

PART 2

EXPERIENCING ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia in Practice

Before delving into my discussion of Muslim youth experiences in secondary schools, I believe it would be useful to briefly discuss some details about participants to better contextualize the discussions in the following chapters. All participants resided and attended schools in the Montreal and the Greater Montreal Region of Quebec, Canada. Four of these schools were located in Montreal, while the other eight schools were located in suburbs or neighborhoods outside the city. There were five female Muslim student participants. The pseudonyms of the Muslim female student participants were: Sarah, Maryam, Noor, Ayesha, and Amina. Sarah, Maryam, and Amina were of Pakistani origin, Ayesha was Syrian, and Noor was French Canadian. All five of the female student participants were born and raised in Quebec. The four non-French Canadian participants had parents that immigrated to Quebec before they were born. There was a total of seven Muslim male student participants. The pseudonyms I used for Muslim male student participants were as follows: Yusuf, Malik, Ismail, Ahmad, Adam, Zaid, and Ali. Yusuf, Malik, Ismail, and Zaid were of Pakistani origin; Adam and Ali were of Indian origin, and Ahmad was Algerian. All of the male participants were born and raised in Quebec and their parents immigrated to Canada before they were born.

Ideally I wanted to interview the same number of male and female Muslim student participants to have equal representation. I felt this was important because the experiences of Muslim women in educational contexts have been very distinct from Muslim males' experiences (Razai-Rashti, 2005; Zine, 2006). However, after a lengthy recruitment process the male to female ratio was slightly unbalanced as I had seven Muslim male and five Muslim female participants. Male participants were very forthcoming and not difficult to find. Female participants were not as enthusiastic about participating in this study. I cannot say for certain why I had such difficulty in attracting female participants. However, it may relate to sensitivities that often accompany narratives of Muslim women in educational institutions (Mossalli, 2009; Razai-Rashti, 2005; Zine, 2006) and reluctance to want to share such sensitive information with a stranger.

I decided to limit the number of Muslim student participants to a maximum of twelve because I wanted the interviews to go into as much depth as possible and allow for follow-up interviews where necessary. Hence, this book provides rich detailed data to draw from, which may not have been attainable if I conducted shorter interviews with a larger number of participants. As I only interviewed a total of twelve student participants, this book does not claim to draw generalizing

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conclusions for all Muslim students in Canadian secondary schools. Rather, my focus is to provide a glimpse of the lived experiences of marginalized members of society, which nonetheless resonate with other narratives and studies of Muslim Canadian experiences with race and racism.

As I had interviewed former and current Muslim students, a concerted effort was made to find participants who attended or graduated from high school in different years since the 9/11 attacks. In other words, participants were not all the same age and I was able to acquire a range of insights from participants who were at high school at various intervals in the years after 9/11, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Five and Six. This was done to examine if attitudes towards Muslims remained consistent or if there have been variations in the post-9/11 era. It may not seem immediately obvious why former Muslim students were interviewed in this study, however, it is my contention that the lived experiences of Muslims who attended high schools in the post-9/11 context were fairly recent at the time of the interviews and therefore they could easily recall their encounters during this time. Some have criticized relying on memories when conducting ethnographic research, claiming this to be subject to one's present perspective, malleable, and susceptible to inaccuracy or loss (Davis & Starn, 1989). However, as Frank Pignatelli (1998) has observed, memory has the potential to enrich a critical ethnography and can bind "the rich potential of the narrative to fascinate, seduce, and draw us closer to the practical, activist intentions of a critical ethnography" (p. 407). In other words, relying on memory or the use of telling stories is in line with some of the foundational principles of critical ethnography, which is to give voice to socially marginalized members of society. Hence, these narratives are relevant even if they rely on memory. From this perspective, memory is not simply a "repository from which memories can be retrieved...Memory is active, always in the present, and a construction, transaction, and negotiation, as opposed to a reproduction" (Roberts & Roberts, 1996, pp. 17, 29). Despite the concerns raised by Davis and Starn, I believe that relying on the memories of participants helped provide reflective responses about their experiences. Through narrating their stories, I argue participants engaged in an introspective process, which may have brought to light understandings of issues that were elusive while living through these moments. These former students still possessed valuable insights about perceptions of Muslims in Canadian educational contexts in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The fact that they were no longer secondary students should not have disqualified or devalued their contributions and insights into these issues.

In addition to interviewing former and current Muslim students, I also interviewed six teacher participants to inquire about their anecdotal experiences and observations regarding anti-Muslim bias and racism in their schools. This segment was interviewed to see if they had noted similar experiences to student participants. Furthermore, educators are often privy to experiences in their classrooms that can provide invaluable insights, especially in regards to racist attitudes towards Muslims. Teachers are located differently from students and their differing perspectives can

provide a more holistic understanding of the context being studied. Efforts were made to include an equal number of male and female teacher participants. As such, there were a total of three male and three female teacher participants. Three of the teacher participants were Muslims and three were non-Muslims. Of the three Muslim participants there were two men and one woman, whose pseudonyms were Hamza, Ibrahim, and Alia respectively. Hamza was of Indian origin, but was born and raised in Quebec. Ibrahim was from Pakistan and immigrated to Quebec when he was a university student, and Alia was of Pakistani origin and was born and raised in Quebec. There were two women non-Muslim teacher participants and a third participant who was a male, their pseudonyms were Laura, Jessica, and Jeff respectively. Jeff was of Italian origin, Laura was of Greek origin, and Jessica was French Canadian. All of the non-Muslim teacher participants were born and raised in Quebec. Attempts were made to have a diverse range of teachers who taught core subject areas. Hence I was able to interview one Social Studies teacher, one Science teacher, one Fine Arts teacher, one Mathematics teacher, and two Ethics and Religious Culture teachers. Teachers made reference to their experiences in relation to their subject areas as well as from their perspectives as members of their school communities. More details relating to each category of participant will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Below is a table summarizing my participants by category, gender, location, and language.

<i>Type of participants</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Language spoken</i>
Teachers	• 3 male • 3 female	• 6 from Greater Montreal region	• 5 English • 1 French
Muslim students	• 7 male • 5 female	• 4 from Montreal region • 8 from Greater Montreal region	• 6 from French Schools • 6 from English Schools
Total	18	18	18

The overall goals of Chapters Five and Six are to paint a portrait of these Muslim students' lived experiences and to understand what factors may have facilitated Islamophobia in their schools. My analysis of Muslim female and male student experiences in the proceeding chapters was done thematically to see what issues emerged within each category of participant. Chapter Five discusses Muslim female student participants' experiences and Chapter Six examines the experiences of Muslim male students, as well as teacher participants' experiences. Upon completing my discussion of each of the groups' interviews, I will identify similarities and trends in participants' responses in the concluding chapter. I turn now to begin my analysis by examining the experiences of Muslim female students in Canadian secondary schools in the post-9/11 context.

CHAPTER 5

UNVEILING THE LIVED REALITIES OF MUSLIM FEMALE STUDENTS IN CANADIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

THE PARTICIPANTS

All of the female student participants were interviewed individually and attended different high schools in Montreal and the Greater Montreal Region. Only one of the five Muslim women interviewed was still in high school at the time of interviewing. All five women were from middle-class socio-economic backgrounds. Two of the participants attended French public secondary schools and the other three attended English public secondary schools. As previously mentioned, the names used for the Muslim female participants in this study were Sarah, Maryam, Noor, Ayesha, and Amina. All women wore the *hijab* in high school and continue to do so. All identified as practicing Muslim women. Sarah was a high school student in grade eleven at the time of the interview. There were only a handful of Muslim girls at Sarah's school, who like her wore the *hijab*. Consequently, Sarah was one of the only visible Muslims in her school. Maryam was a university undergraduate student at the time of the interview. She was not in high school during 9/11. Therefore, Maryam, like Sarah, was a high school student in Quebec secondary schools in the aftermath of 9/11. Maryam was an activist who worked with grassroots organizations within her community to help organize Muslim events.

Noor, Ayesha, and Amina were older than the aforementioned participants and were all attending secondary school at the time of 9/11. Noor grew up in Montreal and was a convert to Islam who took the *shahada* (formal declaration of accepting the Islamic faith) when she was fourteen years old. She was in grade ten when 9/11 happened. Noor's husband was born in Pakistan and immigrated to Canada when he was 19 years old. Noor's husband and children were all Muslims. However, Noor's parents and extended family were all non-Muslims at the time of the interview. Ayesha had recently graduated from university at the time of the interview. She was in grade seven during 9/11. Her family was not always very religious, but after 9/11 there was a shift in her and her siblings' outlook which caused them to incline towards and identify more with Islam. Amina completed her university studies three years prior to the interview and had worked for the federal government. However, once she had children she decided to become a stay-at-home mom. She was fifteen years old and in grade ten during 9/11.

SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS OF ISLAM

During the interview process I asked the female student participants to tell me how they felt Islam and Muslims were perceived by Quebec society at large in addition to their experiences in secondary schools. I felt it necessary to hear their thoughts on how they believed society perceived them because my assumptions in doing this study were that schools are a microcosm of society and the types of perceptions that people have of Muslims in society may resonate with the way they were perceived in a school setting. As I contend in Chapter Three, a number of state policies and institutions in Quebec have anti-Muslim biases. The interview process sought to understand if these biases were perceived by participants in Quebec society as well as in their secondary schools. All female participants felt that there were some levels of racism towards Muslims within Quebec. Based on their experiences, some felt racism was much less apparent in their daily lives than others. Noor, for example, felt that some of the anti-Muslim racism in society was exaggerated by the media:

I think some people are ok with Muslims, some people are not, but most of the people I meet are nice. But I know there are people who don't like Muslims, but mostly we see that in the media and I don't see that much. But I did when I was in Montreal in the metro and those things. Yeah, there you felt bad.

Noor described how her interactions with people in Quebec did not seem negative. However, she still acknowledged that anti-Muslim sentiments existed in Quebec society. It may be possible that Noor felt she had experienced less discrimination than the other participants who believed that anti-Muslim racism clearly existed in Quebec society, as Noor was a white French Quebecois convert to Islam. What was interesting about Noor's comments was that despite feeling that racism towards Muslims was not too bad, she had personally been targeted by people in Quebec for her Muslim appearance while taking public transportation. Noor went on to explain these incidents that took place in the subway in more detail:

Noor: They would sometimes insult you and say '*go back to your country*' and stuff like that. Like, I could have answered, I am in my country, but I didn't used to answer anything when things like that happened. But it wasn't nice I didn't like to take the subway but I used to take it all the time.

Naved: so in some parts when you were living in Montreal you felt that there was some kind of negative impression of Muslims?

Noor: *Yeah*, yeah, for sure. Once someone started throwing *eggs at me* from a window in an apartment building.

Though Noor did not feel that she was discriminated against openly in her secondary school setting, she was clearly being discriminated against when taking public transportation to get to school. Despite Noor's Quebecoise origins, she had been verbally abused with taunts telling her to "go back to your country", which was

indicative of how wearing Muslim symbols like the *hijab* placed her outside of her culture of birth and signified her as ‘Other’ to some members of Quebec society. Abo-Zena, Sahli, & Tobias-Nahi (2009) have noted that Muslim women who wear the *hijab* often “experience marginalization caused by hate speech such as being told to ‘go back to your country’” (p. 13). In this instance, the nationalist subject envisioned themselves in a position of spatial power in which they possessed the right to determine what belonged within the norms of society and what needed to be expelled. Islamic symbols such as the *hijab* in the case of Noor, despite her Quebecoise ancestry, brought about a situation in which she was marked as contaminating the nationalist space and was told to leave. This episode was an example of race thinking, as Noor’s Islamic faith was racialized and thus disqualified her from occupying the status of an exalted nationalist subject. Noor never experienced this type of verbal abuse prior to wearing the *hijab*. Therefore, Noor’s experiences indicated that her perceived belongingness to Quebec society was contingent upon her conformity to the majoritarian culture. Once she veered away from Quebec societal norms, she was told to “go back to your country”, casting her in the realm of ‘Otherness’. In addition to facing verbal taunts, Noor also experienced instances of being physically abused when she had eggs thrown at her. The graduation from verbal taunts to physical forms of abuse and violence such as throwing objects at a person for their appearance and perceived beliefs is an example of nationalist subjects feeling they are entitled to manage the space of the nation. As such, they are raising their hands against the ‘Other’ believing that they are nationally empowered to do so (Hage, 2000). One can draw parallels between these experiences described by Noor and events in Quebec history such as the RA debates and the proposed Bill 60. These events also demonstrated how some members of the majority culture in Quebec felt as though they were in a position to define what did and did not belong within the nationalist space. Noor’s experience with physical assault was not an experience shared by the other participants.

Ayesha never received taunts and verbal abuse in face-to-face encounters in Quebec. However, she did experience Islamophobia indirectly through online forums:

People in Quebec tend to be more secretive about these things [negative perceptions of Muslims] so on the surface it looks like everybody is really happy but then, you know that there’s a lot of wrong messages in peoples’ heads. For example, when I was in university classes we would have these discussion forums online and sometimes they would be anonymous or even not anonymous. People in class would not speak out but then all of a sudden their Islamophobic tendencies came out of these [online forums] because they are hiding behind a screen, so they don’t feel that they’re putting themselves too much out there.

