become engendered between schools and various communities are an important in channelling the needs and concerns of various groups in society into the political structures of schooling. In examining how the links between home, school, and community are related to the politics of education and religious identity, I focused on a particular school board to see how and in what manner they had forged links with the Muslim community in that locality. I began by interviewing a community liaison counsellor, whose job it was to act a bridge between the school and the local Muslim community.

I contacted Fatima, whom I knew to be working in a school board and who was interested in creating greater activism among Muslim parents. She had labelled the majority of Muslim parents as "apathetic" when it came to involvement and advocacy in education. I recalled meeting her at a community involvement conference run by the board where we both attended a race relations seminar. She approached me after I had commented on some of the issues surrounding multicultural and anti-racism education which emerged in the seminar, and encouraged me to get involved in a Muslim community group working with the board which needed more vocal members to represent the community. At the time, I did not pursue her offer; yet later I remembered our encounter and contacted her about the research I was doing on Muslim students in the public school system.
I arranged an interview with Fatima at her office and was very impressed by the role she and her colleagues at the community liaison office played in negotiating the academic and social difficulties encountered by students as a result of their racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds, or through their status as recent immigrants or refugees. Fatima’s role is as diverse as the situations of Muslim youth she encounters. She explained the main components of her job:

There are 4 components of the job actually, to deal with staff in areas of in-service, working with them, helping to deal with students from the South Asian culture, and trying to develop a sensitivity to the cultures and to help people from these backgrounds better understand the school system, support them. With the community through in-servicing with programs, development programs that they need. Also to support the parents, students and staff. The students if they want to do anything in the schools-- leadership opportunities, anything that the students want... I see students individually for assessments placements. Assessments when I say it's more sort of working with them, plus language things like that. Also more informal cultural assessment, helping to understand what the needs of the student are. Just for them to have someone to dialogue with.

Fatima’s role as a community liaison counsellor represents a vital link between the school and the changing face of society. She is there to translate culture as much as language, and to attempt to help new students integrate into both schools and society. As minority herself, Fatima was well aware of the barriers Muslim students must contend with as members of racial, ethnic, as well as a religious minority group. She herself came from East Africa which helped her have an understanding, not only of the immigrant experience, but also of the mindset of parents who brought their ideas of how things were "back home" to their new lives in Canada. Fatima reported how this created a lot of conflict between parents and their children who were growing up in a completely different cultural and social context:
The culture is a big thing. The cross-cultural conflict that they are facing, the lack of understanding. Sometimes they want to do things that the mainstream are doing but they're having problems at home because they're not allowed to do these things.

Where this has caused problems in schools, Fatima noted that there was a greater trend towards schools seeking consultation with communities to help negotiate areas of concern and conflict:

I see a great move toward culturally sensitive counselling. In the past there weren't so many referred to us, but I think that there is more awareness. A lot of the situations, particularly to do with Muslims and South Asians are often referred to us. They won't try and deal with them themselves, which is good because you do have to have that cultural perspective. I'm not saying that I see every Muslim child in the system, but I'd say the numbers have increased. What we're doing at the board right now and I think it's wonderful, it's a very progressive movement.

The increasing need for consultation, has, with respect to the Muslim community, had a lot to do with increasing numbers of Muslim settling into the Greater Toronto Area. Many arrive as refugees, and as Fatima explained, often have patterns of interrupted schooling, where there are gaps in their education due to having to flee their countries and spend time in refugee camps. The school system has not been adequately structured to deal with the new diasporas being created within the North American context. As a result, they are ill-prepared to meet the variety of academic and cultural concerns which are now becoming increasingly salient.

A major problem academically is the use of age-appropriate placement for students irrespective of their academic levels or English language facility. Students who have minimal English and a pattern of interrupted schooling which has lowered their grade level, are nevertheless placed in a class of their peer age group. This ultimately locates them at a level
far behind their peers academically, as well as in terms of their english language capabilities. Many of these students, Fatima explained, are also in a lower socio-economic class level and cannot afford the transportation costs for special booster programs. Government cut backs in education spending have lead to a reduction of these programs which means students who require the additional language and academic support must travel farther to access these special programs. This, according to Fatima, meant that a large number of these students were falling through the cracks in the system.

