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Integrating Islam
A Muslim School in Montreal

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June 1997

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

Despite discrimination in mainstream Canadian society, local Muslim communities are a significant resource for immigrants. Recruited by friendship and kin networks, some families chose to educate their children in private full-time Muslim schools which provide academic/economic credentials and social support. Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, this research depicts a Muslim school in Montreal which both reflects Quebec society and nurtures minority ethnic/religious identity. For many parents, Arabic language classes, academic standards, and behavioral norms were as important as the school's religious affiliation. Rejecting the hypothesis that emphasizing religious and cultural identities distanced children from mainstream society, some felt that the psychological and social effects of affirming a child's background were vital to integration and participation in mainstream society. In addition, the school also provided entry into social networks which offered parents an important support system.

Résumé

Malgré la discrimination dans la société canadienne dominante, les communautés musulmanes locales constituent une ressource d'importance pour les immigrant(e)s. Plusieurs familles, recrutées par des réseaux d'amitié et de parenté, choisissent d'éduquer leurs enfants dans des écoles musulmanes à temps plein offrant autant de formation académique/économique que soutien social. À travers l'observation participante et des entrevues semi-structurées, ce travail de recherche dépeint une école musulmane à Montréal qui à la fois reflète la société québécoise et nourrit l'identité religieuse/ethnique minoritaire. Pour nombreux parents, les cours de langue arabe, le niveau de performance académique, et les normes de l'école en matière de comportement étaient tous aussi importants que l'affiliation religieuse de l'école. Rejetant la notion que souligne les identités religieuse et culturelle risque de distancer les enfants de la société dominante, plusieurs ont indiqué que les effets psychologiques et sociaux de l'affirmation du vécu de l'enfant étaient même nécessaires à l'intégration. Par ailleurs, l'école servait de point d'entrée à plusieurs réseaux qui offraient aux parents un soutien social important.

Raising her daughter alone in France, Latifa strives to maintain her independence, rejecting an abusive marriage and the economically and sexually exploitative roles through which her chosen society seeks to incorporate immigrants, Muslims, and people of colour. She weighs the advantages of "studying Islam," joining one of the local study groups and institutes advocating modern Islamic/Islamist ideologies, yet, like other members of her family, is reluctant to give up the expansive and flexible traditional interpretations which have permitted great diversity and autonomy. When I told her about my project to explore how new and old visions of Islam have emerged as strategies in the lives of Muslims in North America, she sighed and said, "You do that. I wish I could. Never let anyone, even your husband, stop you."

This is dedicated to Latifa and her daughter, and to those whose lives honor their struggle.

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Acknowledgments

I owe debts of gratitude to many people, and none greater than to the students, staff, and parents associated with the school on which this research centered. Many individuals shared their insights and experiences with me, included me in their daily plans, and took time from their busy schedules to accommodate my questions. They remain unnamed here, despite their tremendous contributions.

My work on Muslim communities in North America began in January 1992, when Homa Hoodfar asked me to join her SSHRC-funded research project "Integration of Muslim women in Canadian society, Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, 1992-1994." This large-scale study collected more than one hundred life stories and interviews, exploring how young women used Islamic knowledge (and authority) to support their development as independent — often feminist — young women.

Homa Hoodfar's "backgammon theory" (described in *Between Marriage and the Market*, University of California Press, 1997) on the diverse strategies through which people seek to maximize their options within cultural, economic, and social constraints has inspired my approach to understanding social life. I would like to thank her for other contributions to this work as well. Despite a heavy schedule of writing, teaching, and supervising her own graduate students, she spent many hours listening to fieldwork stories and half-wrought ideas, challenging me to think about the data in new ways, and comforting me with assurances that the struggles and contradictions I experienced in researching and writing are valid — if rarely acknowledged — parts of the process. I would also like to recognize the support and hospitality offered by the staff and graduate students at her home institution, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Concordia University.

At the Islamic Studies Institute, my thesis advisor, A.U. Turgay, lent an ear to my theories as well as my problems, encouraged me to benefit from contacts with other scholars and other disciplines, and above all allowed me the independence and time to pursue anthropological field research. Some of the ideas presented in this paper were first developed in the context of public education in Tunisia and missionary education in the Ottoman Empire, topics I researched for his graduate seminars. My desire to look at social roles of schools was encouraged by his own interest in the subject and facilitated by his startling command of a very broad field of literature. His support at many stages has been crucial. Uli Locher's graduate seminar introduced me to the sociological literature on migration and immigrant communities. The class of three students met in his office in the sociology department, where we shared tea as well as exhilarating analytical discussions. I particularly benefited from his comments on my paper, "The New Umma? Assimilation and Integration of Muslim Immigrants," parts of which were developed further and incorporated into this thesis.

I am also grateful for the generosity of Tony Hilton, Holly Buchanan, Keyvan Mahjoor, Samaa Elibyari, and Mohammad Ghassemi, who shared insights and knowledge of specialized literatures which enriched my point of view and lightened my task. Hamid Ismail, director of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs, and Ibrahim Hewitt, development officer at the Association of Muslim Schools of the United Kingdom and Eire, provided documents and publications relating to Muslim schooling in Great Britain which contributed to my understanding of how this research fits into a larger context. I am also indebted to Abdul Rashid of Statistics Canada in Ottawa who discussed with me some of the issues I raise in chapter 2, and graciously sent a copy of his monograph, *The Muslim Community: Secular Facts, Non-Secular Concerns* (Ottawa Muslim Community Circle, 1994) which raises the issue of aging and how the unbalanced age distribution will affect Canadian Muslims in the coming years.

A special group of people offered encouragement and support during this project. I would like to thank Salwa Ferahian, Wayne St. Thomas, Ann Yaxley, and Dawn Richard, who ushered me through the rituals of researching, writing, and submitting a thesis; Vikki Lockwood Drummond, who commiserated and counseled as we went through this together; Velda and Vernon Kelly, Jen Leblanc, Sabah Dhaoui, Najoua Sghaier, Najib Bergaoui, Lucie Sanscartier, April Nice, Lorraine Nolan, and Elizabeth Taylor Rossinger, who alternately reminded me to work hard and sit back and reflect; and Tijani, Hans, and Helmut, who reminded me of the constraints, compromises, and victories of daily life.

Chapter one

An Introduction: Schooling Muslim Children

By necessity, this research is based primarily on fieldwork among the students, teachers, and families associated with a well-established Muslim coeducational (mixed-sex) school offering both primary and secondary levels. Although a fair amount has been written by Muslim and non-Muslim observers about theories of Islamic education and the needs of Muslim students in Western public schools, there are few studies of any kind based on empirical knowledge of full-time Muslim schools, despite a vigorous debate over whether or not such schools are beneficial to the integration and well-being of the students. I began this research with a review of the literature, a summary of which follows, yet with little more than intuition about the issues which would emerge as the main themes in understanding the life of the school as an institution created by families with immediate needs and concerns. However, themes of strategy, adaptation, and community emerged as I "collected data," or rather attended classes, spoke with teachers and helped out where I could, hung around with students, interviewed parents, and discussed my developing ideas with anyone who expressed an interest in them.

One of the most surprising findings of my fieldwork in the Muslim school was that many — in the estimate of several staff members, about one third — of the children came from Muslim families that are not more religious than most, and certainly not more religiously observant than many devout families who send their children to public or private non-Muslim schools. That is to say, in these families prayer is sporadic, taboos against alcohol and pork products are observed less strictly, men and women mix socially, and women have considerable freedom to dress as they wish. In fact, one story I was told highlights the argument that religious practice is probably not the primary issue involved in many parents' decisions to choose Muslim schooling. One girl attended the school for several years, and like many of the female students, she wore a headscarf only at school. However, some time after graduating, she decided that she would wear the hijab "full time." Her parents, who had nonetheless chosen to send her to the Islamic school where the hijab is promoted as proper dress for Muslim women, objected strenuously. This thesis explores why parents, those whose worldview is centered on

Islamic practice and those who see their lives as more secular, choose this avenue of socialization for their children. Their actions and opinions must be informed by some calculation of cost and return. What kind?

Much of the data presented in the following chapters is culled from interviews with community members and participant observation at a Muslim school, fieldwork which began in July 1996 and continued throughout the 1996-1997 school year. Comments on the challenges facing Muslims in North American society, and summaries of the literature on Islamic education and Muslim schools are presented in the next sections, followed by a discussion of the research design and method. Chapter two provides a conceptual background for the study, examining first ideas of assimilation and integration, and then highlighting variables which affect the adaptation of Muslim immigrants and their children to wider Canadian society. Along with literature on Muslim communities in Canada and the U.S., a major source for this chapter is data from the 1991 Canadian census. Chapters three and four introduce the fieldwork data and analysis, emphasizing difference and similarity with dominant social groups as well as with other Muslim diaspora schools. Emphasis is given here to the diversity of voices within the school community. Chapter five summarizes the principal findings and places them in the context of current debates.

Situating the problem

In the past twenty years, opposition groups of various shades in the Middle East have abandoned Communist symbols and rallying cries for Islamic ones, challenging the role of the state as spokesperson for the imperturbable divine order. America's preoccupation with the "Islamic Threat" has increased internationally, and lately, domestically as well. Indicative of this are the critical commentaries on the minority religious rights of Muslims in the United States and Canada, framed in terms of "the global fundamentalist movement" and "the slippery slope." A noted proponent of this view is the American journalist Steven Emerson, who has claimed that Muslim charitable associations and mosques in the United States are fund-raising fronts for international terrorist organizations.[1] Similarly, in *Femmes voilées, intégrismes*

[1] For a representative example, see Emerson's article "A look inside the radical Islamist network: The other fundamentalists," *The New Republic*, June 12, 1995. Other work by Emerson has been discredited as "propaganda" (Tony Cooper on PBS, referring to Emerson's documen-

démasqués, Yolande Geadah (1996), argues that tolerance of the hijab in public schools may lead to the implantation of less anodyne aspects of Muslim fundamentalism in Quebec.[2] In essence, the repugnant actions of those political factions in Muslim majority states whose claims to legitimacy are formulated in Islamic idioms are being linked to the demands for institutional recognition of the increasing numbers of Muslims in North America, even though what has attracted many Muslim immigrants to Canada and the United States is the pluralist political and cultural atmosphere. Muslims' expectations of religious freedom and equal treatment appear ironically to fuel the accusations of fundamentalism, as their detractors portray Muslims' attempts to build community associations and to obtain respect and recognition for religious or cultural practices as petulant, fanatical, or as proof of foreign influence. For instance, in 1994 a Muslim elementary school in Santa Clara (California) was threatened with closure after a nearby firm claimed that it presented a security risk.[3] While many conservative Christians have successfully maintained the distinction between them and racist or militant Christian fundamentalists, conservative (as well as secular) Muslims have felt less generosity from the public; the conviction of three Muslims for the February 26, 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York was proof for many that Muslims are indeed the new threat to North American society.[4]

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tary *Jihad in America* also produced by PBS), and "marred by factual errors ... that betray an unfamiliarity with the Middle East and a pervasive anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian bias" (*New York Times Book Review*, May 19, 1991, referring to Emerson's 1991 book *Terrorist*). These examples were cited in a June 13, 1996 press release issued by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR, Washington D.C.).

[2] She concludes that while Quebec liberals favor concessions to fundamentalist groups regarding the headscarf in public schools in the name of anti-racism and multiculturalism, sooner or later, these groups will turn against Quebec society (Geadah 1996:12). While she fails to show that Muslim women in Quebec actively or passively support coercive and violent fundamentalist groups, the principal flaw in Geadah's logic is the assumption that outlawing the headscarf in public schools will improve the situation for Muslim women here. What seems to occur instead is that periods of tension such as this are marked by public pronouncements (usually from male spokespersons) that such a policy is unconstitutional and limits Muslim women's freedom of religion, *since Muslim women must wear hijab*. This discourse circumscribes the freedom of action of women who do not wear accepted forms of hijab by disputing their morality and even their membership in the Muslim community.

[3] On July 16, 1996 a court postponed the order revoking the school's license until an impact study could be carried out (*CAIR NEWS, Quarterly Newsletter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations*, fall 1996). As of April 1997, the case was still under review.

[4] "3 Muslim militants convicted of bomb plot," *Vancouver Sun* September 6, 1996. p.A10. See also "The imaginary apocalypse: A US court finds a blind Muslim cleric and nine of his fol-

Prejudice against Muslims — but also against any form of social or racial difference — increases the pressure to assimilate. This problem has often been expressed to audiences within the Muslim community as a distressing plea for survival, and to audiences outside the community as a failure of multiculturalism, the Canadian social policy which served to defuse tension from minority ethnic groups by structuring and defining their participation as subaltern groups within a society dominated by British and French ways and manners.[5] A. Haleem, in the North American Muslim magazine *Islamic Horizons* (July 1987), writes:

> Welcome to the world where Muhammad is Mike and Fatima is Tina, Hasan is Sonny and Iman is Amy, Khalil is Cal and Alya is Ellen, and Hamdullah is Henry. The aliases seem an innocent linguistic compromise. But the double life led by most Muslim children here is serious business. Behind these socially acceptable names crouch an astonishingly broad repertoire of acceptable social behaviors — to peers and teachers. When the doors of Muslim households across the continent are thrown open on school mornings, the children that march through them are headed for the front. It's heart-to-heart combat in the battle of values. The Muslim Community will take heavy casualties. Many will never make it back (quoted in Pulcini 1995:181).

Zohra Husaini describes the dilemma of "fitting in" as a sociological question. She states:

> [How Muslims will continue to practice Islam in Canada] is an especially insistent question because, on the one hand, Canadian culture is increasingly secularized in the context of the modern industrial society, and on the other, for Canadians, ethnic and religious loyalties pull together against the demands of secular assimilation, often leaving one with an unwanted identity crisis. Hence, we need to examine how ethnic groups cope with the dual pressures of ethnicity on the one hand and secularization and assimilation on the other (Husaini 1990:10).

These issues involve children acutely: not only do young people experience the greatest part of their social learning within the new society and through its institutions, but they also represent the future of the family and the ethnic or religious community in the country of residence. Ahmad F. Yousif's study of Muslims in the Ottawa area revealed that raising their children according to their tradition, culture, and religion was a source of anxiety for parents (Yousif 1993:57-59). Much writing about the Muslim community in North America expresses this concern, which is located within the private realm of the family but is in fact a question of communal survival (e.g. B. Abu-Laban 1983; S. Abu-Laban 1991; Hashem 1991; Hogben

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lowers guilty of a 'seditious conspriacy' to conduct a bombing spree throughout New York City" *Time* (Canadian edition) October 16, 1995. p.56-57.

[5] For critiques of multiculturalism policies, see Bhabha 1990 and Corrigan 1987.

1983, 1991). Since the 1970s, ad hoc groups of parents and concerned community members have struggled to set up Muslim day schools in Europe and North America as one response to the challenges of immigration and settling.

While some schools, such as those in Quebec and in some European countries, receive government funding after demonstrating some degree of conformity to local standards, others have been refused such support, despite regular legal provisions (and precedents) for support to private or confessional schools (see Table 1: Muslim schools in Europe and North America, page 10). In Britain, where Muslim groups have made a number of applications to receive funding for well-established and successful full-time confessional schools, opposition has been centered around questions of culture (Nielsen 1995; Parker-Jenkins 1992, 1995; Sarwar 1994). Children attending Muslim schools, opponents believe, are harmed by the lack of exposure to other cultural groups; furthermore, some argue that girls in particular suffer from the imposition of a traditional patriarchal culture by the school, which is normally an agent of modernization. In North America, and Quebec in particular, such debates are beginning to emerge, as local authors such as Yolande Geadah (1996) link Muslim schools to the spread of political extremism.

A note on religion

The idea of religious identity as a level of analysis in this work should be carefully considered, since in so many areas of social life (here no less than in South Asia and the Middle East) religion is no more than one factor among many which affect the constraints and choices an individual faces. Moreover, despite overarching religious and political rhetorics about "the Muslim community," Muslim identity is not a unitary phenomenon. In the Middle East, for example, the community of Islam is fractured by politics and sect; hence, in practice, if not in theory, religious affiliation is secondary to secular motivations and constraints. While Islam retains its significance in the daily lives of many people, it has gained many political meanings as well, being variously associated with regime and opposition, socialism and state capitalism, and pro- and anti-monarchists. Nor does anyone have a monopoly on the authority of tradition. Since September 1996, the world's Muslims have been told by the Taliban in Af-

ghanistan (whose own legitimacy as a religious authority is constantly called into question) that the Islamic Republic of Iran is far too Westernized.[6]

As an adjective describing attitudes, practices, and institutions (as opposed to the religious affiliation of individuals), "Muslim" is a generalization to be used rarely and cautiously.[7] Not only do religious laws, beliefs, and customs differ between regional communities and classes, but more importantly, we cannot assume that religion, while it may be a difference that is easily observed, is really the most important variable in terms of explanatory power. As a analytical category, it hides differences in ethnicity, social class, and relative power which are often more closely linked than religious affiliation to the issue or practice in question.

Yet recently, Muslim identity has sporadically been a highly salient point of organization and affiliation among Muslims (primarily immigrants and their descendants) in Western societies. While it is often still true, as Yvonne Haddad quoted a Pakistani community leader as saying, that Muslims "worship together but then the Pakistanis go back to their curries and the Arabs to their kebabs" (Haddad 1978:80), multi-ethnic councils, associations, and federations of Muslims have, despite occasional or ongoing internal conflicts, become established institutions in North America and elsewhere. In Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and in other Western countries, demands are being expressed in the names of multi-ethnic Muslim communities. Education is a primary area in which stable multi-ethnic coalitions have formed.

Islamic education

Muslim intellectuals are grappling with the challenge of devising educational systems that address both modern sciences and Islamic practice. The First World Conference on Muslim Education (held in Mecca in 1977) addressed the problem of "duality" in the educational establishments of Muslim countries. Western educational streams (from primary through to university) were implanted alongside existing streams of legal, literary, and religious education. The dual system of education encouraged a growing gap between religious experts and technical experts which was reflected in mutual antagonism, as well as in the salary differential be-

[6] See the interview with Afghani human rights activist Sima Wali in Kirschenbaum 1997.

[7] For an influential critique of conventional misuse of the terms/concepts *Islamic* and *Muslim*, see Arkoun 1975, 1994.

tween fields that are considered traditional (subjects related to religion and literature) and those that are considered modern, scientific, and technical (Al-Beely 1980). The First World Conference also addressed the educational needs of Muslims living in minority communities in the West. A paper by Afzalur Rahman enumerated the challenges: parents lacked time and proper religious training themselves to instruct their children, while the ecumenical teaching of religion in Western public schools led students to religious relativism, and eventually to irreligion and the adoption of materialism and selfishness (Rahman 1980). For Muslims in the East as well as abroad, the solution proposed by conference presenters was *tawhid*, a theological concept of the unity of God which they applied to the integration of Islamic and secular knowledge in schools (Al-Afendi 1980). While Muslim educational critics argue that Western educational traditions serve only to train workers, ideally Islamic education views knowledge as unified and God-centered, and ultimately trains the heart and character (Ahsan 1988; Halstead 1995). Ideas of how to put Islamic education into practice differ greatly, however, as evidenced by the next section which reviews the development of Muslim schools in the West and summarizes the few research studies which exist on this topic.

Muslim schooling

The impetus provided by the First World Conference on Muslim Education encouraged critical views of Western education, particularly in Britain, where it closely followed the entry into the public education system of the first massive cohort of British-born Muslims of South Asian backgrounds. During the 1970s and early 1980s, as other minority groups in Britain embarked on their own paths to identify and eliminate formal and informal discrimination in the school system, intellectuals began the process of evaluating the schooling of Muslim children in the state system, led by Muslim civic organizations such as the Islamic Foundation (located in Leicester), the Muslim Educational Trust (London, founded in 1966), and the Islamic Academy (Cambridge, founded in 1980). These issues were widely publicized by local Muslim leaders who generated support from parents and community members (Raza 1993). Referring to parents' responsibility to oversee the education of their children (as stated in the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child), groups of Muslims in Britain developed lists of improvements they wished to see in state schools, particularly since in some state schools the student roll was predominantly Muslim. In fact, in 1992, in 62 state schools, between 90 and 100 per-

cent of students were Muslim; in an additional 230 schools, 75 percent of students were Muslim (Parker-Jenkins 1992:363). Requests put forward by local Muslim groups included:

- withdrawal from the daily Christian worship services which are required in British schools; absence from school on the holidays Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha; appropriate facilities for ablutions and zuhr prayer and absence from school on Friday afternoons for *jum'a* prayer or alternatively, the organization of collective worship at the school;
- uniforms which respect Muslim standards of modesty (i.e. for girls, headscarves and trousers rather than skirts) as well as allowances for students' modesty in physical education classes, including suitable uniforms and private facilities for showering and changing;
- availability of halal meals;
- withdrawal from sex education, music, or dance classes at the parents' request; and
- access to single-sex schools, once part of the British state system but since the early 1970s systematically being phased out in favor of co-education.[8]

Jørgen Nielsen cites a document widely circulated in and outside London which listed the "duties Muslim children MUST observe while they are at school" (Nielsen 1989:238, emphasis in original); its writers effectively served as a religious police in addition to presenting the demands to the school authorities. A form letter provided as an appendix to Ghulam Sarwar's work, *Muslims and Education in the U.K.*, not only takes a more diplomatic approach but also recognizes the family's priority — even over Muslim community leaders — in supervising children's academic and religious education. The letter provides checkboxes next to each statement for parents to indicate their acceptance or rejection of each suggestion. Statements include "I wish my child/children to withdraw from religious education lessons," "I do not wish my child/children to participate in the lessons of Music, Drama and Dance, and Sex Education," "I do not wish my child/children to eat non-Halal food in the school," and "I wish my child/children to wear a style of uniform including sportswear compatible with Islamic standards" (Sarwar 1983:29). Some requests were widespread, particularly the request for a modified uniform which resembles shalwar kameez and covers girls' legs (though, as in South Asian custom, not necessarily their hair). There was great diversity in the frequency of other requests, however, such as designated prayer rooms or exemption from music and drama. While requests often focused on the child's practice, for some Muslim community leaders and intellectuals, the most tendentious issue was the teaching of Islam (within the religious education curriculum) in

[8] The historical development of parents' requests and responses from British school boards is described in Nielsen 1989. For detailed enumerations of requests presented by the Muslim community, see Ashraf 1987; IQRA Trust 1991; Murad 1986; Parker-Jenkins 1992, 1995; Sarwar 1983, 1994. Yawar 1992 details similar concerns about the care of Muslim children in foster homes in Britain.

state schools by poorly trained non-Muslims using texts whose inquiry into Islam is not intended to nurture faith (Ahsan 1988; Hewer 1992). Demands were political or social as well as religious in character. Requests (e.g. for a prayer room) reflected the local Muslim community's need to receive formal recognition and accommodation from the state through its schools, particularly in areas where Muslim students predominate. Thus, in some instances, once the concession was won, students lost interest and few took advantage of it (Parker-Jenkins 1995:88-89).

While some British schools did respond to demands such as halal or vegetarian meals, adapted uniforms, and withdrawal from Christian daily worship, other demands, such as more places in single-sex schools, were not accommodated (Halstead 1988; Nielsen 1989; Parker-Jenkins 1995). Non-Muslims sometimes objected to these structural accommodations. In Derby, for instance, non-Muslims demonstrated against the right of Muslim girls to wear shalwar-kameez (tunics and pants) in the school colors as a modified uniform, while in Bradford, non-Muslim parents demonstrated against the board's decision to provide halal food (Murad 1986). While statistics show that for financial reasons at least, British Muslims overall continue to favor sending their children to state-funded schools and prefer state-funded single-sex schools for daughters (Khanum 1992:127), separate Muslim schools have been organized in areas where the Muslim population is large and where places in single-sex schools are few (Nielsen 1989:240).

Despite laws which allow for the possibility of state funding for schools organized by religious communities, and despite the precedent set by subsidizing more than four thousand Anglican, Roman Catholic, Jewish and Methodist schools (Sarwar 1994:29), petitions by individual schools for access to funding have been denied on grounds that the schools were unable to provide satisfactory facilities (resulting in an inferior education) and would furthermore lead to social segregation since most schools cater to local Muslim communities that are ethnically homogeneous (*Al-Madaris* 1995a:4; Nielsen 1995:57). In response, British Muslims have argued that non-Muslim state schools are also frequently ethnically homogeneous. Furthermore, the level of facilities is directly tied to the refusal of the state to provide funding similar to that allocated to other religious schools. Nonetheless, in 1995, one Muslim school ranked first in its school district, and two more were tied for first in their respective districts (*Al-Madaris* 1995b:1). While in May 1992 a High Court judge ordered that the application of one school be reconsidered, the application was again refused in 1993 (Haw 1994). However, while in opposition, the Labour party (which was elected by a strong majority in 1997) gave formal and

public support to the campaign in favor of funding Muslim schools on the grounds that Muslims should receive benefits similar to other religious communities (Straw 1989).

Like Britain, some Canadian provinces provide the legal opportunity for religious and other private schools to receive government funding, with the significant difference that Muslim schools have actually been able to benefit from the law in this case. At least twenty-one full-time Muslim schools are presently operating in Canada, although not all of them receive government subsidies, generally because their lack of start-up capital prevents them from acquiring a proper building.[9] In Ontario, Muslim educators have formed an alliance with Protestants and Jews in asking for funding and status equivalent to Catholics, which in some areas of that province enjoy separate fully-funded schools and school boards (dating from the 1867 British North America Act which also created Protestant and Catholic school boards in the Montreal area).

Muslim schools have also been organized in the United States, where there is a well developed network of about thirty schools under the banner of the American Muslim Mission in addition to an equal number of independent schools. Religious and other privately-organized schools in the U.S. do not have the opportunity to apply for subsidies, although here too recognition through accreditation (for purposes of college application or inter-school transfers) has become important; while the American Muslim Mission encourages its schools to seek accreditation (Pulcini 1995), some reject the criteria of the secular system all together and have chosen to retain independence regarding curriculum and staff (Durkee 1987). Muslim schools have also emerged in some European countries. Table 1 summarizes the situation of Muslim schools in a number of Western states.

Table 1: Muslim schools in Europe and North America

Country	*Funding provision for full-time religious / independent day schools*	*Full-time Muslim schools established*
France*	yes	none as of 1990
Germany*	no; some Islamic religious instruction in state schools and subject to control of German ministry of education in attempt to discourage Turkish-funded weekend Qur'anic schools	none
Netherlands*	yes, since 1988	14 funded schools as of 1990, including one jointly-run Muslim-Christian "co-

[9] Some Muslim institutions, including schools, have purchased or built facilities with the aid of short-term interest-free loans provided by North American Islamic Trust (NAIT).

Country	*Funding provision for full-time religious / independent day schools*	*Full-time Muslim schools established*
		operation school"
Belgium*	yes, though Islamic religious education in public schools since 1978 limits demand for separate schools except in two areas where local boards have withdrawn Islamic courses from curriculum	1 school (receiving no state funding) as of 1990; plans to open 6 other schools have not been successful in obtaining state funding
Denmark*	yes, since 1849	6 funded schools as of 1986
Austria*	limited: teachers are paid by state; Islamic instruction approved by national Muslim council available in state schools	2 schools, one funded entirely by Saudi Arabia and one supplied with teachers by Austria
Britain†	yes, (1) since 1944 as voluntary aided schools under the control of a religious body, and (2) since 1994 as grant maintained schools receiving funds directly from the state; nonetheless all applications for funding for Muslim schools have been refused	54 (unfunded) schools as of fall 1996
United States §	no	between 60 and 110
Canada ‡	yes (under provincial jurisdiction)	21 operating schools as of April 1997, some partially government funded and some not

Sources: *Nielsen 1995; †This figure is provided by a voluntary association of Muslim full-time schools, the Association of Muslim Schools of the United Kingdom and Eire, in *Al-Madaris* 1996-1997:7. Similar associations of Muslim schools do not exist in Canada and the United States. §Pulcini 1995; Adnan Omran, principal of al-Ghazzali School, Teaneck (New Jersey), personal communication April 1997. Some of the ambiguity derives from the fact that many Muslim schools in the U.S. are informal and their students are officially classified as following a homeschooling program (Durkee 1987). ‡My list is updated from that in Muslim World League 1996:17-18 which lists 16 schools. In addition to 21 currently operating schools, I am aware of plans to open three more Canadian schools in September 1997.

Critical Muslim views on separate schools

While Muslims in Britain have generally supported the campaign for state-funded Muslim schools, some are more circumspect, though for different reasons than those of the British education ministry, cited above. According to Larry Poston, the Islamic Circle of North America views such schools critically, arguing that they derive from and encourage a defensive orientation, motivated by the fear that, surrounded by non-Muslims, Muslims will lose their identity (Poston 1992:38). Similarly, the Islamic Society of North America encourages members to enroll their children in public schools and circulates letters advising schools and teachers of the needs of Muslim children (Poston 1992:44-45). In these views, participation in

Western society does not necessarily entail complete and total assimilation; rather, the obligation of *da'wa* — calling others, including Muslims, to be faithful — requires that Muslims participate in the society around them.

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair Lummis note that 39 percent of Muslims associated with the mosques they surveyed thought that "having an Islamic school in the mosque Monday through Friday replacing public school for children" was very or quite important, while 61 percent said it was somewhat or not important (Haddad and Lummis 1987:50). In fact, in Montreal most Muslims do not choose full-time Muslim schools for their children, and although the reasons cited are sometimes similar to those mentioned above, they also include financial considerations, convenience, and fear of even greater prejudice. Many families send their children to weekend schools where they learn Arabic (and sometimes Farsi, Urdu or other "Muslim vernaculars") as well as religion. During my fieldwork, I learned that despite parents' religious convictions, few Iranian children in Montreal attend Muslim schools since an adequate supplementary after-school program run by the Iranian government already exists for children of students and diplomats, aiming to facilitate their eventual re-entry into the Iranian educational system. One community organization estimates that overall 2 percent of Muslim children in Montreal attend full-time Muslim schools. While the same organization aims to have 50 percent of Muslim children in Muslim schools in Montreal — which is the proportion of Jewish children attending full-time Jewish schools in the city[10] — even a rate of 2 percent is high compared to other cities in North America, according to one educator I discussed this data with.[11] In Los Angeles, he suggested by means of comparison, only about 0.5 percent of Muslim children attend Muslim schools.

Research studies of Muslim schools

Although there is much written, particularly in Britain but also in the United States, about the desirability of Muslim schools and the Islamic ethos that should inform them on one hand, and the reasons why such schools present obstacles to social integration on the other,

[10] These figures were cited at a 1996 fund-raising dinner for the Muslim school where this research was conducted and are supported in Weinfeld 1985:22-23. Morton Weinfeld's excellent study of Jewish day schools also notes that the large majority of students attending Jewish schools are "non-orthodox" (Weinfeld 1985:19) and that most parents do not desire their children to become "maximally Jewish adults" (Weinfeld 1985:16).

[11] Shabbir Mansuri, Council on Islamic Education, Fountain Valley (California). Personal communication, April 1997.

there are few published research studies of full-time Muslim schools. The conclusions of these empirically-based studies are reviewed in this section.

During two years of participant observation at a Muslim girls' school which included interviews with 80 percent of students, all teachers, and a sample of governors, parents, and former students, as well as a review of school policy documents, student records, and curriculum materials, Marie Parker-Jenkins and Kaye Haw examined "the experience of Muslim girls in a Muslim school in Britain" (Parker-Jenkins and Haw 1996:17). Many of the students reported feeling happy with the school because it was Islamic and an all-girls school with a good academic reputation; they also mentioned feeling "comfortable," since they all wore scarves and shared a common religious and cultural background. Nonetheless, certain issues troubled the students, including a lack of close relationships with the staff (only two staff members were Muslim women) and a lack of voice in the schools' day to day affairs. Parker-Jenkins and Haw distinguish between the different views of Islam held by the school governors, parents, teachers, and students, and conclude that the patriarchal/tradition-bound interpretations of the governors (all men) and parents drown out the participatory/inquiring interpretations of Islam held by the (female) teachers and students.