Ayesha described how people in Quebec had Islamophobic views and beliefs but would not express them in face-to-face encounters. However, when an opportunity

presented itself to voice these beliefs in an indirect manner, Islamophobic discourses emerged. This incident was an example of a type of dormant Islamophobia, which was a common theme with a number of participants. Dormant Islamophobia occurs when Muslims feel or believe that people in their everyday interactions have certain animosities, biases, and preconceived notions towards Islam and Muslims. However; they do not readily express these animosities openly. These Islamophobic perceptions emerge when circumstances facilitate anti-Muslim discourse and actions, such as “hiding behind a screen” through an online forum. Being able to express these views in an indirect manner was far less confrontational than in a classroom setting where students would be required to defend their positions. Hence dormant Islamophobia graduated into explicit forms when a facilitating agent, like the discussion forums, was present.

Other participants described how dormant Islamophobia took on explicit forms when events portraying Muslims in a negative light occupied public and media discourses. Hence, events like the RA debates, discussions over the Charter of Values, and terrorist attacks committed by Muslim extremists facilitated overt or explicit expressions of Islamophobia in the lived experiences of participants. These incidents occurred at the hands of members of society, who, prior to these events, did not display such tendencies towards the participants. Some participants discussed how the Quebec Charter of Values enabled dormant Islamophobia to emerge in explicit forms. In my interview with Ayesha, she briefly commented about the Charter of Values, and suggested that it became an issue of public debate in Quebec because of perceptions that secularism was at odds with people practicing their faith. Ayesha alluded to how Islam was perceived as a threat to Quebec’s secularism, perpetuating the notion that Islam is threatening to the core values of Quebec society. Maryam, however; viewed discourses surrounding the charter in a more positive light within the Montreal region:

I think in Montreal because of the whole *Charte* thing (reference to charter of values)...I think people still respect us, I think that respect is growing. I think especially after the whole *Charte* thing...it’s created a platform for people to learn more about Islam and *who these ‘Muslims’* are, especially after 9/11.

Maryam, the university undergraduate student, felt that discussions about the charter have created a space where Muslims can voice their views about issues in Quebec, and consequently Quebec society at large can learn more about Muslims. In other words, Muslims have been able to capitalize on this issue and through the debates and discussions about the charter have been able to exercise agency. Consequently, Muslims were being respected more, as people were sympathizing with the plight of Muslim women who would have been negatively impacted by the charter. Maryam believed that the 9/11 terror attacks had cast the Muslim community in Quebec in a negative light and the discussions and the debates over the Charter of Values helped Muslims in Quebec improve their public image, possibly because they were being perceived as victims of injustice, as opposed to the usual depiction of Muslims

being violent aggressors. Maryam's comments implied that, notwithstanding the negative sentiments whipped up by media and political elites, people were critical of discriminatory actions and proposed legislations. In general, the female Muslim student participants felt that biases towards Muslims existed in Quebec. Some believed that these biases were more implicit. Others experienced them in explicit forms through taunts and verbal and physical abuse. Similar types of incidents occurred with Muslim women participants in educational settings.

EXPERIENCES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Some female participants experienced overt forms of racism and bias, while others did not feel they were openly discriminated against in secondary school. All of them generally described their experiences in secondary school in a positive manner, while still facing occasional challenges related to how they were perceived because of their faith. As the *hijab* is often a signifier of the 'imperilled Muslim women' archetype in media and public discourses in Quebec society, having a generally positive experience throughout high school was a refreshing surprise to some of the participants:

Well in general, I would say I had a pretty good high school experience. I was the only girl in my school to wear the *hijab* and to be a *real* visible minority. I mean there were minority cultural groups at my high school but no one really stood out other than myself and I think I was the first one to ever even wear one [*hijab*]. I looked at graduation photographs from previous years and I never saw anyone wearing a *hijab*, so I would say I was the *real* first *visible* minority in my high school. But overall I had a pretty good experience, I didn't feel like I was singled out.

Amina felt it important to emphasize that despite her visible difference, not only at her grade level but within her school's history, that she had a generally positive experience in secondary school. Amina's emphasis on the *hijab* within her school setting was indicative that she felt that she stood out within her student body, yet this was not a major setback for her attending secondary school. Other participants had varying degrees of positive experiences, which is not to say that within the overall positive atmosphere there were not instances of discomfort.

Ayesha attended a high school that she described as being very multicultural with a number of Muslim students. However, she felt that without a visible signifier indicating her religious/cultural identity she blended into the majoritarian culture in her secondary school, which is something she wanted to change:

I only had one friend that actually wore the *hijab* in my grade, and I wore the *hijab* when I was in grade nine in the middle of the year because I was just sick of not being identified as Arab [i.e. students thought she was of European descent].

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Ayesha was able to pass as a white Canadian student despite having an Arabic name. She felt at odds with the notion of passing, discussed in Chapter One, and wanted to assert her Arab identity. For Ayesha, the *hijab* was a visible signifier that gave access to her Arab identity within the secondary school system. This raises an interesting point—based on Ayesha’s experiences, the *hijab* is what signified Arabness in her school culture. In other words, a student in her school was not recognized as an Arab unless they were displaying a conspicuous religious/cultural symbol like the *hijab*. Ayesha’s donning of the *hijab* also suggested that in some ways she was entangling her religious and ethnic identities, as not all Arabs are Muslim and the *hijab* is an Islamic garment. Some scholars have discussed how Arabs and Muslims are rarely differentiated in media representations of Islam (Salaita, 2006; Shaheen, 2008), however these are reductionist and over-simplified representations. It would seem that Ayesha in some ways was complicit with these reductive stereotypes as she affiliated this religious signifier with her Arab identity. This experience also relates to the racialization of the Islamic faith as Ayesha equated religious symbols with ethnic affiliations. Hence, Ayesha’s comments revealed some of the complexities and interrelations between ethnic and religious affiliations. It would appear that through a process of racialization, Ayesha may have been exercising some form of agency as she wanted to be acknowledged as Arab through this religious signifier. Upon wearing the *hijab*, Ayesha experienced unintended consequences where she felt she had to be a spokesperson for Islam:

You know, when you’re a teenager you feel the world is always staring at you. And you know there were random things that happened here and there but overall it was smooth, except for the fact that I felt that I had to be a spokesperson for the *entire* Muslim *ummah* of the world. Like every time there would be a debate that would happen in class everyone would just sort of look to me and I was 14, I was supposed to justify everything!

Wearing the *hijab* brought about some instances of stares and other uncomfortable situations within Ayesha’s school setting but nothing that was unbearable for her. The only issue which Ayesha seemed to be annoyed with was that she had to be the Muslim representative voice whenever there were discussions about Islam or Muslims in her classes. Though it may seem that Ayesha was viewing all Muslims to be homogeneous as she makes reference to the “Muslim *ummah*” (i.e. the Muslim community), however this term can be used to describe the Muslim community in a general sense taking into consideration the differences of cultures and ethnicities of Muslims around the world. Rather, I believe Ayesha’s comments suggested how others assume homogeneity amongst Muslims worldwide. Such perceptions enabled her to be a representative voice, which came about through a visual signifier, associating *her* with *them*. This was not the case for Ayesha prior to wearing the *hijab*. These comments revealed a subtle irony relating to the intersection of Ayesha’s multiple identities. Ayesha used veiling to identify herself as Arab, essentially exercising agency through racializing her faith, while expressing distaste for being

‘Othered’ when she sarcastically reflected on having to be the spokesperson for the international Muslim community when she started wearing the *hijab*. The anxieties described by Ayesha were possibly exacerbated as the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq took place while she was still in high school. The situation described by Ayesha is what some have termed “spotlighting”, which refers to when “students of minority religious, ethnic, or cultural groups...[are] spotlighted to speak for or otherwise justify what “their group” thinks or what members of their group do” (Abo-Zena, Sahli, & Tobias-Nahi, 2009, p. 8). In subtle ways spotlighting reproduces the myth that Islam and Muslims are monolithic and that there is not a diverse range of views within the Islamic faith regarding world affairs and conflicts. This is hardly surprising given that Ayesha could not even be identified as a Muslim until she visibly wore an Islamic symbol which has often been associated with notions of misogyny and the oppression of Muslim women. In essence, spotlighting asks Muslim students to explain why other Muslims engage in acts of terror assuming that they understand the motivations of terrorists or that they could speak on their behalf. This may result in feelings of guilt by association as spotlighting with regards to the 9/11 attacks assumes that the reasoning for them is somehow explained through the common faith shared by the students and the perpetrators. Ayesha felt a great sense of discomfort when class discussions and debates relating to Islam and Muslims would focus attention on her, because as an adolescent she felt the need to “justify everything” (i.e. the actions of Muslim extremists) even though she did not agree with these actions.

In one instance described by Ayesha she mentioned how one of her teachers through a class discussion reproduced notions of ‘culture talk’:

I remember people were talking about Iraq and what not. It was the Iraq—the US had just invaded Iraq and the teacher was trying to be real open minded and she was a very nice person but she still said ‘*I think we need to understand the Arab mind*’ and then the whole class looked at me. And I was like supposed to explain the Arab mind. So there was always that pressure to represent everybody at the same time and I still didn’t know who I was.

Ayesha’s teacher felt that there was a certain essence or characteristics that were essential to being Arab. Logically then, if there was an “Arab mind” Ayesha was qualified to speak about it because she was one of *them*. Clearly this was troubling for Ayesha because she was still trying to understand who she was. She did not identify with the notions of Arabness as understood by her teacher and classmates, yet she was signified as one of *them*. In this instance, Ayesha’s teacher reinforced the perception that Muslims are a monolithic group, all of whom are suitable representatives and authorities of their religion. The unintended actions of Ayesha’s teacher—reinforcing notions of Muslims being a monolithic group in which all Muslims, or in the case of Ayesha, all Arabs, are painted with a broad brush possessing innate qualities or a common mindset—can be traumatizing to Muslim students in a secondary setting and can result in teasing, bullying, and possibly even

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discord within the family unit. Statements and actions by teachers in which there are subtle forms of racism or prejudice are not always based on an intent to paint a negative image of the 'Other' in a classroom setting. Often these incidents occur out of a genuine misunderstanding, as their knowledge of conflicts or other cultures may be misinformed. This can be damaging, as Kincheloe (2005) observes: "[w]ithout an understanding of these specific dynamics, teachers are too often unable...to protect students from the radioactive fallout of hidden structures of racism, class bias, patriarchy, homophobia, colonialism and religious prejudice" (p. 35). Consequently, teachers who are misinformed may be disseminating stereotypes to their students. In relation to discussing conflicts such as the War on Terror, as Ayesha's teacher did, this will inevitably taint students' perceptions of their Muslim classmates even if they are their friends.

When Maryam started wearing the *hijab*, she experienced a similar type of phenomenon, where she suddenly became the gatekeeper of knowledge of Muslims and Islam in her secondary school:

I didn't really have that many weird experiences in high school but after I started wearing *hijab* in grade eight, mostly people were still respectful but there were a lot of questions that were asked. So I think it was a very *big* shock for me... they would ask me a lot about all those stereotypical things in our religion. So they always needed clarifications. That happens even now.

Maryam experienced a similar type of situation as Ayesha when she started wearing the *hijab*, as her relationship with her peers and teachers changed. Instead of just being a regular student, she had to become a spokesperson for the Islamic faith and for Muslims. Some studies suggest that often questions faced by Muslim women in educational settings are "in the context of epithets propagated by the media" (Abo-Zena, Sahli, & Tobias-Nahi, 2009, p. 15). In other words, the assumption of 'Otherness' underlies these questions. This was the case with Maryam as she described the types of questions that she was asked as originating from stereotypes associated with Islam. These stereotypes, according to Maryam, included questions relating to *sharia*, beheadings, and forced marriages, all of which are tropes in the dominant Western discourse about Islam, as seen in our discussion of Hérouxville in Chapter Three. Hence this was an example of dormant Islamophobia manifesting and becoming explicit. A number of Maryam's peers had biased and contrived notions of Muslims and Islam. Once Maryam began wearing the *hijab* she fit the description of the 'imperilled Muslim woman' in Quebec society, which clearly was not the case before when she was a regular *hijabless* student unqualified to answer questions. Wearing the *hijab* provided her with the credentials to discuss 'Islam', or rather the students' stereotypical views of Islam because she now fit the stereotypical mould. In addition to having to answer questions relating to stereotypes associated with Islam, Maryam also faced taunts and teasing about wearing the *hijab*:

Some of the students, I think back then they would call me—just to make fun of me...that was actually *pretty rough*, they would call me Saddam. So stupid things like that, like Kaddafi, so stupid things like that, but as a joke, I never took it seriously.