The acceleration of these and other problems prompted her to comment on the many problems facing the Muslim students and families she deals with on a daily basis:

[T]his year has by far been the worst year I’ve ever had for the Muslim community... I’ve had four students busted for drugs, two have run away from home. I’ve seen a lot of them getting into gang related activities, which was not the situation in the past. For the new immigrants there is a great deal of illiteracy and there and no mechanism set up in the community to support them in the academics so they are floundering. And of course with all the cut backs that effects them. If it’s a small high school often they don’t have all the specialized E.S.L programs.

The lack of community-based learning programs sponsored by the Muslim community made Fatima feel somewhat isolated in her attempts to find support, be it academic, social or religious, for the Muslim youth she saw becoming "lost" in both the schools and society.

In order to give me a picture of some of the cases she had to deal with, Fatima related the story of a Muslim girl who had recently immigrated from India and who faced with the conflict of over-protective parents and the desire to fit in at school, found herself mixed in with the "wrong crowd." Fatima explained how this girl, who felt very awkward socially and was extremely sheltered by her parents, had become associated with some girls at school who
invited her to an after-school party. Defying her parent’s rules that she return home immediately after school, she instead decided to attend the party. Confronted with alcohol and drugs for the first time in her life, the girl later awoke on a bed with some of her clothing removed. She had no recollection of what had happened at this party. But Fatima, who had eventually been called in to intervene, suspected that there had been sexual assault. The girl’s family was unaware of what had occurred, and Fatima who had been dealing with the family for some time, knew of the father’s heart condition, and decided it best to deal instead with the elder brother, knowing the potential effect of this knowledge on the father.

This scenario illustrates not only the implications of negative peer pressure on Muslim youth, for whom such things as alcohol are religiously prohibited and therefore often foreign to their experience. It also illustrates the need to have counsellors who understand the cultural dynamics of the family and can act accordingly. Fatima used this example also to lament the need for the Muslim community to take a more proactive role in education.

Specific areas of the curriculum which are contentious for many Muslim parents on religious grounds (such as music, which is subject to certain restrictions Islamically) have been an arena of conflict in which Fatima must play a certain intermediary role. Such issues obscure the fluid boundaries of her role on the one hand, as a board employee, and on the other, as a community advocate. Her position vacillates at times from both sides as she attempts to find workable solutions to these areas of cultural conflict. With regard to music, Fatima had become fed up with the Muslim community whom she felt were making certain demands of the system without providing the necessary support to negotiate solutions.

In certain cases, Muslim parents who do not want their children involved in the music
program (which is a compulsory part of the elementary school curriculum) demand to have exemptions. This represents certain problems for the school logistically where there are a large number of Muslim students. Fatima explains this dilemma as follows:

In the past our schools have been very accommodating in individual situations. The will allow students to do research on an instrument so that they are still fitting into the music curriculum, but doing research. But with the numbers of Muslims increasing in certain schools-- one of our schools had about 130 Muslim students and the school doesn't have space to accommodate them separately so we need to look at it from an ethno-cultural perspective and you're saying equity and all that, or are we looking at it realistically and saying it's part of curriculum--

Being placed between the school and the community and being expected to serve the interests and needs of both is a precarious and often frustrating place to be situated as my interview with Fatima revealed. She reported having to reposition herself frequently in the attempt to balance the needs of the community she is there to support and the school board which employs her. In addition Fatima explained how the attitudes of her colleagues were also disconcerting:

See when I discuss it with my colleagues here who are from different nationalities, and sometimes I am being biased because I'm Muslim. They say that "well if they come to this country and they cannot adapt then tell them to go to their own schools!"

Fatima acknowledged the need to change attitudes both within the administrative structures of schools with regard to educational equity and change, and within the Muslim community in terms of how to be an active part of that process. In terms of religious accommodation, Fatima noted that her board had been the first in the Greater Toronto Area to allow prayer rooms. However she felt that the Muslim community was not taking advantage of opportunities to negotiate and advance their needs on other levels:
I've seen a lot of progressive changes. One is with prayer rooms. We put that into place. At least they're willing to listen. They're willing to get together with the Imams and come up with something for the music. So that shows that yes they are serious. They could have just ignored it and said, it's compulsory and waited for something. But I think the Muslim community doesn't do enough itself. That's why education is very important and it has to be done at a community level by people themselves. Because I think it's not fair to create all these restrictions on music and create this whole confusion and then you're not there for them. And I think that either help them, support them or don't invade these barriers. Because then you're confusing them completely and it's not fair.