A one-shot case study of a Muslim girls' middle school, consisting of interviews with students, teachers, and community members and a review of the political and social context forms the basis of a study by Saeeda Khanum of "Education and the Muslim Girl" (Khanum 1992). Situating her research within the struggle between women and a male-dominated society, she draws on the comments of students and teachers to show that while South Asian parents tend not to favor educating their daughters for the work force, education has become an asset for parents and their daughters in the marriage market; some girls hoped that, after gaining independence from their parents (if not their husbands) after marriage, they would be able to find jobs.

Karen Selby's field research focused on participant observation at an American Muslim school which offered grades kindergarten through eight and had an enrollment of less than one hundred students (Selby 1992). Selby observed classroom teaching at the school one day per week for sixteen weeks, and concluded her field study with formal, taped interviews with three teachers; this research was supplemented by participation in Friday prayers, parents committee meetings, and school board meetings during the year following her observation at the school. Selby documented teachers' attempts to move from a curriculum dominated by mainstream textbooks to one which offers "an Islamic schooling experience" (Selby 1992:47). While one

teacher made Islam an integral part of the lesson, others incorporated Islamic content less systematically "added onto the textbook lesson like a footnote" (Selby 1992:47). Selby's goal in this research was to evaluate how Muslim schools reflect an Islamic worldview, and she concluded that both teacher training and the lack of a formal Muslim syllabus contribute to the differing degrees to which this has been achieved within a single school.

In the same vein, Noura Durkee's survey of the primary education of Muslim children in North America is based on her experience as a founder of the Dar al-Islam Muslim village and school in New Mexico (Durkee 1987; see also Pulcini 1995). The first part is a Muslim critique of public schooling, while the second part presents a summary of curriculum development reflecting the efforts of a number of Muslim schools including her own. Like Selby, Durkee emphasizes the need for an Islamic curriculum reflecting an integrated approach to knowledge.

Research design

In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors "from the inside," through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding (*Verstehen*), and of suspending or "bracketing" preconceptions about the topics under discussion (Miles and Huberman 1994:6). Weber's concept of Verstehen refers to the profound understanding gained from appreciating a person's behavior within the context of the actor's values and experiences, that is, through incorporating the phenomenological meaning he or she attaches to it (Weber 1949).[12] This concept guided the research described in chapter 4, which rejects the assumption that families choose Muslim schools simply because they are Muslim and shows how parents viewed this decision.

This study finds its analytical roots in grounded theory, a paradigm which views generating theory and doing social research as intertwined parts of a single process (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Miles and Huberman 1994). The essence of grounded theory is that while the researcher approaches the field with a question and a loose framework of assumptions about likely variables and operating principles, theories and conclusions ideally emerge out of the data, in an ongoing process of investigation, reflection, and comparison. Because so little social

[12] More accurately, the researcher attempts to appreciate a person's behavior within the context of *how the researcher understands* the actor's values and experiences.

research has focused on Muslim schools as sites of integration, I favored the inductive approach of grounded theory.

The primary methods of gathering information were participant observation and semistructured interviews. Participant observation is the foundation of inquiry in social anthropology, since it allows the researcher to gather data that has immediate context and meaning, and to enrich the analysis by incorporating the actors' views about the meaning and significance of the data. Furthermore, like semistructured interviews, participant observation lends itself to exploratory research in areas where there may be many unknown variables or relationships, which was the case in this study. Interviews and observation were supplemented by a brief enrollment survey which I carried out in April. This survey collected information, classed by grade and gender, on students' and parents' places of birth.

In this research project, participant observation consisted of attending classes, speaking informally with students and teachers during breaks and after school, and generally observing the pace of life at the school. After several months, my activities also included giving English lessons to a small group of students, and for a number of weeks, to two kindergarten classes as well. Although my motivation in agreeing to these duties was to give something back to the school community which had generously allowed an outsider to hang around and ask questions, I eventually saw my participation in these tasks as an important tool in facilitating my relationships in the field: while my contribution provided some additional attention for students who were far behind their classes in English skills (as well as some respite for their overworked and underpaid teachers), I also gained first-hand appreciation for the skill and expertise needed to manage an elementary school classroom. While I continued to explain my presence at the school in terms of my research, these activities gave me a recognized and mutually understood role, or rather gave the students and teachers a role to place me in.

I was reluctant to make notes during informal conversations (as opposed to formal interviews) since I quickly saw that my attempts at transcribing events and dialogue often made people self-conscious, and dramatically changed the character of a "naturally occurring" event. Consequently, I made time throughout the day to write up brief notes, sitting outside in the playground, at a hallway table, or in the teachers' preparation room. These notes were reviewed and used as the basis for more extensive reports of the day's activities which I wrote each evening, often on the bus or metro as I returned home.[13] These fieldnotes recorded descriptions of

[13] Anthropologists generally engage in some compromise between naturalistic investigation (unobtrusive observation of naturally-occurring events) and highly detailed and presumably accurate descriptions aided by video cameras or tape recorders. What is essential to grasp here,

clothing and space, paraphrased conversations, lesson plans, and observations about what began to appear as norms and exceptions in the social organization of the school. Within a few days, themes began to emerge in the fieldnotes, and these eventually took the form of underlined headings in the fieldnotes: "Conformity and Autonomy," "Religious Motifs," "Adaptation," and so on. Clifford Geertz describes the anthropologists' goal in writing fieldnotes and later analysis as generating "thick description," generating complex, multi-layered texts which incorporate the explanations of concepts, power structures, and histories necessary to approximate the anthropologist's interpretation of the social meaning of an event (Geertz 1973:5-10).

Because of my own reactions to the almost consistently negative images of Muslims portrayed in the North American media, I anticipated that my initial contacts with teachers, administrators, and families involved with the school I envisaged visiting would be crucial. Not only would they set the tenor for the rest of the project, making the research fruitful or not, but I was also concerned with the effect my presence as a Westerner, albeit one who converted and married a Muslim Arab, would have on the people I talked with in the course of my research. Indeed, although my first meeting with the director went well as I explained my desire to carry out a research study that would provide descriptive data about the school, I later discovered that my intuition was right. Several months into the fieldwork, I learned that many teachers had at first believed that I was yet another journalist who would come, stay for a day, and then go away and write nasty things. One teacher told me, "When I first saw you, a chill went through my heart. Here is another person who has come to point out the mistakes of the Muslims." [14]

I remember my first day at the school as slightly bewildering. I arrived early and greeted the director who took me to the classroom where it had been arranged that I would spend the

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however, is that *all* data — regardless of how it is recorded — is substantially filtered in one way or another by the observer who decides what is relevant to the question, i.e. what constitutes "data" and what does not.

[14] North American Muslims' suspicion of researchers is well founded, given the frequency of attacks on Muslims (North American and foreign) in the media. Several people told me that they had first been willing (and even eager) to talk to the media about Islam and Muslim life in North America, yet after they saw how their opinions were presented in a negative context, they became distrustful. Although the experience of developing mutually trusting relationships with members of the research community is one common to all fieldwork projects, several studies of Muslim communities in North America make special note of the difficulty of "gaining entry" — even where the researchers or their assistants are themselves group members. See Haddad and Lummis 1987:9-10; Ohan and Hayani 1993.

morning. The teacher gave a short explanation of my presence to the class, "This is Sister Patricia. She will be visiting the school to learn about the Muslim community." And I took a seat at the back. During that first morning, I made brief notes about the subject matter and the general atmosphere of the classroom. I also looked for indications of what would distinguish this school from other Canadian schools. I noted the character of teacher-student and student-student interactions, and the kinds of examples the teacher brought to illustrate her lesson. I also looked for quantitative data, counting the number of girls and boys in the class, sketching the arrangement of the desks, marking the placement of girls and boys throughout the room.

At recess, the students left the room. Instead of going to the staff room, as I later learned was the daily routine, the teacher said that she wanted to ask me some questions: "We will stay here because it is crowded in the staff room. So what are you doing here? What is it that you want to know?" I told her that I had been studying the development of Muslim communities in the West and that I had visited with people who sent their children to the famous Islamia School in London, founded by the pop star Cat Stevens who became Muslim and changed his name to Yusuf Islam, abandoning his career at its height. In Britain, Muslims want the right to receive state funding for Islamic schools just as Jews and Catholics receive funds for their own private schools, and as Muslims and other groups in Canada do. But because of the widespread belief in Britain that publicly-supported Muslim schools would encourage the "ghettoization" of ethnic minorities and inhibit the process of integration (and all it entails), state funding for private Muslim schools has consistently been refused. Despite the broad public debate on the desirability of encouraging Muslim schools through providing state funding, there were few real studies of what kind of teaching the schools provided, the atmosphere they promoted, and the reasons parents enrolled their children in those schools. Within the next few days, I had similar conversations with other staff members.

Yet, despite my confidence in the importance of shedding light on this institution/process of socialization, initially I felt very overwhelmed. At a later stage in the research, I wrote in my fieldnotes that there were many doors and hallways, and this seemed to be metaphoric: getting lost in the building, relying on the curiosity and kindness of strangers, eventually finding my bearings and feeling independent, and then becoming quite confident of my mental map of the school — a process which corresponded to my own progress through the orientation, fact-finding, and theory-building stages of the research. During the first few weeks, despite the director's introductions, several months of reading, and much planning on my part, I felt very much alone and unsure of how best to go about my research.

The interviews began in earnest in October 1996, after five weeks of observing and participating in the social life of the school. I had developed and pilot-tested in July 1996 a rather structured interview schedule which I substantially revised to fit the more conversational style that began to appear better suited the exploratory nature of the research. By necessity, this was my research plan, since studies of North American Muslim schools focused only on curriculum, while studies of British schools appeared increasingly inappropriate. Not only were there vast differences between the two populations (primarily Asian and working class in British Muslim schools as opposed to primarily Arab and lower-middle to middle class at this research site) but also the focus of all but a few British studies was influencing policy as opposed to describing the social life of the school. The loose framework enabled me to gather data on the same topics from all participants, while allowing flexibility to incorporate new variables and themes as they emerged. In addition to demographic information, questions for parents included the educational background of their children, experiences in public schools and at the Muslim school, and factors which influenced their educational choices. Staff members were asked to comment on issues that, in their experience, are important for families' choices regarding Muslim schooling, their experiences as teachers, as well as ways in which the school resembled and differed from other schools in the area. Students were asked about their experiences at the school, at public schools, and in Quebec society in general.

The loose structure of the interviews also helped to maintain the spontaneous and informal atmosphere I sought. The subject of Muslim schooling and integration often elicits several sets of responses, each one conforming to the informant's expectations/discourse toward a particular audience (Muslims, non-Muslims, religiously observant people, religiously non-observant people, educated and less educated people, and so on), and I hoped to avoid these rote answers as much as possible. For the same reason, I generally limited my sample to women, since with them I was able to develop a rapport that cut through the dialectics over my own role/status as a Western/Muslim woman that many men tried to engage me in. Thus, instead of rejecting and disavowing my tangled position as an insider/outsider with unique constraints and insights, I embraced it, acknowledging that no researcher — even one who claims to be neutral — comes to the field free of values, experiences, motives, or identity which influence his/her approach (see Behar and Gordon 1995; Finch 1993; Mies 1993).

Sampling

Participants in the formal interviews were approached on the basis of a purposive sampling scheme which sought to include individuals of different ages, educational and occupational backgrounds, places of birth, stages in the family cycle, attitudes toward religious practice, and forms of involvement in the school. Ten students took part in formal interviews, while more than fifty took part in substantial informal discussions that were one aspect of the participant observation. Sixteen staff members, representing diverse ranges of experience and backgrounds, were formally and informally interviewed. Thirty-two parents and community members were interviewed, located by word of mouth after the significant themes of the research emerged. Because this was not a random sample, the results of this study indicate the range of opinions but not their frequency, except in very broad terms.

Consent and confidentiality

My first contacts with the school took the form of telephone conversations and later, a meeting with the director, during which I explained my research plan and goals and obtained consent for the study. Similar explanations and discussions occurred with other members of the staff during the next few days and weeks, as well as with each person I interviewed.

In planning, conducting, and writing up the research, I was particularly concerned with maintaining the privacy of those whose comments and behavior form the basis of my conclusions. Anonymity was promised to all research participants. While I have avoided mentioning the name of the school, I do describe the geographic location and other details which would make identification possible.[15] Because of the small pool of potential informants (students, staff, and parents involved with one of several Muslim schools in Montreal), I have been careful to avoid the mention of identifying information (age, family background, place of birth, education, occupation); while the inclusion of such data would enrich to some extent the reader's appreciation of the data, I am unwilling to jeopardize the privacy of those who generously shared their thoughts with me.

[15] Note that the revised code of ethics of the American Sociological Association states that while individuals, families, kin, and friendship groups that are subjects of research are entitled to biographical anonymity, similar rights are not due to neighborhoods, ethnic groups, religious denominations, corporations, and so on (ASA 1984).

Sources

The primary sources of data are the participant observation and interviews described above. However, written documents were also used. These included letters to parents, the student agenda and handbook (including rules and regulations), and course materials. Other primary sources included contemporary documents about Muslim education and the situation of Muslims in the West produced by Muslim intellectuals and lobby groups.

I also make use of contemporary writing about religious practice and obligations. My rationale in citing these works is that while they are often opinion pieces as opposed to neutral expositions and often lack authority in discussions of whether or not a given custom or belief is "Islamic," they do reflect current arguments, views, and issues.[16] These sources influence (and are influenced by) popular knowledge and everyday epistemologies, in contrast to the scholarly work and sources which, however relevant they may be, do not affect the lives of most people *except through these intermediaries*.

Transliteration

While published research on the Middle East is increasingly tending toward standardized transliteration of written language, spoken dialect poses problems for those whose approach to their area of study allocates equal and often primary importance to social interaction. Bucking the trend toward "correcting" dialect and rendering the transliteration in standard Arabic, researchers such as Lila Abu-Lughod (Abu-Lughod 1993) have returned to favoring local forms and pronunciations in the texts of their published works, placing the transliteration issue in the context of Western authority over the East through the West's superior knowledge of the Orient's literary texts and sources of culture (Kabbani 1986; Said 1978). For similar reasons, I am reluctant to impose standard Arabic on the voices of informants who, writing or speaking in English or French, chose other forms, words reflecting something of themselves. Assalaamu Aleikum is *Arabic anglicized*, it is incorporated into the vernacular through an autonomous (though eventually formalized) attempt to make something knowable to an English-speaking audience, to integrate Arabic by representing its consonants and vowels in a way that makes sense by vernacular orthographic conventions while resisting the "management" of

[16] How to determine whether or not a practice is authentically Islamic is itself the subject of intense debate (particularly among contemporary Muslim intellectuals), as some argue that hadiths which appear to go against the principles of justice and equality outlined in the early revelations should be discarded as tainted by pre-Islamic prejudice. See Arkoun 1994; Collectif 95 Maghreb Égalité 1995; Ezzat 1994; Hassan 1992; Leites 1991. An important new trend in Islamic legal/cultural interpretation is described in An-Na'im 1990; Lindholm and Vogt 1993.

the Orientalist editor. To the anthropologist studying the integration of the Muslims who use these religious idioms as Arabic interjections into written discourse enacted in English, Assalaamu Aleikum is an artifact of a particular culture, education, and worldview. Similar examples can be cited for French, Dutch, and other languages that have become the vernaculars of the diaspora.

English has become an important language for Muslims. While Arabic is still the language of the international *fuqahā'* (legal scholars), English increasingly unites the educated professional elite — which more and more has a voice in the religious life of the community. Vernon James Schubel notes that Abdelaziz Sachedina, a professor of religion as well as a leader of the North American Shi'ite community, delivered a series of religious talks in 1981 which compared English to Urdu. Not only would English become an "Islamic language" as it was used more and more by Muslims in religious contexts, but it was also the only way to preserve the vitality of the community whose children are no longer fluent in traditional Islamic languages (Schubel 1996:195).

Thus since this is a work about social life and choices of Muslims in Canada, the spellings and usages respect the consensus of Muslims living in and writing for the English speaking world. In the text of this work, I favor Eid over *'Īd*, Mecca over Makka, and hadith and hadiths over *ḥadīth* and *aḥādīth*. In the reproduction of primary sources (letters, brochures, articles produced by and for members of the Muslim community), I preserve the author's spelling. When reproducing spoken comments for which no anglicized spelling has become standard, I prefer a modified version of the system of transliteration used by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. In these instances, diacritics are omitted and both hamza and ayn are represented by the apostrophe.

Translations

Most of the interviews and conversations in the field took place in French and were translated into English as the fieldnotes were written up from interview notes or tapes.

Quotations from the Qur'an throughout are from *The Holy Qur-ān: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, by Yusuf Ali (Medina: King Fahd Holy Qur-ān Printing Complex, 1410 H./1989).

Chapter two

Muslims in Canada: A Contextual Approach

Like everyone else, Muslim Canadians live in a world which affects the choices they make. This world is composed of social, political, and economic variables which influence how, through daily decisions, individuals choose to interpret, selectively emphasize, and reformulate aspects of their social identity as they try to improve their situations and adapt to changing circumstances. Following the lead of Henri Tajfel, social identity relates to "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1978a:63).[1] Muslims become a significant social group in these views, and while there are substantive divisions within, the existence of such a group is tangible not so much through shared religious rites as through the sustained public presence of multi-ethnic North American lobby groups advocating Muslims' civil rights.

Religious identification is an important part of social identity, but not the only one; class, ethnicity, and other identities also take center stage in some instances. However, when it comes to Muslims and Middle Eastern Muslims in particular, all other signifiers lose their meaning, and religion becomes the focus of attention. Describing this view of social life in Egypt, Homa Hoodfar states,

> What little [literature] existed focused primarily on gender ideology and the role of Islam in the lives of women and families, although more recently the focus has shifted to the return of veiling and fundamentalism. It was as though Muslims, and in particular Middle Eastern people, lived in the realm of ideology and religion while the rest of the world lived within the economic structure (Hoodfar 1997:15).

While recognizing the role of religion in shaping perceptions and responses to life events, Clifford Geertz also emphasizes its limited explanatory power. In his landmark essay "Religion as a Cultural System," he writes,

[1] In another formulation of this perspective, social groups are "imagined communities," the product of collective acknowledgment of shared experience. See Anderson 1983.

> no one, not even a saint, lives in the world religious symbols formulate all of the time, and the majority of men live in it only at moments. The everyday world of common-sense objects and practical acts is ... the paramount reality in human experience — paramount in the sense that it is the world in which we are most solidly rooted, whose inherent actuality we can hardly question (however much we may question portions of it), and from whose pressures and requirements we can least escape. A man, even large groups of men, may be aesthetically insensitive, religiously unconcerned, and unequipped to pursue formal scientific analysis, but he cannot be completely lacking in common sense and survive (Geertz 1973:119).

I have adopted this perspective in my study of confessional schools as a channel for the socialization of *some* Muslim children in the West. This chapter explores the issues which surround the decision to choose Muslim schooling in Canada, focusing on the historical and social context of Canadian Muslim communities and highlighting the problems of assimilation and integration. A review of current writing on immigration, assimilation, and identity offers a jumping-off point.

Segmented assimilation: A theoretical framework

Nearly 80 percent of Muslim Canadians are immigrants, as we shall see later in this chapter, while most of the rest are second generation Canadians. Thus, each confronts the processes of assimilation and integration, in which the individual negotiates his or her place in wider society. In its most basic sense, assimilation is the process through which an immigrant becomes similar to the dominant social group. Milton Gordon's formulation of the classical theory of assimilation based on the experiences of white European immigrants to the United States describes the process: while the immigrant faces cultural, linguistic, social, and economic obstacles, the second generation, having gained the (North) American cultural kit, surmounts these obstacles (Gordon 1964). The experience of some immigrant groups, however, raises questions about the universality of the assimilation process.

In his discussion of the history of the idea of assimilation in the United States, Nathan Glazer draws our attention to the consistent exclusion of African Americans from the assimilation ideology (Glazer 1993). Along the same lines, studies of recent immigrants from Asia and Latin America (Hirschman 1994; Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut 1994) show that Gordon's theory of assimilation, now called "classical theory of assimilation" or "straight-line theory of assimilation," does not hold true for these latter groups, who were stigmatized by the re-

ceiving society as non-white[2] and faced a markedly different set of options and constraints from immigrants of European origin. Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou insist that Europeans assimilated because they could (Portes and Zhou 1993). However, in a society where the stigma assigned to skin color has reproduced alienation and discrimination (Glazer 1993), non-Caucasian immigrants must find another means of adjusting. Henri Tajfel makes a similar point, writing that while some groups (such as Catholics in Britain and elsewhere) assimilate and shed some or most of their differences, other groups are prevented from doing so by the dominant group, which perceives clear boundaries separating them (Tajfel 1978b:5-6). Tajfel mentions Jews as one group which has consistently maintained ethnic/religious identity and boundaries (no matter how often they are crossed), in part due to the external consensus on the existence of a very distinct group called "the Jews" (Tajfel 1978c:31; Horwitz and Rabbie 1982:241). Muslims, despite an almost overwhelming diversity in histories, languages, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, are another group whose existence as a palpable social group derives not only from the theological notion of the umma but also from shared experience of and in the West.

Minority group members must seek to participate in society through a means other than assimilation, or at least complete and indistinguishable assimilation. Segmented assimilation describes patterns of assimilation in which the individual adopts dominant group behavior or values in some areas and retains minority (ethnic group) behavior or values in others, as part of a strategy to maintain or improve his or her welfare given the existing opportunities and constraints (Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut 1994). One variation on the assimilation process is what Ruben Rumbaut calls dissimilation, as some members of the second generation, excluded by their race from membership in the dominant social group, assimilate to a non-dominant social group, which offers nonetheless considerable status and benefits. Rumbaut suggests Hispanic and Black as examples of these pan-ethnic identities. Muslim also seems to have recently emerged as a pan-ethnic identity (Raza 1993), which is not surprising given the sense of exclusion from dominant society felt by many young Muslims (Hoodfar 1994; Kadi 1994; Kashmeri 1991; Rostom 1989).

Social groups exist (sometimes uniquely) as the result of the individuals' perception that they are members of a shared social category, and individuals belong to many social groups, each of which will be judged more or less relevant (or salient) in a given situation ac-

[2] That is, it is not skin color which is the origin of the problem, but the attitudes of the dominant group toward it.

cording to the level of awareness of membership in the group, the strength of positive and negative evaluations associated with membership in this group, and the measure of emotional investment in awareness of group membership and positive and negative evaluations (Lewis 1994; Tajfel 1978a:63, 1978c:38-39). There are distinguishable benefits associated with emphasizing group membership. Tajfel's experiments revealed that when group identity is emphasized, not only do individuals treat fellow group members more favorably than non-members, but fellow members are also treated more favorably than when group identity is not "switched on." Returning to the idea presented in chapter 1 that some less-religious families do opt for specifically Muslim education, we can consider this as an example of a decision to selectively emphasize this pan-ethnic (Muslim) group identity, in order to reap whatever benefits — economic, social, and psychological as well as spiritual — it offers. Thus, recognizing that group membership combines gains with costs, Philip Lewis suggests that British Muslims are "not simply passive victims of racism, rather ... minority communities have cultural capital which can be turned to their advantage" (Lewis 1994:22). The following section presents an overview of the positive and negative factors which influence the extent to which some individuals choose to emphasize Muslim social identity in the Canadian context.

Muslims in Canada

During the period of unprecedented geographic mobility caused by post-war political upheaval, market development, and increased communication, individuals from many countries came to settle in Europe and North America. As a result of these multiple migration trends, Muslims are no longer simply the second largest religious group worldwide,[3] they are the second largest religious community in former colonial powers such as Britain and France, as well as in countries where their presence is very recent, such as Belgium and Sweden.[4]

In Canada, although a much smaller proportion of the population is Muslim, Islam is a religion which is growing rapidly, largely due to immigration.[5] Between 1981 and 1991, the

[3] Worldwide, Muslims have been estimated at 951 million (all sects). For purposes of comparison, there are 1.78 billion Christians (all sects) and 309 million Buddhists (Crystal 1993:401).

[4] See the discussions of Muslims in Europe in Abedin and Sardar 1995; Nielsen 1995; Nonneman, Niblock, and Szajkowski 1996.

[5] In comparison, the growth of the American Muslim community has been most dramatically affected by conversion. See Stone 1991. For an excellent analysis of the role of Islam in the

Muslim population increased by 158 percent, the second highest rate of growth among all Canadian religious groups (Statistics Canada 1993:1).[6] In Quebec, the population of Muslims increased from 12,120 in 1981 to 44,930 in 1991 (Gouvernement du Québec 1995:150). As the number of Muslims residing in Canada has continued to grow as a result of multiple immigration streams and through natural increase, it is anticipated that the 2001 national census will record that Canada is home to more Muslims than Jews, who currently form the nation's largest non-Christian religious minority group. (The 1991 census recorded 318,070 Jews and 253,260 Muslims, Statistics Canada 1993:14).

Migration patterns

Two early periods of Muslim immigration to North America did not result in the establishment of viable Muslim communities. The first consisted of Spanish (i.e. Andalusian) Muslims in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who were removed from the New World colonies by order of Charles V of Spain (Bilgé 1987:426). The second consisted of Muslim Africans brought as slaves to America. Many of these people were highly educated, and literate in Arabic; some manuscripts were written in Arabic by enslaved Africans in America (Bilgé 1987:426).[7]

However, while Muslims again began to immigrate to North America and Canada in small numbers specifically at the end of the nineteenth century, like immigration streams of Muslim immigrants to other Western nations (Bilgé 1987; Durán 1987; Nielsen 1995), rapid growth of Canada's Muslim population dates only from the 1960s when, for the first time, large (if not equal) numbers of both men and women immigrated as students, professionals, and skilled workers.

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lives of young African American men in prisons, see Dannin 1996. Barboza 1993 is a collection of life histories of American Muslims, with particular attention to Black converts.

[6] During the same time period, the number of Buddhists increased by 215 percent, the number of Hindus by 126 percent, and the number of Sikhs by 118 percent (Statistics Canada 1993:1).

[7] Islam persisted for some time despite attempts by slave traders to suppress it as a sign of the enslaved people's autonomy. In the United States, descendants of enslaved Africans who have "reverted" to Islam form as much as 30 percent of the estimated Muslim population of 4.7 million (Johnson 1991:111). See also Kolars 1994; Muhammad 1995. In Canada, Muslims of African-American heritage (and who identified their ethnic origin as Black in the 1991 census) represent a much smaller portion of the Muslim community, in the area of 3.5 percent. See Table 4, page 35.

Table 2 depicts a population which grew marginally (primarily by natural increase) over a long period of time, before experiencing tremendous expansion over a markedly short period of time. Several factors seem to account for this. Initial Muslim immigration to Canada derived from the Ottoman Empire, and in many respects, Yvonne Haddad's comments on early Arab Muslim immigration to the United States may apply equally well to Canada. She writes that emigration was encouraged by economic changes occurring in the Middle East, including a decrease in prices of agricultural produce between 1890 and World War I, the destruction of agricultural land, and the loss of overland transit income following the opening of the Suez Canal (Haddad 1983:65-66); early Muslim immigrants to Canada were primarily rural Lebanese men with little formal education who became door-to-door traders in Canada (Haddad 1978:71; Jabbra and Jabbra 1987).[8] However, as we shall see, in later years shifts in immigration policy changed the class structure of immigrants. For instance, as Ohan and Hayani note, Muslim immigrants from Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s were mostly middle class individuals displeased with the socialist turn of President Nasser's economic policy (Ohan and Hayani 1993: 24). As more and more Muslim migrants transmitted information (both good news and bad) about their new communities in Canada, growing familiarity with the area, the establishment of kin and other networks, and the development of local enclaves which provide a sense of community as well as specialized services also attracted immigrants.[9] Yousif cites pull factors mentioned by his respondents: education, political climate, employment, and the presence of friends and relatives (Yousif 1993:18).

Table 2: Muslim population of Canada, 1871-1991

Year	*Muslim population*
1871	13

[8] Migration theories assert that migrants make rational cost-benefit calculations, weighing their likely future in the country of origin against what is expected in the area to which they may migrate (Lee 1966, Piore 1979). Push factors (located in the country of origin) and pull factors (located in the country of destination) impel migration; these forces are impeded or augmented by other variables such as access to cash, skills, and social resources and government policies (in both sending and receiving countries) which hinder or help population movement. While economic and social trends describe large geographic fluctuations of population, we should not overlook the private tragedies or the otherwise marginal events which provoked a particular migration at a particular moment. See Khalaf 1987:27.

[9] A fundamental characteristic of migration is that, once initiated, streams connecting specific regions in the sending and receiving societies increase over time as a result of the two-way flow of information between the areas encouraging further migration (Lee 1966). See, for example, Yousif 1993:89, note 9. He writes, "Almost the entire village of Majdel-Balhiss, including its chief..., moved to the National Capital Region [Ottawa and area] during the nineteen-sixties and afterwards." See Khalaf 1987 and Grabill 1971:31 for similar examples.

Year	*Muslim population*
1881	0
1891	0
1901	300-400
1911	1,500
1921	500-600
1951	2000-3000
1981	98,160
1991	253,260

Sources: B. Abu-Laban 1995:135; Haddad 1978:15-19; Rashid 1985:15; Statistics Canada 1993:14; Waugh 1983:76.

Table 3 shows the settlement patterns of Muslims in Canada. Ontario, which has the largest concentration, fares favorably against other provinces when measured by the factors mentioned by Yousif's respondents: many universities and colleges, a stable political climate (compared to Quebec, for instance), a strong economy (compared to the Maritime provinces), and the existence of already sizable ethnic communities. Furthermore, those who initially lack either marketable skills or recognition for their credentials are attracted to Ontario's large cities by the relative ease with which they can obtain employment in the large service and manufacturing sectors (Ohan and Hayani 1993:29-31; see also Piore 1979:15-49 which provides insight into immigrants' initial willingness to work in low-status jobs).

Table 3: Muslim Canadians by province of residence, 1991

Province or territory	*Muslim population*
Newfoundland	305
Prince Edward Island	1,435
New Brunswick	250
Quebec	44,930
Ontario	145,560
Manitoba	3,525
Saskatchewan	1,185
Alberta	31,000
British Columbia	24,930
Yukon	30
Northwest Territories	50
total	253,200

Source: Statistics Canada 1993:14-15.

Initial population growth was arrested in the early part of the twentieth century. The Muslim population declined sharply between 1911 and 1921 with the departure of many who, as subjects of the Ottoman Empire, were considered enemy aliens during World War I (B.

Abu-Laban 1980:87-88, 1983:76).[10] At the same time however, opportunities for Lebanese — who accounted for most early Muslim immigrants to Canada — opened up elsewhere. After World War I and the French occupation of Lebanon, many young men were recruited into the army; others left Lebanon for other areas, such as West Africa, which had become part of France's empire (Haddad 1978:72).

"White Canada": Immigration policy as a structural impediment

Negative attitudes about Muslims (and about Asians in general) also influenced the demographic pattern of Canada's Muslim population. Although acknowledging that immigration was necessary for nation-building and economic growth as North America was being transformed into a modern industrial power, Canadians did not welcome immigrants — Christian or not — whose customs were unfamiliar or thought to be at odds with the British way of life already established here.[11] A book about immigration to Canada published in 1909, tellingly entitled *Strangers Within Our Gates*, described Syrians and Armenians as poor in character:

> Their wits are sharpened by generations of commercial dealings... These parasites from the near East ... are ... but detrimental and burdensome (cited in Porter 1965:65).