Though Maryam did not take the taunts of other students very seriously, it was still indicative of how the *hijab* became a means to change how she was perceived by her peers. Upon donning the *hijab* she had nicknames thrown at her of two violent tyrannical leaders of Muslim countries. Similarly, a study by Michelle Byng (2010) found that media coverage of Muslim women's clothing, particularly the veil, constructed Muslim women as different and having sympathies towards violence against the West. Maryam's wearing of the *hijab* in the eyes of some students indicated affiliations to radicalism and violence. Hence, media discourses linking the *hijab* with violence and terror resonated with perceptions held by students at Maryam's secondary school. In Maryam's experiences, students were not the only ones who held stereotypes of Muslim women who wore the *hijab*, since teachers also had prejudices.

Maryam recounts how she had a history teacher who would make a number of false presumptions about Maryam based on her physical appearance:

I remember in grade 11 or grade 10 at the beginning of the school year, I remember I had a professor, he was our history teacher. And I remember one of my first experiences with him, I think he didn't have too many *hijabis* in his class before and he had this preconceived notion that we were out to get him or something. So once I was like dozing off in his class or something, he came up to me and he kind of accused me of not paying attention and thought that I had headphones under my *hijab*. And he made this whole fiasco in front of the class and I was like what are you talking about. And it was really interesting to see and I kind of told him off too. I was like, that's kind of *rude*, first of all you accuse me like that and I don't know where you're getting these notions from.

Maryam's early encounters with this teacher were not very positive, as she felt he was biased towards her because she wore the *hijab*. She believed the teacher felt that women wearing the *hijab* "were out to get him". His prejudices surfaced when Maryam was daydreaming in class. Instead of telling her to pay attention, he accused her of hiding headphones in her *hijab*. Maryam felt this accusation was unwarranted and disrespectful as she was being accused of something without any evidence to support the accusations. The actions of Maryam's teacher implied a distaste of her wearing the *hijab*. In most instances within a secondary school setting, wearing headphones and listening to music, especially during a teacher's lesson, violates rules and protocols of the school. In doing so, he implied that Maryam was using her *hijab* to 'break the rules'. The nationalist subject, in this instance, the high school teacher, perceived the *hijab* as an aberration that was used to break the rules and

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therefore had no place in his classroom. He envisioned himself in a position to be able to determine what was and was not acceptable within a state institution. Similar to opinions expressed by Claude Pineault in the Charter of Values consultations, discussed in Chapter Three, the teacher viewed the *hijab* as a type of disguise that was being used to dupe the nationalist subject.

Shaza Khan (2009) has noted that in circumstances where teachers have concerns with students who wear visible religious signifiers like the *hijab*, it is best to address these concerns privately with the student. Students may be offended and feel marginalized in a classroom environment in which the teacher makes a spectacle of the *hijab* in front of the whole class. When discussed privately, many of these tensions can be alleviated. In the case of Maryam, this episode marked a confrontational relationship with her teacher which could have very easily been avoided by speaking privately with the student. Maryam's relationship with this teacher evolved over the course of the year and she felt that as the teacher got to know her better through personal contact, his perceptions changed. So much so that she felt a number of his misconceptions of Islam were clarified through their interactions. Ayesha echoes a similar sentiment as she believed in order for perceptions surrounding Muslims in secondary schools to change, Muslims themselves need to take some initiative:

I think that Muslims need to slightly get out of their comfort zone and reach out to people because as a Muslim community I think we just wait for people to understand us without trying to make ourselves understood.

Ayesha felt that Muslims needed to proactively engage in dialogue with the school community and society at large in order to be understood. This is similar to findings in studies which suggest that knowing and having interactions with Muslims can bring about a positive shift in perceptions of Muslims and Islam (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). Ayesha's comments implied passiveness amongst Muslims in secondary school and Quebec society, in which Muslims were the object of others' interpretations. This could be problematic, given that media and political discourses have contributed to casting Muslims in a negative light, as seen in previous chapters. However, Ayesha's comment suggested that she believed Muslims were in a position to counter the dominant discourse about Muslims. In order for perceptions to change, she believed Muslims needed to exercise some degree of agency.

A number of the Muslim female participants discussed how 9/11 impacted their experiences in Quebec secondary schools. As mentioned earlier, three of the five participants attended secondary school during the 9/11 attacks. Despite the fact that this tragic event took place on US soil, its reverberations were felt by some of the participants in a direct manner in Quebec secondary schools. Some of the effects of the 9/11 attacks included losing friends, being bullied, and concerns for safety. Amina discussed how these events affected her relationship with a close friend in secondary school:

There was one incident where after 9/11 that I recall very strongly. There was this guy that I was pretty good friends with. We used to take the bus together and pretty much right after, the day after [the 9/11 attacks], he just completely stopped talking to me. He actually posted something *really* derogatory [about Islam] in his locker and a teacher had reprimanded him for that and had him remove it. And after that he never spoke to me, after 9/11, and before that we used to take the bus to and from the school together and we were pretty good friends.

9/11 changed the way Amina was perceived amongst her friends. Some have noted that events like 9/11 can cause “students who feel pain or threat, particularly over something out of their direct control... to experience frustration and resentment towards the social groups they blame for their feelings” (Liese, 2004, p. 65). As Amina described it, her friendship with a good friend effectively ended because of 9/11, as if the student was trying to punish Amina for these attacks. The assumptions embedded in this student’s response were that these actions committed by a fringe group of Muslims were representative of the religion of Islam as a whole. As previously discussed, a number of stereotypes relating to the experiences of Muslim women in secondary schools revolved around the idea that all Muslims held homogeneous understandings and beliefs. According to this logic, the ideology of the Muslim terrorists who committed these acts would be shared by all Muslims. Amina being rejected by her friend in the aftermath of the terror attacks for no apparent explanation was indicative that he believed sharing a common religion with the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks in some way signaled her acceptance of these acts. It could be said that Amina’s friend categorized her as a ‘bad Muslim’ whose values were incompatible with his. Amina experienced a type of guilt by association which inevitably resulted from this friend’s monolithic understanding of Muslims and Islam. Amina also described how understanding Muslims and Islam as homogeneous affected her brother who attended the same school as her during the 9/11 attacks:

It was very closely after 9/11, and me and my brother we took the bus together to and from school. And after school some of the older kids had started picking on him and calling him Bin Laden’s son and asking him, *where’s your father?* Pretty much they just kind of used the same joke. I guess they were trying to bug him asking him where his father was and saying he’s Bin Laden’s son.

In this instance Amina’s brother was being bullied because of his supposed affiliation with Osama Bin Laden. There was no reason to assume that Bin Laden was in any way related to Amina’s brother. However, once again, there was an assumption operating within these taunts. All Muslims, whether they were terrorists or innocent high school kids were held to share the same beliefs, views, and in the case of Amina’s brother, were biologically connected. His Islamic faith was categorized

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as a race, as the taunts implied that he and Bin Laden were somehow related by virtue of both being Muslim. This incident was also indicative of the existence of dormant Islamophobia. Amina's brother, prior to this incident, was never picked on by these boys on the bus. Their targeting of him only came about because of their racist associations of terrorism with Islam. These students knew Amina's brother, they knew about his religious affiliations, yet their racist tendencies only manifested when an opportunity (i.e. terror attacks) presented itself.

In the case of Amina, it was not clear if her head veil was what elicited views of guilt by association. However, Ayesha clearly did feel that the *hijab* was a symbol which was indicative of affiliation with terrorism and the 9/11 attacks:

One of my friends, she was the only *hijabi* in the grade, the only Arab besides me, so people just started surrounding her. And they weren't trying to bully her, but they were just very curious, right, because they saw *her* people—she's Lebanese—but they saw *hijabis* on TV and they said, you know, did your people do the 9/11? And she's like, those weren't Arabs, those were Afghans. She was in grade seven so she just, she automatically, like swallowed what the news said as well but she like carefully pinpointed it to Afghans. She didn't mention anything about it being Muslims or non-Muslims.

Ayesha at this time was not wearing the *hijab* but her friend in grade seven was. Consequently, students immediately came to Ayesha's friend to understand more about 9/11. As Ayesha's friend wore the *hijab* and the news media was inundated with images of *hijab* clad Muslim women after the attacks—some of whom were being depicted as celebrating the attacks (Kincheloe, 2004)—students came to her wanting to understand the motivations of these acts. Logically, some of the students thought, if they (i.e. Muslims on the news after attacks) wear the *hijab*, and Ayesha's friend wears the *hijab*, they must be the same people. Hence, the students questioned if it was “your people” behind these attacks. In other words, these students assumed Islam was a race. Ayesha's friend perceived the events differently. She believed it was Afghans and not Arabs who were behind the attacks. So she did not make any mention of Muslims or the Islamic faith. She understood, based on media reports, that Afghans were in some way involved in these events and she identified the supposed terrorists according to ethnicity and not religion. This episode demonstrated how there was a clear distinction in how a Muslim student perceived these attacks and the supposed perpetrators and how non-Muslim students reacted to the same events. The Muslim student perceived the perpetrators according to ethnicity because she was a Muslim and her belief system was apparently incompatible with the acts of terrorism on September 11. Hence she clarified that it was not ‘her people’, which in her view refers to ethnic affiliation. The perception from the non-Muslim students was quite different. They saw certain Islamic symbols, like the *hijab*, and understood these symbols as representative of ideologies and actions related to the terrorists and the ‘Islamic race’.

Noor described how her parents and those of some of her Muslim friends who wore the *hijab* had serious concerns for their daughters' safety at school in the aftermath of these attacks:

Noor: I have a friend who stopped going to school for some time because her parents were scared for her safety when she takes the bus going to school. So she stopped. A few of them stopped I think. But because they didn't want to take off their *hijab*, so they just stayed home. My parents told me to take off my *hijab* right after 9/11 but as soon as I got out of the house I would wear it without them knowing. So I did wear it to school but I don't remember anything that happened.

Naved: So there were a lot of concerns for safety?

Noor: Yeah, the parents, mostly the parents were scared for their kids. You did hear about things that happened in the subway. Some people had their *hijab* taken off by other people, stuff like that.

According to Noor, parents of Muslim girls who wore the head veil had serious concerns for their daughters' safety after 9/11. The concerns, as expressed by Noor, were specifically over their daughters wearing the *hijab*. It would seem that these parents understood that the *hijab* was an Islamic symbol in the eyes of the public that signified sympathies or affiliations with terrorism. This occurrence, like Amina's, resonates with Mamdani's (2004) theories relating to 'good Muslims' and 'bad Muslims'. Bad Muslims are those who are perceived to be anti-modern and "refuse the westernization of their bodies and minds" (Thobani, 2007, p. 238). Bad Muslims are those on whom the War on Terror was being waged. By continuing to wear the *hijab* immediately after the 9/11 attacks, parents were concerned that their daughters would be perceived as the 'bad Muslims'. While Noor said she did not experience any problems; parents' safety concerns were warranted, as she pointed out some women were having their *hijab*'s pulled off in the subway.

The act of pulling off the *hijab* in the context of a supposedly multicultural nation and what it entails has been discussed at length by Hage (2000). According to him, the nationalist subject expresses belonging to the nation in two different ways; 'passive belonging' and 'governmental belonging'. Passive belonging is the expectation of benefiting from the nation by virtue of being a part of the nation, whereas governmental belonging involves being in a position to manage the nation so that it remains uncorrupted. Consequently, Hage describes the act of tearing off a woman's *hijab* as nationalist violence rather than racist violence because it is an act of preserving the nationalist space. As we have previously discussed when commenting on participants' experiences wearing the *hijab* while attending secondary schools, the *hijab* after the 9/11 attacks has been perceived as a symbol of affiliation with violence and terror. When people believe their nation is being contaminated by people who share a similar ideology as the perpetrators of 9/11 (i.e. women wearing

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the *hijab*), nationalist subjects will sometimes take it upon themselves to enact their privilege of governmental belonging and purify the nationalist space by pulling off the *hijab*.

EFFECTS OF MEDIA ON MUSLIM FEMALE PARTICIPANTS

Muslim female student participants believed that the media played an important role in constructing knowledge of Muslims in Quebec society, as well as in Quebec schools. When questioned about how the media impacted perceptions in Quebec society, Sarah discussed how it could “brainwash” people:

Naved: Do you think popular culture, so things like movies, TV, and news media, do you think that that affects how people perceive different groups in society?

Sarah: Yeah, because everyone is like kind of brainwashed by it all because it's everywhere, you can't get away from it.

Naved: Have you ever seen any forms of media, either TV programs, movies, or news stories or anything like that that had Muslims in them?

Sarah: Yeah, but usually it's in a negative way.

Naved: And how were they depicted negatively?

Sarah: Well they're usually bad guys, or the person they're [protagonist] after is them [Muslims].

Naved: What are the types of images you see in that type of medium, like if they are the bad guys how are they the bad guys, are they just mean people?

Sarah: No, they're like bombers and explosions and all that.

Naved: So generally they're represented as terrorists and stuff like that.

Sarah: yeah.

