Education for Muslim Girls in Contemporary Britain: Social and Political Dimensions.

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May, 1995

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRELIMINARIES	PAGE NUMBER
Title page	i
Table of contents	ii
Abstract	x
Acknowledgements	xii
Abbreviations	xiii
PART I	1
CHAPTER ONE	2
Framing the Issues From the Margins	
Introduction	3
1.1 Why This Piece of Research- Professional and Personal Concerns	
- The questions	
1.2 The Concepts	10
- Discourse	
- 'Race' ethnicity, black, woman	
- The concept of difference	
1.3 The Structure	33
- Context and themes	
- Methodology	
- The case studies	
Conclusion	
CHAPTER TWO	40
British Muslims and Schools: Accommodation or Neglect	
Introduction	
2.1 The Duality of Church and State	43
- Historical perspectives	
- Political dimensions	

2.2 Aims of Islamic Education 51

- Nature and purpose of life
- Islam and education

2.3 Muslims and the British State School 57

- Cultural needs
- Curricular needs
- Religious needs
- General needs
- LEA responses

Conclusion

CHAPTER THREE 76

Feminist and Multicultural Discourses in the Context of Schooling for Muslim Girls

Introduction

3.1 Muslims and Multiculturalism 77

- Debate concerning Muslim schools in context of multicultural/anti racist initiatives.
- Voluntary aided status.

3.2 Gender, Islam and Single-Sex Schooling 97

- Feminisms and education
- Feminisms and Islam
- Muslim and feminist responses to single-sex schooling

3.3 Muslim Girls Schools- A Conflict of Interests? 127

- Antisexist/antiracist debate
- Equal opportunities

Conclusion

PART II 135

CHAPTER FOUR 136

The Theoretical Context

Introduction

4.1 Ontological and Epistemological Framework 137

- Dichotomies/dualities
- Postmodernism/poststructuralism
- Feminisms and postmodernism/ poststructuralism

4.2 Feminist Methodology? 164

- Research as everyday experience
- Relationship of researcher to research.

Conclusion

CHAPTER FIVE 177

The Research Design and Method

Introduction

5.1 Method 179

- Inductive research
- Triangulation
- Inductive and grounded theory
- Approach/personal background
- Ethnography
- Case Study

5.2 Ethical Considerations 196

- Cross-cultural research
- Working with school age students

5.3 The Research Direction and Design 201

- The primary questions
- The Research Design
- Head/teacher and pupil interviews
- Nazrah
- Attitudes to the rights and roles of women

5.4 The Analysis 219

- Primary research questions, coding, answers
- Further research questions.

PART III 228

CHAPTER SIX 229

The Case Studies

Introduction

6.1 City State 232

- Establishment
- Management/governance
- Numbers and backround of staff and students
- Curriculum

6.2 Old Town High 245

- As for 6.1

6.3 The Ethos and Philosophy of the Schools 253

- The head teacher's perceptions City State
- The head teacher's perceptions Old Town High
- Perceptions of the staff City State
- Perceptions of the staff Old Town High

Conclusion

CHAPTER SEVEN 271

Single-Sex Schooling: The Perceptions of the Staff and the Students

Introduction

7.1 Perceptions of Staff in City State 274

- Advantages
- Disadvantages
- Summary

7.2 Perceptions of Staff in Old Town High 284

- As for 7.1

7.3 Perceptions of students in City State 293

- As for 7.1

7.4 Perceptions of Students in Old Town High 301

- As for 7.1

7.5 Change Schools? 309

Conclusion

CHAPTER EIGHT 317

The Attitudes of the Students Towards High Academic Achievement and The Rights and Roles of Women in Contemporary Society

Introduction

8.1 The 'Successful Female' Cue 320

- City State
- Old Town High
- Summary

8.2 Rights and Roles of Women in Contemporary Society 327

- Questions which show a significant difference
- Questions which fail to show a significant difference
- Summary

Conclusion

CHAPTER NINE 346

Equality in Difference?

Introduction

9.1 Dealing With Difference 347

- Tensions of staff in City State
- Comparison with staff Old Town High
- Tensions of students in City State
- Comparison with Old Town High
- Summary

9.2 Structural Initiatives to Deal with Perceived Difference 374

- Cultural/religious needs
- Curricular needs/language needs
- General needs

9.3 Conclusions 386

CHAPTER TEN 392

Where Do We Go From Here?

Introduction

10.1 The answers to the Questions 394

- The primary research questions
- The secondary research questions
- The discourse to change girls' choices
- The discourse to change the girls themselves

10.2 Equal Opportunities and Difference 429

- Implications for Muslim girls
- Implications for girls
- Implications for equal opportunities and further research - the way forward

BIBLIOGRAPHY 447

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	The process of coding	225
Figure 2	Change schools?	312
Figure 3	Graph to show responses to questions 3 and 4 on jobs	330
Figure 4	Graph to show responses to question 1 on home	332
Figure 5	Graph to show responses to questions 3 and 4 on social roles	334
Figure 6	Graph to show responses to the overall sections jobs, home, social roles	341
Figure 7	Is there a gap between home and school?	356

APPENDIX **CONTENTS OF APPENDIX**

APPENDIX 1
Local Authority survey of responses to the educational needs of Muslim children

APPENDIX II
Honeyford, Dewsbury and Cleveland

APPENDIX III
List of Muslim schools

APPENDIX IV
HMI reports on some Muslim schools

APPENDIX V
BERA guidelines

APPENDIX VI
Selection criteria for the case study schools

APPENDIX VII
Postal questionnaire surveying Muslim schools

APPENDIX VIII
Questions for parents

APPENDIX IX
Questions for ex-students

APPENDIX X
Head teacher interview schedules

APPENDIX XI
Teacher interview schedules

APPENDIX XII
Photographs

APPENDIX XIII
Nazrah story - first student piece of work

APPENDIX XIV
Attitudes Towards Women Scale

APPENDIX XV
The rights and roles of women in contemporary society - second student piece of work

APPENDIX XVI
Student questionnaire - third student piece of work

APPENDIX XVII
Option choices-City State

APPENDIX XVIII
Selection of Nazrah scripts

APPENDIX XIX
Curriculum plan for Old Town High

ABSTRACT

This research examines how the discourses of gender, 'race', culture and religion are articulated in the educational experiences of Muslim girls. Using the data collected in a private Muslim girls' school (Old Town High) and a single-sex state school with a high proportion of Muslim girls (City State) it critically examines how stereotypical representations may come to constitute a commonsense understanding of Muslim women and how these representations can exercise an important influence in shaping teacher perceptions about the presumed needs of their Muslim students.

The theoretical perspective adopted, is shaped principally by ideas within poststructuralism viewed through the lens of feminism. This allows for an exploration of the interplay between the discourses of 'race', gender, culture and religion and their shifting nature. It also allows for a critical examination of the micro-political - that is how power is exercised at local levels, how oppression works, is experienced and where resistance is possible.

The thesis is divided into three Parts. The first Part provides a background to the case studies. The second Part is concerned to detail the theoretical framework of the research followed by a methodological placing and evaluation of the case studies and the third Part concerns itself with a multi-layered analysis of the

data. Throughout the phases of this analysis the treatment of 'race' and gender as a duality and the repercussions this has for the Muslim students in the state school emerges strongly.

These findings have many implications for equal opportunities initiatives in state schools for the research indicates that the matter of 'difference' in equal opportunity work is not dealt with in any adequate way at all. It concludes by arguing for the introduction of strategies which go beyond practical, structural and 'problem solving' equal opportunity mode. It argues for strategies which combine perspectives which deal with, fragmentation, hybridity and pluralism with critical perspectives which centre on an examination of how it is that some students are positioned at the margins of school life and value systems and how they can be repositioned at the centre.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the people whose 'story' this is, I hope that I have done them justice in the telling.

Thank you to everyone who helped me reach this point. They know who they are. In particular to Morwenna Griffiths and Marie Parker-Jenkins of the University of Nottingham for their supervision, guidance and support, and to Mark Hadfield and Rob Watling, also of the University of Nottingham, for the critical debate, their time and interest.

ABBREVIATIONS

AEP	Association of Educational Psychologists
AWS	Attitudes Towards Women Scale
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BMMS	British Muslims Monthly Survey
CRC	Community Relations Commission
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DFE	Department For Education
EEC	European Economic Community
ELO	Education Liaison Officer
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
ERA	Education Reform Act
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
MET	Muslim Education Trust
MPA	Muslim Parents Association
PACE	Parental Alliance for Choice in Education
SACRE	Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education
SRA	Sociological Research Association
UMO	Union of Muslim Organisations
WAF	Women Against Fundamentalism

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

FRAMING THE ISSUES FROM THE MARGINS

Introduction

This research began with two primary research questions. namely:

> 'Are there any areas of agreement between Muslims and feminists concerning the ethos and purpose of single-sex schools?'

and

> 'How valid are objections to Muslim girls' schools which revolve around the grounds that they reduce educational opportunities available to their students?'

However to present them in this uncontextualised way is misleading. The purpose of this chapter is to place these questions in context and so to provide a background to this research. This background consists of historically determined positions, practices, concepts and assumptions but it is not fixed (Watling, 1995). It is constructed, as much by the present as by the past. It addresses these issues through the question "Why this piece of research?" This question examines the personal, historical and political foundations of the research, how they contributed to its conception and influenced its development, and how the research in turn affected certain aspects of this background. It also sets out to clarify particular terms used throughout the thesis and detail its structure by sketching the relevance and focus

of each chapter.

As I write I realise that language is a demarcation, a strategic restriction of possible meanings. It frames and brings into focus that which goes unremarked. The silences are significant. I also write at a time when the formerly invisible are becoming increasingly visible and audible, moving to the forefront and challenging and reshaping knowledge. Centres and margins shift (hooks, 1984). Foucault (1980a) speaks of "subjugated knowledges" arising; deconstructionists talk of "decentring" brought about by the silenced becoming vociferous. It is these debates, issues and limitations which frame this piece of research.

1.1 Why This Piece of Research? - Professional and Personal Concerns

This research is founded on and seeks to examine critically a number of perceived failures and a number of perceived needs regarding issues of equal opportunity. I developed these perceptions during my work as a teacher in the seventies and eighties and while I was doing my MA, 'Women and Education' at Sussex University and as such they are based on a number of personal and professional concerns.

Much of my working life has been spent as a Biology teacher in three mixed comprehensive schools in

predominantly white areas. During this time I became gradually disillusioned on several levels. Firstly, in educational terms I was concerned that the Science teaching offered failed to engage the majority of the girls. This seemed to be particularly evident in exploratory work when students were asked to put forward and test hypotheses. Secondly, I was concerned that, especially in my last school in the late eighties when equal opportunity issues had come to the fore, there was no commitment from the school to engage with issues of gender and 'race'. In this sense I felt we were failing a number of our students.

I was also concerned on a more personal level in terms of my own career. I had been involved in several interview procedures for promotion and had been asked discriminatory questions. I enrolled in my MA in order to gain some theoretical insight into issues such as these. My approach to these issues is therefore rooted in theory rather than activism.

Whilst preparing for a seminar and consequent essay on 'race' and gender I became aware that the educational needs of Muslim pupils and the establishment of private Muslim schools for girls encapsulated and focussed many of the issues that needed to be considered in the equal opportunity and multicultural debates. Theoretically I was

interested in how the discourses of gender and 'race' articulated with each other. Further, not only was it obvious that there was very little research work done or being done in this area but that which was published was by male academics who I suspected had never been in a Muslim girls' school.[1]

Having read the literature on issues of 'race' and gender and some LEA equal opportunity policy documents I was left confused. Much of this literature and documentation tended to deal with either 'race' or gender but rarely seemed to tackle the complexities of their interrelationship. My confusion stemmed from the apparent lack of analytical tools to make this process possible. The consequence of this for women of different backgrounds, in this case Muslim women, had many implications for equal opportunity initiatives and policies implemented both by Local Authorities and schools. My awareness that, although women may be oppressed by men within patriarchal relationships, both in the home and outside it, there are also other areas of oppression in their lives which they experience in a gendered way, such as 'race', class, religion, physical ability, sexuality and age, was compounded as I prepared for the seminar.

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[1](see Halstead, 1991 and the published debates between Walkling and Brannigan, 1986; 1987 and Troyna and Carrington, 1987).

For these reasons I decided to research the educational needs and experiences of Muslim girls for my dissertation. Also it was at this time that the Salman Rushdie Affair and the Honeyford Affair caused Muslim communities to be targeted for a great deal of media attention. This had many repercussions for these communities. I used three case studies as the basis for this piece of work. I gained access with very little problem to two private Muslim girls' schools and a single-sex maintained comprehensive school with a high proportion of Muslim pupils on roll. The constraints on this piece of work were the time in which I had to carry it out (two terms) and its required length.

I also had an awareness that to portray the experiences of the Muslim communities that I was involved with as entirely those of oppression would be to fuse together 'race' and racism and that in this case 'race' was not always experienced in a negative way but also provided a positive context for celebration, in the same way that Islam and what it is to be a Muslim woman were also celebrated.

The lives of the Muslim women who participated in this research are multi-faceted and as the research unfolded it became apparent that in certain respects their experiences have some commonality with those of similar class positions in other communities and that their lives and identities were tempered by a recognition of material

constraints.

In the more recent debate over education and 'race' the class issue has been a neglected dimension. Whereas in the fifties and sixties social class was a key issue in the equal opportunity debate, the late seventies and eighties have witnessed the 'racial' aspects of education coming to the forefront. They remain on the political agenda despite scepticism and pessimism concerning the ability of educational reforms to address social justice issues and mitigate social class inequalities in general. In this respect Williams (1986) asks what lessons are to be learnt from the demise and failure of earlier class based education policies given that recent initiatives designed to remedy racism, 'racial inequalities' and 'racial disparities' in achievements mirror very clearly the earlier, class based, definitions of problems, explanatory paradigms and policy recommendations. It is I believe a question which still has some significance.

The Questions

The assumptions inherent in the failures and needs I have identified shape the foundations of this research. I needed to develop a piece of research which could interrogate and illuminate these and which could be questioned by them in turn. I have already specified the two primary research questions:

'Are there any areas of agreement between Muslims and feminists concerning the ethos and purpose of single-sex schools?'

and

'How valid are objections to Muslim girls' schools which revolve around the grounds that they reduce educational opportunities available to their students?'

With regard to these questions I was looking for a theoretical framework which incorporated criticality and complexity and which incorporated my consistent tendency to further explore feminist theories, postmodernism and poststructuralism and their suggestion that an account of our position in the social world needs a more complex, more flexible, and less deterministic set of analytical tools than we have been familiar with. I needed an analysis which acknowledges the fragmented nature of our society, and the fragmented nature of individuals within it. I also became interested in the possibilities of discourse and Foucauldian notions of discourse and discursive practices as an analytical tool in the belief that this offered the clearest means of redressing some of the analytical failures that I have already referred to.

Underlying these questions are additional questions which also shaped the background to this research and which the research in turn made more explicit as it progressed and evolved. These are the secondary questions relating the micro focus of the work and the empirical data which it

generated to the broader and macro theoretical concerns focussed on the issue of equal opportunities. They arose partly from my dissertation, partly from my theoretical background and partly during the process of the research. They are the questions which the primary research questions masked, but they are the deeper questions which this thesis is concerned to examine. They are:

1) How do non-Muslim teachers interact with their Muslim students and vice versa and is there a difference depending on the type of school?

2) Do the Muslim students in the private Muslim school feel more 'comfortable' in an environment where being a woman is not an issue, being a Muslim is not an issue and being a Muslim woman is not an issue?

3) Does this mean that the students in the Muslim school are more empowered to 'read', take up or reject the discursive positions offered to them in school in terms of 'race' ethnicity, religion, class and gender?

4) Is this different for the Muslim students in the state school, how, why?

5) What implications do these questions have for the issue of equal opportunities?

Each chapter in this thesis is concerned to address some of these questions, partly through an analysis of existing literature in Chapters Two and Three, partly in the epistemological and methodological positionings detailed in Chapters Four and Five and partly in the analysis of the empirical data in Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine. They are all finally discussed in Chapter

Ten, the concluding chapter to this thesis. These questions and my attempts at answering them reflect my personal background in feminist theory, my professional and political concerns over issues of equal opportunity and both clarify and justify why I have made these concerns explicit at this point.

1.2 The Concepts

The theoretical framework of this thesis is built from focussing on the intersections between, gender, 'race', class, ethnicity, racism and religion both empirically and historically as contingent relationships. The data collected demonstrates the ***contradictory, multifaceted*** and ***dialetical*** interplay of these factors in the lives of the participants.

The term 'discourse' features prominently in the analysis of the production of these knowledges so it becomes relevant here to examine briefly both its usage and how discourses are systematically related, that is their discursive nature. This discussion inevitably leads to consideration of the concepts of 'race', ethnicity, black, and woman, all of which signal and provide the context for a discussion of the concept of difference. This is the focus of this section.

Discourse

I have used the term discourse already, implicitly referring to its most general sense as any regulated and systematic system of statements. However the concept is problematic because of its vagueness. Henriques et al (1984) also refer to the problems of clarifying this concept because the usage to which it is put is tied to a variety of theoretical work, from semiotics to the philosophical themes developed by Derrida and Deleuze and to the histories of knowledge that Foucault has attempted in examining the emergence and functioning of the human sciences. There are also more specific analyses of discourse in its relation to the subject and to ideology, as in the work of Kristeva for example.

Henriques et al further maintain that by defining discourse as regulated and systematic it allows for the recognition that the rules are not confined to those internal to the discourse, but include rules of combination with other discourses so that the systematic character of a discourse includes its systematic articulation with other discourses. So Henriques et al

> 'regard every discourse as the result of a practice of production which is at once, material, discursive and complex, always inscribed in relation to other practices of production of discourse. Every discourse is part of a discursive complex; it is locked in an intricate web of practices, bearing in mind that every practice is by definition both

> discursive and material. The problem is to decide which discourses and practices in a specific instance... constitute the complex, what effects the different parts of the complex have and for what reasons.'
> (Henriques et al, 1984 p.106)

Discourses are about what can be said and thought, about who can speak, when and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations (Ball,1990). Foucault used the term throughout his work and refined it as his thinking progressed.[2]

In the Archaeology of Knowledge he believed discourses to be,

> ' practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.'
> (Foucault, 1974 p.49)

At this point in his thinking Foucault uses the term discourse to designate the conjunction between power and knowledge. He argued that it is not possible to 'objectively' stand outside of discourse and analyse it and so rather than ask the question 'what is discourse?' he began to ask the questions 'where is discourse?', 'how does discourse operate?' and 'what does discourse do?' His interest in how discourse operates focussed on relationships of power so that

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[2]It is interesting to note that Foucault constantly revised his work. The revision of The Birth of the Clinic for the second edition of 1972 involved the shedding of a lot of structuralist terminology, as in the phrase 'a structural analysis of the signified' with 'an analysis of discourses'. To me, and for this reason there seems little point in trying to pigeon hole him, or his work and in this respect he once commented that he was laughing from over there.

in The Subject and Power which is one of his last pieces of published work he writes,

> 'what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future...In itself the exercise of power...is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions: it incites, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions.'
>
> (Foucault, 1982, p.220)

He argues that discourses are not about objects and they do not identify objects but they constitute them and in this practice conceal their invention (Ball,1990).

I take these arguments to mean that the possibilities for meaning and for definition, are pre-empted through the social and institutional position held by those that use them so that meanings arise from institutional practices, from power relations and words and concepts change their meaning and their effects as they are deployed within different discourses (Ball,1990). Discourses can therefore constrain the possibilities of thought by ordering and combining words in particular ways and excluding or displacing other combinations. But Foucault also uses the 'principle of discontinuity'

> 'We must make allowance for the complex and unstable powers whereby discourse can be both

> an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy.'
>
> (Foucault, 1982 p.101)

This means that discourses can also be constituted by exclusions as well as inclusions, by what cannot be said as well as what can be said. They stand in antagonistic relationship to other discourses, other possibilities of meaning, other claims, rights and positions (Ball,1990).

Educational sites are not only subject to discourse but are also centrally involved in the selective dissemination of discourses thereby controlling the access of individuals to various kinds of discourse. Foucault says,

> 'We know very well that, in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it follows the lines laid down by social differences, conflicts and struggles. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them.'
>
> (Foucault, 1971 p.46)

The effects of power are therefore both positive and negative. For Foucault in the process of schooling the student is formed and constructed both in the passive processes of objectification, and in the active, self-forming subjectification which involves processes of self understanding mediated by, most often, the teacher as an external authority figure. But education works not only

in the sense of rendering its students as subjects of power, it also constitutes some of them as powerful subjects.

Social institutions such as schools, cultural products such as curriculum texts, and teaching/learning relationships are made up of many different and often contradictory discourses (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie, 1994). These are systematically related. The positioning of an individual with regard to these differing and competing discourses can be said to be *discursive*, that is individuals can be discursively placed with references to a number of discourses and be situated in a number of ways. This opens up possibilities for individuals to *actively* take up a *range* of ways of being and seeing. It is this flexibility which I believe provides an analytically useful tool for this thesis and its concern to theorise the differing experiences of Muslim students in different schools. Each school can be seen to consist of fragile and fluid sets of competing discourses, some of which are dominant, some subordinate, some peacefully co-existing, some struggling for ascendancy (Kenway et al.,1990). The individuals within each school are discursively placed to challenge and change the struggle over meaning.

Foucault's work in the Archaeology of Knowledge suggests that a given discursive formation opens up a certain room

for manoeuvre. Foucault calls this 'a field of possible options' (Foucault, 1972 p.66). Foucault holds that this changing space in which certain possibilities for action emerge, are exploited and then are abandoned, should replace teleological notions of the development of themes or theories.[3]

This highlights the possibilities that the use of discourse and discursive relations and positioning opens up for an analysis of power and dynamic models of identity. Such an analysis is fundamental because these are the issues that are at the heart of the primary and secondary research questions and as such are the concern of this thesis. Additionally the advantage of discourse as an analytical tool for this work is that in offering explanations for the pre-existing framework in which I operate it does not suggest that these are immutable. On the contrary, the use of discourse requires me to examine the ways in which I engage with the discourses I am involved in (and those of others), and through the research review them, critique them, compound them and possibly go beyond their limitations.

A fundamental question here is whether I should be doing a piece of research with Muslim women who have a

---

[3]For a fuller discussion of this see Dreyfus and Rabinow, Chapter 3 (1982).

background in Pakistan when I am a white, not formally religious, middle-class woman who cannot write beyond her own discursive positionings.

This question arose most forcefully at the 1994 Women's Studies Network Conference. Here the emphasis on identity politics appeared to take precedence over what often seems to be the insurmountable task of sifting out the particularities of specific oppressions, identifying their commonalities or connections with other oppressions, and building up a framework of solidarity from which to challenge accepted norms. The danger of identity politics was illustrated very graphically for me by one particular incident.

A group of black women were extremely angry with one of the conference organisers who had announced that there was to be a meeting for the black and ethnic minorities delegates. Consequently some white Jewish women had arrived for the meeting. The black women felt that they had been faced with the difficult situation of deciding whether they wanted the Jewish women at the meeting and whether they could ask them to leave. It appeared in this case that multiple oppressions were regarded not in terms of their patterns of articulation and interconnections but rather as separate elements which were regarded in a linear way (Brah,1992).

Given that racism is a white problem then there will be white people who wish to research in this area. For me problematisation of the label black means that the label white should be similarly deconstructed even though whiteness, unlike blackness is not seen as a racial identity.

When 'race' is considered the focus is invariably on black peoples, its victims, who are thereby constructed as the 'other', the 'problem'. Brah (1992) argues that discussions about feminism and racism which centre around the oppression of black women fail to explore how both black and white women's gender is constructed through class and racism:

> 'This means that the 'privileged and powerful position' of white women within racialised discourses (even when they may share a class position with black women) cannot be adequately theorised and so the processes of domination remain invisible'.
>
> (Brah, 1992 p.137)

Frankenberg (1993) begins her paper 'Growing Up White' with a quote from one of the interviewees:

> 'Whiteness: a privilege enjoyed but not acknowledged, a reality lived in but unknown'
> (Frankenberg, 1993 p.51)

My intention is to approach the research from this perspective. By asking the question how is white privilege and power exercised, and examining the mechanisms whereby this power is exercised it should be possible to gain a better understanding of the processes

of racial oppression and racism so that this discursive position can contribute to others, black, or Asian or Muslim.[4]

As I have already indicated, several terms used throughout this thesis require clarification. These are 'race', ethnicity, black and gender which in turn require a consideration of the concept of 'difference' and they are discussed in the remainder of this section.

'Race'

'Race' is a contested term, the focus of a great deal of academic debate which has evolved over time. The terms and categories involved in the debate are important in a number of ways. Language is one of the vehicles for racism, and 'naming' plays a significant role in stereotyping and racist name-calling. Further, in addition to the definitions and categories which are imposed on 'others' by dominant discourses and those who have the power to 'name', so that definitions belong to the definers and not the defined, there is the question of individual and collective definitions of self. These are shifting, despite stereotyping, and vary according to contexts and individual choices. For these reasons it has long been recognised that the very idea of 'race' is a

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[4]This question of me as a white non-Muslim woman conducting a piece of research with Muslim women is further considered in Chapters Four and Five because of its importance.

social construction the meaning of which varies according to time, place and circumstance.

Despite this people have acted and continue to act as though 'race' is a fixed, objective category. Solomos (1989) points out that this is reflected in both political discourse and at the level of popular ideas. Thus common-sense understandings of 'race' have focussed on variables such as skin colour, country of origin, religion, nationality and language. However we cannot define racism essentially since no single form of racialisation is universal. Even the visible colour difference assumed to represent the essence of racist ideology is socially constructed and can and has changed over time. As Cohen (1988) points out,

> 'Racist discourses have never confined themselves just to body images. Names and modes of address, states of mind and living conditions, clothes and custom, every kind of social behaviour and cultural practice have been pressed into service to signify this or that racial essence.'
>
> (Cohen, 1988 p.14)

This has led some academics to suggest that 'race' should be dispensed with as an analytical tool partly because the very use of the term gives legitimacy to a distinction that has no validity and one which re-inscribes the oppression.[5]

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[5]For a further discussion of this see Miles (1982).

However during the course of this research it became obvious that to deny the significance of 'race' obscures the ways in which it has effects on lived experiences (Anthias, 1990). Because of this Donald and Rattansi (1992) argue that instead of posing the question 'Does 'race' exist?' it is more useful to explore how the category operates. This is my intention. This allows an approach which means that it is possible to incorporate the shifting nature of the concept while at the same time enabling it to be used as an analytical tool in an examination of its effects. 'Race' is conceptualised after Omi and Winant as,

> 'an unstable and "decentred" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle.'
> (Omi and Winant, 1986, p.68)

Confusion over the category 'race' is further exacerbated by the fact that it is often used interchangeably with ethnicity both in common-sense understanding and in the theoretical literature.

Ethnicity

Anthias (1990) describes ethnicity as,

> 'the identification of particular cultures as ways of life or identity which are based on a historical notion of origin or fate, whether mythical or "real".'
> (Anthias, 1990, p. 20)

In this sense ethnicity is often used as a preferred term over 'race' on the understanding that it is more flexible

and less essentialist and reductionist in its connotations. This does not mean that the term is not used in an essentialist way. Gilroy, for example, (1987; 1992) shows how black people's identification with ethnic essentialism has, indirectly, supported the explanations and politics of the New Right.

Ethnicity as a concept can also be linked to liberal notions of multiethnic societies and multiculturalism. The problem here is that this can obscure the force of racism because of pragmatism. Also that endlessly sliding discursive celebrations of liberal pluralism take on board common-sense and stereotypical notions about culture and ethnicity. In other words ethnicist discourses seek to impose notions of 'common cultural need' upon heterogeneous groups with diverse social aspirations and interests and fail to address the relationship between 'difference' and the social relations of power in which it may be inscribed. This certainly became clear as this piece of research unfolded. However Hall (1992) writes,

> 'I am familiar with all the dangers of "ethnicity" as a concept and have written myself about the fact that ethnicity, in the form of a culturally constructed sense of Englishness and a particularly closed, exclusive and regressive form of English national identity, is one of the core characteristics of racism today.'
> (Hall, 1992 p.256)

He also points out that the term ethnicity acknowledges

the place of culture, language and history in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, all knowledge is contextual and,

> 'The displacement of the "centred" discourses of the West entails putting in question its universalist character and its transcendental claims to speak for everyone, while being itself everywhere and nowhere. The fact that this grounding of ethnicity in difference was deployed, in the discourse of racism, as a means of disavowing the realities of racism and repression does not mean that we can permit the term to be permanently colonised. That appropriation will have to be contested, the term disarticulated from its position in the discourse "multiculturalism" and transcoded, just as we previously had to recuperate the term black, from its place in a system of negative equivalences.'
> (Hall, 1992 p. 257)

Hall believes that we are beginning to see constructions of a new concept of ethnicity evolving out of a new cultural politics which engages with, rather than suppresses difference and which partly depends on the cultural construction of new ethnic identities. He further points out that there is still a great deal of work to do to decouple ethnicity, as it functions in the dominant discourse, from its equivalence with nationalism, imperialism, racism and the state, which are the points of attachment around which a distinctive English ethnicity have been constructed. This involves a recognition that we all speak from a particular standpoint, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular

culture, that we are all in this sense ethnically located and this is crucial to our subjectivity.

The point here is that we should not be contained by that ethnicity but recognise that it is not an ethnicity which can only survive by marginalising, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities. Hall refers to this as 'the politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity' (1992, p.258). Bearing this in mind it is in this sense that ethnicity is employed as an analytical tool in this thesis.

Black

The term black also requires discussion because it also relates to the issue of use of language. Hall (1992) implies that initially black was used as a political category which indicated a common experience of marginalisation and racism both on an institutional and personal basis. Black groups were organised to provide the basis for a new politics of resistance and critique of the way that black people were positioned as 'other' irrespective of their different histories, traditions and identities. Brah (1992) criticises the term for its tendency to refer only to those of sub-Saharan African descent and for its American inferences. Further it implicitly fails to acknowledge the existence and needs of other cultural groups and therefore labels those who do not necessarily define themselves in this

way. She points out that in Britain its meaning was grounded in acknowledged cultural differences while seeking to accomplish political unity against racism as is testified by the formation of OWAAD (the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent) so that cultural difference was not the organising principle within this discourse or political practice.

Modood (1988) uses the term Asian rather than black which he claims 'sells short the majority of people it identifies as black' and rather than 'South Asian' which he dismisses as an academic term. This is criticised by Brah (1992) who believes that Modood seems to attribute a unified identity to pre-colonial India while historical evidence shows that pre-colonial India was a heterogeneous entity, and that people were more likely to define themselves in terms of their regional, linguistic or religious identity.

Brah concludes that the debate around the term black needs to stress how difference is constructed within the competing discourses, that the usage of black, Indian, or Asian is determined by its semiotic function within different discourses and not so much by the 'nature of its referent'. She also argues that these various meanings signal different political strategies and outcomes, mobilise different sets of cultural or

political identities and set limits to where the boundaries of a 'community' are established. For the purpose of this thesis the terms used will therefore be 'African-Caribbean', 'South Asian' and Muslim with the acknowledgement that the latter group, like all the rest, is not an homogeneous group. Thus the term Muslim is not defined by place of origin but by religion so that all the above categories overlap.

These debates centring around 'race', ethnicity and black which seek to acknowledge and theorise diversity and 'difference' are also echoed by those occurring within feminism. Feminists are now acknowledging the difficulties of the notion of an ultimate essence that transcends material, historical and cultural boundaries and it is the critique of white feminism , made by black and Asian feminists which have provided the impetus for these considerations.[6] There is now an acknowledgement that our gender is represented and constituted differently according to our differential location within any network of power realised through economic, political and ideological processes. Within these structures of social

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[6]Essence,the basic primary element in the being of the thing; the thing's nature, or that without which it could not be what it is. Throughout Greek, scholastic, and some modern philosophy there have been many proposals of ways for finding the essences of things and views about what science would be like if we did know them (Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy,1994).

relations we do not exist simply as women but as differentiated categories. Spelman says,

> 'It would surely lighten the task of feminism tremendously if we could cut to the quick of women's lives by focusing [sic] on some essential "womaness". However though all women are women no woman is only a woman. Those of us who have engaged in it must give up the hunt for the generic woman - the one who is all and only woman, who by some miracle of abstraction has no particular identity in terms of race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, religion, nationality (Anonymous by the way was not a generic woman)'
>
> (Spelman, 1988 p.187)

Everyday lives are lived in a complex web. There are certain commonalities of location within the social structure, such as class but this has offshoots which are other threads of differentiation such as, for example, racism, caste, heterosexism and migrant status which further describe the position of different women. This is increasingly recognised in feminist theory and practice. No individual category is internally homogeneous.

The critique of white feminism made by black feminists which point to the inherent racism of analyses and practices which assume white experiences to be the norm and use these as the basis from which to generate concepts and theories and which fail to acknowledge the internal differentiation of black women provide the context for the idea of 'difference' as a concept with

the potential to analyse such diversity. So do the debates around 'race' and ethnicity.

The Concept of Difference

Brah (1992) discusses difference by suggesting that there are four ways that the term can be conceptualised and addressed: difference as experience, difference as social relations, difference as subjectivity and difference as identity.

Maynard (1994) on the other hand refers to two formulations of difference: one which focusses on the diversity of experience, the other concerned with difference as informed by postmodernist thinking. I shall briefly consider these.

Broadly speaking the difficulty with the conceptualisation of difference in terms of experience is that it fails to provide a basis from which groups might 'act' politically for it highlights the problems of identity politics. In this sense women have retreated into ghettoised lifestyle politics defined in terms of personal experience and shared subjectivities (Adams, 1989; Brah, 1991, 1992; Harriss, 1989; hooks, 1991; Parmar, 1989). The problem with such politics is that through the use of the language of 'authentic subject experience', emphasis is placed on the accumulation of oppressed identities leading to a hierarchy of oppressions which is divisive and makes it difficult to

work collectively across experiences and identify threads of connection (Parmar, 1989). To overcome this Brah (1991) advocates a politics of identification which regards coalitions as politically possible by recognising the struggles of other groups on a global scale.

Postmodernist accounts of difference which emphasise subjectivities as determined by the discourses in which they are constituted and therefore lacking in both intentionality and will are also problematical. Here the subject is decentred and reduced to a point at the intersection of a multitude of discourses so that postmodernism valorises the multiplicity of voices, meanings and configurations which need to be considered when trying to understand the social world (See for example Baudrillard, 1990; Boyne and Rattansi, 1990; Foucault, 1974; Lyotard, 1984; Morris, 1988; Nicholson, 1990). This is in opposition to conventional epistemology premissed upon the search for meta-theory, objectivity and the rational and unified subject. Postmodernism does not attempt to understand the experience of others but rather acknowledges the existence of all others isolated from the structural, economic and historical material realities of the world. This has been taken to imply that there is no theory to be made and no action to be taken.

Both formulations of difference have a strong overlap in that, at least for postmodernists discourse and experience are much

the same thing. Both kinds of 'difference' also subvert the unity and meaning of terms such as 'patriarchy', 'race', black, 'woman' by implying these categories are so fragmented by for example, 'race', class, historical particularity and individual difference that they each self-destruct as an analytical tool. Consequently the recent work of some feminists such as hooks, incorporates the threads of both the difference of experience and postmodernism. Hooks argues for the necessity of re-formulating outmoded notions of identity because they impose an essentialist, narrow and constricting idea of blackness, often related to colonial and imperialist paradigms (hooks, 1991).

There is no doubt that an emphasis on difference allows for multiple identities but also opens up new possibilities for the emancipation of oppressed groups such as black peoples (Hall, 1992; hooks, 1991) and women through the deconstruction of femininity and blackness and celebration of its multiple forms (Flax, 1987; Skeggs, 1991). This also means that blackness and 'womanhood' and 'Muslim woman' come to be associated with positive connotations and are not just seen in terms of oppression (Brah, 1991). In this sense difference both challenges and transcends categorisation and suggests alternative subject formulations.

There are discourses of gender because of practices which are not informed by, for example, black and feminist theory. However if categories such as gender are largely inherently unstable, continually self-deconstructing and endlessly multiple this means that they have little power to challenge norms which deserve to be challenged such as sexism, racism and classism because they cannot be used as analytical tools to provide the basis for action.

The name 'woman' does have meaning for the people it names and it has its own specificity constituted within and through historically specific configurations of gender relations. It is this which provides the basis for a recognition of some shared experience when I am talking to Muslim students, their mothers and Muslim teachers. But as Brah says:

> 'in different womanhoods the noun is only meaningful - indeed only exists - with reference to a fusion of adjectives which symbolise particular historical trajectories, material circumstances and cultural experiences'
>
> (Brah, 1991 p. 131)

Feminists are, and should be, concerned with multiple subjectivities and a denial of the universal 'woman' but from the basis of trying to understand differences, located in economic and historical material realities, and to identify the commonalities running through these differences. The recurrent problem in this respect is essentialism; that is the notion of an ultimate essence

that transcends historical and cultural boundaries.

The aim is to construct theory to explain both differences and commonalities and thus to increase understanding and guide action. For this reason some feminists such as Spivak (1987) and Fuss (1989) have argued in favour of 'strategic essentialism'. In the need to guide action, dominated groups will have to appeal to bonds of common experience while remaining vigilant of the circumstances under which affirmation of a particular collective experience becomes an essentialist assertion of difference. The problem may arise therefore not only in relation to dominant groups but also dominated groups. In their struggle against the former, the latter may also have recourse to hegemonic, universalising imperatives, to constructing essentialist differences. The oppressed may become oppressor. For Spivak and Fuss this is a risk which is worth taking if framed from the vantage point of a dominated subject position.

A recognition that categories such as woman and 'race' are internally differentiated does not therefore have to mean that they should be abandoned. They may not be unitary but neither are they meaningless. Maynard (1994) quotes Stanley who argues that these categories stand for:

> 'the social construction of a particular set of people facing - albeit with large internal differences - a common material reality because [it is] one based in a common oppression/exploitation.'
>
> (Stanley, 1990 p.152)

Maynard understands this material reality to include representations and categorisations themselves, as well as material circumstances. There is no doubt that the search for grand theories to explain the interconnections between racism, class and gender has been less than succesful. For this reason Brah believes:

> 'They are best construed as historically contingent and context-specific relationships. Hence, we can focus on a given context and differentiate between the demarcation of a category as an object of social discourse, as an analytical category, and as a subject of political mobilisation without making assumptions about their permanence or stability across time and space'.
>
> (Brah, 1992 p.131)

This means that these categories should not be understood as locating white and black women for example, as 'essentially' fixed oppositional categories for as I have already pointed out this thesis is located in an area where the language of binary oppositions will not suffice. Bearing these debates in mind and with a recognition of these limitations it is in this spirit that this thesis is written.

1.3 The Structure

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Part One

entitled Contexts and Themes, is divided into two chapters: 'British Muslims and State Schools - Accommodation or Neglect' and 'Feminist and Multicultural Discourses in the Context of Schooling for Muslim Girls'

The aim of each chapter is to provide a broad overview of the general field and the relevant concepts through an analysis of the main literature. This is, of course, influenced by my personal positioning in the research which I have considered at the beginning of this chapter. The concept of 'equal opportunities' forms the linkage between each chapter. It is in these chapters that I explore questions of how far individuals are aware of the possibilities which some of the recent discourses of the new ethnicities and feminisms open up to them and whether it is only those individuals who are more privileged, who are in a better position to take up and use these new forms of representation. It is here, in the analysis of the existing literature, that the implications that these questions have for equal opportunities is initially broached.

Part Two, 'Methodology' provides the theoretical framework of the research. There are two chapters: 'The Theoretical Context' and 'The Research Design and Method' The first of these chapters defines the ontological and epistemological framework of the research through a

discussion of poststructuralism and how this articulates with feminist theories. It discusses Foucauldian notions of power-knowledge and reverse-discourse and why I have chosen to incorporate a poststructural analysis seen through the lens of feminism for this piece of research. The reasons for my choice of feminist methodology are also considered in depth.

The final chapter in Part Two outlines the implications that these epistemological considerations have for the practical element of the research. It focusses on the research method, direction and design and the ethical difficulties that arise in the course in any piece of research. Its central concern is to make the process and progress of the research explicit.

The aim of both chapters in Part Two is to provide a more detailed insight into the personal, historical and political bases of the research , how they contributed to its conception, how they influenced its development, and how the research in its turn affected certain features of these foundations. They also provide the theoretical background from which to explore further the answers to the primary and secondary research questions. Above all they highlight my belief that feminist engagement with poststructuralism is analytically useful because this illuminates and reveals how power is exercised through

discourse, how oppression works and how through an examination of discursive relationships and positionings, resistance might be possible.

Part Three, is also divided into several chapters. The first chapter in this Part, Chapter Six, provides a background to each case study. The subsequent four chapters detail the analysis of the data. Chapter Seven answers the primary research questions concerning whether there are any areas of agreement between Muslims and feminists over the issue of single-sex schooling. It also signposts the way towards an answer to the other primary research question which is framed around the issue of whether Muslim girls' schools reduce the educational opportunities available to their students. At the same time this chapter generates further questions which directs the analysis towards answers to the five secondary research questions.

Chapter Eight is concerned to refine these answers by providing a quantitative analysis which both adds to and confirms the answers to the primary research questions partially answered in Chapter Seven. The triangulation of this data with the qualitative data also provides a means whereby the fractured data is woven together again in Chapter Nine. This chapter then provides the platform for Chapter Ten.

Chapter Ten is the concluding chapter and as such

provides a response to this introduction. It answers both the primary and secondary research questions and discusses the implications of these answers for the education of Muslim girls and girls generally. Finally, and in the light of these answers, it relates the findings of this research to the equal opportunity initiatives of the seventies and eighties which assume that identity in the form of 'race' and gender is the basis for intervention just as in the fifties and sixties social class was a key site for similar intervention and strategy for change. The discussion focusses on the failure of all these attempts to address social justice issues and mitigate social inequalities in general because of a theoretical inability to combine perspectives which deal with fragmentation, hybridity and pluralism, with critical perspectives which centre on ownership, empowerment and open, focussed interactions with concrete others (Benhabib, 1992; Shackleton, 1993).

Conclusion

The thesis concerns itself with an analysis of contemporary discourses of 'race', religion, culture ethnicity class and gender situated within the context of the challenge of some sections of the Muslim community over educational issues within the state school system and, because of this their felt need to establish state

funded Muslim girls' schools. It takes the latter as symbolic of a challenge to the dominant culture revolving around the construction of a number of competing discourses about 'race', religion' culture and sexism.

It is a thesis which concerns the interplay of these discourses and their shifting nature where the language of binary oppositions and substitutions does not suffice because this provides a way of structuring meaning which in turn structures human relationships of difference and dominance. The argument here is that one side of the dualism is inevitably defined in a negative relationship to the other and such logic invoked for whatever reason is seen to be inherently repressive:

> 'But it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank shouting questions, challenging patriarchal white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs, and for this it is proudly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against. Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority - outer as well as inner - it's a step towards liberation from cultural domination. But it is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed.....'.
>
> (Anzaldua, 1987 p.78)

Above all this is a piece of work which highlights the danger when 'race' and gender are perceived as

dichotomies, the unacknowledged racism that this masks and the implications that this has for equal opportunities in schools.

CHAPTER TWO

BRITISH MUSLIMS AND SCHOOLS - ACCOMMODATION OR NEGLECT?

Introduction

Events such as The Salman Rushdie Affair, the Honeyford Affair and the Gulf War have served to highlight the discontent of some Muslims with British society. While feelings engendered by these events tend to ebb and flow, anxieties amongst the Muslim community concerning the education of Muslim children remain constant. Discontent over educational issues are focussed around the Education Reform Act, accommodation of the special requirements of Muslim pupils within the state school system and voluntary aided status for Muslim schools. These issues underpin and spearhead the concerns of those Muslim parents who appear to be increasingly disaffected with life in this country.

The Muslim community in this country is not an homogeneous one. It is multiracial, multicultural and multilingual and comprises the largest religious minority in Britain today (Ashraf,1986). It is this religious dimension which provides a uniting factor. Since Muslim immigrants first began arriving in this country from the Indian sub-continent and parts of Africa in the 1950s, 60s and 70s they have negotiated long and hard with LEAs (Local Education Authorities) and other appropriate

bodies for schools to accommodate the religious and cultural needs of their children (Nielsen, 1986; Midgely 1989). These efforts have met with only patchy success. This has meant that some Muslim communities have felt the need to have recourse to more radical solutions: to establish private Muslim schools, for which they are seeking to acquire voluntary aided status: and to explore the option of 'opting out' legislated for by the 1988 Education Reform Act (Haw, 1994).

Consideration of the demands from some sections of the Muslim community for an education which incorporates the precepts of Islam and Islamic culture necessitates the unpacking of some complex issues. One strand of this debate is grounded historically and concerns the involvement of both Church and State in the education system of Britain. Another strand of the debate concerns the aims of Islamic education because this provides the context from which to explore reasons for the establishment of private Muslim schools and their bid to gain voluntary aided status in line with Roman Catholic, Church of England and Jewish schools.

For those Muslims who see themselves as swimming against the tide of increasing secularisation, the education system is the focus for the incompatibility of values taught at home and those perceived to be advocated

by the wider indigenous population. State schools have attempted to adopt measures to accommodate the perceived needs of their Muslim pupils and this has usually been achieved under the auspices of equal opportunity initiatives adopted by individual Local Authorities and schools. However accommodation of these needs revolves around major issues such as cultural diversity; social cohesion; and the extent of minority rights in a democracy.[1] This is the context for this piece of research.

This chapter is divided into three sections each of which explores the major relevant themes in these areas: firstly the duality of Church and State; secondly the aims of Islamic education; thirdly the Muslim student in the state school system. The analytical perspective adopted has aleady been outlined in Chapter One. It has been principally shaped by ideas within feminism and poststructuralism because this allows for an exploration of how Muslim girls and women position themselves in discourses that subordinate them as well as giving room for a consideration of the workings of patriarchal structures such as schools. Additionally it provides an analytical framework for examining the micro-political - that is how power is exercised at

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[1]These issues are also discussed in Parker-Jenkins and Haw, 1995.

local levels, how oppression works, is experienced and where resistances are possible. This is explored again in Chapter 4.

2.1 The Duality of Church and State

Demands for an education which accommodates the precepts of Islamic religion and culture are becoming more vociferous from some sections of the Muslim community.[2] The dissatisfaction of a substantial number of increasingly confident Muslim parents over educational issues has gathered momentum since the late 1970s and is now taking place against a backdrop of great turmoil in the educational system.

The origin of the educational system of England and Wales can be traced back to the Middle Ages when the Church founded educational institutions of all kinds and schools were an essential part of ecclesiastical organisation, combining religious and secular teaching as one. This control of education led the Church of England, in the nineteenth century, to build large numbers of elementary schools for the instruction of

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[2]This is evidenced by the formation of an increasing number of pressure groups such as the Muslim Educational Co-Ordinating Council, the Muslim Educational Trust, the National Muslim Educational Council of the United Kingdom, Iqra Trust (a Muslim information centre), the UK Islamic Education Waqf (Trust), the Muslim Education Consultative Committee and the Muslim Parliament.

children of the poor. So widespread were the foundations of the Established Church (and to a lesser extent of other denominations) that when the State intervened in education it was impracticable to alleviate the Church of all responsibility in this field. The Elementary Education Act of 1870 was a piece of compromise legislation in this respect (Lawson and Silver, 1973). It did not introduce free or compulsory education but made both possible, neither did it supersede the voluntary schools. It brought the State into education as never before and it created the school boards (precursors of LEAs) as democratic organs of local administration.

The Church of England and its supporters were often openly hostile to the school boards, viewing them as a direct source of competition. At this time education and Christianity were inextricably linked in the public mind (Tropp, 1957). The strength of this association is much diminished today (witness the decline of observance of daily worship in many schools pre the 1988 ERA) but its continuing existence is evident in the debate on the issue during the passage of the 1988 Act. There is now a further dimension to this debate which lends it added complexity and that is the existence in Britain of sizeable communities sharing a religious faith other than Christianity.

After 1870 Church schools suffered greatly from lack of funds and became generally inferior to the more prosperous Board Schools. From this period there followed a battle between Church and State over the control of education (Cruikshank, 1963; Lawson and Silver, 1973). The 1902 and 1906 Education Acts established the principle of voluntary maintained denominational schools alongside those run by the local school boards. The 1902 Act effectively rescued Church schools fom their decline and brought them under the umbrella of local authority financing. To qualify for such finance they had to accept certain conditions (Clause 7 (1)(c) and (6)) but they kept their distinctive style as Church schools (Cruickshank, 1963). Managers were to include representatives (usually one third) appointed by the LEA (Clause 7(1)(d)) and these were to appoint teachers subject to the consent of the LEA, and to control religious instruction.

Following the 1944 Education Act, three types of voluntary school were created - aided, controlled and special agreement (Commission for Racial Equality, CRE 1990). This Act defined as 'voluntary' all schools maintained through the rates, but which had not been established by a local education authority or a former authority (Section (9)(2)) and set out a procedure for

the establishment of new voluntary schools in section 13.

These voluntary schools are differentiated according to degree of public control, local authority funding and funding from the DFE (Department For Education). The detailed procedure and the exact requirements varied according to whether the school in question was to be 'voluntary controlled' or 'voluntary aided'. Those which could not afford to modernise their buildings to the required standards became 'voluntary controlled'. The LEA then financed the modernisation and the Church (or other voluntary group) retained only nominal control over the running of the school.[3] To acquire 'voluntary aided' status the school had to meet half the costs of modernisation whereupon they retained control over appointment of staff, religious instruction and the secular curriculum. This last autonomy is currently very much constrained by the need to conform to the National Curriculum.

The 1944 Act does not stipulate that only Christian churches or groups may apply for voluntary aided status for their schools. In fact Jewish schools have been established through this procedure and it is through

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[3]It is important to note that not all voluntary schools are denominational.

this legislation that Muslim (and to a lesser extent Sikh and Hindu), groups are seeking state funding for their schools. The financial benefits are considerable; the DFE may make discretionary grants of up to 85% of the cost of the original purchase and extension of the buildings and must pay 85% of subsequent external repairs and alterations. Staff are paid by the LEA.

According to DFE figures in January, 1991 about a third of state schools have voluntary status and are denominational. The pupils at these schools account for 23% of all pupils being educated in state schools. There are 4,936 Church of England schools, 2,245 Roman Catholic schools, 31 Methodist schools and 22 Jewish schools (DFE Dec.1991). Durham (1989) believes that they represent a:-

> 'fudge and a mudge of religious and secular education,with the state paying the schools' running costs and 85% of their capital expenses, while governors and church leaders control the curriculum.'
>
> (Durham 1989)

In fact the curriculum in these schools is now shaped by the National Curriculum.

The position of the present Government concerning these schools is problematical. It has refused to countenance a new generation of religious schools but because both Church and State gave into the demands of Baroness Cox and her supporters during the passage of the 1988 ERA

we have been left with a contentious, if not unworkable law on religious worship in state schools (Haw, 1990). For much of this century the question of religion in schools has not really been in the limelight but the clear intention of the 1988 Act on this issue is to reinforce the specifically Christian roots of the education system. This has considerable repercussions for the Muslim community, and for some, the only escape is believed to be the establishment of Islamic voluntary aided schools. The Muslim Educational Trust (MET) claim that 75% of Muslims are in favour of state financing of separate schools (Cumper, 1990). However, small scale research based in specific localities would seem to point to the contrary (Kelly, 1989; Tomlinson and Hutchinson, 1991).

Muslim parents themselves are divided over the need for a religious basis in the education of their children, displaying the same broad range of attitudes towards their faith - from indifference to fervour - as do Christians and Jews (Dean, 1990). But generally it is claimed that denominational schools make a significant contribution to parental choice in education because of their religious foundation and perhaps more discliplined ethos.

Often these schools are the only means of obtaining a

single-sex education and for this reason it is not unusual to find Muslim girls taking up many of the few places available to children of other religions in both Roman Catholic and Church of England schools (Haw, 1990). A very deep anxiety about apparently lax sexual mores in society generally, and in secondary schools in particular, leads many Muslim parents to seek single-sex education for their children, especially their girls. They also express a desire to see their children being educated in an environment which upholds common moral values and which respects religion (Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, CSIC, 1985). Strongly religiously motivated ethnic minority parents prefer to put their children into schools with a religious foundation - even if that foundation is Christian of one kind or another.

There are Church of England schools with a majority of pupils whose home background lies in one of the main South Asian religions (Nielsen, 1987). Two reports commissioned by the Anglican London Diocesan Board for Schools concerning the role of its church schools for the future indicate that three primary schools in the diocese have over 50% of pupils of Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi origin, while one secondary school had 80%

of its pupils whose home language was not English (Gay, Kay, Newdick and Perry, 1991).

There is every sign that the voluntary aided sector of education is being subjected to an examination of the kind that it has not experienced for many years. Not only do Roman Catholic and Anglican schools feel the need to subject themselves to rigorous self-appraisal to meet the challenge and demands of contemporary secular and multicultural society, but they also feel that they are being threatened by financial constraints, declining Christian intake, the ERA and the issue of private Muslim schools waiting in the wings for voluntary aided status.[4] Denominational schools too have been subjected to severe criticism by HMIs. Teaching at St. Mary Magdalen voluntary aided school was described as suffering from:-

> 'Lack of pace, challenge and insufficient attention to progression.'
> (Boseley, 1987)

While Hackney Free and Parochial School was accused of

> 'seriously failing its' pupils'
> (Spencer, 1990)

At the moment there is a danger that the role of the Church and indeed the role of religion in our education system will be determined more by accident

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[4]See the articles in the Times Educational Supplement by Lodge (1991) and Dean (1991).

than design. The most recent Government report on multicultural education, the Swann Report specifically rejected the idea of voluntary aided Muslim schools as racially and socially divisive and a critical re-evaluation of the relevant clauses of the 1944 Education Act with a view to dismantling all denominational schooling has been proposed by several studies and groups (Swann, 1985; CRE, 1990; Women Against Fundamentalism, WAF, 1991). This debate is probably just beginning.