Fatima was concerned, that unlike other communities, such as the Black community, the Muslims were not well organized around issues in education. She felt that educational change was a process best facilitated by community groups who could come to the board not just with problems but with solutions. In attempting to jump-start the community into action, Fatima began a Muslim Advisory Group, comprised of volunteers in the community, whom she hoped would provide the necessary support to the needs of Muslim students in the school system, and help negotiate areas of religious difference at the board level.

This was a move to increase community involvement in education as well as being an avenue for Muslims to affect educational change.

6.1 : FROM SOCIAL RESEARCH TO SOCIAL ACTION: THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

It became clear to me throughout the course of doing this research, that the Muslim

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20 "Imam" is the term generally used to refer to religious leaders in the Muslim community, although it actually refers to the function of leading congregational prayers.

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community had to take a stronger role in education, particularly in the role of providing student support and advocacy. There was also a need for promoting a better understanding of Islam at the board level and in schools in general; this had been clear throughout the interviews I had done, and was referenced in my own experiences. Fatima invited me to attend a meeting of the Muslim Advisory Group which took place once a month at the Board of Education building. I regarded this as an opportunity to further my field research and welcomed the offer. However, when Fatima expressed her frustration with the group’s inability to move forward and develop some useful strategies, I realized that my involvement may become more prolonged. Guided by a sense of social responsibility, and by the philosophy of critical ethnographic research as providing a catalyst for social change, I embarked on a process of moving my commitment to doing critical social research into a process of critical social action.

My first meeting of the "Muslim Advisory and Community Support Group," as it was informally known at the time, was attended by 20 other members of the community representing the ethno-cultural diversity of Muslims in Toronto. The chair of the group was West African, and other members were from Arab, Somali, Guyanese, and East Indian backgrounds. They also represented members of both the Shia and Sunni Muslim communities.

When they arrived at the meeting, male and female members organized themselves in a segregated fashion around a large conference table, as according to the rules of Islamic social conduct. The meeting was catered by the board and a vegetarian dinner was provided in order to conform to the halal diet, which only allows for meat that is slaughtered in a
religiously prescribed manner. I was impressed that all of this had been arranged for the
group, and that they were given regular use of the Board conference rooms.

As the meeting unfolded, it began with an Islamic "dua" or supplication, and later
there was a break for prayers which took place in an area outside of the conference room.

Much of the meeting was collective brainstorming on what direction the group should take
and what their specific activities should be. This was the fifth meeting of the group, who had
since spent the previous time delineating the problems that Muslim students were
encountering in the school system. The time had now come for a plan of action, and I was
sensing the frustration of many of the members who were feeling that the process was not
moving forward.

There was also some disagreement as to the political nature of the group, who a
minority of the more conservative members felt should be directed by "what the board
wanted" as opposed to the rest, who seemed to see a need for political advocacy in
negotiating the religious needs of Muslim students. There seemed to be this same dilemma
on the part of certain members who felt that while they were being generously hosted by the
board, they were now conspiring against it.

Subsequent to this meeting, I began working with the chair of the Advisory Group
who had realized that the general assembly of members was not an efficient decision-making
body, and that there had to be a steering committee to create and orchestrate the group's
objectives. Thus began a process which I remain a part of, in what is now an organization
known as MENTORS, or the Muslim Education Network, Training and OutReach Service.
The group was restructured into three sub-committees which organized both the activities and
the expertise of the members into three domains: education and research, community outreach, and administrative support.

Through the work of these committees, the group has since started an academic support program for Muslim students in math, language, and E.S.L. Under my direction we have begun developing guidelines for the board on meeting the religious needs of Muslim students. These guidelines help create awareness of the religious needs of Muslim students and develop inclusive strategies to help negotiate these areas in a practical way.

Presenting these guidelines to coordinators of the Music and Physical Education Departments has opened the door for dialogue and has transformed some of the Euro-centred content of the school curriculum. I had participated in teacher in-servicing seminars which dealt with the sexuality component of grade 7, 8 and 9 health curriculum. This began a process of reconceptualizing how this material had previously been taught without regard to the religious and cultural sensibilities and moral viewpoints of many of the students and their families. Many Muslim parents, as discussed previously, did not allow their children to participate in these classes for fear of having their sense of morality corrupted. This seminar was about sharing cultural knowledge with the teachers and redirecting the pedagogy to use student experience and diversity as a starting point for introducing the curriculum.