Sarah mentioned how the media could have a “brainwashing” effect because of its pervasiveness in society. With regards to how the media portrays Muslims, Sarah described how the media perpetuated the ‘dangerous Muslim man’ archetype. She believed that the way Muslims were represented in the media influenced how Muslims were perceived in educational settings. Sarah stated these types of representations can lead to distrust and that students may go as far as thinking that Muslim students may commit acts of violence like blowing up the school. Concerning stereotypes of Muslims perpetuated by the media, Tahir Abbas (2011) argues that “[t]he managed reality that is depicted by the media is transferred on society. When interacting with Muslims, Westerners will automatically perceive them as the stereotypes formulated by the media regardless of the way Muslim people actually are” (p. 71). In other words, the media is instrumental in forming perceptions of Muslims, even if this contradicts the actual beliefs and actions of the vast majority of Muslims. Like Sarah, Amina believed the impact of popular cultural mediums, such as TV and movies cannot be understated:

That's something that kids in secondary school are most exposed to; TV, movies, you know, these are the type of things that they watch. Especially like movies, that's where, you know, a lot of kids spend a lot of their extra free time, watching movies and their ideas do come from this type of medium. It's not just something they're reading about, it's something they're seeing. It's a visual clip. Kind of a snapshot of what Muslims are.

Amina believed that the visual nature of film and television had a major impact on how Muslims were understood. Media representations of Muslims can have a particularly strong impact in a high school setting because according to Amina's experiences, much of students' spare time was spent watching television and movies. Since Muslims are a minority in Quebec, students may not be overly exposed to Muslims and Islamic beliefs. As such, television and films could possibly be important sites of knowledge production for students with regards to how they understand Muslims, because according to Amina they provide a "snapshot of what Muslims are". Stuart Hall (2011) has made similar claims through his examination of issues relating to race representation in the media. He believes that "media are especially important sites for the production, reproduction and transformation of ideologies" (p. 82). Ideologies, according to Hall (2004) refer to "images, concepts and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand, and 'make sense' of some aspect of social existence" (p. 271). In other words, media can influence how we construct our knowledge of various aspects of our lives. This is not to say that there is only one conception of race in the media which reproduces the dominant ruling class interpretation of the 'Other'. Rather, there are varying degrees of racist constructions which are reproduced through different mediums such as films, television shows, or news media. Racist portrayals in the media can be *overt* and at times more subtle through *inferential* racism. *Overt* racism in the media is when openly racist views are given legitimacy by people who are in the business of advocating a racist agenda. *Inferential* racism is a type of unconscious racism that stems from certain unquestioned assumptions imbedded within media (Hall, 2011). Both these types of racism are operational in representations of Muslims in the media. However, one must exercise caution in over-emphasizing the influence of media in knowledge production of Muslims, as people are not just passive receivers of whatever messages are disseminated through popular cultural media. Jiwani (2010), in her examination of representations of Muslim women in Canadian media, warns against viewing these representations in an over-deterministic fashion, assuming audiences lack agency. Nonetheless, she believes that negative representations of Muslims in the media "legitimize certain actions and inactions, authorize particular ways of seeing the world, and lend credibility to specific interlocutors" (Jiwani, 2010, p. 64).

Media representations of Muslims according to all of the participants tended to be one dimensional characterizations that revolved around the archetypes of the 'imperilled Muslim woman' and 'dangerous Muslim man', as Maryam stated:

They're pretty much type cast [i.e. Muslims in the media]. I don't really see them in American media besides things like terrorist plots or movies about terrorism. So they're represented very one dimensionally. And I never see Muslim families in everyday life going to school or things like that.

Maryam lamented how Muslims were rarely ever portrayed in the media as regular people doing normal activities in everyday life and being contributing members of society. This can be problematic as Hall (2004) argues that our understanding of race and the meanings that race carries are particularly constructed through the media. Hence, perpetuating these negative stereotypes could possibly impact how people in society and schools think of Muslims. Maryam did not articulate in great detail the stereotypes of Muslims in the media besides mentioning the prototypical Muslim male terrorist. However, others have documented that typecasts of Muslims in the media disseminate a number of different tropes relating to race, gender, and class (Alsultany, 2012; Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Stonebanks, 2010; Shaheen, 2001, 2008).

None of the Muslim female student participants pinpointed a specific media outlet that had influenced perceptions of Muslims and Islam in Canadian and Quebec society or secondary schools; rather they mentioned various forms of popular cultural media in a general sense. However, some participants did mention specific instances or events that were highly publicized by the media, which helped fuel anti-Muslim racism in Quebec society:

Like for example, reasonable accommodation. You know, halaal meat comes up anything that they [media] can pick on they'll just start picking on it and as I said, for me that's where I see it [anti-Muslim bias] the most; in the media. When I'm outside going places I don't feel anything wrong so it feels like I'm in a different world. Because when I'm reading the comments under the news [articles] on the internet it's all crazy stuff, they're all against Muslims but when I meet people they're all nice.

Noor mentioned how the RA debates, and issues raised in these, like meat slaughtered in accordance with Islam, were used by the media to "pick on" Muslims. Noor also alluded to how dormant Islamophobia took on a more explicit character through comment postings on online news articles. Noor expressed how news articles, when they negatively portrayed Muslims through events like the reasonable accommodation debates, fanned the flames of Islamophobia. Noor felt shock over this because when she met people face-to-face she did not have such negative experiences. Noor described a paradoxical situation where despite people being nice to her in face-to-face interactions, she still experienced sentiments of discrimination and hatred towards her faith. Noor also mentioned in her interview how a local Imam of a mosque was misquoted by a francophone Quebec newspaper, claiming that he advocated the implementation of the *sharia*. According to Noor, the story was concocted and purposely misquoted the Imam to frame him as a 'dangerous Muslim

man' who wanted to apply the *sharia*, which has been equated with oppression, lapidating, and the severing of limbs in Quebec. Having completed my discussion of female Muslim students' experiences, I turn now to consider those of Muslim male students and teachers. These categories of participants described a number of issues relating to anti-Muslim racism which share some commonalities with the experiences discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

MENACING AND MANIACAL MUSLIMS

Experiences of Muslim Male Students and Teachers

MUSLIM MEN'S EXPERIENCES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN QUEBEC

The participants. There were seven Muslim male student participants, only one of which was a high school student at the time of the interview. All of them attended high school in the Greater Montreal region and like the female interviewees, all came from middle-class socio-economic backgrounds. Three of the males attended English public schools, three attended public French schools, while one attended a private French school. All identified themselves as practicing Muslim men while they were in high school. As previously mentioned, the names used for the Muslim male student participants were Yusuf, Malik, Ismail, Ahmad, Adam, Zaid, and Ali. Yusuf, Malik, and Ismail were interviewed individually, while the other four participants were interviewed together in a group discussion. Ahmad, Adam, Zaid, and Ali were given the choice to do the interviews individually but they felt more comfortable to do so through a group discussion format. In the group discussion, some participants were less vocal than others, however all members participated in the interview and responded to issues that they felt comfortable answering. During the time of the interview, Yusuf was in his second year of Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP), which is a post-secondary educational level in Quebec, where students are required to obtain credits before they are eligible for universities. Yusuf was the sole participant who had attended a private school throughout his secondary education, which had only a few Muslim students. Malik was a third year CEGEP student at the time of his interview. He was one of the only Muslims in his entire secondary school. Malik felt that he was very visibly Muslim while he attended secondary school as he had a Muslim sounding name and a "big beard" which he felt visibly identified him as Muslim. Ismail was a first year CEGEP student at the time of his interview. Like Malik, he attended a school where there were very few Muslims. So he felt he was clearly identifiable as a Muslim in his school. Ahmad was completing his final year of high school during the group discussion and he attended a school that had many different minority groups including a number of Arabs and Muslims. Adam and Ali were both completing their final year of CEGEP and Zaid was an undergraduate student during the time of the group discussion. All three of them attended high schools that had a number of Muslim students. Upon completing the discussion of Muslim male experiences in secondary schools, this chapter will also discuss comments from teacher participants

to learn how they have experienced and perceived Islamophobia in the schools that they have worked at.

Societal perceptions of Islam. As was the case with the Muslim female student participants, I also questioned the Muslim male student participants about how they felt Muslims and Islam were perceived by society before delving into their high school experiences. Some of the participants in the group discussion felt that there were very negative and biased views towards Muslims in Quebec society:

Ahmad: They think Muslims are like a *monster*, or some *bacteria*. The way they see Muslims in Quebec in general, they don't like outside cultures. They're too into North American culture. They're closed. They're not interested in other cultures to find out what is Islam, what is Christianity, what is Judaism, particularly with Islam because the media negatively promotes Islam. For example, if there's an American or a Quebecois who beats their kid 42 times there's some kind of mental sickness associated with that person, but when it's an Arab who kills someone he's a terrorist. When it's a Muslim he's a terrorist when it's a white person, a Christian, it's a mental disorder. But if it has something to do with a Muslim or a Muslim country in general, it's automatically labeled terrorism. It's [Islam] something really bad, untreatable, needs to be expelled. People are very misinformed here in Quebec.

Adam: I think we tend to generalize, just like how they generalize *us*, obviously there's people who understand us. Some people go out of their way. In schools the pure hard core Quebecois usually are more understanding of our different ways, from my experience. You can't just generalize on them like how they generalize on us.

Ahmad: that's right there are nice people out there, most my friends are Quebecois because they understand Islam, but in general, I'm generalizing here, but the majority I find they have a negative view of Islam.

The comments by Ahmad indicated that he felt strongly that there were biases against Muslims in Quebec society. He felt that Islam was perceived as a type of threat to the majoritarian culture which needed to be expelled. He used language that described Islam as a "bacteria", implying the faith was perceived as a contaminant that could infect society. Consequently, being Muslim or adhering to Islam was likened to a sickness which was "untreatable" and therefore "needs to be expelled". Ahmad's response suggested that he felt Quebec society engaged in culture talk by assuming a certain biological essence which predisposed Muslims to violent behaviour. Therefore, if a Muslim committed an act of violence, there was no analysis seeking to understand why these acts were committed. Rather, they were understood to be manifestations of inherent tendencies towards violence which would be labeled as terrorism. According to Ahmad, similar types of violent actions were constructed as

aberrations and exceptions when committed by members of the dominant culture. Hence, such behaviour would be explained away through mental illness because actions of violence and abuse were not viewed as essential to the make-up of the white majority. Ahmad's comments also related to the notion of exaltation, as he alluded to a certain set of imagined qualities present in the nationalist subject. Because Muslims were perceived as 'Other' and outside the nationalist imaginary, when Muslims engaged in violence it could not be understood to arise from mental illness. Such acts were believed to be a natural consequence of *their* culture, excluding them as nationalist subjects. A similar situation to what Ahmad described occurred in Quebec in the murder trial of Guy Turcotte. Turcotte was a cardiologist from Quebec who murdered his two children aged three and five years old, in February 2009. Turcotte, a member of the white Quebecois majority obtained the sympathies of a jury who were unable to find him guilty of mercilessly killing his own children. His violent behaviour could only be understood as a result of a mental lapse or deficiency (CBC News, 2014).

Of all the members in the group discussion, Ahmad felt most strongly that Islam was negatively constructed and understood in Quebec. Some other members seemed to agree with Ahmad's comments through non-verbal cues such as nodding their heads in approval of his statements. However, Adam felt that he was making generalizations. This, according to Adam was unfair because it engaged in a similar type of essentializing discourse which was often targeted at Muslims. However, despite Adam's views that Ahmad was generalizing, he did not voice disagreement over what was being said. There was a type of implicit acknowledgement that there was truth in what Ahmad was saying as Adam himself mentioned how "they generalize on us". In other words, Adam did acknowledge that there were generalizing stereotypes of Muslims. He felt that Ahmad's statements should have been clarified, not implicating all Quebecois with such views. Some participants discussed concrete examples of discrimination that they faced in Quebec due to their 'Islamic' appearance.

For the Muslim female participants, it was clear that visible signifiers such as the *hijab* identified them as 'Other' within Quebec. For some of the male participants, having brown skin and a beard brought about a similar type of 'Othering', as described by Malik:

I was in McDonalds once and this old lady came up to me, and back then I had the *big beard*, and she came up to me and she said you should shave that beard, it reminds us of what happened at 9/11. And I'm thinking to myself, how do you know they have big beards? Most of the time when you see the pictures [of 9/11 terrorists] most of them don't have big beards, they have small beards, but why is *big beards* attached to terrorism, you know?

This experience had some similarities with those of Noor who mentioned how Muslim women were having their *hijab's* pulled off shortly after 9/11. Malik described how a large beard worn by a brown skinned man had a similar effect of a

nationalist subject wanting to exercise a perceived sense of spatial power by defining what did and did not belong in Quebec society. Malik's experience was arguably the closest equivalent to having a *hijab* pulled off that a Muslim male could experience. However, the question arises, what makes the beard so threatening? When non-Muslim men have large beards does it garner such a response? Malik found this instance troubling and confusing, as he pointed out that the 9/11 terrorists were for the most part either clean shaven or had small beards. Malik was the only male participant who mentioned having a beard throughout secondary school, which was a means of identifying him as a Muslim. Malik's experiences suggested that similar to how the symbol of the *hijab* came to signify oppression and the plight of the 'imperilled Muslim woman', a "big beard" signified radicalism and the 'dangerous Muslim man' archetype to some in Quebec who felt that his beard reminded them of what happened on 9/11.