2.2 Aims of Islamic Education.[5]

Before a basic understanding of the concept and purpose of Islamic education can be gained it is imperative that an understanding of our own nature and purpose in life from an Islamic point of view is attempted (Mohamed, 1991). Yasien Mohamed explains this in the following way. According to Islam we are born in a state of *fitrah*, that is with the innate inclination to believe in and submit to God. It is the responsibility of humans to realize the human being's essential spiritual nature; in this realization lies the knowledge of God. Thus we are not only physical

[5]Please note that 'man' is used as the noun in this section in reflection of the texts from which the information for this section was obtained.

and psychological beings but also spiritual beings. Guidance for an Islamic way of life is expressed in its perfect form in the Qur'anic revelation and according to this God has endowed human beings with the faculties of heart (*'qalb*) and intellect (*'aql*) by means of which we may be able to understand divine revelation or recognize the Creator. In contrast to western secular education, which recognises our capacity for sensory and intellectual perception only, Islamic education recognises that we have the faculties for a third level of perception, spiritual perception, which is the highest level of perception in the hierarchy of human cognition.

The purpose of human beings is to submit to the divine will which accords with our essential nature (Qur'an, 30:30). Islam which means submission, is therefore in harmony with the nature of the human being and our purpose is to obey God, that is to worship (*'ibadah*) God (Qur'an, 51:36). God having equipped people with the faculty to distinguish right from wrong, has made us accountable to Him and as we have this potential we are meant to be the *Khalifah* (vice-gerent) of God on earth (Qur'an, 2:30), and as such the heavy burden of trust (*amanah*) is placed on us.

Therefore we have the responsibility of divine Will on

earth. This does not imply justice in the socio-political sense only, but more fundamentally rule of the higher self (*ruh*) over the lower self (*nafs*). If we permit the lower self to predominate we are committing injustice, transgressing divine law and going against our own nature (*fitrah*). When we control the lower self (*nafs)* the essential spiritual nature is asserted and we are able to reaffirm the Covenant with God within our total self so that we may express affirmation in action (*'amal*) in obedience to God's Law (*shari'ah*). When the lower self is transformed into the highest level of spiritual development (*al-nafs al-mutmainnah*) through obedience to God, then we do justice to the role of *Khalifah* on earth. Without worship (*'ibadah*) the trust of freedom and intellect will be abused, and we will have arrogated to ourselves a lordship, instead of giving to the one Absolute Lord. Worship then is the practice of the servant (*'abd*) which is a prerequisite for a just fulfilment of the status of *Khalifah*.

We are therefore the locus through which Islam is expressed; through which total and willing submission to the one true God is realized. This also becomes the aim of Islamic education, which is to teach us how to worship God and so fulfill the task of *Khalifah* on earth.

From this explanation it can clearly be seen that a central tenet of Islam is that we are spiritual and moral beings provided with spiritual and intellectual aspects of ourselves through which the full potential of *fitrah* can be realised with the guidance of prophets and divine revelation. From the belief that Islam is in consonance with human nature it follows that it becomes the means by which the full potential of our nature, spiritual as well as material may be realised. It is within the context of this perspective that the aims and objectives of Islamic education have to be examined.

The basic aim of Islamic education is the actualization of *fitrah* in all its dimensions within a social context and it is therefore concerned with the development of the whole person - body (*jism*), mind (*nafs*), and spirit (*ruh*) - in and for society. Consequently Islamic education is rooted in definite *a priori* principles which also provide criteria for critically evaluating society and the individual.

The primary purpose of Islamic education is to produce a good man and since it is the spiritual self that forms the most direct link with God, it is important that all aspects of man's personality should come

under its control. In Islam the individual's spiritual growth (*tariqa*) takes place only within the *Shari'a* (the divine law) (Halstead 1986). Halstead goes on to explain that both *Shari'a* and *tariqa* are metaphors, the former carrying the literal meaning of a broad highway, the latter a narrow path. The *umma* (community of believers) walk together along the broad highway of the divine law, which sets out God's will for man in both his private and his social life and by means of which man is enabled to live a harmonious life in this world and prepared for the life to come.

Religion for the Muslim is essentially a matter of following the divine law, which contains not only universal moral principles (such as justice and charity), but also detailed instructions relating to every aspect of human life. Thus the *Shari'a* integrates political, social and economic life as well as individual life into a single religious world view.

Further in Islam there is no question of an individual working out for himself his own religious faith, or subjecting it to rational objective investigation, for the divine revelation in the *Shari'a* provides all the requisite knowledge of truth and falsehood, right and wrong. The task of each individual is to come to understand this knowledge and

to exercise free will, by either accepting or rejecting it. The Islamic notion of free will contrasts very sharply with the notion of personal autonomy that is widely considered to be crucial to the concept of liberal democracy. Education in Islam therefore aims at:-

> 'the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses.'
>
> (al-Attas, 1979, p.158)

In this way he may develop faith in God and recognise his obligations as *khalifat allah* (God's vice-gerent on earth), and learn to:-

> 'treat the world as a great trust which must not be abused.'
>
> (Husain, and Ashraf, 1979, p.41)

Thus Ashraf defines the aim of education as :-

> 'the means or the process of helping the child to grow and become a "Man"'
>
> (Ashraf,1992 Islamia, p.13)

He emphasises that there are two classes or categories of notions concerning man: the scientific-secularist idea of man and the philosophical-religious one. The former model is the one which predominates in state schools while it is the latter which is prescribed by Islam and the wholeness of man which Islam seeks to achieve, thus the aim of education should therefore be:-

> 'to guide a child so that he shapes himself as a whole being and not a fragmented creature. He should have knowledge of his relationship with God, Man and Nature. His

> will should be trained so that he acts for the sake of God, selflessly, objectively and willingly with the highest norms of truth,justice, honesty, righteousness, love and beauty in his mind.'
> (Ashraf, July 1992 Islamia p.13)

This consideration of 'knowledge' defines the dividing line between Islamic and western concepts of education. The difference in perception rests on the fact that whereas western philosophy allows religious knowledge as a distinct form of knowledge in isolation, Islam only acknowledges the validity of the true faith and confines all knowledge to within the parameters of the Qur'an and the Hadith: one system seeks individual autonomy by which the educational process invites young people to think and act for themselves within society, whilst the other attempts to maintain a strong sense of community and family solidarity within a religious framework. These issues have considerable repercussions for those Muslim children educated within the state system.

2.3 Muslims and the British State School System

The great majority of Muslim pupils first entered British schools in the early 1970s and presented what were referred to 'as some problem areas for LEAs' (Townsend and Brittan, 1972). These included school meals, school dress, physical education and co-education. Some ten years later a national survey concluded that special arrangements

for R.E., school worship, meals, dress and physical education were 'not now generally seen as problem areas' by LEAs and schools (Little and Willey, 1981 and 1983). LEAs reported that they had given formal and informal advice to schools, and head teachers confirmed that they were well aware of the issues involved. If, however LEA responses to these concerns are analysed in greater depth such optimism appears to have little foundation, at least as far as some Muslim parents are concerned.

School Dress.

The Qur'an holds that the principle of modesty for both boys and girls is of uppermost concern. For post puberty girls this may include the wearing of loose baggy trousers, long skirts reaching down to the ankles or other appropriate dress which is neither tight fitting or transparent and covers the whole body apart from the face and hands (Sarwar, 1991). Islam also requires girls to wear an appropriate headcovering so that the hair is not visible. This last issue has been subject to much re-interpretation by Muslim women, anthropologists, sociologists and political organisations, revealing that attitudes to veiling and headcovering can vary according to place of origin, economical, educational and social status. Such

attitudes can also be subject to political and social manipulation (Hussain, 1984, Werbner, 1981). Recently, in the wake of an international revival of Islam, many Muslim women are choosing to adopt an Islamic identity and the hijab is worn as a sign of this common identity (Afshar, 1994).[6]

Some early reports revealed that schools viewed Asian dress styles as problematic especially for Muslim girls (McCrea, 1964). Further research also suggested that parents were more concerned about this issue as the girl reached adolesence (Dosanjh, 1967). A survey of LEAS in 1971 revealed that representations had been made directly to 8 LEAS rather than schools concerning the shalwar worn by girls (Townsend 1971).

A subsequent Community Relations Commission survey found Muslims to be the most conservative group when it came to their daughters adopting Western style clothes, citing religious or cultural reasons for these attitudes (CRC 1976). This was confirmed by a study of Hindu and Bengali parents in Cardiff where 57% of Muslim parents had strong objections to girls wearing skirts as part of a school uniform, some feeling so

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[6]This issue of a revival in wearing the *hijab* is also discussed by Macleod (1992). It should also be pointed out here that hijab means to cover in the Qur'an, although it is more commonly connected as meaning to wear a 'headscarf'.

strongly that they did not hesitate to visit head teachers to insist that their daughters be allowed to wear traditional dress in keeping with their beliefs (Ghuman and Gallop 1981). Overall the emerging pattern was that Muslim associations were more likely than any other to make representations about dress to LEAs (Little and Willey 1983).

The majority of LEAs leave school uniform to the discretion of the head teacher sometimes reminding them that school uniform is not legally enforceable or recommending that they adopt a liberal attitude (Taylor and Hegarty 1985). Schools did vary widely in their policies in this respect (Little and Willey 1983). In the 1990s, however, most schools accommodate Muslim girls in their dress requirements but there are still incidents which serve as a reminder that these concessions are subject to the discretion of individual schools and their head teachers (Parker-Jenkins and Haw, 1995).

An example of this occured in the early part of 1990 when two Muslim girls attending school in Altrincham, Cheshire were refused permission to wear their headscarves (hijab) on the grounds of 'mainly a health and safety matter, not a religious one' (Ward, 1990). The girls were later reinstated in school

providing that they wore tightly fitting and appropriate coloured headscarves (Ward, 1990). This affair served to focus the demands of those Muslims who advocate the establishment of schools for Muslim girls and caused both the media and educationalists to examine the issues involved in educating Muslim girls within the existing state system.

In France a similar event went beyond the issue of religious dress in school to the heart of two principles on which French society is based.
1)The freedom of expression and beliefs guaranteed by the Declaration of the Rights of Man 1789.
2) The principle inscribed in France's constitution that the State and therefore all public service should be strictly secular. It also instigated fierce national debate over immigration and whether or not immigrants have a duty to integrate themselves into French culture. Opinion was so split that traditional political alliances ceased to operate (Follain,1989; Landor,1989; Marnham, 1989).

Both these events, which have involved educationalists, politicians and ethnic associations, serve as a timely reminder that what appears at first sight to be a rather insignificant and easily solveable issue masks the difficulty that indigenous societies are

experiencing in coming to terms with a sizeable and growing Muslim population.

School Meals

Local authority responses to school meals for Muslims show a similar 'ad hoc' pattern. A number of LEAs reported approaches by Muslim associations about school meals and initially attempts by Bradford and what was then the ILEA to introduce halal meat were both atypical and controversial (Little and Willey, 1983). Generally it was found that in the early eighties, although school meal services attempted to make special provision for Asian children there was some residual resistance to catering for dietary requirements of multiethnic schools other than by providing vegetarian dishes (Young and Connelly,1981). More recently it has been pointed out that although some LEAs have made the move to provide vegetarian or halal food that this is spoiled at the servery by the use of the same utensils for halal/vegetarian food and non-halal food (Sarwar 1991).

Religious Education

Reporting before the ratification of the ERA Taylor and Hegarty state:-

> 'The review of the research appears to indicate that.... a substantial minority (of Muslim parents) feel more strongly that their

> whole orientation to life and that of their children and future generations will be at stake if they do not secure proper provision for children's religious teaching.'
> (Taylor and Hegarty, 1985 p.376)

In 1972 the rate of withdrawal of Muslims from the collective act of daily worship was recorded to be 17 times higher than the rest of the British community (Townsend and Brittan 1972) and there is no sign that there as been a decrease in the numbers of Muslims who seek this option (BMMS,1994, Vol.II No.1). Additionally the researchers showed the demand for special arrangements for Muslim pupils to depend not only on pupil numbers in a school or area but also on the relationship between the schools and the local Imam. It was noted that schools implemented their own initiatives in response to community feelings and more schools had introduced comparative religious education than any other feature of the multicultural curriculum although authorities appeared to operate 'ad hoc' policies (Young and Connelly 1981).

Collective acts of worship have always been a feature of the school day in Britain provided for by section 23 of the 1944 Education Act. This Act allowed for withdrawal from such occasions on conscientious grounds and this principle has now been incorporated in the 1988 ERA.

This last Act includes more sections on religious

education than any other previous piece of legislation. Sections 6-9 refer to collective worship and religious education in maintained schools, sections 11-13 to the formation of Standing Advisory Committees on Religious Education (SACREs) and sections 84-88 to religious education in grant-maintained schools. Section 7(1) of the Act requires that the daily act of collective worship in schools be:-

> 'wholly or mainly of a Christian nature.'
>
> (DFE, 1989)

and section 8(3) that any new syllabus of religious education should:-

> 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britian are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Britain.'
>
> (DFE, 1989)

The Act prompted the MET to publish a booklet 'What can Muslims do'? This lists four possible options one of which is withdrawal. Further to this it prepared a specimen letter for parents wishing to utilize this option and also reminded parents of the 19 legitimate requests that Muslims are entitled to make to their LEA concerning religion, diet and dress (Muslim Educational Trust, 1989).

Some Muslim parents have not only exercised their

right of withdrawal from acts of worship but also withdrawn their children from school. This has happened in Eccles where 33 parents removed their children from a voluntary controlled Anglican primary school because it refused to allow special lessons in Islamic instruction (Pyke 1990).

The Act does provide for the head teacher of any school to apply to the local SACRE for alternative worship at the expense of the LEA if Muslim parents are in the majority. This too has caused clashes.[7] Many LEAs like Bradford continue to present multifaith collective acts of worship. However by 1989 Bradford SACRE had received some 40 requests for part or whole school determinations (Jackson 1989). Calls were also made at the Islamic Education conference for SACREs in areas such as Bradford 'to see greater representations for Muslims' (Hackett,G.1991). One of the aims of this conference was to set up a meeting with the Secretary of State for Education and Science to discuss possible changes in the legislation which would allow schools to provide Islamic instruction as an alternative to Christian assemblies and religious education and

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[7]The MET has accused some local authorities of invoking paragraph 42 to avoid bearing the cost of alternative acts of worship even though they have been approved by the local SACRE (Lodge,1990). Paragraph 42 of circular 3/89 does not relate to statutory worship. This issue has now been clarified (Sarwar, 1991).

change the 'broadly Christian' wording to 'the worship of One Supreme God'.

A further aspect of the Muslim faith revolves around the call to prayer and the duty to pray 5 times a day at fixed times. Some of these prayers (depending on the length of days as the seasons change) will fall within the school day, usually during lunch and afternoon breaks (Sarwar 1991). Some schools have accommodated Muslims with regard to this by provision of a room and a place for the ritual ablution required but this response often depends on individual schools and Muslim students themselves can be reluctant to take advantage of this option (Parker- Jenkins and Haw, 1995). The Muslim faith requires fasting during Ramadan which is followed by the festival of Id-al Fitr. Another festival Id-al Adha is also widely celebrated. Muslim associations have asked education authorities to declare Muslim holy days as school holidays. Exercising such discretion is permitted under section 39(2) of the 1944 Education Act but in 1990 it was made clear by the former Secretary of State for Education and Science, John MacGregor, that this was a local decision (Lodge 1990).

Physical Education

Physical education and swimming can present obvious problems for Muslims related to the issue of dress. A survey of LEAs in the early 70's found that relatively few had been approached but about a third of secondary schools reported difficulties with Asian girls refusing to change for P.E. and Muslim girls particularly being forbidden to take part in the lessons (Townsend 1971).

Again the emerging pattern appears to be that schools and LEAs have adopted diverse and often informal responses to parent's wishes concerning physical education for their daughters. Conflicts were also revealed regarding the type of advice and guidance given by a P.E. advisor as opposed to a multicultural advisor(Little and Willey 1983). Some LEAs do have formal policies and at the discretion of the head teacher schools make special arrangements for girls to wear tracksuits, or be withdrawn, swim separately and have individual and separate showering arrangements because it is forbidden for post-puberty boys and girls to be in a state of undress in front of anyone else even of their own sex (Sarwar 1991).[8]

OtherIssues

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[8]The issues, conflicts and implications for Muslim girls and Physical Education are discussed by Carroll and Hollinshead, (1993). This paper is followed by a critique of their findings and conclusion by Siraj-Blatchford (1993).

One of the most consistent demands made by Muslim parents concerning the education of their daughters is for the provision of single sex schools. This issue has many parameters to consider which are dealt with more comprehensively in the next chapter.

Choice of language instruction has also come under scrutiny by Muslims. The ERA stipulates that a modern language must form part of the compulsory foundation subjects for all 11-16 year olds. Alongside the normal French,German and Spanish that schools offer they are being encouraged to provide Gujerati,Urdu or Arabic.This would follow recommendations set out in the Bullock Report while a 1977 EEC directive places a commitment on Britain to effect such measures (Parker -Jenkins, 1991).

There are other problem areas for the education of Muslim pupils. This chapter has highlighted the significance of Islam and the importance of the Qur'an in education which has implications for certain areas of the curriculum such as Music, Art, Dance and Drama and sex education.

As far as sex education is concerned guidelines from the Muslim Educational Trust infer that this would not be problematical if it is taught in line with sections

17,18 and 46 of the 1986 Education (No.2) Act,that is within the context and framework of family life and morality (Sarwar, 1991).

In Islam the only 'music' which transcends culture and ethnicity is the recitation of the Qur'an. It is for this reason that some Muslims avoid music altogether. Music such as unaccompanied songs about the purpose of human life, the well-being of society, the love of Allah and His prophets and the appreciation of nature are encouraged by the Qur'an. According to Sarwar what is actually unacceptable to some parents is the idea of modern, pop or disco music, again because of the moral implications.[9]

With respect to Art the Islamic tradition is frequently understood to be non-representational although some of the greatest cultural treasures of Islam are to be found in Islamic art and include figurative miniatures from Persia, Turkey and Eqypt. This may mean that some Muslim parents may not wish their children to draw human or animal figures although calligraphic and geometric techniques are encouraged.

Dance and Drama are equally problematical for some

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[9] For a further and recent discussion reflecting on the debate about music in Islam see Halstead (1994).

Muslims because of their moral aspects and the necessity to wear modest, loose clothes which cover the body fully. In general the broad areas unacceptable to Islam are public performance, physical contact between mixed participants and role-swapping.

An LEA survey on these issues was conducted by Nielsen in 1986. Eighty four local authorities were canvassed, of these nine failed to respond and two gave only partial responses. Of the seventy three replies only twenty nine made any provision or concessions to Muslims on these educational issues. These results are tabulated in Appendix 1. In 1989, three years later Midgley reported that while eighty out of one hundred and fifteen LEAs in England Scotland and Wales have adopted antiracist or multicultural policies evidence shows that in many instances not enough effort has been made to implement these policies in schools (Midgley 1989).

The responses of LEAs to Muslim requirements can at best be described as varied and are summed up by a study carried out in Birmingham concerning interaction between the Muslim community and schools in the area (Joly 1989). The study found that Muslim parents regardless of age,background,education or sex were unanimous in their belief that education was a

valuable asset. It further emphasised that any modifications introduced into schools for the benefit of Muslim children have taken place as a result of decisions by head teachers and as such have been of a sporadic and precarious nature liable to change as circumstances evolve. The study concludes that although Birmingham has been forthright in its espousal of the principles of multicultural and antiracist education it has been slow to insist that its schools act upon them. This is corroborated by a recent research project carried out with University of Nottingham funding in another city (see Parker-Jenkins and Haw, 1995).

It is only too apparent that much more needs to be done to accommodate the needs of the Muslim child in the state education system. Work to date seems to point to this being an ad hoc and pragmatic affair with issues of 'race' and gender becoming further marginalised on many levels by the 1988 ERA (see Eggleston, 1990; Haw, 1991, 1994; Klein,G. and Siraj-Blatchford, I 1991; Parker-Jenkins 1991;Reynolds 1992; Weiner, 1994).

Conclusion

This is not an exhaustive review, because these issues would themselves be the subject of an entire thesis, but

it is sufficient to signal the concerns that Muslim parents articulate when faced with the British state education system. These can usefully be examined by grouping them into four major areas, namely:-

1)The failure of the state system to adequately provide an Islamic education.

The need for Muslim teachers and authentic Muslim materials is stressed time and again (Sarwar, 1991; Union of Muslim Organisations, UMO 1989). These concerns have largely failed to be met by any iniatives for multicultural developments in education and, in fact, they arise mainly because of the multifaith approach to religious education adopted under the auspices of multicultural education.

2) The issue of how a minority maintains the integrity of its cultural identity.

Sarwar places great emphasis on this,believing that the loss of such an identity threatens the very basis of the Muslim community and pointing to the difficulty that Muslim children experience living within two cultures.The influence of Christianity in assemblies and R.E.together with other aspects of the curriculum are seen to undermine and potentially contradict Islamic views of education. These are intractable issues which are not amenable to simple solutions within the existing state system. The question of how, or even whether, a minority can maintain

its distinctiveness in a larger society is central to the whole issue of multiculturalism. It is an area where there is a vast amount of literature but little consensus of opinion.

3) The issue of parental involvement.

Most parents face bewilderment when faced with the British school system especially when their children reach secondary school age where the schools are larger and the staff less accessible. This is often magnified many times for Muslim parents who find such schools large, unfriendly and intimidating (Haw,K.1990).

4) The issues of single-sex schooling, clothing (especially for P.E. and swimming), provision of halal food, music, art and sex education, teaching of mother tongue and prayer times and facilities.

These issues are grouped together because they, like the previous one, are most readily accommodated by the state school system and, in at least some LEAs, would no longer be likely to emerge as problems. Indeed most, or all of these concerns, except for the issue of single-sex schooling, have been the target at which the main thrust of multiculturalism has been directed.

Parker-Jenkins and Haw (1995) conclude that those needs highlighted in categories three and four above are by and large accommodated by head teachers as ones which

can be most easily addressed by the school within the confines of the particular personalities, staffing profile and establishments involved. Further, that schools are involved in the 'balancing act' of accommodating those needs which can most easily be catered for and this serves as a stop gap and pragmatic measure which is aimed at producing a minority of Muslim dissidents who see the only solution as Muslim schools.

There appear to be many facets to the forebodings of these parents when faced with the British state school system and even those concerns that can be addressed are often done so rather inadequately and with very little degree of consensus.Together with the dissonances between the fundamental religious values of Muslim family life, the secular liberal values perceived to be dominant in schools and the different views of morality between the Muslims and wider indigenous culture there is the issue of racism.This occurs in the sometimes violent abuse of black children by others at and near school, and in the attitudes of teachers and school heads toward the language and customs of the children.

Faced with these seemingly unsolveable problems it is not surprising that some Muslims and Muslim organisations have felt the need to adopt a strong

'relativist' position and establish separate schools. The purpose of this chapter has been to provide the context and background information for a discussion of these private Muslim schools in the next chapter which is concerned to situate the establishment of these schools within the context of the discourse of equal opportunities.

CHAPTER THREE

FEMINIST AND MULTICULTURAL DISCOURSES IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOLING FOR MUSLIM GIRLS

Introduction

It has been argued that the school is a place in which certain 'truths' have constantly to be proved; it is a key site of the production of culture; a place where dominant cultures are transmitted and where cultural meanings are resisted and contested; it is therefore a site of production in its own right. (Giroux, 1983; Willis, 1977; Walkerdine, 1990). It is well documented that for those who have campaigned for the accommodation of the needs for Muslim girls either within the state sector, or by setting up Muslim schools that the objective of paramount importance has been one of retaining a distinctive culture and identity: specifically a religious identity, for Islam is a way of life.

An issue highlighted by the previous chapter concerns whether state education can, or should, reflect cultural/religious differences in society and whether it is possible for state schools to provide an ethos which is universally acceptable. The first section of this chapter aims to examine this question in the light of equal opportunity initiatives. It explores two themes. The first theme considers the establishment of

private Muslim schools in the context of equal opportunity iniatives in the state sector; the second theme examines the debate that has been provoked by these schools applying for voluntary aided status.

The second section of the chapter is concerned to examine the issues of gender, Islam and single-sex schooling through a brief overview of differing feminisms and how they locate themselves in the wider and general context of education. It then considers feminisms and Islam. These discussions provide the context for an exploration of Muslim and feminist responses to the debate over co-education versus single-sex schooling.

The third and final section examines the debate over Muslim girls' schools in the light of equal opportunity initiatives and through an analysis of feminist and multicultural discourses in the context of schooling for Muslim girls. It explores why antiracist and antisexist standpoints conflict over the issue of schools for Muslim girls.

3.1 Muslims and Multiculturalism

The analysis of the literature in the previous chapter highlights three points. Firstly, that the aims of Islamic education fit clearly into the religious category legislated for by the 1944 Education Act.

Secondly, the extent to which Islamic education conflicts with contemporary British educational practices and objectives. Thirdly, that the cultural and religious needs of Muslim children are approached in an ad hoc and pragmatic way so that those needs which are accommodated are seen as 'goodwill' gestures in a balancing act which aims to offset and deflect the accommodation of those needs which equal opportunities initiatives have failed to address. These points now need to be examined with regard to the equal opportunity initiatives implemented by Local Authorities.

Official reaction in the 1960's was to pursue assimilationist policies giving exclusive priority to the teaching of English to immigrant children and absorbing them into British culture. At this time Bradford, for example, used bussing to keep the number of immigrants in any one class or school to a level which it was thought would help language development and integration (Halstead, 1988). Assimilationist conceptions of educational aims often resulted in a disturbing lack of sensitivity. Muslim pupils would, for example, be served with 'English food' only school menus (Mullard, 1985).

The failure of this assimilationist approach linked to an inappropriate curriculum soon became apparent and

research indicated that it resulted in large scale underachievement amongst immigrant children. It appeared that this was due to low teacher expectation, isolation from mainstream school because of attendance at language centres, a tendency for them to be declared as Educationally Sub Normal and a general dissatisfaction with a system which undervalued them and what they had to offer (Coard, 1971; Townsend and Brittan, 1973; Verma and Bagley, 1975). From the failures of this approach an integrationist model evolved.

This integrationist model attempted to shift the emphasis of thought and policy away from cultural imperatives and towards political integration from a position of expected equality. This was assumed to be achievable through provision of equal educational, social and economic opportunities so that black groups would be able to re-negotiate their position in society with the various dominant power groups (Mullard, 1985). The problem with this model was that it failed to recognise that those who desire social and academic achievement need to conform and accept (if only passively) a school ethos before anything can usefully be gained from the supposed equal opportunities provided. This model was therefore seen to suppress cultural symbols of social existence and

require submission to a form of control that denied their existence.

The refined version of this latter model has come to be known as cultural pluralism/multiculturalism. It is accompanied by a multiplicity of interpretations. For some it can mean a policy of total cultural segregation; for others it can mean a policy of revised integration based upon a more equitable distribution of power; and yet again for others it can be used to justify more educational development, curricular expansion and educational sensitivity. In this way multiculturalism has been developed as multiethnic and multiracial education although these terms have not been taken as synonymous by their exponents.

Educational initiatives under these headings have varied from the use of diversity of backgrounds in primary school settings to the complete re-drafting of the curriculum and teaching methods to eliminate ethnocentrism and racism. Responses to multiculturalism have also varied widely. At its worst it has been accused of presenting children with caricatures of their own cultures (the saris, samosas, steel bands approach; Troyna, 1987).

During the 1980's a variety of texts reflecting on multiculturalism were published which dealt with the

intractable difficulties which arise between individuals and groups in every society (Craft and Bardell, 1984; Little and Willey, 1981; Rex, 1989; Tomlinson, 1984; Verma, 1989; Walkling, 1980). By the end of the 1980s the efficacy of multicultural education was being challenged from many perspectives. There was an argument for a 'stronger' version of multiculturalism which went beyond its focus on self-identity, ethnic culture and family background to the roots of racism by examining the operation of unequal power relations and the role of institutions.

Students were encouraged to understand the historical processes of colonialism and immigration as a means of understanding contemporary British 'multicultural' society and antiracists policies were developed by some Local Authorities, such as the now disbanded Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). Such policies were implemented against the backdrop of a progressive centralization of power and subversion of local democracy culminating in the abolition of the Greater London Council and Metropolitan Council by central government in 1986 (Kavanagh, 1987). This also coincided with a backlash to antiracism which focussed on the discourse of citizenship, fuelled by the New Right and disquiet from parents.

The decade also saw the publication of major reports such as the Rampton Report on underachievement (1981) and the Swann Report on the education of children from minority groups (1985). Four years later came the Macdonald Report, Murder in the Playground, (1989) resulting from the inquiry into the murder of Ahmed Iqbal Ullah by a white boy in the playground of Burnage High School, and between this there was the Honeyford Affair and the Dewsbury and Cleveland incidents all of which attracted a great deal of media attention (Rattansi, 1992).[1] Some of this attention was directed at 'loony left councils' and the government used this as sufficient justification for a series of moves to centralise power, challenge and undermine the fragile liberal consensus that Swann had tried to effect and introduce the Education Reform Act and the National Curriculum. This policy was implemented at precisely the time when a new progressive doctrine was taking shape but when local powers to implement such policies were being undermined by the assault on antiracism, legitimated and partly fuelled by the media offensive initiated by the New Right.

While the multicultural/antiracist debate is subjected

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[1]A detailed discussion of the Honeyford Affair, and the Dewsbury and Cleveland incidents is to be found in Appendix II.

to continuous reappraisal, particularly since the implementation of the ERA, to some Muslims it has meant the adoption of an approach which has not adequately addressed their religious/cultural requirements. For this reason an increasing number of Muslim schools have been established. The establishment of these schools and the debate about them is strongly influenced by the history of multicultural education briefly considered in this section and provides the context for the remainder of the chapter.

Muslim Schools

The failure of the state system to provide an Islamic education in any sense is seen by Muslims to arise largely because of the multifaith approach to religous education and other curricular areas adopted under the auspices of multiculturalism. The concern of how a minority group maintains its distinctiveness in a larger society is central to the whole issue of multiculturalism. The debate is further complicated by the implementation of the National Curriculum which has been interpreted as a rejection of many multicultural initiatives in favour of an implicitly Eurocentric agenda (Eggleston,1990). Campaigners for Muslim schools have challenged the efficacy of multiculturalism in enabling Muslim children to retain

and develop their distinctive identity or to redress racism. This highlights the failure of those educational initiatives implemented thus far to effectively address the needs of a plural society.

As early as 1968 it was predicted that demands for 'separate'schools, as they have been dubbed by bodies such as Swann, would increase (Derrick, and Goodall, 1968).[2] Such demands became more apparent in the late 1970s as the immigrant communities established themselves and gained the confidence to re-assert their cultural and religious norms (Saifullah-Kahn, 1977). More recently incidents already referrred to such as the Honeyford Affair, the Dewsbury and Cleveland controversies, the row over Salman Rushdie's book and the Gulf War have all served to sharpen the community's sense of awareness of its own sense of identity and of the depth of the philosophical chasm separating Muslim culture and Islam from what is viewed as the predominantly secular and 'permissive' nature of contemporary British society. Such incidents have also heightened the community's sense of isolation and powerlessness.This has resulted in the formation of Muslim pressure groups (most recently the Muslim Parliament, BMMS,1993) which have multiplied and become more expert in

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[2]It should be noted here that the term is one that is much objected to by some Muslims because of its connotations of separation and isolation (The Islamic Academy 1985).

making their voices heard.[3]

Very often such private schools have been established as LEAs have closed single-sex schools in a specific area (Nielsen, 1986; Haw, 1990). It is thus the issues of gender and religion which have been the main thrust and impetus behind the establishment of these schools. In 1979 two LEAs had been approached by Muslim communities to establish single-sex schools (Little and Willey, 1983). Such representations gathered momentum in the early 1980s with applications made to the LEAs of Birmingham, Bradford and Kirklees. In 1978 one Muslim school, Darul Uloom al Arabiya at Islamiya near Bury, Greater Manchester was known to exist, while in 1982 the School of Islamics, operating on a very modest scale in Stratford, London was established (Mack, 1979; Lodge, 1982).

In January 1989 it was noted that there were fifteen private Muslim schools with plans to set up another twenty (Midgeley, 1989). A directory of schools provided by the MET in December 1989 listed twenty one, although in varying degrees of establishment and permanence (Haw, 1990). A further update provided in July/August 1991 again lists twenty one full time

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[3]For an example of a meeting of the Muslim Parliament see British Muslim Monthly Survey, Vol.II, No.11, December 1994.

Muslim schools or pre-schools in England. Of these eleven are secondary schools for girls and one at Summerfield near Kidderminster, opened in 1989, is a boarding school leading to further education in Islamic Studies.[4] Of the other ten schools, three are secondary schools for boys (two of which are boarding), four are primary schools, (one of which is for girls only), one is a pre-school and the other two are primary and secondary boarding schools for boys and girls (See Appendix III). These schools cater for appromixately one thousand two hundred girls out of an approximate total population of two hundred and fifty thousand Muslim pupils in this country (Weston, 1989; Berliner, 1993).

Some of the early HMI reports on private Muslim schools revealed poor and inadequate premises, no specialist science or sports facilities, a lack of, or inappropriate text books and/or other equipment and staffing problems both in terms of qualifications and permanence.[5] It was reported that one school had four head teachers in less than two years (Parkin, 1984).

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[4]It has been reported that Britain's first Muslim Girls' boarding school is to be set up in a disused hospital in Bradford.(Rafferty, 1991). If it is, it will be the second and not the first.

[5]A selection of these reports is to be found in Appendix IV.

However, it is important to note that it is not only Muslim schools which have received such reports. Similar reports have been published about Jewish schools (see for example the HMI report on Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School, Hackney, 20-24th Of June, 1983).[6] It has been pointed out that these schools must operate in accordance with the Education Acts of 1944 and 1985 and such adverse reports could mean that individual schools could be removed from the register (Bradney, 1987). Operating a school which is not on the register is a criminal offence. Bradney states that the purpose of these schools:-

> 'is to provide children with an education in a way of life which is avowedly different from the one prevalent in the U.K.'
> (Bradney, 1987 p.413)

He notes that HMI reports primarily relate to the suitability of the premises, competence of the teaching staff and efficiency and suitability of the instruction provided. He concludes:- HMI reports revolve around these issues. For schools set up to promote the interests of ethnic minorities or religious groups it is the

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[6]The irony of this is that while there are still no Muslim voluntary aided schools there are Jewish voluntary aided schools. The last Jewish school to be granted voluntary aided status was the Hasmonean Jewish school in Barnet which was granted this status in March 1993. The Islamia school in Brent was refused such status in August 1993 on the grounds that were too many surplus places in neighbouring schools (BMMS, August, 1994, Vol.II, No.7). It is also reported that two more Jewish schools in Barnet have been given backing by the Local Authority to apply for voluntary aided status (Jewish Chronicle, 8.7.94.).

questions concerning what constitutes

> 'efficient and suitable education which are potentially the most contentious issues.'
> (Bradney, 1987 p.413)

This is a key question with respect to 'separate' schools for they raise the complex issues not only of the purpose of education but the extent to which it is practical or even desirable to tailor children's education to the philosophical and religious beliefs of the parents.[7]

Voluntary Aided Status

There are Muslims who feel so strongly about their rights to Islamic schools and state funding that they are willing to vigorously pursue several options. One is to continue campaigning for Muslim voluntary aided schools, the second is to target existing schools for 'opting out' of LEA control.[8] A further option, and one which is being advised by the Muslim parliament, would follow proposals set out in the 1992 White Paper which are now incorporated into the 1993 Act. These invite any

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[7]Britain is the signatory to International and European Treaties concerning the wishes of parents and the education of their children which are not incorporated into British Domestic Law. However,there is an implication that British legislation is consistent with these undertakings (Beddard, 1980; Jacobs, 1975; Robertson,1982) For a further discussion of these legal aspects see Haw, 1994; Parker-Jenkins, 1993.

[8]In 1991 Muslim activists led a campaign for a mass opt out of five schools in Newham (Sen and Nurmohamed, 1991).

group of parents to set up a voluntary-aided Grant Maintained school on condition that they provide 15 per cent of the initial capital costs. All subsequent costs would be met by central Government.

The Muslim Parliament publishes guidance booklets to help with this procedure in the belief that setting up new schools is easier and more effective than trying to take over existing ones (Pyke,1992b). This has also been urged by prominent Muslim educationalists who believe it to be a way of countering an education system which is failing Muslim children (Ashraf, 1988 and Lodge, 1989). Current research however, indicates that despite the existence of these other avenues, voluntary aided status is the preferred option for Muslim schools because the religious dimension is of paramount importance (Parker-Jenkins and Haw, 1995). However, it is likely that continued refusal of voluntary aided status for Muslim schools will make these other avenues increasingly attractive.[9]

The assumption, rarely voiced is that Muslim schools would, in practice, be very different from

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[9]This is the option that is being pursued by the Islamia school, Brent, having had its appeal for the right to voluntary aided status turned down after a long battle. This would take advantage of the clauses in the 1993 Act which legislate for the provision of funding for schools formed by voluntary groups. For a discussion of this option see Haw, 1994, Parker-Jenkins and Haw, 1995 and Pyke, 1992.

existing Church schools taking their religious mission much more seriously and promoting fundamentalism and indoctrination in the classroom. Generally opposition to these schools is voiced on two grounds:

1) That it encourages a racial and cultural divide which is already worryingly deep for, unlike other denominational schools, Muslim schools cater for a predominantly visible minority.

2) It reduces the educational opportunities available to Muslim girls because it is believed that such schools reflect a cultural tradition which relegates them to an inferior position and gives them a sub-standard education aimed at a preparation for a life of domesticity and motherhood only.

But the questions that need to be asked of these schools are:

Are they a reaction to discrimination, conflict and educational failure and are they a fundamentalist means of empowerment and strength which will crystallize the racial, cultural and religious issues separating some Muslims from the white indigenous British population?

There are therefore cultural, racial, religious and political dimensions to be considered in the debate which surrounds Muslim schools and voluntary aided Muslim schools.

The policy review document of the Labour Party accepts the principle of voluntary aided schools for religious minorities provided they are prepared to follow the National Curriculum (Labour Party,July 1989). Not long ago Labour Party backing for more voluntary aided schools would have been unthinkable. Traditionally, a powerful Labour lobby has called for the abolition of existing denominational schools, but faced with wooing the Muslim vote and promoting integration in line with antiracist policies Labour find themselves pushed into a corner.

This is equally true for the present Conservative Government. Some members, support the principle that all religious groups should be entitled to their own schools within the state system (Judd, 1989), and to this end Baroness Cox unsuccessfully attempted to introduce a Private Members Bill, in March 1990, aiming to make it easier for all religious schools to receive state funding (Lustig, 1990). On the other hand there is also a lobby within the Conservative Party which believes that Muslim schools would be divisive in the same way as Catholic and Protestant schools are in Northern Ireland (Judd, 1989).

There are already some state schools in Bradford, Birmingham and London which are very close to

having a wholly Muslim student body.[10] They are 'de facto' the separate schools that Swann argued against. One school, Small Heath Comprehensive in Birmingham, where 90% of the pupils at the time of the parents' ballot was Muslim, has already opted out (Cumper, 1990). Although the procedure for opting out is complex it presents fewer conditions to be fulfilled than for voluntary aided status. (DFE,1988). The head teacher of this school says that the parents wanted,

> 'to make the school more sympathetic to Islam.'
> (Cumper, 1990. p386)

The legislation does expressly forbid opted out schools to change their character but sections 89 and 91 of the 1988 Act do make provisions for changes provided that they are authorised by the Secretary of State (Haw, 1994).

The issue of 'race' is also inextricably involved in the question of voluntary aided status, despite the fact that Muslims themselves wish it were otherwise so the Race Relations Act (1976) becomes relevant. This Act provides guidance to schools and LEAs on the avoidance of discriminatory actions. Section 1(2) states:-

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[10]There are 62 schools in Britain where Muslims make up 90% plus of the school roll and a further 238 where Muslim pupils exceed 75% of the school population (British Muslims Monthly Survey, 1994, Vol.1 No.8).

'It is hereby declared that,for the purposes of this Act, segregating a person from other persons on racial grounds is treating him less favourably than they are treated.'

While section 3 states:-

'(1) In this Act..."racial grounds" means any of the following grounds, namely colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins.....'

And section 71 states:-

'...it shall be the duty of every local authority to make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their various functions are carried out with due regard to the need - a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and b) to promote equality of opportunity, and good relations between persons of different racial groups.'

It could therefore be suggested that local authorities would be in breach of the Act if they sanctioned voluntary aided Muslim schools because this would effectively be segregating on racial lines as these schools are normally located in areas where a large number of the children are ethnically Pakistani. Section 1(2) of the Act deems this to be unfavourable treatment. Further it is argued that such schools would militate against the need to 'promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups'. But within Race Relations legislation there is also the issue of 'one class of people' being treated less favourably than another and arguably this is happening to Muslims over the issue of voluntary aided schools. It has prompted the CRE to

state:

> 'In line with the Race Relations Act 1976, so long as existing arrangements for granting voluntary status are in force, no application from a minority faith school should be given less favourable treatment, either by an education authority or by the DES, than any other application. Any decision or application must be made on non-racial grounds.'
> (CRE, 1990. p22 Emphasis added)

The CRE also cites the 1944 Education Act. This allows for any religious group to establish voluntary aided schools. Section 76 states:-

> 'The minister and local education authorities shall have regard to the general principle that..pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.'

However this clause does go on to say that this to be consistent with efficient expenditure of public monies and this has been used to justify a failure to respond to parents wishes.

Although legal remedy for choice in schooling may be sought by Muslim and "British" parents seeking education in accordance with philosophical or religious convictions such solutions are subject to long and drawn out appeal procedures and whether such advocacy cloaks racist agendas or is a genuine desire for schooling in "British citizenship" is a dilemma which is yet to be resolved (Parker-Jenkins, 1987). Meanwhile Muslim leaders are continuing to demand financial support for Muslim schools.

Muslim leaders have also indicated that atheists or non-believers will not be appointed or retained in the service of Muslim schools (Ashraf, 1988). The implications of this are not yet fully clear. Research carried out in three private Muslim girls' schools shows that the majority of the teaching staff are not Muslims mainly due to a lack of suitably qualified Muslim teachers although this will possibly be redressed in the future as such candidates emerge (Haw, 1990). Thus a further complication is added to the debate, the issue of whether teachers can be dismissed on the basis of their religion (or lack of it), or their moral standards. Similar dismissals have occured in Catholic schools (Blackburne, 1991).[11]

The Islamia Primary School, Brent, North London won permission in principle to seek voluntary aided status in June 1986 (Haw, 1990). It then took three more years to obtain planning approval for necessary extensions only to be refused such status in May 1990 by the present Government. (Lodge, 1990). The case went to appeal but was finally lost in August 1993 on the grounds of surplus places in the primary schools within a two mile radius of the Islamia school

(British Muslims Monthly Survey, BMMS, 1993 Vol.1 No.8).

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[11] Further discussions of these concerns are to be found in Cumper, 1990.

The Zakaria school in Batley, West Yorkshire did not reach this advanced hurdle, failing to gain support from Kirklees Education Committee on the grounds that it was too small to justify state funding (The Guardian 22.2.89). A spokesperson for The Islamic Schools Trust stated that such objections were a deliberate ploy, with the wording of an official Kirklees document being nearer the truth viz:-

> 'More difficult to gauge are the less direct effects and consequences of the establishment of an aided school which has Islam as its ethos.'
>
> (Durham, 1989)

This issue caused Muslim pupils to boycott schools at the time and The Muslim Educational Services organised a protest campaign.

At the time of writing, the Muslim Girls' Community School, Bradford, now Feversham College, is waiting to hear whether they have been successful in their application for voluntary aided status. In its favour it has: the backing of the local authority: suitable premises: a long waiting list: stability: a satisfactory and improving academic reputation; and the local schools are over subscribed in certain areas. A decision from the DFE is expected early in 1995. There are also other Muslim schools which have either applied or are contemplating an application depending on advice from the Association of

Muslim Schools.[12]

In this complex debate over Muslim schools and voluntary aided status, two things are very clear. One is the importance of maintaining a religious identity; the other is the preference for single-sex schooling for their daughters as a priority, and also for their sons. Anwar, 1982; Mabud, 1992; Iqra Trust, 1991). It is this second issue which is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

3.2 Gender, Islam and Single-sex Schooling

Feminists have questioned whether girls benefit from co-education and whether more serious consideration should be given to the single-sex alternative (see Burgess, 1990; Deem, 1984; Faulkner, 1991). Single-sex schooling has also become one of the most persistent demands of Muslims in this country ever since they became numerous enough to make their voices heard (see Anwar, 1981; Nielsen, 1986 ; Parker-Jenkins and Haw 1995). The purpose of this section is to provide a short review of Muslim and feminist responses to education generally and to single-sex education in particular, for it is in this area that this research

[12]This information was provided by replies to my postal survey which promised confidentiality. I am therefore unable to name particular schools.

is specifically located.

The question is in effect a complex one revolving around: the ethos and philosophies guiding the educational practices in both Muslim girls' schools and state maintained girls' schools: who teaches in such schools; and what is being taught. The section deals with three themes. The first theme explores differing feminisms and how they locate themselves in the wider and general context of education. The second theme examines feminisms and Islam, and the third theme concludes the section with a consideration of Muslim and feminist responses to the debate over co-education versus single-sex schooling.

Feminisms and Education

Feminism has a long history and many different perspectives weave their way through it. The purpose here is to give a brief overview of that history and to concentrate on a particular aspect of feminist theory - that relating to education. It specifically considers how different feminisms relate to differing theories and approaches to the education of girls. This is necessarily an overview because a detailed consideration of the wealth of contemporary international work on feminist epistemology, arguments and current debate, would itself demand a separate thesis. These debates reflect the broader

fundamental feminist concerns of patriarchy, capitalism, power relationships, biology, the body, physical strength and violence, sexuality and sexual violence. The research itself, as I have already indicated is also rooted in feminist epistemology and concerned with the construction of feminist methodology. This has been outlined in Chapter One while Chapter Four further considers these broader feminist issues.

Before highlighting the fragmentations of feminism in relation to education it is my intention to emphasize the commonalties which thread their way through these feminisms. Firstly, all feminisms are concerned with women and girls. What unites them is an emphasis on how central gender divisions are to the organisation of society and its mode of operation. Currently this is based on the myths of a single society, objectivity, historical and cultural abstraction, non-interference and authority/power.

Secondly, Griffiths (1995) argues that all these feminist epistemologies have a moral/political stance with 'values' and 'power' as organising concepts and have been developed in response to the disempowerment of women which form the basis of other epistemologies. The concern of feminists is that those in positions of power define the knowledge against which all other

constructs of knowledge are measured. Further for all feminists, politics and values must precede epistemology, which is where analysis begins because feminism is not just about theory it is about our day to day lives and realities. It is of significance

> 'because there is a prevailing sexism in and out of formal educational institutions: schools, universities,local authorities, governing bodies, government departments, educational publishing and voluntary pressure groups. It distorts educational practices and educational outcomes. Inevitably it also distorts how we (all of us) understand - i.e. research - them in order to improve them. This is precisely the concern of feminist epistemology: how to improve knowledge and remove sexist distortions.
> (Griffiths, 1995, p.219)

This relates to a third uniting factor identified by Griffiths, that of the importance of self or subjectivity. She argues that none of the feminist epistemologies assume that there is an 'objective', 'view from nowhere' or a 'God's eye view' and all assume the self or subjectivity is a starting point in the collective enterprise of formulating a usually feminist perspective. This is evidenced in the work of Irigaray, Code, Haraway, Harding, Seller, Young, hooks and Walkerdine (Griffiths, 1995). These commonalities provide the starting point for charting the development of feminist discourses within and about British education. They correspond to Weiner's three dimensions of feminism which are:

' *political* - a movement to improve the conditions and life-chances for girls and women;

critical - a sustained intellectual critique of dominant (male) forms of knowing and doing;

praxis - orientated - concerned with the development of more ethical forms of professional and personal practice.'

Weiner, 1994 p.7-8

The importance of these similarities need to be kept in mind while different feminist perspectives on education are considered. These differing feminist discourses are not only theoretically significant but they also affect views about educational outcomes and strategies for change. Measor and Sikes (1992) identify three areas which distinguish different feminist approaches to education. These are, the causes of women's oppression and their concept of patriarchy, strategies for change and the goal for society, each of which have different effects on the study of education.[13]

The following account necessarily reduces and distils different feminist theoretical approaches to education to their essence through categorisation. This was less

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[13] The term patriarchy is used in this study to refer to the exploitation of women through the social, economic, political and physical structures identifiable throughout society and which maintain male privileges in a number of ways, articulated by specificities of 'race', class, sexuality,physical ability etc.

problematical in the seventies and eighties when Jaggar (1988) identified four different kinds of white, western feminism: liberal, Marxist, radical and socialist. However, the 1990s has witnessed a merging and multipositioning of these perspectives in the light of poststructuralist and postmodernist influences so that theorists can often be located as easily at one end of one perspective as at the other end of another perspective depending on the particular educational issue under consideration. These trends can be clearly traced in academic texts concerned with educational issues especially if their date of publication is noted. In 1987 Arnot and Weiner identified three perspectives on feminism which, they argued, had made the most impact on education: they termed these 'Equal Rights in Education' (namely liberal feminism), 'Patriarchal Relations' (radical feminism) and 'Class, Race and Gender: Structures and Ideologies' (Marxist / socialist feminism), this last perspective being a merging of Jaggar's categorisation. The aims of each of these perspectives differ somewhat in their emphasis which is directly linked to their differing identification of the cause of gender inequalities or oppression, as highlighted by Measor and Sikes.

In spite of recent developments these feminist discourses remain in existence. Liberal feminists deny the importance

of both capitalist and patriarchal structures and processes in education. Liberal feminism has also arguably been the most enduring and accepted of all feminisms. It was associated with the emergence of liberal individualism and Protestantism at the time of the Enlightenment (at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries), based on the ideas of natural rights, justice and democracy. It therefore asserts that individual women should be enabled to determine their social, political and educational roles, and that any laws, traditions or activities that inhibit equal rights and opportunities should be abolished. Access to education is a basic premise of this perspective as it claims that by providing equal education for both sexes, an environment would be created in which each individual's potential can be developed and encouraged.

Liberal feminists assume that equality is achievable by democratic reforms, without the need for revolutionary changes in political, economic or cultural life. Many of the equal opportunity initiatives considered in this thesis are rooted in this liberal, egalitarian position. Methods for realising these goals include the eradication of institutional sexism through the development of a legal framework to ensure equality of access in educational settings; the development of equal opportunities policies in schools; the

encouragement of girls to move into male dominated areas of the curriculum; and the employment of more women in senior educational positions so that they realise their potential at work and in public, as well as private life.

The remaining three perspectives that I have highlighted use the concept of 'oppression'. Marxist feminism attempts to incorporate ideas about women's oppression and patriarchal relationships into classic Marxism, focussing, in particular, on the relationship between production (the labour market) and reproduction (the family); the interrelationship of capitalism and patriarchy; and the complex interplay between gender, culture and society (see, for example, Barrett 1980; Davis, 1981; Segal, 1987). Accordingly, patriarchy has a materialist and historical basis in that capitalism is founded on a patriarchal division of labour.

Marxist strategies for change revolve round the liberation of the working class so that capitalism is replaced with a socialist system where the means of production belong to everybody. The oppression of women will then disappear simultaneously. The importance of this perspective in educational terms is the emphasis that it places on class and gender relationships but

its theoretical complexities and its roots in the Marxist analysis of society which is critiqued for being 'gender blind' means that it has failed to attract large numbers of women to its political position, especially since the demise of other Marxisms in the late eighties.

Socialist feminists have tried to take account of this criticism while holding on to the basic insights that Marxism offers. They suggest that both patriarchy and capitalism are interwoven, both serving the needs of the other and that both must be defeated. While acknowledging that we need to know about gender discrimination in school, socialist and Marxist feminists insist that we cannot fully understand the problem without taking account of the whole social context and the class system. As far as education is concerned research and strategies for change are therefore directed at the interface of gender and class inequality.

Socialist feminists in particular argue that working class girls are disadvantaged at school because they undergo the experience of class inequality and also receive messages about their subordination to men. The division of labour is a crucial factor in socialist feminist theory. They suggest that schools direct a range of messages about appropriate roles and activities to

girls and thereby occupy a central place in reproducing the division of labour across generations. In the belief that both working class girls and boys resist middle class values imposed in schools, research in this area is directed at deviance (See Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970; Willis, 1977 for work on boys and Davies, 1984; McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Llewellyn, 1980 for work on girls).

Radical feminists argue that patriarchy predates capitalism and what we now have is,

> 'patriarchal capitalism and not capitalist patriarchy'
>
> (Hartmann, 1979, p.230).

Two key ideas in radical feminism are that patriarchy is of overarching importance and that the personal is political. Sexuality is a crucial issue for radical feminists because they argue personal and sexual relationships are tainted by an underlying power imbalance and therefore need to be changed. This has led to a re-evaluation of the traditional values of femininity so that women's biology, especially their child bearing capacities and the nurturant personality that derives from it are seen as a potential source of liberation. Initially radical feminists focussed on different varieties of male sexual domination (pornography, prostitution, sexual harassment and

violence against women) and fought politically against these issues while more recently the focus has been on reifying the traditional female role (Kadar, 1988; Eisenstein, 1984; Dworkin, 1981; London Lesbian Offensive Group, 1984; Morgan, 1984; Burris, 1973; Daly, 1978; Bunch, 1987; Rich,1980; Rowland,1987).

The concern of radical feminists is to analyse the way patriarchy is reinforced in schools so it concentrates on the power relationships between girls and boys in school and it seeks to make the educational experiences of women more central to the education of girls. The present curriculum, whether taught by women or not, is therefore a target for change in the need to create a knowledge-base that illuminates the experiences of women. Another objective is the establishment of organisations designed to meet the needs of girls, to help them achieve their potential and make full use of their educational achievements while not denigrating the work of their mothers, friends and women in the community.

Radical feminism has attempted to clarify the nature of patriarchal relations in education, looking particularly at the links between male power, sexual violence, masculinity and femininity and sexuality in the context of education. More recently it has been concerned to bring out into the

open not only facts about the verbal, physical and sexual harrassment experienced by girls in mixed schools but also to highlight the problem of male sexuality (see Jones and Mahony, 1989).