These attitudes were the basis of the White Canada immigration policy between 1891 and 1962, a policy which was the single most important factor in determining the migration pattern and demographic characteristics of the Muslim population. Northern Europeans and Americans, who were judged to be accustomed to the culture, climate, and working conditions,

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[10] Baha Abu-Laban notes that in the 1911 census, Syrians were classified as Turkish, as Syrians were Ottoman subjects (B. Abu-Laban 1980:20). See also Jabbra and Jabbra 1987:28; Khalaf 1987:18; Hoogland 1987:87-88.

[11] The history of Canada's immigration policy testifies to a hierarchy of preference in regard to ethnic groups, with charter members (British and, to a lesser extent, French) at its apex, excluded non-white non-Christians at its foot, and others in between who were not excluded from immigration by the pre-1967 system, but suffered varying degrees of systemic disadvantage. See Porter 1965:60-103; Avery 1975; Lautard and Guppy 1990. The place of Christian denominations in this hierarchy, and the gradual shift in Canada's governing elite from Protestantism to Catholicism, is described in Nock 1993.

were courted and welcomed by the government which was pursuing programs of settlement in the west and economic development in the east. In contrast, Syrians were ranked second from the bottom in priority (Haddad 1978:72). While discrimination was disguised by wording which emphasized economic or cultural skills, immigrant selection also incorporated explicit racial/racist elements: African American farmers, for instance, were formally discouraged (although not excluded, Hawkins 1989:6-7), and those who did fit into the limited categories open to Asian immigrants were subject to a considerable head tax (B. Abu-Laban 1980:55; Hawkins 1989:20).

Muslim Arabs were less likely to immigrate than Christian Arabs, even before the imposition of immigration restrictions. The history of contact between Muslim and Western empires has been marked by rivalry and conflict, translated into mutual accusations of heresy; Europe and North America were not considered hospitable lands for Muslims in particular, and non-Christians in general.[12] Although by the nineteenth century numerous delegations of young men were sent from Muslim countries to study in Europe, living in a non-Muslim society was thought to be dangerous, uncertain, and annoying (Masud 1990; Nyang and Ahmad 1981). Such attitudes were supported by theological views which divided societies into *Dar al-Harb* and *Dar al-Kufr* (abodes of war and unbelief) on one hand, and *Dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam or submission to God) on the other. In essence, Muslims had no guidelines for behavior as permanent residents in North America (Poston 1992:19-20).[13]

Other factors were also at work, however. While non-Muslims had gained knowledge of North America and its culture through American missionaries who had traveled through remote regions of the Ottoman Empire seeking to convert Eastern Christians to Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, Muslims did not, since preaching to them was forbidden (Finnie 1967:123-124). Many Christian graduates of missionary schools left their villages for North America (Grabill 1971:31), initiating new streams of communication and immigration.[14] An-

[12] The tense relationship is characterized by envy intermixed with scorn. Thus, while Molière presents a flattering image of young man who disguises himself as a cultivated Turk to charm a French family in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, in Dante's *Inferno*, the Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali were damned to the eighth hell as heretics. See Said 1978.

[13] A.A. Sachedina tells an anecdote which he affirms is true about several sincere Muslims who insisted that it is permissible to steal from shops in North America, since this is Dar al-Harb.

[14] By 1895, there were 425 Protestant American schools in the Ottoman Empire (Field 1969:350). Virtually all the 20,000 students were Christian (Finnie 1967:107-108; see also Kazamias 1966:96 for similar statistics).

other factor which affected the relative proportions of Christian and Muslim immigrants was access to cash with which to finance immigration (Khalaf 1987:21). The growing infiltration of the Ottoman market by Europe in the nineteenth century offered lucrative middle-man economic and administrative positions to local Christians, while simultaneously undermining the economic structure of the Muslim middle class, composed largely of artisans and merchants (Issawi 1982; Khalaf 1982; Ma'oz 1982). Thus, few Muslims were able to migrate even if they had the knowledge of opportunities for immigration and desired seek a living elsewhere. In the 1930s, only 5 to 7 percent of Canada's Arab population was Muslim (Ohan and Hayani 1993:32).

The exclusion of "Asiatic races" (which included by extension all non-Europeans) from entry was confirmed repeatedly, under various guises. When the White Canada policy was abandoned in 1962, it was an administrative decision introduced with little fanfare (Hawkins 1989:38-39), motivated by the desire to improve Canada's image among the new (and non-European) member states of the United Nations while at the same time drawing profit from the increasingly skilled populations of non-white countries (DeVoretz and Maki 1983).[15] The racist nature of Canada's immigration policy was not a matter of public or political debate at the time. Freda Hawkins writes,

> This very important policy change was made not as a result of parliamentary or popular demand, but because some senior officials in Canada, including Dr. [George] Davidson [Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration], rightly saw that Canada could not operate effectively within the United Nations, or in the multiracial Commonwealth, with the millstone of a racially discriminatory immigration policy around her neck (Hawkins 1989:39).

In 1967, the non-discriminatory policy was made law in an amendment to the Immigration Act which established a merit-based point system of immigrant selection (Parai 1975). This change in government policy permitted the rapid growth of Canada's Muslim population, which doubled five times between 1951 and 1981.

[15] For a discussion of the brain drain phenomenon, see Portes 1976.

Census data

In 1981 and 1991, the Canadian census obtained data on the religious affiliation of Muslims.[16] Prior to 1981, data on Muslims were collapsed along with census information on Buddhists, Sikhs, and Hindus and other Eastern non-Christian religions.

Official estimates of the number of Muslims in Canada are thought to be highly accurate since they are derive from a specific question about the religion of the respondent and of other members of his or her household.[17] However, based on her interviews with Muslim community leaders, Husaini states that many believed this estimate was very low, and that

> it was felt that the manner in which the question about religion was framed made it very difficult, if not impossible, to develop an accurate database of the religious persuasions of Canadians (Husaini 1990:23).

While it is possible that some individuals, believing that the government had no business knowing their religion (and other personal details), gave false information on this and other census questions,[18] it is likely that the extremely rapid increase of the Muslim population between 1981 and the time of Husaini's interviews gave rise to community leaders' assumptions of inaccuracy. However, other factors also influence population estimates produced by advocacy groups. Haddad states that a leader of an American Muslim umbrella organization, whose estimate of the United States Muslim population was half that popularly cited by other Muslim leaders, suggested to her that "inflated numbers are sometimes used to gain per capita aid for

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[16] The mid-term censuses, conducted between national censuses in years ending in six, are less detailed and do not collect data on religious affiliation of respondents.

[17] In comparison, there is true ambiguity about the size of the Muslim community in most Western countries, where religious affiliation is not recorded by the national census. For example, recent estimates of the American Muslim population vary from 10 million (Muhammad 1995:166) to 4.7 million (Johnson 1991:111). See Kelley 1994:136; Stone 1991 about determining the Muslim population in the U.S. In Western Europe, only Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Northern Ireland record religious affiliation of residents in the national census (Nielsen 1995:170). Where religious affiliation is not recorded, the size of Muslim communities is estimated based on the ratio of Muslims found in residents' countries of birth, which is recorded by the census, combined with small scale studies to confirm these ratios in the resident population (see Peach 1990). One danger in such a methodology is that Muslims are frequently under-represented among migrants compared to their proportion in the country of origin, as in the cases of Morocco and Tunisia in the 1960s, when Jewish emigrants predominated, and Ottoman Syria, when Christian emigrants predominated (Karpat 1985).

[18] For a detailed treatment of the debate for and against collecting data on race and religious affiliation in the U.K. census, see Ahmad and Sheldon 1993.

the organizations or to help enhance their political, economic, and spiritual influence" (Haddad 1983:67-68).

Not only do the 1981 and 1991 census data provide absolute figures for the number of Canadians who identified themselves as Muslims to the census takers, but the data also allow us to draw relationships between religious affiliation and other variables, such as place of birth, ethnicity, education, occupation, income, and geographical distribution. However, the wealth of data available to researchers has not been fully appreciated and exploited. For instance, the questions raised by Abdul Rashid's excellent analysis of the 1981 census (Rashid 1985)[19] — the first which recorded data on Muslim Canadians — were not followed up by a similar analysis of the 1991 census, despite compelling evidence (such as the community's increase by 158 percent, Statistics Canada 1993:1) that important changes have taken place. Major stumbling blocks faced by researchers include access to census data tapes and knowledge of the statistical programs used to manipulate the data.

Ethnicity, race, and racism

Muslim families in Canada strive to maintain their religious identity in milieus that are often biased against profound religious motivation of any kind, in addition to being suspicious and misinformed about Islam and Muslims. Closely linked to religion, and frequently confused with it as evidenced by the misbelief that Muslims are all Arabs and vice versa, is race.[20] One measure of racism is the degree to which members of an ethnic group are perceived to be similar to members of the dominant racial/cultural group. Farid Ohan and Ibrahim Hayani cite a survey of anglophone and francophone Canadians which showed that Arabs and East Indian Canadians were perceived to be among the ethnic groups most dissimilar to them, ranking above only Mennonites, Hutterites, and Doukhobors (Ohan and Hayani 1993:5). The same volume presents survey data which indicates that not only do Arabs report discrimination, but

[19] Rashid's work appeared as part of a Statistics Canada series which aimed to provide detailed information on selected groups.

[20] While the proportion of Muslims among Canada's Arab community has increased due to the arrival of as many as 30,000 Somalis (see Ohan and Hayani 1993:54 for their critique of census data on Somalis), only about one-third of Arab Canadians are Muslim (Ohan and Hayani 1993:46). In 1980, Baha Abu-Laban estimated that Arab Muslims were only about one-fourth of Canada's ethnically Arab population (B. Abu-Laban 1980:139).

also that Muslim Arabs report more discrimination than do Christian Arabs (Ohan and Hayani 1993: 135-148).[21]

A public opinion survey commissioned by the Quebec provincial government found similar attitudes. A sample of 1,000 respondents from across the province showed not only that racism was present, but that in some cases it was apparently increasing rather than decreasing. In 1992, 21.3 percent of respondents reported that they were "not in ease" in the presence of Arabs, while in 1996, 32.1 percent responded that they were "not in ease" among Arabs. The proportion of respondents who reported that they felt at ease during both surveys was slightly over half, at 54 percent in 1992 and 55.1 percent in 1996. The survey indicated a similar dynamic of increasing racism toward Indo-Pakistanis. Those who reported feeling "not at ease" were 21 and 29.3 percent in 1992 and 1996 respectively (Joly 1996:69).[22]

This discrimination is acutely felt during times of crisis. Zuheir Kashmeri (1991) documents how latent distrust escalated into harassment and violence against Canadian Muslims (Arab and non-Arab) during the Gulf War. Muslims were also wrongly targeted by media commentators as likely suspects in the days following the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City in April 1995 (later believed to be committed by militant fundamentalist Christian Americans)[23] and again after the TWA Flight 800 crash in August 1996 (still unsolved but believed to be caused by a mechanical failure). For instance, on April 19, 1995, Steven Emerson attempted to lay blame for the Oklahoma City bombing on Muslim fundamentalists.[24] He told viewers of *CBS News* that the Oklahoma City bombing "was done with the intent to inflict as many casualties as possible. That is a Middle Eastern trait" as well

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[21] Many studies reveal the attitudes and perceptions of Westerners toward Islam and Muslims. Aziz al-Azmeh (1993:122-145), Rana Kabbani (1986), and Edward Said (1978) look at how fantasies and biases about Muslims are entrenched and formalized by Western specialists. Earl H. Waugh (1991) discusses discrimination against Muslims in North America. Gerald Darren Gowlett (1995) shows how coverage of Islam in the Canadian media has focused on violence and extremism. Powerful prose such as Driss Chraibi's semi-autobiographical novel *The Butts* (1983, originally published in French as *Les Boucs* in 1955) and the anthologies edited by Kamal Rostom (1989) and Joanna Kadi (1994) document how these attitudes are experienced psychologically and socially.

[22] The sample population was 79.1 percent Caucasian of "francophone origin," 8.9 Caucasian of "anglophone origin," 5.1 percent Caucasian of other origin, and 6.9 percent non-Caucasian (Joly 1996:12).

[23] In June 1997, Timothy McVeigh was sentenced to death for the Oklahoma City bombing.

[24] Similar reactions occurred in Britain. The front cover of *Today* magazine one day after the bombing showed a photograph of a dead baby and the caption, "In the name of Islam."

as "Oklahoma City, I can tell you, is probably considered one of the largest centers of Islamic radical activity outside the Middle East."[25]

In addition to recording religious affiliation, censuses also request information on the ethnic origin of respondents and their households, allowing us to form a rather detailed picture of Canada's Muslim population. Table 4, below, shows the ethnic composition of Canadian Muslims who claimed a single ethnic origin (excluded from the table are 25,585 individuals who claimed multiple ethnic origins). The 1991 census shows a fairly balanced split between two large groups, South Asians and Arabs/West Asians, with a very small number of individuals from other ethnic groups. Glossed over, however, is the considerable diversity within each of these categories. For example, "Arab and West Asian" includes large numbers of Iranians and Afghans, which together account for as much as one third of the total.[26]

Table 4: Muslim Canadians by ethnic origin, 1991

Ethnic origin (single)	*N*	*Percent*
Arab and West Asian	96,385	42.4
South Asian	90,890	40.0
African	11,715	5.2
Black	8,080	3.5
Caribbean	5,505	2.4
Other East and South Asian	3110	1.4
British	3,120	1.4
Balkan	2,860	1.3
French	1,275	0.6
Canadian	1,715	0.8
Other	1,440	0.6
Total	226,095	99.6

Source: Calculated from Statistics Canada 1993:206-7, 212-3, 218. Percentages do not total 100 because of rounding.

[25] For critiques of media coverage, see for instance, "Media stereotypes of Muslims are destructive," *Montreal Gazette*, April 24, 1996; "Arab world bitter over finger-pointing in bombing case (Oklahoma City)," *Montreal Gazette*, April 25, 1995; "Arab-Canadians found themselves targets of war fever: victims criticize news media for ignoring plight of harassment," *Vancouver Sun*, February 4, 1992; "Natives and Arabs suffer collateral damage from the media," *Montreal Gazette*, April 16, 1991.

[26] For instance, between 1986 and 1991, 28,969 Iranians and 7,202 Afghans were admitted to Canada as permanent residents (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 1992:39). While we can anticipate that some (perhaps a very significant proportion) also left Canada within this period, there would also be an increase in the ethnic populations as a result of children born in Canada. Another source of error in these estimates may be a variation in the proportion of Muslims in the immigrant population relative to that in the country of origin. Muslims are estimated to form 98 percent of Iran's population (Glassé 1991:191).

The ethnic background of Muslim Quebeckers also shows several large clusters (see Table 5). Almost 18 percent are from the three North African states Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. In fact, of the 12,840 Muslim and non-Muslim North African-born people living in Canada, 10,235 reside in Quebec (Gouvernement du Québec 1995:150). Another large group, comprising 17 percent, is from South Asia (Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh). In both cases, these are loose groups united but also significantly divided by cultural and historical characteristics. A Tunisian explained the nature of nested Tunisian, Maghrebi, Arab, and Muslim identities to me: "Me against my brother, my brother against my cousin, my cousin against the stranger."

Table 5: Muslim Quebeckers by ethnic origin, 1991

Place of birth	*N*	*Percent*
Lebanon	6,715	14.95
Iran	4,710	10.48
Morocco	4,655	10.36
Pakistan	3,575	7.96
India	2,335	5.2
Algeria	1,870	4.16
Bangladesh	1,735	3.86
Tunisia	1,505	3.35
Turkey	1,475	3.28
Egypt	1,160	2.58
Other	15,195	33.82
Total	44,930	100

Source: Calculated from 1991 census, quoted in Gouvernement du Québec 1995:150.

Denomination and the Canadian Muslim community

Based on Christian religious history, sociologists have developed a religious taxonomy (after Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch) which distinguishes between sects, cults, denominations, and churches. While denominations are pluralistic, churches are monopolistic. Sects are characterized by their tension with greater society, while cults are further along this continuum, and are marked by novel, bizarre, and often syncretist beliefs and practices. In western society, both churches and sects tend, over time, to develop into denominations (Nock 1981; O'Toole 1984). This approach would lead some to categorize both Shi'ite and Sunni traditions

as denominations,[27] and Ahmadis and Druze as Muslim sects.[28] In practice, these distinctions are found in the acceptance or rejection of particular groups and/or practices by Sunni-dominated mosques.

While the Canadian census does record the denomination of Christian residents (e.g. Roman Catholic, United, Salvation Army), it does not collect similar information on Muslims (e.g. Sunni, Shi'ite, Ismaili), Jews (e.g. Reformed, Conservative, Hasidic) or other non-Christian groups. There are several possible reasons for this. First, and most readily obvious, is the relatively small number of non-Christians in Canada and the cost-utility ratio of collecting supplementary information on such small groups.[29] This may have some relevance to the computation and publication of findings, that is, denominational information on Muslims might be provided by respondents but not coded.

Second, Muslims in Canada do not tend to think of themselves in terms of sect or denomination. While Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims worship together in many Canadian mosques, this may not represent a permanent or optimal situation, particularly for Shi'ites (see Haddad and Lummis 1987:43; Poston 1992:108). As Murray Hogben suggests (1983:119), interdenominational collaboration decreases as communities become large enough to support their own institutions, demonstrating that Muslims in Canada do retain (or acquire, in some instances perhaps) distinctions between sects.[30] Supporting Hogben's theory, Zohra Husaini (1990:31) records that Sunnis, Shi'ites, Ismailis, and Druze maintain their own religious organizations in Alberta, while Edmonton alone has five Sunni mosques, one Shi'ite *imambargas*,

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[27] For more discussion of Shi'ite Muslims in North America, see Poston 1992:108-110; Sachedina 1994; Schubel 1991, 1996; Walbridge 1994, 1997.

[28] For discussion of particular Muslim sects, see Gardell 1994; Haddad and Smith 1993; Nuruddin 1994; Webb 1994.

[29] In the 1991 census, the various denominations of Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox Christians together accounted for 83 percent of the population, while non-Christian religions (of which the largest were Judaism and Islam) accounted for 5 percent. "No religion" was marked by 12 percent of respondents (Statistics Canada 1993).

[30] However, we can anticipate that legal affiliation (i.e. the school of law customarily followed by a family, or in most cases, an entire national or ethnic group) will rapidly dissolve in North America, as most distinctions between different schools are no longer salient. During my fieldwork I realized that few individuals who did not see themselves as religious scholars were conscious of the existence of different legal traditions within Islam. Similarly, in the proposal for Muslim personal law in Canada by Syed Mumtaz Ali and Enab Whitehouse (1992), Muslim personal law is presented as a codified whole, rather than several sometimes conflicting systems.

and two Ismaili *jamaat khanas*.[31] In Montreal, which supports about twenty mosques, three are exclusively Shi'ite, one is commonly used by both Sunnis and Shi'ites, and the rest are primarily Sunni (Gouvernement du Québec 1995:150). Based on similar observations in Europe, Calid Durán writes that shared pressures of living in the West cause Muslims of different sects to draw closer, even while continuing to engage in confrontations carried over from their countries of origin (Durán 1987:423).

Finally, and perhaps most fruitful as a source of explanation, is the structure of the questionnaire itself. Christians are cued by the survey question to provide additional information; Muslims, Jews, and other non-Christians are not. Question 17 of the 1991 census asked of each individual in the household, "What is this person's religion?" An explanatory note reads,

> Indicate a specific denomination or religion even if this person is not a practicing member of that group. For example Roman Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, United Church, Anglican, Presbyterian, ... Islam, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh.

Rough estimates of the denominational composition of the Muslim population of Canada are cited in some sources. Several authors suggest that Sunni-Shi'ite populations in North America and Europe reflect the 90 percent/10 percent ratio characteristic of the world's Muslim population as a whole (Durán 1987:423), although Canada's Shi'ite population is relatively greater than that of the United States (Bilgé 1987:429). A lower estimate of North America's Shi'i population of 6 percent by Larry Poston (1992:30) is based on studies published in the early 1980s and likely excludes the significant influx of Shi'ites after Iran's Islamic Revolution. Taking into account recent immigrations of Shi'ite Iranians, Iraqis, and Lebanese as well as East African and South Asian Ismailis, a higher estimate of "at least 30 percent" is offered by Abdulaziz Sachedina (1994:6). A similar proportion, 35 percent, has been suggested to represent the Shi'ite population of Quebec.[32]

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[31] For discussions of the Ismaili community in Canada, see also Rajwani 1983:24-34; Ross-Sheriff and Nanji 1991.

[32] Laurent Fontain and Claude Marcil, "La ville aux huit cents clochers," *Montréal*, April 1993: 26-39, quoted in Gouvernement du Québec 1995:150.

Age distribution

Demographic characteristics of Canada's Muslim community are highly influenced by the immigration policies cited earlier in this chapter. The population is particularly young (with an average age of 27.6 years) and foreign born. In 1991, 22 percent of Muslim Canadians were born in Canada (Statistics Canada 1993:273).

Table 6 describes an age pyramid for the Muslim community. The large proportion in the 25-44 years age group typifies the current point-system immigration policy which privileges educated and economically active individuals. The other bulge, in the under 15 age group, also derives from this policy, since the economically productive years are also the family's fertile ones. There are very few old people, in part because so few Muslims migrated prior to the end of the White Canada policy in 1962. Finally, along with the rest of the Canadian population, the average age is gradually increasing rather than decreasing (see Table 7), corresponding to the trend to marry late and have fewer children (Rashid 1994:20).

Table 6: Muslim Canadians by age group, 1991

	less than 15	*15-24*	*25-44*	*45-64*	*65+*
Muslims	71,575	40,000	98,690	35,265	7,735
(as percent)	28.3	15.8	39.0	14.0	3.1
All Canadians	5,689,300	3,832,825	9,193,915	5,354,675	2,932,320
(as percent)	21.1	14.2	34.1	19.8	11.0

Source: Calculated from Statistics Canada 1993:18.

Table 7: Average age of Muslim Canadians, 1981 and 1991

	1981	*1991*
Muslims	26	27.6
Average of all Canadians	32.3	34.5

Source: Statistics Canada 1993:102-105.

Today's children are growing up without a model of caring for old people, and certainly with no model of caring for old people in the manner which their parents remember from childhood.[33] Muhammad Anwar's surveys of 549 British Muslim households in 1975 and 1983 support these concerns. While 80 percent of parents and young people agreed with the general statement "Muslims prefer to live as joint families" (Anwar 1994a:24-25), when asked about

[33] Rashid 1994. For more discussion of the challenges of an aging community and how models of caring have been influenced by assimilation, see Ross-Sheriff 1994.

their own plans for the future, only 42 percent of young people intended to live in a multiple-generation household.[34]

Educational achievement and job classification

Canadian Muslims are distinguished from the general population by markedly higher levels of educational attainment and involvement. For instance, Muslims were more likely than the Canadian population as a whole to be attending school in 1991. Of those aged between 15 and 44, 35.8 percent of Muslims attended school part time or full time during that year, compared to 27.3 percent of all Canadians in that age group who attended school (calculated from Statistics Canada 1993:108-109, 136-137; see also Haddad and Lummis 1987:5).

Many sources record that Muslims give great importance to education (Abu Aali 1980; Afshar 1989; Halstead 1995). For example, children's notebooks in a London Muslim bookshop I visited in March 1996 were inscribed with the Arabic text of verses 3-5 of Surah 96 (al-'Alaq) of the Qur'an. In Yusuf Ali's translation, they read:

> Proclaim! And thy Lord is most bountiful, — He who taught (the use of) the Pen, — Taught man that which he knew not.

God is not only the source of revelation, but also Teacher. Other evidence of the value placed on education is the well-known hadiths, "The pursuit of learning is a duty for every Muslim man and woman, without distinction between them, since learning is venerated in Islam and its pursuit obligatory" (quoted in Halstead 1991:270) and "Go even to China [then the furthest known center of civilization] to seek knowledge."[35]

While we can easily point to this reverence for education as a possible reason Muslims are more likely to have higher educational involvement than other Canadians, many other

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[34] One pattern of accommodating the privacy and independence valued by young people brought up in Britain with the convenience and family solidarity permitted by customary extended households has been to find apartments in the same building, or houses on the same street (Anwar 1994a: 25). I have observed similar housing preferences among young Middle Eastern and South Asian families living in Canada.

[35] While most agree that it the hadith referring to China was not uttered by the Prophet as its folklore claims (since China was not known to Muslims during the Prophet's time), the saying has become part of popular Islam in many countries and continues to be used to emphasize the value of education in Islam (e.g. Narbaez 1996:22).

nations (such as the Irish) share this esteem for scholars without having a similar educational profile as a community. Rather, with the exception of dependent relatives of citizens and refugees, most Muslim immigrants have been chosen on the basis of their qualifications. Not only did immigration policy exclude all but the most exceptional Muslims from immigration prior to 1962, but the 1967 point system sustained, albeit at a lower level, this bias toward the professional middle class.[36] The effects of this policy on the demographic characteristics of the Muslim community are particularly evident in the educational achievement of men and women who arrived in Canada before 1961. While 30.3 percent of Muslim men who immigrated during this period held university degrees, only 9.9 percent of other immigrant men had similar qualifications; among women, 16.5 percent of Muslims had degrees, compared to 4.7 percent of other immigrant women (Rashid 1985:39). This situation has also shaped the level of school attendance among younger people. While the Canadian-born children of educated immigrant parents can also be anticipated to attain similar levels of education, the presence of this group of high-achievers would also serve as an example and conduit for individuals of less-privileged backgrounds who have aspirations of social mobility (see, for instance, Rumbaut 1994).[37]

Muslim men are more likely than Canadian men as a group to be found in professional (managerial, sciences, teaching, medicine, and the arts) or white collar (clerical, sales, service) jobs (Rashid 1985:40-42).[38] While 31.7 percent of Muslim men worked in the professional sector in 1980, only 23.5 percent of all Canadian men were employed in this sector. Similarly, 34.5 percent of Muslim men in 1980 worked in white collar jobs, compared to 25.5 percent of all Canadian men. Foreign-born Muslim women, however, were less likely than other foreign-

[36] The middle class bias of the point system is somewhat mitigated by the sponsorship of dependent relatives by citizens who entered as independent immigrants via the point system or as refugees, and the subsequent initiation of migration chains, as each relative then sponsors his or her own dependents. Haddad (1983:67) makes a similar argument. From a slightly different point of view, chain migration and its effects on "immigrant quality" are discussed in Arnold 1989.

[37] It is important to recognize that the socio-economic status of an immigrant or ethnic group may vary tremendously from one country of residence to another, depending on the conditions of migration and the forces which encouraged it. For instance, while Canada's South Asian community is relatively prosperous (Qureshi 1991), South Asians in Britain are dramatically less so (Anwar 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Lewis 1994; Nielsen 1995). Bangladeshi children, in particular, have been targeted by British schooling authorities as having special needs (Lewis 1994; Parker-Jenkins 1995).

[38] As noted earlier in this chapter, there has been no analysis of the 1991 census to meet the standard set by Rashid's (1985) study of the 1981 census. The, 1981 figures should be used cautiously, bearing in mind that the tremendous growth of the Muslim community since 1981 has also presented many still unknown alterations in its social and economic characteristics.

born women to work in professional jobs (16.9 percent compared to 23.4 percent), while their employment in white collar jobs was higher (62.9 percent compared to 56.3 percent). Factors influencing this pattern likely include systemic racism and the reluctance of Canadian employers to recognize foreign accreditation, although other factors may also have dictated a different career path. These could include family responsibilities, language difficulties, and lack of social and professional networks.[39]

As immigrants and members of ethnic and racial minority groups, Muslim Canadians aim to integrate themselves into Canadian social, political, and economic life at levels appropriate to their training, experience, and potential (Hamdani 1995; Hoodfar 1992; Jamal 1994). Despite higher levels of educational achievement, Muslims earn lower salaries than others in the same job classifications (Hamdani 1986; Rashid 1985) and are more likely to be unemployed than non-Muslims (Hamdani 1995). The key variables here are race and culture (in the sense of cultural capital, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), since as Hamdani notes, other immigrants from developing countries share this difficulty in obtaining jobs appropriate to their levels of training (Hamdani 1995:154). Abdulaziz Talbani confirms these findings. While South Asians have more education than the Canadian average and are more highly represented in white collar jobs, their average income is less. South Asians appear to occupy the lower status- and salary-ranges of their job classifications, which Talbani attributes to the lower value accorded by the job market (and Canadian society generally) to foreign training and experience (Talbani 1991:33-35).

Religious persistence and exogamy: Reproducing the community

In the early part of this century, Muslims who immigrated to many parts of North America failed to establish communities and institutions that outlived their founders. A major obstacle was family formation: since few women migrated until the 1960s, Muslim men in some communities tended not to marry at all, or married Christian women and became nomi-

[39] Rashid's data do not break down employment classification by period of immigration and sex, nor are these data yet available for the 1991 census. Further investigation in this area will likely yield interesting information about the economic integration of different cohorts of Muslim immigrants and the welfare of their children. See also Hamdani 1995 for more on income differentials between Muslims and non-Muslims in Canada.

nal Muslims (Bilgé 1987). In the Maritimes, where the Muslim community is still much smaller than in other parts of Canada, Muslim families are often isolated, and as Joseph Jabbra and Nancy Jabbra write, "may come to hold very unorthodox beliefs, or be lost to the religion altogether" (Jabbra and Jabbra 1987:68). While most Muslim communities in North America have now reached critical mass and are not in danger of perishing with the first generation, there is some suggestion that Islamic identity may change more subtly, as immigrants and second- and third-generation Canadians adopt the West's fragmented attitude toward religion. In Reginald Bibby's view of religious life, individuals are frequently non-practicing members of their faiths but are not in danger of switching allegiance, although they typically pick and choose from among traditional values and practices, often of several different religious traditions (Bibby 1987, 1993).

The 1981 census provided data which underscored the existing concern of Muslim leaders and writers that despite the growing numbers of Muslims, North American Islam was fragile (see, for instance, B. Abu-Laban 1983). Rashid records that, based on household composition and religious affiliation data from the 1981 census, 19 percent of Muslim men and 8 percent of Muslim women were married to a spouse of another faith (Rashid 1985: 57-60). Among Canadian-born Muslims, 60 percent of both men and women were married to a spouse of another religious background. Mixed marriages — and, equally important, the gender of the Muslim parent — had a strong effect on the religious affiliation of the children. One third of children in households where only the father was Muslim were also identified as Muslims in the census; where only the mother was Muslim, one fourth of children were also identified as Muslims.[40] It is likely that the influence of the non-Muslim parent was strengthened by the weight of a similar society behind it.[41] Another important consideration is that Rashid's obser-

[40] For a substantial discussion of Rashid's findings on the religious identity of children of Muslim parents, see Hogben 1991. Hogben shows that when married to a non-Muslim spouse, foreign-born Muslim men are more likely than Muslim women to communicate their religious identity to their children (38.9 percent versus 24.2 percent); yet, among the Canadian-born, the trend is reversed and women are more likely than men to communicate their religious identity to their children (17.1 percent versus 9.1 percent).

[41] This assumption would be tested through comparison to religious persistence among the children of mixed marriages in societies which are not primarily Christian. For instance, this theory would predict that children born of a mixed Jewish-Christian marriage in Israel would be Jewish, and that children born of a mixed Muslim-Christian marriage in Tunisia would be Muslim. Thus, the relevant variables would be identified as majority religious group/minority religious group as opposed to non-Muslim/Muslim. Acknowledging this, the Hanafi school does not permit marriage to Christian and Jewish women outside of Muslim lands because of the

vations are based on the very small number of individuals who would have been married with children in 1981 out of a total Canadian-born Muslim population of 22,435 (Rashid 1985:17), a population which was highly Westernized even before immigrating to Canada (see Haddad 1978).