Ismail also felt that there were a number of reductive stereotypes in Quebec society that associated Muslims and Islam to violence:

Well because of the media and everything that's always being portrayed towards Muslims, like, we're seen as – like I don't really know how to explain this but you know that whole *terrorist* scenario/stereotype sort of thing. That's what comes into my mind. Because at school that's the jokes that would come upon me and people of my kind. That's all I see how people see us. They see us as something like...how can I explain this, more like people just wanting to murder and kill and that whole concept of jihad. It's basically a portrayal which is actually not true and wrong in many ways.

Ismail, like Ahmad, felt that Muslims in Quebec were perceived as villainous. Ismail suggested that the dominant frame of Muslims was that of the 'dangerous Muslim man' who was out to harm the Westerner. Ismail believed that the identity of his "kind" was reduced to the singular figure of the Muslim terrorist as he exclaimed "that's all I see how people see us". Ismail's comments painted an image of an almost inescapable characterization of Muslims. They were perceived as people who just wanted to engage in indiscriminate violence and murder. Ismail alluded to how these stereotypes trickled into his experiences in secondary school. Ismail discussed how the taunts that he came across in secondary school exclusively revolved around affiliations to terrorism because of his religious background. Similar to Amina's accounts of her brother, Ismail suggested that his classmates in secondary school were categorizing him as one of the 'bad Muslims' because of an assumed biological affiliation with terrorism and terrorists, as his faith was perceived as a race. In some ways it would seem that Ismail himself racialized his Islamic faith as he referred to his co-religionists as "people of his kind". Arun Kundnani (2014) observes that "since all racisms are socially and politically constructed rather than reliant on the reality of any biological race, it is perfectly possible for cultural markers associated with Muslimness (forms of dress, rituals, languages, etc.) to be turned into racial signifiers" (p. 11). It would seem that facing a constant racialization of the Islamic

faith through his experiences, Ismail himself had begun to view his religion as a race. Other participants discussed similar challenges in their experiences throughout secondary school.

Experiences in secondary school. Most of the male participants, like the females, generally felt that their overall experience in high school was positive. However, all the participants felt that there were some levels of racism against Muslims in their secondary schools. Yusuf, like Ayesha and Maryam, felt tremendous pressure to represent Islam when he was a secondary student:

Well going to school—I went to a private French high school—I have to say, we weren't *just* a minority, there were barely any Muslims in that school. The thing, going to such a French school, people don't really know a lot about Muslims. So as a Muslim over there, a teenager, you feel obliged to represent your religion and sometimes it's kind of hard because you're at that age where you're not only trying to find out who you are but you're trying to fit in as well. So sometimes you leave out some of the things of Islam so that you could just tell people what they want to hear maybe, and not necessarily show the right image of Islam. And that's mainly it for the students, but I mean like for the teachers, a lot of times they're going to show videos and stuff that might not necessarily be for [Islam], but you don't have any choice but to accept it. Like one of the videos I had seen in my high school it had to do with Muslim sisters praying behind men, and that was just one mosque that they used in the video but they kind of made a general image of how women are inferior to men in Islam, which isn't the case. But at that age, like, you don't really know how to say your thoughts, how to be against it. So you're better off just keeping your mouth shut.

Yusuf described how being a high school student was a time of self-exploration. This was difficult for him because of certain assumptions associated with Muslims and Islam in his secondary school, which he did not ascribed to. Yusuf was cognisant of his 'Otherness' in his high school setting as well as the types of understandings people had of Muslims and Islam. Hence, he would feel the need to try and "fit in", suggesting that being an accepted member of the student body was not a taken-for-granted situation for him. Rather, he needed to make efforts to be perceived as 'normal' even if this meant telling students "what they want to hear" at the expense of misrepresenting his faith. Some studies have shown that within educational institutions, students have been able to assert their Muslim identity through participation with Muslim student groups formed within the school, as these help ease tensions relating to peer pressure and prevent marginalization (Khan, 2009; Zine, 2001). Unfortunately in Yusuf's school such an organization did not exist.

The challenges of being a Muslim minority in school were compounded with further difficulties when teachers would show materials casting Muslims in a negative light. Yusuf's comments suggested that he would be at odds with the types of media portrayals of Muslims presented by his teacher, as he described a video that

was shown to his classmates gave off a “general image of how women are inferior to men in Islam”. Such imagery of Muslim women in the Canadian context have been documented in depth by Jiwani (2010), who contends that “[t]he tendency within the news media and current affairs programming has been to project representations of the veiled woman as essentially an abject and victimized Muslim figure” (p. 65). Yusuf felt that in his classroom setting he had no “choice but to accept” the types of portrayals of Islam that were disseminated to the students despite the fact that he felt such information was casting his faith in a negative light. Instead of the classroom being a space where Yusuf felt comfortable to express himself, his identity, and his beliefs, he described feelings of alienation, ‘Otherness’, and was forced to accept prejudicial discourses about his faith. Yusuf described how the archetype of the ‘imperilled Muslim woman’ was perpetuated through media presented to his class. Despite disagreeing with these portrayals, he felt the need to regulate his views and beliefs about the issue. Perhaps he did not want to engage in a confrontation with his teacher, as doing so would potentially draw more attention to his Islamic faith and in such a situation could further create feelings of alienation with his peers. Abo-Zena, Sahli, and Tobias-Nahi (2009) observe that children in educational settings often have fears and anxieties over being disliked because of their religious affiliations. Such a situation not only inhibits social adjustment and causes marginalization, but can also affect school performance. The tensions described by Yusuf were similar to those described by other participants.

Participants from the group discussion mentioned that school curricula in Quebec, as well as teachers in some instances, facilitated anti-Muslim biases:

- Zaid:* The only problem that would come up, especially in Ethics class or religion class, where debates would come over different religions and then people had their opinions and what not. Other than that high school was ok.
- Naved:* And what kind of things would come up in those discussions that you can recall?
- Zaid:* Well we’d compare other religions like Christianity to Islam and all the other religions and then there would be discussions to that. So there would be people who would agree and disagree and that would cause debates and *even* fights. I remember once we were talking about Islam and comparing it to Judaism and there were a few people who got offended and there was a Muslim and a Jew and they began to fight in class. And they started fighting after class as well. But it got better afterwards. But it shows that this religion class caused more tension.
- Ali:* I think they want politically correct answers as well. Like a lot of times if you say what you want, what you believe in, you won’t get the full marks. They want you to say what the media says.
- Adam:* The most *secular* response.

Ali: Yeah, exactly.

Ahmad: The school I went to, some kids had problems with other religions, because it was a school where the Quebecois were a minority maybe 20%. Everyone else was Arabs, Chinese, Afghan, and all other cultures. It wasn't the students that had issues; I found it was the teachers. For example, once in physics class I was balancing a book on my head and the teacher said, *Ahmad, stop praying*. He thought it was funny and a good joke, but I didn't appreciate that and the students understood that. Or for example, just because I would pray at school, when I go to school I observe the afternoon prayer. I pray outside. But I've never encountered a student—they will ask me questions, but never in a negative way, but the way the teachers view it, when you talk about your religion [in a positive way], they're against that. It's like you said before, you won't get full grades if you're not 'with the teacher'. For example, my Ethics teacher, he's not educating people he's *mis*-educating people by not giving information that is precise and neutral. When it comes to Christianity, Judaism it's fine but with Islam he chooses information against Islam and he presents this to students as if it's normal but it's not something that's normal.

Zaid discussed how his Ethics and Religious Culture class at times would be a source of tension in his high school, particularly when religions were discussed. These tensions involved debates within the classroom and on one occasion even escalated to a violent confrontation outside of the class. Zaid did not specifically imply that his teacher was responsible for the confrontation. However, other participants in the group discussion felt that teachers facilitated tensions towards Muslims and Islam.

Ali's comments suggested that teachers wanted students to regurgitate dominant media discourses even if these contradicted their own beliefs and understandings of issues. Therefore, Ali's understanding of what "politically correct" implied arose from what was being said in the media. Adam added to these comments and stated, "the most secular response", to which Ali agreed. This was an example of how the students were identifying how the state policy of French secularism, as discussed in Chapter Three, infused media discourses. These comments also demonstrated how a state institution, like a secondary school, reproduced dominant Quebec media discourses and state policies, as teachers seemingly wanted students to mimic these if they were to receive "full marks". Not conforming to state policies and media discourses carried the penalty of not getting "full marks". These comments suggested that some of the participants perceived their classrooms as apparatuses of state indoctrination, as they felt obliged to give "the most secular response" even if this was at odds with their Islamic beliefs. As was the case with Yusuf, other participants also felt the need to regulate their speech with regards to their beliefs within a classroom setting. A similar pattern has been noted by Sunaina Maira (2014) in her study of Arab, South Asian, and Afghan communities in the US. In this study it was

found that Muslim youth felt their right to free speech was restricted in the context of the War on Terror because they believed they were under constant surveillance. It would appear that in the post-9/11 context some Canadian Muslim youth also feared reprisals for their beliefs because they perceived them as contravening state policies of secularism and thus regulated their speech.

In Ahmad's experiences some teachers not only expected students to accept state policies and media discourses but also engaged in the process of misinforming their students about Islam and Muslims. Ahmad described how one of his teachers singled him out as an object of ridicule because he was an observant Muslim student who prayed the afternoon prayer in school. Ahmad described how students around him did not bother him when he would observe prayers, and would ask questions which he did not perceive as demeaning. However, he felt a sense of conflict and tension towards his teachers when he would speak about his religion in a way that contradicted state policies and media discourses. Ahmad felt a strong bias from his Ethics and Religious Culture teacher when discussing Islam. He felt that his teacher would pick and choose what to present about Islam, thus creating a distorted picture of his faith. Ahmad described how his Ethics and Religious Culture course facilitated constructing his Islamic faith as 'Other'. Ahmad specifically identified his teacher as being the cause of these tensions through presenting the Islamic faith with his own bias. He felt that his faith was being unfairly presented and if he wanted to get "full grades" he would have to be "with the teacher". In other words, he was indirectly being forced to accept dominant media and state discourses about Muslims within his Ethics and Religious Culture class. If he did not do so, he felt that he would be penalized.

An important reoccurring theme that came up with Muslim male participants when recounting their high school experiences was the archetype of 'dangerous Muslim men' which would regularly appear in different forms within their secondary school settings. As mentioned previously, Muslim male students would sometimes have taunts thrown at them relating to violence and terrorism. Some of these stereotypical views towards Muslim men manifested within the school culture during dress-up days like Hallowe'en:

Zaid: Well, in high school, especially around grade ten and eleven, we had two classes one of them was Ethics and we were talking mainly about Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and that stuff and also in our Contemporary World class, we were talking about the war between Palestine and Israel. So the topic of Islam was *pretty* popular in grades ten and eleven. So one Hallowe'en, I guess you can say there was a Hallowe'en party or Hallowe'en day at school, and a few people—a group came dressed up as the so called 'Muslim' with the turban and beard and what not. So they came to school like that, and as people saw they also took their gym clothes and made a turban and found,

I don't know paper or what not, and made a beard and that was their costume for the day.

Naved: And why would they dress up as Muslims for Hallowe'en, what were they trying to show by wearing the turban?

Zaid: I guess they were trying to be unique but they weren't. I don't think they were trying to offend us. I guess mostly the purpose of Hallowe'en costumes is to look *scary*, so I guess they were trying to show that as being terrorists or Muslims.

Zaid discussed how the topic of Muslims and Islam came up in some of his courses, namely the grade eleven Contemporary World class and the Ethics and Religious Culture course, as he attended secondary school during the height of the War on Terror. Though Zaid did not directly indicate that these courses negatively depicted Muslims, his comments did suggest that through these courses students in his school received exposure to Muslims and the Islamic faith. Hence, "the topic of Islam was pretty popular" in the senior levels of the school that Zaid attended. So on Hallowe'en, a group of students thought it would be a good idea to come to school dressed up as Muslims. Zaid's comments link the instruction in his Contemporary World and Ethics and Religious Culture classes with this incident. This suggested that the information that students obtained about Muslims and Islam in these courses was consistent with media and state discourses which consistently reproduce the image of the 'dangerous Muslim man'. This archetype employs a number of visual signifiers including the beard and clothing items such as the turban (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008), which is what students wore to embody this archetype. Zaid mentioned how in his Ethics and Religious Culture class other faiths were also discussed, specifically mentioning Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism. However, of the faiths discussed, only Islam and Muslims were identified as threatening figures worthy of imitating on Hallowe'en.

The presence of the 'dangerous Muslim man' archetype is further confirmed when Zaid discussed why he thought non-Muslim students would think that dressing up as Muslims on Hallowe'en would be an appropriate costume: "the purpose of Hallowe'en costumes is to look scary". Therefore, it would be logical to assume that if students were dressing up as Muslims on Hallowe'en it was because they perceived a certain type of 'Otherness' in the Muslim faith which was threatening and dangerous, much like how students wear costumes depicting vicious killers, monsters, or other intimidating figures on Hallowe'en. Zaid's description of this episode was very telling. He mentioned that a group of students came dressed up as the "so called Muslim". Zaid did not state that the students came dressed as violent terrorists. The students came dressed as the 'Muslim', or at least how the figure of the 'Muslim' has come to be known in Western discourse. Zaid mentioned how he felt that the intent of students was not malicious, indicating that the students wearing these costumes did not feel that such a depiction was in any way offensive.