In 1992, Measor and Sikes in their book on Gender and Schools catalogue four main feminist perspectives - liberal, radical, socialist and psychoanalytic, while in 1989 Tong identifies seven - liberal, Marxist, radical, psychanalytic, socialist, existentialist and postmodernism feminisms. Arnot and Weiner were rightly criticised for marginalising black feminism and lesbian feminism so that in 1994, Weiner now adopting a poststructural analysis of feminisms in education, discusses these as well as Christian feminism, humanist feminism, Muslim feminism and eco-feminism. These have all emerged as feminism has become more fractured. These feminisms are interwoven with, and complementary to, the feminisms that have been highlighted, in particular liberal and radical feminism which have permeated and influenced the British school curriculum and educational practices more generally.

Black feminism in particular has been responsible for causing feminists to re-evaluate their thinking as I have already discussed in Chapter One. As far as education is concerned black feminists have been responsible for

highlighting the endemic nature of both racism and sexism by concentrating on exposing the pathologization of black family culture and fracturing the widely held stereotypes of black femininity. This has been achieved through explorations of the actual experiences of black girls in educational establishments (see Amos and Parmar, 1984; Mirza, 1992), the racism and sexism of teaching staff (Wright, 1987) and the construction of black students as problems (Williams, 1987). In particular black feminists have been concerned that by distinguishing between 'race' and gender in education and treating them as a duality black girls have been rendered invisible. This is the focus of my research in respect of Muslim girls and therefore requires no further discussion at this point since it is a linkage throughout the entire thesis.

At this time other feminisms appear to have had less impact on education although poststructuralism, principally through the work of Walkerdine is becoming influential in Britain. The interest in the way that discourse operates as a 'normalising' process in which knowledge and power is connected, and the prioritization of the 'micro' means, it is argued, that it is possible to create a 'reverse-discourse' thus creating alternative ways to say the "unsayable". Strategies for change involve students being encouraged

to develop a critical awareness of their positioning in educational discourses. Again this is a focus of this thesis. It is discussed briefly in Chapter One and more fully in Chapter Four but more importantly it is a thread which weaves its way through this entire work.

I have already pointed out the weaknesses of categorisation and its constituent problems but this analysis outlines how feminism has shifted over the past two decades and how this has impacted with education and educational issues. At the beginning of the section I emphasized the commonalities running through these different feminisms which is the concern to understand what has caused women's subordination in order to campaign and struggle against it. All these theoretical understandings are dependent on ideological and political value positions. Feminism is about resistance to any one dominant discourse but the distinctions are helpful when examining the positionings of gender and Islam and when assessing the compatibility of Muslim and feminist arguments for single-sex schools which are the main considerations of the following sections in this chapter.

*

Feminisms and Islam

Where Muslim women are concerned, racialized discourses articulate with those of gender in their social

representation. The 'oriental female', especially the Muslim woman has come to occupy a position of the 'other' in the discursive space surrounding the long history of Orientalisms (see Said, 1978; Kabbani, 1986). She is exoticized and represented as ruthlessly oppressed and in need of liberation. She is guardian and guarded (Afshar, 1994). She is read as victim/ emblem of religious fundamentalism, as custodian of religious beliefs, even though as Afshar (1994) argues for centuries it has been men who have been the interpreters of norms, values and practices according to that belief. She has reflected the religious and cultural commitment of the group in her attire and behaviour. She is the bearer of 'races' and cultures which are constructed as inherently threatening to western civilizations. This has been a shifting process and one in which at various times and places Muslim women have needed to negotiate different arrangements with the patriarchal structures within which they have been placed (Kandiyoti, 1991).

When Muslim communities perceive themselves to be threatened and disempowered it is the women who have had to submit to greater degrees of suppression than at times of success and optimism. This is done through claims for the necessity to adhere to absolute laws embedded in the text of the Qur'an and it is at times of crisis that the return to this position is advocated

through stricter controls and rejection of those who fail to conform. Not all Muslim women are equally affected because there are divisions, as always, along class, cultural, national and traditional lines, with old aristocratic and wealthy families using their position and/or wealth as a means of negotiation with the host society. For most Muslim women it is these changing circumstances, this ebb and flow in the fortunes of Muslim communities that they have had to negotiate.

In the past the dilemma for western feminisms concerning the position of Muslim women has been the:

> 'great difficulty in steering interpretation of these arguments between the Scylla of cultural relativism (Muslim women cannot be judged to be oppressed when they are simply celebrating the Muslim way of life - the western concept of autonomy is irrelevant to their culture) and the Charybdis of positive truth (we know Muslim women are oppressed even if they do not, because we possess universal criteria of oppression, external to Islam, which identify veiling, the celebration of motherhood and cliterodectomy as oppressive).'
>
> (Ramazanoglu, 1986 p.259)

However the well deserved critique of white western feminisms by black feminisms has meant that the more recent discourses of the new ethnicities and feminisms have opened up the discursive space for Muslim women to explore what it means to be a Muslim woman, sometimes living as a minority in western societies. It has

allowed Muslim women to express the difficulties of finding new ways to negotiate between the unacceptable extremes contained in the above quote.

This has meant that from the mid eighties there has been a number of works in English or translated into English on the predicament and the possibilities for Muslim women. The consensus of this literature confirms the position of Muslim women as the site of unprecedented struggle within Islam as well as the considerable resistance to the condemnation by Western observers of aspects of Islamic culture such as veiling, female circumcision and family laws.[14] In this respect western scholarship is seen as having little to offer Muslim women either in understanding their oppression or in suggesting solutions.

Collectively these works assert the rights of Muslim women to search for the causes of women's oppression in Islamic societies while not necessarily accepting that Islam is to blame. Ahmed (1992), for example presents the view of Islam as a foundationally non-sexist religion through an historical analysis of the laws and practices of the core Islamic discourses and an

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[14]For further discussions on these issues see El Sadaawi, 1980; Hussain, 1984; Fernea, 1985; Unesco, 1984; Boudhiba, 1985; Mernissi, 1975, 1991; Trivedi, 1984; Amos and Parmar, 1984; Ramazanoglu, 1989.

analysis of the role of women in early Islamic societies. Even though there is general agreement that Islam has developed on to cultural systems which are oppressive to Muslim women, there is also agreement that this was not always the case (Mernissi, 1975, 1991).

This has meant that western feminists have had a timely reminder that historical explanations of the causes of gender inequality which treated 'woman' as a universal category of the oppressed are open to critique and that women's struggles to assert their rights, needs to take place without the destruction of cultural identity. These critiques have raised critical issues for feminists. These issues focus on whether it is possible to recognise oppression in general and whether it is possible to develop universal political practices to transform different societies if oppression takes culturally specific forms. While Muslim feminists do not deny the significance of sexual politics in the oppression of Muslim women they argue that Muslim women have always engaged in other conflicts, and that there are political and economic struggles in which they may need to fight alongside Muslim men.

In their historical search for the real causes of women's oppression in Islamic societies Muslim

feminists have marshalled various theoretical approaches. Ramazanoglu (1986) argues that in an attempt to link the oppression of Muslim women with loosely defined conceptions of feudalism and capitalism Marxism has been theoretically attractive to some Muslim feminists. This is particularly the case for those who have been seeking to understand historical variations in oppression and the slow transformation of Islam from a system of gender difference to one of gender oppression. The works of Hussain, Fernea, Boudhiba and El Sadaawi draw implicitly on a number of Marxist arguments but have rejected Marxism partly because of the problem of combining gender and class in accounting for women's oppression but more especially in a defensive stance against western social theories.

In a similar vein Ramazanoglu argues that while some Muslim feminists see liberalism as a practical means of improving women's access to education, health care, employment and legal rights, this view is seen to be over simplistic on two counts. Firstly, it does not tackle the underlying social problems of poverty, inequality, male honour and the power relations which maintain female oppression. Secondly, western emancipation is seen to introduce new evils such as loss of social control, excessive individualism and the

destruction of extended family ties on which women depend for support and to which the west has found no solution.

For those Muslim feminists who do not espouse religious fundamentalism, who reject the liberal solution as ineffectual, and who reject Marxism as culturally unacceptable this has meant the necessity of constructing new theories to explain the oppression of Muslim women at different periods and in different societies from within Islam. This has been done by demonstrating the cultural and historical variations in oppression within Muslim socities and by disentangling these forms of oppression from an 'authentic' Islam so that this could provide a cultural identity for Muslims without the need to oppress women. Hussain (1984) for example, like El Sadaawi (1980) urges women to seek their own salvation within a new Islam so that equality and liberation can be achieved by **'becoming your own woman in your own province'**, that is by defining complementary but non-oppressive roles for both men and women.

Muslim feminists challenge the level of generalisation which western theorists have generally approached the oppression of Muslim women. By stressing the cultural specificity of their oppression and the different

struggles in which they have engaged, they have drawn attention to the significance of colonial history, and the gulf of interests subsequently developed by women of the United States and other colonial powers, and the women of the Arab nations and the wider Muslim world.

The difficulty for Muslim feminists is that faced with a hostile host community, and a patriarchal kin community which is less than supportive of their views, those who resist the ascribed qualities of submission, obedience and propriety run the risk of alienation from their family and community. From her study of Muslim women in West Yorkshire Afshar (1994) concludes that for many women the conflicts that such views cause are proving destructive in the home and outside it. She argues that it is time that the Muslim community as a whole and its men as a group reconsider the demands that they make of their women and move towards a position that allows Muslim women to choose the combination of identities with which they are comfortable, rather than to be forced to adopt imposed identities that have no coherence.

In summary there cannot be a correct way of viewing the current oppression of Muslim women. The fragmentations are there, in common with the fracturings to be found in western feminism so that the

views of Muslim feminists are equally divergent, drawing on fundamentalist, liberal, Marxist, socialist and a spectrum of other feminisms. Appreciating the social position and cultural identity of Muslim women entails a vision of liberation, and it is these politics of liberation, shared by all feminisms that remain the subject of debate and the goal of active struggles (Ramazanoglu, 1986). It is also evident from this review that Muslims, both men and women are united by an Islamic identity and it is this which has relevance to the considerations of the final theme in this section which looks at Muslim and feminist responses to the issue of single-sex schooling.

Muslim and Feminist Responses to Single-Sex Schooling.

The issue of whether or not single-sex schooling is the answer to equality of educational opportunity for girls is a contentious one. What then are the arguments in support of co-education? The arguments as set out by Dale (1969; 1971; 1974) are analysed by Halstead (1991) in five main groups as follows:

i) Segregation at any age is artificial and unnatural:

> 'Education cannot be training for life unless it prepares the child to take his [sic] place naturally in the community of men and women'
> Dale, 1969, p.228

The implication here is that the mixing of the sexes at any age is not only natural but also mutually enriching

and of positive educational value in our society.

ii) Mixed schooling is claimed to result in a healthier attitude to sex and to relations between the sexes. This point was also made by Wollstonecraft (1792 p.182). At this time co-education was seen as the solution to the evils of male "debauchery" and "vice". This argument has evolved to become one of helping young people to feel more at ease in mixed company, increasing mutual understanding between the sexes and giving marriage a better chance of success (Dale, 1971, pp.93-297)

iii) Most students prefer mixed sex schooling and lessons where both sexes are present are more interesting (Dale,1974). Dale (1969, p.231) suggests that these lessons have greater 'vivacity', 'alertness in the classroom' and 'general joie de vivre'.

iv) Many teachers prefer mixed schooling (cf. Lamb and Pickthorne, 1968, p.160). The presence of girls in the classroom has a calming effect on boys' behaviour and the consequent effect is more positive attitudes to learning. Dale states:

> 'The progress of boys is probably improved by co-education while that of girls is not harmed...(because) the boys are spurred on by friendly competition with the girls and some of the girls' greater industriousness and conscientiousness is communicated to the boys.'
> (Dale, 1974, pp.267-268)

v) Mixed sex schooling involves a commitment to the equality of the sexes in principle and facilitates the equal treatment of the sexes in practice. It avoides discrimination and provides fairer access to resources and curriculum options for girls (cf. Walkling and Brannigan, 1986).

The reaction of Muslims and feminists is to query these arguments although the reasons behind their critiques are not always compatible. Some feminists argue that there is a great deal of evidence that sex stereotyping of the rights of women and their role in contemporary society is still a problem (Sharpe, 1976; Hakim, 1979; Oakley, 1982; Kremer and Curry, 1986; Crompton and Sanderson, 1987; Association of Educational Psychologists, AEP, 1988). Both sexes still tend to assess themselves and behave in ways compatible with the major stereotype which suggests that intellectual achievement and leadership, competitiveness, independence, and effectiveness, reflect masculinity, but are basically not consistent with the accepted image of femininity (Broverman et al, 1970; Horner, 1972).

This means that in an attempt to conform to society's vision of appropriate female behaviour girls and women often display a fear and avoidance of success (Horner, 1969; 1972; Mkangaza, 1986; Balkin, 1987). There is evidence to suggest

that most women accept this sex stereotyping as the 'ideal' of womanhood, and therefore feel that to achieve or become equal to men in the academic or business sphere, they must lose some of the facets of so called femininity (Broverman et al, 1970; Horner, 1972; Spence et al, 1973; Sharpe, 1976; Byrne, 1978; Delamont, 1980; Cockburn, 1991). Faulkner (1991) argues that Gumbly's study (1988) further supports these conclusions, suggesting that girls and boys still make different choices within the education system and then leave it to take up sex-stereotyped roles with different life chances.

Payne (1980) observed that many of the decisions made about the education of girls are largely based on the traditional view of women's role in society. More recent research also indicates that although protected by the implementation of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), equal opportunities remains for most girls a possibility for the minority rather than a realistic option for the many (Cockburn, 1991).[15]

Debate amongst feminists continues as to whether or not single-sex schooling is the answer to equality of educational opportunity for girls. Echoing the work of

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[15]Rendel (1982) provides a legal angle to the issue of the right of girls to a non-sexist education. She examines the ways in which the European Convention on Human Rights and its case law could be used to combat sexist education in State or private schools.

Dale (1969, 1971, 1974) which is often considered a definitive work on this subject Bone (1983) writing for the Equal Opportunities Commission, Steedman (1983), and Marsh (1989) all tend to agree that any findings suggesting possible advantages of single-sex schooling for girls are, for the most part, inconclusive and contradictory. Kenway and Willis (1986) considered the single-sex school debate and argued that extremist feminist views which consider that any single-sex environment has to be better for girls than any co-educational setting should be dismissed. Nevertheless other educationalists still argue that the mixed sex system may carry definite disadvantages for the academic and social development of girls (Spender and Sarah, 1980; Deem, 1984; Mahony, 1985; Kremer and Curry, 1986; Lee and Bryk, 1986; Burgess, 1990; Faulkner, 1991). Faulkner concludes that:-

> 'girls-only schools by fostering less unfavourable attitudes towards the concept of female achievement and more liberal views of women's rights and their roles in contemporary society,will encourage an ethos within them which is not conducive to the perpetuation of the traditional sex stereotypes of girls and women.'
> (Faulkner, 1991, p.216)

All of these studies have contributed to a developing theory concerning the educational experience and academic attainment of girls in different settings. This emerging theory points to the fact that a single-sex school environment is possibly academically more

beneficial to girls and provides an environment which does not reinforce traditional sex stereotyping of girls and women. This is of concern and relevance to the two research questions posed earlier in the thesis.

Muslims are far more likely to agree in general over the issue of single-sex schooling than feminists because it is rooted in their religious beliefs. Halstead (1991) outlines the arguments of Muslims for single-sex schooling as follows:

i) Islamic culture does not consider segregation of the sexes to be 'unnatural'. For Muslims this is an argument that implies that the extent to which men and women interact socially is somehow biologically determined rather than socially conditioned by cultural, religious, social and economic values, beliefs and practices.

ii) The belief is that it is the responsibility of the parents and the extended family to promote an attitude to sex and a mutual understanding between the sexes set within the context of Islam. There is therefore no wish to see the school taking over this role. In fact within the family framework Muslim girls have more freedom to develop a balanced understanding, and confidence in the presence of the opposite sex, with

less danger of sexual harassment.

iii) In common with feminists Muslims would argue that the presence of boys in the classroom has a distracting influence on the educational achievement of girls: it inhibits girls both socially and academically.

iv) Muslims put more emphasis on the relationship between the teacher and student in the classroom rather than the interaction of the students so to adopt a system which is dependent on the use of girls as a civilising influence is the same argument adopted by the Swann Report (1985, p.510) over the issue of 'separate schools'. In other words the presence of Muslims in state schools is needed to help whites shed their prejudices. In both cases the group with less power is being used by the educational system to ameliorate a problem that belongs to the group with more. The same argument can also be applied to the 'friendly competition' between the sexes in academic work: Muslims object to the outcome of this (that girls end up second best in the competition for the teacher's time and attention and that boys academic performance improves while that of girls does not).[16] They also object to the principle behind it on religious grounds.

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[16] Recent research argues that the academic performance of boys is being outstripped by girls, see for example Rafferty, 1993 and Dean,1992).

v) Muslims argue that the principle of equality is not necessarily satisfied by identical treatment. As there is relevant difference between boys and girls in their physical, emotional and mental development there is injustice in treating them the same when in relevant respects they are different, just as much as there can be in treating them differently when in relevant respects they are the same. In Islam the notion of equality has a spiritual basis: Islam proclaims the absolute equality of men and women in terms of the 'soul, moral nature, spiritual rights and potential' (Durkee, 1990, p.68), but this is not held to be inconsistent with the recognition of physical, emotional or social differences. Differentiated social roles are not a denial of equality in Islam (Iqbal, 1975, p.12). Women may choose to be 'just' wives and mothers or may choose economic or political roles for themselves in addition to these family responsibilities, but in neither case are they considered to be of less worth than men, whatever their roles; men and women will be rewarded equally by God for their labours (Qu'ran 3:195; 33:35).

In summary, a comparison of these critiques framed within the context of feminisms and education, considered at the beginning of this section, indicates that Muslims and feminists draw on both liberal and

radical feminist discourses in their arguments for single-sex schooling. Muslims and liberal feminists support the principle of equal access to all areas of the curriculum and moves towards single-sex groupings in co-educational schools. However, the underlying principles of liberal approaches to schooling for girls are rejected by Muslims. For liberals, equality is based on the principle that men and women are the same and achievable through their identical treatment. Muslims on the other hand believe that equality is achieved through the recognition of difference and that differentiated social roles are not a denial of equality (Iqbal, 1975). Muslims appear to be more sympathetic to the arguments and approaches of radical feminists with regard to the schooling of girls. Both advocate different kinds of education for girls and emphasise the advantages of women learning with, and from each other, and both feel strongly about the sexual harassment of girls in mixed schools. It is considerations such as these which provide the foundations for an analysis of the debate concerning Muslim girls' schools in the next and concluding section of this chapter.

3.3 Muslim Girls' Schools - A Conflict of Interests?

This section summarises and further considers the

antisexist and antiracist discourses surrounding the debate over Muslim girls' schools, for not only do these schools represent a challenge to the dominant cultures within the education system and those that influence it, but they also highlight the fragmentations to be found within and between the discourses of feminism and of antiracism and multiculturalism. This section therefore concerns itself with the dilemma which is posed by Muslim girls' schools for the liberal antisexist/antiracist and different interest groups. Further the unexpected alliances between these different groups are highlighted as evidence of the instability of categories. This provides a useful insight into the emerging politics of representation which centres around the concept of difference (see Hall, 1992).[17]

Muslim schools for girls raise a variety of seemingly complex and intractable issues and do not have support across the whole Muslim community. Both the Asian Youth Movement and the Council for Mosques in Bradford opposed the plans of the Muslim Parents' Association, to take over five schools in Bradford as Muslim voluntary aided schools and a survey at the time suggested that only 48 out of the 600

[17]This is also discussed by Knowles and Mercer (1992) in their paper Feminism and Antiracism: An exploration of the political possibilities.

girls at Belle Vue Girls' school agreed with this plan (Halstead, 1988).

The group Women Against Fundamentalism, has strongly condemned the move to establish religious schools whether opted-out' or 'opted-in' (Women Against Fundamentalism 1991). They argue that the Education Reform Act (1988) has fostered one religion over another by imposing Christian assemblies in schools and that furthermore under the guise of 'parental choice', the Act has paved the way for racists to demand 'white only' schools under the cover of the right to a Christian education. This has also created the space for conservative and religious male leaders in the Asian community to demand Muslim schools. They argue that:-

> 'All religious schools have a deeply conformist idea of the role of women. They will deny girls the opportunities which they are just beginning to seize.'

and call for

> 'An end to state funding of religious schools and the imposition of particular religious education by the State, including Christian assemblies within schools.'

(Women Against Fundamentalism, Journal No.2 July 1991 p.1)

This effectively highlights the crux of the debate over Muslim girls' schools as does the printed debate between Walkling and Brannigan, and Troyna and

Carrington. The problem for Western society is as Walkling and Brannigan point out:-

> 'Sexism can be, in theory, rooted in beliefs which are among the most strongly held and which are crucial to cultural identity. That is, they can be the very sort of belief which those of us who value a multi-cultural society think that minorities have a right to preserve.'
>
> (Walkling and Brannigan, p.22 1986)

This pinpoints the apparently conflicting ideals between antisexist and antiracist education in the demand for an education which satisfies the requirement for equal opportunities for women but which gives due recognition to the special status accorded to the moral education of women in some cultures. Specifically, it argues that, antiracists by accepting demands from some sections of the Muslim community for single-sex and denominational schools could be seen as inhibiting the emancipation of Muslim girls.

In a reply to Walkling and Brannigan, Troyna and Carrington conclude that in focussing upon the demands of some parents for single-sex denominational schooling, Walkling and Brannigan evade the central issue. For them, this is the need to discover what factors have promoted a growth in the demand for educational provision outside the mainstream of state education, by various black minority groups. In their opinion addressing this problem entails a concern with

the prevalence of racial harassment in maintained schools and the failure to institutionalize anti-racist and antisexist education in those settings. They ask the question:

> 'Is it surprising that some Muslim parents espouse the rhetoric of separatism when multicultural/anti-racist, and it would seem anti-sexist education policies, are not worth the paper they are written on?'
>
> (Troyna and Carrington, 1987 p.64)

Parental choice based on the desire to maintain a religious or cultural tradition is not illegal but opinions are sharply divided as to its acceptability. In both the Dewsbury and Cleveland cases, highlighted in Appendix II antiracists refused to concede that 'culture' could possibly mean anything other than 'race' and are therefore strongly opposed to parental choice on this basis. The Muslim case for separate schools rests on the argument that multiculturalism presents all cultures in a superficial way and that this is particularly objectionable when the culture is seen to be an expression of its religion. The Dewsbury and Cleveland cases have provided a focus for these issues and a clear example of how seemingly politically opposed interest groups can unite around a common cause albeit for very different reasons.[18]

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[18]An incident in France over the waering of hijab in school provides a similar example of the cross cutting of political allegiances (See Haw, 1994).

Some Muslims regard 'separate'schools as essential not only for the religious instruction of their children but for their cultural survival. Paradoxically some of those lobbyists who support such schools under the umbrella of antiracism, such as the Labour Party, do so because of a basic belief that different groups in society deserve equal rights and should not be opposed by a dominant majority. There are those who would dispute that these schools give Muslim girls such equal opportunities.

Muslims and the CRE have indicated the desire that the issue of 'race' should not cloud this particular debate. This, it would appear, is impossible. There is no consensus of opinion amongst antiracists themselves as to the desirability of these schools and furthermore if Muslim schools, either voluntary aided or opted out, are established it is possible that the cycle of segregation will become difficult to break for any future attempts to dismantle such schools will equally be hampered by issues of colour and racism.

Campaigners for Muslim schools have challenged the efficacy of multiculturalism to enable Muslim children to retain and develop their distinctive identity or to redress racism. The response to this failure is the

establishment of separate institutions where a Muslim identity can be protected and which by implication rejects any attempts to implement a new stronger version of 'antiracism'. Ironically this move is also supported by groups such as PACE which favours mono-cultural education but for different reasons. Their support for the Dewsbury parents rested on the argument that the 'cultural identity' of the white children was being threatened by the school's approach to multicultural education. In this sense multicultural education is not seen as an enabling structure for 'ethnic minority' children but antithetical to the needs of indigenous white children.

Such opposition partly draws upon different social constructions of multiculturalism. The liberal stance postulates that existing accommodations of Muslim needs over such issues of dress for example are sufficient and 'separate' schools would prevent Muslim children from gaining the skills and values they require to fully participate in the wider society. In this sense multicultural education is constructed as a means to assimilation. Those who advocate antiracist approaches represent the radical approach which depends on the notion of a shared black identity from which to combat racism. Muslim schools which rely upon a distinctive Muslim identity being produced and

reproduced are considered to be inimical to this process. Such a fragmentation of the black consensus means potential vulnerability which can be exploited by those who oppose any form of antiracism.

Reaction to Muslim girls' schools from antisexist perspectives is equally influenced by a variety of constructions of feminism and their impact on education and educational issues. Above all reaction to Muslim girls' schools is influenced by the insistence on maintaining a dichotomy between antiracist and antisexist initiatives and if nothing else the explorations of feminisms and education and feminisms and Islam in the second section has shown this to be a false dichotomy.

Conclusion

The issue of schools for Muslim girls' effectively expose the fragmentations which occur across and between the discourses of feminism and multiculturalism/ antiracism as evidenced by the cross cutting of alliances between different interest groups in support or opposition to these schools. In this sense the debate concerning Muslim girls' schools serves to illuminate the fluidity of categories that occur when the interaction of 'race' and gender is considered and the dilemma posed for the liberal

antisexist/ antiracist living in a pluralist society. Above all this chapter has highlighted the need for in depth research into the experiences of the Muslim students in Muslim girls' schools and a comparison of these experiences with Muslim students in state education. This is the aim of this thesis.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

The preceding Chapters have already indicated that the theoretical location of this research is that of poststructuralism seen through the lens of western feminist theory. The following is an argument for my theoretical positioning. This is based on my own standpoint which I began to make explicit in Chapter One and which becomes further apparent in this and the following chapter. Those aspects of my autobiography are detailed which I consider to have relevance to this research. The silences are, of course, of equal relevance. This consideration of my own subjectivities is the grounding for my ontological positioning and defines the subsequent relationship to epistemology and methodological choices made.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section - the ontological and epistemological framework considers feminist theory and its points of convergence and divergence with postmodernism. It also explores poststructuralism and what poststructuralism and feminism have to offer in terms of accommodating both commonalities and difference, the negotiation of

dualisms,[1] and a liberatory politics. This intention was signalled in Chapter One which indicates a concern to account for the multifaceted, contradictory and dialetical interplay that the discourses of 'race', racism, ethnicity, class and gender play in the lives of Muslim girls at school and that this is located within particular historical and material boundaries.

The second section considers feminist methodology as a logical extension of the ontological and epistemological framework discussed in the preceding section. It represents the broad theoretically informed framework within which the research proceeds and establishes the framework for the last chapter in this Part, Chapter Five.

4.2 The Ontological and Epistemological Framework

In this section the argument is focussed around an organising concept that dualities, dichotomies, oppositions, both structure and set limits on our understandings. For these reasons I was attracted to the postmodernist/poststructuralist debate which explores the notion that dualisms which continue to dominate

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[1] This was also discussed earlier in Chapter One which highlighted the fact that this thesis is concerned to examine the problems that arise when teachers perceive 'race' and gender as a dualism.

western thought are inadequate for understanding a world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limitless array of historical and cultural specificities. This notion is also located within feminist theory, so that similarly, and from a feminist standpoint, Jaggar (1988) also emphasises that the insistence on making sharp distinctions between mind and body, reason and passion, knowledge and sense, culture and nature, permanence and change poses insuperable philosophical problems concerning the possibility of knowledge and the relations of mind to body,value to fact and of individuals to each other.

Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

I begin this section with a brief discussion of the ways that I understand postmodernism and poststructuralism. The aim of the section is to survey these debates and the danger of this is that the argument can become over-generalised and unsupported. This is mitigated by detailed referencing and footnoting. From this understanding I then examine how these debates articulate with those of feminist theories. I consider what I believe postmodernism and poststructuralism have to offer, together with those aspects of these debates which I believe should be rejected, in

keeping with my belief that such sifting is the intention of theoretical debate. The section concludes with a critique of whether there is in fact such a thing as poststructural feminism.

Griffiths (1995) argues that the debate about postmodernism and poststructuralism is characterised by many fragmentations of perspectives, ambiguities and re-descriptions so that definitions are many, confusing and often depend on the discipline in which they are being used. She lists some of the many definitions of postmodernism and poststructuralism so that it becomes apparent that the task of finding any simple definition of these terms is both frustrating and misleading, particularly as the terms are used very loosely and often interchangeably by academics.[2] They are also used to refer to different, if related, ideas by people coming from different intellectual and academic backgrounds. Also, given the reaction to coherence and meta-narrative any definitions should be seen as a starting point and oversimplification. Even those who are most closely associated with the terms have rejected them as appropriate labels for their

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[2]Lather (1991) sometimes uses postmodern to mean the larger cultural shifts of a post-industrial, post-colonial era and poststructural to mean the working out of those shifts within the arenas of academic theory. She also uses the terms interchangeably.

work. When Baudrillard, who some have labelled a key proponent of postmodernism, was asked about this he replied:

> 'It's an expression, a word which people use but which explains nothing. It's not even a concept. It's nothing at all .....Everything that has been said about postmodernism was said even before the term existed...There are perhaps areas in which the term postmodern may mean something , to the extent that people claim to belong to this, perhaps in architecture. But as soon as it's clear that the term adds nothing new it is best to let go of it'
>
> (Gane, 1993, pp.21-22)

For me, as I initially engaged with these debates it was important to understand what they were a reaction to. I felt that I would then be able to unravel which areas of each were theoretically useful to me and this piece of research. The question is, what can postmodernism be assumed to be an extension of, or replace, and the answer lies in an exploration of modernism, so that postmodernism can only be described in relation to modernism, and then not wholly in opposition to it for it constitutes a critique of:

> 'the pretensions of modernity and in some senses may be said to extend and deepen the critique already begun by modernism'
>
> (Boyne and Rattansi, 1990 p.8)

It becomes apparent therefore that postmodernism is a

reaction to the concepts of both 'modernism' and 'modernity' and that disparities in interpretation of these results in an equivalent disparity in the concept of 'postmodernism'. Boyne and Rattansi cite Berman who encapsulates modernity as something which:

> ' unites by cutting across class, region and ideology and yet disintegrates through incessant change, contradiction and ambiguity'
> (Boyne and Rattansi, 1990, p.2)

Thus 'modernism' is sometimes thought of as 'modernism' in painting, architecture and music as discussed by Huyssen. It is also referred to in literary theory to detail the use of self-reflexive texts, which break with the social realism of the nineteenth century (Williams, 1989). Similarly an understanding of 'modernity' is dependent on the intellectual tradition being discussed. In social/political theory it can be consumer capitalism (late capitalism) or the hope of social justice through the systematic application of the principles of rationality and justice. In philosophy modernity is associated with the Cartesian revolution and the hope of providing a unified understanding of the world. The key ideas within postmodernism echo this disparity they include

* An insistence that human thought is situated
* The impossibility of discovering an Archimedian

point or a self-legislating self. There is no such thing as objectivity/neutrality.

* That the self is not a knowable, empirical or perceivable object but is produced by the discourse in which it finds and positions itself.

The implications of these concerning the possibility of knowledge are:

* There is no one 'true' knowledge because it is particular to the discourse(s) in which it is produced.
* There can therefore never be explanatory meta-theories or meta-narratives.
* That dualisms which structure western thought are inadequate to understand a world where such a multiplicity of causes and effects shift and interact in a complex and non-linear way.

The difficulty in separating poststructuralism from postmodernism derives from the fact that the two overlap in a complex way. Poststructuralism also is a reaction to a tradition starting with Descartes for whom the 'Cogito' - the rational I - was the first building block of knowledge. Structuralists from various disciplines reacted to this by arguing for the necessity of universal basic structures so that various universalising (androcentric) theories were produced (Saussure in linguistics, Levi-Strauss in

anthropology, Lacan in psychoanalysis).

Poststructuralism rejects what it sees as the simplistic solutions offered by these structuralist analyses carried out in terms like class, religion, economy or politics and it is here that we can identify some of the overlap between postmodernism and poststructuralism.

Notable amongst the critics who have questioned these was Foucault. He insisted on the importance of language as constitutive of reality and subjectivity even while its parts shift meaning according to circumstance and that events and situations have to be understood in the interplay of discourse and subjectivity at particular times and places. Kenway et al. (1994) argue that poststructuralism is a term applied to a very loosely connected set of ideas about meaning, the way in which meaning is struggled over and produced, the way it circulates amongst us, the impact it has on us as subjects and the connections between meaning and power. Further that, meaning therefore shifts as different linguistic, institutional, cultural and social factors come together in various ways. Meaning is influenced by and influences shifting patterns of power. It also constitutes human subjectivity which is, again, regarded as shifting, multifaceted and contradictory.

This view of meaning also makes problematic notions of 'truth' and promises of 'enlightenment'. Both are seen to be the products of particular peoples and cultures, times and places and the relationships of power which permeate through them. The implication here is that such a view of meaning emphasises the particular rather than the general, discontinuity and instability rather than continuity and stability, plurality, diversity and difference rather than similarity and commonality and complexity rather than the essence of things (Kenway et al., 1994).

As I have already explored in Chapter One the emphasis in poststructuralism is on discourses and texts which make up social institutions. It is through discourse that meaning and human subjects are produced and through which power relations are maintained and changed. Foucault uses the term discourse to designate the conjunction between power and knowledge. He unmasks the structures, rules and procedures, exclusions and oppositions which control and restrain what can and what cannot be said, which seek to shape meaning and to represent the 'normal'. Echoing the debates of postmodernism postructuralists argue that binary oppositions or dualisms often provide a way of structuring meaning and this in turn structures human relationships of difference and dominance (see also Chapter One p.38).

The key ideas of postmodernism are therefore echoed by poststructuralism. Both are terms applied to a very loosely connected set of ideas and the remainder of this section is an exploration of these ideas and how they have impacted with feminism.

We operate within a system in which power is unequally distributed and social activity is structured in fundamentally opposing ways for different groups of people in terms of, for example, gender 'race' and class so that we are always positioned vis a vis power and interest (Skeggs, 1992). We also operate within a dichotomous culture whereby and for example

> 'masculinity is defined through what it is not, i.e., the feminine; heterosexuality is defined through what it is not,i.e.,homosexuality; and the concept of 'taste' is used to establish distinctions, so that groups can construct their social identity against 'others'[3]
>
> (Skeggs, 1992 p.1)

It is not surprising therefore that too often the only answers offered to various epistemologically related questions are based on one or other of what are traditionally considered to be, two alternative and opposing paradigms or concepts. These include - fact versus value, qualitative versus quantitative, subjective versus objective, individual versus society. Such oppositional stances are presented as plausible through the

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[3]See Bourdieu,P. (1984).

use of the concepts of neutrality and objectivity. But the position that neutrality/objectivity is achievable ignores all the workings of power and inequalities which structure social activity often in opposing ways, for different groups so that the vision of each group represents a distortion/inversion of the other and in systems of domination the vision available to the dominant will be both partial and perverse so that neutrality/objectivity become impossible (Skeggs,1992; Hartsock, N. 1983). Fact merges with value and as Elbaz argues:

> 'In effect one cannot separate the empirical and the moral realms, for value becomes one of the constitutive elements of the material object just like its colour and shape.....For the abolition of the differentiation between the material object and its ethical counterpart means that there is a superposition of values upon facts; the domain of facts is absorbed by the domain of values'
>
> (Elbaz, 1988 p.27)

An acknowledgement that society is structured in fundamentally opposing ways for different groups has implications for the concepts of neutrality/objectivity for they impose a value system with moral positions. The moral position that neutrality/objectivity is achievable ignores all such workings of inequalities and power. Neutrality/objectivity are thus exposed as myths.

Insofar as women are isolated, marginalised and

dependent it is inevitable that others will speak for them; historically in the social sciences it has been men who have been tempted to do that speaking (Eichler, 1979). Thus the androcentric, patriarchal basis of most social science methods 'has rendered women not only unknown but unknowable' (DuBois, 1983 p.107), they are largely absent or pathologically included as an opposite, a deviation from the 'norm'. Feminist epistemologies have played an instrumental part in challenging this universally accepted 'traditional' knowledge which claims to be premissed upon objectivity and truth. (Gunew, 1990; Harding, 1986; Irigaray, 1985; Stanley and Wise, 1990).

It follows then that the importance of the consideration of the subjectivities of both researcher and participants is fundamental to any piece of feminist research and to feminist theory (see for example Gunew, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Kremer, 1990; Lather, 1988; Walkerdine, 1981). It allows for an acknowledgement of the importance of my own pre-conceptions as researcher, of those who participate and of those who might wish to offer a critique of this work. Through this the reader is able to place the researcher within the text for it gives an indication of the assumptions made about what there is to be known

and what is knowable.

Chapters One and Three argue that opposition to male power - structural, institutional, interactional or discursive - is one of the central organising principles of feminism. The concern of feminists is that those in positions of power define the knowledge against which all other constructs of knowledge are measured. Foucault's concept of power-knowledge becomes relevant here.

Foucault, Power-Knowledge and Reverse Discourse

Foucault's argument begins with knowledge being developed through the exercise of power. The knowledge that has been developed is then used to legitimate and increase that power. It is this - its ability to maintain and increase power - which Foucault terms 'power-knowledge'. It is cyclical, a construct of, as well as a constituent part of, power relations (Diamond and Quinby, 1988; Foucault, 1979, 1980a, 1980b; Morris, 1988).

An important part of this construct is Foucault's concept of normalisation which consists basically of a judgement regarding what is normal and what is abnormal. This is then embodied in normalizing practices and knowledges, perpetuating the knowledge

previously constructed, legitimating order and increasing the power of those who already have it. (Foucault, 1979, 1980b). Thus women, irrespective of 'race' or class have become enmeshed in these power-knowledge processes of which, as Foucault pointed out, we are mostly barely conscious. To reject this process is to place ourselves into opposition i.e. the abnormal and thereby be judged accordingly.

Other access positions such as 'race ' and class also permeate through this which suggests that any ontology needs to take into account the access to, and discursive positions available to, different groups that are likely to produce different constructs of knowledge. From questioning the possibility of one traditional knowledge, to which claims of truth and objectivity are fundamental, it follows that the possibility of one black knowledge or one 'any' knowledge must also be questioned. On this basis the fundamental categories of 'truth' and 'knowledge' are not only irreducibly complex and ambiguous but also saturated with politics.

Foucault's concept of discourse and reverse discourse is relevant to this fragmentation. He argued that reverse-discourses can be constructed against the dominant one, but that although these are clear sites

of resistance they have only precarious power, for their discourses are automatically marginalised. Thus feminist discourse in total represents a reverse discourse to the 'male' dominant, 'traditional' one, but there are within feminism multiple reverse discourses or reverse, reverse-discourses to the predominant white middle-class feminism. There is a lesbian fragmentation which represents a reverse discourse to the main one of heterosexual feminism, white working class feminism, black feminism and feminists with disabilities. There is also further fragmentation across these for instance black lesbians and motherhood all of which represent multiple reverse discourses and reverse, reverse to the predominant white middle-class feminism as well as remaining individually and collectively reverse discourses to the accepted 'male' discourse (Foucault, 1980a, 1980b; Diamond and Quinby, 1988).

Feminism, Postmodernism and Poststructuralism - The Implications

The arguments of postmodernism and poststructuralism have many implications for feminism or any other marginalised groups. Both feminism and postmodernism challenge traditional power-bases of knowledge from the political perspective in the sense of deployment of power,

but the feminist challenge arises from a direct concern - that of the opression of women. Griffiths (1995) refers to the 'uneasy love affair' between them for although they share some common ground, the postmodernist call to recognise the demise of Enlightenment goals of justice, freedom and equality sweeps away the major objective of feminism just when these goals appear to be within reach. In this sense many fear that it is especially dangerous for the marginalised (Harstock, 1987; Alcoff, 1987; Christian, 1987; West,1987). Furthermore the appropriation of these ideas are by white, male academics who some would argue have borrowed heavily (but rarely acknowledged), from feminist theory, with its frequent celebrations of 'difference' and specificity, and its critiques of Enlightenment paternalism (Skeggs, 1991b). Skeggs therefore argues that postmodernism should be left 'severely alone'.

On the other hand Chapter Three has also highlighted that western feminism contains within it many fracturings and even contradictions. When this is considered with the discussion in Chapter One around organising concepts such as 'race' ethnicity, gender, class and the concept of difference, and the preceding exploration of postmodernism and poststructuralism it becomes apparent that certain key elements of contemporary feminism share certain concepts with

postmodernism and poststructuralism. These concepts are:

i) The significance of subjectivity

ii) The significance of 'voice'

iii) The significance therefore that facts are saturated with moral positions and value

iv) The questioning therefore of 'truth' and 'constructs of knowledge'

v) The examination of 'otherness' and the relation between the 'self' and the 'other' as increasingly central themes of feminism and poststructuralism.

Feminists are similarly concerned with multiple subjectivities and a denial of the universal 'woman' but it is from the basis of trying to understand and change differences, located in economic and historical material realities, and to identify the commonalities beneath these differences. The aim is to construct theory to explain both differences and commonality and thus to increase understanding and guide action, to join the macro and the micro and so influence action. In this sense Spivak (1989) problematizes her earlier problematizing of essentialism with her urging to "take the risk of essence". She uses the concept of essence to illustrate the ways in which deconstruction critiques:-

> 'that which is so useful that you cannot think without it, what one learns from deconstruction is the importance of essences, how useful they are.'
> (Spivak, 1989, p.150)

Fuss also warns that those who jettison essentialism take away an interventionary strategy of the oppressed who can use it in an Irigarayian move "to undo by overdoing" (p.86), a "displacement and *redeployment* of essentialism" which thinks through the body (Fuss, 1989, p.80).

The analysis of differing feminisms in Chapter Three outlined how these have impacted with education and educational issues and possible practical solutions to these issues. The acknowledgement of the dependence of the construction of feminist theories upon practice and vice versa is fundamental to this research. This allows for the negotiation of another oppositional divide, that between theory and practice. In this sense Hutcheon (1989) and Lather (1991) argue that feminist engagement with, particularly, poststructuralism, may well push it in directions it might not otherwise have gone in terms of political engagement.

Feminist engagement with poststructuralism offers discursive space in which the individual woman is able to resist her subject positioning - a specific fixing of identity and meaning. As a 'reverse-discourse', feminism is positioned to challenge meaning and power, enabling

the production of new resistant discourses. In this sense poststructuralism provides a useful analytical tool in that it illuminates and reveals how power is exercised through discourse, how oppression works and how resistance might be possible. However the critique that poststructuralism, like postmodernism cannot provide a viable political programme because it rejects absolute values and verges on relativism needs to be further explored by feminists.

For me, this means as Razack (1993) argues, that in the effort to untangle how we are constructed we have sometimes failed to define what it is about the world that we want to change and why. We have to begin with how we know, calling in to question knowledge and being of both the teller and the listener, and struggling for ways to take this out of the realm of abstraction into political action.

Trinh recommends giving up the quest for knowledge that is to definitively know but to question one's point of departure at every turn so that strategies (such as replacing rationality with emotions) do not become end points in themselves (Trinh, 1989 p.43). This proposal to engage in the ground clearing activity of radically calling into question means that:

> 'The questions that arise continue to provoke answers but none will dominate as long as the ground-clearing activity is at work. Can knowledge circulate without a position of mastery? Can it be conveyed without the exercise of power? No, because there is no end to understanding power relations which are rooted deep in the social nexus - not merely added to society nor easily locatable so that we can just radically do away with them. **Yes, however, because in-between grounds always exist,** and cracks and interstices are like gaps of fresh air that keep on being suppressed because they tend to render more visible the failures operating in every system. Perhaps mastery need not coincide with power.'
>
> (Trinh, 1989, p.41, emphasis added)

For Razack (1993) this means reflecting critically on how we hear, how we speak, to the choices we make about which voice to use and the development of pedagogical practices that enable us to pose these questions and use the various answers to guide those concrete moral choices we are constantly being called upon to make. It means a more complex mapping of our differences than has ever been tried before. It means that colonisation from within and without will become a major theme, most importantly in terms of how it constitutes the colonisers themselves. This is Spivak's 'unlearning privilege' (Spivak, 1990, p.30) so that 'not only does one become able to listen to that other constituency, but one learns to speak in such a way that it will be taken seriously by that other constituency' (Spivak, 1990,p.42). To accomplish

this Trinh recommends a movement away from defining and boxing ourselves into one subject identity:

> ' You and I are close, we intertwine; you may stand on the other side of the hill once in a while, but you may also be me, while remaining what you are and what I am not. The differences made between entities comprehended as absolute presences- hence the notion of pure origin and true self- are an outgrowth of a dualistic system of thought peculiar to the Occident.'
>
> (Trinh, 1989, p.90)

Razack argues that without absolutes, no true self, no pure origin, it becomes all the more imperative to pay attention to how our multiple identities are constructed and played out in any one time, in any one context. A commitment to the resposibility 'to trace the other in self' (Spivak, 1990, p.47) must become central to our practice so that alliances might then be possible between the white, able-bodied heterosexual and middle-class women and women on the margins. In this way feminist engagement with poststructuralism can provide a viable political programme and prevent the slide into relativism.

In educational settings, and for the moment, Jones (1993), argues that what poststructuralism allows for is a conceptual language which transcends agency/structure dualisms, as well as avoiding the simplicities of theories which invoke a monolithic notion of patriarchal power in understanding girls' classroom

experiences. She suggests that feminist poststructuralism holds to a view of 'positive uncertainty' (p.158) in which complexity rather than pattern prevails:

> 'When girls are seen as multiply located, and not unambiguously powerless, a feminist approach to classroom research must shift away from the 'disadvantage' focus. An interest in the unevenness of power means that....studies must focus on the ways in which girls are variously positioned in the classroom.'
> (Jones, 1993: p.160-1)

The advantage of this is that it allows for a recognition that all girls (and boys and teachers) are complex human beings and are active readers of their cultures. This is the concern of this thesis with respect to the experiences of Muslim girls in different educational settings. It also allows for the complicated and ambiguous ways that meaning is made in schools and the highly subjective ways that students and teachers 'read' and 'rewrite' meanings. With regard to gender, and for example, as Kenway et al., 1994, suggest there is not necessarily a match between the direct and indirect knowledge about gender that the school and the teachers deliver in various ways and its reception and application by the students. It suggests that as teachers and students interact with gender-related knowledge, such knowledge is negotiated, re-interpreted and possibly even transformed in the process.

To sum up, there are those, myself included, who remain ambivalent to postmodernism; being attracted to some parts of postmodern thought and practice, while rejecting others (Morris, 1988; Giroux, 1988; Best and Kellner, 1991; Lather, 1991). Morris also thinks that we can get some use from poststructuralist thinkers such as Foucault although she acknowledges that his 'is not the work of a ladies man' (Morris, 1988, p.26).

In a similar vein bell hooks sees no contradiction in valuing Friere's work (who like Foucault is considered to be no ladies' man) and her commitment to feminist scholarship. She says:

> 'In talking with academic feminists (usually white women) who feel they must either dismiss or devalue the work of Freire because of sexism, I see clearly how our differemt responses are shaped by the standpoint that we bring to the work. I came to Freire thirsty,dying of thirst....To have work that promotes one's liberation is such a powerful gift- that it does not matter so much if the gift is flawed. Think of the work as water that contains some dirt. Because you are thirsty you are not too proud to extract the dirt and be nourished by the water....When you are privileged, living in one of the richest countries in the world, you can waste resources.And you can especially justify your disposal of something that you consider impure,unclean,etc.Look at what most people do with water in this country. Many people purchase special water because they consider tap water unclean and of course this purchasing is a luxury. Even our ability to see the water as unclean is informed by an imperialist consumer perspective.'
> (hooks, 1993 p.149)

If nothing else postmodernism is undeniably useful in a moment of uncertainty in western thought to provoke debate thereby enabling us to think more about how we think (Flax, 1987 p.624).[4]

Hutcheon recommends this ambivalence as a way "to interrogate the limits and powers of postmodern discourse" (1988 p8). Spivak (1987) recommends moving between the various contestatory discourses of neo-Marxisms, feminisms, "minoritarianisms" and poststructuralisms in order to interrrupt one another.[5] As Lather, 1991 argues with respect to this Foucault (1984) presents a useful argument in his essay "What is Enlightenment?" In salvaging the emancipatory project by displacing the universal, the necessary, the obligatory with the singular, the contingent, and the strategic Foucault argues for:-

> 'An attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.'
>
> (Foucault, 1984 p.50)

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[4]Current debates over the meaning and value of postmodernism and poststructutalism flood academic literature. They range from feminist (Weedon, 1987; Morris, 1988; Nicholson, 1990) to neo-Marxist (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) to 'critical pragmatists' (Cherryholmes, 1988; Best and Kellner, 1991).

[5]For feminist work in this area, see Flax, 1987; Harding, 1986, 1987; Haraway, 1988; Rabine, 1988; Scott, 1988; Spivak, 1987; Nicholson, 1990.

The focus is shifted from a search for formal structures and universal values to how we are constituted as subjects of our own knowledge - a central theme of poststructuralism. By working at the intersection of knowledge, power and ethics this is neither "for" nor "against" the Enlightenment. Rather it is against that which presents itself as authoritarian and finished and for that which is "indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects" (p.43) - a permanent critique of ourselves, "always in the position of beginning again" (p.47).

For me this is the way forward. It does not imply the abandonment of certain modernist approaches, but it allows for the taking account of commonalities while equally giving consideration to differences. It allows for a way to negotiate the oppositional divide and through this theoretical understanding provides a way ahead for those who seek emancipation and some form of liberatory politics. Spivak urges us to 'take the risk of essences' But what is meant by essence here? Is it the desire for unity, univocity and purity? I do not think so, for this is a desire which is already contaminated by that which it attempts to resist and exclude because it is a desire which springs from impurity and contamination.

In an article which asks the question "Black Socrates? Questioning the philosophical tradition", Critchley (1995) explores the displacement of the Ancient model of philosophy (that which has its roots in the African, Egyptian and Asian classical civilisations) by the Aryan model of philosophy (that which has its roots in Greek and European civilisations) which some have argued (Bernal for example) was driven not so much by a concern for truth as by a desire for cultural and national purity, which for chauvinistic, imperialist and ultimately racist reasons, wanted to deny the influence of African or Semitic culture upon classical Greece, and by implication upon nineteenth century northern Europe. Critchley's concern is to argue for culture and tradition as hybrid ensembles which are the products of radically impure mixing and mongrelism. He cites Said who suggests that the consequence (and inverted triumph) of imperialism is the radical hybridity of culture, where histories and geographies are intertwined and overlapping, troubling any appeal to cultural and national exclusivity. Critchley (1995) argues that cultural identity (or cultural self-differentiation) is relationally negotiated from amongst competing claims that make conflicting and

perhaps awkward demands upon us. He uses the notion of contrapuntal criticism adopted from Said as a form of:-

> ' critical-historical, genealogical or deconstructive reflection that would bring us to the recognition of the hybridity of tradition, culture and identity. Contrapuntal criticism, the comparative analysis of the overlapping geographies and intertwined histories of present cultural assemblages, would reveal hybrid ensembles as hybrid ensembles and not as unities or essences.'
>
> (Critchley, 1995, p.23)

I understand this to be equivalent to Gilroy's *'changing same'* (1993) and it is in this sense that I argue for a holding onto the commonalities whilst taking account of differences, for hybrid ensembles, for recognition of a *'changing same'* so that a perpetual modernity is not rejected, or set aside, but rather its power for getting us to face the crisis of the present is both incorporated and- crucially - contested (Critchley, 1995). This means that there is an underlying reality, but there are different ways of coming to know, so that a critical examination of these ways of coming to know pushes us forward in the quest for this reality which is unending.

Poststructural Feminism?

Finally is this then poststructural feminism? I would argue not. I have already argued that different feminisms share certain features of postmodernism and

poststructuralism such as, the rejection of the logic of binary oppositions, the principle of the unified subject, the Enlightenment legacy and meta-narratives predicated on unified groups of oppressors and oppressed. Similarly different feminisms share linkages with other non-feminist thinking. This is made clear in Chapter Three which clearly shows for example the cross cutting of Marxist feminism with Marxism; socialist feminism with socialism; liberal feminism with liberal egalitarianism and radical feminism with 'civil rights' movements particularly in America.

Feminist theoretical traditions are those which seek to understand the differences and dominations between and within femaleness and maleness. This is a central feature of a feminist analysis together with one which implies a challenge of some sort to any inequitable relationships of power which involve gender or sexuality.

For me these shared understandings are the important issues because it is from here that differences can be acknowledged, critically reflected upon and engaged with, so that debate may be pushed forward. For me it is feminism with perhaps a predominantly socialist agenda or a Marxist agenda or a radical agenda or a poststructuralist agenda, each complementing, co-

existing or opposing the others at different times and in different circumstances. Each is to be drawn on in different ways and to different degrees as and when the moment requires it. Each is to be categorised only when this is useful as in Chapter Three of this thesis. All of them to be critically engaged with but none of them ever to be totally rejected or totally accepted because of the label that they carry. For me and above all it is **feminism**. This as Spivak argues is the necessary *essence*, the thing which deconstruction makes you realise that you cannot do without, to be used with a criticality, an awareness, and above all sensitivity. Having argued therefore for a feminist epistemology informed predominately by poststructuralism, for this piece of research, and for this time and in these circumstances it now becomes necessary to consider the methodological implications of this.

4.2 Feminist Methodology?

Methodology represents the broad theoretically informed framework within which any piece of research takes place. It is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed so that it guides the research methods used, the theoretical concepts of analysis and interpretation, the positioning and

relationships of the researcher to the researched and the presentation of the results (Brine,1993).[6] This is not to say that there are particular feminist methods but that the decision is made from within the researcher's understanding of feminist methodology. As there are differing feminist epistemologies so there are differing feminist methodologies. Unlike Hammersley (1992a) therefore I do not think that there is a 'feminist methodology', for there is no single feminist response to this question. Skeggs (1992) argues that research can be feminist if it:

> 'draws on feminist theory; centres on gender (and its relation to heterosexuality, 'race' and class); exposes power relationships in the structuring of difference and inequalities; and if the research can be transformative. This may not necessarily mean that there is a feminist methodology. The methods we use are not gendered it is the use to which we put them that is.'
>
> (Skeggs, 1992,p.6)

Historically quantitative/positivist methods have been seen to be in the province of men. It is these, with their constituent concepts of neutrality and objectivity, so firmly established by white western educated men of the Enlightenment which have informed

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[6]See for instance the following feminist texts: Gunew, 1990; Roberts, 1981; Duelli-Klein, 1983; Wise, 1987; Harding, 1987; and non-feminist: Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992; Hammersley, 1992a.

traditional knowledge constructs and which have provided a bench mark for critiques of alternative social science research paradigms, or those which centre around the qualitative/interpretive area and which are often seen to be in the province of women. For 'different methods become gendered in the process of their use' (Skeggs, 1992 p.6).