Since 1981, the Muslim community has increased in numbers and in degree of institutionalization. Mosques and cultural associations can be found in many cities; in larger cities, such as Montreal, Toronto, and Edmonton, there is a wide variety of organizations.[42] An internet site maintained by the Muslim Students Association of USA and Canada displays addresses and contacts for mosques across the continent. The list includes over 170 mosques, prayer rooms, associations, schools, da'wa (missionary) organizations, social service providers, international development and relief agencies, and other groups catering to the interests of the North American Muslim community. Marriage matching services are also formally offered by many mosques; other avenues include classified advertisements for prospective partners (of both sexes) in national Muslim publications and, again, on the internet.[43]

Because of increased opportunities to meet potential marriage partners of similar religious (and ethnic) background, a study of religious persistence based on the 1991 census might show that there has been a decline in mixed marriages.[44] Trends of increased religious practice would also be reflected in a decline in religious exogamy. While Murray Hogben writes that

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increased possibility that the offspring of the marriage will not be Muslim ('Abdur Rahman al-Jaziri, *Kitab al-Fiqh 'ala Madhahib al-'Arba'ah* [Cairo, 1970] p.76, cited in Doi 1989:45).

[42] Perhaps reflecting the relatively recent interest in following the growth of Muslim institutions in Canada and the United States and certainly the recent increase in institution-formation at all, Edmonton's al-Rashid Mosque is sometimes cited as North America's first mosque (e.g. Husaini 1990), in addition to its place in history as Canada's first mosque. However, as Barbara Bilgé (1987:428-429) writes, several American mosques predate it. The first mosque constructed in North America was built in Maine by an association of Albanian Muslims in 1915. A mosque built by Polish-speaking Tatars in Brooklyn in 1928 remains in use.

[43] In March 1996, I discovered a Muslim marriage bureau displaying ads from men and women seeking partners at www.plaza.com/pages/institutions/matrimonials.

[44] Exogamy — marriage to a person of another group — can be examined in terms of ethnic, religious, kin, or geographical communities. A survey of 561 Arab Canadians conducted by Ohan and Hayani revealed that 82 percent of Arab Muslims were married to a partner of another ethnic group (ethnic exogamy). While they did ask respondents if they would approve of their children marrying a spouse of another religion (80 percent of Muslim Arabs would not, compared to 70.7 percent of Christian Arabs) they did not collect data on instances on religious exogamy among their sample, i.e. inter-faith marriages (Ohan and Hayani 1993:129). They attributed the higher rate of ethnic exogamy among Muslims to ethnically-mixed mosques (Ohan and Hayani 1993:127).

exogamous marriages probably occur most frequently among individuals whose observance of traditional religious norms is not strong, he reports that one community leader

> noted that the percentage of outmarriages had apparently dropped from [his estimate of] 10 percent to 5 percent lately because Muslims were getting 'more and more conscious' of Islam, which was supported by rising attendances at his center (Hogben 1991:159-160).

On the other hand, several factors indicate that the high rate of exogamy, particularly among North American-born Muslims, may continue. Louise Cainkar has suggested that some North American-born Muslim women experience difficulties in finding marriage partners because they are considered by their male counterparts to have undesirable Western habits or attitudes, and lack the ability to recreate the home environment essential to maintaining and reproducing the family's ethnic identity (Cainkar 1991:303-304). The knowledge needed to reproduce this environment includes language skills, housekeeping and culinary skills, and diverse social skills such as preparing for parties and celebrations, preserving marital harmony (itself a great task as gender roles are transformed by the migration process), and raising children.

The perception of pollution or corruption by North American society also leads to exogamy. Since families' reputations continue to be assessed by the morality of their women members in North America just as they were in the country of origin, women's activities are more closely monitored than men's (Talbani 1991:140-157). Hogben writes,

> ...one leader links real or imagined loss of virginity with the need for women to look outside Islam for husbands. He states that there is a particular code of dress and behavior for Muslim women and that those who have gone beyond it in effect get a reputation that makes it difficult for even the less observant or nominal Muslim men to marry them. Hence the men seek virgin brides from their homelands, while the women left here have to find acceptance from non-Muslim husbands. This situation may well explain why some community leaders note a rise in exogamy among women as well as a larger number of women seeking husbands in vain, while their male counterparts marry inside or outside the faith and inside or outside the country (Hogben 1991:178-179).

Finally, religious and ethnic patterns of exogamy have been linked to gains in socio-economic status and relatively high educational attainment, as well as the process of transformation from a largely foreign-born population to a native born one (Aguirre, Saenz, and Heang 1995; Demos 1994; Jones 1982; Leonetti and Newell-Morris 1982; Richard 1991). Processes of education and career advancement tend to break down ethnic and religious boundaries, and erect new ones based on class and shared experiences. These patterns — and

goals — of social status and achievement are characteristic of Canada's Muslim community, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The high rate of exogamy indicates the openness of Muslim Canadians to other ethnic and religious groups. Yet, because most children of mixed marriages are not raised as Muslims, the reproduction of the Muslim community among subsequent generations might be challenged by its social and economic success.

Conclusion

Canada has a small but rapidly increasing Muslim population. Initial immigration was hindered by the racist White Canada policy, which was rejected only in 1962. Muslim immigrants from South Asia and the Middle East entered Canada in large numbers after 1962, primarily as professionals and trained workers, although there have also been substantial numbers of refugees. While the Muslim community in Canada is well-integrated economically, in terms of job classification and educational involvement, many recognize that Muslims face prejudice and discrimination because of their race and religion. The most important challenge to the community is passing on religious and cultural traditions to Canadian-born offspring, not only since their socialization occurs primarily in a secular environment but also because the higher levels of economic and educational success found within the Muslim community tend to break down religious and cultural barriers to mixed marriages. While characteristics of Muslim social identity, such as esteem for education and caring for older relatives, are positive factors encouraging group adhesion, negative forces, such as racism, also contribute to group maintenance. In the following chapters, I show how some families have chosen to educate their children in a Muslim school as one response to the challenges of integration and assimilation.

Chapter three

A Muslim School

The school is located on the edge of a large, middle-class residential neighborhood. Although many Muslim families have moved to the area to be near the school/mosque complex, most students come from outside the neighborhood. Some are delivered in the morning and picked up in the afternoon by their mothers or fathers; others use car pools organized by parents, or the school's private bus service. Some students take public transit, spending up to ninety minutes traveling each way. In fact, the school's location is central, well serviced by the city's bus and subway lines, close to the junction of the highways leading to western and northern suburbs where there are large numbers of Arabs, and to Montreal's south shore where many South Asians live.[1]

Bordered by a small lawn and a fenced, concrete playground, the school shares the complex with its parent organization, a Muslim community association. There is no sign announcing the building's vocation or owner. Like most other Muslim institutions in Montreal, these premises were converted for their present use.[2] Adjoining buildings were purchased by the community association and renovated, making space which is used for daily worship; Muslim Scouts (both boys' and girls' groups), potluck dinners, religious discussion groups, weekend language and religious instruction, administrative functions, and the full-time day school. Occasionally, the space is rented for social functions such as weddings, and lately, an *aqiqa* — the symbolic haircut which celebrates of the birth of a healthy child. This efficient use of resources has been beneficial. New windows were recently installed (at a cost of $15,000) with funds raised by the weekend school.

A large, airy common room serves as combination locker room, auditorium, recreation area, and gymnasium. Adjoining the common room are a similarly large cafeteria on one side and the mosque and its reception area and administrative offices on the other. Because of the

[1] For descriptive data on the residential concentration of ethnic groups in Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec, see Ministère des Communautés culturelles et de l'Immigration 1992.

[2] For a thorough discussion of Muslim institutions in Montreal, see McDonough 1994.

building's previous vocation as a factory, the ceilings throughout much of the building are high, increasing the impression of space and light. The classrooms are distributed along several corridors; most are spacious and all are well lit by banks of large windows. However, until recently, the primary and secondary students shared the complex, and some classes were crowded into small, windowless, and poorly ventilated rooms.

During my fieldwork, the secondary school was moved to independent facilities in a nearby neighborhood, one condition of the provincial funding the administration hoped to receive for the 1997-1998 academic year.[3] Although many said that the secondary students deserved to have their own building and all showed much pride in the fact that the community was now able to support a "regular" system of primary and secondary schools, a few expressed nostalgia for the days when recreation periods resembled a large, if somewhat chaotic, family gathering. Although the elementary students were sometimes treated as pests by the teens, there had been a lot of warm exchanges. Yet there was some relief when the secondary school was moved: some parents of elementary school children (and teachers as well) worried that discipline problems with some of the high school students were setting a bad example.

Yet while a few students complained spontaneously about the facilities, others wanted to tell me that the fraternal atmosphere of the school outweighed whatever it lacked in physical resources. Students and teachers told me that as long as the school was safe and clean, it would do. One student told me,

> I think that it is better that we have the school now and benefit from it even though it may not have everything rather than wait twenty years until we can afford an expensive new school.

Another said, "Just like with people, it's what's inside that counts." On one of my first days there, a teacher told me that she had feared that I would notice just the broken ceiling tiles and the cramped hallways, and miss the children. She told me,

> The children — and they are amazing — are what you need to write about. Despite everything, our students do well. We have some of the best results in the province.[4] That is what the school is about.

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[3] Other conditions are adequate laboratories and a dedicated gymnasium, neither of which are present in the main complex housing the primary school. As I was completing the final version of this manuscript in July 1997, I learned that the secondary school's application for funding had been refused.

[4] See chapter 4 for a discussion of academic achievement at the school.

With an enrollment of twenty-five students, the school was founded in 1985 by a group of Muslims who wished to create "institutions that function according to the Islamic code that are not insular nor detached from mainstream society," as expressed in a descriptive brochure. Initially, the school was supported by donations from the local community; in 1987, the provincial government approved the school's application for partial funding on the basis that the school operates "in the public interest," a status given to private religious and non-religious schools who meet the education ministry's criteria for curriculum and facilities. By 1990, the school was able to offer instruction for all primary grades, and by 1994, for all secondary grades. The first secondary school graduation was held in 1995, and according to the brochure,

> all have been accepted to well-respected CEGEPs [colleges] and according to their first choice of program.[5] It was indeed a dream fulfilled for the community...

More than two hundred and fifty students attend the primary and secondary schools. Although the population is very diverse, there are significant concentrations of students from several ethnic backgrounds, including European-Canadian, Iraqi, Moroccan, Lebanese, Algerian, and Tunisian (see Table 8).

Table 8: Ethnic backgrounds of students, grades 1 through 11

*Ethnic group**	*Percentage of students*	*N*
European-Canadian	17.98	48
Iraqi	17.98	48
Moroccan	14.98	40
Algerian	9.74	26
Tunisian	8.24	22
Lebanese	12.36	33
Egyptian/Sudanese	5.24	14
Pakistani	3.75	10
Iranian	2.99	8
Other (Indian, Bangladeshi, Bulgarian, South African, Mauritian, Eritrean, Somalian, Libyan, Turkish)	6.74	18
Total	100	267

[5] The brochure also notes that most students were admitted to "the competitive field of Health Sciences," an area which several women informants told me on one occasion is, along with computer science and engineering, one of the sectors of the employment market which they feel is open and accessible to Muslim women who wear headscarves.

* Based on parents' place of birth data from 1997 Enrollment Survey. Cases likely to be ambiguous were verified (e.g. most individuals born in Kuwait and Iran identified their ethnicity as Iraqi). Some students are counted twice to reflect mixed ethnic origin.

There are very few ethnographic descriptions of Muslim schools in the West, and the vast differences between schools' structures, worldviews, and curricula — and between what is recommended by Muslim intellectuals and what actually takes place within the schools — are thus hard to grasp. While many of the schools which were the sites for the research described in chapter 1 were single-sex, the Montreal school was segregated at neither primary nor secondary levels. Classroom seating was generally mixed as well. Although teachers would describe the seating plan as "boys on one side and girls on the other," there are enough exceptions — children who had to be moved to another spot because they either chatted or fought excessively with their seatmates — that the classrooms are not segregated at all in practice. In the primary school, in fact, the only classroom which conformed to the segregated model belonged to a non-Muslim instructor. In contrast, other communities (in Canada, in the U.S., and in Great Britain) have often opted to establish single-sex girls' schools even when the community can afford to provide resources for only one school, thus excluding boys from Muslim education.[6] Uniforms here were typical Western styles, purchased off the shelf at a supplier which stocks uniforms for other private schools. Other Muslim schools have designed their own uniforms, in a refusal to adopt Western clothing styles. Similarly, the Montreal school selected appropriate textbooks and curriculum materials from mainstream sources, while Muslim schools in other areas have sometimes written their own textbooks or gleaned appropriate selections from scripture and classical Islamic works. Relying primarily on my fieldwork observations, this chapter provides descriptive data on a Muslim school in Montreal, exploring the unique ways in which Muslim values were expressed within the school, the ways in which it resembled other francophone schools in Quebec, how it resembles and differs from what we know of other Western Muslim schools, and also how these patterns of behavior confirm and contrast with popular religious/cultural norms. The chapter begins with formal structures such as curriculum and code of conduct, and moves to informal structures, such as social interaction.

[6] For evaluations of Muslim single-sex (i.e. girls') schools, see Halstead 1991, 1993; Haw 1994; Parker-Jenkins and Haw 1996; Khanum 1992.

Curriculum

Chapter 1 surveyed contemporary writing on Islamic education, highlighting the emphasis placed on integrating Islam into the school's core curriculum. At the school where I observed classroom teaching and conducted interviews with teachers, administrators, and students, the community aimed to create an Islamic atmosphere through supplementing rather than supplanting the traditional Western model of education.

Classes were taught in French and followed the curriculum guidelines set out by Quebec's ministry of education, with the addition of several Islamic subjects — Qur'an (*tajwid*, or Qur'anic recitation), Arabic, and Islamic studies. Table 9 and Table 10 below indicate the relative importance of each course in the overall program, by comparing the number of subject hours per cycle for different subject areas.[7] Emphasis on particular subjects in the secondary grades corresponds to the focus of the provincial exams for each grade level.

Table 9: Subject hours by grade, primary (Pr) grades 1996-1997

Subject	*Pr1*	*Pr2*	*Pr3*	*Pr4*	*Pr5*	*Pr6*
Arabic	2	3	2.5	2	2	2.5
Art	2	2	2	2	2	1
Computers	1	1	1	1	1	1
English	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	3
French	8	7	7.5	7	7.5	7.5
Islamic Studies	1	1	1	1	1	1
Math	6.5	5.5	5	6	5	6
Natural Science	1	1	1	2	1	1
Physical Education	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Qur'an	1	1	1	1	1	1
Social Studies	1.5	2	2	.5	1.5	2
total hours per cycle	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5

Compiled from 1996-1997 timetables.

Table 10: Subject hours by grade, secondary (Se) grades 1996-1997

Subject	*Se1*	*Se2*	*Se3*	*Se4*	*Se5*
Arabic	2	2	2	2	1
Art	1.7	2	0	0	0

[7] In the primary grades, the teaching cycle corresponded to the regular school week; classes were scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and so on. Partly because Friday afternoon classes are interrupted by the jum'a prayer, the secondary school cycle was organized over six days (Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, etc.), so that subjects rotated through the week. The six day cycle is used in many schools so that Monday holidays are more or less evenly distributed over the cycle.

Subject	*Se1*	*Se2*	*Se3*	*Se4*	*Se5*
Biology	0	0	3.8	0	2.9
Chemistry	0	0	0	0	3.4
Computers	1	1	1	2	1
Career guidance	0	0	.9	1	1
Ecology	3.8	0	0	0	3.9
English	3.8	3.7	2.8	3.9	2.8
Social and personal development	1	0	1	1	1
French	5.7	5.9	5.8	5.5	5.8
Geography	5	0	3.8	0	0
History	0	3.8	0	3.7	0
Household economics	0	2.8	0	0	0
Islamic studies	1.7	.8	.9	.9	1
Math	5.8	5.6	6	6.5	3.9
Phys. Ed.	2	2	2	2	2
Physics	0	3.9	0	5	3.8
Qur'an	1	1	.8	1	1
Technology	0	0	3.7	0	0
total hours per cycle	34.5	34.5	34.5	34.5	34.5

Compiled from 1996-1997 timetables.

Islamic subjects occupied a significant place in the curriculum, but didn't overshadow other courses such as English, another "optional" course which the parents wished to emphasize. (English instruction at the school began with two hours per week in grade one, while it is not taught in most French-language public schools in Quebec until grade five.) An information sheet which I received from the Islamic Cultural Centre in London gives some indication of the importance of these subjects in different London area Muslim schools. Islamic subjects (including Arabic) accounted for 12 percent of the curriculum at one secondary girls' school, 20 percent at a mixed primary school, 25 percent at Saudi-funded primary and secondary schools for girls and boys, and 40 percent at a boys' secondary school. At the Montreal school, these subjects occupied between 18 percent of a 27.5 hour school week (in grade two) and 9 percent (in secondary five); increased Arabic instruction accounts for the greater proportion of Islamic matter in the lower grades. See Table 11.

Table 11: Selected courses, average subject hours per week by grade

Subject	*Pr 1*	*Pr2*	*Pr3*	*Pr4*	*Pr5*	*Pr6*	*Se1*	*Se2*	*Se3*	*Se4*	*Se5*
French	8	7	7.5	7	7.5	7.5	4.7	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.8
English	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	3	3.2	3	2.3	3.3	2.3
Arabic	2	3	2.5	2	2	2.5	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	.8
Islamic studies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.4	.7	.8	.8	.8
Qur'an	1	1	1	1	1	1	.8	.8	.7	.8	.8

Compiled from 1996-1997 timetables. Subject hours in secondary grades adjusted for five day week.

Using the provincial guidelines for public and subsidized schools, teachers chose their own materials and designed their lesson plans, occasionally incorporating Islamic notions or points of view as they seemed appropriate. Teachers confirmed what I had observed in their classrooms, and several noted that individual teachers differed substantially in how and how frequently they incorporadte Islamic notions into the regular curriculum, something expected in the case of non-Muslim teachers,[8] although several Arab/Muslim teachers had similar teaching styles. (In October 1996, five out of twenty-seven full-time and part-time teachers were non-Muslim.)

For many, however, these opportunities were welcome, and part of a holistic pedagogical process which drew links between instruction and children's home life. "We talk about these things when the occasion presents itself," one teacher said. She continued, telling me about how a lesson which described North American Indians as nomads grew to include Arab tribes as the class explored the concept of nomadism. Her example refined the students' comprehension of the textbook's objectives while making the lesson relevant to Islamic history and equally, making Islamic history relevant to the lesson. Referring to this teaching style, the newsletter of the Association of Muslim Schools (UK and Eire) says that it increases students' self-esteem as well as Islamic awareness (*al-Madaris* 1995c:3).

Another example of making Muslim belief relevant to the classroom took the form of a school outing to a sugar camp (*cabane à sucre*), a farm where maple sap is collected from trees and transformed into syrup. While "sugaring off" is well known across Canada and the northern United States, it is especially popular in Quebec, where the centerpiece of the event is a hearty meal of foods laced with maple products. However, most of these traditional foods incorporate ham, lard, hambone broth, or other pork products, making such an outing anathema to most Muslim parents, however much children are tempted by the idea of eating maple sugar taffy with their fingers from troughs of fresh snow. It is interesting that the school took the initiative to make this activity acceptable to Muslim parents, and has made arrangements for a halal meal for several years. In a letter to parents, the activity was described as an educational and Islamic one:

[8] Marie Parker-Jenkins's study of Muslim schools in Britain notes that in five of the six schools she surveyed, most or all of the teachers are non-Muslim. She states that these schools "depend[ed] on non-Muslim teachers to be sensitive and responsive to the Islamic ethos of the institution" (Parker-Jenkins 1995:86). Although the author gives a substantial survey of current theories of Islamic education, she provides no data on how teachers actually incorporated these notions into their teaching.

> This trip is complementary to the social studies program of the school. It will also provide the students with an opportunity to learn more about Quebec culture. At the same time it will serve as a celebration for Eid al-Adha.

The incorporation of Islamic notions into the formal curriculum was used extensively in the midwestern U.S. primary school where Karen Selby conducted fieldwork in 1988, with the primary purpose of increasing students' awareness of religious teaching. She describes how one teacher incorporated Islamic studies into the science curriculum:

> Sister Catherine used the Qur'an as a resource rather than allowing it to dominate the classroom discourse in her Natural Science course as each unit encompassed three concurrent strands. One strand focused upon the reading of a traditional General Science text. Another strand was the laboratory strand which began with the rules for the safe usage of all equipment, the third strand was the one which required students to apply Islamic knowledge (including their knowledge of the Qur'an). This strand began by looking at "The Book of Signs," a video about the Qur'anic view of modern science including the ethical and historical role of the Muslim scientist. All three strands were taught and rested throughout the school year (Selby 1992:43).

Teachers at the Dar al-Islam primary school in New Mexico, for example, also use Islamic concepts such as the descriptive "beautiful names of God," the *Asma' ullah al-husna*, to introduce science notions such as the creation of stars and planets (*al-Khaliq*) and maternal instinct among animals (*al-Rahman*) (Durkee 1987:78). Similarly, Christine Kolars, writing about an African American Muslim school in New York, states that "an example from the Qur'an or Islamic history is applied to nearly every situation" (Kolars 1994:492).

At the school where I conducted my fieldwork however, with the exception of Qur'an and Islamic studies, however, the curriculum very much resembles what is taught in non-Muslim schools in that it is rarely overtly "Islamic." Even Arabic is taught primarily from quite secular textbooks imported from Morocco. Textbooks in other courses are identical or similar to materials used in Quebec's public schools. One teacher commented on this, saying, "The Qur'an tells us to find knowledge wherever it exists." When I asked why the school didn't make more use of Islamic concepts or books with Islamic themes in the core curriculum, another staff member bluntly told me that students reject anything they perceive as being pushed on them incessantly.

In fact, opportunities to use Islamic texts were rare, since few children's books about Islam are written in French, the language of instruction at the school.[9] The library did have a large set of Islamically-oriented books for children in English, however, and several staff members regretted that the books were rarely used, either by teachers in the formal curriculum or by students in their independent reading or research projects. Several Muslim publishing houses, notably in Britain, have made efforts to produce English-language material appropriate for school age Muslim children. The Islamic Foundation in Leicester (U.K.), for instance, publishes the Muslim Children's Library series which includes such titles as *A Great Friend of Children*, *Love All Creatures*, *Muslim Nursery Rhymes*, *Marvelous Stories from the Life of Muhammad*, and *Muslim Crossword Puzzles*. The books respect Muslims' customary avoidance of portraying images of the Prophet and his contemporaries. In *Stories of the Caliphs*, for example, a story about Umar's sadness when he compared the simple lifestyle of the Prophet to the rich opulence of the Byzantine and Persian kings is illustrated by a drawing of the Prophet's sparse apartment and a geometric design. While encouraging the use of books written especially for Muslim children, Noura Durkee recognizes that these sanitized Islamic books cannot compete for children's attention with the well-funded commercially produced cartoons and comic books. She relates an anecdote from the Dar al-Islam school:

> One inventive teacher replaced all the super-heroes — those human and half-human hulks with magical powers who so entrance American youth — with stories of the real super-heroes, the Sahaba ["companions" or contemporaries of the Prophet]. She was to some degree successful. Should we make Sahaba comic books and cartoons? That is an interesting question... What the American children really loved was the movie, "Muhammad the Messenger of God," with Anthony Quinn as Hamza. They have memorized it, with its errors and its good qualities too, and forever made a picture in their minds of the beloved Hamza, *radī Allahu 'anhu* ["May God be satisfied with him"] (Durkee 1987:78).

When I decided (at the suggestion of one of the staff members) to use such a book one afternoon for the English tutorial I gave, several students spoke up. "This isn't Islamic studies class," they reminded me. Although we sometimes used examples that related to the lives of Muslim Canadians and children of Arab or South Asian descent (such as "Yesterday we were at the mosque" or "Yusra has a book about computers") to try out English vocabulary and grammar, students expected the *formal* lesson to be neutral in structure.

[9] English-language books were offered as prizes to students in a school-wide Islamic knowledge quiz. One staff member said she wished something appropriate was available in French, "But what can you do? We have to give the children something."

Apart from Islamic studies and Qur'an, the only class which frequently and regularly drew on Islamic themes was art. While the class was scheduled throughout the week in the secondary grades, most primary school students had art class each Friday afternoon, interrupted by the jum'a prayer. Art projects were often obviously Islamic in content, such as posters displaying Qur'anic verses and glitter-paint Arabic calligraphy on construction paper with holiday greetings such as "*Ramadan karim*" and "*'Id mubarak*." Some projects were given Islamic themes by association. One project was described to me by the classroom teacher, who said, "We are making papier-mâché bowls for Eid." Other art projects were entirely independent, or rather their Islamic content was more subtle. One teacher told me that since art activities reinforce cooperation and sharing, they have strong moral value whether or not they have explicit Islamic themes.

Some books which students had been asked to purchase as required texts were later discarded after it was decided that they did not encourage Islamic values. One of these was Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which some staff members found objectionable because it presented a tragic and immoral sexual relationship as a cause noble enough to die for. I suggested that the play could also be taught from a Muslim perspective as a lesson in the consequences of poor judgment, since, even in traditional interpretations, it is a tragedy in which the principal characters suffer gravely because of their flaws.[10] One staff member told me,

> That reasoning is too sophisticated for young people, especially since they are already told by the media that sex before marriage is all right. There are many other books that are more appropriate and teach better values. Why can't we use *King Lear* instead?

When I mentioned the textbook change to another staff member, he agreed with the decision. Then he said,

> You know, it is not just the West that has produced works that advocate lying and cheating and immorality. I don't think that *One Thousand and One Nights* is appropriate for Muslim children either! You can say that there is a strong morality in *One Thousand and One Nights*, that bad acts are always punished, but that takes a much more sophisticated understanding of the text. Children imitate.

Just as Islamic materials can be used to teach science or language lessons, some Muslim schools are using Western materials to teach Islamic lessons. Zahida Hussain, principal of Al-

[10] Dr. Ali Ashraf has conducted seminars with Muslim teachers in the United States on teaching Shakespeare in an Islamic framework (Durkee 1987:76).

Furqan School in Birmingham (U.K.), has based a language arts module on George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a modern political novel which she considers part of the "broad and balanced" curriculum necessary to prepare Muslim students for post-secondary education (Hussain 1996-1997:4). *Animal Farm* is an allegorical novel in which a farm is taken over by animals in an egalitarian revolution which later degenerates as the leadership is seized by the pigs who become corrupt and gradually return to the practices of the human farmers. Hussain writes:

> Many Muslim children (and their parents!) from an Asian subcontinental background are very uncomfortable even with saying the word 'pig' so using this book is a great challenge in many ways. I set the Year 10 group the following questions...
> - What is the role of the head of any Islamic group, party, etc.? That is, the so called 'leaders' in the Muslim community...
> - Why do you think the other animals never questioned Napoleon as he changed the commandments one by one? Do you think it would have made a difference if all the animals were educated? (Consider the importance Islam places upon education.)...
> - Are there any Islamic organizations/movements calling for the establishment of an Islamic state? Before we join such movements, what questions do you think we should ask?... (Hussain 1996-19097:4-5)

Coherent with the liberal curriculum current in many schools, this lesson plan is encourages students to think critically and independently about literature, and also to think critically about how Islam is practiced.

The provincial curriculum, in some instances, conflicts directly with the beliefs many Muslims hold. These cases are dealt with as they arise, and generally result in a lesson plan that integrates two streams, one "secular" and one "Islamic." One teacher said that teaching about evolution was one area that posed challenges. She said,

> We teach them about evolution because they need to know it. Even if they disagree with the theory of evolution they need to know what it is in order to disagree with it intelligently.

In another case, a teacher was asked to justify why she used a lesson that referred to Christmas. She told the parent that in North America, Christmas is part of the environment. Children can't avoid it, no matter what they believe, and so they need to know about it. I asked another staff member how he felt about following a curriculum that reflects a Christian worldview. He told me,

> To the extent that something is part of the provincial program, we follow it. For example, a teacher came to talk to me about St-Jean-Baptiste, which is part

of the culture and history here, and so it is part of the program.[11] We have to teach it. Some parents tell their children not to do assignments about St-Jean-Baptiste, saying that it is Christian, not Muslim. We tell them that the students need to know this for their secondary five examinations, and we don't want anyone to fail because there was a question about St-Jean-Baptiste or Jesus! We follow the program, but tell the children that this is not Islamic.

A symbolic approach

Other clues to the school's integration into Quebec society and how this was reflected in its curriculum can be found in the agenda it publishes each year. Students and teachers were provided with daybooks or agendas, a common practice in Quebec schools. The agenda is designed by the printer, integrating the school's yearly calendar, policies and regulations, and other information into a standard model. All information is printed in English and French.

The cover displays a science-themed abstract motif, with the school's name, address, and emblem embossed at the bottom. The emblem itself is a typical school crest. The school name forms the upper part of the perimeter: the French form appears in large (12 point)[12] characters above the English form, which appears in small (6 point) characters. Interestingly, the crest's format conforms — to the letter — with Quebec's current law on bilingual outside signs which requires that English text be less prominent and one-half the size of French text. Like language use and instruction in other parts of the school milieu, this can be interpreted as a formal and public affirmation that the school endorses the predominance of French while encouraging the use of English. The bottom perimeter of the crest is formed by the Arabic text of the school motto, "*Rabbī zidnī 'ulman*," derived from Surah 20 (Ta-Ha), verse 14 of the Qur'an.[13] On the agenda cover, as well as on school sweaters and athletic wear, the French and English forms of the motto appear below the crest, "*Seigneur! Augment ma Science*" and "Oh

[11] St-Jean-Baptiste (John the Baptist) is the patron saint of Quebec and equally so, of Quebec nationalism. June 24 is a public holiday in his honor, marked by secular parades and celebrations throughout the province. The name of the influential separatist/sovereignist organization, the Société St-Jean-Baptiste, highlights this association.

[12] A point is a unit of measure used in typography. One point equals 1/72 of an inch.

[13] My transliteration. The text in the school crest appears in Arabic, not Roman script. When one staff member explained the derivation of the motto to me, she said that they left off the word "*Qul*" from the Qur'anic verse so that it wouldn't be sacrilege to wear the shirts and get them dirty.

My Lord Advance me in Knowledge." The relationship between the motto and the school's educational mission is patent, although some aspects might be less obvious. While the verse is traditionally interpreted as a petition for knowledge of God, even the religious imagery of the motto is well established in Western tradition; that is, it is certainly no more foreign than what we find in other mottoes such as "Domine, dirige nos" (City of London). Again there is persistent bilingualism, the presence of French and English translations below the crest (this time equally large, with the French text above the English) reflecting the school's language policy. In addition, the Arabic motto, which ought to be considered analogous to a Latin one in schools which claim descent from the Western Greco-Roman tradition, is interesting because of the striking prominence of the translations, indicating the importance attached to its comprehension.[14] This is the very opposite of the rote learning associated with Muslim schools (see *al-Madaris* 1995d) and which unfortunately continues to plague some (Halstead 1986:15).

The central area of the crest has three elements. Quebec's provincial emblem, a fleur-de-lis, occupies the top third. The central third contains an open book, a common motif in school crests which has dual significance here: in secular tradition, knowledge or learning (a book), and in religious tradition, the Qur'an (The Book). The bottom third of the central field contains a large crescent moon — *al-hilāl*, a traditional Muslim symbol.[15] Unlike representations of the Muslim crescent in the flags of Turkey, Tunisia, and other historically Muslim states, however, this crescent is rocked back and not upright. It is associated, but independent. It also appears to cradle the book, containing it. The symbolism of the crest is quite powerful: "we are Quebeckers" and "knowledge is Islamic." A discussion I had with one staff member demonstrates this idea quite eloquently. I had asked why there was not more "explicitly Islamic" content in the school's curriculum. My informant replied,

> Are you saying that science is not Islamic? That the world is not Islamic? It is Islamic.