Encouraging student leadership was a goal defined by MENTORS which lends itself to enhancing formalized student resistance, giving Muslim students the leadership skills to organize and collectively advocate for their needs. In forging a partnership with a leadership camp run by the board, MENTORS was able to provide spaces for Muslim students in this program who are often overlooked in the selection process. Through this initiative, barriers
which normally preclude Muslim youth from participating in these camps are removed by providing segregated programs for males and females and ensuring that the environment is consistent with Islamic requirements.

The partnership of MENTORS is not solely designed to be with the board, but with the students, as a means of facilitating resistance and moving political advocacy back into the schools as well as creating a community-based catalyst for developing an Islamic sub-culture in the schools. The activities of MENTORS are directed toward the goal of instituting the ideological, social, and institutional requirements for this process which lends directly to the continuity and practice of Islam as a driving force in the life of Muslim youth in the public schools. MENTORS, then, represents formalized resistance at the community level which is directed toward filtering down and guiding similar social action on the part of students. Muslim students involved with MENTORS, and the leadership programs emerging as joint ventures with the board, are being groomed as role models who, it is planned, will ultimately strengthen student organizations and continue to advocate politically for their needs and interests as religious minorities, in both schools and society.

As Bilquees, who is now also involved in MENTORS along with her daughter Zeinab, remarked concerning how Muslim parents usually deal with the educational system:

They are more reserved. I think if all the Muslim parents come out and do these things the teachers would know they can't just do whatever they want to do in the school system.

In this sense, groups like MENTORS are the community watch dogs in the educational process and are there to see that schools are accountable for their policies of ethno-cultural equity in education and do not simply pay lip service to the need to create more inclusive
education systems. The notion of "partnerships" between schools and communities needs to be problematized in this sense. Inserting parents and communities into existing structures and decision-making processes, such as school councils, can be regarded as token gestures if corresponding issues of power and representation are not addressed.

As a final note to this chapter, it is significant that through the process of their initial involvement in this research, Bilquees, Zeinab, and Amina are now all active members of MENTORS and have found a means to address many of the issues and concerns that they have shared in this study. For them as well as myself, social research has also provided an avenue for social action which has enacted a new role for them not just silent stakeholders in education, but as players in a process of educational change and transformation.

6.2 CONCLUSION:

Edward Said wrote that "because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action" (1978:3). For the same reasons, knowledge of Islam is also not a "free subject of thought or action" since its production is often guided by political imperatives which reproduce neo-colonial politics, in order to maintain the global dynamics of power and privilege. In order generate an accurate understanding of a subject such as Islam, the dominant paradigms which are used to objectify a specific version of Islam must be deconstructed followed by a reconstruction of the intellectual space of knowing Islam, according to those who live by its beliefs and principles. In doing so, this essentially liberates this knowledge from the parameters of Euro-centred discourse, and privileges the knowledge of the Muslim as a marginalized subject.
This study has attempted to allow the voices of Muslim students and parents to articulate a frame of knowledge for understanding the experience of Muslim students as religious minorities in a secular school system. Schools represent a nexus where, as Solomon (1992) points out, "structure and culture collide." For Muslim students this has meant a clash between differing social conventions and norms. The politics of religious identification in education is, for the Muslim community, a site of resistance and a struggle against Eurocentrism. Muslim students have used strategies of formalized resistance as a means of organizing dissent and transforming the pedagogies and practices in education which marginalize and exclude on the basis of religious difference.

Nascent forms of Islamic subcultures are evident within schools, centrally organized by Muslim Student organizations. I have argued in this study that the development of these subcultures are a means for Muslim students to develop a network for social support and to maintain the religious practices which support the saliency of their identity as Muslims.

Post-modernist discourses on identity argue that the various historical, social, and cultural mediations which shape our identities have no fixed way of locating us with any certainty. This is perhaps the making of much of post-modernist angst, or the sense that if we can locate ourselves with greater definition than through the abstract and ethereal notion of occupying a "space" or being situated in a "borderland," than we become trapped in a fixed relationship which threatens to erase our agency. Yet, we should not confuse metaphor with reality. Identities are constructs which are grounded in various states of actual being. This is not to say these are necessarily monolithic or static, but, as is the case with Islamic identity, they are often grounded in specific ideologies, beliefs, and corresponding patterns.
of behaviour. Islamic identity, as I have argued, is, for some Muslims, essentialized through literal adherence to Islamic doctrine as well as emulation of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) which provides a blueprint for how to live an Islamic way of life. It is, in this sense, fixed in adherence to specific articles of faith and religious praxis which govern every facet of life. Therefore it is important to make a conceptual distinction between the notion of shifting/transient identities, and the notion of multiple identities as distinct forms of social location.