Most methodological debate revolves around the quantitative/qualitative split. At its heart is the fundamental issue of power-knowledge. It is a debate which tends to be oppositional with all the constituent problems that this implies, for it can be acrimonious and counter-productive. It is one which feminists have attempted to transcend by refusing to equate feminist research with any one specific, narrow methodology for it is claimed that this is based on the unconscious masculine preoccupation with separation and domination in the fundamental categories of western philosophy, the same categories that define the basic problematic of western epistemology and political theory (as cited in Jaggar, 1988). Feminist methodologies differ in accordance with their epistemological roots. I will point these out when and where they have relevance. However there are several key identifying features which this section is concerned to address. Arguably, Brine

(1993) identifies these as being:

1) The focus of the research is the everyday experience of the researcher and the researched.
2) Feminist researchers are women. I would add here feminist researchers are women whose discursive positioning can contribute to others, male, Asian, Muslim, white, black and so on.
3) The relationship between the researcher and the researched is of crucial importance.
4) The research is emancipatory.
5) The research should be accessible and theoretically and/or practically useful to the process of emancipation.

The emphasis on the experience of women has its roots in radical and socialist feminist epistemology, the important point being that it is not the experience of men. Women's reality of the world is inaccessible to men, whereas the male interpretation of reality is forced upon women. Skeggs (1992) argues that as a great deal of our cultural output in art, literature and film is about male anxiety, women learn a great deal about men and this enables them to occupy masculine subject positions, such as objectivity. However because there is less social value attached to

femininity it is less likely that men will have a great deal of knowledge about women (see also Stanley and Wise,1990). Such a position based on a standpoint epistemology has its roots in Marxist feminism. The point of feminist research then is to place an emphasis on the participants rather than the researcher.[7]

The second common element of feminist methodologies is that feminist researchers arguably should be women. This is the implicit assumption of, for example, Mies (1983) in her methodological guidelines. The concern is that men would appropriate it, redefine it and render women to the position of being forced to concentrate on the arguments of men rather than the lived realities of women. It also has implications in terms of the power relationships inherent in any piece of research. This overlaps with, and is the concern of the next key element of feminist methodology: the importance placed on the process of the research which centres on the relationship between the researcher and the researched and the emancipatory goal of the process for all those who participate in it.

Firstly, the relationship of the researcher to the

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[7]This point is evident in the following feminist texts: Duelli-Klein, 1983; Lather, 1988; Mies, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1990.

researched. This is of no concern to liberal feminists. The liberal stance assumes the possibility of taking an 'Archimedean' point, positioning themselves 'outside' of the world which they research in an objective manner. Liberal conceptions of epistemology, as indicated in Chapter Three, are underpinned by a concern with universal human values which not only informs their arguments for 'equal rights' but also prevents them from claiming any sex-based privileges or distinctions. Liberal feminists do not therefore advocate a feminist epistemology. Their epistemology is encapsulated in a positivist methodology which emphasises objectivity, and a denial of any causal effect or value judgement due to, and for example, age, sex, 'race' or class. They are however concerned to eliminate male bias in research and would therefore argue that feminism affects methodology in that it alerts the researcher to sources of bias.

Mies (1983) advocated 'conscious partiality' in her consideration of the relationship of the researcher and the researched, so that the researcher consciously identifies with the 'subject' of the research (See also Harding, 1987 and Smith,1988). This concept refers to the shared gender of the researcher and the

researched so that this similar gendered experience of reality facilitates and enables greater insight and quality to the research. This can be related back to radical feminist epistemology where the sharing of gender subsumed all other difference, where the researcher and the researched share the same 'powerless situation' and the relationship was non-hierarchical (See Oakley, 1981 and Finch, 1984).

This assumption ignores the power inherent simply to the role of the researcher and has since been explored by feminists other than those who adopt a liberal stance. Briefly, radical feminists argue for the erasure of power in the research process by stressing the overriding importance of gender which subsumes any other structural or material differences between women. Socialist feminists on the other hand acknowledge power differences between women as being materially and economically rooted and which operate individually or collectively in terms of for example, class, 'race' or sexuality. Feminists of a postmodern persuasion stress pluralism and multi-subjectivity to the extent that such a methodology makes no attempt to find any commonality let alone a gendered one thus effectively ignoring power issues.

The point here is not so much the differing

interpretations and emphases on 'conscious partiality' but to underline the explicit placing of the researcher in the research process. Adoption of a feminist methodology, of whatever persuasion, means that the researcher becomes someone who from their own ontological and epistemological positioning makes themselves visible and 'knowable' within the research.[8]

I have already argued for an epistemological approach which is rooted in poststructuralism seen through the lens of feminism. This in turn informs the methodological placing of the research and is therefore the concern of the remainder of the chapter.

Walkerdine (1984) suggests that the power of the researcher to objectify and scrutinise the participant/s of the research is similar to the male gaze, by that she means that men, obviously those in positions of power, create as their object not women as they really are but fantasies of what they both desire and fear as in the 'Other'. Fernando (1992) argues similarly that black people have also been divested of subjecthood, as they have become objects of white scrutiny and classification. This has direct

[8]Such an understanding and approach is found in these texts: Mies, 1983, 1990; Duelli-Klein, 1983; Lather, 1988; Gunew, 1990; Kremer, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1990.

relevance to this research and the question was also considered in Chapter One. In this sense it becomes essential to focus attention on difference between researcher and participants so that:

i) the complexities of the social world are more fully represented and accounted for

ii) it avoids reinforcing existing power differences between researcher and participants and re-inscribing the oppression.

I have already argued that the focus of this study is on power relationships between teachers, mostly non-Muslim and white, and their Muslim students and the significance this has for racism as a white problem. Just as it is argued that men cannot do a piece of feminist research neither can I do a piece of black feminist research, nor would I attempt to. This position which argues for both a recognition of power differences and a means of mitigating these inequalities is usefully approached by adopting a deconstructive analysis. Opie (1992) adopts such an approach. She uses the concept of appropriation as a means of directly empowering the participants in any research project. Briefly this is a term which conventially defines social relationships in terms of power relations. It is used by Edward Said and has

particular relevance for this study. Said (1978 and 1989) considers the relations of the colonizer and colonized but his argument is equally informative for the research process because his characteristic features of the relationship between colonizer / colonized can be said to be clearly replicated in the relationship of the researcher to the researched. He also demonstrates the critical importance of textual representation in the work of appropriation which is again crucial to the production of any piece of work.

Opie draws on the work of Said in defining 'appropriation' as the means by which the experiences of the colonizer (a term used to link those colonized in the imperialistic sense of the word and those located in zones of dependency and peripherality) are interpreted by a (more) dominant group to sustain a particular representation of the view of the 'other' as part of an ideological stance. This practice is complex, inter-locking, self- fulfilling and constraining. Said adopts Foucault to argue that language cannot be regarded as a truthful transparent medium through which the world is apprehended simply as it is. Instead, that it is fully implicated in power relationships. This therefore means that there is a need to be highly aware of the potential for appropriation which accompanies the researcher's

discursive positioning. In this research it necessitates an awareness of the use of language by different cultures and the need to account for the meanings of 'race' and other discursive positionings of interviewees.[9]

Said also argues that developing any new knowledge in an established field requires modifying the conventional textual practices in that field particularly as those practices constitute a colonizing or appropriative relationship, in this case between the researcher and the participants in the research. This means that the problems of appropriation and its possible solution lies within the researcher's way of working with the texts produced by the research. Opie refers to this as textual practices and suggests that a deconstruction of the textual practice can contribute to the reduction of appropriation. She suggests that this can be brought about across three links

1) Identification of the constraints that ideology can impose on the data.

2) Indirect empowerment of the participants by writing

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[9]This is also explored by Edwards (1990) and Billson (1991).

up the research in a way that represents a range of positionings i.e not just academic speak.

3) Discussion of the ways by which interpretative control can be shared between researcher and participant, for example handing back full transcripts and in analysis of the data an identification and questioning of the researcher's own discursive practice as well as of the other- the participant. This would also necessarily involve an awareness on the part of the researcher of their location within the literature, the nature of their own textual practice and the personal and political implications of the methodology for the participants in the study.

In this way Opie suggests that this would mitigate the issues of authority and ideological appropriation identified by Said, which is crucial if the ethical issues involved in the research process are to be partly resolved. Of course they will never be entirely overcome because of the impossibilty of suppression and writing beyond own discursive positionings (Threadgold 1986). A deconstruction of the research process is not therefore definitive but mitigation is possible by being explicit about limitations of any piece of work through a recognition of the implications of the discursive positionings of all the participants including the researcher.

This points to the final key issue of a feminist methodology: that the research should be accessible and theoretically and/or practically useful to the feminist cause which concerns the oppression of women. Theory and practice are not conceived of as a dualism. The aim is to construct theories which are not, and never will be universal, which are fluid and shifting and part of a continually developing process. The purpose of these theories and feminist 'knowledges' is to assist in an understanding of the world and to crtique and add to existing 'knowledges'. Feminist theory is essentially political because it is committed to changing the lives of women who are structured by the power relations operating in contemporary society.

This is the theoretical context for this piece of research. It defines my ontological, epistemological and methodological positioning and it is the base for the final chapter of this section which describes the specific practical perspective of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Introduction

In Chapters One and Four it was explained that categories impose a strategic limitation because of their failure to recognise and deal with fragmentation, hybridity and pluralism. In recognition of this, the approach to the research is also hybrid. It defies most categories, but if it has to be labelled, it is interpretive and qualitative in that it does not gain its validity from statistics but gains what authority it has from the depth of insight made available through a broadly qualitative approach that incorporates a quantitative element.

The research focusses on the everyday lives of teachers and pupils of a maintained single-sex school with a high proportion of Muslim girls (**City State**) and a private Muslim girls' school (**Old Town High**). It is grounded in a postructural theoretical perspective which is viewed through the lens of feminism. This has already been made explicit in Chapter Four.

As the research is aimed at some understanding of the social situation and educational experience of adolescent Muslim girls the data gathered and analysed needs to be understood in context. Therefore in order to

understand the patterns of experience of adolescent Muslim girls it becomes necessary to gather data about the 'lived' experience of participants and become immersed in their social environment.

The chapter is structured around four sections. The first section begins by detailing my approach to this research and how this was influenced by my background. It then discusses inductive and grounded theory, the use of ethnography and case study, and considers what this means for the prescriptive nature of the work carried out in each school because in this sense the approach does not fit neatly into any one of these 'pigeonholes'.

The second section considers the ethical questions which arise from doing a piece of cross cultural research and one which involves secondary school age students who are by definition minors. It considers these issues specifically and prepares the ground for the more general ethical considerations of anonymity and confidentiality which are discussed in the following sections of the chapter.

The third section provides an insight to the direction of the research, as influenced by my background and subjectivity. It also details the research design which evolved in response to the issues and debates considered in Chapter Four and the previous two

theoretical content.

sections of this chapter.

The fourth and final section is concerned with the process of analysis. It details the coding techniques which provided the initial 'way in' to the wealth of data collected, the answers to the primary research questions, the further questions and the emergent hypotheses that this generated.

5.1 Background and Direction

In interpretive research theories or concepts are generated after the data collection phase, not prior to it. There is therefore a need to emphasise the developmental or emergent nature of interpretive research by stressing that the process of analysis operates to a certain extent simultaneously as the data are being collected. Such a model reflects the interpretive researchers' focus upon research in 'natural' settings and the avoidance of the rigid control needed in an 'experimental' quantitative approach.

Triangulation is regarded by many researchers as a means of validating work through the use of multiple methods of investigation. It is this view of triangulation which has dominated debate concerning its potential (see, for example, Denzin, 1970 -a proponent - and Silverman, 1985 - an opponent). However,

this view of triangulation also means that the divergent data generated by this approach seems to be regarded as something of an embarrassment. Too often where such divergence occurs researchers decide that one finding is more true than another causing Bryman (1988) to point out:-

> 'it is in the spirit of triangulation that inconsistent results may emerge;it is not in its spirit that one should simply opt for one set of findings rather than another'
> (Bryman, 1988,p.134)

McLaughlin (1991) inclines to the view that triangulation has more to offer than mechanistic validation. She uses the work of Miles and Huberman (1984) who consider the analogy of diagnosis, where a modus operandi approach consists largely of triangulating different factors so that a case is made which will fit one point of view far better than any others. Therefore it does not matter that all the signs are not the same but rather that all the signs can be accommodated within one interpretation beyond reasonable doubt. In this view of triangulation, apparently divergent data - or indeed convergent data - are but elements of the diagnostic process. A process which can be regarded as more explicitly creative than are most present approaches to the building of analytical and explanatory models. This research proceeded with this diagnostic approach in mind.

Inductive Research and Grounded Theory

The research direction is inductive. This allows for theory being developed from data so that knowledge is built up from the experience of the participants.[1] It is essentially a question led approach. From my knowledge of the schools and my particular interests which focussed around the interaction of 'race' and gender, 'equal opportunities' and single-sex schooling I had two primary research questions:

> 'Are there any areas of agreement between Muslims and feminists concerning the ethos and purpose of single-sex schools?'.

and

> 'How valid are objections to Muslim girls' schools which revolve around the grounds that they reduce educational opportunities available to their students?

This allowed for the development of the next stage of the research. At this stage it appeared to me that there were similarities of approach which was grounded in feminist theory and the concept of 'grounded theory' conceived by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

The data gathering process itself involved several

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[1]The following texts are useful for the consideration of inductive work: Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Cohen and Marion, 1989; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1991; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992.

phases which were not necessarily linear in that I was often collecting different pieces of information by diverse methods in any one particular phase. The initial phase allowed for base line observations on social structure and patterns of behaviour enabling each school environment to be more properly understood. Other phases in the data gathering process included interviewing and documentary research and collection.

These 'diverse slices of data' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 p.66) ensure density and provide different perspectives in analysing and understanding the social situation of each case. Such multiple data collecting methods, as used in grounded theory research, diminishes bias by increasing the wealth of information available and enables an identification of the relevant social processes in two different Muslim communities. Such a detailed framework then allows for a comparison with relevant feminist perspectives and studies on the experience of girls in different educational settings generally, and the issue of single-sex schooling specifically.

Inductive research in general, and grounded theory, in particular is critiqued for reasons which are summarised by Brine (1993) as follows:

i) All research must necessarily start with a theory

and those who argue for an inductive approach are not honestly recognising the theory that they have already formulated.

ii) The approach is not representative and this raises the question of its validity.[2]

iii) It lacks direction or form and the researcher has not paid sufficient attention to the original hypothesis and/or the research design.

This research was generated from the broader theoretical and autobiographical context made explicit in Chapters One and Four. This means that it did start with a theory and it was from here that the two primary questions emerged. These questions determined the direction of the research in terms of the interview schedules adopted for the head teachers and the teachers and the 'work' that was completed by the students. As I collected this data I listened to it, read it and became immersed in it. This led to some fine tuning and ideas for the direction of the analysis. It did not lead me to other data collection. I kept to the same interview schedules and questionnaire work in each school.

Although the interviews with the head teachers and

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[2]This is a point which is also raised in the debates about ethnography and case studies and is also considered at these relevant points.

teachers did not generate the questions and direction of the 'work' that I did with the students they did confirm that the pieces of 'work' I had intended to do with the students were appropriate. At this stage of the research I could, and would, have changed the direction if I had thought it necessary.

I was quite clear about what I wanted to do with the students. I did not want to just 'sit in' and observe their lessons, or just do group interviews, or just do a straightforward questionnaire. I wanted to involve them in the research in a way that would enthuse them. I also wanted to mitigate some of the ethical issues considered in the following section which concern the problems of working with minors who by definition have less power and control over their lives than others. They also have a tendency to view anything done in class as just 'another piece of schoolwork'. I did of course use all these techniques but I adapted these to suit my intentions and purposes.

I observed their lessons, we did group discussions around some photographs, we did an imaginative story, a magazine type 'tick list' questionnaire and a more conventional questionnaire. This last piece of 'work' was based around their experiences of their school and opinions of single-sex schools and equal opportunities issues.

For these reasons I do not believe that the approach to this research can be desribed as one of grounded theory. It is however inductive in that the transcription of each interview was analysed by a process of inductive coding which allows for, and is particularly useful:

> 'when the study is exploratory or when there is little theory informing the researcher about which responses to expect'
> Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, p.323

Also, each stage of the analysis of the data generated further questions so that theory was developed and built up from the experiences of the participants.

What implications do these brief considerations have for this research? An answer to this question requires more detailed consideration of my background because this relates to my approach and therefore the process and progress of this piece of work.

The Background of the Researcher

This piece of research and the perspectives it adopts are, as I have indicated in Chapter One a product of an interplay and relationship between personal biography, positioning in society, historical period and cultural context. This reflects my assumptions regarding what there is to be known and what is knowable, for these assumptions are rooted in my understanding and experience of the world.

For these reasons the personal account which follows is of direct relevance to this study. 'It is a selection, an ordering, a shaping; a complex interplay between the present self and the past self selectively recalled at various stages of personal history' (Weiner, 1994, p.11). This knowledge enables the reader to locate the researcher within the text.

This then is a subjective account and as such contains an inevitable bias in the selection and presentation of content for I am attempting to articulate only those parts of my personal and cultural history which I consider to have relevance to my handling of, and approach to, this piece of research. However the very partiality of this account is of value. A clarification of my personal history and background from my own bias and through patterns of experience, of my own choosing is revealing in itself and does, I believe, provide a valid means of explaining my approaches to, and analysis of, this piece of work. Further it allows the critical community who may read and use this piece of work to judge the knower (as seen by herself) and situate the approach and conclusions within possible bias and discursive assumptions and conceptions. What follows is to assist the reading of this thesis. It is not the 'academic me' and therefore it is not written in the academic register.

If categories are useful and comforting (and people seem to find them to be so) then I am a white, middle class woman who has grown up in a western, predominantly Christian and heterosexual society. While doing my MA the dissatisfaction, injustices and discrimination that I both observed and felt in the classroom and experienced as a teacher with a young family trying to pursue a career was given a name and a framework within which it could be analysed; namely feminism, which I approached from a theoretical rather than a practical/activist perspective.

As I started this course in the late eighties my experience of feminism was never one of a universal 'sisterhood' nor did I ever think of the category 'woman' as being absolute and inviolable. This was underlined by the fierce debate in seminar sessions promoted by the fragmentations quite clearly and explicitly represented by the other women (and two men) on the course. At the time I was not aware that postmodernism/poststructuralism placed a similar emphasis on fragmentations. This has been a debate which I have entered into while doing and writing this thesis.

I have always resisted being categorised and for this

reason have never formally joined any group of any description. I am however committed to feminism and its concern to understand what has caused women's subordination in order to campaign and struggle against it. I resist being placed in any one feminism because I feel unable to locate myself in one perspective which holds true at all times for all issues. Instead I hold onto the commonalites and fragmentations in the belief that there are times when differences should not be exaggerated because the similarities are more important and vice versa.

It is for these reasons that I would not describe this research as that of grounded theory, ethnography or even ethnographic case study because my resistance to categorisation also extends to these debates. I also do not think that this particular piece of research comfortably fits any of these labels, certainly none of these hold true at all times and in all their perspectives for this research. It is partly ethnography, it is partly case study, it is partly grounded theory and it does incorporate a quantitative element but it never quite fulfills all the criteria which could place it in any of these pigeon holes. This becomes clear in the following sections.

Debates about qualitative work are framed around a

confusion and multiplicity of contested terminology which is often used loosely and interchangeably. Those most associated with qualitative work are: inductive and 'grounded theory', which I have already discussed, ethnography and case study. These last two provide the structure of the remainder of this section.

Each of these is considered briefly, and in turn, because they were debates in which I had to engage while doing this research. At relevant points I will again give specific detail about the process and progress of this piece of research so that it becomes located with respect to these discussions.

Ethnography

Across the numerous discliplines in which ethnography has come to be proposed there is considerable diversity in prescription and practice. There is disagreement, for example, as to whether ethnography's distinctive feature is the elicitation of cultural knowledge (Spradley, 1980), the detailed investigation of patterns of social interaction (Gumperz, 1981), or holistic analysis of societies (Lutz, 1981). Sometimes it is portrayed as essentially descriptive, or perhaps as a form of story-telling (Walker,1981); occasionally, great emphasis is laid on the development and testing of theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Denzin, 1978).

Notwithstanding this diversity of opinion there has been an upsurge of ethnographic work in British educational research making ethnography the most commonly practised qualititative research method because of its characteristic emphasis on participant observation (Woods,1988). The term itself derives from anthropology, meaning literally an anthropologist's 'picture' of the way of life of some interacting human group (Wolcott, 1975). The major concept is 'culture', viewed as a 'process', that is to say 'ongoing, elusive, and always being modified'.

In the educational sphere much of this ethnographic work describes and illuminates the fine-grained details of school life. Ethnographic description differs from ordinary description in that the researcher's aim, within the limits of their own ability, is to give a thorough description of the relationship between all the elements characteristic of a single human group, to penetrate beneath surface appearances and reveal the harder realities which are concealed beneath this superficial layer. Ideally the ethnographer does not pre-define or make decisions about roles and positions and the relationships between them, or about people's views and perspectives before they are encountered. Again, ideally these will be revealed to the researcher over time, and

they might contrast strongly with more formal and official accounts which are made within a framework of educational functioning or dysfunctioning, and which interpret people's views, opinions and sentiments for them.

One of the major criticisms levelled at ethnography is that its findings are insubstantial and trivial and provide only 'endless description and a sequence of plausible stories' (Eldridge, 1981, p.131). But perhaps more importantly, and in the light of the debates considered in Chapter Four, any ethnography or qualitative piece of work that attempts to understand the words and deeds of others is redundant, for it can only be done from the confines of the researcher as subject.

However in this research, subjectivity is viewed as a strength and not a weakness. In Chapter Four I argue that both poststructuralism and feminism share the common and central themes of a recognition of the place of subjectivity; of 'voice'; and the acknowledgement that facts are saturated with moral positions and value. The location of myself within the research allows for an examination of 'otherness' and a critical reflection between the self and the 'other' so that 'not only does one become able to listen to that other constituency, but

one learns to speak in such a way that it will be taken seriously by that other constituency' (Spivak, 1990, p.42). Subjectivity becomes a strength.

In view of the discussion up to this point I would not describe this work as ethnographic although elements of it can be described in this way. I have established relationships in both schools gradually and in a way which has been about mutual learning. The Muslim school is smaller and because of this relationships begun in school have become social relationships. I have been invited into families and been welcomed for meals and to weddings. I have learned about Islam and the cultural background of the Muslim communities which participated in the research. I have also made myself and my family known. These relationships are on-going regardless of when the research is finished. This development has been an important part of this research.[3] On this level it is ethnographic. It has informed, and provided the background for, the research carried out in each school. The work carried out

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[3]These relationships are different from the time I spent talking to parents in their homes about their daughters' schooling and choice of school although this too often involved socialising often over food or a cup of tea. I would also add that I have been involved as a researcher on two funded projects which have been studies of the experiences of Muslim girls in different Muslim communities. An element of this work has also involved being invited into families and their homes. In this case the cultural background is rooted in a different country of origin with all the differences that this implies.

in the schools however is at a different level, it is prescriptive, and in this sense is not ethnographic.

Case Study

The term 'case study' is frequently used interchangeably with ethnography. Case study is a widely used approach and indeed the central frame of qualitative research still derives from case studies. As a consequence the term 'case study' has come to have a multiplicity of definitions. The major characteristic of the case study however, is its concentration on a particular instance in order to reveal the ways in which events come together to create particular kinds of outcomes. An early and influential paper in the field referred to this as 'illuminative' evaluation (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972). More recently though the term 'case study' has gained much greater currency.

A widely quoted definition of a case study is that it is the study of 'an instance in action' and the study of a 'bounded system'. Yin (1984) and Delamont and Atkinson (1985) argue that attempts to define and support the case study has, in an oppositional stance to the quantitative paradigms, neglected necessary work on the theoretical and methodological development of this method. Such a view is also echoed by Hammersley

(1992) who points out that the case study issue was the forerunner of more recent debate about qualitative and quantitative method. Hammersley (1992b) defines the term 'case' as:-

> 'The phenomenon (located in space/time) about which data are collected and/or analysed, and that corresponds to the type of phenomena to which the main claims of the study relate...cases can range from micro to macro all the way from an individual person through a particular event social situation, organisation or institution to a national society or international social system...the case study should be defined as one case selection strategy among others; the others being experiment and survey'.
> (Hammersley, 1992b, p.184)

He recommends that the 'case study' should be distinguished from at least four other general aspects of research design: problem formulation; data collection; data analysis; and reporting the findings. His definition of the case study is a narrower definition than is conventional, neither does he imply that case studies always involve participant observation, the collection and analysis of qualitative rather than quantitative data, that they focus on meaning rather than behaviour or that case study enquiry is inductive or idiographic rather than deductive or nomothetic.

Hammersley (1992b) argues, and I agree, that case studies do not display a distinctive logic that sets them apart

from survey and experiment for Hammersley shows that the same methodological issues apply to all three but the strategies vary in how they deal with the issues. This means that case study combines the features of both survey and experiment and so Hammersley defines case study as the investigation of a relatively small number of naturally occurring (rather than researcher-created) cases.My agreement with Hammersley on this issue stems from the methodological approach detailed in Chapter Four given its foundation in poststructuralism and its explicit placing of the researcher in any research process.

Further and with respect to his argument Hammersley also analyses the work of Lacey (1970), Hargreaves (1967) and Ball (1981), citing them as a clear example of systematic theory development and testing in ethnographic research which demonstrate the possibility of using comparison of existing cases to make reasonable judgements about causal research.

This piece of research too, is grounded in the breadth of view provided for by an accumulation of qualitative research projects concerning the experience and academic achievement of girls in different educational settings. This in turn has allowed for the promotion of theory development in this sphere.

Finally, it is the acknowledgement of the place of

complexity and difference in any epistemological consideration while considering and accounting for the similarities, the meta-narratives, that is the basis for my approach to this piece of research. It shaped the direction, design and analysis of the research and helped me to consider the ethical questions which I encountered in doing this piece of cross cultural research. This is the focus of the rest of this chapter.

5.2 Ethical Considerations

I have already raised the dilemma concerned with carrying out a piece of cross cultural research and the problems this raises in terms of power and control. In trying to mitigate these issues and in the belief that methodological and ethical issues are inextricably interwoven I have adopted a feminist approach with a poststructural emphasis which deals with issues in terms of responsibilities and which broadly highlights the issue of the use of language in terms of power and control. This means that the ethical issues that I have faced and considered as a white, non-Muslim woman working with Muslim participants specifically, and the relationship between researcher and researched more generally, have already been partially considered in Chapters One and Four. I now want to consider these

issues in more detail, particularly the ethical issues involved when the research includes working with school age students.

The current debate within British feminism regarding the question of whether or not white researchers should attempt to work with and interview black people has already been raised in Chapters One, and Four but these chapters have not considered the further problems relating to the questions asked in interviews and the validity of the answers given.[4]

The argument is that white feminists should study the structures and institutions that promote racism, rather than 'study' black women themselves. Edwards (1990) argues, and I agree, that this is no solution to those studies (such as this) in which 'race' plays a part and which is increasingly likely in a multiracial society. If white researchers feel that they cannot include the voices of black women then the absence of these voices runs the risk of negating the presence of black women so that it is white women who once again come to fill the void, and are assumed, yet again, to speak for all women. This is not a study about

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[4]See also, and for instance, Amos and Parmar, 1981; Carby, 1982; Phoenix, 1987; Reisman, 1987; Troyna and Carrington, 1989.

structures and institutions that promote racism because I cannot see how that can be done without an attempted understanding of the power relationships that are inherent to them and which is the focus of this research. This means that the voices of black people must be included.

I do not think that a man can do a piece of *feminist* research but this does not mean that I think that a man should not, for example, in a study of masculinity, include the 'voice' of women in an attempt to understand masculinity. The same is true for this study. In response to feminist critique of his work Freire states in Learning to Question:

> 'if the women are critical, they have to accept our contribution as men, as well as the workers have to accept our contribution as intellectuals, because it is a duty and a right that I have to participate in the transformation of society. Then, if the women must have the main responsibility in their struggle, they have to know that their struggle also belongs to us, that is to those men who don't accept the machista position in the world. The same is true of racism. As an apparent white man, because I always say that I am not quite sure of my whiteness, the question is to know if I'm really against racism in a radical way. If I am, then I have a duty and a right to fight with black people against racism.'
>
> (hooks,1993, quoting Freire p.153)

I emphasize that this research fully recognizes its limitations. It is a study about the relationships between the teachers (often white and non-Muslim) and their Muslim

students and how these are affected by different educational settings and experiences. It is not and would not presume to be a piece of black feminist research.

I now want to discuss the ethical dilemma associated with working with secondary school age students who are minors and by definition with less power and control of their lives than had they been of age. This was considered by Denscombe and Aubrook (1992). They looked at pupil perceptions of participating in the 'Drugs in Schools; a programme of inquiry' (DISPRIN) project and the 'Drugs and Risk-Taking' (DART) project. This work revealed that although a minority of the respondents were suspicious about these the exercises, the majority perceived them as 'just another piece of schoolwork'. This questions the extent to which such questionnaires are completed voluntarily and poses further ethical questions for researchers, teachers and educational authorities. This issue is not addressed by British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines for educational research which are to be found in Appendix V.

These published guidelines, for example the Sociological Research Association (SRA) Handbook (1986) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines (1986), which consider basic ethical

issues have been useful as a foundation and guide. However, I have had to interpret, expand and elaborate on these with respect to my particular research context and as different ethical issues arose.

I was given permission from each head teacher and class teacher to work with the pupils within the school context. BERA guidelines were followed. Neither school suggested that permission should also be obtained by the parents. This, as Denscombe and Aubrook point out, has very clear advantages in terms of a high response rate.

There were times when I felt that the students considered it to be 'just another piece of school work' to be undertaken and completed within the degrees of conscientiousness with which school work is normally approached. Although they were told the details and the purpose of the research, assured of confidentiality, and assured it was not obligatory they were a captive audience and appeared to assume that it was a piece of schoolwork which they had a tacit duty to complete. This was particularly so where the teacher insisted on remaining in the classroom to introduce me and explain the work I was doing. This raises issues about rights to say no. In this case the possible remedies would seem to be:-

1) not to use questionnaire research with pupils in school but in another situation where they would feel genuinely free to refuse to participate. This would risk the extent and quality of coverage and mean a possible struggle to get a representative sample so that the quality of the data would suffer.

2) make sure that they know that they are not only formally free to decline but that they feel free to do so. This was the approach I adopted. I began on an informal basis through the use of photographs in group situations. This allowed me to become a familiar figure doing something with them that was out of the ordinary and enabling me to explain my work to them. I do have doubts about how easy it was for the students to refuse to participate in the research (although a few did). However I do not think that these doubts would prevent me from working with students again, and in this way, in the future. The reasons for this opinion are to be found in Chapter Ten.

In conclusion to this section more general issues, such as confidentiality and anonymity are not forgotten but to ease the reading of this chapter they are discussed as the direction and the design of the research are made explicit in the following sections of this chapter.

5.3 The Research Direction and Design

My interest is at the micro level of local issues in the belief that local variables are critically important to the process of educational change, that is the macro level. Each school was selected for many different reasons: I already had a relationship with the staff and the students; they bring into play contrasting features; represent different Muslim communities, and in each case have generated a special set of local interests. Additional criteria used in the selection of each case can be seen in Appendix VI.

This meant that not only were they geographically accessible but I had no difficulties with initial access. I did not assume that this permission meant that all the staff and students would be willing to participate in the research. I was very aware as someone who had only recently left teaching that I would be asking the staff to give up very precious free periods to be interviewed in the later stages of the work.

My work for my MA dissertation was effectively my pilot study and the initial phase of this piece of research. I spent a lot of time in both schools observing, familiarising myself and becoming a 'known' face. In this

sense, and as I have already explained, the work began as an ethnography in that as I became familiar with each school I developed more of an understanding about the lives of the people in the school. This was achieved through the gradual building of informal relationships by my sharing in the everyday experiences of the people there. At the same time I was always aware that these relationships with the staff and the students were formed within the limitations of me being seen in the role of researcher, and with the Muslim participants, as a white, non-Muslim researcher.

It became a two way learning process. I was surprised very early on when I realised that the staff saw me as an academic from a university and felt that they had to converse with me in a 'powerful' and 'academic' way. I was surprised because I still saw myself as a teacher. I was often talking to people who had reached a more senior position than I had done as a teacher and therefore it was I who felt less powerful and not vice versa. I learned who it was I had to put at ease by emphasising my background and when it was more advantageous not to, for example when I was talking with senior male teachers. This, in the same way as we make adjustments in all our everday relationships

(some more successfully than others).[5]

I came to the state school with what I believed to be some understanding having been educated in a single-sex setting, and having taught in similar, although not multiracial, set ups and I felt comfortable. I came to the Muslim girls' school without these understandings or a religious background. I did not feel so comfortable and felt I had a lot to learn. In this sense I made more assumptions about the state school than I did about the Muslim school.

I was also aware that because I was researching only two schools in depth (for practical and economic reasons as much as anything else) that there could be a problem with validity. I attempted to overcome this by undertaking a postal survey to provide both background data and some means of theoretical sampling. This is more fully discussed later in this section. However, the advantage of this research is the richness of data that the two case studies provide while its limitations in terms of generalisation are recognised. In the light of the discussion so far it now becomes possible to discuss the

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[5]This is discussed fully in the following text: Gewirtz,S and Ozga,J. (1993). 'Sex, Lies and Audiotape: Interviewing the Education Policy Elite' Paper for ESRC seminar; Methodological and ethical issues associated with research into the 1988 Education Reform Act, University of Warwick, 3.2.93.

research design which was, as I have already made explicit, structured around the two primary research questions.

The Research Design

The following research design is the result of a series of decisions made in the light of the issues raised in the previous sections of this chapter. The linkage of the two research questions to larger theoretical constructs means that the particulars of this study will serve to illuminate aspects of these larger issues, and are therefore of significance. The design is eclectic. It is placed within a framework of background data supplied by information obtained through a postal questionnaire distributed to the 21 Muslim schools listed in England and a girls school in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. (See Appendix VII).

Each case study was chosen because of the reasons I have already given and because in one locality parts of the Muslim community have felt it necessary to establish a private school for Muslim girls while in the other locality there is no Muslim girls school partly due to the existence, for many reasons, of an accessible single-sex girls' school.

The next part of the research design targeted those issues raised by the primary research questions and used

the information generated by the postal survey, which had generated a sixty three per cent reply rate. Within this approach there are four phases:

1) to gather any documentary evidence made available to me such as Governors' reports, school brochures, timetables, curriculum details, breakdown of exam results, destinations of year 11 students and HMI reports.

2) conduct semi-structured interviews with the head teacher and staff (a representative sample in the case of the state school as the number of staff is greater).[6]

3) give three related pieces of 'work' to years 8, 9, 10 and 11 (the ethics of this was discussed in section two of this chapter).

4) Meet informally with some parents and ex-students who are willing to do so. It should be noted here that during the course of these meetings I was interested in asking the questions which are detailed in Appendices VIII and IX. However, these meetings were informal and sometimes took place at school functions such as parents evenings or fund raising events. For these reasons the information gathered

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[6]The selection criteria used is described later in this section together with some of the issues generated by the use interviews in the research process.

was mostly not taped and is sprinkled throughout the analysis usually in confirmation of a particular issue under discussion. It is not therefore directly quoted. The insights from these meetings are mainly to be found in Chapter Nine which is concerned to weave the fractured data back together again.

The interview schedules for the head teachers and staff were constructed around a series of questions. The interviews with the head teachers were aimed at obtaining in depth information about the approaches of each school to policy and practice in the educational provision for Muslim girls both academically and socially. These interview schedules can be found in Appendices X and XI.

The interview with the teachers was concerned with their teaching experience and educational background, their views on their present school; the aims of education for girls; the needs of their Muslim students; curricular issues; and issues of equal opportunities. This interview aimed at obtaining a different level of information in terms of attitudes to single-sex schooling, awareness, acceptance and working definitions of equal opportunity issues.

My concern was to involve only those teachers who were interested in the research and willing to participate

in it. At a staff meeting in the state school (City State) I formally asked for volunteers, talked about the research and assured them about issues of confidentiality. I then circulated every member of staff with a letter, a reply slip asking for convenient times when we could meet, and a copy of the interview schedule. In the event I was surprised by the level of interest, goodwill and response and interviewed many more teachers than I had originally planned. Because of the smaller size of the Muslim school (Old Town High) I was able to approach teachers on a one to one basis.

I did not want the start of the interview to appear cold and formal. I began each interview with an ambiguous set of photographs which a colleague and I had taken in different schools (See Appendix XII). I chose four photographs out of four rolls of film that were taken. This phase of the design was based on the Adult Learning Project set up in Scotland in 1979 which was a systematic attempt to implement Freire's approach in Scotland.[7] The pictures acted as a means of codification, as visual representations of significant situations in the lives of the participants. According to Freire codifications need to have certain

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[7]A more detailed discussion of the project is to be found in Kirkwood and Kirkwood, 1989.

characteristics.

I have used those which were applicable to this particular piece of research and its situation: they must represent familiar and easily recognizable situations; they must not be too explicit or too enigmatic - neither making propaganda nor seeming like a puzzle; they should offer various decoding possibilities; they should contain what Freire calls the inclusive contradictions, by which he means those key contradictions which recur in various aspects of the life of the community; and codifications should relate to felt needs, in order to stimulate initial engagement. The four pictures were therefore chosen with these characteristics in mind.

I asked people to talk about what they thought was happening in each photograph and what the people in the pictures were doing. Participants commented on type of school, type of lesson in progress, uniform, gender and other equal opportunity issues without the prompt of a specific question and in this sense provided the 'way in' to the issues that the research was concerned to address.[8]

Chapter Four identified one of the main strands of a methodology informed by feminisms is the emphasis on

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[8]For further discussions concerning the use of photographs in a piece of research see Walker and Weidel, 1985 and Prosser, 1992.

the process of the research so that the research became a shared enterprise and issues of power in the relationship were mitigated. However despite all the efforts of mitigation which I have already discussed, the sharing of experiences and differences, the building up of some form of relationship, I was still the researcher. As Brine (1993) argues it was me who was asking the questions, had the knowledge of all the responses, an idea of where it all fitted together and had the power over whether or not I shared my ideas and experiences.

This means that interviews can never be an egalitarian process. This was reinforced by several comments from participants as I switched off the tape recorder such as 'Phew! That wasn't as bad as I thought it would be' often accompanied by a visible relaxing of the shoulders. Furthermore this sort of reaction came from people irrespective of their status.

Much has been written about the use of tape recorders in interview situations.[9] I was only once refused permission to record an interview out of forty five interviews with students and teachers. I always made sure that the participants knew how to control the tape

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[9]See, for example, Atkinson and Hammersley (1983) and Powney and Watts (1987).

recorder but only one interviewee made use of this. Several revealing conversations did take place after the formal ending of the interview. In some cases the tape was still running and I made sure that I had permission to use the additional material. I always reiterated confidentiality at the beginning of each interview with the undertaking that I would send the transcript of the interview back to them if they so wished. Only one person, who needed repeated reassurance throughout the interview, requested this. I sent her the transcript of her interview but did not receive a reply in response to this. I could have taken this to mean that she was happy with the transcript. However, I decided that the interview had taken place and although I could not erase it from the research I would not use it for direct quotation.

I was told afterwards by a number of the interviewees that they had seen the interview as an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and the issues raised by the questions. They said that they valued this. In this sense the interview can be thought of as empowering as mentioned by Oakley (1981). Generally these participants not only expressed an interest in the work but said they thought it would make a valuable contribution not only to the issue of Muslim schools but to the multicultural debate. In this sense the interviews could be seen as a shared project and the creation of a situation approaching

that of a sharing of ideas, leading to the research itself becoming a shared experience.[10]

The work with the students included the following stages:

i) The same set of photographs that were presented to the staff.

ii) A questionnaire designed to measure attitudes of students towards high academic achievement in girls.

iii) A scale to measure pupils' attitudes towards the rights and roles of women in society; this scale investigates traditional/liberal attitudes towards womens' rights and roles in contemporary society, and consequently to equal rights for women generally.

iv) A more open-ended questionnaire designed to probe and give an over-view of pupils' feelings about their school, their attitudes and aspirations.

The photographs were used in group situations because they gave the students the opportunity to talk in an informal way about different situations in school, differents types of school, teaching and teachers. Some of these discussions were taped although the quality of the recordings turned out to be variable especially

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[10]The following texts discuss this issue: Oakley, 1981; Middleton, 1983; Harding, 1987; Lather, 1988; Smith, 1988a, 1988b.

when the discussions became heated. The resulting data is very rich. Their value was in allowing me to become a familiar figure doing something with them that was not perceived as 'ordinary' school work and enabling me to explain my work to them. I followed this with three pieces of writing.

The first piece is based on the standard Thematic Apperception Test (As McClelland 1953). Originally this test consisted of a set of deliberately ambiguous drawings into which the person taking the test had to read their own story. The test in this investigation is verbal and has previously been used by Mkangaza (1986) and Faulkner (1989) and was in turn based on the work of Horner (1972).

Horner carried out her study between 1964 and 1971 and refers to her work as an investigation into 'women's fear and avoidance of success'. She argues that women have a motive to avoid success in a society which views competence, independence, competition and intellectual achievement as qualities basically inconsistent with femininity and 'positively related to masculinity'. This results in many women who fully expect success in achievement related situations to feel that this would be followed by negative consequences such as social rejection or feelings of being unfeminine. Thus a fear

of success is aroused in otherwise achievement-motivated women which then inhibits their performance and levels of aspiration.

Another feature of girls' reactions to the traditional stereotypes held of them by society is the fear that they must conform or appear less feminine (Broverman et al., 1970; Spence et al.,1973; Sharpe,1976; Byrne, 1978; Delamont,1980). Horner asked medical students to write a story around the clue 'after I came top in my final year exams'. This study has been used as a basis for further studies in this area (Mkangaza, 1986; Schwenn, 1970; Watson, 1970; Prescott,1971).

Faulkner (1989) also used this piece of work to investigate the claims of sex stereotyping in schools and female fear of success by measuring pupils' attitudes towards high academic achievement in girls. The research was carried out in different types of school, that is mixed or single-sex, in an attempt to identify some of the factors which might be influencing the development of traditional or liberal attitudes to equal rights for women in general, and to high academic achievement in girls in particular. The work also aimed to investigate the effect of school type and background upon students' responses. In this case the clue was: 'Anne is a girl of your own age who is attending a secondary school. After the exams at the end

of the year the form teacher announced that Anne had come top of the class in all her subjects.'

I adapted this work firstly by changing the name from Anne to Nazrah and then asking the students to write an imaginative story around the clue: 'Nazrah was in a big class in an inner city comprehensive school. After the exams at the end of the year the form teacher announced that Nazrah had come top of the class in all her subjects.' I was also interested in what the students thought about Nazrah as a person and what they thought she would be doing when she was 25 because I was interested in their perceptions of the type of occupation that an academically successful girl can do on leaving school. (See Appendix XIII).

The second piece used a scale to measure pupils' attitudes to the rights and roles of women in contemporary society, and in consequence, to investigate the prevalence of traditional sex-stereotyping in each of the schools studied. This was also useed by Faulkner (1989).

The scale itself is the British Version of the Attitudes Towards Women Scale (AWS-B) as described by Parry 1983. The original Attitudes towards Women Scale was a 55 item Likert-type scale devised by Spence and Helmreich in 1972. From this a shorter version was devised by Spence et al (1973) designed for use with 12

year olds and upwards.

The same pattern of findings have emerged for both versions of the scale; that is female students and mothers were significantly more liberal than male students and fathers. Also students were found to be more liberal overall than their parents. Given this and the high correlation between the long and the short form it has been accepted by researchers that the short form is a valid and reliable measure of attitudes towards the rights and roles of women in contemporary society (Parry 1983).

In spite of the good psychometric properties of the short form AWS, many of the items were not felt to be suitable for disadvantaged groups or with a British sample. An example of such an item is - 'economic and social freedom is worth far more to women than acceptance of the ideal of femininity which has been set up by men'.

A British version was developed and a full discussion of the reasons for this is to be found in Faulkner (1989). Of the 25 AWS items 22 were simplified and Anglicised. The above example was reworded as: 'Women are better off having their own jobs and freedom to do as they please rather than being treated as a lady in the old-fashioned way'. The revised scale was then administered to 104 working class mothers. Data was also collected from 100 middle class

professional women.

The resultant scale comprised 21 items; the one concerning sex before marriage was omitted from the British version (see Appendix XIV). Co-efficient alphas show the scale to have acceptable internal reliability (Cronbach, 1951). Although the British version has not been validated on male groups there is no reason to believe that it would be less robust than the American version, which was administered to both male and female samples (Parry,1983). I used this scale as a basis for the second piece of 'work' with the students. Having done one piece of writing they enjoyed the tick list format.

The scale is appropriate for use with children and adults of 12 years and upwards. It consists of a summated rating scale with each of its 21 items equally rated. The original scale is scored on a 5 point conservative/liberal response dimension, with a high score denoting a liberal attitude and a low score denoting a correspondingly conservative attitude to women's rights and roles in contemporary society. For this piece of research and to make the scale even easier to administer the scoring was reduced to a four point scale so that each item had a four degree response alternative:-

-strongly agree

-agree

-disagree

-strongly disagree

A score of 1 to 4 is attached to the appropriate headings; 1 being the most conservative or traditional response and 4 being the most liberal one.[11] A copy of this questionnaire is to be found in Appendix XV.

The third piece of 'work' completed by the students is a more generalised and open-ended questionnaire designed to obtain another level of information and to probe the attitudes of the girls to school, girls only schools and their aspirations. A sample is included as Appendix XVI where it can be seen that this piece of 'work' is more conventional and self explanatory. For these reasons I do not intend to discuss it in any more detail.

The students were invited to participate in the research and to complete the pieces in order. They were told that it was voluntary. They were asked to give their name, age and form but assured of confidentiality. They were told that they could ask for any help that they felt they needed and this included language translation. The work was done over a period of a few weeks in the weekly lesson set aside for form business.

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[11]Faulkner (1989) also used this reduced four point scale.

In summary the choice of data collection is diverse in keeping with the Glaser and Strauss grounded theory tradition and is used in the spirit of triangulation discussed by McLaughlin (1991).

5.4 The Analysis

The grounded theory method requires that the researcher simultaneously collect, code and analyse the data from the first day in the field. The method is circular, allowing the researcher to change focus and pursue leads revealed by the ongoing data analysis.

In their development of grounded theory Glaser and Strauss proposed that the research progress in stages. Each stage determines the questions to be asked in the subsequent stages, the concepts and tentative hypotheses and also the research method and means of analysis. This means that specific research methods are determined by the theory as it is generated: quantitative or qualitative depending on the needs of the data.

The process is one in which a coding scheme is drawn up from representative responses to (mainly open-ended) questions. This coding scheme is then applied to the rest of the data.

The coding scheme developed from the interviews with

staff and students and the questionnaires of the students had the following main areas:

1) ethos and philosophy
2) single-sex schooling
3) academic achievement
4) roles of women in contemporary society
5) confidence and assertiveness
6) conflict and tension
7) needs of the Muslim students/equal opportunities

This scheme developed because the answers to the primary research questions emerged at an early stage in the procedure and it became apparent that these questions did in fact mask other questions which became obvious as the analysis proceeded.

Strauss and Corbin (1991) refer to open, axial and selective coding. Open coding is the analytic process by which concepts are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. The basic analytic procedures by which this is accomplished are: the asking of questions about data;and the making of comparisons for similarities and differences between pieces of information. Similar instances are labelled and grouped to form categories. Axial coding refers to a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. It is

followed by selective coding. This is the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating these relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development.

In this case the analysis progressed in the stages identified by Strauss and Corbin. The analysis concerning the ethos and philosophy of each school and attitudes to single-sex schooling which was the focus of one of the primary research questions began a process of comparison between the two schools. The connections between the emergent categories which resulted from this analysis of the background of each school and over the issue of single-sex schooling and its advantages and disadvantages gave rise to further questions which focussed on the issues of academic performance, religion and self confidence and assertiveness. Similar instances were labelled and put together to form categories.

At this early stage similarities and differences between the two schools began to emerge and this process of open coding led to the next stage of the analysis corresponding to the process of axial coding that Strauss and Corbin refer to. In these early phases of the analysis it became obvious that the primary questions

could be answered. There were many areas of agreement between the staff and the students in both schools over the issue of single-sex schooling and the emphasis on academic achievement in the Muslim girls' school (Old Town High) meant that it seemed unlikely that their educational opportunities in this sense were reduced. However,at this point new questions began to emerge. The analysis at this stage focussed on the interviews of the head teachers and staff and was concerned with the categories of religion and academic performance. At this stage the data was being put back together again in new ways. This procedure generated a further set of questions.

Firstly, one question focussed on whether the differences between the two schools concerning emphasis on academic performance was detectable in the responses of the students. Secondly, a strong commitment of the staff in both City State and Old Town High to gender issues emerged which further prompted a question about whether this was reflected in student attitudes to the rights and roles of women in contemporary society, and if there was a discernible difference in attitude between the students of each school on these issues.

The commitment of the staff in City State to gender issues in terms of equal opportunities which emerged at

this stage of the analysis also identified certain tensions as they tried to reconcile their desire to encourage the students to challenge and question the stereotypes of women, their rights and their roles in contemporary society on the one hand whilst giving due consideration to what they understand to be the religious/cultural beliefs of the Muslim students on the other hand. These tensions were not detectable in the responses of the staff or the students in Old Town High. This began the final stage in the analysis procedure which corresponds to the selective coding of Strauss and Corbin.

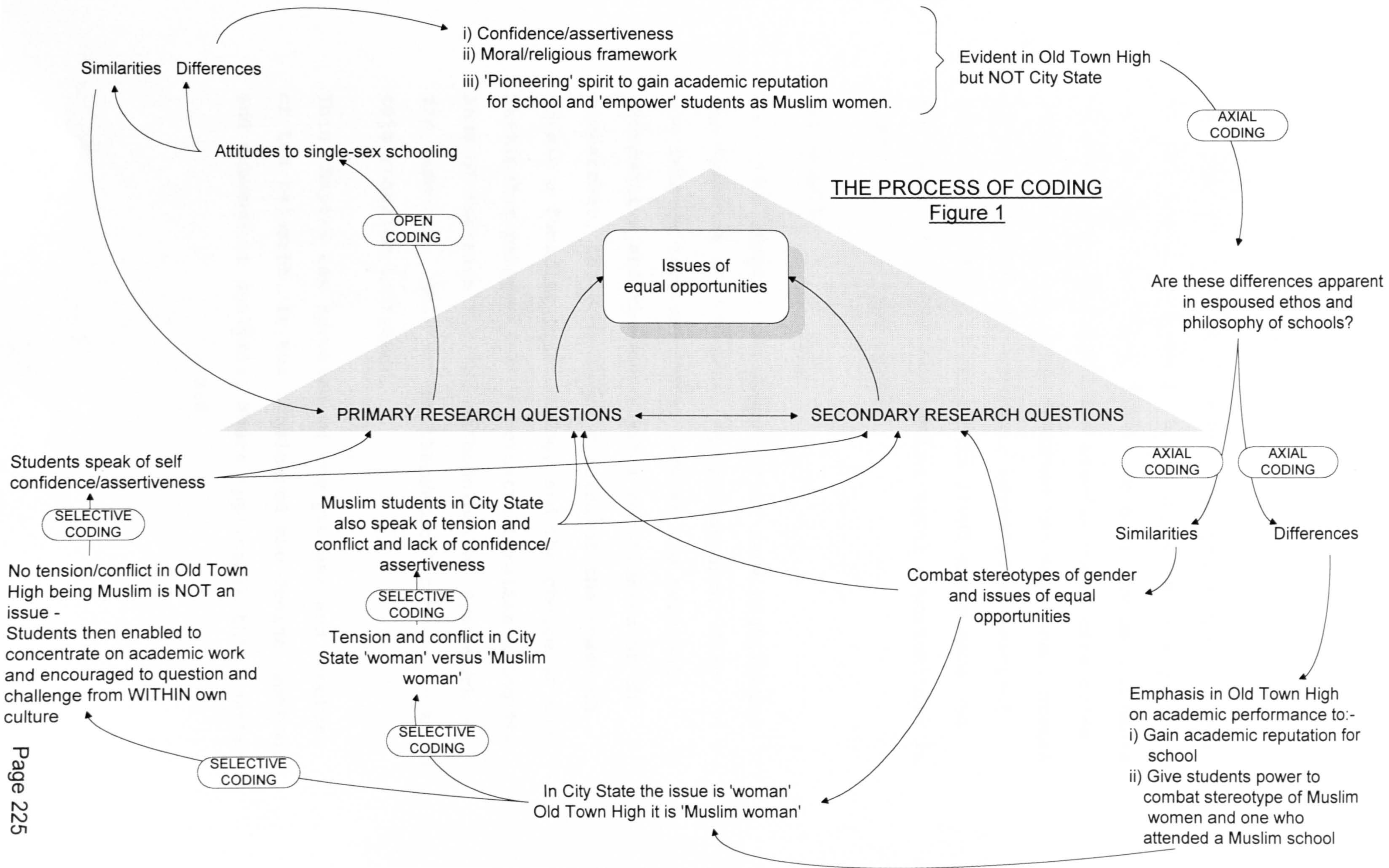
The tension and conflict identified in the responses of the staff and students in City State became the core category which was systematically related to other categories so that relationships between these categories were validated and categories that needed further refinement were filled in and developed. This generated three further questions which were addressed in the final stage of the analytical procedure, they were:

i) Is it because the Muslim students in Old Town High feel 'comfortable' in their environment where being a woman is not an issue, being a Muslim is not an issue and being a Muslim woman is not an issue?

ii) Is it from this basis they feel free to question, challenge and assert their own agendas for an exploration of what it means to be a Muslim woman and pursue academic success and further or higher education from the safety of feeling secure in their own identity?

iii) Is this the case for the Muslim students in City State?