A song written by another staff member also portrays this view. In this song, the normative behavior of good Muslim children is presented as working hard and playing hard. It is sung to the tune of *Mary Had a Little Lamb*:

> Our little girls are very sweet, very sweet, very sweet
> Our little girls are very sweet

[14] This is the only time I have seen a school motto consistently reproduced in three languages.

[15] Despite its place in the lunar Islamic calendar, the use of the crescent moon as an Islamic symbol probably originated only after the Ottoman conquest of Byzantine Constantinople, where it was also used (Glassé 1991:274).

They like their Muslim school.

Our little boys are very good, very good, very good
Our little boys are very good
They like their Muslim school.

They do not care if rain or shine, rain or shine, rain or shine
They do not care if rain or shine
They like to be at school.

When it's time to work, they work and work, work and work, work and work
When it's time to play, they play and play
They never break a rule.

Their teachers like them very much, very much, very much
Their teachers like them very much
Because they are so cool.

Ethnicity, language, and integration

The linguistic (and by extension, cultural) assimilation of Quebec's immigrants is a politically sensitive issue, never more so than after the 1995 provincial referendum, when the majority decision against separation was attributed by Premier Jacques Parizeau to the weight of "ethnics and money" (see Hall 1995). Language, then, is an interesting lens through which to look at integration in a school that is, almost by definition, ethnic.

The school's teachers and administrators saw themselves as preparing Muslim students to be successful as citizens of Quebec, and they see Quebec as a French-speaking society firmly planted in English North America. Correspondingly, the school's mission (expressed in the yearly agenda) states,

> Our aim is to provide excellent, Islamically oriented, trilingual education (French, English, and Arabic) at the kindergarten, elementary, and secondary school levels.

The decision to emphasize English as well as French also reflects the influence of the well-established English-speaking Muslim South Asian community in Montreal. Several individuals who had been involved in the school since its inception told me that ten years ago English played a much more prominent role in the school; its role later declined because of the necessity to conform to Quebec provincial regulations on private schools receiving government subsidies.

While classes were taught in French, English nonetheless continued to occupy an important role. Students received between two and four hours of English instruction per week,

depending on the grade (see Table 11: Selected courses, average subject hours per week by grade, page 52). The English instructors told me that they believed that beyond the middle elementary grades, classes operate at the same level as language arts classes in Quebec's English schools. This seems to be not so much because most of the students have chosen to integrate into anglo-Quebec society, since French was still the dominant language in the halls and recreation areas, but because of the emphasis placed by the school's administration on language skill acquisition. Not only did the Muslim school offer earlier and more English language instruction than most public schools do, but, along with French, English was also used in the morning and noon assemblies as students prepare to go to their classes. In some grades, classes such as art and Qur'an were also taught primarily in English. In the case of Qur'an, for instance, one instructor spoke little French and preferred to conduct the classes in English and Arabic, while in the case of art, there were no subject specialists and so some grades were taught by an English teacher. The emphasis on gaining fluency in English presented difficulties for some students; those who lagged behind were typically students who had transferred from a French-language public school in the middle elementary grades or later and were not exposed to English instruction in the early grades. While clearly providing an incentive to learn English, several people I interviewed noted that this situation also meant that students whose command of English is poor will struggle in these other areas of their academic performance as well. Nonetheless, students who had been at the school for several years spoke near-native English, even though they came from French- and Arabic-speaking households.

Interestingly, even students who spoke English at home often spoke French in the hallways and with their friends. One student whose *language of preference* was English had best friends who spoke only French. At the same time, however, most students were very proud of their English skills. Many greeted me with, "Hello Miss! How are you?" before beginning a conversation that would take place in French.

Most students were from Arabic-speaking families, and many spoke their parents' native dialect at home. Two to three hours of Arabic and one hour of Qur'an per week provided students with basic notions of grammar and vocabulary.[16] The Arabic language classes were conducted entirely in Arabic, and one teacher was proud that many of the South Asian elementary school students performed at very high levels, some as well as the students from Arab

[16] The Qur'an classes consist of reading aloud, memorizing, and understanding selections from the Arabic text of the Qur'an, and so in addition to religious education these classes also contribute to the development of Arabic language skills. The primary language of instruction is not Arabic however.

backgrounds, although by high school the Arab students had a significant advantage. Non-Arabic speakers who had transferred to the school from the public system in the later grades had more difficulty. In one class, a non-Arab student fell soundly asleep while the teacher corrected an exam with the more advanced students. Another non-Arab student also had trouble following the class, and complained to the teacher, "You speak just Arabic. I don't understand anything!" The school has attempted to remedy these problems by providing extra instruction in Arabic for those who lag behind, particularly in the lower grades.

Fears that the predominance of Arabic speakers in the school would render the playground culture essentially Arab seemed unfounded. Although most teachers and many students speak a dialect of Arabic at home, I heard it spoken infrequently among students and never between teachers and students.[17] Between teachers of Arab origin however, Arabic was the usual language of informal conversation, although "formal" discussions were always held in French or a mixture of French and English. Informal noon hour religious discussion groups or *halqas*, which I attended along with the other Arabic-speaking female teachers, were held in Arabic however.

While many of the teachers were Algerian and came to Canada as adults, the students were from more diverse backgrounds. Not only did students come from many different Arabic-speaking countries (see Table 8: Ethnic backgrounds of students, grades 1 through 11, page 49), but they also came at different ages and with different levels of language skill. Both parents and teachers remarked that many children seem to outgrow their Arabic vocabularies as they become teenagers; French and to a lesser degree English have become the peer group languages, with the result that even some siblings tended to speak to each other in French or English, not Arabic.[18] As the Arabic language teachers told me, most of the students may be ethnically Arab, but by secondary school most were more comfortable speaking in English or French and preferred to have complex notions (of Arabic grammar, for instance) explained in French.

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[17] On the other hand, one of the ways I established my status at the school and in the community was by using my limited Arabic as often as I could. Not only did this underline the fact that I had already spent several years learning about Muslim culture, but it also served to break the ice, particularly with children. It was also one of the minor ways in which I transgressed the expected adult role of disciplinarian, which I worried would prevent them from viewing me as someone who was interested in them as individuals.

[18] For similar trends of English language use among francophones in a French-language school in Toronto, see Heller 1987. For an interesting personal account of Arabic language use among second and third generation Arab Americans, see Salome 1994.

In the classroom, teachers insisted that French was essential. In one Islamic studies class, students had been asked to memorize a hadith and present it in front of the class, first in Arabic then in French. One student was able recite the hadith in Arabic, but not in French. The teacher asked him, "But do you understand it in Arabic?" "Yes," the student said. "Well, you still have to know it in French. What language is this class taught in? This is Quebec and we speak French here. It is important to me," the teacher answered.

Communal prayer

In addition to the curriculum, the school's administration promoted an Islamic environment in other formal ways as well. Students prayed twice each day at the school and attendance at both prayers was obligatory. Morning prayers took place following the day's announcements, after the students had assembled in lines before going to their classrooms; these brief prayers are called *du'a* or supplicatory prayers. The early afternoon noon prayers (*salāt al-zuhr*) were performed communally in the mosque each day. Students left their shoes in their classrooms or the locker room and went to the mosque shortly after one p.m. Older students went singly and found their own places, while the younger students met first in their classrooms and were led to the mosque by their teachers. All but a few teachers directed their students to enter and then waited outside or returned to their classrooms.[19] Inside, the children formed rows, touching shoulders. Older students and teachers took the initiative of straightening their own or other rows (but never the rows of the opposite sex), gesturing to close up spaces and make room for the row behind. Unlike many mosques where women are cloistered on a balcony or behind a curtain or wooden lattice, here girls and women prayed in lines immediately behind the boys and men.[20] While most of the adult men prayed in front of the

[19] While other female staff prayed in the mosque, only one homeroom teacher did so regularly. This had the interesting consequence of blurring the distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim teachers. One student explained to her mother that her non-Muslim homeroom teacher didn't pray with the children "because she always has too much work to do."

[20] It seems relevant to mention that the school's mosque allocated equal space for women and men. A list of 82 London area mosques (*Muslim Directory 1996*) notes each center's capacity of men and women. Most of these mosques can accommodate five to ten times as many men as women; eleven mosques with space for over 500 male worshippers (including two mosques that can acccommodate 1500 men, two that can acccommodate 2000 men, and one that can accommodate 2500) had *no space at all* for women. Twenty-one mosques with capacities of less than 500 have no room for women. Only three London mosques can accommodate equal numbers of men and women.

boys, all adult women prayed behind the girls, along the back wall. Because the back wall allowed those listening to a long sermon to rest their backs, it was a preferred spot. Until the secondary students were moved to another building, older girls also sometimes prayed in this row, although they were occasionally asked to move elsewhere when a teacher or other adult woman was unable to find a place. On Fridays larger numbers of people from the wider community attended prayers, and before the secondary school was moved (thus liberating space in the mosque during prayer times), worshippers sometimes filled both the mosque and the adjoining room, connected to the mosque by doors and a window the width of the room. Interestingly, women were not relegated to the back room.[21] Instead, each room was divided with males in front and females behind; the mosque proper was used for older students and adults, and the back room was covered with carpets and used for the younger children. Thus, women retained their monopoly over the comfortable back wall of the mosque.

Before prayers, boys often recited Qur'anic verses for the congregation, either standing in their rows or sitting in the prayer niche and reciting into a microphone. The *adhan* and *iqama* (call to prayer and announcement that prayer is about to begin) are also performed by male students. Older and younger boys were given the opportunity to do the adhan and iqama, and while it was acknowledged that some boys were more skilled or had more natural talent than others, teachers took care to provide opportunities for those who were less proficient. Girls and women are traditionally excluded from these public roles. Boys were proud of their ability to perform these "adult" duties in the mosque, and it would seem that girls would benefit equally from such opportunities, reinforcing their Arabic diction and public speaking skills, and likely their self-esteem as Muslims. In fact, there is a need for skilled female Qur'an reciters in Canada, as women from Iran and South Asia in particular have continued a tradition of female religious gatherings.[22] One possible avenue might be for the school to organize its own

[21] During Ramadan, I attended a talk and *tarawih* prayers at the mosque one evening. Chairs were placed in rows in the adjoining room where women could hear and view the speaker without entering. This allowed women, whether they were menstruating or supervising children, to continue to participate in the public life of the mosque, particularly since everyone passed through this room on the way to socialize in the cafeteria and gymnasium where food was served.

[22] During the writing of this chapter, Homa Hoodfar described to me a *sofreh* (a traditional Iranian women's religious gathering) she attended in Montreal. Although the host was a Shi'ite Iranian, the speakers were Sunni Arabs — presumably because the host was unable to find an Iranian or at least Shi'ite Arab female speaker. The evolution of Pakistani religious gatherings in the Canadian context is discussed in an interesting article by Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (1996).

women-only events which would allow girls a similar opportunity to display what they have learned in their Qur'an classes.

On Fridays, students attended jum'a prayer in mid-afternoon. Friday's sermon or *khutba* was delivered by one of the male staff members or an invited guest. The khutba was delivered first in Arabic, then the same talk was given again in French or English. The khutba was the only ritual element which took place in a language other than Arabic, although French and English were used for announcements and the like.[23] After prayers, staff members often made announcements, effectively knitting together what happened inside the mosque with what happened outside.[24]

Prayer time offered several minutes for quiet socialization or extra prayer before the adhan. Some came to the mosque early to perform extra prayers called *nawafil*, while others talked quietly. On one occasion, while waiting for the adhan, several older girls managed to play part of a contraband game of cards by hiding their hands under their scarves. They were noticed when one girl dropped her cards on the floor in front of the teachers. The students were sternly reprimanded, but not given detention or warning slips, while the staff member who had noticed the card playing seemed slightly bemused by the girls' audacity.

In addition to the boys who rotated as *muezzin* and reciters, there are other roles in the mosque which students vied for. Boy and girl monitors, chosen by a staff member from the grade six class at the beginning of the year, patrolled the rows before (and for several months, even during) the prayers, writing down the names of inattentive students.[25] The supervisory role of "calling the classes" individually to line up and leave the mosque was performed by older female students.

Prayer time had its own section in the school regulations:

> 1. Every student must perform ablution (*wudu*) before going to the mosque. Each class will be accompanied by the class teacher who will lead them to the mosque.
> 2. All students must attend *zuhr* and Friday prayers.

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[23] In some communities, however, the vernacular may be supplanting Arabic even as a ritual language (Waugh 1980).

[24] See McLaren 1993 for similar notions in a Catholic school.

[25] I am grateful to one reader who suggested similarities with a Jewish school in Montreal, where monitors for religious services are elected by their fellow students. The candidates, in preparing campaign speeches for their classmates, learn to present themselves in ways that are suitable both to the administration (who must approve the candidates) and to their fellow students (the electorate).

> 3. Girls who are menstruating will not pray but be in the room assigned to them and learn more about Islamic studies by reading some of the text book until the prayer is over. Any violation of the above rules will lead to detention next day or suspension if the student repeats the offense.

Several people I talked with recognized problems with the concept of "obligatory" worship, even though it has a long history in religious schools of all denominations. Students could be required to come to the mosque, and they could be required to go through the motions of prayer, but if the actual intention to pray is missing, then the prayers are invalid and worthless. In that sense, then, for some students, daily prayers were an obligatory school assembly far more than an exercise of faith. On the other hand, one staff member told me that some of the older girls, who were excused from prayers during menstruation, attempted to prolong this absence as much as possible, sometimes to the point that they missed prayers for a month at a time. When I commented on this, she said that she intended to speak to the girls involved and tell them that if they were menstruating for a month at a time then they should see their doctors!

Although teachers brought their students to the mosque, they were not obliged to attend prayers, and many didn't, perhaps because they didn't pray regularly and wanted to make no pretense of appearing to do so publicly. This was not always the reason, however. Some teachers who didn't pray with the students prayed alone in the mosque at other times of the day. One teacher said she prays regularly at home but was simply "unable to do a good prayer" in the same room as the children, since she found it impossible to discard her role as teacher and supervisor in order to concentrate on her prayer, an essential requirement for its validity.[26] While I learned that teachers' praying habits were sometimes the subject of gossip among the parents, the fact that women maintain their behavior despite periodic pressure is evidence of the school's general policy of tolerance and respect for individuals.

On the other hand, almost all male employees attended communal prayers consistently. While women can fulfill this religious duty at home (whether they do or not) and this is even recommended by some,[27] Friday's public prayer is considered a duty for men.[28]

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[26] In fact, although teachers and other adult women customarily prayed together in the back row, they also occasionally prayed in the girls' rows in order to supervise noisy or inattentive children or, sometimes, to help younger children remember the sequence of the prayers.

[27] Abdur Rahman Doi offers several hadiths supporting this view, though he recommends that women be encouraged to pray in the mosque since, as many contemporary Muslims "are neglectful of their prayers," the resulting social pressure would likely prompt more women to pray regularly (Doi 1989:28-30). While I don't share his desire to enforce the performance of prayer,

Timetable and calendar adjustments

Students attended class from 8:00 (secondary) or 8:15 (elementary) until 3:15 each day, with a fifteen minute break in the morning and an hour at noon. After lunch, prayers took an additional twenty minutes; on Fridays, prayers and the sermon occupied at least thirty minutes in mid-afternoon and cut into the scheduled class (which was usually art in the primary grades). The schedule changed slightly during Ramadan, when the noon break was shortened to 30 minutes since many students and teachers were fasting, and equally importantly, to ease parents' and teachers' routine of picking up children and school and rushing home prepare the meal which would break the family's fast. During this month, the school day finished 30 minutes earlier.[29] The structural accommodation of fasting during Ramadan was also symbolic, particularly in the elementary grades since most children began fasting only in grade five or six. In that sense, it represented the autonomy and power of the community which was able to *regulate the passage of time* and subvert the monopoly of dominant secular, white, European North American society over time and space.[30]

The school day was slightly longer than at most schools, which allowed time to be granted to Arabic, Islamic studies, and Qur'an classes without sacrificing other subjects. The

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Doi's comments confirm my belief about the consistency of male employees' mosque attendance.

[28] As in the hadith which states, "A person [man] who leaves three Friday prayers consecutively, Allah puts a seal on his heart." (Saqib 1986:64). Thus, even though prayer can be performed privately, mosque attendance is sometimes used to judge the number of practicing Muslims in a locality, as in Kelley 1994. Similarly, an extensive study of assimilation among Muslims in the U.S. conducted by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair Lummis used a mosque-based sampling frame to recruit interview subjects. Haddad and Lummis believe that the attachment to Islam felt by unmosqued Muslims (Muslims who do not regularly attend a mosque) depends primarily on "confessional allegiance," rather than practice or belief (Haddad and Lummis 1987:9). In contrast, during my fieldwork I heard of many men and women who were very observant yet rarely attended the mosque. A similar view was expressed in Haddad's earlier work (Haddad 1978:86).

[29] The school timetable is also adjusted during Ramadan in a few Muslim countries. In Tunisia, where people customarily spend the nights of Ramadan shopping and visiting and eat their sustenance for the next day at three in the morning before going to sleep, schools and offices open later in the morning and close earlier in the afternoon. In Canada, this custom has been adapted to a Western timetable that doesn't accommodate late sleepers during Ramadan. Many people who are fasting get up early, take a hearty breakfast meal before sunrise, pray, and then go back to sleep.

[30] On the significance of social hierarchies in regulating social time and space, see Metcalf 1996.

schedule also incorporated both statutory holidays (state holidays which often correspond to Christian holy days) and Muslim religious holidays. In 1997, students and teachers received a three day long holiday for Eid al-Fitr (Eid al-Sghir) in February at the end of Ramadan. The mid-winter break was scheduled to fall in mid-April during the week preceding Eid al-Adha (Eid al-Kabir), the most important Muslim holy day which marks Abraham's submission to God in preparing to sacrifice his son, and God's compassion in ordering him to sacrifice a ram instead. Several "Islamic Days," where children attended Islamic-themed movies and talks, played quiz games with Islamic themes, and did arts and crafts, also took place during the year, one after Eid al-Fitr and another on the statutory Easter holiday.[31] This choice of dates reflects a widespread practice among North America Muslim community groups, which have begun a tradition of holding Islamic conferences for adults as well as children on Christian holidays (especially Christmas) with the intent of reinforcing Muslim identity, and perhaps reinforcing their view that Muslims shouldn't view Christian religious feasts as civil holidays to celebrate with parties, Christmas trees, or Easter egg hunts as some families do.[32] (In Montreal, for instance, a three-day Islamic camp for teenagers was held at the Muslim school over the Christmas holidays.) Despite the school's intentions, attendance for the Islamic Day on Easter Monday was very low; some classes were half their usual size.

Discipline

Teachers and students were proud that the school had no problems with drugs, alcohol, or violence, although teachers were concerned about rowdiness and the need to constantly assert authority in order to keep certain classes in check. Yet there were no delinquents, and there was no litter and no smoking area.[33] Overall, the school maintained a safe and respectful atmosphere for teachers and children. The high expectations of discipline was why many par-

[31] Since this was a statutory holiday, non-Muslim staff did not attend. Muslim teachers were obliged to work and were not paid overtime; they were told, "This is not your holiday." Both Muslim and non-Muslim staff had paid vacation for Muslim holidays.

[32] These are common practices among "modern" middle-class and upper middle-class Muslim families in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere.

[33] While there were a few names carved into wooden desks, there was no vandalism or graffiti apart from one sticker on a locker which read "Azad Kashmir" (Free Kashmir). That was the only partisan political message I encountered in the school.

ents chose to support the school, and it was one of the aspects that impressed me when I first visited the school. I discussed this with one of the staff members:

> Patricia: What strikes me is that this school is not very different from other schools. In describing how you see the school, you haven't really talked about "Islamic identity" or "Islamic values;" rather you've been talking about things like discipline.
> Staff member: That's because discipline and all these things are part of Islamic values. When we say, in our rules, that students can't lie, they can't steal, that's Islamic values.

The school's policies and regulations are described in the agenda distributed to teachers and students. The goal of these rules is to promote learning and a healthy atmosphere, which teachers and students perceive as the heart of the school's distinctiveness. The description of the code of conduct published in the agenda is similar to what might be promoted in any other Quebec school. It reads,

> ...students are expected to exhibit a commitment to learning and to achieving success. We have guidelines for appropriate student behavior which reflect the school's philosophy of openness and mutual respect. The guidelines show that one is expected to take personal responsibility for his/her behavior... We believe that having a fair yet firm policy on student behavior will allow our school to better function as an environment fruitful for learning, while at the same time promoting the safe play necessary for child development.

General conditions on the application of the code are laid out, including a statement condemning the use of physical punishment as cruel, inhumane, and intolerable.[34] Parents and students are advised that infractions of the code will be treated fairly, and that parents will be advised of major infractions.

Eleven sections of the code of conduct describe behavior expected of students, explaining the rationale behind each rule and stating the consequence (i.e. punishment) of misbehavior. The reasons presented for expected behavior rely on showing the effects of good and bad behavior in each instance on the well-being of the individual and of the school community. For instance,

> *Section 5: Appropriate Language*
> *Expected Behavior*

[34] Although many Muslim families whose children attended the school used corporal punishment at home, I observed that staff did adhere to the school's policy against physical punishment. Its stance on this issue may encourage parents to adopt other child-centered approaches, such as positive reinforcement.

> Your language will be such that it shows respect for other students and staff. Name-calling, swearing, cruel, rude, and obscene language, whether spoken, written, implied, or gestured is unacceptable.
> *Reason for Expected Behavior*
> Being able to communicate appropriately is a valuable life-skill. When language is offensive to others, hurt feelings may lead to further conflict.
> *Consequence of Misbehavior*
> If you use inappropriate language, you will be given a stern reprimand. When the situation requires, you will go to the detention room and make a written account of your actions.

In the code of conduct as well as in other instances, such as Islamic studies classes, the school chose not to rely solely on rules (religious or other) to communicate moral lessons to the students. In fact, religion is hardly invoked at all in the code of conduct, although it is certainly implicit. The following excerpt shows how religious notions are effectively used to reinforce standards which have also been presented in rational terms of child development and psychology.[35]

> *Section 4: Respect for Others*
> *Expected Behavior*
> You are expected to treat all people with consideration and respect. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Prophet Muhammad says: "None of you is a good believer until he/she likes for his brother/sister what he likes for himself/herself." Fighting, shoving, tripping, kicking, biting, and rough horseplay are not acceptable student behaviors.
> *Reason for Expected Behavior*
> Every person needs a good self-image and has the right to be treated with respect. Getting along with others is a very important skill in making your way in today's world. Rough behavior may hurt someone's feelings or physically injure them.
> *Consequences of Misbehavior*
> Disrespect or misbehavior will result in a time out and a written account of the incident by the student in the detention room.

The regulations also refer to the "Islamic rules regarding stealing," currently interpreted in some countries as the amputation of the thief's right hand.[36] How does the school deal with such a precedent, which is permitted neither by Canadian law nor by the school's own policy against corporal punishment? The rule states:

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[35] This approach also bears resemblance to current trends in Islamist writing which emphasize the rationality of the Qur'an and Islamic doctrine.

[36] When I mentioned the imposition of this punishment on an American worker living in Pakistan to one community member, she insisted that it had been done for political value, to show the American government that Pakistan was independent and could indeed defy the will of the United States.

> Both the parents and the school staff must make the children aware of the severity of Islamic rules regarding stealing.
> In a case whereby a student committed a theft:
> Parents will be informed and the children must return the stolen object.
> The child must apologize in person to his parents, school principal, class teacher, and the injured party.

The guidelines allude to Surah 5 (al-Ma'ida), verses 38 and 39, which reveal that the school administration's approach to resolving theft and re-integrating the offender is authentically Islamic, arguably more than the interpretation of many countries which claim to follow Muslim laws. In this holistic view of resolving anti-social acts, the accused is called to make sincere repentance and to repair the consequences.[37] The verses read:

38. As to the thief,
Male or female,
Cut off his or her hands;
A retribution for their deed
And exemplary punishment
From Allah,
And Allah is Exalted in Power,
Full of Wisdom.

39. But if the thief reprent,
After his crime,
And amend his conduct,
Allah turneth to him
In forgiveness; for Allah
Is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

Such an approach was also used to address other sorts of infractions.

Dress

Another aspect of the school's encouragement of an Islamic atmosphere was the dress code which students and teachers were formally and informally asked to respect. In contrast to other Muslim schools (e.g. described in Haddad and Lummis 1987:80), however, this code does

[37] The amputation of limbs as punishment for theft has little historical precedent to recommend it as authentically Islamic. Instead, Muslims have generally interpreted the verses in light of principles such as society's debt toward the poor (stealing food to eat is not punishable) and adequate proof (the thief's confession or the testimony of two witnesses is required). See Rosen 1989 on Islamic concepts of justice, with particular reference to the notion of re-integrating offenders.

not distinguish between Islamic and un-Islamic clothing on the basis of ethnic tradition but rather according to what is covered and what is not. For instance, in his book *The Muslim Woman's Dress* which is widely circulated and referred to as an authority by many who consider the hijab obligatory Islamic dress, Jamal Badawi writes that both men's and women's clothing

> should not be similar to what is known as the costume of unbelievers. This requirement is derived from the general rule of Shari'ah that Muslims should have their distinct personalities and should differentiate their practices and appearance from unbelievers (Badawi n.d.:9).

None of the mothers I talked with, even those who preferred to wear distinctive *jallabas* or *jilbabs* themselves, felt that it was un-Islamic for schoolgirls to dress in modest Western clothes. One staff member said that the uniforms were appropriate and Islamic:

> The girls are covered; the older ones wear cardigans to cover their bodies. They boys too are covered, the pants are loose. Not everyone remembers that it is just as important for boys to be modest as it is for girls. But I don't think they have to dress differently other than that. Muslims are not supposed to dress to attract attention.

The students wore standard uniforms purchased from a company which supplies clothing to other private schools in Montreal, although some parents bought second hand uniforms, had them sewn privately, or purchased similar styles elsewhere. Elementary school girls wore navy jumpers and white blouses; older girls wore green and blue plaid skirts, long-sleeved white blouses, and navy cardigans bearing the school crest. The skirts must fall no less than eight inches above the ankle, and very few skirts were any longer than that. The uniform of girls in grades four and up included white headscarves. Boys wore gray or navy pants, long-sleeved white shirts with navy vests, and ties. For physical education, students of both sexes wore loosely-fitting track suits.

From time to time, teachers took several minutes after morning assembly or noon prayer to conduct a uniform review. Those wearing clothing other than the prescribed styles were admonished and told to wear the standard uniform the next day. This was a bone of contention: many students wore clothing which more or less closely resembled the assigned uniform while asserting individuality and personal taste in minor variations. In these uniform reviews, boys' clothing was scrutinized as carefully as girls', and their non-standard sweaters and shirts were picked out as frequently. One particular criticism of boys' uniforms was pants that were judged too tight. Boys and girls were considered equally responsible to dress in the style the school viewed as Islamic.

Clothes and hierarchies

Until several years ago, all female teachers — Muslim or not — were required to wear headscarves at the school as a condition of employment. When two Muslim students were prohibited from wearing the hijab at their public schools, the hijab requirement at the Muslim school was taken up by the French-language press and the school quickly revised its policy.[38] The requirement now applies only to Muslim teachers. While some individuals I spoke with questioned the implications of the rule or acknowledged that wearing a scarf part-time meant that it was difficult to grow used to hearing less well, none of the Muslim teachers and parents who didn't wear hijab outside the school considered the rule oppressive to the extent that the media did; many felt the media's interest in the school's dress regulations was an attempt to vilify Muslims and their beliefs. During the 1996-1997 school year, non-Muslim teachers dressed as they wish, in short sleeved tops, scoop-neck blouses, tight leggings, and knee-length skirts, or, as some did, in clothing which greatly resembled the modest Western outfits of Muslim teachers.

Muslim teachers dressed in a variety of modest (and often fashionable) styles. A few wore the new-style *jallaba* (a floor-length loose dress worn over other clothing) usually purchased in the Middle East, which, in that context if not in the West, indicates that the wearer is educated and modern while still identifying with Islamic values.[39] Most, however, wore off-the-rack bought locally, usually a long-sleeved top and jacket or sweater which falls below the hips, calf-length skirt or pants (or jeans), and a scarf covering the hair. Only details such as a few inches of hair showing at the crown and a loosely-tied scarf rather than a pinned one served to distinguish between those whose headscarf was religious and those whose headscarf was pragmatic.

Male staff also wore Western clothing, although several from time to time wore a *jibba* (a long, loose garment) over their usual occidental attire. Typical clothing consisted of a suit and tie, or other pants and a long- or short-sleeved shirt. In fall 1996, only three of the nine men employed full-time or part-time at the school wore beards.[40] Along with several of the

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[38] See Appendix for a list of newspaper articles on the controversy. One French Canadian Muslim told me that the French-language media's attacks on the school's hijab policy were clumsy. Failing to consider that she might be both Muslim and Quebecker, one television report falsely portrayed her as a Christian teacher oppressed by the hijab rule.

[39] For more discussion of veiling in the Middle East, see Hoodfar 1991, 1997; MacLeod 1991.

[40] None of the students wore beards. In Britain this is a more common practice however, and cases have been reported of Muslim boys attending public schools who have been told stay home unless they shaved their beards. See Parker-Jenkins 1995:66.

male students, two or three wore traditional skull caps (called *kabbus* or *kufi*) on occasion, but not regularly.

As in other Muslim social groups and institutions, the contrast between the informal discourse on men's and women's clothing revealed a social hierarchy. In effect, while the school's policy on women's (and girls') clothing conformed to all but the most conservative opinions on Muslim dress, men had a fair amount of leeway, considering that a number of Muslim groups or religious leaders (e.g. the Tablighi Jamaat, described in Raza 1993:12) advocate distinctive beards, skull caps, and *jallabas* or other ethnic clothing while condemning neckties.[41] Though this situation indicates some ideological distance from the fundamentalist movements that seek to impose "correct" forms of dress and other aspects of gender roles, it confirms a hierarchy which has emerged within many conservative Muslim communities in the West in which some preserve their own freedom of action against fundamentalist dictates while substantiating their Islamic identity by imposing (formally or informally) these dictates on the women of their community. Other views of hijab emphasize personal choice and also minimize the significance of head covering relative to other aspects of Islamic practice, such as prayer, payment of zakat (poor tax), and good character. Thus, while some women may prefer it for themselves and for others as the proper dress for Muslim women, they rarely seek to impose it by force of law, regulation, or violence on others. The next section discusses how students, staff, and parents viewed the hijab rule at the school.

Hijab

The basis of hijab is considered to be Surah 24 (al-Nur), verse 31:

> And say to the believing women
> That they should lower
> Their gaze and guard
> Their modesty; that they
> Should not display their
> Beauty and ornaments except
> What (ordinarily) appear
> Thereof; that they should
> Draw their veils over

[41] On the significance of beards, head coverings, and other aspects of male dress in Egyptian society, see Gaffney 1994. Similarly, in her talk "Women in Islam: Politics of Clothing and Gender Relations" at Queen's University (March 13, 1996), Homa Hoodfar described how the Islamic Revolution in Iran sought to Islamize men's as well as women's clothing. In the street, buckets of paints were sometimes thrown at men dressed in short-sleeved shirts; ties were also condemned as a symbol of westernization. Similarly, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has imposed its standards of dress and behavior on both men and women.

Their bosoms and not display
Their beauty except
To their husbands, their fathers... [42]

However, there is some disagreement in the wider Muslim community about the school's requirement that female students in grade four and above and female Muslim teachers wear headscarves. Some people I talked with voiced their concerns in terms of customary practice. One woman, an observant Muslim, said "We don't even force girls to wear headscarves in Egypt and of course we are Muslim there!" Others referred to Surah 2 (al-Baqara), verse 258, "There is no compulsion in religion," to support their view that even if the school can legitimately *advocate* "covering" (i.e. wearing a headscarf and clothing which covers the chest, body, arms, and legs), it cannot enforce such a policy since this is a religious practice (or obligation, in some views) which the school has acknowledged in requiring this only of *Muslim* teachers.[43] One individual said that the school should be particularly sensitive to any appearance of coercion since "we know they — the media and the rest of society — are watching us for the slightest proof that we are as bad as they think."