Rather, this incident demonstrated the students' understanding of what it meant to be 'Muslim'. According to Zaid, their understanding of 'being Muslim' on Hallowe'en embodied the tropes of violence and intimidation, as the purpose of the attire was to "look scary". Like discourses and practices relating to culture talk, this incident revealed how there were certain taken-for-granted characteristics associated with Muslimness, as if they are biological or inherent traits which define their essence. A number of the incidents described by the participants above alluded to how media representations of Muslims impacted how they were perceived in secondary schools.

Effects of media on Muslim male participants. All of the Muslim male student participants felt there were biases in how Muslims were represented in popular cultural mediums such as television programs, Hollywood films and the news media:

I think the media of our time, things like La Presse, TVA, FOX News, CBC all these media never give neutral information. They never just give the news as it is, nothing more, nothing less. It is always opinionated and this has an effect on people's perceptions with Muslims. I can recall when I was in high school, every morning I would come in between 7:50 and 8:50. One day I came around 8:20 and I was having a coffee with some of my friends and some Quebecois and we'd always get into arguments because they would always say things against Muslims that they were getting from the media. If we look at acts of terrorism, 94% of them are committed by non-Muslims. *Only 6%* are committed by Muslims, but we never hear about the *other 94%*. We only hear about acts of terrorism by Muslims. And when people keep on hearing the same message over and over again through the media it will eventually have an impact on how they view Muslims.

Ahmad was the most forthright of all the participants in his belief that media negatively depicted Muslims and about how this affected perceptions of Muslims by the general Quebecois population. Ahmad discussed how in his secondary school experiences he would routinely confront Quebecois students with stereotypes that come from the media. These students were his friends and he therefore felt comfortable discussing their perceptions of his faith. Ahmad specifically discussed how Quebecois students felt there was a connection between terrorism and Muslims. Ahmad's comments implied that in his discussions with these students, there was an assumption that all acts of terrorism were committed by Muslims, whereas the groups that committed the majority of terrorist acts were never discussed. Ahmad did not specifically mention where he got this information from, but a report published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) confirmed his statements. This report documented all terrorist acts committed in the US from 1980 to 2005. According to the FBI's database the vast majority of crimes in the US that were considered to be acts of terrorism were committed by Latinos and extreme left wing groups. Acts of terrorism committed by Muslims accounted for only 6% (FBI, 2005).

Ahmad believed that the disproportionate media coverage of Muslims who committed acts of terrorism created an erroneous understanding of Islam amongst the

Quebecois students that he associated with in secondary school. Their understanding of Islam was constructed through the media archetype of ‘dangerous Muslim men’, which Ahmad felt was illogical as most acts of terrorism were committed by other groups in society. Ahmad’s comments infer that media biases from Quebec, the US, and Canada as a whole portray similar types of messages, which negatively depict Muslims and perpetuate stereotypes of ‘dangerous Muslim men’. Similarly, Muslim male participants who mentioned specific popular cultural mediums that negatively depicted Muslims often mentioned Hollywood films and US television shows, which were easily accessible in Quebec.

Another participant discussed how biased media representations of Muslims were shown in his school and how non-Muslim students linked these representations to Muslims in his classes:

There was a funny [incident] in class. We were watching a movie and I don’t remember what movie it was but in the first scene there was this white man, he was in jail and he was making a movie. So he starts off, hi my name is this and he stutters and he closes the camera, then he starts again, starts recording again and says, hi my name is...closes again. And he does it three times and he closes. And then at the end he goes in the name of Allah the Most Merciful and then he says my name is, and he says a Muslim name and I’m a terrorist and then the movie starts. And it’s funny because like only two Muslims in the class and *everybody* looked at us laughing.

Zaid described how a film which depicted Muslim terrorist stereotypes was shown to his class. Zaid did not recall the name of the film, although what he described resonates with a Hollywood film called *Unthinkable* (2010) directed by Gregor Jordan and starring Samuel L. Jackson and Michael Sheen. In the opening scene of *Unthinkable*, similar to what Zaid described, the viewers are presented with a white male who is making a video tape describing how he has placed three nuclear bombs in US cities and that he will detonate them if his demands are not met. The opening scene of this film is very telling as it shows a man, Steven Younger, struggling to speak about his terrorist plot. After attempting numerous times to describe his plot unsuccessfully, he finally begins his message by asserting his Muslim identity starting with the common phrase uttered by Muslims whenever beginning an act of worship, “In the name of Allah”. Instead of introducing himself as Steven Younger, as he previously did, he now introduces himself through his Muslim persona of Yusuf Atta Muhammad. Unsurprisingly, the character is now able to discuss his plans without any difficulties as he has openly abandoned his non-Muslim identity, which was the only thing holding him back from describing his violent mission against the West.

Zaid discussed how his non-Muslim classmates automatically linked this scene with the two Muslims in the class. Once again, this episode demonstrated how the racialization of Muslims is a seemingly normal experience for Muslim students in secondary schools in Quebec. The terrorist in the opening scene of the film was a

white male and yet simply because of his affiliation with the Islamic faith, students watching the film automatically made a connection between the terrorist and the Muslim students, who aside from their faith, had nothing in common with the character. Zaid's comments suggested that the racialization of Muslims was not perceived as something abnormal, as he was not offended by this association and felt that it was a funny incident. Similarly, other participants who regularly faced taunts and jokes associating them with terrorism did not take much offence to such distasteful actions:

You know at first when I came into high school, I had the joke, oh, when are you going to *blow up* the school? Or, how about you bomb that person. Just those jokes which refer to terrorism because that's how we're seen as because that's how we're portrayed as in the media. And for me, I would just take them as jokes. I'm like, well ok that doesn't really bother me—go ahead, you know. And what I would do is, I would go along with the joke, and eventually—which that's something they didn't expect—and eventually they stopped making any jokes at all.

Ismail would regularly have taunts and jokes relating to terrorism thrown at him because of his faith. Similar to what was described by Sarah, students would ask Ismail “when are you going to blow up the school?” Ismail felt that stereotypes associating his faith with violence and terrorism were a result of media representations of Muslims, as he mentioned “that's how we're seen as because that's how we're portrayed as in the media”. Ismail described how he coped with these taunts by telling his peers “that doesn't really bother me—go ahead”. Luckily for Ismail this behaviour from his peers eventually stopped. But for other students that is not always the case.

J'Lein Liese (2004) discusses how there are levels of discrimination that occur in educational settings. The first level of discrimination relates to slurs based on stereotypes. Often slurs can be used to “*dehumanise* another person or social group to justify a violent act” (p. 67). In other words, racial slurs directed at students can eventually escalate into forms of physical violence. In the context of the War on Terror, racial slurs such as ‘terrorist’ have been employed to “justify retaliatory actions post 9/11” (Liese, 2004, p. 67). This has occurred through the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as these nations were described as supporting terror and were a part of a supposed ‘Axis of Evil’. Hence the term ‘terrorist’ is synonymous with groups of people who are enemies of the state in the War on Terror and warrant violent policing. If students are being labelled as ‘terrorists’ in secondary schools, it should not simply be taken as a joke and should be seriously addressed by teachers and by the school.

Ismail did not mention that any teachers or administrators within his school came to his defence when he was ridiculed in this manner; rather he simply treated these incidents as a joke and did not let these taunts get to him. This type of reaction is similar to Noor's responses, where she felt that racism against Muslims was more of a

perception manufactured by the media, even though she had repeatedly experienced racist incidents on her commute to school. Zaid was also seemingly untroubled by how a film which depicted a Muslim terrorist was immediately linked to him and another Muslim student in his class. In all three cases, the Muslim students did not feel that the racism they were experiencing was troubling or something that needed to be seriously addressed.

When considering Muslim female and male student responses along with Chapters Two and Three, which theorized Islamophobia and examined anti-Muslim racism in Quebec, a clearer understanding emerges of how state practices and policies, combined with political and media discourses have enabled manifestations of Islamophobia. French secularism as well as interculturalism have facilitated the construction of an exalted nationalist subject in Quebec. Muslims have been excluded from this status as 'Muslimness' carries with it associations with a religion (i.e. the Islamic faith) as well as presumptions of misogynistic treatment and oppression of women. These perceptions associated with Muslims and Islam oppose the 'core values' of secularism and gender equality in Quebec society. This related to experiences of participants who discussed how they were expected to give the "most secular response" to issues in their class discussions. Students described how they would be penalized for non-conformity to these norms, even if it contravened their faith. Muslim women wearing the *hijab* became visibly marked as 'Other' and were racialized and discriminated against as the *hijab* carries with it assumptions of backwardness and oppression in Quebec society. The 'Otherness' associated with Islam in Quebec political and media discourses as seen in the RA debates and the proposed Bill 60 also resonated with participants' experiences. Some participants discussed how they were told to "go back to your country" or that their beard had no place in Quebec society. These instances, like the RA debates and discussions over the proposed Bill 60 involved exalted nationalist subjects who felt empowered to exclude Muslims from the nationalist space. Teacher participants also noted a number of racist incidents in Quebec secondary schools against Muslims.

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN QUEBEC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

I drew from six teacher participants in this study, three of whom were Muslim and three non-Muslim. All of these teachers were interviewed individually and worked in the Greater Montreal region. Muslim teacher participants had insights on anti-Muslim racism from two perspectives; racism that they had observed towards Muslim students within their secondary schools and racism which they themselves had experienced as Muslim teachers.

Muslim teachers' experiences with racism. Of the three Muslim teacher participants, two were male and one was female, Hamza, Ibrahim, and Alia. Hamza had been teaching in secondary school for eight years at the time of the interview. He was a Social Studies teacher and identified himself as a practicing Muslim

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man. Ibrahim was in his third year of teaching secondary school at the time of his interview. Ibrahim was a Mathematics and Technology teacher and like Hamza, identified himself as a practicing Muslim. Alia was on maternity leave at the time of the interview. She had worked in the secondary school system for seven years and was planning on returning to teaching upon completing her maternity leave, resuming her position as a Science teacher. Throughout Alia's experiences as a secondary school teacher, she was visibly identifiable as a Muslim as she wore the *hijab* while at work. In addition to providing insights about Islamophobia faced by Muslim students in secondary schools, these participants also discussed how they were perceived by their students. Ibrahim felt that he experienced prejudice from his students because of his faith:

The event that happened last year, with one of the kids taking a picture of me and posting it on his Facebook page and putting a picture of an airport, the map of an airport, right next to it as if I was planning to blow it up. That was *totally racist* and judgmental. He took a picture of me teaching in class and he said 'terrorist Math teacher?' was the comment that he put there. So that was something *very* racist that happened. Other than that, in the same class, one of the students who was later expelled from the school because of bullying, he used to make planes in the class and throw the planes and he would say, 'sir are you going to destroy that plane' something like that. And I would say, no I won't, I don't believe in that but still he kept on bullying me. But they [other students] were quite impressed they were really surprised how I didn't used to get mad at them and just laughed off their stupidities. They were expecting me to get completely angry, but I told them what you are perceiving is completely false.

Ibrahim described how a student targeted him as an object of ridicule by taking his picture and posting it on his Facebook page and linked his image to terrorism. As was the case with student participants, there was no basis to assume that Ibrahim was going to commit an act of violence or terrorism. However, Ibrahim was associated with such acts by a student by virtue of his faith. Similarly, another student indirectly associated terrorism with Ibrahim by asking him if he was going to "destroy that plane". Ibrahim's comments suggested that he felt the student was trying to make a joke linking him to terrorists who blew up planes, as was the case with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This student, as described by Ibrahim was a bully. However; his bullying was not limited to students and was also directed towards Ibrahim. The bullying experienced by Ibrahim involved linking him to the trope of the Muslim terrorist. In both examples mentioned by Ibrahim, his students felt empowered to "bully" and ridicule him because of the perceived 'Otherness' associated with his faith.

Ibrahim mentioned how his other students expressed amazement that he was not angered by the student who would throw paper airplanes in his class. Ibrahim suggested that his students who did not openly hurl taunts and engage in racist

acts towards him still made assumptions about him. Those assumptions entailed predisposition to anger. Ibrahim mentioned that his students were expecting him to “get completely angry”, but that was not the case. Ibrahim’s comments suggested that he felt his students had preconceived notions of him and harboured dormant forms of Islamophobia. When discussing this account with Ibrahim in detail, it was clear that he believed that his students felt he was pre-disposed to anger. According to Ibrahim “they were all on board” with regards to the assumptions they had of Ibrahim as a ‘dangerous Muslim man’. Ibrahim’s accounts described a range of students expressing Islamophobic tendencies. Some students expressed their perceptions of Ibrahim explicitly through bullying or unlawfully taking his picture and ridiculing him on the Internet, while other students engaged in microaggressions with Ibrahim. Microaggressions can be understood as regular exchanges between people that send racist or condescending messages to individuals because of their ethnic, racial, religious, or cultural affiliations (Paludi, 2012). In another instance, Ibrahim described how two female students claimed that Ibrahim unfairly sided with male students over them in a class dispute. Ibrahim stated how these girls openly claimed he was being “sexist”. Ibrahim believed that these claims of sexism were rooted in the perception that Muslim men are misogynistic and unfair to women. Hence, these microaggressions assumed Ibrahim was a ‘bad Muslim’ pre-disposed to anger and oppressive towards women.