This process of analysis is particularly suited to this type of research because it is an under researched area where it is not possible, at the beginning, to predict or hypothesise about possible outcomes. As the research and analysis progressed, around two broad questions, which were the primary research questions, further questions were generated which served to express the focal concerns of the research as detailed in figure 1. This figure is concerned to illustrate the process of coding. At first glance it appears complicated. This reflects the complex nature of the process of analysis which is 'messy' and multifaceted. I wanted figure 1 to capture and reflect this, whilst summarising and clarifying the coding procedure. I have not incorporated the process of analysis of the quantitative element of the work into this figure because that would require a three dimensional diagram.


THE PROCESS OF CODING
Figure 1
Similarities
Differences
i) Confidence/assertiveness
ii) Moral/religious framework
iii) 'Pioneering' spirit to gain academic reputation for school and 'empower' students as Muslim women.
Evident in Old Town High but NOT City State
AXIAL CODING
Attitudes to single-sex schooling
OPEN CODING
Issues of equal opportunities
Are these differences apparent in espoused ethos and philosophy of schools?
PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS
SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Students speak of self confidence/assertiveness
SELECTIVE CODING
No tension/conflict in Old Town High being Muslim is NOT an issue -
Students then enabled to concentrate on academic work and encouraged to question and challenge from WITHIN own culture
Muslim students in City State also speak of tension and conflict and lack of confidence/ assertiveness
SELECTIVE CODING
Tension and conflict in City State 'woman' versus 'Muslim woman'
SELECTIVE CODING
SELECTIVE CODING
AXIAL CODING
AXIAL CODING
Similarities
Differences
Combat stereotypes of gender and issues of equal opportunities
Emphasis in Old Town High on academic performance to:-
i) Gain academic reputation for school
ii) Give students power to combat stereotype of Muslim women and one who attended a Muslim school
In City State the issue is 'woman'
Old Town High it is 'Muslim woman'

The analysis initially focussed on the micro concerns of the research beginning as it did with an exploration of the every day lived experiences of the participants in single-sex settings. The broadly based categories which emerged from this dictated the subsequent stages of the analysis and gradually revealed an emergent macro focus which related this lived experience to the theoretical perspectives of equal opportunities in terms of 'race' and gender.

Conclusion

Both this chapter and Chapter Four have highlighted the feminist underpinning of the research. They acknowledge the connection between the personal perspective and the ontological positioning of the researcher, the consequent placing of the research within a feminist epistemology and the choice of the particular perspective of poststructuralism using the lens of feminism for the methodological framework of the research. This is the theoretical context in which this research is framed.

This chapter has focussed on the process and progress of the research. It has considered the design, methods and subsequent analysis. Where applicable this chapter

has also highlighted the linkage between the research process and the theoretical principles on which it is based. This linkage is also visible throughout the thesis. It is signalled in Chapter One because it is fundamental to how I have approached and analysed the relevant literature and it is considered in depth in this section because it forms the foundation of the research.

Finally the choice of a poststructural perspective over and above other perspectives is significant. The reasons, detailed fully in Chapters One and Four, reside in its acknowledgement of the importance of agency as well as structure in the production of social practice so that its focus is how we are constituted as subjects of our own knowledge. This brings with it the potential to move feminist research beyond description and into explanation based on an analysis which illuminates and reveals how power is exercised through discourse, how oppression works and how resistance might be possible through actively taking up specific discursive positionings at the intersections of competing discourses. This is the underlying and overriding intention of this research.

PART THREE

CHAPTER SIX

THE CASE STUDIES

Introduction

The chapters of Part Two provided both the background to the case studies, and a methodological placing and evaluation of them. This Part, Part Three concerns itself entirely with an analysis of the data which resulted from interviews with the staff and with the questionnaires, informal 'chats' and interviews with the students. The data in the following chapters is the perception of the staff and students themselves: it is *their* perception of their schools, single-sex education, the aims of education for girls and issues of 'equal opportunities'.

Each case study generated a wealth of data, but this Part necessarily concentrates on the dominant issues, that is the emergent generative category of questions which determined the direction and development of the analysis of the research project. The original category is that which focussed on the primary research questions.[1]

This Part is divided into five chapters. The first, Chapter Six introduces each of the two schools, as seen through the

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[1]See Chapter One, page 1.

eyes of the head teachers, both of whom have been in post for a substantial period in terms of the history of their school. This chapter also describes the ethos and philosophy of each school as seen through the eyes of the head teachers and staff and concludes with my analysis and perceptions of each school with respect to these issues. As such this chapter provides a context within which to place the other chapters in this Part.

Chapter Seven focusses on the perceptions of staff and students on the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex schooling. This chapter concludes with a discussion of areas of agreement over this issue and the differences which emerge between these two particular schools. Chapter Eight focusses on the statistical analysis of those pieces of 'work' carried out by the students which look at attitudes to high academic success and the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. Chapter Nine concerned with the development of theory concentrates on the emergent questions which have arisen during the previous stages of the analysis. These emergent questions determine the subsequent and final discussions of the thesis to be found in Chapter Ten the concluding chapter of this Part and of the thesis.

The information for the following sections is taken from questions 1-14 of the head teachers' interview

schedule located in Appendix X and my field notes. Both head teachers have been associated with their schools from the early to middle period of their establishment. In this sense they know the school, the local area and the relevant incidents which have helped to shape the school both in the past and the present because of their involvement at these times. The aim of this section is to familiarise the reader with the establishment and general character of each establishment.

It is not my intention to give geographical details about the location of each school because I have promised both schools anonymity. As most Muslim schools are clustered in certain areas it would be quite easy to identify the school from such geographical clues. There are some who have argued (see for example Connolly, 1994) that little attention is given to 'looking beyond the school gates' and exploring how a particular locale has provided a site through which broader, national political discourses on 'race' have been appropriated and re-worked, and how, consequently, this has impacted upon the nature of social relations in the school. Connolly argues that in the absence of such analysis the work has unwittingly reproduced an ahistorical and static notion of racism.

However, if the research is located in a sensitive area, and this is, such considerations become problematic. I would argue that there are ways of 'looking beyond the school gates' so that people's lived experiences are considered without divulging geographical clues and that is through the use of a feminist and poststructural analysis which predicates discourse as an analytical tool so that the ways people are positioned in discourses both <u>in</u> and <u>out</u> of school are given due consideration.

6.1 City State

The school is a county comprehensive school for girls aged 11 to 16. It is situated about three miles north of the city centre and is the only maintained single-sex secondary school in the city and one of only a very few in the whole county. The school shares a large open site with several other schools with access to a neighbouring special school facilitated by linking corridors. The buildings are quite pleasant although in need of some decorative refurbishment,the original main building dating back to the 1950s.

Establishment

City State was established in the early thirties as a girls' grammar school and catered for a selected intake of 11-18 year olds. In the seventies as a result of re-organisation of County secondary schools to become comprehensive schools it became an 11-16 comprehensive school. It retained its single-sex status but became a neighbourhood school serving the local area for the most part. A nearby comprehensive was also single-sex for boys. Four linked feeder primary schools sent their boys to this establishment and their girls to City State. Parents who wanted single-sex education for their daughters could apply for the spare places (usually about 30-40 of the 150 originally available). There were always more applications than places, resulting in selection by governors. The criteria used included those living nearest to the school, those with sibling links and those with special needs. Ethnic needs/issues did not appear to have any significance. The majority of requests came from white families, many with academically bright daughters because the grammar school image was still strong.

In 1983 the boys school was closed and the plan was to close City State and establish a co-educational school in the locality. This new school was to be formed and

housed in City State's original building situated in an area of high South Asian population. Parents, governors and staff successfully fought against the decision to close City State which meant that City State was re-located to its present site away from the densely populated South Asian areas of the inner city.[2] This prevented a protest from South Asian families who maintained that the school met their religious and cultural needs. The continuing presence of a girls' school was also used by politicians as a reason for refusing a request from local Muslim organisations for a Muslim girls' secondary school. The school is now situated in a pleasant suburban area west of the city but also adjacent to a large council estate. Its original location was in an accessible inner city area, on a road which intersected with two main bus routes into the city.

City State now has no local catchment area. It serves all girls whose parents live in the city and can then offer places to county girls if there are spaces available. All girls therefore come as a result of parental choice. Generally Muslim parents choose the school because it is single-sex and therefore allow

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[2]This and the following information provided by the head teacher is substantiated by her personal log in which she details incidents and events concerning the school. I was given access to this log book.

their daughters to travel outside the family situation to attend the school. In fact, significant moves have been made by the school and the local authority to provide buses to a time table which allows for minimum changes to enable Muslim girls to travel across the city unaccompanied. A contribution is also made by the Local Authority to the cost of the journey.

The admissions policy states that priority will be given to girls living within a five mile radius of the school. In the past it has been unnecessary to apply this criterion as the school has been under subscribed. However a good inspection report coupled with an awareness that single-sex education could be beneficial for girls has meant that the numbers on roll are increasing. This makes for a potentially interesting situation. In the past Muslim families who wished to send their daughters to a single-sex school have automatically sent them to the school, even if they reside out of the five mile area, and apparently still assume that there will be no problems in this respect. However, increasing numbers could mean that the criteria in the admissions policy will have to be more strictly applied. The girls attending the school are still mainly from inner city areas. Usually about a third come from the original catchment area, especially the South Asian girls. In the last twelve months there has been a growing

interest in the school within the local neighbourhood which is certainly noticeable for the 1993 intake. These are mostly white girls from the nearby council estate.

The property in the immediate vicinity of the school is owner-occupied bungalows and houses - it is a desirable residential area with many families who would be termed 'middle class' and seem affluent.[3] A proportion of the residents are of the retired age group, especially in the houses facing the school. The council estate adjoining the other side of the school was built in the 1930s. There are some notorious trouble spots.

According to the head teacher the South Asian presence in the local area is very low. The daughters of the one or two affluent, local South Asian families do not attend City State, but are either educated privately or sent to a Church of England school which has a prestigious and academic reputation.

Management/Governance

School starts at 8.55 am and finishes at 3.35 pm with

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[3]This interpretation of class is that of the head teacher and as such can be described as a commonsense understanding of class. For a theoretical discussion of this concept see Hamilton,M and Hirszowicz,M. (1987). Class and Equality in Pre-Industrial, Capitalist and Communist Societies. Wheatsheaf Books.

a lunch break at 12.20 to 1.30 pm. The day is as follows:

Start:-	8.55 - 9.20	Assembly/form
Lesson 1:-	9.20 - 10.15	am
Lesson 2:-	10.15 - 11.10	am
Lesson 3:-	11.25 - 12.20	pm
	LUNCH	
Lesson 4:-	1.35 - 2.30	pm
Lesson 5:-	2.40 - 3.30	pm

The governing body is made up of 8 women and 5 men. One of the men and one of the women are Muslim. There is a Sikh man who is the Labour Party nominee and the rest are white. There are vacancies for two more governors. A full governors' meeting is held once a term and there are also three sub-committees with oversight of Finance, Personnel and Curriculum. The Chair of the Governors and Head sit on each of the latter together with 'volunteer' governors.

The school has a clearly defined management structure. There are 37 staff in full time employment plus 6 Section 11 staff, four of whom are in full time employment. There is a head teacher and two deputy head teachers, one with responsibility for curriculum and staff development and the other with responsibility for pastoral, student welfare and

development. These are all 'white' females. The curriculum is delivered via the heads of department and their teams which may number four or five but occasionally be as low as two or one plus. The pastoral work is delivered via Heads of Year and form tutors. The Heads of Department are all white females except for the Head of Science, the Head of Technology and the Head of Music and Buildings' Maintenance Administration who are white males. The Heads of Year are all white females.

Other posts of special responsibility include a Finance manager who is a white male,allowance C and a Curriculum Co-ordinator also a white male on allowance D. The Section 11 team is headed by a white female and a Home School Liaison Officer who is a South Asian female. There are two other full time members of the Section 11 team one a white male and the other a South Asian female, together with two part time members, both white who make up a full timetable by teaching in mainstream departments. Therefore there are only two South Asian members of the Section 11 team neither of whom is a Muslim.

There were also peripatetic teachers who come in from the central language team to teach Urdu and Punjabi, two of whom were Muslim men. From September 1993 this

team was disbanded and the school now employs a full time member of staff to teach Urdu. One of the Muslim men has been appointed to this post. Therefore, at the moment, the full complement of South Asian staff is two Indian women who are non-Muslim and one man who is a Muslim. There are seven men on the staff none of whom is on less than a B allowance. Three of these are on B allowances, three on C allowances and one on a D allowance.

No one from the ethnic minorities is represented amongst the ancillary staff of secretaries, librarians, kitchen assistants, caretaker/cleaners, midday supervisors, or resources technicians. The school is situated in a predominantly white area so the 'locals' who apply for part-time jobs of this status are almost bound to be white.

Very few applications are received for teaching positions from other ethnic groups. There was none for the recently vacant headship and there were two rounds of applications and interviews. In the past five years there have only been two applicants from minority groups for advertised posts, one a South Asian male, and the other an African-Caribbean male. Both were unsuccessful.

The school is helped by contact with Education Liaison Officers. The Authority appoints one of these for each ethnic minority community and the Muslim ELO links with the school as necessary.

Numbers and Backgrounds of Staff and Students

In April 1993 there were 570 students on roll broken down as follows:

Year 11	4 classes	110
Year 10	3 classes	75
Year 9	4 classes	100
Year 8	5 classes	130
Year 7	6 classes	150

The 1993 intake was 150 plus so that the number on roll will be just over 600 in September 1993 and if the following year's intake is also 150 then the total on roll rises to 670 plus because only 75 from the current year 10 will leave.

The ethnic background of these students is as follows[4]

White-indigenous English	43%
South Asian	42%
African-Caribbean/mixed race	14%
Chinese/Vietnamese	1%

[4]These are the ethnic descriptors used by the head teacher of City State.

The 42% South Asian group consists of girls whose families originate from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and one or two from Afghanistan and/or Kenya. Most have their roots in Pakistan. Many of the parents/grandparents come from rural communities where little formal education was available. There are therefore still parents who cannot read and write in their own language and certainly not in English. The head teacher states:

> 'Some mothers are known to find their lack of skills, especially communicating in English very frustrating and this is exacerbated by the fact that their daughters are fluent in mother tongue and literate in English. This can mean that with the children communicating in English and the father quite fluent that the mother becomes isolated.'

As indicated the school numbers are growing from 422 in 1989 to 573 in 1993 and to over 600 in 1994/5 which has meant that this South Asian group is becoming proportionately less in percentage terms. This group is numerically stable but increasing numbers of whites and to a lesser extent blacks/mixed race are now opting for the school. In the past there has been a year group that was 60% South Asian (52% Pakistan / Bangladesh origin) but the current year 7 and next year's intake suggest that the percentage of Muslim girls will drop to around 30%.

According to the head teacher whose subject specialism

is Religious Studies the religious background of the students is varied. Most of the white girls seem to have no declared faith although there are a few practising Christians and some of the African-Caribbean students attend Gospel Churches. The students who originate from India are mostly Sikhs and there are only four Hindu. The students who originate from Pakistan/Bangladesh are Muslim and form the largest 'faith' group in the school (about 34%) the majority of whom according to the head appear to have a natural commitment to the ritual requirements in that they fast during Ramadan, they eschew alcohol and they wear school uniform which ensures they are covered, such as trousers or shalwar kameez. A fair proportion attend the local mosque after school or visit a relative for Islamic and Qur'anic studies.

Over 200 students receive free school meals and of those that do not a fair proportion are from low income families. The students are mostly drawn from inner city areas and deprivation is evident. The majority of the Muslim students are from less affluent families with a significant proportion being poor due to unemployment. These are in receipt of free school meals.

Curriculum

The school offers English, Maths, Science, Modern Languages, RE, Humanities, CDT, PE, Art and PSE in years 7-9. The option choices at the end of year 9 are to be found in Appendix XVII. Careers Education operates in the school from year 9 as part of a fuller Social and Personal Development programme. At the end of year 10 there is one week's work experience followed by a further one week's work experience in the Autumn term of year 11. At the end of this year there is also a careers convention in school together with visits to local colleges. Each student has an interview in year 11 with a Careers Officer who is white and linked to the school. Careers Officers from the ethnic minorities are linked to the wider team and are available on request. The head teacher states that Muslim families rarely ask for this help.

A wide range of extra curricular activities are available within school, most taking place during the lunch break such as choir and drama activities, especially when working towards a production and various sports activities such as Football, Athletics, Netball and Trampolining. According to the head teacher, Muslim students very rarely participate in

these activities.[5] There is a lunch time club organised by black youth workers attended by African-Caribbean girls only; although it is officially open to 'anyone who considers themselves to be black'. Another lunch time club is led by the Section 11 team. This offers a range of activities and is well supported by younger Muslim girls as by others.

Every Friday there is another lunch time club run by representatives of a local Asian youth project called Project Pehchan. Over the years this has been well supported by South Asian girls of all ages including a period when older girls had an after school session. The project workers then took each girl home in their minibus. Additionally some Muslim girls take advantage of belonging to the 'Stimulus and Development Programme' groups in year 8 or year 9. This is open mainly to the academically more able to help them extend their skills. Attendance is voluntary and extra homework is involved. Muslim girls join in visits to events of particular educational or vocational significance for South Asian young people as they

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[5]This is also corroborated by interviews with the staff. The Drama teacher for example talked of the difficulties of any after school activity and lack of transport. She also referred to problems with school productions, even when they were women only events, concerning travel arrangements for Muslim students and their mothers.

occur such as the Careers Convention Day Conference for Muslim and other Asian girls 'Different Culture; Different Future'.

6.2 Old Town High

The school is situated off a main ring road about a mile from the city centre. The building opens directly onto the street and is found right at the point where the road comes to a dead end. Adjacent to the school is a maintained primary school. Initially the building had other uses which were not educational. From September 1994 the school became a split site school. The Lower school is now taught in the original building and the Upper school is situated some miles away in a building which was formerly a primary school.

Establishment

The school was formally established as a result of parental interest. The building was bought by the Muslim Association. The school is responsible for the maintenance of the building but does not pay rent. The head teacher directly attributes this to the survival of the school. Old Town High is recognised by the DFE and has charity status through linkage to a Muslim association. It is currently applying for voluntary aided status. As you enter a small foyer you have to ring a bell before the

main door is opened onto an entrance hall with a central staircase.

Old Town High serves a heavily populated South Asian area of the city. Most of the students live locally or just outside the boundary, a few travel some distance to attend the school.

Management/Governance

The school day begins at 9.10 am with a 15 minute religious assembly taken by the head teacher or the students themselves. The day is divided into four lessons each lasting one hour and ten minutes. There are two ten minute breaks one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The afternoon break is there so that the girls can offer the late afternoon prayer during winter. This is not a consideration during the summer months but the break remains.

Start:-	9.10 - 9.25 Assembly
Lesson 1:-	9.25 - 10.35 am
Lesson 2:-	10.50 - 12.00 am
	LUNCH
Lesson 3:-	12.50 - 2.00 pm
Lesson 4:-	2.10 - 3.20 pm[6]

[6]From the Autumn term of 1994 and with the move to two sites a five day period day is in operation which has allowed more flexibility with the curriculum.

The school is governed by a governing body of ten people including the head teacher. These are all Muslim. There are four parents and the other five come from a range of backgrounds across the Muslim community. They offer an interest in the school and expertise in financial or education matters or business contacts. The chair of the governing body is a prominent male Muslim educationalist and spokesperson. There are two females on the governing body, the head teacher and one of the parent governors. The head teacher has expressed a wish that eventually the school will be run by a female governing body but at the moment she is concerned with building up the confidence of the Muslim women in the community and does not want them to feel pressurised into participating in such a role prematurely.

The management structure of the school is such that the head teacher is entirely responsible for the running of the school and all decisions, having recourse to the governors only in situations in which she feels unsure. The role of the governors is to ensure that what is implemented by the head teacher is appropriate. Other than the overseeing of financial matters there is not much 'interference' from the governors in the day to day running of the school and educational decision making. There is continuous

informal feedback to the head teacher and the governors from the community, often from informal discussions in the mosque. The views of the parents and the community are given great weight. It is the community and the parents who will influence the school's success and the head teacher feels strongly that it will not serve any purpose if the school tries to move faster than the community in terms of change. The school therefore reflects the community and the community reflects the school, and feedback whether on a formal or informal basis is essential to this process and the success of the school.

The structure of the school is that there is a head teacher and subject teachers with responsibility in consultation with the head teacher for their own subject area. This less hierarchical structure in comparison with City State is due to several factors:

i) Size of the school

ii) Lack of finances.[7]

Numbers and Backgrounds of staff and Students

There are now 184 girls on roll aged 11-18. There is a substantial waiting list. The increase in student

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[7]The head teacher for example is paid at exactly the same hourly rate as the other qualified teachers in the school.

numbers is directly attributable to a steadily improving academic record over the last three or four years which has meant that the school has gained a good reputation amongst the local Muslim community and there have been transfers of students from local maintained schools who were struggling academically in these schools. Increased student numbers has meant that space is now at a premium even though building work has been undertaken and the existing classrooms have been extended.

At the start of this research there were six classrooms and seven classes, although this class number includes the upper and lower sixth which are taught as one group. For the academic year 1993 three temporary classrooms were sited at the rear of the building effectively taking up all the space which was previously available as an outside recreation facility. With the move to the other site these are no longer required and are being removed.

In September 1993 there were 183 students on roll broken down as follows:-

Year 12	one class	12
Year 11	one class	35
Year 10	two classes	40
Year 9	three classes	96

There are four full time staff, one is the head

teacher and the others teach Science, Maths and English. There are 7 part time staff and one cleaner. The staff are paid an hourly rate of £7.21 for qualified teachers and £4.12 for unqualified teachers. They therefore do not get paid over the holidays nor do they receive any additional benefits such as superannuation. Of these staff, five are Muslim and the remainder are white non-Muslims and one African-Caribbean non-Muslim. All the staff are female.

The predominance of part time staff means that there are no formal staff meetings of the whole staff. Decisions are made on an informal basis by the head teacher, or the head teacher in consultation with the relevant member of staff as far as curricular issues are concerned. This also means that there are no formal discussions concerning the day to day running of the school, its ethos or its philosophy.

There are no food facilities in the building, so there are no ancillary staff associated with this. There is help in routine administrative duties from ex-pupils but this is done on an ad hoc basis.

The students in the school come from family backgrounds where there is financial hardship with the majority of the parents being unemployed. Often the parents are not formally educated and have migrated to

this country in the fifties and sixties mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh although there are some students whose parents originate from Iran, Iraq, Libya and India. When the school started the vast majority of the students had parents who migrated from one particular region of Pakistan but now they come from all areas of Pakistan from Peshawar to Punjab and the Sindi areas. There are both Sunni and Shia Muslims within the school. The students attend a range of mosques but the majority of the students are from the Deobandi branch of the Sunni Muslims. There are several mother tongue languages spoken in the school, these include Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic but now some students are from mixed parentage so English is their main language. Ninety eight per cent of the students are first generation British the remaining percentage coming from abroad.

The school fees are £500 per year requested in one or two lump sums. In reality the parents pay in small instalments. The head teacher suspects that quite often child benefit is used.

Curriculum

Old Town High complies with National Curriculum guidelines. There are nine subjects on the timetable, Science, English, Maths, RE, Urdu, French, Art,

Humanities and Child Development. Physical Education is done for the required 5% of the time. There are no option choices in year 9. Years 10 and 11 take as exam courses the subjects offered on this timetable. Four mandatory subjects are offered at A level - Sociology, RE, Urdu and English. However when the school moved to its new premises part of the building work included conversion of existing classrooms to science laboratories. This means that the school now offers Science A levels. The school does not offer Careers Education or work experience although this year the sixth form are being offered ten sessions on a Tuesday afternoon with a white, female Careers Advisory Service's officer, because the head feels that they should be aware of what is available.[8]

There are no extra curricular activities available to the students that could be compared with those offered in City State. There have been some local educational visits as part of course work and the school is in contact with Youthreach which organises weekend trips to theme parks and offers 'women only' outings. The school is not involved directly in the organisation of

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[8]Some of the girls expressed some concern that in the initial session the advisor asked them why they were asking for information about certain careers that they would 'never be able to do'. The head teacher sat in on subsequent sessions.

such trips. In the past they have participated in public speaking and literary competitions but staffing and financial constraints mean that this is not a regular feature. These constraints are also largely responsible for the lack of extra curricular options.

6.3 The Ethos and Philosophy of the Schools

The initial part of this section is taken from each head teacher's response to the question 'how would you describe the ethos and philosophy of your school?'. It is followed by the perceptions of the staff concerning the aims of education for girls in their school. This section is concerned with their perceptions and my analysis of these perceptions. The quotes which are cited in this section and all subsequent quotes will be identified at the end by the prefix CS for City State and OTH for Old Town High, followed by the code number of each interview if it was given by a member of staff.

The head teacher's perceptions.

City State

The primary aim of this school is to provide a first rate education; the best for secondary school age girls in the area. Girls of all abilities, backgrounds

and needs are welcomed to the school and are valued for what they can bring to the community. So there is a strong philosophy about the 'person' at the school which is regarded as a 'plus' in such a multicultural setting.

> 'Every girl matters. When a girl is frozen out of the community- either momentarily as in a 'telling off' or more seriously as exclusion the reason has to do with personal relationships and anti-social behaviour not ethnic origin or cultural attitude. So a significant part of education has to do with personal education'
>
> (CS. Head teacher)

Education is also perceived as being about academic achievement and each girl reaching her potential. The school aims for high academic standards and encourages those who are weak with the help of a strong Section 11 - Special Needs support link. The commitment of the staff is to achieve the best for each student and encourage the students to develop into positive women who are able to take their places alongside other men and women at every level of achievement and ethnic origin.

> ' We are educating future professional women. We are educating those whose work will require less brain power but plenty of energy and pleasant co-operation. We are educating the mothers of tomorrow with all that they will bring to their families. The Muslim, students therefore are part and parcel of all this - because they will surely fit into one if not all the above categories. Because they

> mix naturally with girls from other ethnic groups they can learn much and give much - yet still within the single-sex environment that they, as well as their parents seem to prefer'
>
> (CS. Head teacher, emphasis added)

Opponents of Muslim girls' schools have voiced concern about such a commitment to 'educating the mothers of tomorrow' and indeed the head teacher of Old Town High states:-

> 'The women have been taught and will continue to be taught to be a good mother and will be taught within the faith they are the first school for the new generation and therefore education is even more vital for them than boys'
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

The difference is that the latter is framed within the context of Islam. For now it is interesting to note that this radical feminist perspective surfaces in the ethos and philosophy of both City State and Old Town High.

Old Town High

In essence the ethos and philosophy described by the head teacher of this school bears much resemblance to that of the ethos and philosophy described for City State. Thus the school also emphasises the need to encourage its students to be self-confident, correctly assertive young Muslim women who will make a positive contribution to the community and as mothers

of the next generation. There are however marked differences between the two schools. Old Town High also believes that it offers an educational opportunity to a wide range of girls with differing abilities and needs. It emphasises that it offers an opportunity to provide schooling for some of the most vulnerable and least wealthy Muslim families in the area who would otherwise send their daughters 'back home' rather than be forced by law to attend a non-Muslim school or struggle to try to find other means of dealing with what is conceived as a major dilemma. Thus the school sees itself as offering an opportunity for young British Muslim girls to understand the Islamic way of life within a non-Muslim society. The prospectus states:-

> The Board of Governors expect the staff to develop an exemplary 'ethos' within the school which inculcates the best traditions of the Prophet Mohammed (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the lives of those associated with the project. The teachers are required to enhance the self esteem of the Muslim girls, build their confidence, nurture an Islamic identity and pursue excellence in all their endeavours'

As would be expected, the religious dimension is much emphasised and permeates through the school from adherence to religious duties throughout the day, to assemblies with a strong religious and moral dimension and through to the curriculum with all students taking

Religious and Islamic Studies throughout their school career. This is the first marked difference between the two schools.

> 'It is not a written down philosophy. It is there because you are practising it yourself, it's indirect, informally teaching your candidates what your faith is all about. There's no compulsion in religion but once you are within it there are certain rules and regulations that you have to abide by and you can't leave them out and can't say that I disbelieve. Those type of things are informal but it's there. It's part of the school philosophy and it is, I hope being transmitted from a practising individual to those who are a bit weaker'
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

The second marked difference is that the emphasis in City State is on personal autonomy or 'the person' whereas, although the philosophy of Old Town High stresses the importance of personal achievement, a greater emphasis is put on responsibility to the community. This is linked to the strong religious ethos of the school:

> 'I want my students, when they see an inappropriate thing to feel they can stand up and say that it's not acceptable without being rude, without being insulting just nicely and gently saying. That's the moral teaching I want them to have- **it's not morals for me, it's not education for myself, it's education for everyone** and I must be part of that process. I say to my students you know what school life has been, when you leave keep that in mind. I expect you to give something back'
>
> (OTH. Head teacher, emphasis added)

This is consistent with the theoretical aims of Islamic education discussed in Chapter Two. It is

this consideration of the meaning of 'knowledge' which defines the dividing line between Islamic and western concepts of education. The difference in perception rests on the fact that whereas western philosophy allows religious knowledge as a distinct form of knowledge in isolation, Islam only acknowledges the validity of the true faith and confines all knowledge to within the parameters of the Qur'an and the Hadith: one system seeks individual autonomy by which the educational process invites young people to think and act for themselves within society, whilst the other attempts to maintain a strong sense of community and family solidarity within a religious framework.

The third marked difference stems from the fact that the school needs not only to prove itself to society at large but also to the local and wider Muslim communities and has a commitment to overturn the stereotype of what it means to be a Muslim woman.

> 'I think it's to some extent the stereotypical image of a Muslim woman and what she can do and assumptions like that are damaging because they are already disadvantaging the women. You are disadvantaging those that you want to enable.In a way you are already then saying to my candidates you are in a Muslim school and therefore this will be appropriate for you and this won't be appropriate for you.'
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

The ethos of the school is based on the very strong

belief that an academic background is one way of giving the students the power to survive in different situations and a means of moving forwards and combating the stereotype of the 'Muslim woman'

> 'If you are an academically good candidate you can survive the most difficult situation because you've got the intellectual power to be able to discuss and argue your point of view. So I do expect my students to do well academically,to show that Muslim women can get an education, can think for themselves , show we're all decision makers and the way we look and dress up has nothing to do with mental ability. They (the students) must break those stereotypes that exist.
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

This emphasis on combating the stereotypical beliefs about Muslim women overspills into a pioneering spirit which is very strong throughout the school. This strength brings empowerment to the students. Each student is encouraged to maximise their talents and abilities. The positive is always emphasised. This is tempered by a recognition that those students who wish to go on to some form of Higher Education face cultural constraints, family pressures and institutional barriers when they leave school:

> 'My students will have to fight to get to Higher Education and it's because it's never been done before and if it's the first time there is a fight, there is a struggle and they have to do their best to make sure that they actually succeed. They have a uphill struggle when they go to Higher Education.
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

The belief that the students will encounter difficulties in entering Higher Education was seen to be due to four main issues:-

i) The fact that they attended a Muslim school which is assumed to have low standards of education and where academic performance is seen to be of secondary importance to an Islamic way of life. Old Town High therefore has a strong commitment to not only overcome the stereotype of what it is to be a Muslim woman but also the stereotype of being a Muslim girl who attended a Muslim school;

ii) that the students are automatically considered not to have the language skills to cope with a degree course;

iii) the factors which revolve around institutional racism. In this regard the head teacher of Old Town High believes that even though her students sit the same exams the fact that they achieve high grades is perceived as good fortune rather than as evidence of academic ability.

> 'I mean there are also factors like being from Islam, girl, being black. We have those plus the assumption that we haven't got the education standard within the institution. We sit the same exams but somehow it is perceived as luck students got the grades. When my students get As and Bs and Cs I think it's somehow perceived as luck rather than their ability.
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

and

iv) cultural constraints of the community and therefore their parents. The head teacher sees her role as one of discussing these issues with the parents, challenging their assumptions but <u>not</u> going against their wishes. The student discussed in the following quote went to University after much discussion with her parents and once she had got married. In this sense the head teacher believes that the way is then eased for the students following them.

> 'I have got a candidate in University who wasn't applying initially because she wears a full hijab and because of her family. I said to her "look do you want to get a good education, if yes then apply and see what they offer you.Then try to get those grades and then go in and see how the relationship is. If you can't cope with it obviously you'll have to make a decision but you can't just give up. This is you and you're going to wear a hijab because you believe in it and therefore you've got to fight for it. Maybe by your presence the next candidate will have an easier task". Fortunately she was a brilliant student and I knew she would have a good academic relationship because sometimes if you are a weak candidate you can have a backlash.
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

It is also important to note that stereotypes about the educational standards in Muslim schools are not just the province of the indigenous white society. In this sense the head teacher sees her role as one of informing the public, and this includes the Muslim

community, about the school in general and its educational philosophy in particular. In fact when stereotypical judgements about the school are made by the local Muslim community this is felt very keenly by the head teacher of the school.

> 'I think we have managed to change the opinion of my own community. I don't think it was just hindrance from the white community there were also difficulties within my own community saying we would not be able to provide the standard of mainstream schools.Actually my role is, to make sure that I make the outside public realise that we are an educational institution, interested in the education of the students. I talk to people a lot and I get annoyed when people make judgements without actually being in the school. When the white community does it I don't really feel angry about it but when my own community does it I feel anger. People who make judgements like that, from my own community without being in my school do great injustice to us. With the white community you are expecting those comments until you prove yourselves but from my own community I don't. I expect them to keep giving me encouragement and the push to do better. That's what my aspirations for the students are. I really want them to be very intellectually active. That's really what my aim is'
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

This strong commitment to challenging mainly white stereotypical views of Muslim women and the necessity of proving itself as an academic establishment contributes to the fourth difference between the two schools. Although City State does emphasize the academic achievement of the students it is embedded within an ethos which centres around ' a very strong philosophy about the person' which springs from the 'comprehensive ideal'of

the school. The 'pioneering spirit' which influences the ethos and philosophy of Old Town High means that academic achievement is stressed very strongly as being concrete and incontrovertible proof to a sceptical indigenous society and to the Muslim community in the locality that it is an educational establishment.

> 'I work hard for GCSEs because without that they would not have the power to say we are intellectuals, we can think for ourselves, we can make our decisions. Once they have that other people think academically they are OK. That's how the judgement's made so yes I do work for qualifications like that but I hope they have the spiritual dimension. You can't measure it, but it is there.'
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

The Perceptions of the Staff.

City State.

The perceptions of the staff concerning the aims of the school and the aims of education for girls coincide with the articulated ethos and philosophy of the school outlined by the head teacher. From an analysis of their responses the following categories emerged:-

i) to provide the students with the opportunities and environment where they can learn to respect and value themselves as individuals and reach their potential.

ii) to remove expectations and stereotypes by questioning gender roles and teaching them to challenge and question and analyse.

iii) to make the students aware of the opportunities open to them and to prepare them for the world of work and further and higher education.

iv) to furnish the students with equal opportunities in terms of access to the curriculum and aspirations.

v) to make the students aware that if they don't, for whatever reason, take up opportunities for themselves that this can be done as mothers of a future generation.

vi) to make the students aware of, and therefore enable them to negotiate, the difficulties of combining work and marriage.

vii) to provide positive female role models.

The staff emphasised the importance of encouraging each student to reach and fulfill her potential. Linked with this was the desire to encourage the students to challenge the traditional expectations and stereotypes of women and their roles. This meant that the staff placed great value on their ability to encourage the students to be self-confident, assertive and independent through nurturing the self esteem of each pupil. This commitment to equal opportunities and to challenging traditional, stereotypical gender roles

emerged very strongly throughout this stage of the analysis and in a sense can be likened to the 'pioneering spirit' identified as operating in Old Town High. The crucial difference between the two schools is that City State is concerned with the category 'woman'. It is here that tensions begin to emerge very obviously because of the multicultural nature of the school. The staff voiced some concern that although they were committed to ensuring that their students challenged and questioned and analysed gender issues, at the same time they were 'treading on the cultural toes' of their Muslim students and perhaps more importantly their parents. The following is typical of these concerns:

> 'The responsibilities that they are expected to take on at home do to a large extent colour their view of the future and it certainly colours the idea the parents have of what we should be providing for them in terms of curriculum. They are expected to learn how to make a home and look after a family and so on as the first priority rather than as in addition to their career. I think what we try and do very much is again to come back to this idea of valuing the person at City State. We take on board that within certain cultures certain things are expected as they are in our own British culture but that even so the student as an individual needs to know themselves and know what their potential is and be able to reach for it, to develop in a way that is most suitable for them, rather than being restricted to what the family feels should be their future. It is a difficult one that because you value the Muslim part of that student and all that

> that culture can give as a community and it's a very, very hard line to hold I think, to give them a sense of their own individuality and worth and yet also value their culture and what that means for them and their families and I think we do need to keep the two things together, but the tension...I think both are important, very important.
>
> (CS. 1)

The problem is how to deal on an every day level with a commitment to a universal category 'woman' when the fragmentations and differences are staring back at you in an overt way. They are there, in terms of class, ability and sexual orientation but these are not as immediately obvious and therefore there is not the pressure to deal with them. This is a theme which runs throughout this thesis. It will be returned to in the last section of this analysis to be found in Chapters Nine and Ten because it is to this point that full answers to the original research questions are leading.

Although the academic potential of each person was valued, the emphasis from the staff in City State was on making the most of all talents and abilities, in keeping with the comprehensive nature of the school and in equippping the students to deal with and operate within a gendered, multicultural society.

Old Town High.

Again the perceptions of the staff concerning the

ethos and philosophy which operates within the school and educational aims for the students reinforces that which was articulated by the head teacher. There are also several points of convergence with those categories which emerged from the responses of the staff in City State but the differences between the schools are again underlined. The following categories emerge:-

i) to make and develop the person so that they make the optimum use of their skills and abilities and fulfill their potential.

ii) to encourage the students to be confident, assertive and positive about their own abilities so that they feel able to question their own culture from within and without rebellion. This correponds with category ii) identified from the responses of the staff in City State viz: to remove expectations and stereotypes by questioning gender roles and teaching them to challenge and question and analyse. There is however a significant difference.

iii) to provide equal opportunities in terms of access to the curriculum and aspiration.

iv) to educate them academically and within the religion.

v) to prepare them for a role as future mothers of a new generation.

The following statement summarises the perceptions of the staff on these issues as well as emphasising the difference which emerges between the two schools:-

> 'Well I think girls need to recognise their own skills and achievements and be able to identify that perhaps they need to be positive about them because I don't think girls do. I find that certainly with education boys seem to know exactly what they are, where they are. They have much more confidence than girls do in their own abilities. I'm not saying it isn't anything to do with personalities. I do believe that on the whole girls tend to play down their abilities and skills and boys if anything tend to overplay them. So girls need to be giving themselves some recognition and blow their own trumpet a bit more. I think this is why I like working here.We have to educate them to live in a man's world and that's still the case. **The aim is to give an opportunity to girls of all abilities to learn and achieve as much as they can academically socially, morally and spiritually. They gain confidence and responsibility and a sense of identity because they are in a school where their own religion is dominant and the ethos of the school reflects their background.**
> (OTH. PC, emphasis added)

The importance of academic achievement within a spiritual and moral framework was identified as being the ethos which permeated throughout the school in an environment where the girls felt secure enough in their own identity to question, to challenge and assert their rights as Muslim women to pursue further

and higher education.

> 'Well it's to bring out the best in every girl and try to develop that to its fullest potential in very difficult circumstances. It's also to help them adapt to western life within their own faith which quite often might be at conflict. I think they enjoy the work they do and the main ethos is always based on hard work. To try and achieve the best that they possibly can. For a lot of the girls they do achieve that and they are quite positive about it. The main advantages are that they can work within the Muslim set and so I think that they probably have less bullying, less taunting particularly mainly from Western boys and so they have a much better understanding of themselves and they don't get the negative view from our society. That's a big advantage.'
>
> (OTH. MS)

<u>Conclusion</u>

In summary, the analysis of the head teacher's description of the ethos and philosophy upon which each school is based is reflected in the understanding of the staff. This has highlighted a number of significant differences between City State and Old Town High. These are ones that could be expected given the difference in budget and staffing between the two schools and reflected in terms of facilities, resources, curricular choices and extra- curricular activities.

There are however other significant differences. These

stem not only from the Islamic ethos, which is a primary concern of Old Town High, but also from a desire for this school to prove itself academically to both the wider indigenous community and the local Muslim community. There is also a significant similarity and this is the strong commitment to combating gender stereotypes and gender issues. However the emphasis in City State is 'woman' while in Old Town High it is 'Muslim woman'. It is the consideration of these similarities and differences which signalled a possible focus for the analysis of the remaining data and which is the concern of the remaining chapters of this section.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLING - THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE STAFF AND STUDENTS

Introduction

Debate over single-sex schooling is often focussed around the comparable levels of academic achievement attained by boys and girls in single-sex and mixed schools. Evidence as to whether or not girls perform better in single-sex schools, is as discussed, in Chapter Three patchy and inconclusive. Writers such as Shaw (1980) have underlined the need to examine the social as well as the academic consequences of single-sex schooling. Arguments have also been presented so that debate about co-education can be extended beyond the simple 'we need to mix the sexes because society is like that' because this tends to ignore the ways in which gender inequalities are replicated in schools (Brah and Deem 1986). Almost invariably discussions about single-sex schooling are dominated by people other than the young students and teachers themselves. This is an analysis of the responses of the teachers and the students in City State and Old Town High concerning their views on this issue.

The question 'Do you think that girls benefit from being educated in a single-sex setting if so why and how?' was initially used from the interview schedule

for staff. This was then extended to using the questions 'What are the advantages of working in this school?' and 'What are the disadvantages of working in this school?' because a significant number of staff cited the fact of it being a single-sex establishment as one of the advantages of working in the school whereas some aspects of the single-sex nature of the school were also mentioned as disadvantages. As far as the pupils were concerned the question ' What do you think are the main advantages and disadvantages of being educated in a single-sex setting?' from questionnaire three was used. Similarly this was extended to using the questions 'What do you like about your school and what would you say are its main advantages?' and 'What do you dislike about your school and what would you say are its main disadvantages?'

In City State the local, multicultural single-sex state school, 26 teachers plus the head teacher were interviewed out of a total of 45 members of staff in various full time or part time capacities. So, 60% of the staff were interviewed. In Old Town High, the private Muslim girls' school, seven teachers plus the head teacher were interviewed out of a total of ten members of staff. This meant that 80% of the staff were interviewed.

In City State 125 students from years 8-11 completed Questionnaire Three of the questionnaires that they agreed to complete. This meant that 30% of the students in these years completed this work. Not all of these were Muslim girls so their responses were categorised as to whether they were Muslim or non-Muslim. Sixty of the replies were from Muslim students and 65 from non-Muslim students. Those replies from non-Muslim students provide a valuable means of comparison as to whether any of the views about single-sex schooling were peculiar to the Muslim students only.

In this school there were several constraints on the research. I was the only researcher and therefore with the resources available I was only able to work with two representative forms from each year group and one in the case of year 11. These forms were chosen in consultation with the Home School Liaison Officer, Head of Year and Form Tutor. The forms that were chosen had a high proportion of Muslim students from a variety of home backgrounds. They were also those forms whose form tutors were interested in the research and willing to let me take their weekly form lesson. There were 137 replies to Questionnaire Three from the students attending Old Town High. This meant that 75% of the students in years 9-12 completed this work.

This chapter has five sections. In the first section I examine the responses of the members of staff from City State. The second section is concerned with the responses of the staff in Old Town High and I then draw out the commonalities and differences in these responses. The third section is concerned with the responses of the students of City State. The fourth section examines the responses of the students of Old Town High and again commonalities and differences are drawn out between the students of each school and between the students and staff in each school. The fifth and final section looks at the data which refers to whether the students would like to change schools and why. The chapter concludes with a discussion of any variations or similarities in the responses which signpost the way to further analysis by asking further questions of the data.

7.1 The Perceptions of the Staff in City State

In City State generally the staff seemed to feel that the advantages of single- sex schooling outweighed the disadvantages. The responses regarding the advantages of single-sex schooling fell into eight emergent categories.

Advantages

Firstly, there were no boys to dominate the girls. Domination of girls by boys was referred to in terms of three major areas a) teacher attention b) opportunity to express themselves and c) in a single-sex setting girls have access to 'hands on' experience in the practical subjects which would normally be dominated by the boys in a mixed setting.

Secondly, the advantages of girls being educated in a single-sex setting was referred to in terms of boys being a source of distraction. Again this emergent category can be further analysed in terms of two major areas:

a) Removal of sexual stress. It must be pointed out here that there were some staff who felt that having no boys was even more of a distraction. This extract summarizes these points:-

> 'girls' only schools remove any problems of discipline and concentrates the minds of the girls if they've got the boys removed. That's another thing that could take their minds off their work. We all know boys are attention seekers that goes almost without saying but I think it takes the sexual stress out of the school it removes that. It can increase fantasy. We don't have stereotyping in options because it is a girls' school which is good but the disadvantage of that is that competition is removed. They learn to test their strengths in a way that isn't threatening, in an atmosphere that isn't threatening.'
>
> (CS. 2)

b) In this category boys are referred to as a distraction in terms of being disruptive influences, intimidating and therefore the cause of discipline problems which distract the girls from their work.

Thirdly, there are those staff who commented that they believe single-sex schooling is advantageous for girls because it removes the element of competition both with the boys and for the boys. It was pointed out that they still had the opportunity to compete against each other if they so wished. There were members of staff however who felt that this was a bad thing and one remarked:-

> 'I'm a feminist and I believe that girls are equal in every way. I think mostly it is environmental differences that are to blame but I do think that boys can be more enquiring and persistent with their questioning and I think you do lack that sometimes. The girls, and I think a lot of it is the way a lot of them have been brought up, don't want to question anything. It's difficult to get them moving and I think that is a good stimulus which is sometimes lacking here. I think it's this unhealthy word "competition". I think it is sometimes quite valuable really. It has to be conceded that that's when some people give their best performances when there is competition. As long as it's not used in an irresponsible way I think it's not always wrong.
>
> (CS. 13)

The fourth emergent category refers to the advantages of being educated in a single-sex setting in terms of

equal access to all areas of the curriculum so that there is no curriculum stereotyping.

Fifthly, there was a group of comments referring to the advantages of being educated in an all girls' school in terms of feelings of 'sisterhood' both between the staff, which are predominatly female, between the staff and the girls, and between the girls themselves. These feelings emerged very strongly. It was felt that this led to a calm, warm, non-threatening atmosphere where both students and staff are nurtured and supported by each other. Significantly this was not mentioned by any of the male participants.

> 'It leads to more informality. We have got a very informal staff set up because there are a lot of women on the staff.We can share and women can relate more to girls. We've all been girls. I think that's an advantage. We share a lot as a staff.
>
> (CS. 2)

Sixthly, some staff mentioned that it was beneficial for the girls to be in an environment where there were women in positions of responsibility. In fact it was quite obvious that although City State had women in the top managerial positions of head teacher and deputy head teacher, all the second level managerial positions were filled by the male members of staff,

none of whom had the job of being a form teacher.[1]

The seventh group of comments saw one of the advantages of being educated in a single-sex girls' school as the encouragement that they were given to be confident, assertive, and to express their own opinions and be women.

> 'They tend to leave their single-sex school as self confident correctly assertive young women. I would argue that the majority of City State girls do, we do find the exception of course. The girls at City State are positive about the fact that it's single-sex particularly those who transfer from co-ed comps'.
> (CS. 27)

However, this was not seen to necessarily extend to the Muslim students in City State,

> **'They (the Muslim students) also tend to be the ones who've got less confidence. I think they don't aim high. I feel they're quieter and they need confidence in the class to speak up because other students can be louder than they are.**
> (CS. 6, emphasis added)

This is not to say that in less structured situations the Muslim girls in City State conformed to the stereotype of the shy, retiring, unassertive Muslim girl. They did not.

Lastly, there was some reference made to the benefits of being taught in an all girls' establishment in

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[1]This was also discussed in Chapter Six.

terms of the maturity gap between boys and girls.

Only two members of staff mentioned the particular benefits of single-sex schooling to Asian girls:-

> 'I think just looking at Asian girls only I think that they do benefit from being here because I think they find that they can open up more to other women and females than they would do to males'
>
> (CS. 25)

and

> 'we can tackle issues that you would never dream of tackling in a mixed school, not with a mixed group, They talk freely about their periods. It takes a lot of the embarrasment away for the students and especially for the Asian girls. They would never dream of coming to talk to you about the things that they do in a mixed school in case it got back to the parents.
>
> (CS. 19)

None of the staff except three mentioned the opinions of the parents with regard to single-sex schooling.

Significantly the male Muslim Urdu teacher commented:-

> 'Muslim parents give a lot of importance to obedience, good manners modest dress and many other things based on morals. They really don't give a lot of emphasis about subjects. They think that moral education is very, very important and in fact this is the area where they are reluctant or sometimes hesitant to send their girls to colleges or secondary schools. It is easier to fulfill their needs whatever their religious and cultural demands than in a mixed school. From Muslim parents point of view I think they're very much satisfied that at least their girls are secure they're going to a single-sex school and there is no risk of being with boys so they feel more secure and more confident of sending them to single- sex schools'.
>
> (CS. 15)

Disadvantages

The disadvantages of being educated in a single-sex girls' school were referred to in terms of three major emerging categories.

Firstly, disadvantages were seen in terms of problems in dealing with the opposite sex on leaving school. There was a feeling that there were disadvantages to being in an all girls school because it increased sexual fantasy so that girls became obsessed with boys and that there could be the possibility of difficulties in dealing with the opposite sex when the girls left school. They felt that this was an issue that was not addressed by the school and one that needed to be.

> 'Now perhaps the disadvantage to all this is that when they go out in the wide world they haven't got a lot of experience of talking and working with boys or men and I'm not sure how this will affect them. I've been out with some of the girls sometimes on trips and they get a bit silly when they see a lot of boys. I think that sometimes they play up the men even within school because they are not used to having the men, a man in this position. I think that we do need to address how the girls relate to men. I think it's an important part of their life really and that could be a disadvantage but really that's the only disadvantage I can think about.'
>
> (CS. 7)

Secondly, it was felt that these girls are socially

less mature and tended to fantasize about boys. Thirdly, boys were seen to provide another and important perspective to classroom discussion and work.

> 'I think the main one is that there aren't any boys here and often in activities particularly in social science I would prefer to have some boys in the classroom in discussion situations. If you're talking about something like gender issues and inequalities it's good to have a male perspective as well as a female perspective and so I find that lacking. Also the social opportunities it affords boys and girls to work with each other in a co-operative way in a classroom is non-existent. I think it would actually stop any silliness in the classroom, this chatting about boys and so on. I don't think girls would react in that way if they had boys round them because they would be a bit more mature.'
>
> (CS. 11)

Summary

To allow convenient comparisons to be made with the perceptions of the staff of Old Town High on this issue, these emerging categories can be summarised as follows.

1) There were mixed feelings on the issue of single-sex schooling. The advantages were expressed in terms of social reasons rather than academic ones.Thus there was a belief that the girls benefitted from their experiences in a single-sex establishment because they were not dominated by boys who tend to demand more teacher attention and who intimidate the girls so

that they do not feel free to express their opinions.

2) It was also felt that the presence of boys had a distracting influence on girls in terms of being a disruptive influence in the classroom thus diverting teacher attention but also because it removed the problem of sexual stress so that the girls had no need to compete with each other for the attention of boys and could just 'be themselves'. The fact that there were no boys also meant for some staff that the element of competition was removed.

3) It was felt that all these things led to there being less discipline problems in the school so that they felt comfortable to be able to get on with the business of teaching. This in turn engendered the feeling of a calm, warm and friendly atmosphere in the school where girls could test their strengths in a non-threatening environment and express their opinions without ridicule. In such an environment they were nurtured and supported by the staff. The girls also showed the same feelings of support to the staff and each other because of a mutual recognition of being female. This common bond also meant that the girls were encouraged to think about their role as women in society. Such an atmosphere led them to have self-confidence both generally and in their opinions which they felt able

to express freely both inside and outside of school, although this did not necessarily seem to extend to the Muslim students. I have called this category 'feelings of sisterhood'. This particular category emerged very strongly as I analysed the data. I was surprised by this because my initial impression of City State was that it was only different because it was a school full of girls rather than a girls school.

4) The school aimed to produce girls who were independent, assertive and who believed in their ability to change things, either when they went to college, or into employment. This was very much part of the ethos of the school which encouraged the students to develop whatever talents they had by going into further education.

5) There was a belief that that they were still battling against stereotypes because that is the way society works. However, they could at least present a balanced approach within the single-sex environment so that the girls were given equal access to all areas of the curriculum. They were therefore able to promote equal opportunities by the presentation of a whole spectrum of career choices. It was felt that seeing female members of staff in managerial positions and positions of responsibility throughout the school

hierarchy also helped in this area.

Lastly, although a few members of staff mentioned research that showed girls performed better in subjects such as Science, Maths and Technology, the academic benefits of a single-sex education were rarely referred to except in vague terms such as 'levels of performance.'

There was a feeling that there were disadvantages to being in an all girls school because:

1) It increased sexual fantasy so that girls became obsessed with boys

2) There could be the possibility of difficulties in dealing with the opposite sex when the girls left school. The staff felt that this was an issue that was not addressed by the school and one that needed to be.

In general the majority of the staff did feel that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages this last comment being typical:-

> 'I think the pros outweigh the cons really. There are disadvantages obviously, they're not mixing with boys'.
>
> (CS. 8)

7.2 The perceptions of the staff at Old Town High

The responses from the staff of Old Town High show corresponding emergent categories. It should be emphasised

here that these categories were not 'fitted into' the ones which emerged from City State but emerged quite independently in this school as well. However these replies emphasised the experience of Muslim girls particularly. It is these comments which will be focussed on as it is here that a significant difference begins to emerge between the two schools.

Advantages

Firstly, there were no boys to dominate the girls. This again was referred to in terms of three major areas:- a) teacher attention, b) opportunity to express themselves and c) access to 'hands on' experience.