The policy enunciated by the school's administrators is that each school is free to establish its own requirements and that the scarf is part of theirs. Several staff members, even though they told me that wearing the hijab had to be a personal decision, said that parents have the responsibility to raise their daughters properly and they can force them to wear the hijab (just as they can force them to wear knee-length skirts rather than mini skirts) until they reach adulthood. Parents delegate this authority in the same way that they delegate the authority to discipline their children. "In any case," staff members and parents said on many occasions, "people who do not agree with this are not forced to send their children here."

Yet, while the headscarf policy was defended and legitimized as a dress code, it cannot be viewed without also acknowledging that the hijab — which stands for modesty and the privacy of women's bodies — has ironically been appropriated as a public symbol of communal identity. One of the parents described how the policy came about:

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[42] Those who state that Muslim women are required to cover all but their faces, hands, and feet often refer to a group of hadiths in support of their interpretation of this verse. Such arguments and the accompanying hadiths can be found in Badawi n.d. and Doi 1989:12ff.

[43] "This is an example of using a good surah in the wrong way," said one person in response to this argument.

> It was not the school which asked that the girls be required to wear the scarf in the beginning, it was the parents who said that if they sent their children to the school it was because they wanted them to really be Muslim.

Consequently, section 12 of the code of conduct reads:

> *Hijab (Headscarves)*
> All girls from grade four upward are expected to wear headscarves to cover their hair properly.

Muslims who believe that women should "cover" state that this is not required before they reach puberty, which in Muslim legal tradition is fixed as the onset of menstruation. However a staff member told me that they had decided that girls would begin wearing the scarf at school in grade four:

> There are girls in grade four who are beginning puberty, and it would be too embarrassing for them if we said that this one has to but this other one doesn't. So everyone does it together.

There was no pressure on younger girls to cover their hair, although part way through my fieldwork it was decided that they would, like the other girls and women, be required to cover their hair in the mosque.[44] One staff member explained this decision to me, "If they are old enough to be praying, then they are old enough to be covering their hair."

Although some of the girls in grades one, two, and three did regularly wear scarves, they often showed a considerable degree of nonchalance about it. Older students and mothers told me that the little ones wore the scarf mainly because they saw others wearing it and because they heard from their parents that it is the "best dress for Muslim women." In contrast to the white scarves worn by older girls as part of their uniform, younger girls often wore patterned, brightly-colored, or black scarves. Several girls wore their scarves so casually that they were usually half on and half off; others, when their scarves came untied, simply took them off and stored them in their desks. In the middle of class, these younger girls sometimes unpinned their scarves and asked the teacher to put it back on nicely, much the same way they asked for help in tying their shoes or buttoning their coats. There was no embarrassment that they had become "uncovered" nor was there any indication of pressure on the girls to quickly put their scarves back on. What I observed at the school contrasted markedly with statements that kin-

[44] As this policy was being introduced, girls had difficulty remembering to bring scarves with them for prayer. The teachers displayed ingenuity and flexibility in finding a solution that would promote their wish that the girls perform their prayers and cover their heads while doing so: they collected knitted winter hats for the girls to wear in the mosque.

dergarten girls are forced to wear the hijab made in the film *Au nom d'Allah* (In the Name of God), a Radio-Canada documentary which featured the school where I conducted my field-work.

Older girls were required to wear the scarf, although the distinction between the scarf as part of a dress code and the hijab as personal religious commitment was retained. Several girls estimated that perhaps no more than a third of all girls in the school wore the hijab "full-time." One girl mentioned the distinction between hijab and headscarf, and recognized that for many of her classmates, the scarf had no ideological significance. She said,

> At the school, it is just a part of our uniform. When teachers see a girl without her scarf, they don't say "Where is your hijab?" They say "Where is your uniform?"

Similarly, one mother said,

> You see it is just a part of the uniform because the girls who are not practicing take it off as soon as they go out of the door. They are not harassed because of it, as soon as they leave the school they are free to do what they want. I know them, these girls. They take it off before they get to the bus stop![45] Outside the school, the school cannot say anything. But inside the school, the hijab is part of the uniform just like the navy skirt and the white shirt.

I asked what one student thought of the "hijab rule," especially since most Muslims in Montreal believe it is a matter of personal choice. She said,

> Well, there are two answers. First, it is good because the girls get used to wearing the scarf and so it is not strange to them. And the girls who wear the scarf full-time aren't made to feel strange. If only those girls wore the scarf, then it would be like a public school and they might be teased by the other girls since most of the girls here only wear the scarf because they have to. And also it is part of the Islamic environment of the school. But on the other hand, it is not so good because the girls who are forced to wear the hijab by their mothers aren't doing it because they want to. When girls wear the scarf because they want to, then they will keep it up; but no girl who is forced to wear the scarf will keep it up when she is older. So it is not really good for them.

[45] This practice is not unique. A park in one northern Indian town is called "Purdah Bagh," a place for young girls to take off their burqas (cloak-like garments covering the body head to toe, including hair and face) as they leave the traditional neighborhoods and put them on again before entering (Anjum 1992:114). Older girls from the Montreal school often spent several minutes in the bathroom before leaving the school in the afternoon, carefully layering their street clothes under their uniforms. Once out the door, they might remove the outer layer — the uniform — in the street or parking lot, or wait until boarding the bus.

This reality is reflected in the behavior of these girls and in how they wear their scarves. Like the teachers, girls vary in how much hair they cover, and older girls have considerable leeway. While some girls wear the scarf folded in a dart at the temples to form what they called a "tent" covering the forehead (at least several inches and sometimes down to the eyebrows), others display several inches of their hairline. Many older girls arrange their scarves loosely and untied, with the ends simply crossed under the chin and placed over the opposite shoulder. Sometimes the scarf is not wrapped at all, but draped over the head and pinned under the chin, with the ends hanging straight down.

None of the girls or teachers wore their scarves in the traditional peasant style in which the scarf is wrapped around the head and tied at the nape, covering the hair but leaving the neck open. Although traditional women in many Muslim societies cover their heads in this style, it is clearly distinguished from the modern hijab by Muslims and Westerners alike as lacking its ideological connotation and committment. As the weather became warm one day, I told one of my friends at the school that I would soon begin wearing my hijab in this cooler style, and I retied the scarf I was wearing to demonstrate. My friend, who unlike me wears the "full-time" hijab, laughed at my new style, and said, "Oh, like one of those orthodox Jewish women!" Another day, wearing my scarf "peasant style" as I called it, I met several of the younger boys whom I knew quite well. One took one look at my scarf and wagged his finger at my with a grin, "Ooooh! A bandana!" The other commented, "Why are you wearing that? That is what Moroccan women wear." He had seen me wearing various styles of modern hijab for six months and this was the first time my clothing seemed to make a statement.

Girls and women whose scarves represented commitment to the religious idea of hijab were usually meticulous about covering their hair and chose styles which stayed easily in place. Some wore sewn headcoverings of one or two pieces devised to be comfortable and no-fuss, while others use a safety pin or straight pin to anchor their scarves under the chin, above the left ear, or at the back of the head. Linda Walbridge says that in a Shi'ite neighborhood in Dearborn, Michigan, the manner in which a scarf was pinned corresponded to the wearer's political views. She writes:

> Zahra D.'s sisters-in-law wear their scarves pinned on the side [above the left ear] along with long, very modest dresses. Another Lebanese woman approached one of these sisters-in-law one day when Zahra D. was with her. The woman asked, "Do you wear your hijab for Hizbullah or Amal?" Zahra angrily blurted out, "She wears it for God" (Walbridge 1997:178).

This was not the case at the school, and girls who did not wear the hijab outside of school also sometimes pinned their scarves in this fashion because they said it was pretty, unlikely to need rearranging, and comfortable.

No staff members or students wore face veils (known as *niqab* in the Middle East) during my fieldwork, although this practice is becoming more common in the wider Montreal Muslim community, and I learned that some of the students' mothers dressed in this style. One opinion in favor of covering the face asserts it is necessary because of the corruption of modern society in which "even the face may attract sexual glances from men" (Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani, quoted in Doi 1989:15; see also Khurshid Ahmad, quoted in Lemu and Heeren 1978:50). Several women I talked with considered this practice extreme and un-Islamic, saying that what is obligatory during prayer is the best dress for Muslim women, and since women may not veil their faces during prayer or pilgrimage then this practice is not recommended (Mutahhari 1989:64ff).

Social interaction

Informal structures also characterized the space as Muslim. In contrast to Arabic conversations, Arabic interjections (phrases inserted into a conversation taking place in French or English) were used liberally by some students, and not at all by others. These interjections were often religious in form. Some of the boys punctuated their conversations with the exclamation "Wallah!" ("By God!") to indicate amazement, exasperation, or to emphasize that they were indeed telling the truth. Students (and teachers) replied to invitations and plans with phrases along the lines of "Inshallah, we will meet after school," implying not that they expected divine intervention but rather that they intended to keep the commitment but that if either party proved unable (for unforeseen reasons) then it was God's will. In formal situations, however, such as when teachers assigned dates for tests and homework or when administrators sent out printed announcements, the dates were never qualified in a similar fashion.

Interjections had an Islamic structure, but, as in the Catholic school classrooms observed by Peter McLaren, served additional social purposes (McLaren 1993). Several children had the habit of trying to silence conversation in the classroom by clapping their hands and declaring "Allahu akbar!" (God is greater); these mini-performances were mainly for my and the teachers' benefit, since they allowed the actor to simultaneously participate in the classroom commotion and demonstrate his own conformity to the "quiet classroom" rule. While

students weren't really able to effectively marshall religious legitimacy in this way and rarely succeeded in creating order by reminding the others that Muslims should be orderly, a few teachers used similar techniques. One teacher was extremely effective. This exchange took place one morning as she prepared to leave the room to gather some materials:

Teacher:	Are you going to be wise?
Class:	Yes.
Teacher:	Are you going to be quiet?
Class:	Yes.
Teacher:	Who will supervise?

At this point, I expected to see the students wriggle and squeal "Me! Me!" in excited attempts to earn the job of classroom monitor. Instead there was silence. The class responded, again in unison, "Allah!" They remained absolutely quiet for several minutes after the teacher left the room, then the level of noise rose slightly as students began to engage in quiet conversation. When the teacher came back, she thanked them for keeping their promise to be quiet, and returned to her planned lesson.

Children's conversations included accusations such as "Oh, that's haram!" in novel ways. One use was to express disgust. One afternoon, I was talking with an eleven year old girl when she discovered a plastic container left on a nearby window sill. She opened it and then screwed up her nose in distaste. "Oooh! That's haram!" she said. "What's haram?" I asked, looking into the abandoned container. "This is just cold spaghetti!" She pushed the container of spaghetti away. "Oh, but it's revolting! I'm going to throw up!"

Others referred to things they knew to be haram for special effect, or to see the reaction of their audience. These incidents seemed similar to the sensational "dirty stories" I have heard from non-Muslim children, along the lines of "There was a woman who was naked! That's dirty!" The younger children at the school had their own versions of what constituted sensational stories. One story that was recounted to me on the playground concerned a child who had intended to avoid performing wudu before afternoon prayers, and so the youngster went the whole morning without going to the bathroom to pee. Prayers took longer than expected, and the unfortunate child urinated in his pants, inside the mosque. The other children were deliciously horrified by the incident, since few things they could imagine were more defiling to the mosque's purity. This story took on a life of its own, and evolved into accusations as well as boasts of audacity. In the days following the incident, I heard elementary school boys claiming that their worst enemies had peed in the mosque, and on one occasion, one fellow looked me straight in the eye and told me that he had peed in the mosque himself. I raised my

eyebrows, opened my mouth in theatrical disbelief, and in my best teacher's voice told him I was thoroughly disgusted and that I never wanted to hear such a thing again. He smiled.

This symbolic transgression of boundaries was present in many forms. In some cases, as above, it served to reinforce agreed-upon taboos while providing the actor with the chance to exert some independence. In other cases, it might establish a hierarchy of knowledge that subverted the teacher's authority. One incident drew these two themes together. I arrived in the teachers' preparation room in the middle of a conversation one morning. One of the English teachers was showing a book about farm animals to a homeroom teacher whose class she would be teaching later that day. The book had a large photo of a hairy sow and her piglets. The English teacher, who was non-Muslim, asked how she should discuss the pig in class. The homeroom teacher, who was Muslim, said that Muslims don't raise pigs, or eat their meat or offer it to guests, but obviously God created pigs along with the other animals. It would be all right to show the children a picture of a pig, she concluded. Then she told an interesting story:

> This morning, we were talking about barnyard animals. I asked what kind of animals live on the farm. "Cows," "horses," "ducks," "chickens," "sheep," the students answered. Then "Pigs!" "Pigs! Pigs! Pigs! Pigs live on farms! Don't forget pigs!" I told them that pigs live on Christian farms, but not Muslim farms.

She smiled as she told us about her inventive response, and then she turned back to the English teacher,

> You see, with me, they just wanted to talk about pigs because they know that I know we don't eat pig. They wanted to see what I would do. Watch this morning what they do with you. I bet they will take one look and say, "Oh missus! Pigs are haram! Haram! Haram!" They would get some fun out of that.

Other forms of social interaction were also characteristic of the school. The most interesting is perhaps the adoption of a form of address unique to Western Muslim communities. Students address teachers and other adults as "Sister" and "Brother" (using the English words even when the language of conversation is French), sometimes with the first name ("Sister Fatma") and sometimes without. While this form of address was also extended by the younger children to non-Muslim teachers (and consistently by all the students to one particularly well liked Christian teacher), older children and staff members used the kinship terms "Sister" and "Brother" to refer only to Muslims. Non-Muslim teachers were addressed by an honorific used with the first name in the Arab style, such as Mrs. Theresa or Dr. Susan.[46] Female staff mem-

[46] The use of the first name in both cases is in keeping with the current norm in Quebec's public schools, where students often call teachers — particularly younger ones — by their

bers referred to most of their women colleagues by their given names only, although the senior woman staff member was always addressed in the Western style, the honorific "Mrs." used with her family name. Women teachers generally used the kinship term to address male staff members, while male staff members did the same.

The use of fictive kinship terms is common between friends and neighbors in many parts of the world (Muslim and non-Muslim), although such *consistent* use, especially between individuals who do not have affectionate friendships, is novel. The use of fictive kinship terms legitimizes inevitable interactions between non-related Muslim men and women by placing them in an Islamically acceptable context. I discussed this notion with a young Muslim woman who has grown up in Canada. She is quite active in the community and frequently interacts with men her age, and, despite her insistence that she adheres to strict Islamic norms of gender relations, she knows many non-kin men quite well. She told me, with a grin, "I don't think there is any danger. You can't even imagine flirting with someone you have called 'Brother' for five years."

Men and women maintained some degree of segregation at the school. Male employees rarely entered the teachers' preparation room, although the door was virtually always half open and men sometimes stopped to talk from the doorway without entering. Male teachers kept to other areas of the school, partly because the teachers' preparation area was often terribly crowded, but also because of the sense that it was a women's space. This seemed very clear one day during Ramadan, when a teacher who was feeling tired took off her scarf and laid down to rest out during the noon hour break, of sight of the door. The door remained partially open, as usual, until one of the older women purposefully got up and closed the door. On other occasions, women removed or rearranged their headscarves in the preparation room — something I saw take place otherwise only in the privacy of the washrooms.

The degree of gender segregation practiced at the school was limited, and I did not perceive that it created problems for the teachers. Female and male staff members interacted freely, though rarely with easy familiarity — something which many in this context would see as undesirable in any case, and even a hindrance to the maintenance of healthy working relationships. As a consequence of the unanimous respect for these expectations concerning male-female professional relationships, male and female staff members had little reticence about

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given names. However, in contrast to the current trend which encourages children to use familiar forms of address with adults (*tu* as opposed to *vous*), students at the Muslim school used the formal, respectful form *vous* with teachers and other adults.

conducting work-related conversations alone in closed offices, despite the well-known hadith to the effect that when a man and a woman are alone together, the third person in the room is Shaytan, the devil. In sharp contrast to what I observed in Montreal, Parker-Jenkins and Haw found that female Muslim headteachers in the United Kingdom were often excluded from participating in meetings with male board members on grounds of modesty (Parker-Jenkins and Haw 1996).

Conclusion

The school's founders envisaged the institution as a part of Western society that would conform to Islamic standards. An Islamic atmosphere was created formally, through classes in Islamic studies, Qur'an, and Arabic; twice-daily communal prayers and time-table adjustments for Muslim holidays; and the wearing of hijab by girls and Muslim female teachers; and informally, through teachers' incorporation of Muslim experiences into their lesson plans and through shared expectations of Muslim social interaction. Other aspects affirmed the school's place in Quebec and North America: the uniforms were Islamic but Western in style and origin; the curriculum followed provincial guidelines and mainstream textbooks; the languages of teaching and administration were French and English; and neither the school as a whole nor individual classrooms were segregated along gender lines.

Chapter four

Schooling and Strategies

Many aspects of the school's culture and structure contradicted the image of a cloistered religious institution portrayed by the few research studies that have been published on Muslim schools elsewhere, particularly in Britain. In addition to observation and participation in the school's daily life over the course of an academic year, the research plan included exploring immediate sources of influence on the school, the shared assumptions about the school's mission, and the factors to which the teachers and administrators were responding. I conducted in-depth interviews about the factors which motivated some families to choose a Muslim school over a public or private one and what needs the school fulfilled for them. Early on in the research, I interviewed a member of the school's founding group who told me that they had sought to "do something for the children and for the community." The primary group was not composed of young parents, but rather of community leaders concerned that children were being educated in an un-Islamic environment. In fact, the school's founding coincided with the publication of Abdul Rashid's statistical analysis of the 1981 census exposing the high rate of religious exogamy among Muslim Canadians: in mixed marriages, between two-thirds and three-quarters of children of Muslim parents were raised outside Islam (Rashid 1985).

Since the 1980s, the Muslim community in Canada and in Montreal in particular has grown significantly, and the threat of losing children to other confessional groups seems to have diminished, only to be displaced by other concerns that are as much social as religious. For the parents I spoke with, there were multiple reasons why they supported the school, although these were often prefaced by a formal, conventional, "expected" response. As our discussions progressed, however, other issues emerged. As one mother described her experience with the Muslim school,

> You don't have to worry. They learn about Islam. They learn the rules. There is no problem with delinquency. You hear so much in the media about the problems that teenagers have. I think it is better at the Muslim school, there is nothing like that.

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of in-depth semi-structured interviews I conducted with forty-eight parents, school staff, and community members on these issues.

Education and the "Myth of return"

My initial question for parents was always, "What motivated you to send your children to the Muslim school?" Many responded immediately that they hoped to return to what they considered "their country" in the relatively near future, although as we talked, they often told me that returning was actually a much more distant goal.[1] In Tunisia, for instance, inflation has targeted consumer goods and housing without generating comparable wages increases. One informant told me that secondary school teachers, for instance, earned about $9,000 in 1996, while the cheapest houses and flats cost $50,000. Cars, which are a necessity for families who aspire to be middle class, cost twice as much as similar models in Canada.[2] Saving enough money to return and buy a house and support a higher standard of living than before, demonstrating that their self-imposed exile had been productive, means that few manage to return unless they manage to obtain a job that pays well enough to support the family and put some money aside.[3] "And then," my informant said, "if you have such a good job here and get to know some people, it isn't so bad."

Parents remarked that the task of reaching their children to read and write their own mother tongue was far more time-consuming than they had anticipated; extra instruction was absolutely necessary. Different parents said,

> At the public school there are just the basic courses. Although we live here, what would happen if we decided to go back to Morocco tomorrow? So they need to learn their parents' language, Arabic, so that they would be able to continue their studies. Myself, I am not able to give all the time that the

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[1] Michael Piore underlines the contrast between migrants' dreams of making money (or getting an education) and returning to their country with the conventional Western view in which returned migrants are considered failures (Piore 1979:50ff). Extending Piore's argument a bit further, I would argue that this is because the country of immigration/migration is implicitly considered superior to all possible alternatives, and thus returned migrants are considered not only economic but also social failures.

[2] On the other hand, she said, since she came to Montreal with her family of four last year, her food bill has increased from $400 to $1,000 month. Along with public transportation, many foods are heavily subsidized by the Tunisian government. (All prices are in Canadian dollars.)

[3] Highlighted in Piore 1979 as a primary dynamic of labor migration, this was also true for the first Muslim immigrants to Canada (Haddad 1978).

> school gives to my son because I work too. I can give some time to his studies, but not as much as the school. And that is not enough.
>
> It's not a high level of Arabic compared to the national curriculum in my country, but it's better than nothing. Especially, since it is really a third language here. The teacher is very good. She always encourages him, and makes him answer in class. She has helped a lot.
>
> We liked the school because of Arabic. Everyone says that you can teach them Arabic at home, but you can't. They learn the dialect, but you can't teach them to read and write at home, not when they also have to learn French and English as well.

Despite the considerable difficulty of returning permanently to the Middle East, most parents told me that the most important factor behind their decision to enroll their children at the Muslim school was the opportunity for their children to learn standard Arabic and perhaps continue their education or join the work force in the Middle East — perceived by immigrants not only as homeland, but also as land of opportunity (Haddad 1983:173). I heard from students about other links with their parents' place of birth which reinforced the importance of learning or retaining Arabic: the funeral of a grandparent, a visit from an uncle, the threat of being sent to live with relatives if rowdy behavior and bad marks weren't improved. A letter in Arabic from Al-Azhar University in Cairo describing possibilities for study in theology was displayed on a bulletin board in the front hall of the school. During Ramadan, one girl told me that her father would be performing hajj this year, hoping to make contacts with pilgrims from the Gulf who could offer advice about employment for English teachers in their countries. If he found a job, then maybe the family would move there. He returned unsuccessful, and in fact, I heard of only one case where children enrolled at the school actually did return with their family to live in the Middle East. They stayed for several years before returning to Montreal where they were again enrolled in the Muslim school.

Ties to Arabic as a heritage language may also be negatively reinforced by the child's environment, the dominant society which imagines Arabs/Middle Easterners, and particularly women of Arab and Middle Eastern heritage — wherever they are born and despite whatever other ethnic heritage they also legitimately claim — to be irrevocably exotic, and demands that individuals conform to these expectations (Fayad 1994; Gheisar 1994; Hamilton 1994). Personal accounts by women of mixed heritage illustrate how the "othering" of Arabs, Iranians, and other Muslim or Middle Eastern peoples overwhelms and obliterates what is familiar to the West and patriarchally erases the identity and contribution of the other parent — most often

the mother.[4] Martha Ani Boudakian, an Armenian American feminist, describes two possible responses: eliminate whatever marks ethnic identity or embrace it proactively and define it yourself (Boudakian 1994, see also Collier 1994). Thus, the quest to reclaim identity often includes learning a language that parents may have discarded as immigrants.

Whether or not they ever return to a homeland, parents desire that their children become fluent in Arabic, the language of business and education, as well as culture, religion, and family. This wish also evokes the "myth of return," the immigrant's solution to having one foot in each country, and living with two contradictory contexts, value sets, and worldviews (Al-Rasheed 1994:200). It is a myth not in the sense that it is untrue, but in the sense that it guides action and makes sense of it.[5]

Religious education

Non-Arabic speaking parents also said that they wished their children to learn to read (and sometimes write) Arabic, even when their children could not read or write the parents' and grandparents' native language. Reading Arabic, they often said, is an essential skill for Muslims since it allows them to read and understand the Qur'an. I talked about native language instruction with one mother whose children also attended a weekend school organized by a group of mostly Pakistani and Indian parents, where they teach Arabic but not Urdu.[6] When I asked why Urdu wasn't also taught, she said,

> Urdu is like English, it is a language that allows people to communicate with each other and so it is important. The children try to learn it. But Arabic is a duty for Muslims and the children need to know it in order to understand and participate in their religion. Even though people in my country sometimes say their prayers without understanding them because they don't know Arabic, that is not something that we should encourage for our children.

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[4] Majaj 1994a, 1994b and Salome 1994 are compelling accounts of untangling Anglo-American and Arab identities and tongues, and the effects of this psychological breach on self-esteem.

[5] In addition to Piore 1979, see also Anwar 1979 and Dahya 1973.

[6] Haddad writes, "In Toronto there are some members of the Jami mosque who want their children to learn Urdu instead of Arabic so that they might be able to understand their heritage. This was viewed with suspicion by other members of the mosque" (Haddad 1978:98 note 40).

Several staff members mentioned that courses like Islamic studies and Qur'an were important for the children's religious education, particularly since both parents often work outside the home and have little time. Although provincial funding for "heritage language programs" allows ethnic community groups to provide weekend lessons in language and culture (Bauer 1994; Talbani 1991:57-58), some parents of children enrolled at the full-time school said that weekend classes were less effective.[7] I spent one afternoon with several women who talked about the difficulty they had in getting their children to take the weekend classes seriously. They said,

> The kids think that because it is on the weekend, then it doesn't matter. They just don't pay attention in the classes.
>
> They need to have time off on the weekend. School is their job and they need time off just like adults do.

While emphasizing that they appreciated the opportunity to have Islamic instruction at school — just as most Christian parents can choose appropriate religious instruction for their children within Quebec public schools, parents told me that they did make an effort to provide introductory and informal religious instruction at home. Furthermore, several parents I met spent several hours each week supervising the memorization of hadith and Qur'an and teaching the skills of Qur'anic recitation to their children, all of whom were boys.

On the other hand, one staff member at the school said that many parents didn't have adequate training themselves and so they were forced to rely on the school to teach their children. When I asked if this was because of modernization or women's employment in jobs outside the home, he disagreed, saying that traditionally formal religious education for children is given by a local Quranic scholar or hafiz.[8]

My observations at the school revealed some basis for these opinions. A few students told me that they only learned to do ablutions and pray properly after they started going to the

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[7] The opinions of several parents whose children attended the weekend classes supported this view. Two mothers told me that they would have preferred to send their children to the day school except that the classes were in French and their children spoke English only. On the other hand, other parents espoused views which seem to be shared by much of Montreal's Muslim community, asserting that children will, through observation and imitation, learn their parents' religious practice as well as their attitudes toward religion.

[8] For a brief history of classical religious instruction in the Middle East, see Al-Aroosi 1980. Earl Waugh (1980) notes that the mosque has indeed taken on nontraditional responsibilities, including religious education, in North America.

Muslim school, and that their parents wanted them to learn even though they don't themselves pray. One girl said that she had a hard time, since she transferred to the school after the other children her age had already learned about ablutions and prayers. Because of that, she said, she never really learned how to pray and perform ablutions properly, although she later "figured most of it out" by watching the other students. As for the silent recitations during prayer, she still had difficulty. A staff member acknowledged that many students come from families where religious practice is not emphasized:

> There are some parents who also send their children for a religious education, but for more practical reasons since they don't themselves practice their religion or know anything about it, and they want to avoid criticism by sending their children to the school for a proper religious education. Thus, they may not know much about religion, but they consider that the school is responsible for that. Thus you find people who are virtually non-practicing, but send their children here.

Although students attended classes in Arabic, Qur'an, and Islamic studies each week, one teacher emphasized that the school provides "just bits and pieces of Islam," "no more than the simplest introduction." While the students received basic religious instruction, it seemed true that the school did not see itself as a religious college. One indication of this was that although students spent an hour weekly (above and beyond Islamic studies) learning to recite Qur'an, studying interpretations of it, and memorizing selected verses, there was no set program for memorizing the entire Qur'an. In comparison, a descriptive pamphlet for another Canadian Muslim school states that fifteen of their students have memorized the Qur'an in the past three years. A brochure about this school states:

> In an age when evil is not only tolerated but promoted, and in a place where the degeneration of society is bringing the concept of morals to a halt at an alarming pace, humanity's lack and need for true guidance becomes ever-apparent. Day by day it becomes more obvious that a way that will bring the entire mankind solace, comfort, and prosperity must be introduced and implemented. However, before this way — the way of Islam — can be introduced to humanity at large, appropriate measures must be taken to awaken the flag-bearers of the Truth — the Muslims. They must be reminded of their responsibility to bring Islam into their lives, and keep it alive through the coming generations. Otherwise, social and moral deterioration may remove any hope of a prosperous society. An important and key element in this awakening process is the establishment of institutions of higher Islamic learning. In these institutions, youth who are the base of our future can learn the true and practical essence of Islam. This training will take place in an environment conducive to both the learning and practicing of the highest morals and conduct known to man — Quran and Sunnah. Those individuals who will learn in such an envi-

ronment will, Inshallah be instrumental in the establishment, propagation, and protection in present and future generations.

The same school offers a six year comprehensive program of Islamic and academic subjects leading to "the degree of Alim." When I asked if the Montreal school had considered such adopting a program for producing Qur'an scholars, one staff member said,

> There are some students who do this on their own. But we can't ask everyone to do it. You see how busy the children are already. When would they find the time, with English, French, and Arabic and all the sciences? This is school, and there is plenty of time outside of school to memorize Qur'an if they wish.

Academic achievement

The school's staff was proud of the students' results on provincial standardized tests (see Table 12 and Table 13 below). The results were well publicized within the Muslim community, and the school relied on the legitimacy conferred by the tests to combat the negative image (within the community as much as outside it) communicated by the lack of a purpose-built facility, and perhaps also to disprove the notion that the integration of Muslim culture and faith into the curriculum undermined the school's academic credibility.

Table 12: Average grade on provincial examination by subject and school category, June 1994

Subject	*Private*	*Public*	*Muslim*
French	74.9	68.4	74.1
English	79.5	75.4	81.9
Math	72.1	69.2	77.1
Physics	70.3	69.1	76.4
Chemistry	76.5	75.4	73.2
Economics	73.5	69.3	76.5
Total	74.47	71.13	76.38

Source: Parents' committee document (January 1996); *Résultats aux épreuves uniques de juin 1994 par établissements privés*, Québec: Ministère d'Éducation.

Table 13: Provincial examination success rate by subject and school category, June 1994

Subject	*Private*	*Public*	*Muslim*
French	95.0	80.2	100
English	95.9	90.3	100
Math	87.8	82.8	100
Physics	85.3	81.5	100
Chemistry	95.9	94.2	100
Economics	93.8	84.5	100
Total	92.28	85.58	100

Source: Parents' committee document (January 1996); *Résultats aux épreuves uniques de juin 1994 par établissements privés*, Québec: Ministère d'Éducation.

In the 1997 ranking of schools by the Quebec education ministry, the school placed tenth out of 59 private schools on the island of Montreal and 18th out of 141 public and private schools on the island.[9] These achievements were viewed as evidence of the high caliber of the school, particularly in view of tuition. While the tuition charged by Muslim school was $1500 per year in 1996-1997, other private schools charged up to $6000. Because of such low tuition fees, many low-income families — including families receiving social assistance — also had access to the school.

Parents offered examples from their own experience to illustrate the high standards at the Muslim school, especially compared to public schools. One mother said,

> My niece and nephews go to public school and they have much less homework than my daughter has. My niece is in grade three and she can't writetwo sentences without making lots of mistakes in French. And she gets very good marks. My daughter can write much better than she does, and she's in grade two and she's getting 68 or 70 percent. So you see that the standards are very different.

> The standards at the public schools are very relaxed. They are not very demanding. I wanted to have my son do the test to see if he could go to kindergarten rather than pre-kindergarten since they don't have pre-kindergarten at the Muslim school. So I spoke to a psychologist on the phone. She asked, "What school do you want to send him to?" I said the Muslim school. And she said, "Well, I wouldn't push him yet because that is a very high performance school." Those were her words. And she didn't recommend that he go there for another year.