Alia described similar experiences of being bullied by students because she wore the *hijab* while teaching. Alia also experienced bullying by other members of her secondary school community:

At another school there was a teacher that was basically bullying me. She would bring up things like, *oh, your religion allows men to beat other women*. She would bring up these random things, and I’d be like, *are you kidding me?* And finally one day she basically—I was sitting at my desk and she was standing over me pointing her finger in my face and yelling at me things like, *if you claim Muslims are so misunderstood why aren’t Imams going on national television speaking up for your religion*. And I remember thinking—obviously when you’re being verbally attacked your brain turns off—after I remember thinking, *what TV do you watch?* There’s people on the TV all the time and she was trying to allude to the fact that she felt ‘you people need to change yourselves when you come to Canada’.

Alia, like Ibrahim, described that she was being “bullied”, but in this incident the perpetrator was a teacher. The incident that Alia was discussing took place while the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan were ongoing throughout 2006. The type of bullying that Alia experienced involved the archetype of ‘imperilled Muslim women’, which was regularly employed in media and political discourses throughout the War on Terror, as her colleague clearly felt that Muslim men were enacting violence on Muslim women. Alia would regularly try and explain how Muslims were misunderstood and misrepresented in the media. However, her

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attempts to change this teacher's perceptions fell on deaf ears as she continued to harass her while she worked at that particular school. Alia felt that this colleague who was bullying her was implying that she did not fit into Canadian society. Her statements were troubling for Alia, as she was born and raised in Canada. Hence, Alia's beliefs and appearance signaled a type of 'Otherness' which excluded her from membership of the nation. This incident was an example of a nationalist subject reaching her threshold of tolerance, as Alia's perceived 'Otherness' could no longer continue without her voicing opposition to it. Alia mentioned how this particular colleague had friends from other ethnic groups such as an East Asian friend. However, Alia's difference was deemed unacceptable to tolerate, as her 'Otherness' was irreconcilable with this colleague's conceptions of nation. In other words, Alia needed to change herself because she was not welcome in *her* country. As was the case with student participants, Alia was being confronted with a member of the majoritarian culture who felt she possessed a sense of spatial power permitting her to determine who belonged and who did not.

Hamza's experiences as a secondary school teacher did not involve any incidents of being bullied by students or staff members. However, he did feel that in the post 9/11 context, Muslim students have experienced challenges relating to how they have been perceived by other students:

I think with some young kids it's a *lot* for them to deal with when all their friends aren't Muslim and sometimes it's hard to stand up and say I am Muslim and they get a bit more timid. One story that comes to mind was once there were two Muslims in our school and one of them asked the other if he was Muslim because he wasn't sure. But the other one was with a bunch of friends and he kind of denied it and said, no I'm not. And later when we saw the two of them together, one of the students asked the other, well you said you weren't Muslim before and he [the other student who denied being Muslim previously] kind of mentioned that sometimes when he's around his non-Muslim friends he didn't want to admit that.

At the school that Hamza was working at, there were very few Muslim students. Hamza noticed that the few Muslim students he interacted with faced challenges. Hamza mentioned how one of the Muslim students at his school was conflicted with his Muslim identity when he was around his non-Muslim friends, so much so that he denied being a Muslim around them. This student was selectively expressing his Muslim identity. Around Muslims, in the confines of a secure space he would acknowledge his Islamic identity. Presumably this student felt that being identified as Muslim would cause him some type of social marginalization or to lose his friends. Abo-Zena, Sahli, and Tobias-Nahi (2009) discuss how Muslim students may engage in such behaviour "in order to minimize the apparent differences between themselves and their non-Muslim peers. Muslim youth may feel pressured to keep secret, deny or even abandon their Muslim faith in an attempt to blend in" (p. 9). This may have been the case with the student described by Hamza, as Hamza mentioned

this student felt “shame” or was possibly even “embarrassed” to acknowledge his Islamic identity and what would result from that.

Later on in the interview, Hamza recounted how a Muslim female student was verbally and physically harassed by another student in his school who tried to pull off her *hijab*. Within a secondary school setting, the action of pulling off a woman’s *hijab* is usually preceded by less abrasive forms of abuse over an extended period of time and does not usually occur as an isolated incident (Liese, 2009). Hence it would be conceivable that this student may have faced repeated lesser forms of abuse from students related to her appearance prior to this incident. Hamza discussed how wearing the *hijab* in his secondary school posed a major challenge for Muslim women who may have been inclined to do so. Some Muslim female students would come to the school wearing the *hijab* and at some point later in the year stopped wearing it. Hamza associated these events with the social pressures and anxieties that arise from wearing the *hijab* as a signifier of the ‘Other’ within his secondary school. He mentioned how the *hijab* makes a Muslim student “very very visible” which resulted in becoming an “automatic target”. Hamza believed that students who wore the *hijab* were perceived as ‘Other’, which resulted in stereotypical understandings of them. Not wearing the *hijab* or choosing to stop wearing it could possibly prevent this categorization. Hamza also briefly mentioned how some students may pick up stereotypes through media representations of Muslims. As discussed earlier, media representations of Muslims often employ tropes of oppression and backwardness through visible religious signifiers like the *hijab*. Hamza’s comments were consistent with student responses suggesting that media discourses about Islam may have some influence in how Muslims in Quebec secondary schools were perceived.

Hamza also expressed how some of his non-Muslim students felt conflicted between their perceptions of Muslims through their interactions with Muslim teachers, and how that contradicted discourses surrounding Muslims that they were accustomed to:

I guess the average teenage kid who is exposed to news bits throughout the day, or news flashes, or whatever information they get from mum, dad, from brothers and sisters is only those few little bits about Muslims committing violent acts, being wars in their countries, news items coming from there about various actions of people in those countries. So that becomes what their exposure is to Muslims and I think it was made evident to me recently because...a student asked me just the other day, because he knew that there were some Muslim teachers in the school and he wanted to know if I was one of them. And he had said that he was speaking to his grandma—who was, I guess, a Francophone Quebecoise—mentioned that Muslims are bad, not contributing much to society, kind of feeding into some of those things [stereotypes]. And he had mentioned to her, I have one or two Muslim teachers in my school that I’ve had and they’ve been very positive, very good interactions, and very positive experiences. I think that kind of illustrates that this student is wrestling with

what maybe people are telling him, what the media is telling him, and what his real life interactions are and he's finding a difference between reality and perception.

Hamza discussed how a typical student is inundated with negative perceptions of Muslims and Islam through media, family, and society. For one of Hamza's students, there was a disparity between the messages that he received about Islam from a family member and his personal experiences with Muslims who were his teachers. Hamza felt that the perceptions that were held by this student's grandmother were based on stereotypes in Quebec society. Hamza described how the student felt confused by this because the teachers who he knew were Muslims did not fit into the mould described by his grandmother. This incident described by Hamza revealed how the perceptions of Muslims in a secondary school environment, in some instances, were influenced in a positive manner through positive interactions with Muslims, which did not conform to dominant media and state discourses surrounding Muslims. This was similar to sentiments expressed by Maryam and Ayesha, who both felt that perceptions of Muslims in secondary schools can change when Muslims express agency and counter stereotypes through their interactions with the non-Muslim majority. However, As Hamza described, the student felt somewhat conflicted between his experiences with Muslims and the messages that he had been exposed to about Muslims and Islam. This was indicative that positive experiences with Muslims alone are not enough to change perceptions. As Chris Wilkins (2006) observes, simply having exposure to people of different ethnicities does little to challenge perceptions, and "without an understanding of the social structures which create the individual prejudice through which racism is manifested, teachers are unlikely to play a major part in challenging racism" (pp. 16–17). Positive interactions with Muslims may result in students questioning dominant discourses about Muslims, but more actions are required in order for students to overcome some of the cognitive dissonance that may result from these conflicting experiences.

Non-Muslim teachers' perceptions of anti-Muslim biases. There was one male, Jeff, and two females, Jessica and Laura, in this category of participants. At the time of the interview, Jeff was in his fifteenth year of teaching, and primarily taught Ethics and Religious Culture courses. Jessica was in her sixteenth year of teaching. Most of her work-load consisted of teaching French and Ethics and Religious Culture courses. Laura had been teaching for almost twenty years, primarily in the Arts department of her school. Laura felt that the association of Muslim men and terrorism was a common stereotype that manifested in her school. In some instances this was perpetuated by Muslim students themselves in her drama class:

Even here I see the Indian [Muslim] kids being called a terrorist and they laugh it off. I mean it's for jokes right? But is it? I guess they play along [Muslim kids], and the good ones, the *really* good ones, the popular kids who can handle it, they play along, I mean they do play along... I can't say that the brown skinned kids that I've taught haven't enjoyed playing the terrorist, *they have*.

They enjoy it, they laugh about it, they have their whole costume and they'll go full tilt. They'll bring in like strapped bombs and stuff, it's for comedy and there's a purpose and we'll all laugh, you know. The black kid will be the rapper with the grill, and in comedy you're encouraged to use your physical type as a part of your comedy. The fat kid will, you know, come in with the Doritos and it makes me happy that they're using their body type in a way that I'm ok with. I'm ok with this. But in a classroom, in an *English* classroom or a *French* classroom and, you know, someone says '*give this to the terrorist over there*' well that's a whole different ball game and it's happened, I've heard it's happened, I've heard that it happens.

In Laura's experiences as a teacher she had observed how students used terms such as "terrorist" as a joke with Muslim students. Often the response, similar to those discussed earlier, involved the Muslim students themselves laughing off the comments. However, Laura suggested that such comments were not really jokes and promoted subtle forms of racism. Laura discussed how the "popular kids" could handle these types of incidents. Her comments implied that using such terms towards Muslim students can potentially be marginalizing and offensive. If a student is "popular" or has a lot of friends in the school, they can "handle it" because there is less fear of being socially marginalized. However, Laura's comments suggested that this type of behaviour could be damaging to a student who is not as socially adjusted.

Laura distinguished how students using the Muslim stereotype of 'terrorist' could potentially be productive in an educational setting. She alluded to how Muslim students used their physical appearance in her drama classes as a type of satirical device and would act out the 'dangerous Muslim man' archetype. Muslim comedians in the post 9/11 context have used similar techniques to demonstrate the existence of racism towards Muslims in society by embedding their comedy routines with their "experience of exclusion and victimization" (Morey & Yaqin, 2011, p. 198). The overall intent is to entertain the audience, while simultaneously getting the message across that certain groups in society are stereotyped and experience racism and bias. By employing the archetypal image of the Muslim terrorist, Laura believed that the students may have been trying to portray images in their drama routines that had a broader appeal to the class. Some, like Laura, may argue that this is an example of how Muslim students are exercising forms of agency within their school setting as opposed to passively being victims of abuse and taunts that associate their faith with violence and terror. Hall (1996) disagrees with this line of thinking. According to Hall (1996), using racial jokes within one's own racial community is unlikely to denigrate a race, as these jokes form a part of the self-consciousness of that community. However, using racial jokes across racial lines "reinforces the *difference* and reproduces the unequal relations because, in those situations, the point of the joke depends on the existence of racism" (p. 166). Thus, this approach may not have had as beneficial an outcome as Laura intended in her drama class. Nonetheless, Laura's comments suggested that she felt there was a fine line between perpetuating

stereotypes and exercising agency. Using a derogatory slur like “terrorist” in an English class, where such a stereotype is not serving any type of satirical purpose, is a blatant form of racism.

Jeff and Laura both felt that media representations of Muslims, especially after 9/11, had been extremely negative and contributed towards creating negative perceptions of Muslim students. Both believed that anti-Muslim sentiments in their secondary schools manifested in subtle forms more often than overtly:

Jeff: I don’t know many Muslims students here, I’ve just heard through hearsay that a couple of students here were harassed because they were wearing *hijabs* and comments were thrown their way. But, and I’m assuming here, you know I wonder even though they [non-Muslim students] may not say anything because you know in our school it’s not politically correct to say anything—you know you will be reprimanded for it—but how many times have they [Muslim students] been looked at in a negative way just because of what we’re seeing in the news. Recently with the law passed in Quebec where kids can’t wear a *hijab* while playing soccer. And how many kids agree with that. We had a discussion in class and they look at an Arab person here, a Muslim person here thinking *eh, you know...* looking down on them because this law was passed in Quebec. So what is *said* and what is *thought* could be two different things. I don’t necessarily see it too often in terms of outwardly things being done to the [Muslim] kids besides what little I hear about comments being passed at their expense but I don’t hear much of it.

Naved: So if there is racism towards Muslim students you feel that it’s more implicit as opposed to explicit?

Jeff: Yeah, for sure. Just by their [non-Muslim students] comments that we hear in class. *Even the jokes*. Kids don’t realize that racist jokes *are racism* and how many jokes are at the expense of Muslims, you know?