Secondly, the advantages of girls being educated in a single-sex setting was referred to in terms of boys being a source of distraction. Again this emergent category can be further analysed in terms of two major areas. a) removal of sexual stress and b) boys are a distraction because they are disruptive, intimidating and the cause of discipline problems. This distracts the girls from their work. One teacher who works both in the private Muslim girls' school and a state mixed school comments:-

> 'I'm actually working in another school at the moment as well. I do 2 days at a small village school, which has got better facilities and

> certainly more money, more textbooks and so on. I'm finding that school much harder in a very strange way. The teenage boys, 12 and 13 are very hard, disrupting lessons. The work ethos is not as strong and it's a struggle every day.
>
> (OTH. SS)

The third emergent category from some of the staff of City State was not directly referred to by the staff in Old Town High, namely removal of the competitive element by the boys. However the fourth category which concerned the issue of equal access to all areas of the curriculum featured very strongly in their replies , although this was constrained in this school because of lack of subject choice due to inadequate resourcing.

Fifthly, in common with the majority of the staff in City State all the staff continually referred to enjoying a working environment where there was mutual support and friendliness. They commented on the warm and relaxed atmosphere of the school. They also equated this with lack of discipline problems and job satisfaction. The replies in this emergent category, which I have termed 'feelings of sisterhood', have a distinctly Islamic slant.

> 'In a way within my faith, it's non-threatening. We have PE which is compulsory anyway. I've no problem in changing facilities and yet I don't have proper changing facilities, everybody changes right into a different outfit, but because all the staff members are female there's no danger of somebody

> walking into a room where girls are wearing their other clothes which they might feel uncomfortable with. There's no head covering within school so you are much more relaxed. I don't have to keep wrapping myself so I am relaxed from that point of view. I can make a noise, run around and the students can enjoy themselves without the pressure. I mean obviously. I'm much more reserved when I am in a mixed gathering but then I'm bound to be. Obviously there are outside appearances I mean I don't act the silly soul who's just looking for attention. You are much more reserved, you do things in a much more formal way but when they are all girls maybe in the staff room I can sit with my legs on another chair, if it's a mixed room I do not do that because it's not appropriate.
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

The importance of the staff as role models was also referred to as being beneficial to the students in the school. The encouragement that the students were given to be confident,assertive, express their own opinions and be women was also seen as a definite advantage in Old Town High.

> 'I think it is to do with self confidence, self - esteem, assertiveness because in a way they are here in a closed environment and many people think well they're going to come out as shy little flowers unable to blossom but I think if they have built up confidence then they do feel able to take on the big wide world without going to pieces and if they stay within the Muslim community then still they have the self knowledge and the self confidence knowing that they have achieved what they have achieved. They know what education is, so that if they have children themselves I think they'll encourage their own children either girls or boys to do

the best they can.

(OTH. MS)

Lastly the maturity gap between boys and girls was referred to.

The staff in City State were concerned to voice the disadvantages of single-sex schooling in terms of obsession with boys and assumed difficulties in dealing with the opposite sex on leaving school. These concerns were voiced by some staff in Old Town High but at the same time this disadvantage to single-sex schooling was firmly dismissed by the following comment.

> 'Sometimes people say if they've always been in a girls' situation they can't adjust, I don't think there is any problem. I have not faced it. I don't know there might be one or two people who might face it but there are one or two people who always have some problems one way or the other. I've never had any difficulty. I've taught in a school where the staff was mixed. I had no problem talking to another staff member. I worked in a firm where only two of us were female and I had no problem with that. At the age of 19 I came from an all girls' school to Anytown College where there was only three female members in the sciences and had no problems. I mean obviously I'm much more reserved when I am in a mixed gathering but then I'm bound to be'.
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

Both the Muslim and the non-Muslim staff in this school felt that there were clear advantages for the students to being educated not only in a single-sex environment but a single-sex Islamic environment. The view was expressed

that this lack of constraint meant that the students were free to question and explore a whole range of issues concerned with being women, being a Muslim and being Muslim women.

> 'I think this is why I like working here because I do feel girls are taught here to fulfill themselves without necessarily rebelling against their own system and their culture. But to see how to change things within the culture for the better.Hopefully we give them an idea of all sides of the argument and I do think it happens here.
> OTH. PC (emphasis added)

In this school the benefits of a single-sex education as far as the academic performance of the girls was concerned was much more emphasised. This was equated with the eagerness of the students to learn and to work hard. This attitude was fostered by the ethos of the school which places much emphasis on personal development of the individual academically, morally and socially. This has its roots in the strong Islamic framework of the school. The majority of the staff continually emphasised job satisafaction which outweighed the disadvantages of poor pay.

> 'Well the main advantage is that the girls are very willing, very receptive, hard working, they want to learn and I think if you present them with an interesting lesson and you're enthusiastic it brings out the best within them. To me that is a big advantage because I go home feeling at the end of the day that I've actually done something worth while. They want to learn. It's actually an environment where if they are given the right stimulus they actually

> can learn, there's very few distractions for them.
>
> (OTH. SS. emphasis added)

Job satisfaction was also referred to in terms of a pioneering spirit, 'I feel it is something of a 'cause', 'it seems unjust that they do not have voluntary aided status', 'I wanted to know more about the Muslim community.' The staff also felt that this 'pioneering spirit' was evident in the attitude of the girls towards the school:

> 'It depends very much on attitudes of families as to what each individual girls' opportunities are. I think in a way the school's job is to make sure the girls themselves know what's available. Whether or not they make use of it immediately on leaving I don't think is an issue. I mean it's the old thing about why educate women because all they do is get married and have children. In a way that shouldn't matter because that woman is a better woman than one that wasn't educated and has children.The benefits for the children and the next generation are vital. I think you have to look long term. But maybe individual girls at the present time are almost sacrificing themselves in order for the next generations to have more opportunity.But I think they're aware of that as well they see themselves as pioneers in many ways'
>
> (OTH. MS emphasis added)

The head teacher and staff also saw an advantage in parents feeling able to freely discuss sensitive issues on an informal basis with the head teacher either by phone or in person. This is a noteworthy difference between the two schools because poor communication and hence relationships with Muslim

parents was a concern of the staff at City State.

Disadvantages

In this school the teachers mostly referred to disadvantages in terms of facilities, resources and the lack of subject choice. Also as the only subject teacher they felt disadvantaged because there was little or no possibility for collaboration nor was there any time for staff meetings because the majority of staff were part time.

It was felt that these disadvantages were outweighed by the advantages of the girls being educated within a school where they shared the same culture and religion although there was some reference to the disadvantage of being educated in a Muslim girls' school in particular.

> 'They will say to me we're not allowed to do that. They're quite a moral little lot really, It's lovely, it is nice. I wonder sometimes how innocent they are and how much is the fact that they are closeted and how much of it is that they're not allowed to say. I see education as widening their boundaries but how you can actually widen their boundaries when they cover up and go home. I think the girls feel that they reflect a Muslim community and I think one of the drawbacks probably is going to be that the community itself hangs onto them. They will be closeted here and will then perhaps have difficulties and constraints on leaving.
>
> (OTH. Mc)

Summary

Similar social reasons for their beliefs that girls in general benefitted from their experiences in a single-sex establishment were also expressed. Thus the emerging categories in this context saw a great degree of overlap viz:

1) Girls were not dominated by boys who tend to demand more teacher attention and who intimidate the girls so that they do not feel free to express their opinions.

2) That the presence of boys had a distracting influence on girls in terms of being a disruptive influence in the classroom thus diverting teacher attention but also because it removed the problem of sexual stress so that the girls had no need to compete with each other for the attention of boys and could just 'be themselves'.

3) The belief that all these things led to there being less discipline problems in the school so that they felt comfortable to be able to get on with the business of teaching although in this case this was referred to much more positively in terms of the girls eagerness and wish to learn and underlying this their desire to 'prove themselves'. The staff felt that this 'pioneering spirit' was also mirrored by the girls.

4) the feeling of a calm, warm and friendly atmosphere in

the school where girls could test their strengths in a non-threatening environment and express their opinions without ridicule was constantly referred to. In this environment they were nurtured and supported by the staff. The girls also showed the same feelings of support. This category, **'feelings of sisterhood'** emerged very strongly in both schools but in this school it had a strong Islamic slant to it and was referred to as being the major underlying factor which contributed to the positive advantage that the students gained from being educated in a single-sex Islamic environment. **In this environment being female was not an issue, being a Muslim was not an issue, and being a Muslim female was not an issue.**

5) The advantage of **parents feeling able to freely discuss sensitive issues on an informal basis** with the head teacher either by phone or in person.

In Old Town High understandably the staff were more concerned with the specific disadvantages resulting from lack of finance rather than the disadvantages of single-sex schooling generally.

7.3 The Students Perceptions at City State

The responses of the students in City State can be grouped into similar emergent categories. It is my

intention firstly to examine the responses of the Muslim students in the school from years 8 to 11. This part of the analysis will include a discussion of the responses of the non-Muslim girls in the summary because although they could be grouped into similar categories there were some differences. Overall and in contrast to the findings of Brah and Shaw (1992), which included interview data from young Muslim women about their attitude to single-sex schooling, the majority of the girls believed that they benefitted from being educated in a single-sex environment.

The students referred to the dominance of boys over girls, although they had slightly different points of reference from the staff. These responses fell into the following groups:

a) The fact that there were no boys so that the girls felt free to express themselves openly. This was referred to as a benefit of being educated in a single-sex setting in the majority of replies.[2]

> 'I like this school because it's a single-sex school (girls). This is an advantage because sometimes I can't speak or do something when a boy is around'
>
> (CS. 8B,9O)

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[2]The spellings have been corrected in all the replies which are quoted.

b) Domination of teacher time and attention was referred to in the following terms:-

> 'The girls tend to get their rights in education rather than the boys getting all the attention'
>
> (CS. 13L, 11R)

c) The girls also mentioned domination of boys in terms of bullying. This was not referred to by the staff in either school.

> 'I think it is better single-sex than a double because there is no stupid kind of bullying'
>
> (CS. 20, 80)

> 'I like this school because it does not have boys in it. With boys bullying becomes more. Here people worry more about their work than boys'
>
> (CS. 6B, 90)

> 'The main advantages are that there are no boys around so the girls have more freedom and there is less bullying as well'
>
> (CS. 1L, 11R)

However, two girls out of the 67 Muslim girls who replied did mention bullying and racism among their dislikes of the school.

> 'Some of the girls are a bit racist and bully'
>
> (CS. 3B, 90)

> 'Bullying and name calling'
>
> (CS. 6S, 10R)

d) The girls commented on boys forcing them to do

things they may not want to do. Again this was not referred to by the staff in either school.

> 'boys force or pressure girls to do certain things some girls agree with it some girls don't'
>
> (CS. 21O, 8O)

> 'There's less trouble girls don't get pregnant at school'
>
> (CS. 7Y, 9Y)

> 'Advantage:- less trouble and girls don't quarrel a lot. Girls can't get pregnant at school'
>
> (CS. 10Y, 9Y)

The girls also talked about boys as distracting because they didn't have to think about them in school and because they were not there to disrupt work in the classroom.

> ' The advantage is you won't always be thinking about boys and be left out with your education'
>
> (CS. 2B, 9O)

> 'I like this school because it is a girls school and when you are at a mixed school boys tend to mess about too much and you lose your concentration...You can concentrate better without them nagging at you all day long.'
>
> (CS. 10R, 8R)

Although the girls did not refer to the element of competition so overtly as the staff one of the older students did say:-

> 'The main advantages are that you can concentrate more on education because there are no competitions where as if you go to a mixed school you have competition against the boys'
>
> (CS. 15L, 11R)

Further the Muslim students at City State felt that they got equal access to the curriculum and that the school was not sexist.

> 'The main advantage is that this school cannot be sexist because there are all girls. Also the girls tend to get their rights in education life rather than the boys getting all the attention'
>
> (CS. 13L, 11R)

The teachers were seen as helpful, the atmosphere less violent and it was believed that there were less fights. Many girls said that they felt they learnt a lot more when boys were 'not around' and equated this with obtaining a better education. The staff did refer to this but did not extend this to expressing the opinion that girls performed better educationally except when referring to research in the areas of Maths, Science and Technology.

The Muslim girls did not mention the advantages of seeing female teachers in good jobs and positions of responsibility. Neither did they refer to the advantages of single-sex schooling in terms of it making them feel confident and assertive, although they did indicate that they had more freedom without boys around and that they could express themselves more openly. In connection with the issue of single-sex schooling there was only one reference to the

wishes of the parents and very few comments concerning religion and culture. Some of the students did however make the following comments:-

> 'I like single-sex school because my parents doesn't want I read mixed school' [sic]
>
> (CS. 5L, 11R)[3]

> 'I like this school because it is only for girls and I like the teachers. The main advantage is it will respect if you are in a girls school. The advantage for single sex school is you get more respect'
>
> (CS. 3B, 9O).

> 'I hate this school because it should have all lady teachers'
>
> (CS. 18O, 8O)

Another one said that she didn't think there was enough work done on Islam.

The Muslim students referred to the disadvantages of being educated in a single-sex setting but there was only one emergent category which coincided with that of the staff. This concerned perceived difficulties of dealing with the opposite sex on leaving school. This category featured strongly in the responses of the girls:

> 'A disadvantage of going to an all girls school would be that later on in life when you work in a male dominated environment you won't have had the experiences to cope with male jokes and remarks'
>
> (CS. 1R, 8R)

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[3]This girl had only recently arrived from Pakistan and in fact some of her script was written in Urdu.

> 'Well the main disadvantage I feel is there are no boys to compete with and when we leave and go on to college or work we will have males to compete with and it would be harder for us to get used to the situation'
>
> (CS. 12L, 11R)

The students frequently referred to name calling from students at other schools:

> 'A disadvantage is that the other school call names and cause trouble'
>
> (CS. 8B, 9O)

> 'Disadvantages:- Name calling eg lesbians etc.'
>
> (4K, 10Y)

Linked to this they voiced their dislike of the fact that as an all girls' school it attracts men and boys to the field and outside the school at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

> 'The thing I hate about this school are that at breaks and dinners men come to our school and all the girls get excited'
>
> (CS. 6B, 9O)

Neither of these emergent categories appeared in the teacher interviews.

The emergent categories from the responses of the non-Muslim girls mirrored those of the Muslim girls and are included in the summary of the attitude of the students to single-sex schooling, although I will point out any differences where and when they occur.

Summary

1) There was reference to dominance of boys over girls in terms of bullying, being able to talk more openly and removal of sexual stress. Whereas the Muslim girls talked about boys in terms of them forcing them to behave in a way that they did not wish and getting pregnant, possibly echoing the fears of their parents, the non-Muslim girls did not mention this sort of overt pressure. They did however comment more directly on the fact that there were no arguments about boyfriends, no cattiness and no flirting. This was not directly mentioned by the Muslim girls except in vague terms such as 'you won't have to be thinking about boys' and 'no boys to attract you'.

The non-Muslim girls did not refer to the dominance of boys from the perspective of teacher time or attention. There were also comments from this group of girls that as they were used to being with boys they missed the boys and that it was a disadvantage that the boys were not there because there was no competition or challenges without the boys.

2)The girls in both groups mentioned equal access to the curriculum, being treated equally and the fact that

there was little or no sexism or racism.[4]

Many of the non-Muslim girls referred to the advantage of being all girls in a multicultural setting. This was not referred to by the Muslim girls.

3) A strongly emerging category from both groups of girls was the **'feelings of sisterhood'** between each other and the staff. This was referred to in terms of friendliness and co-operation. There was also reference to the **non-violent atmosphere of the school.**

4)Neither group of girls mentioned the advantage of having staff as **role models**, a category which emerged as having some significance as far as the staff were concerned.

5)The non-Muslim students in contrast to the Muslim students emphasised that the school ethos meant that they **were encouraged to express their opinions, be confident and assertive.** This contrasted sharply with the replies of the Muslim students who **did not refer to this at all.**

7.4 The Perceptions of the Students at Old Town High.

The emerging categories from the responses of the Muslim students in this school show considerable overlap with those of the staff in the two schools and

---

[4]It is interesting to note here that it was the Muslim students (albeit a small proportion) who mentioned racism as a disadvantage of being at the school.

the students in City State. Therefore for clarity I will deal with them in the same order of groupings. However, in common with the staff in Old Town High some of these categories showed a distinctive Islamic slant or different categories emerged. The majority of the girls believed that they benefitted from being educated not only in a single-sex environment but in an Islamic one.

Firstly, the students referred to the dominance of boys over girls, although they had slightly different points of reference. The absence of boys was referred to as an advantage of being in the school and a benefit of being educated in a single-sex setting in general because this meant that the girls felt free to express themselves openly. Domination of teacher time and attention by boys and domination in terms of bullying were also referrred to.

> 'When I was in a mixed sex school and I would get good marks or I would be put in the higher groups the boys would tease me or ask you how you did it and who you copied. Here you feel easy with all the girls and if they are not your enemy or bullies you can trust they will not say anything unpleasant'
> (OTH. AF, 12A)

As with the students of City State it is interesting that the students commented on bullying in terms of less bullying rather than none at all and there was reference to being free from racism in Old Town High.

There were also comments about boys forcing girls to do things they may not want to do, such as starting on drugs or getting 'physical'. This echoes the comments of the Muslim students of City State and again possibly echoes the fears of their parents.

The girls also talked about boys in terms of them being a distraction in the same major sub groupings as those of the staff in both schools; removal of sexual stress and a distraction in terms of being disruptive influences and distracting the girls from their work.

The responses of the older students of Old Town High included that they get equal access to the curriculum because they did not have to compete with the boys and the school was not sexist.

> ' I like that it's only girls, religion is frequently talked about and one is free from racism and prejudiced ideas. Its main advantage is that it gives the girls freedom to explore all the subjects offered and are not oppressed by the males as in state schools, girls can voice their concerns and hopes without pressure or conflict from the opposite sex'
>
> (OTH. 6th form, 1F)

The students also referred to a pervading sense of co-operation, helpful teachers and that there was an atmosphere which was less violent partly because there were less fights. In common with the students in City State the girls commented on the fact that they

thought being in an all girls school meant that they performed better academically.

In this school there were three more emergent categories , the first of which coincides with groups of comments mentioned by the staff in each school. Significantly, as with the non-Muslim girls in City State, comments concerning the advantages of being educated in a single-sex girls' school in terms of the encouragement that they were given to be confident and assertive so that they could express their own opinions and be women, emerged strongly.

> 'I like the environment of my school and the way the teachers push you to do your utmost to make you produce the results you want, although I don't agree with too much pressurising. **In this school I like the way some teachers think of you as an individual and not a whole class.** They make you work and try to build your confidence , make you realise that what you do does matter it is relevant and your future relies on it. **Since I have been to this school I have learned a lot not just about education but about life, how it could change.** I have gained a lot of confidence although I am sometimes a bit too confident which I shouldn't be'.
> (OTH. FF,4FB. emphasis added)

> 'I love the teachers and the lessons. The main advantage is that they encourage you to work hard and become someone'.
> (OTH. FA, 14F)

This first comment is of interest for two reasons.

Firstly, because this student expresses her gratitude at being treated as an individual. This contrasts sharply with the experiences of the Muslim students in City State because they, like other students belonging to ethnic minority groups, appeared to be treated as a group rather than individuals. This in contrast with their white peers in City State causing one teacher at City State to remark,

> 'Groups of girls are labelled, particularly Afro-Caribbean girls. If Afro-Caribbean girls are presenting a problem it is an Afro-Caribbean problem. If white girls are presenting a problem it's an individual problem.'
>
> (CS. 17)[5]

Secondly, referring back to the quote of the Old Town High student because her confidence is obviously causing her some confusion and possible difficulties. On the other hand the Muslim students in City State did not refer either to feeling self confident or to such encouragement.

The next group of comments emerged only as a category from the staff and students of Old Town High. This concerns feelings of 'freedom', 'being comfortable' and being from the same background.

> 'The main advantages are, you can live freely, no worries, and more freedom.'
>
> (OTH. AF, 3A)

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[5]This is quoted here because of its importance and relevance to the point the Muslim student in Old Town High was making.

'The school main advantage are that it is an all girls school and we all have more or less the same backgrounds and we all get on'
(OTH. FF, 2FB)

'The advantage is that we are all Muslim girls and know about each others background and know what to expect of our friends'
(OTH. FF, 12FB)

Finally the staff and students of Old Town High included a religious dimension in their comments on the advantages of being educated at their school. Predictably this was often linked with the single-sex issue in this context. Therefore the fact that the school provides the students with the wherewithal to learn about and practise their religion was frequently alluded to.

'I like this school because it is an Islamic school where I am accepted for my religious behaviour and I am provided with facilities to practice my religion without any care'
(OTH. 6th Form, 4F)

The staff in this school made frequent reference to a 'pioneering spirit' and this was also referred to by the students.

'I like my school because one, we study our religion more deeply, two, because it is an all girls school and three, without the resources of mainstream schools producing good results is a challenge'

(OTH. FF, 6FB)

The girls in Old Town High also referred to the disadvantages of being educated in a single-sex setting but there was only one emergent category which coincided with that of the staff and this was the one which referred to the possible problems in dealing with the opposite sex on leaving school. This emergent category featured strongly in the responses of the girls.

Summary

Several of the emergent categories from the Muslim students in the private Muslim school echo those of the Muslim students from City State.

1) There was reference to dominance of boys over girls in terms of bullying, being able to talk more openly and removal of sexual stress. In common with the Muslim students in City State the Muslim students in Old Town High also talked about boys in terms of them forcing you to do what you don't want to do, such as smoking and drugs and 'getting physical' was the term used this time rather than pregnant. Again the students used vague terms such as 'you won't have to be thinking about boys' and 'no boys to attract you'. The Muslim girls of Old Town High also referred to the dominance

of boys from the perspective of teacher time or attention. There were also comments from this group of girls in Old Town High that as they were used to being with boys, they missed the boys this corresponded to comments made by the non-Muslim students of City State. This is perhaps best summed up for all these students in both the schools by the following comment:-

> 'I think the good thing about being with girls is that you can get on with your work without the boys bugging you, and the bad thing is that you don't have any boys to bug you'
> (OTH. FA, 12A)

2) The girls in this group also mentioned equal access to the curriculum, being treated equally and the fact that there was little or no sexism or racism. The girls did not refer to the fact that they were not mixing with different cultures and there was even a comment that suggested an advantage in that-

> 'The main advantages are the boys not taking over the class and you do not meet a lot of people from different cultures.'
> (OTH. MB, 5B)

It was also noticeable that although the girls expressed concern about mixing and dealing with boys on leaving school they did not mention meeting and dealing with different cultures.

3) Feelings of 'sisterhood' between each other and the

staff was commonly referred to and was often equated with a non-violent atmosphere where there was friendliness and co-operation. The students in this school also commented that they felt free and comfortable because they were all girls and all Muslims together which meant that they were able to practise their religion 'without any care'. This also meant that they 'understood' one another.

4) In common with the girls in City State this group of girls did not mention as an advantage seeing staff as role models, a category which emerged as having some significance as far as the staff of City State and Old Town High were concerned.

5) The students of Old Town High emphasised that the school ethos meant that they were encouraged to express their opinions, be confident and assertive. This in common with the non-Muslim girls in City State but NOT the Muslim girls in City State.

7.5 Change schools?

With regard to the single-sex issue the students were asked if they would like to change schools and if so which type of school they would like to go to. The following information is presented in both the Table below and graphically in figure 2.

Change Schools?

		Reasons		
	% Wishing to Change	Mixed Sex	Reputation	Other
Muslims City State	25%	43%	50%	7%
Non-Muslim City State	49%	59%	9%	32%
Muslim Old Town High	27%	11%	30%	59%

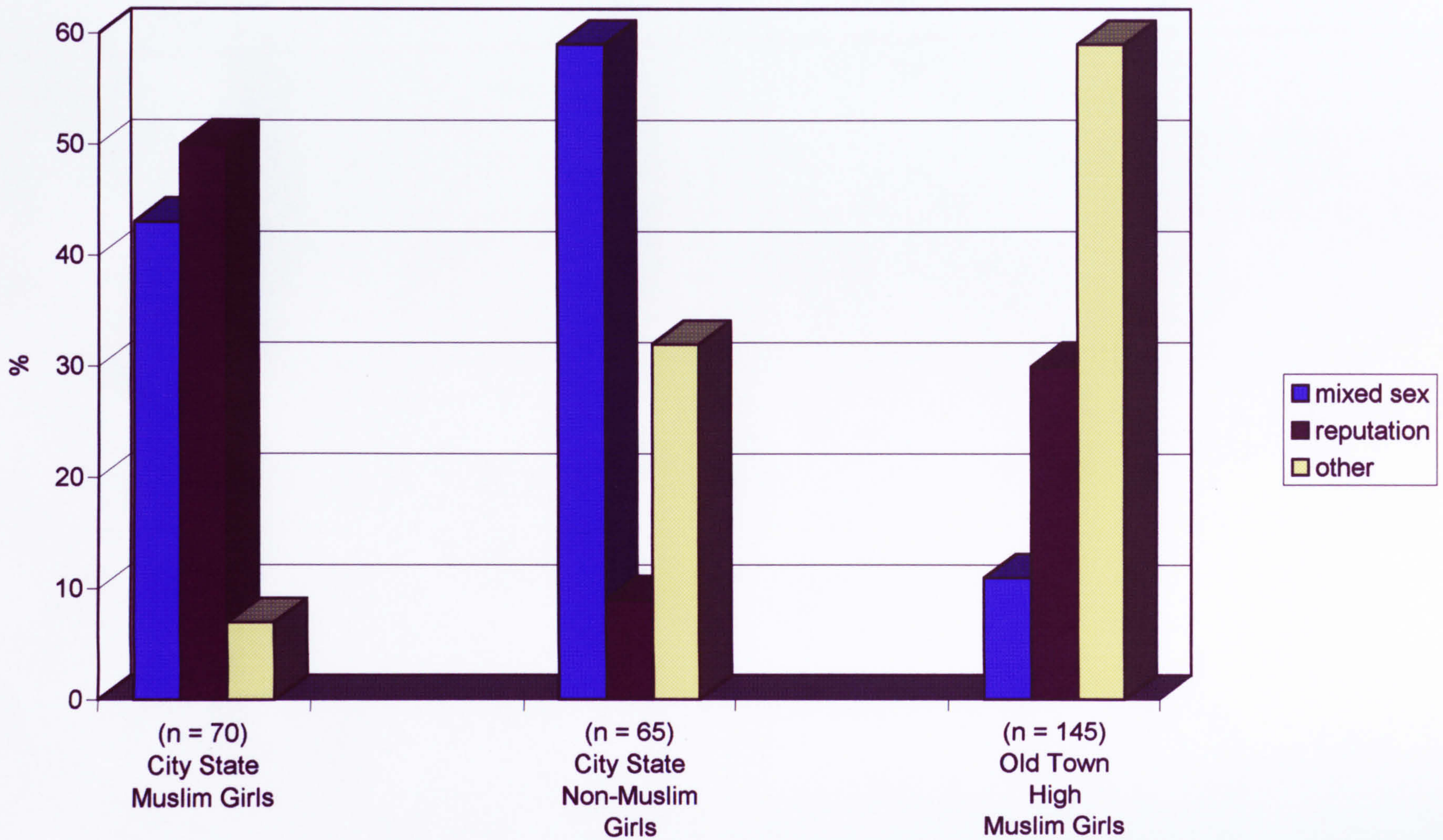
In City State 25% of the Muslim students said they would like to change schools. Out of this group of students 43% said they would like to change to a mixed sex school while 50% said they would like to change to a school or CTC with a good academic reputation. Seven per cent said they would like to change to a particular state school in the area but gave no real reason.

In comparison with their Muslim counterparts 49% of the non-Muslim students in City State said that they would like to change schools. Of these 59% gave going to a mixed sex school as the reason for their wish to change. Nine per cent said they wanted to go to schools with good academic reputations and more options. Nine per cent said they wanted to go to schools where their friends were and 6% wanted to

change schools because they were picked on in their existing school. Six per cent wanted to go to schools where they didn't have to wear uniforms and 3% wanted to change because they HATE being called a lesbian. Eight per cent gave various other reasons for a change of school.

Taking the Muslim students and the non-Muslim students together in City State 38% stated a wish to change schools in comparison with Old Town High where only 27% expressed a wish to change schools. Of this group in Old Town High only 11% of these gave wanting to go to a mixed sex school as a reason for their answer and 30% said they wished to change to schools with good academic reputations and better resources, facilities and more options available. Thirty per cent said they wished to change to state schools where their friends or cousins were and 8% mentioned that they had been offered a place at one particular state school but were not allowed to go there because it doesn't enjoy a good reputation. Twenty three per cent said they would like to go to other schools for various reasons such as another Muslim school or a boarding school or a single-sex state school or a CTC. This is represented in figure 2

Figure 2: Reasons for wanting to change schools



Conclusion.

In analysing the responses of the staff and students relating to their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex schooling there were several major emergent categories. These categories revealed clear similarities and differences between the two schools with regard to the advantages of single-sex schooling as tabulated below.

Similarities	Differences
An atmosphere free from male dominance and harassment	Feelings of confidence and assertiveness possibly linked to self knowledge and a sense of cultural identity
Removal of competition with and for boys	Emphasis on religion and strong moral framework
Removal of sexual stress, intimidation and behavioural problems	Emphasis on academic performance
Equal access to the curriculum during lessons and in terms of subject choice	
Encouragement in terms of positive role models	
Feelings of 'sisterhood' so that there was a common experience of being women and adolescent women leading to a warm, friendly, supportive and non-violent atmosphere	

In these respects some common ground emerges between

the two schools over the issues of single-sex schooling. A strongly emerging category from both schools was that of feelings of 'sisterhood' between staff, staff and pupils and pupils. It was felt that this in turn led to a warm, friendly, supportive and non-violent atmosphere.

It is from this base that pupils felt they had the freedom to explore ideas about, being a woman or specifically a Muslim woman in the case of the Muslim school. This was perceived to lead to feelings of confidence and assertiveness for the non-Muslim students in City State and the Muslim students of Old Town High but not so much for the Muslim students of City State.

From this stage of the analysis it is evident that the original primary research questions can be partially answered. Firstly, and with regard to the question concerning areas of agreement between feminists and Muslims over the issue of single-sex schooling it seems there are definite areas of agreement between the staff and students in each school as to the advantages and purpose of single-sex schooling.

Secondly, and concerning educational opportunities there are marked differences between the two schools with regard to an emphasis on academic performance and religion. These

were identified in Chapter Six and have been further emphasised by the analysis of attitudes to single-sex schooling in this chapter. This appears to contradict the assumptions made about Muslim girls' schools concerning educational opportunities. However, some questions or issues also emerge from this analysis.

Firstly, is the emphasis on academic outcomes reflected in the students' attitudes to high academic success and in the academic performance of the Muslim students in each school?

Secondly, implicit in the responses of the staff and students in both schools on the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex schooling and their school specifically are issues of self confidence and assertiveness linked to cultural identity.

One question that now needs to be addressed is:-
are the differences between the two schools concerning emphasis on academic performance discernable in the responses of the students?
Also, the strong commitment of the staff in both City State and Old Town High to gender issues prompts the question:-
is this reflected in student attitudes to the rights and roles of women in contemporary society and is there is a discernible difference in attitude between

the students of each school on these issues?

These questions provide the focus for the next chapter. It now becomes necessary to examine other sources of evidence focussed around these three questions before full answers to the primary research questions can be attempted.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ATTITUDES TOWARDS HIGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND THE RIGHTS and ROLES OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Introduction

There is a concern that Muslim girls' schools reduce educational opportunities because they reflect a cultural tradition which relegates their students to an inferior position by 'educating them for marriage and motherhood in a particular Islamic sense'; encouraging an ethos within them which is conducive to the perpetuation of the traditional sex stereotypes of girls and women. This was highlighted in Chapter Three and is initially challenged by the analysis of the data in Chapters Six and Seven. It was also considered by the Swann Committee. The following quote is rather long but is included because of its relevance to this piece of research and because it made such an impact on me when I first read it.

> 'We believe that it is important to recognise that the concept of a single-sex school in the Muslim context differs in certain fundamental respects from the philosophy underlying existing single- sex schools in the education system. Girls' schools in this country - apart from their pupil populations and to a lesser extent their teacher populations - have in practice differed little from coeducational schools in that the core curriculum has been the same and the same educational standards in terms of public examinations have been sought. Traditional "girls' subjects" such as home economics have of course tended to be included

> in the curriculum at the expense of "technical" boys' subjects, but in recent years even this difference of emphasis has become less clearly defined with the greater acceptance in society as a whole of a broader role for women. From the statements which have been made by spokesmen of the Muslim community, however, it is clear that the form of single-sex education, which at least some are advocating for girls would entail a far more central focus in the curriculum on education for marriage and motherhood in a particular Islamic sense, with other subjects receiving less attention and with the notion of careers education being seen as irrelevant to the pattern of adult life which the girls are likely to pursue'.
>
> (Swann, 1985, p.505 emphasis added)

It is these issues which this chapter is concerned to explore further.

The first piece of writing that the students were asked to do was designed to probe their attitudes to high academic success by asking them to write an imaginative story about Nazrah who had come top in all her exams at the end of the year. They were also asked to write about what they thought Nazrah was like as a person and what she would be doing when she was 25. The second piece was an attitude scale to investigate their perceptions about the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. In each case the impetus for the decision to include these pieces of work in the research design was partially influenced by the above quote.

The Muslim students in both City State and Old Town High come from similar socio-economic backgrounds and many of their parents migrated from the same areas in Pakistan. If the premise of the Swann Report is correct then it would be expected that the students in Old Town High would:-

i) show less positive attitudes to the high academic achievement of Nazrah and to Nazrah herself because research has shown that girls whose main role in life is considered to be in the domestic sphere will often fear and deliberately avoid success (Horner, 1969; Mkangaza, 1986; Balkin, 1987)

ii) express more traditional views than their counterparts in City State regarding the rights of women and their roles in contemporary society because the type of school they attend will influence them. This is the suggestion of Faulkner (1991) who summarises her research findings with regard to attendance at a single-sex or mixed school as follows:-

> 'The result appears to suggest that the type school attended was the major influencing factor on the development of the attitudes of these pupils'.
> (Faulkner, 1991 p.216)

This chapter is presented in three sections. The first section analyses the data which relate to students attitudes to high academic success. The second section

analyses the data which concern the attitudes of the students to the rights and roles of women in contemporary society and the third section summarises these findings.

8.1 The 'successful female' cue.

In City State 135 students completed questionnaire One. This meant that 32% of the students in those years did this piece of 'work'. Of these 135 students, 70 were Muslims and 65 were non-Muslims. In Old Town High 145 students completed questionnaire One and this was 79% of the students in those years who completed this questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire, attitude to high achievement in girls, was finely scored on a 6 point scale of 1-6. The second part of the questionnaire, attitude to Nazrah herself, was scored on a 5 point scale of 1-5. The scoring criteria were based on those used by Faulkner and were arrived at after the scripts had been read through several times. They are as follows:-

a) attitude to Nazrah's high academic achievement

Score	Reaction
1	Overall a very negative reaction, incorporating negative acts such as being beaten up, or killed, or committing suicide.
2	Overall a negative reaction such as being booed, or causing trouble with one or both parents, siblings, teachers, friends, peers, so that she wishes she had not done so.
3	Overall anegative reaction where Nazrah herself is secretly pleased and proud but unsure whether to show it because she is concerned about the reaction of one or both parents, or siblings, friends, peers, teachers making her unsure of what she should do and causing arguments.
4	A neutral response simply stating the facts objectively, with some of the class being pleased for Nazrah and possibly some not,or parents, siblings, teachers, peers.
5	Overall a positive response such as clapping or cheering, congratulating her, throwing a party, getting a reward and not caring about the negative reactions of others. Feeling that all the hard work has paid off and keep going despite all.
6	A very positive response with Nazrah making active gains as a result of her achievement. Allowed to go on to Further/Higher education and getting a 'good' job.

b) the second part attitude to Nazrah herself. This was scored on a 5 point scale of 1-5.

Score	Reaction
1	A very negative reaction to her, describing her with undue hatred or contempt.
2	A negative reaction describing her with dislike.
3	a neutral reaction
4	A positive reaction describing her as likeable.
5	A very positive reaction actively liking her.

c) The third part concerning what Nazrah will be doing when she is 25 is coded as follows. Having a 'good' career and working, or a career and combining this with children is coded as 1, married and having children as 2, and don't know as 3 because those students who responded in this way would seem to be ambivalent about a career and work and because this part of the questionaire was deliberately aimed at their perceptions of what an academically successful girl would be doing in the future.

To ensure that my perception of what constituted

positive or negative responses corresponded generally to that of others, a small scale investigation was carried out prior to scoring the questionnaires. Four people including myself marked 24 papers. The scoring was compared. Those few papers which showed a discrepancy in scoring were discussed. I then scored all the stories and consulted with the same people in other cases where there was some doubt. This statistical data was then analysed.

A significant difference can be identified between the responses of the students in City State and those of the students in Old Town High concerning the high academic achievement of Nazrah. The students in the private Muslim school were significantly more positive to the high academic achievement of Nazrah and to Nazrah herself (See Table 1). However, both groups produced a favourable response as both groups produced a mean score that was over half the maximum possible score of 6.

Category means/standard errors for scales affected by school type (maximum score 6; minimum score 1)

Table 1

	City State n=135	Old Town High n=1
Attitude to Nazarh's achievements.	3.84 (0.09)	4.95 (0.09

Chi-square = 39.7 $p < 0.00001$

The scores were further analysed according to religion so that the Muslim girls and non-Muslim girls in the state school were separated out as well as the Muslim girls in the private school. Again there was a highly significant difference between the three groups with the Muslim girls in Old Town High scoring most positively in their attitude towards the high academic achievement of Nazrah, followed by the Muslim girls in City State and then the non-Muslim girls in City State. See Table 2

Category means/standard errors for scales affected by religion and school type (maximum score 6;minimum score 1)

Table 2

	Muslims City State n=70	Non-Muslims City State n=65	Old Town High n=145
Attitude to Nazrah's achievement	3.97 (0.14)	3.71 (0.11)	4.59 (0.07)

Chi-square = 52.90821 p< 0.00001

A significant difference also emerged between the two schools concerning the attitude to Nazrah herself and it was again the Muslim girls in Old Town High who were the most positive towards Nazrah as a person. When broken down as before, according to religion,

there was again a linear progression with the Muslim students in Old Town High being most positive towards Nazrah as a person followed by the Muslim students in City State and then non- Muslim students in City State. However again all categories produced a mean above half of the possible maximum score of 5. See Tables 3 and 4

Category means/standard errors for scales affected by school type (maximum score 5 minimum score 1)

Table 3

	City State n=135	Old Town High n=145
Attitude to Nazrah herself	3.25 (0.06)	3.72 (0.06)

Chi-square = 28.73374 p<0.00001

Category means/standard errors for scales affected by religion and school type (maximum score 5; minimum score 1)

Table 4

	Muslims City State n=70	Non- Muslims City State n=65	Old Town High n=145
Attitude to Nazrah herself.	3.44 (0.09)	3.07 (0.08)	3.72 (0.06)

Chi-square = 39.22594 p<0.00001

The students were finally asked what they thought that Nazrah would be doing when she was 25. Given the presumed emphasis that private Muslim girls' schools

are supposed to give to the role of being a wife and mother 'in a particular Islamic sense' it would be expected that the girls in such schools would show a significant difference from the students in the state school and that the Muslim students would show a significant difference to the Non-Muslim students and opt more heavily for category two. This was not the case. See Tables 5 and 6 which add to this discussion by showing these results.

Category means/standard errors for scales affected by school type

Table 5

	City State n=135	Old Town High n=145
What will Nazrah be doing when she is 25?	1.37 (0.06)	1.31 (0.06)

Chi-square = 3.24313 p=0.20 (NS)

Category means/standard errors for scales affected by religion and school type

Table 6

	Muslim City State n=70	Non-Muslim City State n=135	Old Town High n=145
What will Nazrah be doing when she is 25?	1.37 (0.09)	1.37 (0.09)	1.31 (0.06)

Chi-square = 3.80137 p= 0.4336 (NS)

However, signs that the students were concerned about conforming to traditional stereotypes can be clearly traced in their stories about Nazrah's high academic achievement. Although the number of less than favourable responses were very significantly higher amongst the non-Muslim and then the Muslim girls in City State, the girls regardless of the type of school attended appeared to experience inner doubts and conflict. This was often expressed in terms of disbelief and not feeling able to show their joy. Fear of negative consequences such as loss of friends or being considered 'different' and suffering as a direct result of that success was also in evidence. Sometimes this was expressed in racial terms or with a specific cultural slant. A selection of these scripts are to be found in Appendix XVIII.

8.2 The Rights and Roles of women in Contemporary Society

This part of the analysis will address the following questions:-

i) Do the students of City State show more liberal views of women's rights and their roles in contemporary society?

ii) Is there a difference in attitude between the Muslim and non-Muslim students in this school?

iii) Do the students in Old Town High show significantly more traditional views to these issues than would be expected from the stereotypical notions of these schools?

The questionnaire was analysed on:-

i) each question,

ii) each of the three sections, Jobs, Home and Social,

iii) the overall response to all three sections.

The responses were grouped as follows:-

Group One	Muslim girls in City State
Group Two	Non-Muslim girls in City State
Group Three	Muslim students in Old Town High

In City State 135 students completed Questionnaire One and this was 32% of the students in those years. Of these 135 students 65 were Muslims and 70 were non-Muslims. In Old Town High 144 students completed Questionnaire One and this was 79% of the students in those years.

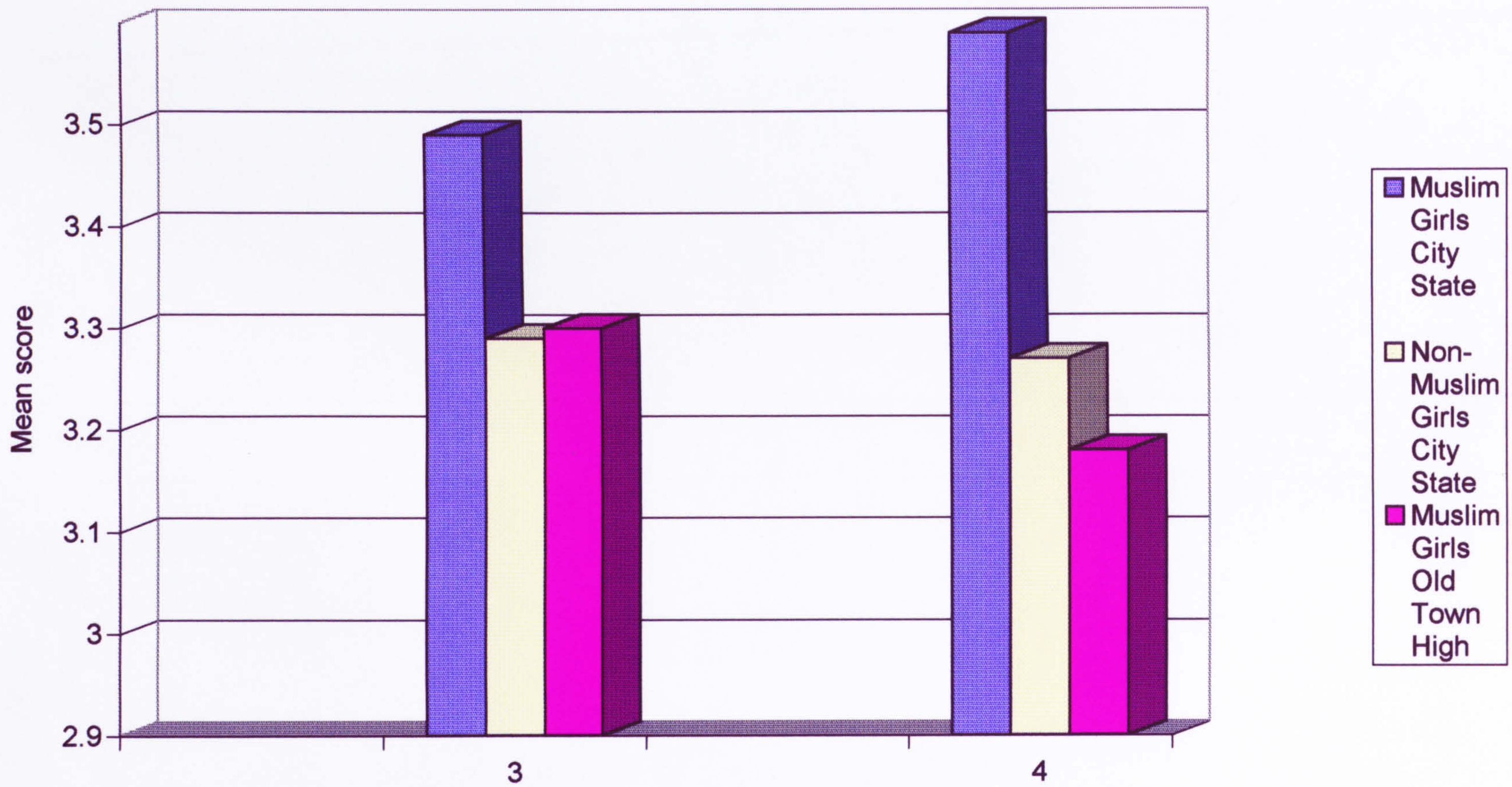
Five individual questions highlighted a significant

difference between the three groups. I will deal with these section by section.

Jobs

Questions 3 and 4 from this section produced significant differences between the three groups. Question three was: 'women are better off having their own jobs and freedom to do as they please rather than being treated as a lady in the old fashioned sense'. In the case of this question it was the non-Muslim students of City State who produced the most conservative response to this question followed by the students of Old Town High. It was actually the Muslim students of City State who produced the most liberal response to this question. Question four was: 'there should be more women leaders in important jobs in public life such as politics'. This time it was the students of Old Town High who showed the most conservative response to this question followed by the non-Muslim students of City State. Again it was the Muslim students of City State who scored most liberally on this question. This information is presented graphically as figure 3.

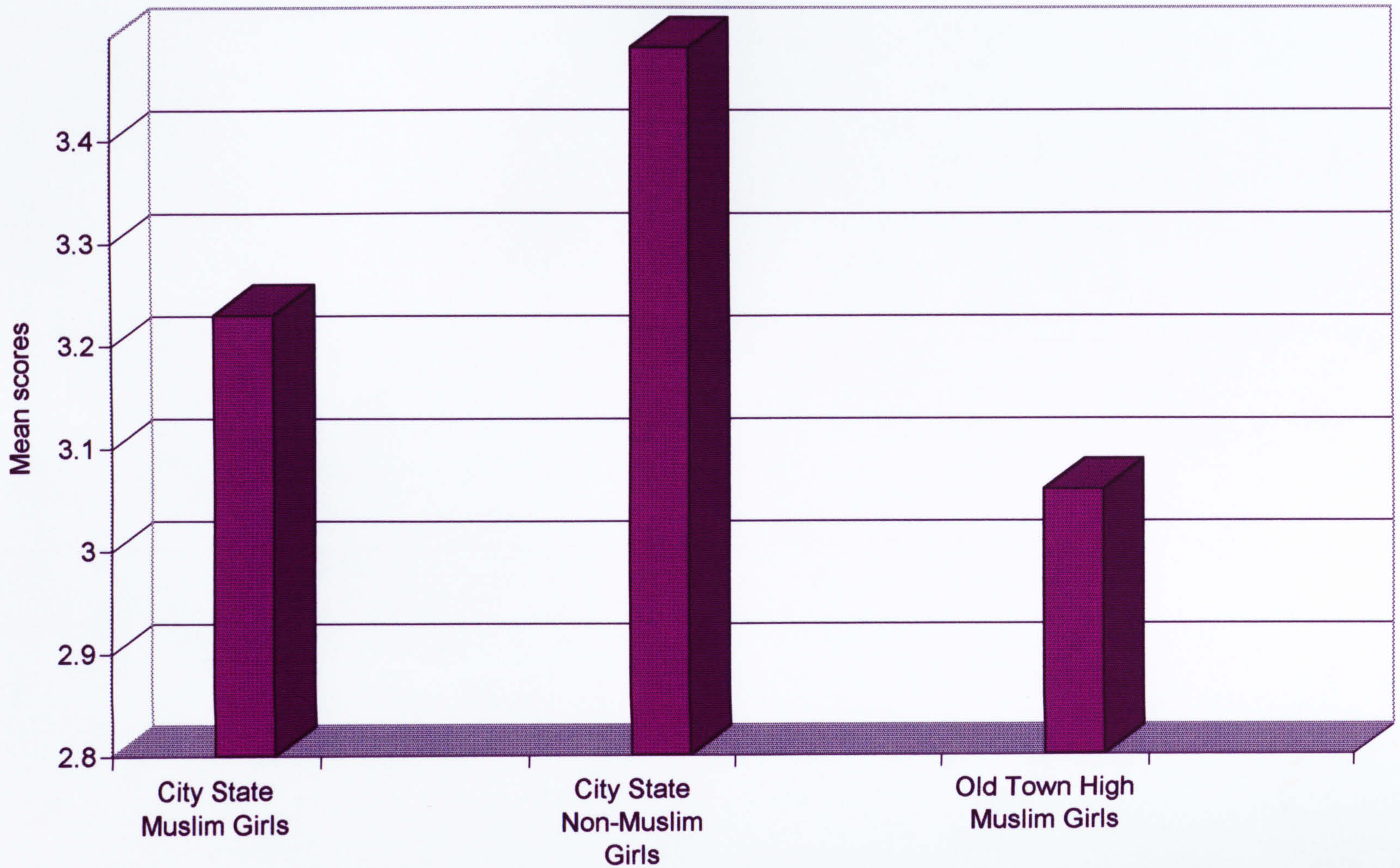
Figure 3: Mean scores for girls in different groups (Question 3 & 4 - jobs)



Question 3: 'Women are better off having their own jobs and freedom to do as they please rather than being treated as a lady in the old fashioned sense'
Question 4: 'There should be more women leaders in important jobs in public life such as politics'

Question 1 from this section also highlighted a significant difference. This question was: 'It would be ridiculous for a woman to drive a train or for a man to sew on shirt buttons' The Muslim students of Old Town High showed a significantly more conservative attitude as far as this question was concerned. They were followed by the Muslim students of City State. It was the non-Muslim students of City State who scored more liberally on this question. This is presented graphically as figure 4.

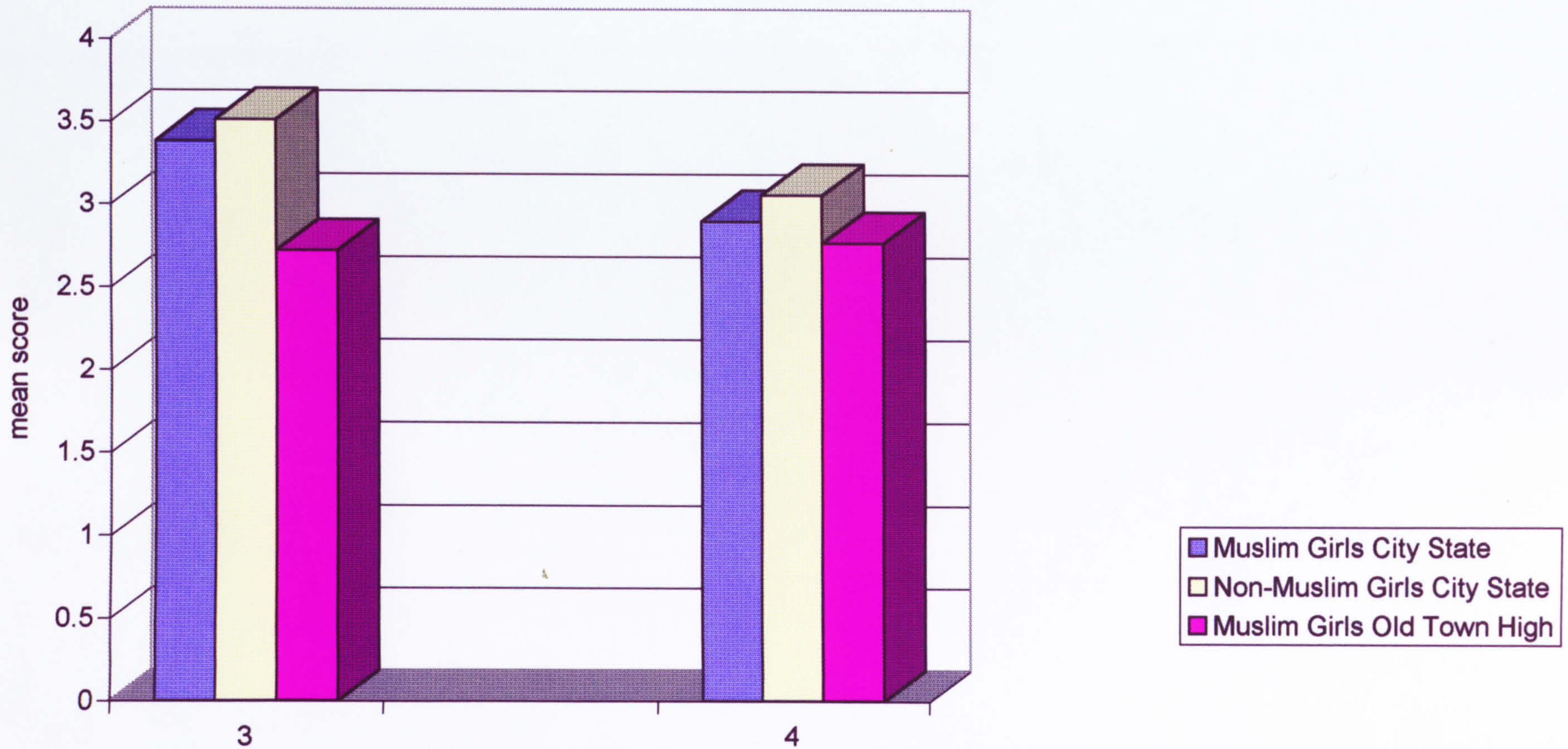
Figure 4: Mean scores for each group of girls.
Question 1: 'It would be ridiculous for a woman to drive a train or for a man to sew on shirt buttons'



Social Roles

Questions 3 and 4 in this section showed significant differences in the responses from each group of students. Question three was: 'girls nowadays should be allowed the same freedom as boys such as being allowed to stay out late' and question four was: 'it sounds worse when a woman swears than when a man does'. It was the non-Muslim students of City State who scored most liberally on question 3 followed by the Muslim students of City State. The Muslim students of Old Town High showed a more conservative response to this question. For question 4 which concerned the appropriateness of women swearing it was the Muslim students of Old Town High who showed the most conservative response followed by the Muslim students of City State. The non-Muslim students of City State scored most liberally in this respect. This is presented graphically as figure 5.