For many Muslims, the saliency of this form of identification provides the basis for creating a supra-national community of Muslims known as the "Umma," which currently is fragmented by nationalism and sectarian divisions, both globally and within the diasporic context. The malleability of Islamic identity is clear from the various modes and frames of reference used to interpret Islamic doctrine and through the diverse expressions of those who identify themselves as Muslims. Yet, this does not detract from the specific determinants found in the Qur'an and Hadith which are followed by many Muslims, and define their sense of identity.

In the racialized context of Canadian schooling, the challenges faced by Muslim students in the public school system, add to other categories of difference, such as race and ethnicity, which are also used to locate them within the framework of both schools and society. Unlike racial forms of identification, Islamic identity must be asserted. Asserting Islamic identity within the context of schooling requires corresponding changes to the institutional practices and bases of knowledge within schools. This is understanding informed by the narratives in this study.
Many of the Muslim students who have shared their schooling experiences in this study felt that they would prefer their children to be educated in an Islamic school. They felt that although they had "survived" public schools, they would prefer if their children could avoid many of the struggles they faced, such as racism and low teacher expectations, by sending them to Islamic schools. Currently there is a greater movement towards separate educational systems, as well as home schooling as an alternative for Muslims who prefer to opt out of the current system, and feel that an Islamic environment is more conducive to maintaining Islamic identity. Future studies in these areas are necessary to explore the educational alternatives being created by the Muslim community and how these systems and structures of knowledge are implicated in the reproduction of the essentialized Islamic identity.

The final word goes back to Edward Said (1981) who wrote that, "...truth about such matters as Islam is relative to who produces it" (p. xvii). The textual account produced here is indeed relative to the experiences of the Muslim subjects who as actors are engaged in a process of negotiating their identities as both Canadians and Muslims. The truth that is produced about Islam through this account, will hopefully be referenced through their experiences and the meanings they ascribe to their identities as Muslims. Doing so helps to create a new conceptual understanding of Islam as a Canadian experience, rather than a foreign cultural practice, and forces the interrogation of various sites of social difference as a means to reform the structures of both schools and society.
REFERENCES:


APPENDIX I

STUDENT INTERVIEWS: PUBLIC SCHOOL

General Questions:

SECTION A:
1) Age 2) Sex 3) Ethnic Background
4) Languages spoken
5) Parents occupation
6) No. of Years in Canada
7) No. of years in Public school
8) Participation in pt/summer Islamic schools or programs (no. of years)

Section B: Identity:

- What is your definition of a Muslim?
- For you, what would you say constitutes living an Islamic lifestyle?
- How do you see you identity as a Muslim female/male?
- Are there specific ways that you express your identity as a Muslim? (i.e manners, behaviours, clothes etc)

Social Context and Cultural Practices:

- What are some of the challenges of being Muslim in a non-Muslim society? How do you negotiate this yourself?
- Do you feel that integrating into Canadian society is important for Muslims?
- Do you feel there are areas where Muslims should not integrate?
- Do you feel there is a need for full-time Islamic schools for Muslims?
- Do you feel there is a need for other sorts of separate agencies specifically for Muslims? (i.e Social service and counselling agencies, Children’s Aid, food banks, health services etc)
Section C: Student Questions:

School:

- Describe your experiences as a Muslim student in the public school system? (i.e probe overall experience, also teachers and other staff, curriculum school activities?)

- Do you find pressures to assimilate? How do you deal with this?

- What are some of the concerns Muslim students have with regard to their participation in public education?

- How do Muslim students make their concerns known to school officials or teachers? What sort of responses have they had?

- Is there a Muslim student organization in your school currently? What sort of activities do they do?

- Has your public school made any accommodation for your Islamic way of life (i.e location for prayers etc) If not, how does this affect you?

- Has the curriculum in your school dealt with Islam or Islamic issues? If so, how did you feel about how this was represented?