Jeff’s comments inferred that a lack of racist incidents in his school did not necessarily mean that students did not hold racist views towards Muslims. Jeff described how students often harboured negative views towards Muslims which manifested in subtle ways such as “being looked at in a negative way”. Jeff suggested that there was dormant Islamophobia present in his school, where students perceive Muslims negatively, primarily through representations of Muslims in the news. As previously discussed, dormant Islamophobia often evolves into explicit and more overt forms of Islamophobia when a situation presents itself.

Jeff’s comments also suggested how media and political discourses have reinforced negative views towards Muslims in his class. Jeff referred to highly publicized incidents in Quebec relating to how Muslim girls who wore the *hijab* were prevented from playing soccer, citing concerns relating to safety. The topic of religious headgear being permitted in soccer matches has occupied media and

political discourses in Quebec's recent past. The issue came up again in the summer of 2013 when the Quebec Soccer Federation announced a ban on the Sikh turban, which was supported by Pauline Marois, the Quebec Premier at the time (Peritz, 2013). Jeff felt that incidents in Quebec which related to the banning of religious symbols facilitated negative views and comments towards Muslims. Hence, enabling Islamophobia to emerge in the realm of perceptions (dormant Islamophobia) and in actions (explicit Islamophobia). His comments suggested that state policies policing religious minorities, whether intended or not, reinforced negative perceptions of those groups in an educational setting. This was similar to comments discussed in the previous sections where Muslim students and teachers discussed how state and media discourses were perpetuated in educational settings. In both instances, state policies and practices along with negative depictions of Muslims in political and media discourses were reinforced in educational settings through teachers exhibiting anti-Muslim bias or through course content.

Teachers' views on challenging Islamophobia in Quebec schools. On a number of occasions throughout the interview process Muslim and non-Muslim teachers alluded to or provided insights as to how the officially government mandated Quebec Education Program (QEP) could potentially challenge Islamophobia in secondary schools in Quebec. All of the teacher participants believed that there were a variety of courses that could include content to challenge dominant discourses surrounding Muslims. Overwhelmingly, teacher participants felt that the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) course could potentially be used as a tool towards this end.

The QEP consists of a number of subject areas such as English, Math, History, and the ERC program, which have each been elaborated on "with reference to common overarching objectives, a set of cross-curricular competencies, and what the Ministry [has] referred to as 'broad areas of learning'" (Morris, 2011, p. 191). The broad areas of learning "deal with major contemporary issues...[and] contribute to the development of a broader world-view" (MELS, 2008, p. 465). They include health and well-being, career planning and entrepreneurship, environmental awareness and consumer rights and responsibilities, media literacy, and citizenship and community life (MELS, 2008). The QEP employs a competency-based approach to learning and defines a competency as "a set of behaviours based on the effective mobilization and use of a range of resources" (MELS, 2001). Therefore, students are expected to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively address salient social issues. In addition to the competencies of each of the subject areas, the QEP also has cross-curricular competencies which cut across subjects and go beyond the limitations of the subject areas. The cross-curricular competencies "are rooted in specific learning contexts, which are usually related to the subjects [in the QEP]" (MELS, 2008, p. 466). They include the following: uses information, solves problems, exercises critical judgment, uses creativity, adopts effective work methods, uses information and communications technology, achieves his/her potential, cooperates with others, and communicates appropriately (MELS, 2008). The QEP is mandated by the Quebec Ministry of Education and is taught across public and publically-subsidized

private schools across Quebec. Students are required to take ERC courses in four out of five of their secondary school years (MELS, 2008). The main objectives of the ERC program are: “the recognition of others” and “the pursuit of the common good” (MELS, 2008, p. 2). The objectives of this program are rooted in a number of principles, which includes fostering living in harmony with others (MELS, 2005). These objectives form the backdrop of the three competencies of the program: reflects on ethical questions, demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion, and engages in dialogue (MELS, 2008).

Ibrahim cautioned that in order for Quebec educational curriculum to challenge negative perceptions of Islam, certain courses need to be given more emphasis:

Naved: Do you feel that the Quebec Education Program can be used as a tool to engage students in discussion about Islamophobia?

Ibrahim: Yes it can, but it has to be given its proper perspective. I mean like, the Ethics and Religious Culture course is not given much importance, which the idea is good, it's dialogue. That's the basis behind it. But it should be given *more* importance. Even teachers who talk about Ethics, it's like *oh I'm teaching Ethics*, as if they're not an important teacher, as opposed to science and math, which are considered important subjects. I personally think things like ethics would go far in a person's life to make them better humans, compared to math which won't. So those subjects should be given more importance, people should take it more seriously. The Ethics course is a *very* marginal course, and the vast response from the Quebec society has been negative teaching their kids these things.

Ibrahim's comments suggested that the potential to question dominant discourses surrounding Muslims existed within the QEP through courses like the ERC program. However, the effectiveness of these courses was limited because they were not given much importance and teachers teaching these courses had negative attitudes towards them. Other teacher participants described similar beliefs about the possibility of challenging anti-Muslim racism in Quebec secondary schools. Jessica, an ERC and French teacher mentioned her experiences:

Naved: do you feel that the QEP can be used as a tool to engage students in discussions about issues of race, Islamophobia? Do you feel there's a space within the QEP to engage in these discussions?

Jessica: I do it *all the time*. All the time. I'm constantly using current events bringing them in my class addressing different issues about whether it be Muslims, or the separation of Quebec, or the perception of the body, or whatever. I actually thrive on teaching like that because it makes it much more real for the kids and it gives me the opportunity to show them the other side of the story which often they don't see.

Naved: And you're able to use the framework of the QEP to be able to do that in your class?

Jessica: I teach French and Ethics and both disciplines are *really really* easy, it's easy for me to integrate it in those two subjects. Yeah.

Jessica believed that engaging in conversations relating to Islamophobia created a charged environment in her classroom, which made the learning experiences "more real" for her students. Furthermore, she felt that she customarily engaged in such conversations in her classes. Hamza described how various courses within the QEP could potentially discuss issues related to stereotypes and racism in Quebec secondary schools:

If anything, in the curriculum which is taught, there are opportunities I guess in different subject areas to give a fair and balanced approach or to speak to some of these misconceptions that exist. And I guess it depends on the subject area and I guess the main thing is that as teachers and educators we need to inform ourselves because it's difficult for me to talk about Sikhism if I don't know about it or about Judaism, or about Christianity, or about any other group that I may have a limited knowledge about. So I need to be cautious about what I say and think. With Islam and Muslims, those issues come up in current events classes. Come up in any class basically when there's some literature being read or whatever and a lot of the current contexts refer to maybe parts of the world where Muslims live or some of the novels the kids are reading. So I think it's important that kids get a fair exposure to it. And if we, as educators, don't know, we have to inform ourselves. And maybe that's the role of a Muslim teacher in helping to form the narrative that is discussed about us accurately in classrooms from a pedagogical standpoint.

Hamza believed that within the QEP there was space to engage in anti-racism education. A superficial understanding of various ethnic and religious groups is not sufficient. According to Hamza, detailed knowledge of ethnic and religious minority groups in Quebec society is necessary. This needs to be combined with a deeper understanding of the social processes that create and reinforce racism in a school setting.

Teacher participants discussed in this section strongly felt that Quebec educational curricula, in particular the ERC program could be used as a potential tool to counteract Islamophobia in Quebec secondary schools. Yet, this is not without its contradictions since a number of Muslim student participants described how anti-Muslim racism was perpetuated through their ERC courses. Some Muslim student participants alluded to how teachers used this course as a means to misinform students about Islam. Educational and curriculum theorists have discussed how school curricula can be used to maintain and perpetuate dominant ideologies and subordination in schools. For example, Michael Apple (2000) has argued that schools are sites in which both explicit and hidden curricula are disseminated. The explicit curriculum

is what is formally being taught in schools through the various courses and programs that are offered. The hidden curriculum refers to societal imbalances perpetuated through the process of schooling when teachers are uncritically teaching the curriculum. As Tarra Yosso (2010) observes, “[c]urriculum then has multiple layers, including structures, processes, and discourses, each of which combine to present knowledge that align with formal (overt) or informal (hidden) outcomes” (p. 94). Hidden curricula exist because of power imbalances within educational structures. These power imbalances or ‘unequal power’, as referred to by Apple (1991), afford privilege to some members in society to define what knowledge is accepted as ‘official’ and worth disseminating, and what forms of knowing are to be ignored and deemed irrelevant. Without altered power relations, critical and responsive educational curricula are unattainable.

Critical race theorists have similarly argued that addressing systemic and structural inequities through educational curricula are ineffectual as these are underscored by devices aimed to preserve cultural privilege and dominance. Hence, there is an inability for traditional educational curricula to be transformative. As Michelle Jay (2010) notes, transformative educational curricula threaten “those dominant groups in our society who have a vested interest in the perpetuation of the mainstream academic knowledge that supports the maintenance of dominant structures, long-present inequities, and the current power arrangements...to subordinate racial minorities” (p. 5). Some have described the process of using educational curricula to maintain cultural privilege and dominance over subordinated groups as a form of hegemony. Hegemony, as described by Gramsci (1971), is a power relationship in which dominant groups are able to maintain dominance over subordinated groups. Hegemony is preserved by universalizing consensus that the dominant group’s interests coincide with society’s interests. Hence, domination is undetected and therefore perpetuated through consent of the subordinated groups. Within educational contexts, Hall (1986) has argued that the state does not perpetuate the superiority of dominant groups forcefully. Rather, this is achieved through ongoing negotiations and the granting of concessions to subordinate groups to maintain their acquiescence. This can occur through allowances such as ‘multiculturalism days’, ‘international days’, and other events which momentarily encourage superficial cultural exchange and dialogue, while masking structural inequalities. Such allowances are exercises in developing ‘tolerance’ rather than taking concrete actions towards racial equality.

Despite criticisms of educational curricula maintaining and perpetuating white supremacy, some critical race theorists have suggested ways to challenge and engage students in fruitful discussions about racism within educational institutions (Helms, 1992; Leonardo, 2009; Tatum, 2009). One such approach that I believe can facilitate critical discussions about Islamophobia in Quebec secondary schools is by working towards a critical race curriculum. Yosso (2010) has discussed incorporating critical race theory concepts within educational curricula to challenge racial subordination and inequalities within schools, which she terms critical race curriculum (CRC). CRC has five central tenets, which I contend provide useful insights that can inform

critical discussions about anti-Muslim racism within schools. These include the following: (1) acknowledging the central and intersecting roles of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination present within curricular structures and discourses; (2) challenging dominant social and cultural assumptions in relation to the 'Other'; (3) directing the formal curriculum toward goals of social justice and critical consciousness; (4) developing counter discourses through storytelling, narratives, chronicles, family histories, scenarios, and biographies, which draw on the lived experiences racialized students in the classroom; and (5) drawing on historical and contemporary analysis to explicate the connections between educational and societal inequality. Although these principles are intended as a foundation for an educational curriculum centred on social justice and anti-racism, I believe they can also be useful for providing a framework for teachers wishing to express agency within existing educational structures and curricula to challenge racism.

CONCLUSION

We've Jihad Enough

DRAWING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THEORY AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

Chapter Two of this book discussed how Islamophobia since 9/11 is structured and organized in North American societies through the social relations of race, gender, and class, and has been mediated through the War on Terror. The purpose of discussing these social relations was to provide a theoretical framework for thinking through anti-Muslim racism in this book. Since the archetypes of the 'dangerous Muslim man' and the 'imperilled Muslim woman' regularly surfaced in participants' experiences it would be fair to say that the War on Terror has fundamentally affected the experiences of Muslims in Quebec secondary schools, as the War on Terror has been justified through these archetypes. These archetypes have been further reinforced and given meaning through anti-Muslim racism in Quebec relating to secularist discourses, state policies of secularism and interculturalism, as well as anti-immigrant/Muslim sentiments expressed in political and media discourses. While one can situate participants' experiences within the broader context of the post-9/11 age and the War on Terror, quite importantly, their experiences resonated particularly with racism and discrimination prevalent in Quebec political and media discourses. Synthesizing the global meta-narrative of anti-Muslim racism within the local context of these participants provides a more nuanced and salient understanding of their experiences. Hence, the challenges of racism experienced by these participants must be directed at the broader post-9/11 culture of fear, but also as importantly directed at the local Quebec and Canadian contexts. Participants' comments suggested a consistent racialization of the Islamic faith, which presumed innate qualities or characteristics associated with 'Muslimness'. Male participants' comments suggested that racialization of Islam associated Muslim men with violence and terrorism. Racialization for Muslim women occurred through the presence of a visual signifier, the *hijab*, identifying these women as 'Other'. Hence an appreciation for the relations of race and gender were essential in examining Islamophobia experienced by the participants, as male and female participants experienced racialization differently based on their gender.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS AND PARTICIPANT CATEGORIES

A number of common themes and issues emerged from the data analysis of the interviews. The most obvious of these trends was that most participants experienced, directly or indirectly, some form of anti-Muslim racism and prejudice in Quebec society and in their secondary schools. However, there was a wide range in how participants interpreted the racism that they experienced. For example, Noor described