Figure 5 :Mean scores for each group of girls. Questions 3 & 4 : social



Question 3: ' Girls nowadays should be allowed the same freedom as boys.....'

Question 4: ' It sounds worse when a woman swears than when a man does'

These results are broken down for each of these relevant and significant questions and are presented in Table 7 below as well as graphically (See figures 3, 4 and 5 already referred to).

Table of questions which produced significant differences showing mean scores/(standard error) of each group of girls

Table 7

Question	Muslim Girls City State n=63	Non-Muslim Girls City State n=70	Muslim Girls Old Town High n=145	Signficance P value
Jobs 3	3.49 (0.08)	3.29 (0.08)	3.31 (0.06)	0.05
Jobs 4	3.59 (0.07)	3.27 (0.08)	3.18 (0.06)	0.01
Home 1	3.23 (0.12)	3.49 (0.08)	3.06 (0.08)	0.02
Social 3	3.38 (0.10)	3.51 (0.08)	2.72 (0.07)	0.001
Social 4	2.90 (0.10)	3.06 (0.10)	2.77 (0.08)	0.01

NB a scoring of 4 denotes the most liberal response and 1 the least liberal response.

The remainder of the questions did not produce significant differences but these results deserve consideration and again they will be discussed section by section.

Jobs

The questions in this section which did not produce significant differences between the three groups are questions one, two, five, six and seven. These are as follows:-

1) 'There are many jobs that men can do better than women'

2) 'Women should have completely equal opportunities in getting jobs and promotion as men'

5) 'Women have less to offer than men in the world of business and industry'

6) 'Girls should have as much opportunity to do apprenticeships and learn a trade as boys'

7) 'Women should not be bosses in important jobs in business and industry'

All three groups showed a favourable response producing mean scores of over half the maximum possible score of 4 and were in agreement that women who work are capable of doing a variety of jobs. This includes those which are traditionally seen to be in the province of men. They also have as much to offer to the world of work as men and should have equal opportunities in getting those jobs and promotion. Further they are capable of working in managerial positions in important jobs in business and industry.

Home/Family Life

The questions which did not produce a significant difference in this section were questions two, three, four, five and six as follows:-

2) 'A woman's place is in the home looking after her family, rather than following a career of her own'

3) 'If a woman goes out to work her husband should share the housework; such as washing dishes, cleaning and cooking'

4) 'In general, the father should have more authority than the mother in bringing up children'

5) 'Women should worry less about being equal with men and more about becoming wives and mothers'

6) 'Daughters in a family should be encouraged to stay on at school and go to college as much as the sons in the family'

Given the assumptions made about Muslim women and their roles in the family, as represented in the Swann Report, for example, it is noteworthy that there were no significant differences produced by these individual questions between the three groups. The expectation would be that the Muslim students in Old Town High, given the supposed emphasis of these

schools on the roles of girls as wives and mothers 'in a particular Islamic sense', would have scored significantly more traditionally particularly on questions two, four, and five. In direct contradiction to these assumptions all three groups showed a favourable response to these questions producing mean scores of over half the maximum score of 4 and were in agreement that women do not necessarily belong in the home but should be able to pursue some form of further or higher education and a career of their own and in doing this expect their partner to contribute equally in household duties and raising children.

Social Affairs

Three questions in this section did not produce a significant difference. They were questions one, two and five:-

1) 'Girls earning as much as their boyfriends should pay for themselves when going out with them.'

2) 'It is all right for men to tell offensive jokes, but I don't think women should tell them.'

5) 'Women should be able to go anywhere a man does, or do anything a man does'.

In fact all the groups showed more liberal than conservative responses to these questions in each case producing mean scores of over half the maximum score of 4 although for questions 2 and 5 it was the Muslim students of Old Town High whose mean scores showed a marginally more traditional attitude to these questions followed by the Muslim students of City State.

Overall analysis of each section

These questions were than analysed by sections. The Scheffe procedure was carried out to compare the three groups scores for each section. The procedure for the jobs section found there to be no significant difference between any of the three groups.

The grouping of questions concerning the roles of women in the home found there to be no significant difference between the Muslim students in City State and the Muslim students in Old Town High, but there was a significant difference ($p<0.05$) between the Muslim students in both schools and the non-Muslim students of City State. This last group, the non- Muslim students of City State, were found to have more liberal attitudes than the Muslim students in both schools to the roles of women in the home.

Also the section concerning social roles of girls and women found that the Muslim girls in Old Town High were significantly less liberal in this respect than the Muslim and non-Muslim girls in City State school, ($p<0.05$) and that the Muslim and the non-Muslim girls in City State are not significantly different in this respect. This information is presented in Table 8 and graphically as figure 6.

Figure 6: Mean scores for each category: Jobs,home & social

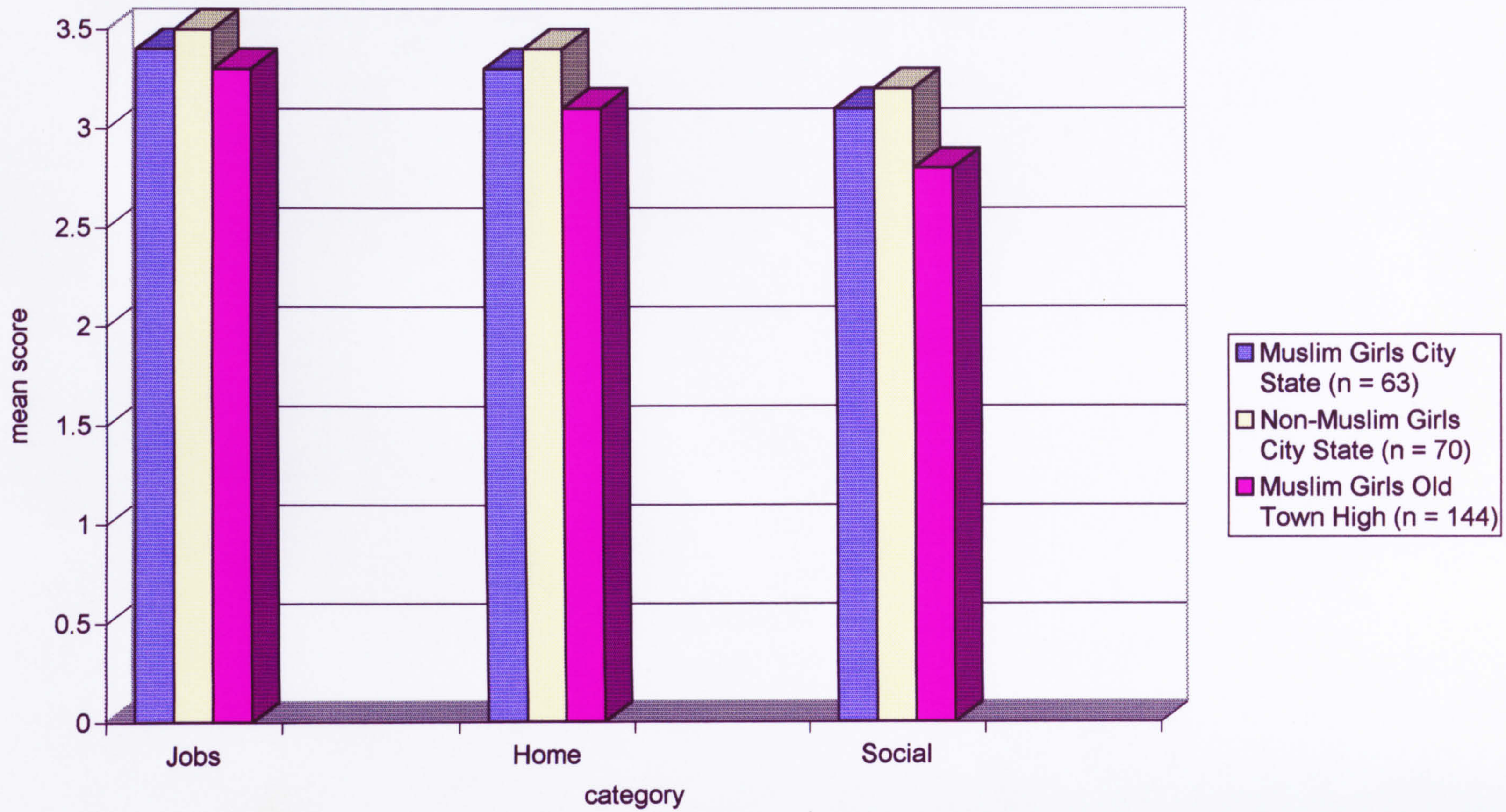


Table of means/standard error for each category, Jobs, Home and Social affected by religion and school type

Table 8

	Jobs	Home	Social
Group one Muslim Girls City State n=63	3.44 (0.05)	3.27 (0.08)	3.09 (0.05)
Group two Non-Muslim Girls City State n=70	3.45 (0.04)	3.36 (0.05)	3.17 (0.05)
Group three Muslim Girls Old Town High n=144	3.34 (0.03)	3.14 (0.04)	2.84 (0.04)

(sig.p<0.05)

8.3 Conclusions

The analysis of this data concerning attitudes to the rights and roles of women in contemporary society means it is now possible to answer the questions asked at the beginning of the section 8.2 viz:

i) Do the students of City State show more liberal views of women's rights and their roles in contemporary society?

ii) Is there a difference in attitude between the Muslim and Non-Muslim students in this school?

iii) Do the students in Old Town High show significantly more traditional views to these issues

as would be expected from the stereotypical notions of these schools?

From my findings the Muslim students of Old Town High are not significantly less liberal than the Muslim or the non-Muslim students of City State in their attitudes to jobs. Nor were they less liberal than the Muslim students of City State over issues with regard to the roles of women in the home. They did differ, however in their attitudes concerning the social roles of girls and women, showing themselves to have significantly less liberal attitudes in this respect. This effectively answers the first and last questions asked above.

Further, regarding the question which concerns whether there are any differences in attitudes towards the rights and roles of women in contemporary Britain between the Muslim and the non-Muslim students in City State - that also depends on the category of questions. There were no significant differences between the Muslim and the non-Muslim students of City State for the group of questions concerning jobs, nor for the group of questions concerning social roles. With regard to this last group of questions both the Muslim and the non-Muslim students of City State showed more liberal attitudes when compared with the

students of Old Town High. However it is interesting to note that the group of questions concerning the home did show a significant difference between the Muslim students in City State and the non-Muslim students of City State with the latter scoring more liberally in this respect. This then effectively answers the second question asked at the beginning of this conclusion.

From these findings concerning both the attitudes to the high academic achievement of Nazrah, and the rights and roles of women in contemporary society, there emerges a marked difference between the Muslim girls in the state school (City State) and the Muslim girls in the private school (Old Town High). It is the Muslim students in Old Town High who are more positive to both the academic achievement of Nazrah and towards her as a person.

Additionally from the qualitative analysis detailed in Chapters Six and Seven there emerges a marked difference between the Muslim girls in City State and the Muslim girls in Old Town High in terms of; feeling confident, assertive; being able to question and to challenge; pioneering feelings as a Muslim woman; and academic aspirations. This prompts the question, why? What is the difference between the two schools?

Tensions have also been identified in the responses of the staff of City State as they try to reconcile their desire to encourage the students to challenge and question the stereotypes of women, their rights and their roles in contemporary society on the one hand whilst giving due consideration to what they understand to be the religious/cultural beliefs of the Muslim students on the other hand. These tensions are not detectable in the responses of the staff or the students in Old Town High. This prompts the questions:

i) Is it because the Muslim students in Old Town High school feel 'comfortable' in their environment where being a woman is not an issue, being a Muslim is not an issue and being a Muslim woman is not an issue?

ii) Is it from this basis they feel freer to question, challenge and assert their own agendas for an exploration of what it means to be a Muslim woman and pursue academic success and further or higher education from the safety of feeling secure in their own identity?

iii) Is this the case for the Muslim students in City State?

It is these questions which are explored and discussed in the next chapter within Part Three of the thesis so that the triangulation of the data is completed.

CHAPTER NINE

EQUALITY IN DIFFERENCE?

Introduction

This chapter has three sections the first two of which are concerned with the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating these relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development. The first section examines the relationships between the staff and the Muslim students in City State and compares these with those of the staff and students in Old Town High. The second section then focusses on the structural initiatives that City State have implemented to deal with the perceived needs of its Muslim students. The third section is concerned to draw the categories which emerged in the process of open, axial and selective coding together, to relate them and refine them further.

The concern of this chapter is to weave the fragmented and fractured data together again. Chapter One details the concern of this thesis to deal with hybridity, fragmentation and pluralism. In reflection of this Chapters Four and Five argue for an approach to this research which is also hybrid, fragmented and plural. This chapter will draw on the 'diverse slices' of data generated by this

approach. Therefore although it will concentrate on the interviews of the head teachers and staff and 'work' completed by the students it is concerned to 'knit' the views of parents, ex-students and staff of those Muslim schools who replied to the postal questionnaire, into this phase of the analysis and this main body of data in the way that was described in the third section of Chapter Five.

9.1 Dealing With Difference

Firstly, the analysis of this section is approached by looking at the interview responses of the staff of City State in terms of the tensions that they spoke about in their interactions with their Muslim students. This is important because such tensions were very rarely referred to by the staff in Old Town High. A more usual comment from the staff in this school was:-

> 'I suppose the Islamic teachings that they have, and the pressure from each other, and the questions that they ask .....I think because they are in a safe environment they're more able to ask questions that they might not ask in a more supposedly open environment. So I think they're able to criticise and question and get their doubts sorted out while they're still within a safe community'.
>
> (OTH. MS)

In contrast the staff at City State voiced concerns about their Muslim students using terms such as 'conflict', 'dilemma' and 'tension', although none of the questions embraced these terms. This part of the

analysis differs from that of the preceding chapters in that it draws on the whole interview rather than on a few specific questions. The analysis at this point considered these tensions by using the following questions as a framework:

i) What do the staff perceive to be areas of tension and conflict?

ii) How and why does this arise?

iii) What do the staff perceive the needs of the Muslim students to be?

The responses of the staff in Old Town High are used in this instance throughout the text as a means of comparison. The perceptions of students and ex-students concerning these issues are also drawn upon.

Firstly, in answer to the question concerning perceived areas of tension and conflict these seem to fall into six emergent categories:-

i) The commitment of the staff to encouraging the girls to challenge existing gender steretypes, which in turn leads to:

ii) A perceived clash of parental expectations and school expectations.

iii) Peer group pressure.

iv) Weak home school links.

v) Lack of representation on the staff of Muslim teachers and on the governing body.

vi) Felt lack of knowledge about Islamic culture.

The commitment of the staff to equal opportunities emerged very strongly in City State despite initial impressions that it appeared to be a school with all girls attending it rather than a girls' school. I discussed this in Chapter Seven when the emergence of the category 'feelings of sisterhood' was considered, because as I also commented there, it was a category which had surprised me given my initial impression of the school. A widely held perception was that the school was a place where the students needed to be encouraged to question gender stereotypes and the division of labour often in the face of increasing presssure from outside influences, such as the media.

> 'I was talking about changing roles. I am one of those people that get very worked up over the popular media and I feel that their influence is perhaps stronger than it has ever been. I feel that frequently they are reinforcing all stereotypes and roles of boys and girls and sometimes doing it so successfully that they push aside efforts that other people are trying to make. We have to try and counterbalance these. But sometimes they find it very easy to go along with the stereotypical role that they believe

> it, or are brainwashed into believing it. Also the peer pressure which has always existed is now publicized and it is communicated through the sort of journals that they sometimes read which reinforces it. I think peer pressure is stronger now than it has been so it might be more difficult for many of the students to break out and stand apart.
>
> (CS. 23)

This strong commitment to equal opportunities in terms of gender is also the point where in City State the discourses of 'race' and gender articulate on a daily basis. It is here the staff voiced their anxieties about how to negotiate their way through these discourses so they were seen to give due consideration to the needs of the girls as a whole and the perceived needs of their Muslim students. They did not feel 'comfortable' in this area. They used terms like 'fall into the pit' 'wary about being pushy' 'worry about saying the wrong thing'.

Davies (1984) points out that in her opinion many western feminist teachers see a counter position between opposing sexism in school and opposing racism and are inclined to give priority to the former. If this is so, it is not without some considerable 'liberal angst' in the case of the staff in City State who, feeling less comfortable with the 'race' aspect of the situation, give this priority because they feel less 'comfortable' in this area. This point could be

illustrated by a relevant extract from the transcribed interview of every member of staff at City State. The following is taken as typical:-

> 'I don't want to stereotype to be quite honest as I said before I believe this school and the home conflict. I feel, **I didn't fall into the pit** but I was aware of going to ask the questions of what are you doing when you leave here, what would you like to do, and I learned to maybe put these questions in a different light or not assume that they were going to do anything. I find that when you are in a smaller group, when I do course work with them (the Muslim students) they ask about me, you give a little bit but **I feel that I would not say things to them that I would say to a white girl or a black girl because I couldn't say that my husband does the dishes or, or I feel I don't want to because that could create problems.**
>
> (CS. 25, emphasis added)

In this instance the racism/sexism contradiction is very clear.

Further to this, the staff articulated what they felt to be a clash between the expectations of the Muslim parents of what the school should provide, and the expectation of the school for its students. Again comments here seem to fall into two opposing categories. It was either felt that the school was seen to be a 'dumping ground' for their daughters until they reached marriageable age; or the Muslim parents had unrealistically high expectations for their daughter in terms of future educational pathways and career patterns. Either way the staff appeared to feel that

this clashed with the expectations of the school. Such comments often prefaced perceptions that inevitably such clashes of expectation led to tensions, conflict and dilemma.

> 'I often feel as though I am in a dilemma. It's this dichotomous situation where you feel as though the school is leading the girls along one path and it can be at a tangent to what is actually required of them at home. It's presenting what is available without offending parental opinions really. That's a difficulty reaching a balance. You have to be aware, you've got to be on your toes all the time.'
>
> (CS. 17, emphasis added)

In this context the staff were anxious to point out that parental background and the time of their arrival in this country was a major contributory factor affecting their expectations of school. One teacher who had just returned to this country after teaching in a primary and middle school in Kuwait remarked:-

> 'I think Pakistanis, especially in England, because they haven't got the education background that Arabs have, they feel that they are poor, they need their daughters to get married, have children and look after them. They don't differ in schools but they differ from home. It happens to quite a few and I think that that's one of the biggest fights. I've got the two lowest groups for English for year 10 and 11 and I have to fight the girls to make them learn.It may not be the same in the higher groups, it may, but then again it's probably because the girls have already got a sort of wider background.The parents read or they are doctors or chemists or whatever. It has a lot to do I think with class, with background, they are not bothered. They don't see learning speech marks or being able to write an

> argumentative essay of any importance to their future lives or to their lives at the moment. They are just not important at all.
> (CS. 9)

In fact most of the parents that I talked to were concerned to stress their feelings that education was very important for their daughters (See also Afshar,1989; Joly, 1989)

Some staff felt that this meant that on leaving school the girls retreated back into the family and 'we have done them little service really'. This circle of confusion and tension also leads to a lack of communication between the staff and their Muslim students. This has two effects. Firstly, some staff commented that the Muslim students tended to group themselves together especially during lesson time so that they could operate from a position in which they felt 'comfortable'. Interestingly this is also seen by the students of Old Town High as being a major advantage of their school. Secondly, the staff remarked on the resultant difficulties of encouraging the Muslim students to participate in lessons.

> 'Having said that they're multicultural groupings the fact that they are all bunged into the same class doesn't mean that they work necessarily together. Unless I split them up, generally although not always, the Asian girls will work in one group and there's usually an ethnic mix amongst the others.The Asian group of girls usually given a choice will tend to work together and resent being ungrouped. Sometimes I will mix

> the entire class up. I often find then that if you get one or two Asian girls in a group with other girls the couple of Asian girls will tend to go extremely quiet, more quiet than they are normally and not join in, not contribute even to discussion. Just do as they're told as it were.
>
> (CS. 20, emphasis added)

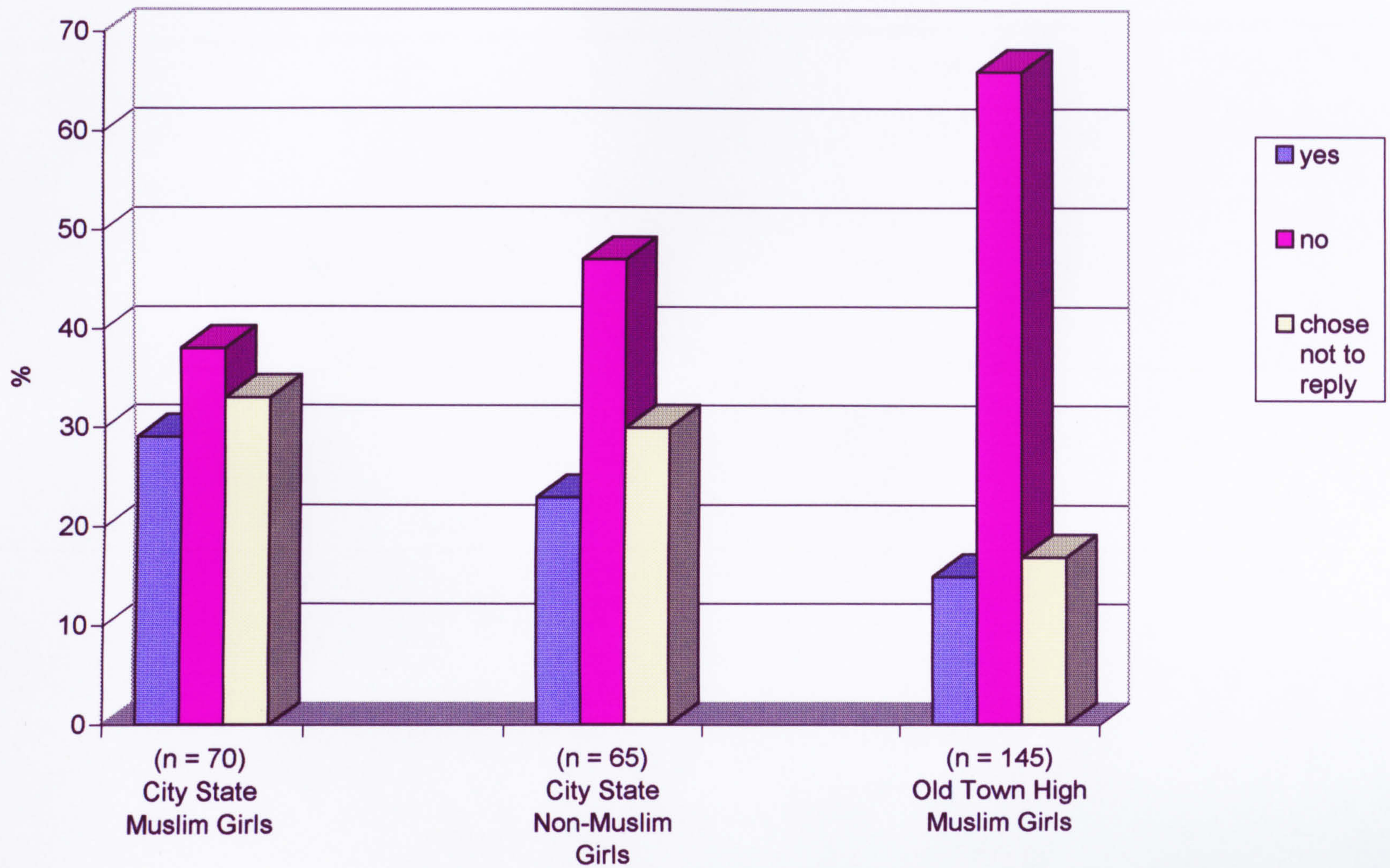
The failure of the Muslim students to participate in lessons is attributed to two reasons. Firstly, peer group pressure. Secondly, failure of the curriculum to adequately provide for their needs. Peer group pressure in a multicultural sense does not apply to Old Town High in the same way. The staff at City State referred to the difficulties that they believed the Muslim students encountered at being confronted on a daily basis with western cultural norms. By this the staff meant not only that the girls questioned and felt resentment at their own cultural restrictions but did not feel able to discuss this amongst themselves because of community pressure. Nor did they feel able to talk about this to other students or staff from outside the community.

> 'I think the Muslim girls see the freedom as they always see it of what a lot of the girls have outside of school and there is sometimes a feeling of resentment that they can't have that same freedom. I wonder if they always realise the depths of the sort of reponsibility that the freedom can bring. I think they only see one side of the thing and not the whole picture. I think they need counselling.Someone to be able to talk to about the things that frustrate them or the things that they don't agree with. They really need to be able to, if they can't talk with the family at home. They form little support groups amongst themseves naturally. I

> think it's forced to be so. It's a very close knit cultural group, and I think perhaps they are aware that they sometimes have to be careful what they're saying because if someone passed it on or someone heard. They have to be careful who they're saying what to.
>
> (CS. 7)

Thus the Muslim students at City State tended to form themselves into tight groupings. The lack of Muslim teachers on the staff at City State was perceived to be a contributory factor in this respect. The tensions illustrated by these selected comments are also echoed by the replies of the students to the question ' Do you think that your school creates a gap between yourself and home? Can you please give reasons for your answer'. The information that follows is shown graphically as figure 7. It should be noted here that many students chose not to reply to this question, either because they did not understand it, although it was explained to them or because they simply didn't feel that they wanted to.

Figure 7: Does school create a gap between yourself and home?



Twenty nine per cent of Muslim students in City State said that there was a gap created between school and home. Thirty eight per cent said that no gap was created and 33% chose not to reply to that question. In comparison to this 23% of the non-Muslim students said that there was a gap created between school and home and 47% said there was no gap created. Thirty per cent of this group chose not to respond to the question. Given the comments of the staff and the tensions they have indicated that they feel in their relationships with their Muslim students, it is perhaps surprising that the percentage of Muslim students who said there was no gap created between school and home is not significantly different from the non-Muslim students.

When the replies that indicated that there was a gap created between school and home were analysed the Muslim students did, however, give very different reasons for their answer from the non-Muslim students. The non-Muslim students talked about gaps being created because they had to spend too much time doing their homework, getting into trouble at school which was then reported back to parents and different ideas about how to deal with bullying. One non-Muslim student commented:-

'I think it does because it encourages us so much to become independent and ALL for women's rights, that I have a lot of arguments with my father about what a woman's place should be'.
(CS. 10R, 2S)

In contrast the findings show that of the 29% of the Muslim girls who believed that there was a gap created between school and home, 69% talked about pressure, stress, confusion and not knowing who to listen to. The following is a selection of their reasons.

'Yes because it is different because you don't know what to do because you can't make your mind up what to do what your mum and dad say or your teachers say'
(CS. 8O, 4O)

'What the school tells us about male and female differences is not the same as I have at home. My family have typical views about men but I do not get confused because I know that they are wrong so I know how to react with these things in the future'
(CS. 9O, 6B)

'Yes there is. My family says something else and teachers say something. This causes me pressure and confusion'
(CS. 9O, 8B)

'Yes it does create a gap between myself and my home and sometimes I get confused'
(CS. 9Y, 1Y)

'Yes when you go home after school on days you get so stressed and you can't do things you want to do'
(CS. 10R, 13S)

Some replies which asserted there was a gap commented on cultural differences like the celebration of Eid festivals but there was no other mention of religion in these replies.

In contrast 66% of the Muslim girls in Old Town High said that there was no gap created between school and home. Nineteen per cent of these students chose not to reply to this question. In giving their reasons for this answer the girls commented on:

i) Feeling comfortable at being in an all Muslim and an all girls' school.

ii) The fact that they learnt about Islam and were able to perform their religious observances without feeling in any way out of the ordinary.

iii) That the moral values and behaviour encouraged by the family were reinforced by the school.

Some girls commented that they actually believed that the school brought them closer to their families and one girl commented:-

> 'I think this school doesn't create a gap but my experience of mixed/state schools has led me to believe that they do create a gap. For example at home when being told off you are taught to lower your head but in mixed schools the teacher expects you to look at them when being talked to'
>
> (OTH. AF, 16A)

Fifteen per cent of the students in Old Town High said that they did feel that there was a gap created between home and school and interestingly give similar reasons to the non-Muslim girls in City State, such as

too much homework which reduces the time that they can spend with their family and one girl made a very similar comment to the non-Muslim student in City State who talked about having to correct her father:-

> 'I'd say yes what I learn at school clashes with what my parents taught me. I have to correct them and that doesn't go down very well!'
>
> (OTH. FF, 18FB)
> (her own exclamation mark)

Other girls also commented about the difference between schoolwork and housework in this respect which was not a consideration of the non-Muslim students in City State.

Just as the Muslim girls in Old Town High did not reveal tension and confusion in their replies this is similarly reflected in the interviews of all the staff, both Muslim and non-Muslim of this school. They did not express concern or worry over addressing gender stereotypes, discussing the role of women in society or other curricular areas where the staff of City State felt they could be treading on 'cultural toes'. If there were concerns they felt that they had ready resources in other Muslim members of staff or the head teacher to be able to discuss such issues. They also felt comfortable that should any problems arise the students were able to discuss these in their Islamic Studies lessons or assemblies.

'I feel comfortable about discussing these issues because I don't see that it is against any of the ethos of the school to develop. I'm interested in skills of communication and I just try to enable the girls to develop their skills as best they can. **Certainly in the texts that we do we're looking at women who have challenged the establishment but not necessarily rebelled against it. I think there's a difference.**

(OTH. PC, emphasis added)

The head teacher also felt that her staff did not have to worry about these issues because they could always consult with either her or other Muslim members of staff. The staff themselves also felt comfortable that should any problems arise the students had the advantage of being able to discuss such issues in their Islamic Studies lessons or assemblies.

'The staff here do not have to worry. You see even if they did put the wrong messages we have Islamic Studies as part of the course and I think those messages need to be brought back into the classroom where they can be discussed and say 'this is how Islam views it'. I think Islamic assembly in the morning is a vital part of the whole school day. I don't go and just recite the Qur'an or Hadiths what I do is put in ideas. So even if people were putting in all sorts of ideas which could be threatening, which could have an impact on them it is countered by either an assembly or an Islamic lesson. There is no reason for the non-Muslim members of staff to worry. It would come to me somehow. If it's just one individual I'll deal with that individual and if I think it's an issue which we need to talk about it'll come out either as an assembly or a lesson and I'll say to the students, what do you think? Question this.

(OTH. Head teacher)

Additionally in Old Town High the strong and often informal links between the school and the local Muslim

community meant that parents were able to voice their concerns in a way that was non-threatening to all parties.

> 'I also hear from my parents asking about certain textbooks which we have covered, "do you think it will be appropriate, I mean is it appropriate for a Muslim school to be studying so and so book". "Exactly" I say "we are in a safe environment we can do it, in another school I would question it myself but in this school I can do it because there's always the other dimension coming into it". So I mean I've had queries like that from my parents which is good'
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

This strong and informal relationship with the parents was also evidenced both by my conversations with the parents and by the fact that whenever I have been in the school parents have either 'dropped in' informally to see the Head teacher or telephoned to discuss issues of concern.

The following comment illustrates this last point again.

> 'In mainstream schools the resistance from parents to things of Drama, of Dance, of Music because of the connotations that it leads to immoral activities, but within the school here it can be explained to the girls that the reason for using music for exercise is to exercise the body. That it's not un-Islamic. That if they have any worries or their parents have any worries they can come and talk them through with the head teacher and so all the girls participate and all feel at ease doing it whereas I think in a state school they would either participate but not tell the parents or feel uneasy and I think probably in many of the curriculum areas there are occasions when this sort of thing would crop up, for example going on educational trips again because of the links with the parents it can be explained why the

> girls are going, exactly what's involved and the trust can be built up so that's a very obvious advantage I would say.
>
> (OTH. MS, emphasis added)

Several issues are raised by both these comments and those of the students in Old Town High. Conversely those areas of concern which are voiced by the participants in City State and which, it would seem, lead to feelings of tension and doubt are those areas in Old Town High where the staff and students feel secure and comfortable. They are:

i) Being all Muslim girls and therefore feeling comfortable to be able to practise their religion and discuss cultural norms and constraints from a feeling of security without having to worry what others might think.

ii) Having a mixture of both Muslim and non-Muslim members of staff which meant that any felt lack of knowldege of culture could be discussed with them.

iii) An Islamic ethos which permeates through the school and the curriculum.

iv) Strong and informal links between the parents and the school which build up a relationship of trust.

Most or all of these points are also corroborated by the

evidence detailed in the replies to the postal questionnaire.

The second question asked at the beginning of this section of the analysis 'how and why does this tension and conflict arise?' can now be partially answered. The Islamic ethos permeates through Old Town High and the curriculum and is not 'bolted on'. In contrast, with regard to the curricular needs of the students in City State, the staff emphasised the multicultural commitment of the school. The responses regarding the curriculum showed some variation across the departments commensurate with the requirements of the National Curriculum in different subject areas. Although some subject areas, such as Humanities, felt that there was room for an Islamic orientation in the curriculum it often took the form of a specific module, or it was introduced as part of a multicultural approach where a variety of subject material was made available. The latter approach figured fairly consistently over the range of disciplines in keeping with the equal opportunities and multicultural commitment of the school.

> 'Not particularly an Islamic orientation. We do try to make it wider, more multicultural so it represents different aspects, even little details like the names we use on worksheets and although it seems a little thing it just reinforces the fact that these names aren't strange, they're not funny, that

> they're everday names that we will all hear. We use the different types of patterns, the systems that are used for the different types of patterns in symmetries and reflection and rotations. We actually go and get pictures from different sources. We have got some resources on statistics which compare world resources where all the wealth is compared with all the work.
>
> (CS, 14)

Alternatively some subject areas, such as Science, indicated that they had very little room for manoeuvre at all as in the case of Science.[1]

The staff at Old Town High were also committed to this multicultural approach and equally constrained by the National Curriculum but the difference is that the Islamic dimension could always be addressed in Islamic Studies or in discussion with the Muslim staff should the need arise, an opportunity not available to the Muslim students in City State. Further the staff in City State voiced their concerns of finding subject matter appropriate to their Muslim students which would encourage them to participate in the lessons.

> 'They find it quite difficult when we do things like looking at women in society. To begin with they often don't contribute. You've got to try to find ways to get the Muslim girls in particular to make a connection between them and the subject matter because quite often they turn off. I don't know whether it's because the system is white predominantly that the Muslim girls

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[1] The inclusion of an Islamic orientation to the curriculum was also discussed in Chapter Two and will be considered later in the following section of this chapter.

> very rarely, will bring into the lesson anything from their own backgrounds unless specifically invited to do so. Even if it's just something generally about home they don't go into anything that might be specifically common to Muslim families. They will go along with all the other things such as going home late, they'll go along with what they think I want from them or what they think the other girls will want from them as well. I think they're very careful not to bring their own cultural issues into the lesson because I don't think they want to be mocked and sometimes I don't know how much to encourage them because you know that they do get mocked when they do it.
>
> (CS. 20, emphasis added)

Linked to this was the felt lack of cultural knowledge which was constantly alluded to by the staff of City State. It was an area in which they clearly felt ill at ease worrying that they would say the 'wrong thing' or be 'too pushy'. The following comments illustrate the stereotypical assumptions made by some teachers indicating their concerns.

> 'I'm not totally au fait with everything to do with Muslim students but because I've seen Muslim girls go away from school and get married and things like that I think perhaps in some of the more fundamental of the Muslim community they are still more encouraged to go towards marriage rather than going into further education and allowed to do a career. **So I think it's hard to sort of push education to the limits with them. I still think they need to be encouraged but I'm very wary of trying to be too sort of pushy about it because I know they've got other pressures from home and that, that will make them slightly different.'**
>
> (CS. 12, emphasis added)

Such tensions clearly affect their Muslim students and the interviews of the ex-pupils of City State also reveal that they felt that they were not sufficiently encouraged by their teachers. One ex-Muslim pupil now studying for exams at college, having persuaded her parents to allow her to do so, felt that she had been allowed 'to drift away' at school. She attributed this to her non-confrontational behaviour and lack of confidence in school which meant that she was allowed to coast along in lessons. The less she felt the teachers encouraged her the more she drifted away. The comments from the staff in the school show how this becomes a vicious circle because of their wariness to push their Muslim students into areas assumed to be closed to them for cultural reasons. As her performance at school dropped off she shielded her parents from that knowledge by failing to pass on letters notifying them of parents' evenings where they would have had the opportunity to discuss her progress, or lack of it. It became advantageous for her to keep the school and her parents separated. Her parents seemingly content with this were equally happy about leaving the education of their daughter to the professionals.

The breakdown in communication between the home and the school is an important factor here. Again it is an

area where the staff in City State felt both tension and concern. The perceived clash of expectation between home and school, complicity on behalf of the Muslim students in shielding their parents from their own performances and misdemeanours and also the different codes of behaviour of their peers, of which they know their parents will not approve, inevitably become factors which contribute to weak home/ school links. In the case of City State this is exacerbated by the fact that it draws its students from a geographically diverse area and it is limited by the fact that it doesn't have sufficient numbers of staff with either the language or the cultural expertise.[2] Neither does the school have a ready made network from which to build and strengthen these links.

This is in contrast to Old Town High where the links are both strong and informal and where the school is centred in the community from where it draws its students. Here, concerns voiced in the mosque or on the street corner, are passed back to the head teacher. The parents are quite confident to communicate over the phone or to 'drop into' school.

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[2]There is a female Asian Section 11 teacher who has responsibility for home school liaison and the school now has a policy of inviting parents to parents' evenings by phone.

'I always say the role is different.The state schools have done their best to invite them, they've tried to arrange meetings in other situations, institutions rather than their own school.So they've done their best but they haven't had the input from the community members.I **think mainly the reason that I have succeeded is that I am one of them.** I think that plays a part, it's like you can understand me because you know the background. The second is that in other schools students are embarrassed to bring their parents because their mothers are simply dressed and the image they have. In my school the students are not embarrassed by their mothers. They're quite happy to introduce their mother to their sisters.I came from Pakistan at the age of 13 and I was embarrassed to take my mum around and say this is my mother. These students are quite happy to take their mothers around. The thing I appreciate from my mothers is that they ring me to say my daughter is ill and will not be in school for a week. I think ringing takes much more courage because you don't know who's going to be on the line, you don't know how to put your phrase and yet they manage to do that very well and very confidently. They wait first to see whose voice it is and it's because then they know they can speak Punjabi or they need to now try to practise their English.
(OTH. Head teacher, emphasis added)

In contrast the staff at City State do not have these advantages and parents' evenings for example were seen as quite problematical in this respect, not only in terms of parents finding it difficult to physically get to the school but in the communication with the parents once they were there.

Although they were given opportunities to address these issues on a series of staff INSET days, some staff, particularly the more experienced ones, felt

that all these did was to retrace the same old ground which failed to furnish them with a working and in depth knowledge of the needs of the Muslim students and their parents.

> 'All the time I feel that by putting across the things we put across, and I'm as guilty as the next person, although you're conscious of it you can't always avoid it, that you're, all the time, turning them away from their own cultural background. This is my assumption of their culture. I don't know whether the Muslim community is leaning more towards women working.I assume not. It could equally be I was wrong about that but you never have the time to find out. I often think that when we have INSET days and we do racism awareness I think for me to find out about the different ethnic groups, particularly the Muslim girls, here because there are so many of them and things about their culture that would be helpful. Far more helpful than trying to go over the same ground of racial awareness because we're still getting racism from the staff. There is no two ways about that. We don't have that knowledge of their backgrounds. It's very easy to moan about their parents again, and a lot of that does go on, even though we are supposed to be racially aware here, and are so compared to a lot of other schools. But still we don't bend the system to meet their needs at all. We're still plodding along in this very English old fashioned system.
>
> (CS. 20, emphasis added)

These emergent categories show that the staff of City State are unsure in their relationships with their Muslim students and their parents. There are students from other ethnic groupings as well as from the indigenous white population in the school. These girls are often from a different class background from the

staff and some of them also see their future in terms of marriage, children and possibly some form of low status employment. Here, as confirmed by Davies (1984) the staff appear to have no problems in subsuming the discourses of class and 'race' beneath the discourse of gender in the interests of their aim of encouraging students to be self determining individuals and feel comfortable doing so.

However because of their cultural assumptions about their Muslim students and their parents, particularly those who are first generation and who also come from low socio-economic backgrounds the discourses are assumed to be in open conflict. In a busy and increasingly overloaded school day the staff often have to make practical decisions over which students receive their help, attention and encouragement. This is necessarily often those students who make some attempt to help themselves or bring themselves to the attention of the teachers for many and varied reasons.

Those students who are not perceived to be committed to academic achievement, further education and a career, or who do not bring themselves to the attention of the staff, or who appear to have switched themselves off from school for many and varied reasons

are the ones who fall by the wayside. In the case of the Muslim students who fall into these categories and who need a great deal of encouragement to participate in lessons stereotypical cultural assumptions are an additional factor. This results in a vicious circle which is amply illustrated by the following comment:-

> 'so they just stand back and the sad thing is that sometimes even the teachers themselves **having this viewpoint don't encourage our Muslim girls to achieve their potential.** They have low expectations as well I feel. True this is it, this is the danger and the thing is now it's come to the point now where the child has stopped believing in herself'.
> (CS. 26, emphasis added)
> (One of the three Asian members of staff)

The third question asked at the beginning of this section concerned the perceived needs of the Muslim students. In the light of the analysis framed around the preceding two questions it can now be discussed because it becomes clearer as to why some of these needs are more readily addressed and accommodated than others in City State. The comparison with Old Town High also highlights how the multicultural aspect of City State and its commitment to equal opportunities in terms of gender and 'race' also presents problems for the staff when dealing with the Muslim students which is in turn reflected in their approach to school life. It is here that clear differences emerge between the students in both schools concerning questions of

identity and self knowledge of their Muslim students. At this point it must be emphasised that City State enjoys an excellent reputation with regard to its multicultural approach and initiatives and the staff are generally committed to both the policy and its implementation. In connection with this there is a high level of pastoral support within the school and the staff show a respect to their students regardless of their background.

> ' There is something very colourful about the school and the atmosphere here. I don't think it's just because it is girls I think it's because of their, ethnic traditions. I think also because of that the staff have a respect for the students which you don't always get in other schools. I think that staff here give all students, whatever social class whatever background they come from a certain degree of respect. I've noticed that in middle class schools staff can actually get away with being what I consider to be now fairly rude to students, very abrupt and I don't think people treat students like that in this school, that's quite good and positive.'
>
> (CS.11)

This phase of the analysis has highlighted the tensions of the staff in City State in their relationships with their Muslim students. This is made more evident by the comparison of the experiences of their counterparts in Old Town High. To advance the discussion I now want to look at the structural initiatives that City State has put in place as it attempts to make provision for the needs of their Muslim students.

9.2 Structural Initiatives to Deal With Perceived Difference

An analysis of what the staff of City State perceived to be the needs of their Muslim students can usefully be examined through the use of the following categories emerging from the interview data. These categories also coincide with the theoretical categories examined in Chapter Two which concerned itself with the issues of accommodation or neglect of the needs of Muslim children in the state school system. They are as follows and will be discussed briefly in turn as they have already been examined by the analysis up to this point:-

Cultural needs/ religious needs

Curricular needs/ Language needs

Needs which do not fall readily into the above categories.

Cultural Needs/ Religious Needs

From the responses of the staff in City State to these issues it would appear that some of these needs are more readily addressed and accommodated than others. In general the staff at City State felt happy that the school was sensitive to the needs of their

Muslim children in terms of dress, both generally and in PE, provision of vegetarian meals, celebration of Eids, sensitivity during Ramadan, provision of prayer facilities, if requested, and withdrawal from assemblies, RE, and sex education lessons, if requested. There has been some difficulties with scarves in Science and 'dangling in the paint' in Art but generally the issue has been tackled with little fuss or problem.[3]

> 'There was an issue about head dresses as well. At one point there was quite a lot of discussion about what was suitable what was appropriate and I know that at some schools they say no head dresses at all. Last term there was a new girl who was wearing a really attractive head dress and some of them cottoned on to how nice she looked. I'm sure for some it is a quite genuine reason but we have to sort of tackle it quite sensitively, that you don't just wear this as a fashion accessory. I think we are very understanding really. They have to have a letter from home I think, saying that it's what their parents want.'
>
> (CS. 5)

There is also provision of extra curricular activities such as a lunch time club specifically aimed at the Asian students and the school has

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[3] I have already referred to the incident of the two Muslim girls in Altrincham, Cheshire who lost some schooling because they insisted on wearing headscarves in Chapter Two and there is no doubt that this issue is still a problem in some areas, for example the case in Crawley, where a Muslim boy was sent home to shave off his beard and a Muslim girl was similarly sent home and told to return without her *hijab* (BMMS, 1993).

instigated women only evenings to encourage the Muslim mothers into the school.[4] Work experience for Muslim students is also approached in a sensitive manner with due consideration given to the wishes of the parents and the student and counselling offered where these wishes do not coincide. The staff of City State did however express more concern that the religious/ spiritual needs of the Muslim students were not, and could not be adequately addressed.

> 'Although there is teaching on Islam in RE, I don't know much about it, just know it goes on. From a positively spiritual point of view I've not been aware of any you know Islamic assemblies or anything like that, there is nobody skilled in that area and that could be developed.'
>
> (CS. 6)

This lack of a religious dimension to the curriculum was not generally mentioned by the Muslim students themselves in City State. Interviews with the ex-pupils revealed that they felt that their religious needs were catered for at home, the Madrassah and the Mosque and they indicated that they were quite glad that they did not have to cope with an additional religious dimension in school. In contrast the Muslim

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[4] Muslim students have participated in drama and dance performances at these evenings and they have been extremely successful although transport has been a difficulty.

students at Old Town High felt that the religious ethos of their school reinforced this aspect from home and felt it to be one of the advantages of the school.

The question of withdrawal from certain lessons has not proved to be a problem in City State either:-

> 'I've had a parent ask that his daughter could be withdrawn from RE. I explained to him that RE was a legal requirement from the government. That it wasn't the school that was enforcing it. I actually said if you write me a letter requesting this, she can just sit at the back and do something else. I'm probably breaking the law but I feel that that's his request even though I think he was wrong because we do all religions. He didn't want her to learn about any other religion which I don't like but that's his personal view so I've got to respect that. The same parent didn't want any sex education done in any shape or form even if it was reproduction systems in science. Again I explained that it was the law but he still requested it. We have had girls for swimming who wanted to wear tights as well. I said that's fine as long as they're thin, they're not big thick heavy ones because we don't want you drowned. It's a bit of a problem . It's always made clear that they go swimming with no other schools but you can't guarantee that other people, other members of the public won't come in. On the whole they seem very happy because they only go swimming in year 7 . If it was higher up the school then there may be a different view on things. Also in PE they're allowed to wear tracksuits so that gets around those kind of problems.'

(CS. 14)

These cultural needs are readily met in City State where both the head teacher and staff are committed to multicultural initiatives. This finding is consistent with the documented initiatives of local education

authorities as outlined by Nielsen (1986), the findings of Joly (1989) in her work in Birmingham schools and the findings of Parker-Jenkins and Haw (1995).

The in-depth data resulting from this piece of research and its analysis also suggests that these cultural needs as highlighted in this category and its counterpart in the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two, are by and large accommodated by the head teacher of City State as the ones which can most easily be addressed given the multicultural intake of the school and the consequent diversity of needs. Further they are considered to be 'goodwill' gestures in a pragmatic attempt to deflect the problems that the staff of City State have articulated in their everyday dealings with their Muslim students.

The fact that the religious needs of the students are not necessarily addressed by City State has already been discussed. This is partly due to the fact that there is no member of staff in City State who is a practising Muslim apart from the male Urdu teacher. This is clearly seen as a difference between City State and Old Town High in the analysis of the data concerning the ethos and philosophy of each school. It was an expected difference but not one that the Muslim

students in City State appeared to feel the lack of. It is however the moral dimension of their religious faith which spills over into cultural needs where problems are seen to arise. It is in this area that the staff of City State voiced concerns:-

> 'In terms of an on-going developmental thing I think a lot has happened. We started off with the very basics and parental requests in terms of dress, even a place to pray. Food as far as possible has been met. The girls are quite confident and forthright in asking for their needs.Where there is a slight concern is on the values. Sometimes parents feel, and rightly so as well, that the values which they stand for are not re-inforced in schools.In Islam the religion is the essence life and they would like especially in curriculum areas like RE,more first hand input from people themselves to come and teach the subject'
>
> (CS. 26)

The theoretical discussion in Chapter Two concerning the discourses of multiculturalism / antiracism also highlighted this as an area which multicultural / antiracist initiatives have failed to address. It is supported by the empirical evidence of this piece of research.

The analysis of the data from both schools indicates that in City State the staff are wary of treading on cultural/religious/moral toes and they are unsure of which discourse to accentuate or subsume at any given moment. This lack of confidence is communicated to

their Muslim students. The reasons for such wariness are manifold and have been highlighted throughout this section. The staff and students at Old Town High on the other hand do not appear to have to negotiate this dilemma.

Curricular Needs/Language Needs

Many of the staff at City State voiced concerns about the language needs of their students and the difficulties of communicating with their parents because of the language barrier. Firstly, with regard to the language needs of the students in both schools the cultural context of the majority of the Muslim girls is that they are double and sometimes multiple language users. This has implications for academic attainment in terms of assessment and testing.

> 'I think the school does all that it can. I don't think we offer our Muslim girls enough. They turn out nice girls why don't we just leave them to it. Muslim girls leave this school with little opportunity to have a career from which they can move on. They don't have the educational standard. They don't have the written English. They don't have the parental background and they don't have the ability to change for progression. We have got girls in the fifth year for example who are not going to get their English GCSE and that really distresses me. There are language difficulties they need far more communication skills and that's general

> oral and written skills. I think they need more lessons in speaking and that's a problem in this respect.Whether the Muslims actually are of low ability or just have language problems and I feel their needs are very different. They won't read aloud. I don't mean they are intimidated in the sense of bullying just a presence'
>
> (CS. 4, emphasis added)

One teacher also commented that language barriers are to an extent responsible for encouraging the Muslim students to group together whilst in school

> 'One of the reasons that the girls like to stick together is that I have noticed that although they speak very good English there's still this language barrier. They'll say, "miss I can't explain to you,I don't know the words to be able to tell you" or "miss if I told you, you wouldn't understand". There's this thing amongst them that they understand each other obviously but that we are not going to understand their little ways and we are not interested in their ways. I mean I'm fascinated and love to hear but it takes a heck of a lot of encouragement to get them to tell you something about their background. I suppose therefore they stay together to protect that.'
>
> (CS. 20, emphasis added)

The staff at Old Town High were equally concerned about the language needs of their students. Encouragement to develop their communication skills in both an oral and written sense is given high priority in the school because of the concern that the girls would face problems when applying for Higher Education as the assumption would be that their

language skills would be insufficient to cope with the demands of a degree course.

The staff at City State indicated that their inability to communicate with the Muslim parents was a major problem. This is not a problem at Old Town High. Parents' evenings at City State are often poorly attended by the parents of the Muslim students, although this has shown some improvement since the school adopted the policy of directly contacting the parents by phone through the home liaison teacher who speaks the community languages.

If the Muslim parents do attend the evenings teachers often commented that it would be the father, brother or uncle who spoke directly to the teacher with the mother in the background.

> 'At parents evenings the brother comes or the father and they bang the desk and they say "my sister must practise her English more, I am buying her books. I want her to have extra lessons. I need an English tutor." On the one hand she's got to have a good education and in the next breath this child is hardly allowed to speak during the interview. The mother is standing perhaps behind. She's expected to get this wonderful British education and yet she's going to be married off. They are asking far too much of their women.They want the behaviour, they want the education, stand at the back, toe the line. I think if I were a Muslim woman I would be very confused as to what was expected of me. They are also teaching their mothers English. The fathers speak English the mothers don't. At parents evening the father and the brother speak and the mother is

> behind and they don't even translate. Well that's again a generalisation but these things have struck me.'
>
> (CS, 4)

The staff at City State felt that the school offered the best language resources possible to its Muslim students within the confines of the funding available. In this respect the Section 11 staff were concerned to point to the reduction in Section 11 funding. They did however feel that language needs would take priority and would be the last to suffer. However, the fostering of good home school links with Muslim parents, relies on good communication which means resourcing and tackling languauge difficulties with the parents and it is here that the Section 11 staff believed that cuts were inevitable.

Not only is this an area that the staff have targeted as being one which is in need of some improvement but it is also an area which comparison with Old Town High reveals as being crucial to the educational well being of the Muslim students. The parents must have the confidence to be able to work with the school on both a formal and an informal basis. Commenting on her own experiences of the state school system in this country the head teacher of Old Town High remarked:-

> 'I think that assumption was made with myself because I was 16 I'll get married so the only thing I needed was Needlework and Cookery. I

> did do my GCE O levels in Needlework and Cookery but that wasn't what I wanted. I had to leave at the age of 19 to get what I wanted. So in a way I think to some extent the assumption that this is what my family even wanted for me and **unfortunately my family being the first generation did not know the school, the education system, did not interfere. I think they should have interfered but they did not.**
>
> (OTH. Head teacher, emphasis added)

The curricular needs of the Muslim students have already been discussed. Again it is an area where the staff of City State have expressed concern. The Asian teacher at City State sums this up as follows:-

> 'A lot of work needs to be done in the curriculum subject areas in essence. Islamic architecture and so on,not bits added on but really the whole thing be embedded so it becomes so natural.'
>
> (CS. 26)

Eggleston (1990) has described the National Curriculum as one of assimilation. This is clearly expressed in National Curriculum documents in which compulsory sections are Eurocentric or British with alternatives to these perspectives occurring only in options which can either be followed or ignored. Both schools are hidebound by the National Curriculum but the students in Old Town High have the advantage of having Muslim teachers who are able constantly to provide an Islamic dimension as and when the need arises. They also have the benefit of being able to discuss a variety of concerns in Islamic Studies. The Islamic dimension permeates through the curriculum, it is not 'bolted

on'. Those Muslim schools which replied to the postal questionnaire also emphasised this aspect as an advantage and priority of the school. An example of how the curriculum is 'Islamicised' in Muslim schools is to be found in Appendix XIX.