- Are there any books in your school library dealing with Islam?

- Does your public school celebrate/ acknowledge Islamic holidays? If so, what in particular do they do and what are your feelings about this?

- Is your school and the curriculum inclusive of other cultures? If yes, explain..

- Are there any changes you would like to see in your school or in the education system generally? Explain...

- What sort of values do feel are being taught in your school? How do you feel about them?

- Have you ever experienced racism or felt discriminated against as a Muslim, in or outside of school? Explain...

- Do you feel there are negative stereotypes of Muslims? If so, what are they... Have you confronted any of these in school? Outside of school?
Peers and social activities:

- Are your friends primarily Muslim or non-Muslim?

- How would you characterize your relationship with non-Muslims vs Muslims?

- What sort of boundaries do you maintain in your relationships with non-Muslims?

- What sort of boundaries do you maintain with members of the opposite sex? (probe: Muslim vs. non-Muslim- Is there a difference in the relationship?)

- Have you observed members of the opposite sex maintain the same sort of boundaries? (i.e with Muslims vs. non-Muslims of the opposite sex)

- What sort of Islamic social events do you like to attend?

- What sort of non-Muslim social events do you attend?

- Are you involved in any Islamic organizations?

- Are you involved in any non-Muslim organizations?

- How would you compare your experience in non-Muslim social events or organizations vs. Islamic events and organizations?

Future:

- What are your future academic/ career goals?

- What are your future personal goals?

Section D : Parent Questions:

Social Context and Cultural Practices:

- What are some of the challenges of raising Muslim children in a non-Muslim environment?

- What are some important values which you hope to pass on to your children?

- What are some of the Islamic practices which you would like your children to maintain?

- Have your children had any specific difficulties in maintaining these practices? (i.e with friends or at school)
School:

- How do you feel about the quality of education your children are receiving in the public school system?

- What do you like/dislike about public schools?

- Do you find there are cultural conflicts for Muslims in public schools? If so, how do you deal with this?

- Are you satisfied with the teaching staff and other school employees? (re: guidance counsellors etc)

- What sort of peer group do your children have at school? (i.e Muslim/non-Muslim)

- Are you aware of any racial or anti-Islamic sentiments or acts perpetrated by students or teachers? How did you/your children feel/respond to this?

- Have you ever been aware of any biases or misrepresentations related to Muslims in the school curriculum?

- What changes would you like to see in the public school system that would help safeguard Islamic identities and lifestyle?

- Are you aware of such changes in your children’s school?

- Are you actively involved in affecting such changes, either individually or through home/school associations or an outside lobby? If so, has this been an effective process?

- Have ever discussed concerns with a teacher or school principal? If so, how did they respond? Were you satisfied with their response?

- Have you ever talked to a race relations officer or community worker in the board about your concerns as a Muslim parent? If so, how did they respond? Were you satisfied with their response?
APPENDIX II

Information for Informed Consent:

Date:

Dear:

Thank you for your interest in the research I am conducting on how Muslims maintain their religious identity living in a non-Muslim society. This letter will give you further information about the project and will present a consent form for your signature.

This research will contribute to a Master's Thesis, fulfilling requirements for a Master of Arts degree in the field of Sociology in Education. My research is being supervised by Dr. George Dei, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. I will be using a qualitative research model, conducting informal interviews with a small number of students, and parents in the Muslim community.

As a member of the Muslim community and a parent, the direction of my research is focuses on the challenges faced by Muslims living in a non-Muslim society and the strategies they develop in order to deal with these challenges and maintain their religious lifestyle and identity. I am particularly interested in how educational systems are implicated in encouraging Muslims to assimilate into the mainstream culture, as well how they can be used as sites of resistance to cultural conformity.

Please be informed that all information in this study will remain confidential; pseudonyms or other codes will be used to maintain confidentiality throughout the project. The name and location of the school will not be given. The data collected will be destroyed if you wish. Raw data from the interviews will be destroyed within two years of successful completion of the project.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Please do not hesitate to call me with any questions or concerns at [416] 750-0617.

Sincerely,

Jasmin Zine
CONSENT FORM

I have read Jasmin Zines’ letter regarding her research towards a Master of Arts program in Sociology in Education at O.I.S.E. I understand that the data collected will be used in completing a M.A degree. To maintain confidentiality, I understand that my name will not be used.

Signed________________________________________

Date:________________________________________