Some parents — both very religiously observant and less observant individuals — cited the students' good results on the standardized tests as proof that the school's focus is not relig-

[9] From a letter distributed to parents.

ious instruction, but rather providing a proper education for Muslim children, something that includes but is not limited to religious instruction. Referring to this, one parent said,

> There are some people who say "Oh, the Muslim school is not very good academically. They do just Arabic and Qur'an." It is incredible the things they — *Arabs*, *Muslims* — say about the school. But when I went there and saw what it is, I was amazed. If the school wasn't good, then they wouldn't be able to have a permit and they would have closed. I am satisfied, particularly since before I had heard lots of nasty things about it.

Behavioral norms

Along with academic, religious, and linguistic criteria, parents also had social criteria for their children's education. Parents are concerned about drug abuse, premarital sex, and crime (Ba-Yunus 1991:233; Haddad 1978:79-80). These concerns seemed to be primary in the minds of members of the Muslim community at the time of the school's establishment. Like other conservative parents, Muslims in Montreal were shocked by the "Sexual Revolution" that took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, marked as significantly by the change in public discourse toward sexual activity outside marriage as by any change in behavior. For the first time, television characters presented as role models for modern women (e.g. on the series *Mary Tyler Moore*) openly discussed premarital sex. Talk of a Muslim school in Montreal began during this period. Haddad cites a local Muslim publication:

> So what can we provide [our children] with that will at least save them from drowning into this world of pop art, groovy clothes, and groovier hair styles, smokes and snuffs that fly them high, this world that is turning God's great gift, the desire for procreation, into a source of gay, free, swinging and unprincipled way of life akin to animals (*Bulletin/Newsletter*, June 1975, quoted in Haddad 1978:79-80).

Some ardent supporters of the school were individuals who, as North American born converts or immigrants who came here as children or teenagers, grew up in North America and were familiar with the pressures and problems facing children, particularly adolescents. One young mother told me,

> I went to school here and I know. You can't tell me that everything is fine in schools here. I don't want my daughter to go through what I went through. Who would want that? And you don't have to be Muslim to be critical.

Another parent said,

> There are people who are afraid. They have heard all kinds of things about the public secondary schools, about drugs and sexual relationships, and they are afraid. I have friends who came here very young and did their secondary school here and they say that these kinds of things are very common.

These concerns were also expressed by many individuals who did not consider themselves particularly religious. One mother acknowledged this, saying,

> There are parents who are not practicing and send their children to the Muslim school because they say, well at least there are no drugs, no sex, the girls aren't kissing the boys in the school yard. Many parents, whether they are practicing or not, are afraid of that. I know many people who are not practicing who send their children to the school for that reason.

Because puberty is a time of change and learning adult roles, parents believed that during the teenage years children are especially sensitive to the diversity around them, and that bad behavioral models are especially powerful. Muslim educator Noura Durkee writes:

> For Muslim children, [puberty] can be truly devastating. It is at this time and in these schools that drugs, tobacco, sexuality and other forms of distractions enter heavily into the public school environment, along with violence. I have seen Muslim parents in a state of shock after a visit to junior high or high school. They cannot believe it, the bad manners of the children who shove through the doors and talk back to their teachers, seeing pregnant teenagers, hearing the language (Durkee 1987:63).

Yet many acknowledged that while the Muslim school has high standards of discipline, so do many private schools. "It is a matter of choosing what is right for you," one parent said, expressing a belief shared by many other people I spoke with. Yet, parents usually discussed their other options as public schools rather than non-Muslim private schools. Since tuition was less than half the fee charged by other private institutions in Montreal (although many have much better facilities and can justify the differential), the Muslim school attracted many families who would be financially unable to send their children to other private schools.[10] In fact, in terms of facilities at least, the school's status as a partially funded private institution meant

[10] Indeed, several community members told me that high-income earning Muslim Canadians — including those who are very religiously observant — rarely send their children to the Muslim school, but choose instead private single-sex schools. Reasons suggested include academic concerns (linked to the quality of facilities and lack of extracurricular activities) as well as the fact that the school is mixed at all levels. As in their countries of origin, upper middle class Muslims sometimes favor Catholic-run single sex schools, particularly for daughters, since they are considered to offer high quality education in an environment that emphasizes propriety and respect for elders in addition to being segregated along gender if not religious lines. This is also the case in Britain. See Nielsen 1989:238.

that it had fewer resources than fully funded public schools. Rather than well-heeled or exclusive, in this instance 'private' implied only that the school was unaffiliated with Montreal's public Catholic and Protestant school boards.

Quebec public schools had negative associations for most parents, who compared local public schools unfavorably with public schools in the Middle East and Asia where very strict standards of discipline are imposed. Several parents told me that in their countries of birth, private schools were generally a last resort for children who scored poorly on the national examinations which determine career paths and entrance to academic or vocational streams in the public system.[11] Parents realized quite rapidly that it is not the same here. One informant compared public schools in his country of birth to military academies; in contrast, the public system in Montreal (and equally, elsewhere in North America) seemed dangerous and chaotic. He added,

> Public schools are violent but so are the buses and metros. Children are beat up in what they call 'taxing' — bullies who steal expensive leather jackets and sneakers. Kids are not even safe at school.

Another parent told me,

> The stories we hear from our friends whose kids go to public schools... That environment does not promote the values we hope our children will grow up with. My son is not like that and I am proud of that. But I cannot say that he would not be like the other boys his age if he were in the public school now. What would we do?

Well-publicized media accounts of adolescent violence both between students and against teachers support these views, even though admittedly not every public school experiences such acute levels of violence.[12] Staff members were aware that parents were attracted by the level of discipline found at the school.

In some cases, children who had experienced behavioral problems in the public system were enrolled in the Muslim school. One staff member told me,

> As much as 25 percent of the students attend the school because the parents see it as a sort of reform school, a place to learn to be a good citizen as well as a good Muslim.

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[11] See for example Allman 1979; Dhahri 1988.

[12] See for instance "A child's view of mob rule: self-esteem runs amok at a junior high school," *British Columbia Report*, January 1, 1996; "Durham board chair blasts unacceptable school violence: 153 students, 27 teachers injured report finds," *Toronto Star*, November 14, 1996; "School violence rising, police warn," *Montreal Gazette*, January 25, 1995.

Discussions with students supported this view. One boy told me that his parents encouraged him to come to the school, because he was "hanging around with the wrong crowd and getting bad grades," as he said. He had been given a choice, he said, between several Muslim schools in Canada or a military school in the Middle East; he chose the Montreal school because it was less strict than the military school and he didn't really want to go to the other Muslim school and become an alim (religious scholar), although an uncle — who was more religious, in his view — had encouraged him.

Media accounts of sexual abuse in private child care centers also created anxiety on the part of several parents.[13] These parents believed that sexual abuse was much less prevalent among Muslims, and insisted that it did not occur in their countries. One mother said,

> In the public school, children are harassed and abused sometimes by the adults. Not just girls. Boys too. As soon as we heard there was a Muslim school, we said it is a good idea.

Parents expect the Muslim school to enforce standards of behavior that are familiar to them, and overall their expectations are realized at the school. A staff member commented on the atmosphere which prevailed at the Muslim school:

> While we have some discipline problems here, you know, some students which are more difficult than others and maybe even some classes that have a certain reputation with the teachers, we certainly don't have problems with drugs, or knives, or gangs. Nowhere in the school can children sneak off to smoke or drink alcohol as you see in some schools. Parents have that peace of mind when they send their children here.

These statements were confirmed by my own observations and discussions with parents, students, and teachers, and are also backed by Qadir Abdus-Sabur's study on anti-social behavior in North American Muslim schools which revealed that violence, aggressive behavior, drug

[13] In the 1990s, news accounts revealed the prevalence of sexual abuse in Canadian residential schools for Native, disabled, and troubled children; while many of the news-breaking stories deal with compensation for crimes which occurred up to forty years ago, others are current. See for instance "Three new sex charges laid against BC school principal (William Bennest)," *Montreal Gazette*, September 7, 1996; "Hundreds of Cree and Ojibwa children violated: a decades-long pattern of physical and sexual abuse at a residential school in the isolated northern Ontario community of Fort Albany first nation is about to result in criminal charges," *Globe & Mail Metro Edition*, October 19, 1996; "New Brunswick pays $4.1 million to victims of pedophiles so far (Kingsclear reform school)," Canadian Press Newswire, June 3, 1996; "Girls assaulted, flashed: parents, school on alert (Sister MacNamara school)," *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 25, 1996.

and alcohol use, and teenage pregnancy are all extremely rare in these schools (Abdus-Sabur 1995:57).[14]

Cultural norms

Many parents said that one reason they preferred the Muslim school was that they shared the same values and expectations. What distinguishes cultural norms in the school environment is that these values/behaviors may be encouraged or accepted by one social or ethnic group and discouraged or condemned by another. These values and expectations, which were expressed both in the formal curriculum as well as in informal interactions, went beyond religious practice and discipline, although they encompassed them. Some parents used phrases like "They know what we are like" and "You don't get any surprises" to describe their desire for consistency between home and school environments. For example, one father said,

> I sent my daughter to the Muslim school because I think that being in a school which is congruent with the cultural environment at home makes the child more at ease, and gives them a certain level of psychological comfort. I think that when the cultural environment at school contradicts or conflicts with the cultural environment at home it can lead to conflicts within the child. That's essentially why we chose this school. The second reason is so that she will learn the basic elements of our culture, even if that isn't one of the stated goals of the school's program. The school transmits the basic elements of Arab and Islamic culture.

These basic elements of Arab and Islamic culture might include the Arabic religious idioms many teachers used themselves and often encouraged the students to use, by pronouncing the appropriate formula themselves at the point where they judged the student should have used it.[15] However such norms also include maintaining a low tone of voice, not engaging in

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[14] Using a comprehensive list of full-time North American Muslim schools, eighty-seven full-time schools were contacted by Abdus-Sabur and thirty-two schools responded to the survey (Abdus-Sabur 1995:57). Although he offers no data in this respect, other studies (e.g. Durkee 1987:71) have shown that about half of full-time Muslim schools belong to the Sister Clara Muhammad system of the American Muslim Mission (AMM). It is likely that these schools also formed a significant portion of Abdus-Sabur's sample. Because AMM schools typically serve urban low-income American-born Black children, a group vulnerable to violence, alcohol and drug use, and teenage pregnancy, these findings indicate ways in which some families have coped with serious constraints. See also the discussion of AMM schools in Pulcini 1995:184-185.

[15] Those used most frequently in French or English conversation include "Inshallah" (God willing) and "Al-salāmu 'alaykum" and its response "Wa 'alaykum ul-salām." Some (but not all

flirtatious or overly casual conversation with members of the opposite sex, and avoiding gestures such as sticking out one's tongue or whistling (both considered relatively anodyne — or childish at worst — by most North Americans but harshly criticized by many Middle Easterners).[16] One parent explained,

> Each culture permits things that another doesn't. For example, if I, as someone who was raised in a particular family environment, went to a school which encouraged behavior which I had been raised to believe was wrong, I would be very upset. Swearing, cigarettes are part of that. Not to say that public schools teach children to smoke, but the peer environment encourages it.

Similarly, a student described her parents' decision in terms of these cultural factors:

> I had just arrived from a Muslim country and my parents thought I would be better here. They didn't want me to be changed.

On the other hand, not all cultural patterns were preserved in their entirety. One instance that struck me particularly was the predominant attitude toward dogs. In many Muslim cultures dogs are considered unclean (according to Khomeini 1984, as unclean as pigs), and observations by Haddad and Lummis (1987) and Walbridge (1997) indicate that these views have persisted among immigrants to North America. Yet at the school, students told me stories about their family dogs. During the early months of my fieldwork as my own life history became known, some students learned that I have two cherished dogs. Over the next few weeks, different children came up to tell me, in confidence, that their families also have dogs. Pet dogs were also present in the school: a poster near the mosque depicted dogs and children playing, and class assignments decorated the walls with pictures of cats, birds, and nine dogs.

Partly because of the school's mission to encourage behavior and attitudes consonant with Muslim morality but also because all but four of the thirty staff members were Middle

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teachers) used this greeting upon entering or leaving a classroom. The children were taught to respond in unison and had perfected a long drawn out version, "Waaaa 'alayyyyykum ul-sssssalaaaaam wa rahmat ul-llllaaaahi wa barakaaaaaaaaaaatuhu." The greeting took on a life of its own far more lively than the blessing promised by the hadith to those who greet other Muslims. One staff member sometimes cued the children with a countdown, "One, two, three, *Wa alaykum...*" Adults always smiled at the gusto of the greeting, and some of the teachers would turn to me during the children's "performance" and smile or add, "They really have fun with that!"

[16] Cultural and religious norms are connected by a complex web of traditions justifying each in terms of the other. For instance, those who argue that men should, among other things, cover their heads (during prayer as well as at other times) use as justification the fact that it was the common custom during the time of the Prophet.

Easterners or married to Middle Easterners, the school helped preserve Muslim/Middle Eastern cultural patterns, at least in modified forms. One of the principles people frequently mentioned was respect shown in different ways for younger children and elders. One individual commented on the cultural differences between childrearing standards in Montreal and in the Middle East:

> I can't believe how kids here swear in the metro, in front of families and women with children. You would never see that at home. We have respect for strangers, kids learn to respect other people. Here, unless it's your son or daughter you don't dare tell them not to do something. And also smoking. Women never smoke cigarettes, and men won't smoke in front of their older brothers or fathers. But here children even smoke outside their schools.

Some parents felt that this sort of behavior was not adequately discouraged in the public schools, and expressed concern that their children would adopt undesirable attitudes or behavior. One said,

> Parents spend only a few hours with their children each day. No matter how good the parents are, they will have less of an influence on their children than the school will. It is important that they learn good values in school, especially now that both parents work.

Peer pressure was an important part of parents' calculation of what went on at school, and they sometimes expressed worry that their children would suffer unduly, even if they succeeded in maintaining the family's standards of behavior. Some said,

> Girls have to dress sexy and act like women when they should still be playing with their dolls, or else they are made fun of and treated like babies by their classmates. They become convinced that if they are not like a model with big breasts and thin legs, then they are failures that are worth nothing.

> Parents just can't compete with school. If a child is encouraged by his parents to say no to smoking, drugs, alcohol, sex, then he is made fun of and has no friends. These are all things that many people are concerned about, not just Muslims. This is a problem with the system.

While some parents also objected to particular parts of the curriculum at the Muslim school which they thought were offensive or inappropriate (for example, ripping out dictionary pages that portrayed nudity in the form of the human skeleton and muscular system), public schools were considered more likely to contravene the family's values, particularly those that deal with expressions of sexuality. Some of these issues are ones that would be considered controversial by conservative parents of many religious groups, and are discussed in this text which

I found on an internet site dedicated to the needs of Muslim parents who choose to homeschool their children.

> Children also learn many ideas in the classroom that are destructive to Islamic values and parental authority. One health education text book informs: 'Testing your ability to function sexually and to give pleasure to another person may be less threatening in early teens with people of your own sex.' Also, 'You may come to the conclusion that growing up means rejecting the values of your parents.' Students were told not to take the text home, but to keep it in their lockers. One might think that parents can remove their children from these offending classes and remove these offending texts, but it has become increasingly difficult. School officials feel that these topics are too important to be excused from (*The Message*, November 1995, quoted in Sulaiman n.d.).

Objection to this approach to discussing sexuality, however, does not mean that Muslims have outlawed the subject from the curriculum, although I did speak with several people who felt that it was an issue best discussed in private between parent and child. Many agreed that, as long as information is imparted with respect to the modesty of girls and boys (i.e. they are given this information separately), sexual development and reproduction could be taught as part of the health and hygiene or human biology class (see also Sarwar 1992, 1994).

Gender

While some concerns (such as violence) seemed to touch boys particularly, it was clear from the gender gap in the school's enrollment figures that there were convincing reasons which pushed parents of girls to favor the school (see Table 14, below).

Table 14: Girls as percentage of enrollment per grade, 1996-1997

Grade	*Girls as percentage of grade enrollment (N)*	*N*
1	68	40
2	65	37
3	70	23
4	63	19
5	43	21
6	59	22
7	61	23
8	69	16
9	60	10
10	75	12
11	100	6

Many people I talked with felt that a disproportionate concern for girls' behavior was common among Muslims, even though they considered it un-Islamic and hypocritical, since at least according to religion, men and women are both expected to act with propriety (Badawi 1972; Lemu and Heeren 1978). One man called this a "fixation on women" and said,

> We are talking about underdeveloped people here. We don't like our daughters to go out with boys before marriage. Honor. For us, it is honor. You will find men who are non-practicing, who drink alcohol and might even have mistresses, but don't talk about their daughters. It's true! Stay away from his daughter and his wife.

Women agreed with this view.[17] For example, when I asked why there were so many more girls than boys at the school, one mother, who like the man quoted above was critical of her own society and its double standards, responded,

> That is part of the Arab mentality. People are much more afraid for their daughters than for their sons. If a boy goes out and does whatever he wants, that's much less serious than if a girl goes out and does the same thing.

Another told me about a Tunisian proverb that acknowledges this double standard, "Put a boy in water and he comes out clean, put a girl in water and she comes out dirty." This shows, she explained, that whatever a boy does will be forgiven, but whatever a girl does "will stick to her" and will be not forgotten.

Parents of both boys and girls, however, expressed their decisions differently and sometimes justified them in terms of the personality differences between their children or the family's financial situation. In these cases, parents decided that the family's desired standard of living would permit only the daughters to attend private school. Affirming that many privilege confessional girls' schools over boys' when financial resources are limited is the predominance of private Muslim girls' schools in Great Britain and the United States. Nonetheless, traditionally, boys' professional and religious education is considered more important since they will constitute the community's religious leadership as well as hold the sole responsibility for providing cash income to the household. Although Muslim girls' schools in Britain have some-

[17] Of course this is not to say that such a double standard is *unique* to Arab or Muslim cultures. In fact, many contemporary authors of popular conservative Muslim literature (e.g. Badawi 1972; Doi 1989) note the hypocritical attitude of Western feminists in pointing out the shortcomings of Arab/Muslim society while ignoring the considerable problems women face in Western cultures and blindly presenting the West as a model of women's liberation. See also al-Hibri 1994 and Hoodfar 1994 for critiques deriving from non-Western feminist perspectives which incorporate these concerns.

times been criticized for the quality of the education they offer, the Montreal school (where girls predominate but boys are not excluded) took its burden very seriously, and as the provincial results show, demonstrated a consensus that the quality of girls' education is important — something that is not logically inconsistent with parents' desire to provide a sheltered or nurturing environment for their daughters.

One mother was considering sending her son to the local non-Muslim kindergarten and told me about the factors she was considering. The most important factor was cost, since she did not work outside the home. If there were plenty of money, then he would go to the Muslim school without further debate.[18] She told me,

> I think for most people, it has a lot to do with gender. Culturally, they feel that girls have to be protected more. But in our situation it was not that. It was how we saw the personalities of our kids. And also money. When you have to buy everything, every pencil, every piece of paper, and then you still have to pay seventy dollars at the beginning of the school year for art supplies. And I paid well over three hundred dollars for textbooks and markers. I had her uniforms made by a lady so that it cost less, though. It's the same uniform, but I saved some money there. But we will see how our business goes, and inshallah we will be able to send him to kindergarten, because soon they will have to learn about prayers and we don't want him to miss out.

Although her (and her husband's) perception of proper gender roles may well influence how she perceives her children's personalities (as well as how she participates in influencing their personal development), she avoided giving the impression that her decision was based solely on gender. Her son, she said, is not shy and he isn't likely to do something he knows is wrong just because the teacher tells him to. On the other hand, she explained that her daughter, who is older, is less self-assured and tends to go along with others to avoid creating trouble. She explained,

> The characters of my kids are very different. My daughter is very timid and she is very shy. Maybe the fact that she is a girl meant that we thought is was absolutely necessary for her to go to Muslim school from the beginning. But our son is more outspoken and I think he will tell us more what's going on in his classroom. I think he is more assertive — he says, "No, I don't like that. That's not right, that's haram." He knows about haram and halal. He doesn't know everything, but he has a basic idea, whereas my daughter, I think that she would do whatever the teacher says. She wouldn't think that any teacher might tell her to do something that we wouldn't approve of. But my son, even with his grandparents who aren't Muslim, he asks if the food is halal. Not that

[18] In fact, many other Muslim parents I met who did not send their children to the school said that they wished they could, but they couldn't afford it. Several full-tuition scholarships, based on need and accomplishment, are provided by the local Muslim association.

> he doesn't trust them, but he's not sure that his grandmother will only give him things that are halal. That's why I have confidence that he'll be all right. If he can ask his grandmother, then he would ask a teacher too. But my daughter, she is not like that. Even now, I find that she is not assertive and I think that she needs more guidance.

Another family had one girl and one boy who attended the Muslim school while another son attended a more expensive private school where English is the language of instruction. By having one child complete two years in the private English school, the parents believed that they would obtain the right to send all their children to a public English school.[19] The child sent to the English school was judged (by the parents) to be less able to cope with the demands of studying English, Arabic, and French at the Muslim school. The burden of learning three languages was cited by other parents whose sons attended public schools while their daughters attended the Muslim school. In some cases, boys attended the Muslim school for some time before being moved to a less demanding public school on the advice of the school's teaching staff, while in others, the decision was taken before enrollment. Several parents said that they were discouraged from sending their sons to the school because of the emphasis on second (and third) language skills; boys, they said, are not as good at languages as girls.

Yet these factors don't account for the tremendous gender gap, and it is likely that the parents and staff members I interviewed were accurate for the most part in their claims that parents are more worried about their daughters than their sons. To illustrate this point and dispel any doubts I had, one informant told me about female students who were identified by the school as needing the support of specialists in learning disabilities. While the school distinguished itself in admitting that these students had needs it could not meet, the parents did not agree and the girls remained at the school despite their difficulties. "It is enough for those families that a girl learns the Qur'an," I was told by one person familiar with the cases.[20] Fortunately, these situations are rare, and to its credit, the school has demonstrated a commitment to referring children with special needs to other schools where remedial services are available.

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[19] It is difficult for people born outside of Canada — regardless of their mother tongue — to obtain access for their children to education in English public schools in Quebec. However, after a brief phone conversation in which I described this family's plan, an official of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal concluded that this strategy would sucessfully guarantee eligibility for English language education for all children in the family.

[20] Muslims are not the only religious/cultural group to display such diverse, complex, and multi-faceted beliefs about female education. For a sensitive and nuanced discussion of similar perspectives among *haredi* (ultraorthodox) Jews in Israel, see El-Or 1994.

Integration

The discussion of factors influencing families' decisions has highlighted the desire to retain control of the process of integration into wider, multi-ethnic society, choosing what values they wish to adopt. As one parent told me,

> The basic idea is that there is integration, but it needs to take place fluidly, slowly, as the community is able to absorb the changes in order to avoid this kind of social rupture.

Another told of an incident that had surprised her and caused her to desire more control over her child's education. She said,

> A friend of mine sent her children to a public school. They chose "Moral Education" instead of "Religious Education" because they said the child would become confused if he was learning how to be a Muslim at home and how to be a Catholic at school. But, in the class — not in Moral Education —, the students were taught to lay down and close their eyes — they called it "relaxation" — and they would say "Jesus save us, Jesus save us" over and over again. And her son, — children are like parrots, they repeat everything — he would do the same thing at home! And so, even if you try to have an education in the public school, you never know what they will teach. This was in the regular class, not in Religious Education or Moral Education!

Another had no complaints about the public school her child had attended, but grew uneasy with the constant vilification of Muslims that she saw on television and feared that these attitudes would eventually erupt at school. She said,

> What provoked our decision to send our son to the school was the big debate about the hijab on television. There were no Muslims in our son's school, it was in the east of Montreal and there are very few Muslims in that neighborhood. But on television, we saw there was so much prejudice. So many things they accused us of. I said, "I don't want him one day to be ashamed of me. Now he is little, and when I go to the school he is so proud of me, he introduces me to everyone. But when he is twelve or thirteen, and he has a girlfriend and other friends, he won't want to say 'That is my mother' because everyone will think that I am bad and mean." So I said to my husband that I don't want my children to go through that. I brought them here to Canada and I am responsible for them. That was when it clicked.

While critical of some of the values and behaviors they believed were typical of the public schools, many parents were also conscious that they too were viewed critically and their options were often limited by prejudiced or distorted views of Muslims. Parents said,

> In the beginning, I put my son in the public school, but over the years, I realized that there are many prejudices against Muslims. For example, take the case

> of the hijab in public schools. There is a whole polemic against it, people who say it is political and that we are fundamentalists or terrorists. Why would I want to force my son to face problems like that? We are wear it because we are observant Muslims, and because it is an obligation. It has nothing to do with politics. Why should my son hear nasty things because I wear it? He is too young to understand. He will hear nasty things on television and at school as he gets older. So I wanted to bring him to the Muslim school now, because by secondary school it will be too late.
>
> If they talk about Muslims on the television, it is always in negative terms and with prejudices that are insulting. This has become a part of me, and it hurts. There is a deeply held belief that Muslims are dirty somehow. I want to fight against these prejudices. But prejudices are hard to fight.

Girls, especially if they wear the hijab, seem to suffer more than boys from negative images of Muslims in public schools (Sulaiman n.d.). Although many agreed that the difficulties were often resolved several weeks or months after girls began wearing hijab at school, many of my informants related stories of how young girls in the public school system were initially ostracized by friends as well as teachers. In a few well-publicized cases in 1994 and 1995, however, schools declared formally that, as distinctive clothing which "marginalizes" wearers as members of a distinctive group, the hijab (along with neo-Nazi symbols) violated their dress codes.[21] An excerpt from my fieldnotes describes a conversation with a teenaged girl who vividly remembered these incidents and the public debates that surrounded them:

> *Fieldnotes, November 1996.* I talked to a teenaged girl today who attends a public secondary school. She said that she was watching a television talk show one evening and saw one of her teachers. The teacher told the interviewer that Islam degrades women. "I started to cry. I couldn't understand why someone would say something like that," she told me. "She knows me. She knows what I am like, and that I am not like that. How can she say that?"

Most people I interviewed did not think it was overly difficult for Muslim children to observe Islamic practices in public schools, and despite the recent incidents of hijab-banning, believed that there has been no broadly based movement in this direction within either private or public schools, as is the case in France.[22] Unlike in Britain, where some schools with sub-

[21] For contrasting accounts of these incidents, see Conseil du statut de la femme 1995; Geadah 1996; Helms 1995:62, 69-70. The appendix to this thesis contains a partial list of newspaper articles which discussed the controversy.

[22] In 1989, three French schoolgirls of North African parentage were told not to attend school wearing the headscarf, which, it was argued, infringed on the secular nature of French education. Following an initial directive by Minister of Education François Bayrou to prohibit headscarves in the schools, the Conseil D'État later ruled that students' display of religious symbols

stantial numbers of Muslim students have made *institutional* changes to accommodate Muslim dietary restrictions, religious instruction, and mid-day and Friday prayers (Nielsen 1989; Parker-Jenkins 1992, 1995), most Montreal public schools have small numbers of Muslim students and needs are accommodated on a yearly and per case basis. Yet, it is not ability (or obstacles) to practice Islam in school which poses problems, but rather the relation of power which becomes evident in doing so. Students who choose to identify with Muslim (minority group) ways rather than with Canadian (dominant group) ways find that doing so requires concessions: a school "permits" hijab, or doesn't; students are "authorized" to use a classroom for prayer at noon hour, or aren't; the cafeteria "makes allowances" for halal diets, or not. While Muslim Canadians are adaptable and well able to practice Islam in very diverse situations, to be Muslim, at least outwardly, in the public school system is a continuing process of supplication which must be enacted with each change of teacher, principal, school. For this reason, parents were sometimes concerned with the psychological impact of the necessary bargaining with principals and teachers. One parent said,

> In the public schools, it is sometimes very badly interpreted when children ask for things. People say, "You have the right to have a room to pray in." And so the children ask for a room to pray in, and they get it. But then the next year, they ask again, and then they are told that they are being extremists and they are asking to have a mosque in the school. That is very hard on the children.

Most parents I spoke with (whether or not their children attended the Muslim school) expressed pride that their sons and daughters had coped successfully with the challenges of being a practicing Muslim in a non-Muslim, and often areligious, environment. While they were critical of Western prejudices toward Muslims, they were confident that their children could overcome whatever prejudice they encountered. Many felt that they were very able to integrate and participate fully in Quebec society. Some children, including elementary school-aged daughters of religious parents, participated in mainstream social activities such as swimming and gymnastics lessons where they met and mixed with others. Several parents suggested that the Muslim school, where their children were considered absolutely normal, had offered them psychological strength that they wouldn't have found as minority students in a public school.

Other parents said,

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was permitted. The hijab has provoked a national debate over the place of religion in France's secular schools (i.e. the separation of Church and State), a debate that concerns as much the character of French Republican identity as it does the rights of immigrants and minorities. Interestingly, the prominent actors on both sides have been men. On Muslims in France and the hijab question, see Bloul 1996; Césari 1994; Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995; Morsy 1993.

> The problem is one of balance, finding a certain balance between what is Arab or Muslim and what is Quebecois. When the children leave the school, they are mature and have quite a bit of confidence in their abilities. They are quite autonomous from a psychological viewpoint. When they get to college, they are already quite well-adjusted. Also, don't forget that the Muslim school is already very diverse. The parents demand that. The lessons are taught in French. English is also taught. For parents who want their children to integrate, the school offers many possibilities. On the other hand, an immigrant is always an immigrant. Sending a child to a public school would not change that. There is always the concern with integration, assimilation, finding something you are comfortable with. The Muslim school is one option. As long as the children are comfortable with their own cultural identity, they can adapt perfectly. That is extremely important: for the children to adapt or integrate, they need to be at ease with their own past, their own heritage.
>
> An ethnic school can in fact promote integration that way, because it provides a strong foundation, a point to take off from. They are not afraid.
>
> You can't change someone's personality at the age of thirty years old and give them confidence if they had a difficult time as a child. If you know who you are, whatever religion, and you are attached to it, you don't see it as an obstacle. But also, I think that these girls, because they are so many now, won't experience the obstacles that the others did who were the first ones to wear the hijab here. They are Quebeckers, and they demand their rights — just like the other women in Quebec did fifty years ago when the demanded the right to vote, and later, when the demanded the right to keep their own names when they married. When these girls are twenty years old, I think that this society will be a democracy and they will be able to express themselves as equals. Live the life that you want to, that is part of an individual's rights.

Similarly, one parent interviewed by Christine Kolars in her study of an African American Muslim community in New York felt that separate schooling wasn't necessary to maintain religious faith, although it might be the solution to other social problems experienced by Black children. She said,

> I am raising [my youngest son] as a Muslim child, but I don't see a reason to isolate him. He knows what is good and bad and as the time comes I expect him to take it [religion]... I don't see it as necessary, taking kids out of school. But I understand that the public schools may not provide what African American children need (Kolars 1994:491).

While children from low-income families often need intensive support in continuing their education, the Muslim school also offered other psychological benefits. During Ramadan, for instance, young people talked to me about how nice it was to fast with their friends instead of having to sit in a cafeteria where fellow students waved food at them, mocking them for

being "too religious" and tempting them to eat. At the same time, the sense of community also promoted individuality. Since all the girls wore headscarves and agreed on the basic principles (such as no dating) that often cause trouble for Muslim girls in public schools, these issues were no longer issues, and instead of being thought of as "the Muslim girls" without individual personalities, they were labeled according to personal qualities (such as studiousness, talkativeness, and boisterousness) just as non-minority teenagers are in public schools. Discussing this one day, one mother told me quite sadly that, for her non-Muslim relatives, anything unusual her children did or said was always attributed to the fact that her children were Muslim.