General Needs

The needs in this area are in a sense implicated by the needs and concerns expressed in the previous two sections. These are those needs which fall within the organisational management of the schools and which concern issues related to schooling in general for their Muslim students. They are:-

i) Home school links

ii) Muslim teachers to provide necessary input in terms of moral / cultural / spiritual needs,in the curriculum and as community language users

iii) Representation on the governing body of Muslim parents.

iv) A deeper and more critically aware input on INSET days concerning the cultural backgrounds of their students.

These needs have been identified by the staff in City State as areas which require attention and improvement. These are also needs which multicultural /

antiracist initiatives and equal opportunity policies have failed to meet. They constitute the next phase of needs which move beyond practical, structural changes in the school system. This is the focus of the third and concluding section to this chapter and the final chapter of this thesis.

9.3 Conclusions

As the data concerning the background to each school, the ethos and philosophy operational in the schools and the perceptions of the staff and students in City State and Old Town High concerning the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex schooling were analysed clear differences began to emerge between the two schools. These generated the questions which shaped the subsequent analysis. These emergent questions are summarised as follows:-

i) Can the differences between the two schools concerning an emphasis on academic performance and religion be identified in the espoused ethos and philosophy of each school as perceived by the head teacher and staff of each school?

ii) Is the emphasis on academic outcomes reflected in the students attitudes to high academic success and in the academic performance of the Muslim students in each school?

The strong commitment of the staff in both schools to gender issues further prompts the question:-

iii) Is this reflected in student attitudes to the rights and roles of women in contemporary society and is there is a discernible difference in attitude between the students of each school on these issues?

iv) Do the Muslim students in Old Town High feel 'comfortable' in their environment where being a Muslim is not an issue and being a Muslim woman is not an issue and is it from this basis they feel free to question, challenge and assert their own agendas for an exploration of what it means to be a Muslim woman and pursue academic success and further or higher education from the safety of feeling secure in their own identity?

v) Is this the same for the Muslim students in City State?

Both the staff and students at City State and Old Town High are in agreement that single-sex schooling provides an atmosphere free from male dominance and harassment so that the students can concentrate on their academic work. Further it engenders feelings of sisterhood between staff, staff and pupils and pupils,

from where pupils can develop freedom to explore ideas about being a woman, or a Muslim woman in the case of the Muslim school, and issues of equal opportunities in terms of access to the curriculum. The analysis at this point showed that both schools, as far as some aspects of the purpose of education are concerned, are in agreement with liberal and radical feminists in terms of equal access to the curriculum and opportunities on leaving school as well as considering themselves to be the educators of their students as mothers of a future generation.

However clear differences emerged between the two schools in terms of emphasis on the religious and academic aspirations for the students and confidence of the staff to deal with the needs of their Muslim students. At this point the analysis of the empirical data suggested that there was a marked difference between the Muslim girls in the state school (City State)and the Muslim girls in the private Muslim girls' school (Old Town High) in terms of feeling confident, assertive, being able to question and to challenge, pioneering feelings as a Muslim woman and academic aspirations. This was also reflected in the ethos and philosophy of each school and was further manifested in the concerns of the staff at City State concerning the cultural/religious needs of their Muslim students

and their parents and the ability of the staff and the school to adequately deal with these.

The quantitative analysis of the data showed that the emphasis on academic outcomes was reflected in the students attitudes to high academic success so that the students in Old Town High showed more positive attitudes to a female student who achieved high academic success and were more sympathetic to her as a person. The strong commitment of the staff in both schools to gender issues was also considered and a quantitative analysis carried out on student attitudes to the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. The interest here was whether there was a discernible difference in attitude between the students of each school on these issues. Although some questions showed significant differences in attitude, generally, and contrary to the opinions expressed in the Swann Report, for example, the Muslim students in Old Town High did not appear to be less liberal in their attitudes to jobs and the home than their counterparts in City State. The quantitative analysis of the data also highlighted that there were complexities to the reaction of the Muslim students in both Old Town High and City State which assumptions concerning the role of women in Islam fail to consider.

The findings also suggest that the equal opportunities policies and practices on 'race' and gender, adopted in good faith by City State have served to promote anxiety in the staff concerning their dealings with their Muslim students and their parents. This is in turn reflected in the confusion and tension expressed by their Muslim pupils and affects their attitudes to academic achievement and success and their expectations on leaving school.

In City State the discourses of 'race' and gender, particularly, are in open conflict. Not only this, but because the Muslim students in City State do not benefit from a shared and secure environment, a shared conversation, a feeling of belonging, they do not have the advantages of the Muslim students in Old Town High. In this case the lack of equipment, resources, subject options and extra-curricular activities is more than made up for by the value and experiences of sharing a common identity. From this point of reference the Muslim students in Old Town High are then empowered to concentrate on educational achievement and academic success although this could be further capitalised on if the school had the educational equipment and resources to extend their range of options and other educational opportunities.

The comparison of the data from the staff and students of City State and Old Town High has served to highlight those needs which multicultural/antiracist initiatives and equal opportunity policies have failed to address and why they have failed to address them. Although City State have implemented certain initiatives to accommodate the needs of the Muslim students the findings show that these real needs move beyond practical, structural and pragmatic changes in the school system. Whether or not these needs are met in City State or any other state school has implications which target the fundamentals of equal opportunities policy as it stands at this moment. This is the focus of the next and concluding chapter.

CHAPTER TEN

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Introduction

The ongoing debate over single-sex schooling in general and Muslim girls schools in particular is an important dimension of the processes whereby discourses of education, gender, religion, 'race' and age articulate in the social construction of Muslim girls. The concern of the thesis in this respect has been to focus on the relationships between teachers, often white and non-Muslim, and students, and by implication those between adults and girls.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, it can be regarded as a response to Chapter One which began by focussing on two primary research questions:

> 'Are there any areas of agreement between Muslims and feminists concerning the ethos and purpose of single-sex schools?'.

and

> 'How valid are objections to Muslim girls' schools which revolve around the grounds that they reduce educational opportunities available to their students?

As the research proceeded it became clear that these questions masked other, deeper questions which were also made explicit in Chapter One. These were:

1) How do non-Muslim teachers interact with their Muslim students and vice versa and is there a difference depending on the type of school?

2) Do the the Muslim students in the private Muslim school feel more 'comfortable' in an environment where being a woman is not an issue, being a Muslim is not an issue and being a Muslim woman is not an issue?

3) Does this mean that the students in the Muslim school are more empowered to 'read', take up or reject the discursive positions offered to them in school in terms of 'race', ethnicity, religion, class and gender?

4) Is this different for the Muslim students in the state school, how, why?

5) What implications do these questions have for the issue of equal opportunities?

Secondly, the chapter can be regarded as critical perspectives on the thesis. It is a concluding chapter consistent with the opening chapter and the theoretical context made explicit in Chapters Four and Five founded on feminism and poststructuralism. This means that it is written from within my own discursive positionings. However, a requirement of this research has been that I have needed to critically examine the ways in which I engage with the discourses I am involved in (and those of others). It has required that I examine how these discourses compete and complement each other and through my work reassert them, re-work them, dispute them, and possibly move beyond their limitations. This chapter will therefore

re-visit those points which I consider to have relevance to the place at which I have now arrived in my thinking with regard to the issues of education, education for girls and education for Muslim girls and how this impacts on the issue of equal opportunities. In doing so it will re-work these points because as I stated in Chapter One the research is not fixed. It is constructed as much by the present as by the past.

The chapter is presented in two sections. The first section considers the answers to the primary and secondary research questions in the light of the theoretical framework offered in Chapters One, Four and Five. The second section is concerned to examine the implications that the answers to these questions have for equal opportunity initiatives both now and in the future. These implications will be considered in the light of their overall importance to the future of education for both girls and Muslim girls through an examination of equality in difference.

10.1 The Answers to the Questions.

In this section certain theoretical considerations have to be kept in mind. Firstly, an analysis with a poststructural base means that the heterogeneous nature of power needs to be considered. Power is to be understood in a number of ways including categories like gender or

class, for example, but by no means only these. We need to consider the:

> 'heterogenous ensemble of power relations operating at the micro level of society. The practical implications of this model is that resistance must be carried out in local struggles against the many forms of power exercised at the everyday level of social relations.'
>
> (Sawicki, 1991 p.23)

This reiterates points made throughout this research: namely, that the regime of any school is not simply a reflection of the order of society but, rather that schools participate in the production of power relations in ways which make for their own distinctiveness and which at the same time, contribute to and are a result of wider social models. Further, as Foucault's ideas indicate, if we wish to analyse the 'micro-physics' of power, it is necessary to look beneath conventional institutional ways of structuring our thinking (Kenway et al.,1994).

Secondly, the theoretical framework offered in Chapters One, Four and Five means that the educational experiences of the Muslim students in each school can be seen as a set of discursive relationships (discursive fields) consisting of a number of different and sometimes contradictory discourses, such as those of 'race', gender, class and religion. In school these are set within the discourse of education. These can be considered as primary

discourses. Further, each of these discourses can themselves be considered as a discursive field, consisting of its own different discourses. Impacting on these discourses are other discourses to do with, for example age, competence, personality and sexuality so that at any one time these primary discourses can shift and change places with subordinate discourses and vice versa rather as the pattern shifts and changes as you twist the eyepiece of a kaleidoscope so that the combination of pieces which go to make up its pattern are altered. The pattern can remain static before it is shifted again in an endless variation of combinations over time which can always be subtly different for each individual, even while they belong to groups, just as the pieces which go to make up the patterns of the kaleidoscope remain the same.

The discursive positionings taken up and adopted by the Muslim students in each school are dependent on a number of factors displaced and positioned as these students are across these various primary and subordinate discourses which historically and presently make up their lives both in and out of school. Kenway et al.(1994) argue that those in school are associated with the schools' cultures and sub-cultures; with various curricula and

educational issues and the principles and politics which inform them; with the relationships *amongst and between* the staff and students; friendship groups and so on. Those out of school will include the discourses of the family and the community and those associated with the student's ethnic/ racial/ class/religious positionings. They also include the discourses of popular youth culture, in this case both Asian and western (fashion, pop music, magazines and books, television and films) which influence girls in terms of how to present and regard themselves with respect to current trends, how to make themselves attractive to the opposite sex and how to achieve pleasure, power and fulfillment through materialism, fantasy and romance.

Thirdly, the relationships between the Muslim students and their teachers, often white and non-Muslim, are inscribed by a series of power differentials which are focussed around, and set up, by a number of competing discourses such as 'race', ethnicity, religion, class and age. Foucault maintains that these seek to form 'the subjects about which they speak':

> 'Their purpose is to regulate, to discipline, to define what is normal and what is deviant, what is desirable and what is not and so to divide people from each other and within themselves. They claim the moral and rational high ground: they claim to be telling the

> truth, and in seeking to discredit any other claims they participate in the politics of truth-telling or discourse.'
> (Kenway et al.,1994 p.198)

These are the theoretical positions in which this thesis is located and it is these concepts which are used to examine the evidence regarding the differing experiences of the Muslim students in City State and Old Town High. The primary research questions will be considered first, and in such a way as to make the linkages to the secondary research questions explicit through an analysis of the discourses which I believe are operating at this level. Furthermore it is this exploration of the primary questions which identifies the discourses that allow for the detailed consideration of the further research questions.

The exploration of the secondary research questions considers more specifically the heterogeneous nature of power as it impinges on the lives of the Muslim girls at City State and Old Town High. This is to be understood in a number of ways, and in terms of, power differentials round competing discourses like gender, 'race' and class (but by no means only these) because social interaction is made up of sets of discursive relations positioned in discourses. This leads the discussion towards a consideration of the implications that these explorations have for education generally and equal opportunities in

particular which is necessarily the focus of the second section of this chapter.

The Primary Research Questions.

The primary research questions are concerned with the issues of whether there are areas of agreement between Muslims and western feminists over single-sex schooling and whether Muslim girls' schools can be objected to on the grounds that they reduce the educational opportunities available to their Muslim students.

Firstly, and with regard to the issue of single-sex schooling, there is one major difference between Muslims and western feminists. Muslims acknowledge that their support for single-sex education is deeply rooted in their religious faith. Indeed the discourse of religion is constantly emphasised in Old Town High. This is evidenced both by the replies to the postal survey and the interviews carried out with students and parents for this piece of research and by the results of two funded research projects (Parker-Jenkins, Haw, 1992-1994).

On the other hand the empirical evidence from both schools emphasised commonalities in their approach to the education of girls in a single-sex setting, and in agreement with the

aims of, particularly, liberal and radical feminisms. This was expressed in terms of equal access to the curriculum, the questioning of gender stereotypes, enjoyment of working in a predominantly female environment, the employment of female staff as role models and the adoption of an approach which seeks to make the actual experiences of women more central to the education of the students.

The work of Walkerdine, already referred to in Chapters One, Three, Four and Five, becomes relevant at this point. Walkerdine (1990) argues that we all exist at the nexus of contradictory discourses and practices and therefore contradictory positions. It is at the interstices of these discourses that subjectivities evolve. These subject positions given in the relations of the practices themselves are not unitary, but multiple and often contradictory, so that the constitution of subjectivity is not without seams or ruptures. Using insights from a re-working of Lacanian psychanalysis and Freud, Walkerdine argues that current practices operate on a system of disavowals and denials and consequently the very practices themselves help create and read back the effects as 'other', as pathology. The effect of such practices may be open hostility, conflict, or, as withdrawal as silence (and therefore accepting the regulation while covertly being hostile)

followed by apparent acceptance which none the less involves a disavowal. This would seem to be applicable to the Muslim students in City State.

I have already referred in Chapter One to the concern of black feminists over this 'invisibility'. They have also argued that this 'invisibility' is caused by teachers distinguishing between 'race' and gender and treating them as a duality. This is the case for the Muslim students in City State who appear to be less self confident in their school environment than their counterparts in Old Town High. Speaking of the relationship between Freire's work and the development of her work as feminist theorist and social critic hooks (1993) says:

> 'Again, I want to assert that it was the intersection of Paoulo's thought and the lived pedagogy of the many black teachers of my girlhood (most of them women) who saw themselves as having a liberatory mission to educate us in a manner that would prepare us to effectively resist racism and white supremacy, that has had a profound impact on my thinking about the art and practice of teaching. **And though those black women did not openly advocate feminism (if they even knew the word) the very fact that they insisted on academic excellence and open critical thought for young black females was an anti-sexist practice'**
>
> (hooks, 1993 p.150, emphasis added)

This highlights a significant point with respect to this research and both the primary and secondary research questions that this concluding chapter is

concerned to explore; that is the issue of how deliberate and conscious people are of the discourses which they are wielding.

The staff of City State and Old Town High could be said to be conscious of the equal opportunity discourses they were wielding with respect to the education of girls in general, and in a single-sex environment in particular, in that they made these explicit. However,I would argue after Alvarado and Ferguson that:

> 'Teachers do stand in a powerful position in relation to those who are taught. What they teach, however, is not knowledge. It is preferred discourses. These are not necessarily chosen by the teacher, nor must the teacher necessarily be aware of what is taking place. There are a whole host of factors which can serve to mask the nature of a specific discourse.'
> (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983 p. 29, emphasis added)

To my knowledge the teachers in both schools were largely readers and consumers of policy and curriculum texts produced by others. Their readings are selective interpretations of policy according to the constraints of the texts, a host of individual and group dynamics, and the perceived needs and particular needs of their school. Clearly some teachers and managers are more sympathetic to equal opportunity initiatives, than others and these are the ones who are involved in producing such initiatives at the local level of the

school.

Other teachers, students and parents are initially readers of the texts they produce. They may then be involved in the process of equal opportunities in a new pattern of meaning creation. Further, some will be involved in secondary production by developing reverse discourses so that all will produce and circulate their own meanings.

This means, I would argue, that teachers in City State and Old Town High (and indeed teachers in general) are affected by filtered versions of feminisms and equal opportunities issues which they re-work and think through in ways that are of the culture they inhabit, or to put it another way the discourses they inhabit. Further, these ways are also the source of ideas about particular feminisms or multicultural / antiracist discourses and practices which are circulated in eddies of meaning. (there were, for example, liberal and radical feminist views of a sort long before they were categorised in the seventies and early eighties)

At any given moment it is shared experience, shared knowledge and shared culture which is built on. This is the case for the students in Old Town High but not for the Muslim students in City State. In Old Town High the students feel comfortable and confident in

their more monocultural setting and are therefore enabled to pursue explorations of what it means to be a Muslim woman operating within the Muslim community. In this environment being a Muslim woman is not an issue.

In contrast the Muslim students of City State are marginalised because of the multicultural nature of the school. Here the staff felt confident in their abilities to deal with the common issue of being female but not confident in their abilities to deal with the complexities of difference. This means that the Muslim students in City State are less confident, about being a Muslim student in an environment where being a Muslim woman is an issue.

While the approaches to the education of the students in both schools can be located quite firmly within liberal and radical feminism these discourses are drawn on selectively, in different circumstances and at different times and re-worked so that it cannot be said that either school shows a pre-disposition to one or the other. In this context Halstead's analysis (1991) which locates Muslim girls schools as more likely to be operating within the discourse of radical feminism is seen to be somewhat simplistic and open to critique partly because it is in Old Town High, where

the Muslim students are comfortable in their difference, that the processes of exploration and questioning and challenging from within an Islamic framework can begin, so that the very fact that they are then freed and encouraged to concentrate on their academic achievement is as bell hooks argues an anti-sexist practice in itself. In this sense the common emancipatory goal of all feminisms is more likely to be reached by the students of Old Town High than the Muslim students of City State.

Although a similar set of discourses concerning the education of girls in a single-sex setting appears to be operational in both schools, at City State the sharing breaks down for the many reasons already examined. The teachers here have to speak to a disparate audience. They do anyway in terms of class, age, power differentials, sexual orientation and physical ability but these fracturings are not so clearly evident as the difference embodied by their Muslim students. The fact that they believe they share a similar cultural experience as women renders such differences to appear less relevant than their shared experience of being women. However, stereotyped images of what it means to be a Muslim woman appear to have an additional relevance which muffles the shared discourse of being a woman. The muffling

of this shared discourse of being a woman has repercussions for the Muslim students of City State, even though there are considerable areas of agreement between the staff of City State and the staff of Old Town High over the issue of single-sex schooling. Although the Muslim students of City State have the advantage of being and learning in a multicultural setting where there is a wider range of subject options, staff expertise, activities, equipment and resources, they are marginalised.

This has real implications for the Muslim students in City State in terms of educational opportunity and brings the discussion to a consideration of the other primary research question. The analysis of the empirical data in both schools reveals that the equal opportunities policies and practices on 'race' and gender, adopted in good faith by City State have served to promote anxiety in the staff concerning their dealings with their Muslim students and their parents. This is in turn reflected in the confusion and tension expressed by their Muslim pupils which also affects their attitudes to academic achievement and success and their expectations on leaving school.

Although City State offers more to its students in terms of equipment, resources, subject options and

extra-curricular activities, the Muslim students are effectively as shut out from these as are their counterparts in Old Town High because they do not benefit from a shared and secure environment, a shared conversation, a feeling of belonging, they do not have the advantages of the Muslim students in Old Town High. In this case the lack of equipment, resources, subject options and extra-curricular activities is more than made up for by the value and experiences of sharing a common background and cause.

> 'I think that helps educationally in that they feel valued and if they feel valued then they will do their best to learn. There is an atmosphere of wanting to achieve and wanting to do well which is infectious just as the opposite attitude that "so what it's all rubbish" is equally infectious. I think if the girls come out feeling self confident even if they haven't had all the equipment and resources then they will do well. **They feel that they can and no resources in the world can give that sort of attitude.'**
>
> (OTH. MS, emphasis added)

It is the Muslim students in Old Town High who are encouraged to concentrate on educational achievement and academic success because of the belief that this is one way to combat the stereotype of what it is to be a Muslim woman and one who attended a Muslim school. It is also a means of proving the academic worth of the school to both the local Muslim community and to the wider indigenous community. In this school the students do achieve academically and are encouraged to

believe in themselves and the value of academic qualifications within the academic capabilities of each individual.

In this sense it cannot be said that the school reduces educational opportunities, although this could be further capitalised on if the school had the resources to extend its' staffing, widen subject choices, provide better equipment and thus broaden the educational and extra-curricular educational experience of its students.

Although this discussion of the primary research questions has provided some answers it has also left gaps concerning the difficulties of dealing with difference on a practical level. Comparison of the evidence from both schools indicates that City State has the difficulties it has because it is multicultural while Old Town High is more monocultural. This means that City State has had to explore and initiate means of equipping its students to be educated in, and consequently to live in, an increasingly culturally and racially complex society.

On the other hand this is not a consideration in Old Town High and the school is then well positioned to concentrate on the academic achievement and success of its students. It then becomes a question of weighing

up the advantages of a more socially complex but not necessarily academically successful, educational experience with a perhaps less socially complex and 'comfortable' educational experience, and one which can concentrate on dealing with fewer issues. In Old Town High this means the freedom to encourage and concentrate on academic success.

This is usefully discussed through a more detailed exploration of the discourses operational in each school and how this affects the students. It effectively means that the secondary research questions now need to be investigated through a comparative analysis of the educational experiences of the Muslim girls in both settings. This can provide ways forward for equal opportunity initiatives in state schools which enable minority groups, in this case Muslim girls, to take advantage of the educational experience offered in these schools so that all children benefit from being educated together in ways which enhance their ability to live with, and confidently deal with, hybridity, fragmentation and pluralism.

The Secondary Research Questions

The staff at both schools were not aware of all the aspects of the preferred discourses which in this case

they had chosen and the implications that this had for their students. This is particularly clear when the relationships between the non-Muslim staff and the Muslim students in City State are considered.

The teachers of both schools voiced a commitment to overturn gender stereotypes. This led to a set of discursive practices designed to enhance the options of the students while in school and on leaving school. These discursive practices consist of a number of different and often competing discourses. After Kenway et al. (1994) I would also identify the main discourses in the discursive field of combating gender stereotypes now and in the future in both schools to a greater or lesser degree as being:

i) The discourse designed to change and/or widen girls' choices with its roots in liberal feminism.

ii) The discourse designed to influence the girls themselves with its roots in radical feminism.

These are the discourses which the staff of both schools made explicit in their interviews. They can therefore be considered as ones which are deliberately wielded by the teachers in both schools to change things and people. The interest here is twofold. Firstly, how does this relate to the

discourses which perpetuate regimes (the sort that Foucault was so interested in). Secondly, what meanings did these discourses offer the students, and particularly the Muslim students in the case of City State and how did the girls position themselves and re-work these meanings. I shall deal with these discourses in turn through an exploration of the first four secondary research questions which are:

> 1) How do non-Muslim teachers interact with their Muslim students and vice versa and is there a difference depending on the type of school?
>
> 2) Do the the Muslim students in the private Muslim school feel more 'comfortable' in an environment where being a woman is not an issue, being a Muslim is not an issue and being a Muslim woman is not an issue?
>
> 3) Does this mean that the students in the Muslim school are more empowered to 'read', take up or reject the discursive positions offered to them in school in terms of 'race', ethnicity, religion, class and gender?
>
> 4) Is this different for the Muslim students in the state school, how, why?

These considerations will then allow for a discussion of the final question concerning the implications that these research findings have for equal opportunity initiatives in state schools. This is the major concern of this thesis and is therefore considered in the second and final section of this concluding chapter.

The Discourse to Change Girls' Choices

The discourse to change girls' choices drew on aspects of liberal feminism in its concern to encourage the students to take up forms of knowledge and work most often associated with males and/or a career and in this way to enhance girls' economic independence and career and social mobility. In City State the girls who were enabled to take up discursive positionings in this discourse, and who might thus have already had access to these discursive positionings, tended to be those who were white, and/or middle class and/or academically bright and those who saw their futures as 'players' in the job market.

Here, the staff at City State seemed to have no hesitation about offering this discourse to their students regardless of their class or academic ability and to the students from all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds except their Muslim students, even though this discourse implicitly belittled other preferences for knowledge and work shared by many of the students from a variety of racial, religious, ethnic and class backgrounds. In this area conflict and tension was felt and expressed by the staff of City State with regard to their Muslim students only. Here the primary discourses of 'race' and gender were

perceived as contradictory and because of this the staff felt they had to make either/or choices for their Muslim students. This choice often meant that it was the discourse within which they assumed Muslim girls and women are positioned which took precedence over the discourse of gender.

The staff also felt that they were treading on the 'cultural toes' of the Muslim parents and perhaps, more importantly, the community, which appears to be regarded as a group rather than a set of individuals because the links between school and home are not strong.

Additionally, the staff of City State demonstrated a commitment to deal with the category 'woman' because of:

i) The multicultural nature and ethos of the school and because of the problems and confusion that arises in any attempt to deal with difference on an everyday and practical level.

and because

ii) They are operating from their own discursive positionings with respect to this discourse (the majority could be described as white, middle class women who took up this discourse themselves while at school and in higher education).

The combination of these factors meant that it was felt only to be questionable to offer this discourse to their Muslim students who they believed had religious/cultural, family and community pressures to consider. In this instance stereotyped images of what it means to be a Muslim woman have an additional relevance which muffles the shared discourse of being a woman. This has real implications for the Muslim students in City State in terms of educational opportunity and expectations on leaving school because the Muslim students in City State were offered only a limited range of discursive positionings with respect to this discourse and it was more likely that they were implicitly made to feel that this discourse was not available to them. This makes explicit the issue of whether education has the ability to be a 'midwife' to society. The question is whether schools can really alter the range of discursive positionings to students out of school. This is a question which is returned to in the concluding section of this chapter.

In City State there are Muslim girls who are prevented from taking up the option of higher education and a career because of cultural and family restrictions. Faced with this pressure from home, and implicit alienation from this discourse in school, possibilities of working round such difficulties seem

insurmountable with the result that many of these Muslim students seem to 'opt out' while at school.

This discourse was also available to the students of Old Town High but the students in this school were offered a range of discursive positionings which they felt enabled to take up because they were couched within the primary discourses they were already positioned in with regard to 'race', culture and religion.

Academic excellence was regarded as a means whereby the students could pursue higher education and careers such as medicine, pharmacy, teaching. At the same time other forms of knowledge and work such as the role in the home were also respected and accorded status because of the religious and moral discourses operational in the school.[1]

Additionally, the discourse of career and breadwinner was offered to the students in terms of their being able to take their skills back to the community (Muslim women would benefit from being treated by a Muslim woman doctor, pharmacy could be practised in family run shops, teachers could go back and teach in Muslim schools). In Old Town High choice is not an

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[1]See Chapter Three section 3.2.

individual matter which can be carried out in isolation from family or community, this being in keeping with the theoretical aims of Islamic education discussed in Chapter 2

> 'I want them to be giving back (to the community) rather than just achieving academic success and getting where they need to. I mean for example if they want to become an engineer life is going to be tough if you are a Muslim and from this background. Your parents might not want it. Now my feeling is that they must be able to judge saying, "for me to become that, what effect does it leave on twenty people behind me". If it's going to destroy these twenty people then I'd rather make one sacrifice and continuously change the attitude rather than make twenty sacrifices and get to what I want. I don't think that is what I would like for my students and yet many people say I'm wrong in that'
>
> (OTH. head teacher)

The parents of the students in this school were approached by the female Muslim head teacher personally, as individuals, with regard to the future of their daughter and the discussion proceeded from within the framework of a shared understanding of the cultural and religious discourses which influenced the arguments. There are two points to be made here.

Firstly, the question that must be asked is what is the real result of this 'couching' and therefore greater discursive flexibility? For some academically successful students at Old Town High there is no doubt that it offered only an illusion of discursive re-

positioning. These are the students whose parents for many religious and cultural reasons did not allow them to go on to Higher Education. These students were then left with the choice of correspondence courses, the Open University, or the possibility that a future husband **might** allow them to continue with their education after marriage. It is arguable whether these students who did at least achieve high academic success at Old Town High are 'better off' than their counterparts at City State who for many reasons 'opted out' of the academic discourse.

Secondly, in this respect Old Town High sets out to challenge the views of the 'community' unlike City State which, rather respects them. For the Muslim head teacher of Old Town High it is possible to work within the shared primary discourses of culture and religion. Discussions with parents were approached by the sensitivity borne out of familiarity. This also means that there is a shared and implicit awareness of the fragmentations within the 'community' which could then be openly acknowledged. In contrast the relationship between the staff of City State and their Muslim parents illustrates the dangers of reifying a 'community'. This reification is especially dangerous when it comes from those outside - and can turn into a

stereotype. These are key points which again highlight a number of issues.

These issues are concerned with whether the sense of 'the community, out there' is the same at each school. Or to put it another way, whether it is the same set of discourses which Old Town High challenges and City State reifies or whether indeed these are always the same for each school and whether they are static.

Initial impressions are that they do appear to be the same set of discourses revolving around cultural and religious restrictions of Muslim girls going into further and higher education. However, the challenge of Old Town High is from within and it is my belief that this alters the pattern of the discourses which are operational, just as the pattern changes as you look down and twist a kaleidoscope, although the pieces which go to make up the pattern are always the same. The material conditions and futures of a disempowered community become a primary and common concern and therefore a discourse which overrides cultural and religious discourses. Effectively this is the discourse of class, this twists the kaleidoscope and the pattern shifts. The head teacher of Old Town High makes several comments which reinforce this point:

> 'the girls who come to me at the age of 12 by the time they leave you can compare them with an upper class white family, manner wise, behaviour wise, education wise'
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

Of the parents and their expectations and plans for their daughters she says:

> 'They would have been working class anyway so they're not middle class or upper class, they would have been working class. But now with the employment situation the majority of them are unemployed so financial hardship is there. The majority of the parents are not educated themselves formally. They are illiterate but they have clear ideas and views.They are very much in favour of the girls being educated. I think they've realised how important it is for survival purposes and also I think to some extent people from the sub-continent see success in education. If you are educated you get good jobs, good money and so on. Now with the way things are changing the family members have to work. Previously one member of the family, the father was sufficient to provide the necessities of life but now things have changed and we have moved from that time There's a need for more than one breadwinner and they realise that.I think that this itself is being educated. They might not be formally educated but they realise that this is a need for the future.
>
> (OTH. Head teacher)

On the other hand City State's reification is from without and from a discursive positioning which focusses on a presumed 'other'. The discourse of class is effectively substituted by the discourse of 'race', because of fear of the 'other' on both sides.[2] In this

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[2]This in agreement with Williams and mentioned on p.7, Chapter One.

sense the discourses which Old Town High challenges have a fluidity which comes from already being couched within the primary discourses of 'race', culture and religion. As an aspiring community which is disempowered by the indigenous community it is in their interests to widen their discursive horizons and become discursively more flexible. In contrast the same discourses that City State reifies with respect to the Muslim community operate through a series of power differentials which 'gags' flexibility because I would argue after Beechey and Donald (1985):-

> 'if power is conceived as less fluid than Foucault makes out - if, like mud, it sticks - then it is possible to argue that the strategies and techniques whose detailed ebb and flow Foucault charts may gradually produce more enduring institutional sedimentation and formations of power and resistance'
>
> Beechey, V. and Donald, J.(1985) p.xvi

The pattern of the kaleidoscope therefore sticks and changes. It becomes more set and rigid.

The issue of the nature and result of the challenge to the community of Old Town High is also brought into focus here. In one sense this challenge can be interpreted as one which is hiding behind the orthodoxies of the discourse it is challenging because 'fear' is a useful ally for a disempowered community. It is unsettling to outsiders. This being the case

then this challenge can be construed as one which is also replicating these discourses (not just in the students but in the community at large) although the motives for this are very different from those of the indigenous community which also mobilises fear to maintain its own powerful positioning.

Since it is possible for the head teacher of Old Town High to work within these discourses questions concerning her role must also be asked. Is she an 'agent'? If so what sort of agent is she? A 'double agent'? A 'secret agent'? An 'agent' of change? A 'sales agent'? It is my belief that she is all of these. Some she would admit to and be comfortable with, others she would not because of the strict Islamic and primary discourse within which she most usually operates. She comments:

> 'I continuously get a feedback on things that the community might disapprove. If I've taken a decision some father will mention it in the mosque to one of the governors and it will come back to me. That's very useful and also in a way it's good to know what they're thinking. It's the parents who really will make the school a success and if I know what their thoughts are this helps. It's no use moving too fast when the community is not yet ready for change because that could end up being disastrous for the school and the children and the community itself so it's good to have feedback.'
> (OTH. Head teacher)

Further these roles are also fluid. There are times

when some of these roles have more ascendancy than the others. There are times when these roles compete. These roles are played with different emphases at different times as and when it is felt to be appropriate or applicable. Some of these roles are played consciously others are played sub-consciously. For some parents some of these roles are acceptable at any one time and some of these roles are not acceptable.

In the introduction to this chapter I stated that there was a need for me to *critically* examine my own positioning explicitly and I believe that this is the best point for me to do that. I am not sure that the head teacher would recognise the analysis of her role that I have just offered because it belongs to an academic discourse. It is a discourse in which I am placed but one in which I do not always feel 'comfortable' and so understandably it might well be a discourse which the head teacher would reject.

I am also aware that there are, and will continue to be, gaps in my 'knowledge' which have a bearing on this analysis and place limitations on this thesis so that its purpose is to act as a means of developing my thinking, and that of others, in this field. This is an ongoing process which involves my own critical reflexivity (and that of others). To this end this

thesis has applied the ideas of others to my own research with Muslim girls, so that I have reflected upon them, re-worked them, re-cycled them and maybe been guilty of repeating them so that I am perhaps 'shoring up' work that should be more critically examined.

The analysis of the data involves attention to multiplicities, contradictions and relations of power embedded in interpretive structures. It is difficult: partly because it is about critically examining why I wanted to hear the stories of the Muslim women and girls who participated in this research. I have had to ask myself if I was asking for their accounts for *my* benefit, which I could not *hear* because of the benefit I derived from hearing them (Razack, 1993). I believe that I have partly answered these issues in Chapters One, Four and Five but for me they will never totally be resolved. My intention has been to open up spaces for voices suppressed in traditional education but I cannot know if that will be the outcome.

This is part of the process of research. In places (particularly the chapters which deal with the background and theoretical location of this work), it has been about incorporating the ideas of others with

my ideas so that they have re-emerged to support my argument and interpretation. For me, it has been a learning process. Watling (1995) argues, and I agree, that the job of the thinker is to unmask discourse and its effects. He argues that this approach gives a complicated (but I believe a fuller) account of what is going on in the classroom and allows us to dig beneath the surface of issues like "teaching", "schooling" and "learning" and show us that these issues are inexorably connected with issues of power since (in Foucault's famous equation) the will to truth is the will to power.

My interest in this research is, and has been, in the way that 'disciplines' operate in the education system and whether or not there is a chance for students, in this case Muslim girls, to gain power from their education, Watling (1995) comments:-

> 'This is the two-edged sword of "discipline". In order to become powerful, privileged members of a field of knowledge (a discipline) we must first submit to its structures (its discipline). This is the triple-edged sword of subjects. In order to become free agents (subjects) within a field of knowledge (a subject) we must first acquiesce (become subject) to its ways.'
>
> (Watling, 1995)

This is the trend which I have tried to follow, however falteringly.

The Discourse to Change the Girls Themselves

The second discourse which the teachers made explicit was that which was aimed at changing the girls themselves. This discourse largely celebrates the feminine side of the male/female dualism and draws mainly from radical feminism. It sets out to enhance the girls sense of self and self worth and/or enhance the standing of the knowledge and work conventially seen as feminine. 'Feelings of sisterhood' solidarity and esteem emerged very strongly in both schools with respect to this discourse and femaleness was celebrated.

In this discourse the students tended to be positioned as problem-sharing victims or people whose skills were unacknowledged. In City State the discursive conditions of possibility were more limited for its Muslim students. These students do not always share the same problems as problem-sharing victims because they are subordinated within different sets of discourses. Also in Islam the skills of women are differentially acknowledged and celebrated.

Consequently in City State the Muslim students needed a more complex set of discursive responses than it could offer. In Old Town High on the other hand problems such as the difficulties of operating as a

Muslim woman in a multicultural society and of facing parental opposition to preferred options such as going into the fashion industry, or air hostess, or hairdressing on leaving school were shared and understood by all within the Islamic discourse in which they all operated. This means that the Muslim students from City State could benefit in a similar way if they had this wider range of discursive positions made available to them.

The learning environment of City State is multicultural and the staff here are concerned to combat gender stereotypes while trying to serve the needs of many. On a practical level this often means that they try to serve the needs of the consensus. Girls who are not positioned as 'normal' are positioned as 'different'and less than 'normal' girls. They are seen as 'special'. This is the case for the Muslim students at City State. On the other hand although the Muslim girls in Old Town High are still seen as 'special' and 'other' by virtue of the fact that they have their own 'separate' school. The difference is that they all share this 'specialness' and 'otherness' within the confines of the educational discourse (and to a certain extent outside it) and that this then filters through to other areas of their lives. In this environment it is

'normal' to be a Muslim girl and this fact is celebrated. This means again that there is a wider range of discursive positions open to them than their counterparts in City State and they are enabled to take these up because they receive an education couched in their own values.

At this point the secondary questions are effectively answered with regard to the relationship of non-Muslim staff to their Muslim students and whether the type of school they attend makes any difference to this relationship. The more 'comfortable' educational experience of the Muslim girls in Old Town High empowers them to read, take up or reject a wider range of discursive positionings with all the consequent advantages that this implies.

In Old Town High there is a fluidity between the discourses of 'race' and gender that the staff, both Muslim and non-Muslim, feel 'comfortable' to negotiate. Here there is the confidence on the part of the Muslim staff and the Muslim students to move between these discourses as and when the particular moment requires it as Muslim women and this filters through to the non-Muslim staff of this school.

The non-Muslim staff of Old Town High do not have that

same confidence and there are problems. Some of the non-Muslim staff have said they find it difficult when their students speak in their mother tongue to each other in class room situations and there are worries over curricular, cultural and religious issues. The advantage here is that these non-Muslim staff are working with Muslim staff and within the Islamic ethos of the school so that such issues can be confronted and discussed as and when they arise and this legitimates the movement between the 'race' and gender discourses even within the traditional inflexibility of educational discourses. The same cannot be said for the non-Muslim staff in City State who do not have the same confidence as the non-Muslim staff of Old Town High and appear to be immobilised by their concerns about how to deal with their Muslim students.

Walkerdine (1990) argues that equal opportunities and much work on sex-role stereotyping deny difference in a 'punitive and harmful way'. Rattansi (1992) similarly argues that multicultural practices fail to confront issues of cultural difference. Both argue that we need to ask how the contradictory positions created within practices are lived and how these effect the production of subjectivity. This has been the aim of the discussion of the secondary research questions and from these findings it now becomes possible to

consider the implications that this has for future equal opportunity initiatives. This is the final research question.

10.2 Equal Opportunities and Difference

This section is concerned to examine the implications that the answers to these questions have for equal opportunity initiatives both now and in the future. These implications will be considered in the light of their overall importance to Muslim girls, girls generally and to the future of education through an examination of equality in difference. I have already pointed out in Chapter Three that Muslims argue that the principle of equality is not necessarily satisfied by identity of treatment and that there is injustice in treating people the same when in relevant respects they are different.

As far as the educational needs of their children are concerned Muslims argue that equality is achieved through separation of the sexes from adolescence, an argument endorsed by those who support single-sex schooling in general. This is a belief that equality is achievable through separation, and not at all the same thing as equality achievable through the recognition of, and working through 'difference'. I

would argue that separation is something to be used judiciously and flexibly because the danger here is that it can be logically extended to mean having all monocultural schools - this one for white working class, this one for Pakistani children, another for Caribbean children of African descent - and this leaves a lot of people unaccounted for in an increasingly culturally and racially complex society. It is at this point that ideas and suggestions for further research can be made more explicit.

Implications for Muslim Girls

In Old Town High the students are 'empowered' to 'read', take up or reject the discursive positions offered to them in terms of 'race', ethnicity, religion, class and gender because they are in an educational environment where being a Muslim woman is not an issue. They are all Muslims except for some staff. This is a more monocultural environment BUT there are fragmentations and fracturings amongst the staff and students at Old Town High. These are the ones, as in City State, which are not immediately obvious. They are the fragmentations that occur within the religious, ethnic, class and gender discourses and which are becoming clearer as my relationship with the school and the Muslim staff becomes closer.

This brings other issues into focus. The question is whether Old Town High is able to offer the same sort of 'discursive variety' to students who are lesbians or who are from an extremely orthodox religious background.[3] These issues are the subject of further research concerning questions which focus on how progressive Old Town High is, and whether it is able to offer as wide a range of discursive positionings to minority groups within the school as the school develops and its numbers increase and whether indeed it will have something to learn from schools like City State which already have a wealth of experience in dealing with such issues. I will return to this point later in this section. For now the need is to concentrate on the implications that the different educational experiences of the Muslim students in both schools have for Muslim girls in particular.

The equal opportunities policies and practices on 'race' and gender, adopted in good faith by City State have served to promote anxiety in the staff

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[3]The head teacher has told me that a student has been admitted this term (Christmas, 1994) into year 11 who insists wearing the full *bhurka* within school all day. All the students at the school wear *hijab* and a proportion put on the *bhurka* for their journeys to and from school but because it is a female environment it is not felt that it is necessary to wear it during the day. The new student has discussed her beliefs with the head teacher in an apparently articulate, objective and thought provoking way and her wish has been respected.

concerning their relationships with their Muslim students and their parents. These policies appear to both promote and produce 'liberal angst' in the staff with regard to treading on 'cultural toes'. This effectively closes options for their Muslim students. These students appear to be less empowered to negotiate the hurdles that they face owing to some confusion as to which discourse they should 'plug into' at any given moment, or even whether these discursive positions are available to them. Linked to this is the felt lack of cultural knowledge constantly alluded to by the staff of City State.

Despite the fact that many INSET days were devoted to prejudice reduction courses it was still an area in which the staff at City State clearly felt ill at ease. This implicates the effectiveness of such courses which in the over simplification of categories (i.e. to ethnic minorities) appears to lead, in the case of City State anyway, to essentialism and the contradictions of 'adding on' other categories which are then perceived as dualisms, such as 'race' versus gender, woman/Muslim woman.

The comparative analysis of this data shows that multicultural approaches practised in City State do collapse into gross over simplification of 'other'

cultures in this case with regard to the differing positions and politics of girls and women in Muslim cultures. This has many implications for its Muslim students.

This research shows that the constructions of the 'other' by teachers and how the 'other' reacts and interacts with these constructions and equal opportunities and multicultural/antiracist initiatives need to be considered hand in hand. This has implications not only for Muslim girls but for all girls, minority groups and equal opportunity initiatives in particular.

Implications for Girls

Based as it is in a poststructuralist and feminist framework this research offers an understanding of girls which is able to make adjustments for the complexities of being a girl. It does not argue that girls are one thing or another but recognizes that they are subjects and acknowledges their commonalities and their many differences. It indicates that girls are productions and *producers* of themselves (Kenway et al., 1994).

Such a perspective which recognizes girls as complex subjects also suggests that blinkered, reductionist, 'problem solving' approaches to gender reform or any other

equal opportunity reform will not work for them or any other minority groups. The equal opportunities policies currently practised in state schools are visible means of appearing to empower minority groups. They cater for the superficial needs of different minority groups but fail to address the structural changes which need to be undertaken, in terms of the curriculum for example, in order to adequately accommodate the needs of minority groups and effect their empowerment. Further such policies fail to acknowledge that constructions of the 'other' by teachers and how the 'other' interacts and deals with those constructions and equal opportunities are inextricably linked.

This is also evidenced by Hadfield (1995). He assessed 80 LEA equal opportunities policies and while acknowledging that the publication of these landmark policies was a major achievement, taking into consideration the process of policy production and the political contexts in which many of them were created, he also argues that the increase in policy production throughout the eighties was matched by a decreasing amount of policy innovation. This lack of innovation was in his view due to three factors:

a) The degree of repetition in later policies, often marked in some instances by verbatim reproduction of whole sections of earlier policies.

b) Increasingly undifferentiated application of cultural reproduction theories to more and more policies.

c) The failure of later policies to develop more sohisticated curriculum responses throughout a decade of policy development.

He argues:-

> ' The impression created is of policy developers happy to work within the relative safety of a theoretical rationale based upon the cultural reproduction of discrimination. Such a rationale is safe, and attractive, because it encouraged those in the education system to look inwards at their provision, it provided a simple heuristic model based on a number of general concepts and processes with which to critique their provision, and generated educational outcomes which were easily justifiable as legitimate concerns of the education system, even to the most reactionary of critiques....The added bonus of this rationale was that it did not make great demands on teacher's time or **radically** influence the nature of the curriculum'
> (Hadfield, 1995, p.87,emphasis added)

A policy context was therefore created dominated by the issues of 'race', culture and gender with other issues such as social class, age and handicap only discussed in association with this core and all treated as deriving from the same basic process of stereotyping and culturally based discrimination. The inevitable result of this is that the issues have become homogenised with the same policy options being applied

to an increasing number of issues. The policy responses have also inevitably led to small scale additions to existing curricula, with an emphasis on the humanities, and the removal of those organisational processes and structures which are most easily perceived as being based on, or reinforcing, stereotypical of discriminatory beliefs. Thus the outcome has been the creation of 'discrimination free zones within schools rather than fully fledged socially critical pupils'.

This research also indicates that the matter of 'difference' in equal opportunity work is not addressed in any adequate way at all and further that the role of the pupil in actively engaging with and combating these issues has never been fully explored. In City State the tendency is to essentialise all girls in the terms of the 'normal' girl but girls learn about the future, their futures and themselves through contradictory and shifting patterns of discourses. These are produced by and through schools, and other social and cultural institutions, through a set of relationships and representations, and through girls themselves as they participate in the discourses of everyday life and experience (Kenway et al., 1994)

Discourses about being female and feminine weave their way through the patterns of the kaleidoscope. They intertwine with

> 'those about being an appropriate and successful student and about what is of value at school. They weave their way through discourses about being social and sexual, about leisure, friendships, romance, image, about growing up and 'settling down'about dependence and independence and through these about being in 'paid work', being a parent, a household member and a participant in the politics of civic life.
> (Kenway et al., 1994 p.198)

For each individual the kaleidoscope is twisted by their own individual circumstances so that the pattern shifts subtly for them at any one time and over time.

Through the kaleidoscope of discursive shifting patterns girls are taught about what is appropriate for them. They make decisions about their future from the positions made available to and by them through such discourses and from controlled and often subconscious choices from their own individual standpoints. For Muslim girls the patterns of the kaleidoscope are interpreted through the lens of Islam and what it is to be a Muslim woman.

There is a inclination to read the gendered aspects of the school in two ways. Firstly, as the mirrored image of wider relationships of gender, elsewhere, 'beyond the

school gates'.[4] Secondly, within school, where thinking about gender tends to be structured by the ways in which the cultures and practices of the schools themselves are formed. As Kenway et al.(1994) argue it then becomes pigeonholed into, for example, 'gender and policy', 'gender and teachers, 'gender and the curriculum', 'gender and the classroom', and 'gender and the students'. From here the move is to the 'problem solving' mode - what are the problems for girls and minority groups in the classroom and what can we, the educators, working in isolation from these groups do to prevent these problems happening. This is also evidenced by Hadfield (1995). A number of dualisms then become mobilised so that practices are divided into good/bad, sexist/non-sexist, oppressor/oppressed.

Implications for Equal Opportunities and Further Research - The Way Forward

Although I have been critical of equal opportunity reform as it stands at the moment this does not mean that it should be dismissed out of hand, neither does it mean that equal opportunity initiatives to date should be anything other than applauded. It does mean however that there is room for considerable

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[4] This was made explicit by the quote on pages 349-350 of Chapter Nine.

improvement, as this research has been concerned to explore, and it is my belief that there is the possibility and commitment from many sources to ensure that this happens. This next and final part of the discussion then, is concerned to make my hopes for equal opportunity reform explicit and to make sugestions which allow for ways forward in this area. Some of these suggestions have arisen from this research and others concern the possibilities for further research.

Implicit in any equal opportunity reform in school is the notion of the 'normal', in this society usually white, middle class and male. Those who are not positioned as 'normal' are positioned as other than and as less than 'normal' girls. In City State the Muslim students are seen as 'special' and not because this is how they have been positioned by the school but by society 'outside'. This allows for two things to happen.

Firstly, it allows the school to shift reponsibility for any of the problems the girls may have at school to their home or their culture. Blame can be transferred elsewhere and girls and their parents can then be asked to accept all responsibility for any

changes.[5] This has relevance to two points which I made in the previous section of this chapter and which I said I would examine further in this section. These are the issues of how the discourses which were deliberately wielded by the staff of both Old Town High and City State relate to the discourses which perpetuate regimes. The answer seems to lie in an exploration of this shifting of blame which is a two way process and which allows room for the discourses which perpetuate regimes to manoeuvre and operate. The other issue concerns the ability of education to be a 'midwife' to society. The question is whether schools can really alter the range of discursive positionings to students out of school. Again, and in this respect, this same two way blame-shifting operation which is being wielded requires further exploration and research.

Secondly, and/or alternatively, the school develops some sort of compensatory measures couched in terms of the 'normal' to try and reposition those students who are perceived to be 'different'. As a result the Muslim students in City State are positioned by institutional structures and practices in such a way as to marginalise and disown them. This means that schools need to firstly examine themselves rather than elsewhere, to

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[5]See the interview quote in Chapter Nine, Page 354.

critically examine their practices and ask questions about how some of their students are positioned at the margins of school life and how they can be repositioned at the centre in consultation with the students themselves.

In City State the teachers knew that the tendency was to reduce all girls to the 'normal' girl with the implicit assumption that all girls have similar needs, pleasures, interests and worries, that they are subordinated by one type of oppression which can be overcome by one type of 'empowerment'. Their confusion stemmed from the difficulty of what to do about it without getting caught up in the 'liberal dilemma' associated with either cultural relativism and pluralism or with the stereotypical cultural notions formed by their own discursive positionings around these discourses. 'Difference' then is not only seen to be problematic on a theoretical level but a practical level as well.

I have already argued that there is a need for feminism to hold on to the commonalities while taking account of the differences and that there are times when the commonalities are more important than the differences and vice versa. This seems to require a double strategy. There is a need to explore how regimes of power use 'difference' to fragment counter-claims and divide individuals within themselves

while looking for ways of utilising 'difference' so that individual experience is appreciated together with an appreciation of our commonality. Such a double strategy is the way forward for equal opportunity reform in particular, and with regard to all minority groups, and to education in general.

As far as girls and equal opportunity initiatives are concerned, for the teachers of City State and by implication any school, this means, as I have already argued, in Chapters One and Four, that it is not necessary to abandon certain modernist feminisms. It does however imply the need for a 'knowledge' of different feminisms, for a critical examination of their different weaknesses and strengths in particular circumstances both in school and beyond, and for a view of them as strategies rather than end points. This is Trinh's 'points of departure', her ground clearing activity. Teachers could then make these discourses of feminism available to their students and enable them to explore different feminisms as strategies for change to suit individuals according to their material, historical and cultural locations. This of course can be extrapolated to education in 'race', culture, ethnicity and religion.

The danger here, as explored by Foucault and as highlighted by a poststructuralist emphasis on inter-discursivity, is the ways in which feminisms, or any other 'isms', of all types can be taken over, manipulated and sabotaged by their 'others', for their own ends. Sawicki argues that this means the necessity for *critical self-reflexivity;* to 'subject feminist categories and concepts to critical historical analysis in a continual effort to expose their limitations and highlight their differences' (1991, p.48). This means 'looking for weak points, contradictions, ruptures,discontinuities and cracks in the system of representation, and converting them into moments of negotiation and posibility through the use of whatever resources are available' (Kenway et al., 1994 p.199). This means as Kenway et al. point out that when the question 'what about the boys?' is asked the possibility arises for the development of a feminist exploration and interpretation of masculinity. It means when a member of staff in City State says:-

> 'I think possibly I was going to say too much is made of it. I know I am going against the grain and against the general feeling but I feel that there is a lot of attention to, yes they are allowed certain modifications in their dress. They're allowed their days of prayer and festival days off which all children take not just the Muslim girls then they have their days off for their fasting and you know if they are not feeling well so there's a lot of emphasis on they're being special and I sometimes feel the white children miss out. They don't have any, obviously we haven't got any white clubs as

> such but you know there is Indian dancing which any white child can go to but there is nothing, there's nothing special. I sometimes wonder if the emphasis is too much on the other ethnic groups and sometimes it causes bitterness among the white children'.
>
> (CS. 8)

there is the possibility for the deconstruction and re-articulation of whiteness.

I would argue that a poststructural approach and analysis has relevance to such future initiatives and innovations in the equal opportunity debate because it signposts the way to the introduction of strategies which can go beyond practical, structural changes and 'problem solving' equal opportunity mode to the development of a more sophisticated praxis which combines perspectives which deal with fragmentation, hybridity and pluralism, with critical perspectives which centre on ownership, empowerment and open, focussed interactions with concrete others (Benhabib, 1992; Shackleton, 1993). City State is already on the path of discovering the difficulties and delights of dealing with 'difference'. Old Town High has not, as yet, had to negotiate these pitfalls. When, and if it does, it is to be hoped that its path will be made smoother by the experiences and commitment of schools like City State. Alternatively, and hopefully there will come a time when equal

opportunity reform has reached the point where Muslims (or any other minority group) do not feel the need, or indeed have the need, to educate their children in 'separate' schools.

For now it means that what is needed is well theorised practices and practical theories which have the sophistication to deal with 'difference', hybridity and pluralism. This means theories which challenge practice and practice which challenge theories. But more specifically this research means that, for the moment at least, the Muslim girls are better off in this Muslim school; for it is these students who are better able to 'dance' with the discourses in which they are positioned and the ones which they actively take up.

Above all, this research means, I hope, that a crack has been opened up, a gap of fresh air which has formerly been choked, so that it has made visible the failures operating in the education system, with respect to Muslim girls and by implication other minority groups. This could not have been achieved without the invaluable contribution of all the participants and for these reasons I believe, the doubts I raised in Chapter Five about working particularly with school age students are mitigated. It is the contribution of these participants

which I hope, will, and should, give life to future initiatives which seek to improve and enhance the educational experiences of these groups within the state school system.

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