Many I spoke with criticized francophone Quebeckers for having a simplistic view of integration, a view that some felt was better described as assimilation rather than growing roots and feeling "normal" and "at ease" in Quebec society, which was what they sought instead. These parents emphasized that Canada is a nation of immigrants, even though Quebec has tended to consider itself the nation of one immigrant group in particular, the French who arrived prior to this century (see Porter 1965 for an influential exposition of this view). Parents said,

> I am Muslim, and it does not prevent me from speaking French like the Quebeckers and from talking with them. Integration means harmony both for the wider society and for the immigrants. If they don't integrate they will have problems later. I am in favor of integration. My son learns English, French, Arabic at the Muslim school. It doesn't prevent him from living here and taking part in Quebec society. I think that this is where he will stay, live, have children. He is part of this society.

> There are so many different cultures and beliefs at the school that the students live with and accept that I think we are better "integrated" — in terms of understanding other cultures — than Quebeckers. Although for them, integration means being like the *Quebecois de souche* [ethnic French Canadians]. But just because you send your children to a public school doesn't mean that they will get to know the *Quebecois de souche*. There was an article in the paper by a journalist who went to a public school and said that there was every nationality but one, the *Quebecois de souche*! There are schools (and kindergartens too) where there are no Quebeckers.

Others discussed integration as a commonplace process that affects everyone as they move from one social group to another, and not necessarily limited to the socialization of immigrants. These parents often used the example of their own lives. One mother explained,

> When we talk about integration, Muslim women come here and go to university. Little Moroccans, little Lebanese children, they live in their countries. These are countries that are pretty much closed to the outside. But they come here to go to university when they are twenty years old. And they learn here

about other people, and learn how to get along with other kinds of people. Me too, I went to secondary school in a small village that you couldn't even get to by bus. But when I finished my secondary school, my father decided to send me to London for a year to study and learn English, as a present, to learn a little bit about the world. And London isn't just any city. It's monstrous, it's huge. I managed! I lived with other people, without my parents. I did very well.

Community

A close-knit community developed around the school, and I came to see this as a channel through which individuals integrated themselves into a society that is urban, multicultural, and sometimes hostile to outsiders. Many families lived nearby and saw each other frequently, even if they (particularly the women) did not attend other activities at the mosque. However, this sense of community also embraced parents who lived farther away. Parents who picked their children up at the school, for instance, often socialized with other parents in front of the school; many sought out their child's teachers at this time to discuss problems or simply to hear news about the child's performance in class. Through contacts with members of this community, parents first heard about the school and after hearing positive stories about it, decided to send their children. One mother said,

> You always know about your kids. Because everyone knows everyone else, you know how your kids are, and if they are having any problems or getting into trouble. In the public schools, you don't know anyone and you never hear.

Another parent told me,

> I have met some parents from the school. Sometimes I come in and participate in the class activities or help the teacher. At the beginning of the year, the parents got each other's telephone numbers. And so when we are wondering about homework we call each other. At the beginning of the year, even though the teacher does a good job telling us what we need to buy and what the students need, it's confusing, you have lots of questions about books and so on. I don't know if it is like this in public schools, maybe outside the city it is. Maybe in villages.

Teachers also participated in maintaining the sense of community. Many drove some distance to the school and, on their way, picked up children from their neighborhoods.

The ability to create and maintain networks through the school was important to parents. Virtually all parents were either immigrants or converts (and often immigrants married to converts) who, because of the physical and psychological rifts created by these life experiences,

often lack access to kin-based social networks. Data on the place of birth of students (Table 15) provides an indicator of families' recent immigration experiences.

Table 15: Foreign-born students as percentage of total enrollment

Grade	*Foreign born students as percentage of grade enrollment (N)*	*N*
1	45	40
2	22	37
3	17	23
4	37	19
5	57	21
6	59	22
7	61	23
8	69	16
9	60	10
10	58	12
11	37	6

Yet, while immigrants must rebuild their social networks with each migration, nonetheless, because of increased geographic mobility (in Canada and in the Middle East), few young people — of any social group — benefit from the close network that their parents depended on.[23]

Although many parents rarely attend prayers at the mosque, it was a social center for some, particularly the men. Daily prayers were usually attended by a few men (less than ten during the week and up to thirty on Fridays) from the community, and fathers of students occasionally (and sometimes regularly) took part, praying alongside their sons in the front rows. Only one or two women who were not teachers or volunteers attended the noon prayers on any particular day (perhaps five on Fridays, however), although there were many women who came occasionally.[24] Two side entrances allowed worshippers to enter the mosque area di-

[23] For discussion of such networks in Egypt and how women and men actively create and maintain them, see Hoodfar 1997.

[24] Haddad and Lummis report that while American Muslim men were more emphatic about the importance of Friday prayer than women, women commonly attended services and were active in mosque affairs (Haddad and Lummis 1987:46). While these findings are confirmed by other field studies among American communities (e.g. Adeney and DeMaster 1994), Sheila McDonough notes that conservative tendencies, notably the influence of the Tablighi Jama'at, have reduced women's participation in some Montreal mosques (McDonough 1994). While I found that women's presence at Friday afternoon prayers was much lower than men's, women were very prominent in other aspects of the community's life, such as weekend religious instruction, discussion groups, community broadcasting and publishing, and anti-discrimination activism. Haddad and Lummis describe similar situations in U.S. mosques.

rectly,[25] although women whose children attended the school often entered the mosque through the school, some stopping by the offices to socialize or distribute advertisements for shops which sold Arab groceries or halal meat.

For women, most informal networks centered around visiting (at the school and at homes), and provided various forms of moral support, advice, information, and companionship. My interviews often confirmed the observations of Walbridge (1997:19) that North American Muslims tend to prefer to live in heterogeneous neighborhoods where there is more privacy and less gossip. For these people, the school offered the possibility of a network in which individuals had a significant degree of control, alternately increasing or decreasing their involvement in order to limit obligations (in kind as well as in frequency) or enlarge their social circle.

Men, and women to a much less extent, also participated in formal networks created through different school committees. In addition to access to information and social support, the committees provided a forum in which individuals could take part in and influence the education and socialization of their children, express their personal initiatives, and take on leadership roles, something largely denied to recent immigrants and racial or cultural minorities in Canadian society.[26] A father who had been very involved in one committee said,

> For the group, it is important to have institutions like the school. That promotes integration in the sense that it provides them with opportunities to exercise leadership, develop organizations, see what works and what doesn't. Individuals are able to gain experience which is essential for immigrants. Also, it promotes an internal dialogue within the community. That too is essential. Individuals are not isolated, with the psychological and social consequences that isolation entails. You are a part of the society, you are not completely subordinated to the society that you are living in. Opportunities for action and participation are very important for people who are seeking to deal with the stress of changing from one society to another. The school has an effect on the integration of parents as much as children. The alternative is that they feel like they have no place here, that society rejects them.

[25] The Prophet recommended that mosques have separate doors for men and women so that women could use the mosque without provoking criticism for socializing with male worshippers (Mutahhari 1989:94).

[26] In fact, traditionally and on a societal level, voluntary service on school boards and parent-teacher associations is considered "local politics" and a training ground for public service in other ways. See, for instance, Daniels 1988; Steinberg 1977.

Conclusion

Most Muslim children in Montreal attend public schools, and few of the people I interviewed characterized parents' decisions to send their children to the Muslim school as a question of religious commitment. Usually seeking not to imply negative judgment of people who sent their children to other schools, parents talked about their particular circumstances which made the Muslim school the best solution for their own family.

Although learning Arabic (often for a combination of social, economic, and religious reasons) was important for all parents, most were ultimately concerned with their children's socialization. Many parents used phrases such as "You don't have to worry" and "No headaches" when describing why they supported the school. Because of perceptions that Islam and Muslims are poorly portrayed in the media and in society at large, many parents who had not personally experienced prejudice or discrimination were skeptical about the public education system. Concerns about maintaining acceptable behavioral and moral standards also figured importantly in parents' decision making, and were highlighted by the imbalance in the gender ratio in almost every grade. Finances were a major factor in parents' decision making. Whether they were practicing or not, parents often talked about the role of religion in terms of self-esteem and supporting the child's identity, and rarely as the ability to practice which tends to be the focus of publications coming out of Great Britain. While parents believed that shared cultural and religious backgrounds was beneficial for their children, the sense of community also encouraged parents to develop useful social networks and participate in leadership roles within the school.

Chapter five

Conclusion: Maintaining Community, Maintaining Boundaries

Knowledge is something you shall learn and not something you should receive (Imam Malik, quoted in Durkee 1987: 53).

The goal of this research was to describe the "social life" of a full-time Canadian Muslim school, and, taking into consideration the extent of prejudice within mainstream society against practicing Muslims, explore why some families choose this form of socialization for their children. Literature on Muslim schools in Britain highlights how Muslim schools in that country developed in response to (1) increased leadership from intellectuals who believed that, to preserve Muslim culture against Western dominance, modern educational institutions could embody an Islamic worldview, incorporating research sciences without denying faith; and, concurrently, (2) the disinclination of British school officials to accommodate the religious, cultural, and educational needs of Muslim children, particularly those from low-income families. At least 54 full-time Muslim schools now operate in Britain; while laws allow for state funding of religious and other private schools, repeated applications have been refused based on claims that schools lack suitable facilities and will lead to the ghettoization of Muslim students. Muslim educators believe that state officials are acting out of prejudice, and point to several extremely successful Muslim schools to support their demands for recognition as a community with status and rights equal to Catholics, Jews, and Presbyterians, communities which presently receive state funding for their schools. Within a field dominated largely by policy papers and theoretical or philosophical arguments from views both for and against Muslim schools as alternative educational institutions, several research studies have attempted to address the debate by investigating Muslim girls' schools. Data provided by Marie Parker-Jenkins and Kaye Haw (1996) and Saeeda Khanum (1992) support the conclusion that despite overarching patriarchal attitudes of the school governors toward teachers as well as students, the schools provide a space in which girls advocate their own interpretations of Islam and attempt to sift out oppres-

sive traditional practices from the egalitarian, revolutionary ethic that modernist Muslims believe underlies the Qur'an.

As in Britain, the Canadian Muslim community suffers the effects of prejudice and discrimination. Yet, the highly selective immigrant selection program which in the 1960s replaced a racist policy excluding most non-Europeans also created an ethnically diverse community whose foundations are professional, educated, and economically secure. Despite the persistence of discrimination in mainstream society which has meant that Muslim Canadians are concentrated in lower wage and job classifications within their employment categories, the community is a significant resource for new immigrants, particularly refugees and less-skilled or less-educated economic migrants. In return, new immigrants have contributed to the maintenance/renewal of Muslim identity. While early cohorts of immigrants were highly assimilated, by choice, because of isolation, or because they were highly Westernized in their countries of origin, later immigrants brought with them the new appraisal of Islam as a social (and not just religious) identity. In Canada, exclusion and discrimination have reinforced the importance of an alternate source of community and self-esteem. Recruited by friendship and kin networks, some families chose to educate their children in a Muslim setting which provided both academic (viz economic) credentials and social support.

At the full-time mixed-sex Muslim school this research focused on, an Islamic atmosphere was created formally, through classes in Islamic studies, Qur'an, and Arabic; twice-daily communal prayers and time-table adjustments for Muslim holidays; and the wearing of hijab by girls and Muslim female teachers; and informally, through teachers' incorporation of Muslim experiences into their lesson plans and through shared expectations of Muslim social interaction. Interviews with parents revealed that while formally religious aspects of the school were important, Arabic language classes, academic standards, behavioral and moral norms, integration, and a sense of belonging to a wider community were equally important. Vilification of Muslims in the media and fears that these attitudes were present in the public school system had caused some families to leave the public system. Parents believed that their children were receiving a good academic education and were nurtured rather than excluded as members of a minority religious/cultural group. Rejecting the hypothesis that emphasizing religious and cultural identity distanced children from mainstream society, some felt that the psychological and social effects of affirming a child's background were vital to integration and participation in mainstream society. In addition to providing for the children, different networks at the school

also offered a support system for parents, most of whom are immigrants. Building on these findings, this chapter offers some general conclusions.

Community, conformity, and difference

Fieldnotes, March 1997. As an activity to go with a song I was teaching, the children were drawing pictures of mosques. I began by saying that mosque means "mosquée" or "masjid," and asked if anyone knew what a mosque was. One child said, "Yes, it's God's house." Another said, "It's the place where you pray." Some children said that would draw the place where they pray at their houses instead. Many of the children drew archetypal mosques — complexes of low domes and tall minarets topped by crescents — even though there are no mosques in Montreal built in this style. Perhaps they got this from the framed photographs and plastic models of the mosques at Mecca and Medina which decorate many living rooms. Several of the children in fact told me, "This is Mecca" or "This is the Ka'aba." But, on the other hand, I couldn't help wondering how many of the children were drawing on their knowledge of the architectural (and cultural) pastiche depicted in the movie *Aladdin* and the weekly television series based on it. Some of the children drew complete streetscapes with people and lots of buildings; others drew single buildings; one drew the interior of the mosque, complete with multicolored carpets, minbar, and rows of people. The children were busy drawing when one of the boys came up and tugged at my arm:

"Sister! Sister! She drew an 'x'! She drew an 'x' on her page!"

"What's wrong?"

"Sister! She drew an 'x' on her page! She drew an 'x' on the masjid! It is haram! It is haram what she did!"

He led me over to a desk where a girl was drawing a mosque that, at first glance looked like the others. Three domes, three minarets, and a huge blue cat.

"Harrrraaaammm! She is kuffar! Harrraaaammm!"

He was standing on top of his desk and shouting. The little girl had begun to cry. I looked more closely at her picture. Where the other children had drawn crescents on their minarets, she had drawn crosses. I put my arm around her:

"Sweetheart, *habibi*, it's okay. Look! You drew a nice church for Christians. It's very nice. The cross means it's a church. Did you know that Muslims put moons on the tops of their mosques? Do you want to do a mosque too?"

She nodded, and I gave her another paper. Then I went to talk to the boy who was still standing on his desk, still insisting at the top of his voice that the little girl was a "kuffar."

"She is kuffaaaaar! It is harrrraam! She is kuffffffaaaaar!"

"She is Muslim, just like you. It is okay for her to draw a picture of a church. Christians pray too, you know. They pray to God too, just like Muslims. You shouldn't call her a kafir. In fact, it is a big sin for you to do that. You should

never call another person a kafir, no matter what. Only God can judge people."

He was listening. "Sister, there was someone who was Muslim and then he changed and he wasn't Muslim anymore. He changed!"

"We don't call our friends kuffar. It is a very big sin to say a Muslim is kuffar."

His eyes were wide, and in the same tone which he had used to condemn his classmate, he agreed, "A big sin, Sister!"

With that, the small crowd that had gathered around us dissipated and the rest of the morning went without incident. The boy who had found the mosque with the cross on top went back to his work and began to draw another mosque on the back of his page:

"This is the mosque at night. There is a big moon in the sky! They are Muslim there. They have a moon."

The girl drew a second mosque, a large orange one covered with blue and green tiles, and a crescent moon on the minaret.

This exchange represented for me one of the struggles that go on as Muslims in North America try to maintain the borders of a community whose members sometimes tend to syncretism, or forgetfulness, or compromises of convenience. Juxtaposed with this seemingly harmless goal is a hierarchy of whose tradition/authority is accepted, and whose is not. While it is easy to gain a consensus on the question that mosques should be crowned by crescents and not crosses, the desire for uniformity extends to other issues as well. Some of these, such as women's clothing but also religious rituals, have until recently been characterized by views that varied by region, social class, and sect. In the diaspora as well as in the Middle East and South Asia, there is increasing pressure to conform to models defined by various (often competing) groups as "Islamic."

Community and autonomy emerged as major themes during my fieldwork at the Muslim school. I began to see that a fine equilibrium was maintained between, on one hand, families' desires to retain and reproduce not just piety and religious feeling, but also the degree of conformity within the community that could be called Muslim social identity; and on the other, their autonomy in emphasizing aspects of that identity.

Prayer was one example of this. Parents, even those who did not themselves pray, agreed that their children should learn how to pray "since it is their heritage" or "so that they will remember it for later." While all students were required to pray at school, the community generally recognized that teachers decided for themselves whether or not to participate. This was, however, influenced by the traditionally different discourses on men's and women's participation in public prayer. While most female teachers opted not to pray at school, virtually

all male teachers accepted the consensus on the preference of communal prayer for men and performed the early afternoon prayer in the mosque when they were at the school, although never coming in uniquely for noon prayers as a number of other men from the community did. While women's practice was coherent with traditional beliefs that discourage women's mosque attendance, in this context it was used by women to increase their autonomy, and not by men to limit it.

Hijab is another issue that reflected the balance between community and autonomy. While headscarves were a required part of older girls' uniforms, the administration acknowledged that most did not wear it outside the school; similarly, while Muslim female teachers had to wear headscarves, religious and ideological commitment to wearing hijab was not a condition of employment. Furthermore, one of the mothers who volunteered at the school wore hijab only in the mosque. Her identity as a Muslim woman with modest values, however, was never questioned since she always dressed in traditional shalwar kameez, with her dupatta (traditional Pakistani scarf) worn in the usual style, that is, around her shoulders and not over her head. She (and others) described this clothing as "what Muslim women wear in India and Pakistan." By contrast, the headscarves worn by the teachers and students whose normal attire did not include a hijab were the only outward indications that they were Muslim.

The boundaries drawn by the community include Muslim women who do not wear hijab, though at the same time often viewing this choice as not only misguided but also, as far as some are concerned, as a matter of public debate. Unlike prayer, which can be delayed and performed at home or in private, hijab is material, visible, and public. Yet while the Muslim community may be criticized for placing too much emphasis on headgear and not enough on more traditionally important aspects of Islam (notably the payment of zakat which is one of the Five Pillars of Islam),[1] the popular media has also exaggerated the oppression of women forced to endure the "veil." Furthermore, the fact that women and girls who don't wear normally hijab were not excluded from the school might be quite significant and unique as an indicator of the community's acknowledgment of diversity. The principal of a Muslim school in the United States told me quite bluntly, "If I found out one of the teachers was not wearing her hijab after school, she would be out of here." All of his former female graduates, he said, still "wear their hijabs."

[1] See Haddad 1978 for a discussion of variations in zakat payment and other forms of religious practice among Muslim Canadians, and Haddad and Lummis 1987 for a discussion of religious attitudes among Muslim Americans.

For the parents I talked with, the issue of community/conformity versus autonomy was resolved (though sometimes with difficulty) by asserting that it was important for them that teachers support the values of the community, even if they are not practicing Muslims. One mother said,

> What would be dangerous would be if the teachers tried to refute or deny parts of the religion. That would be dangerous. I believe in Islam, I know that I have to say the prayers five times each day and fast during Ramadan. But then, imagine if I sent my son to a teacher who is against Islam and against all religion and she told him that religion is for idiots. Children look up to teachers so much, they are always watching what the teachers do. Like last week at the iftar, my son came up and whispered to me, "Sister Patricia is here! Did you see her?" I said, "Yes, I saw her. I talked to her." Teachers are so important for them. I'm sure that it was the same for you when you were little too. I was the same. So, if the teachers are not observant Muslims, but they understand their role and they respect that the students have this faith, then they don't try to destroy it, then it is okay. It is not a problem at all.

Another aspect of the tension between conformity and diversity within the community was periodic difficulties between the administration, dominated by Sunni Muslims, and the large Iraqi Shi'ite minority (see Table 8: Ethnic backgrounds of students, grades 1 through 11, page 49). While the pressure to conform is less blatant than in the past — one student said that ten years ago classmates had to be informed that Shi'ites are Muslim — distinctively Shi'ite practices are sporadically discouraged by some staff members and recognized as legitimate by others. Tensions between Sunnis and Shi'ites at the school have been highlighted by emphasis on conformity during prayer. Shi'ite students say that these problems "come and go," and although some instances have erupted into conflicts, others they let pass. For instance, the school's staff have sometimes discouraged the Shi'ite practice of using an object (normatively an object from nature and often a small tile made of earth from Karbala or Mecca, but in practice frequently a Kleenex tissue) on which the worshipper places his or her forehead during the prostration.[2] In one instance, a letter was distributed to parents reminding them that students were not to bring "objects" with them into the mosque. I was told that on another occasion, a staff member circulated among the students and confiscated whatever they had brought with them to pray on. One student told me,

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[2] Arabic speaking Shi'ites call this tile a *turba*, meaning "soil" in Arabic. The importance for Shi'ites of the object from nature is underlined in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Risala Tawzih al-Masa'il* (1984), which contains fourteen questions on this subject. The practice is not optional, although Ayatollah Khomeini's opinion is that it may be foregone "where one must *conceal* his faith" (Khomeini 1984:145).

> I was praying with a Kleenex. And then, when I finished praying, one of the mothers who was visiting took me to the back and said "Go sit there." And so I said okay. And then she said the principal told her, "If you see anyone praying in a bad way, then tell me." But after I went to the principal and told him what she did, and he said, ""It's okay, everyone has their own way to pray."

Although some of the Shi'ite students ceased using a Kleenex or turba at the school, others continued to do so.

In another case I heard of, when a Shi'ite boy pronounced the adhan and included in it the customary Shi'ite profession of witness to the Imamate of Ali and his descendants, he was abruptly pulled by the arm from the mihrab by one of the staff members.[3] The boy was humiliated.

Shi'ite students were also occasionally corrected for praying in the Shi'ite tradition with their arms at their sides during the recitation of the *fatiha*, rather than folding their arms over their navel or chest as followers of the Hanafi, Hanbali, and Shafi'i schools do. Most Shi'ite students continued to pray with their hands at their sides, nonetheless. This is the issue that is most objectionable from the point of view of a religious scholar, since Ayatollah Khomeini condemns this practice in a section of his *Risala* about conditions which make prayers invalid:

> The third prayer invalidator is to put the hands on top of each other as practiced by some who are not Shi'ites. When for the sake of courteousness he puts the hands on top of each other even though he is not like them he must, as an obligatory caution, repeat that prayer... (Khomeini 1984:155)

One student, however, said that this issue is less of a problem than the turbas, and many Sunnis recognize that, like Shi'ites, most Sunnis who follow the Maliki legal tradition (including some of the teachers) also recite the fatiha with their arms at their sides and, consequently the school acknowledges the legitimacy of diversity in this practice.[4] These periodic incidents marred an otherwise successful cooperation, and an atmosphere that in other ways was open to differences in belief.[5] As one Shi'ite parent told me, "It makes us feel second class."

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[3] While the statement is not part of the adhan in Ayatollah Khomeini's opinion, he recommends that it be said as a way of "seeking closeness to God" (Khomeini 1984:126).

[4] See Dutton 1996 for an interesting analysis of the development of opinions within the four Sunni schools on *sadl al-yadayn* (holding one's hands at one's sides).

[5] The mosque has in the past presented speakers who are considered "too liberal" by other members of the community. During one of these talks, I witnessed a heated debate in the

When I talked with several staff members, it became clear that these problems were situated within the construct of community and diversity. Several people seemed embarrassed to say that all Muslims do not recognize identical traditions and authorities. When I asked about the different religious beliefs families had, one teacher said in a low voice, "Well, there are the Sunnis and the others..." I asked who the others were, thinking she was referring to a secretive and blasphemous sect. Another woman answered, "She means the Shi'ites." She began to tell me that she recognized the legitimacy of Shi'ite beliefs and practices, but that not all families do, and that in some cases, Sunni students had begun to imitate the Shi'ites — who many saw as models of devotion — by praying with a turba. "What happens," she said, "is that now the Shi'ite girls pray as they wish, but do it so that you do not see."

A comment from one informant highlights the school's tolerance of diversity and its practical basis. "They can't just put all the people who are different out, there would be no one left," she said. Relying for its yearly budget on donations from the mosque, parents' tuition fees, and government per-student subsidies, the school depends on a broad coalition of support for its continued existence. Other schools, particularly in Britain where the student roll is often drawn from the sectarian and ethnically homogeneous mosque associated with the school (Parker-Jenkins 1995:48-49), may provide less room for diversity in ideology and practice.[6] In fact, in cases I heard of where students were withdrawn following a disagreement with the administration, parents' complaints about religious "strictness" (or lack thereof) did not generally result in the withdrawal of their children, while disputes about other matters such as grades or behavior problems did.

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mosque where a member of the audience disagreed with the speaker's views. Although the majority of those present disapproved of the critic's line of questioning, he was given several minutes to present his views, before being asked to cede the floor and if he wished to come, to give a response to the talk the next evening. This incident indicated to me that not only does this particular community generally support more liberal Muslim intellectuals against the attacks of conservatives, but also that it has done this in an open and democratic way. The issue of turbas and prayer posture, something that is much less confrontational than what I witnessed, could be resolved with similar tolerance by merely allowing students the dignity of praying in the manner of their choice.

[6] At the same time, there is indication that British Muslims are also addressing these issues. Hewer (1992:32) writes, "It is no part of a school's remit to engage in proselytizing among the pupils. Just as at present, a Christian applicant of an evangelical disposition who saw R.E. [religious education] teachings as a way of making converts would not be accepted for the course, the same guideline would have to apply to Muslim applicants. In a similar way, such a teacher training course would only be suitable for those who were prepared to accept the freedom of fellow students and lecturers to take a different position of questions of belief."

In many ways, religious feeling is being divorced from practice, though perhaps this is the case in many instances around the world and is another aspect of this drive for conformity I have noted. By formally requiring women and girls to cover their heads and all students to participate in prayer regardless of intention, the school provides for a distinction between what is "Muslim" and what is "Islamic." Philip Lewis describes how, during the Gulf war, Muslim South Asian young people in one British school showed a high level of support for the Iraqi government. This was interpreted by Lewis as evidence of strong ties to Muslim identity, characterized by shared history and culture, which existed separately from piety or religious sentiment, which he gauged by the low level of participation in public prayer:

> At the height of the Gulf crisis in a Bradford upper school with a largely Muslim intake it was evident that most youngsters were pro-Iraq. Yet, in this same school, throughout the crisis, no more than two or three prayed in the area set aside for prayer. This episode illustrates the distinction between Muslim and Islamic identity. The youngsters felt that, as with the demonization of Islam in the wake of the Rushdie affair, their Muslim communal identity was once again under attack from negative media coverage. This perception, however, did not translate into prayers (Lewis 1994:177-178).

Critics have expressed concern that Muslim schools, by definition, abdicate the role schools play in mediating the rights of the child against those of the family. Fataneh Farahani writes in this respect,

> Children who attend these schools will lose another friend: a school which could defend their right[s] against their parents, a place where they could meet other norms and values, a meeting place with people of different manners and customs. They are deprived of an alternative outlook. The segregated Islamic school can lead to immediate, short-range psychological advantages, but it will eventually probably lead to further oppression of the girls in many Islamic families, the spread of fundamentalism, and it will be another source of growing racism (Farahani 1993: 26).

This may be the case in schools where teachers and staff lack the authority — and most importantly, the knowledge — to challenge oppressive practices. Yet, in some instances I observed, teachers and staff had a positive impact in encouraging the integration of students (and, by extension, of parents) while preserving Muslim/Islamic identity, precisely because of their "authority" as Muslims as well as teachers. While parents can easily discount the advice of non-Muslim social workers or teachers as racist or immoral, it is much harder to ignore the counsel of a Muslim teacher who is well known and trusted within the community. While I

was at the school I heard of numerous cases where staff had formally and informally intervened with parents to promote a child's welfare.[7]

Another way this occurred was by correcting misperceptions about Islam (as well as about Western society and Christianity), particularly by sorting out oppressive cultural traditions from what many scholars would argue is authentically Islamic (i.e. based on a holistic understanding of the Qur'an). For instance, teachers felt very strongly that girls and boys should be treated with equal attention. When this norm was violated — as by a visiting speaker who spoke directly to the boys while ignoring the girls — teachers complained. Similarly, while some Muslim girls attending Quebec public schools have apparently refused to sit near boys (Geadah 1996:235), girls and boys routinely sat next to each other at the Muslim school. While parents or children occasionally objected, these cases were dealt with as they arose by the classroom teacher. Overall, the school maintained a policy of coeducation that was effectively accepted and supported as appropriately Islamic — in one explanation, since students were expected to be studying in class, not socializing.

Girls' participation in sports was also promoted by the school. While in public schools, some parents have requested the withdrawal of their daughters from physical education classes (Geadah 1996:235; Parker-Jenkins 1995), the Muslim school community has distinguished between women's physical activity (which is permitted) and immodest dress (which is not). Consequently, female students at the Muslim school take part in physical education dressed in long sleeved T-shirts and loose sweatpants.

It is unfair to suggest that Muslim schools are more harmful to women and girls (particularly immigrants) than secular schools within the same context. In fact, Muslim schools, including the one where I conducted my fieldwork, offer women an institutionalized place in the life of the community and provide a model for women's public roles in other arenas. Many schools are founded and staffed primarily by women who see education as an extension of their family responsibilities.[8] The role of women in Muslim schools was formally recognized during a recent international conference of Muslim scholars and educators. A report on this conference comments,

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[7] It is mistaken to believe that only girls suffer from "patriarchal" authority in the family; sons seemed to be dealt with more violently by abusive fathers, some of whom sadly had lower academic expectations of their daughters.

[8] See for instance, the account of women's establishment of a Muslim school in Seattle (Adeney and DeMaster 1994:197), and of the Clara Muhammad schools (Pulcini 1995:184).

One important aspect of the Cape Town conference [Sixth International Islamic Education Conference] was the presence of so many influential women delegates. Perhaps for the first time at such a level, men (including Ulamaa' — Islamic scholars) and women sat together for the common cause of the education of our children. Many were clearly not quite sure how to relate to each other. However, in a short and apparently unexpected speech as part of the opening session, the President of South Africa's Muslim Judicial Council laid particular emphasis on the value of having ladies present and taking an active role at the conference... Sheikh Nazeem [Muhammad] [said], "It is important that our sisters are present today; when they are here, Barakah (Allah's Blessing) is here." (*Al-Madāris* 5:3)

Appendix

Newspaper Reports on Hijab in Quebec Schools

1994. "Hijab ban at Louis Riel fuels debate about religious expression in schools," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A13. September 10.

1994. "Forcing hijab on teachers unacceptable: Houda-Pepin," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A3. October 24.

1994. "Hijab incompatible with Quebec society, nationalist group says," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A4. November 23.

1994. "Behind the hijab debate," *Montreal Gazette*, p.B1, B2. December 3.

1994. "2nd Muslim told to shed hijab or leave school College Regina Assumpta," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A3. December 4.

1994. "Educators outside Quebec mystified by hijab ban," *Globe & Mail* Metro Edition, p.A1, A4. December 13.

1994. "Student files rights complaint over school's ban on hijab," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A4. December 16.

1995. "Banning hijab infringes on basic rights: Broadbent," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A4. January 15.

1995. "Good relations: [Carolyn] Sharp is the Jesuits' only female editor [Discussion on human rights & the hijab debate in Quebec]," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A3. January 23.

1995. "Fight for freedom : students back the right to wear hijab in school," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A3. February 3.

1995. "Hijab in schools supported," *Globe & Mail* Metro Edition, p.A4. February 15.

1995. "Hijab ban wrong, study finds [Quebec Human Rights Commission]," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A1, A5. February 15.

1995. "I'll ignore hijab ruling: MCSC [Montreal Catholic School Commission] Chairman," *Montreal Gazette*, p.A1, A12. February 16.

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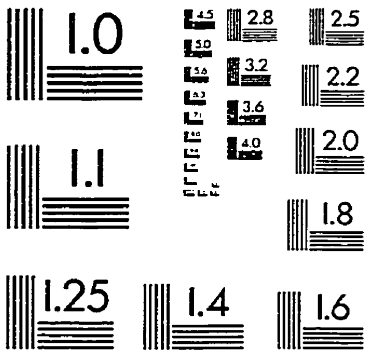
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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