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INTERPRETATIVE STUDY OF THE PURPOSES OF LONDON ISLAMIC SCHOOL

(Spine title: LIS: Milestone or Millstone?)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Asma Ahmed

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

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The thesis by

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entitled:

LIS: Millstone or Milestone

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the purposes of Islamic schools with specific reference to the London Islamic School [LIS] in London, Ontario. Drawing mainly on Ramadan's (1999) integrative and post integrative framework and Coleman's social capital theory, the thesis focuses on Ramadan's question of how "milestones" can be provided which would help young Muslims find their way in the modern West. Using the key informant approach to gathering data, the researcher conducted a total of 27 interviews with current students, graduates of LIS, parents of current students, parents of graduates, teachers, administrators and board members. The findings led the researcher to conclude that the London Islamic school provides many "milestones" for Muslim youth to build a Canadian and Muslim identity in an environment that is conducive to Western and Islamic values and character, although not in a strongly systematic fashion.

KEYWORDS

Milestone, millstone, independent school, Islamic school, Islam, Muslim, purpose, Ramadan, Coleman, social capital, citizenship, key informant, integration, post-integration.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the most important people in my life. I dedicate this to my respectful father for being patient, understanding and unconditionally supportive of all my non-traditional endeavors. I also dedicate it to my dearest mother for being my bestest friend, I have never felt the need for friendship because of her active listening, her emotional intelligence and her caring disposition.

My heart flutters with love, care and respect in your presence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Alhamdulilahi rabil alameen, Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds.

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I would like to thank Rola Chadi and Sally Al-Sabawi for their continuous support and for taking care of my family and feeding them, during the long and tedious writing process.

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM OF ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

> Education is one of society's dominant concerns and, although schooling is only a part of society's much wider arrangements for education, the more complex and dynamic the society, the greater is the need for clarifying the function of its schools and the role that they should play in the ongoing attempt to realize a better society. (Shapiro, 1986, p. 38)

"My father came to London because of London Islamic School. I knew how you looked like before the first day of school, we went on the website and I saw your picture," said Zach to his teacher one October morning. Zach's father is the breadwinner for his family. When I was beginning this thesis in November 2009, he'd been unemployed since he came to London in August. He had been willing to risk unemployment to ensure that his children would go to the Islamic school of his choice. Zach has an older and a younger sibling. His older brother began associating with disreputable friends and, to the distress of his parents, eventually left home. He had only a superficial knowledge of Islam and his confidence in the faith had withered. Zach's father vowed that his other children will not struggle like his older son. He researched the cities in south-western Ontario to find a friendly, academically strong, religiously moderate and professional school for his children. He chose the London Islamic School.

There are many stories like Zach's. Muslim youth who lose confidence in their faith and who are not rerouted or assisted by their family or members of the community often find themselves lost and engulfed by peer groups who have no affiliation to their faith, especially in the modern West. Ramadan (1999) asks, "who will restore to them [these and other youth] the elements and sense of their identity? Who will reconstruct it or, at least, give them some milestones which should permit them to find, consciously

and freely, their own way?" (p. 2). This thesis sought to explore such questions in the context of the purposes and educational activities of an independent Islamic school.

The Research Problem in Context

Problem

What are Islamic schools and why do they exist? More specifically, what is the London Islamic School, how did it come to be, and what do members of the school community see as its purposes?

Schools

Allison (1983) called schools commonplace institutions. They are to be found everywhere in contemporary society. But he also points out that schools have existed throughout much of human history, in many different times and places. They have taken many forms and pursued many purposes. While all schools share a set of common organizational characteristics, some schools cater to children, others to younger or older adults; some are regulated, financed and operated by the state or other authoritative bodies, others exist as largely unregulated, independent entities; some are dedicated to particular pedagogic or other educational philosophies, others to various social or religious ends.

To the contemporary Western mind, Islamic schools would obviously seem to be the latter kind, concerned primarily with religious purposes. But in previous ages, Islamic societies, particularly, perhaps, the religious character of their schools may not have been so distinctive and noticeable, but just taken for granted. How might this dynamic be manifest in contemporary Western societies, such as modern day Ontario?

How might members of Muslim communities in such societies view the character and nature of Islamic schools they have established and support? These schools must be presumed to have religious purposes, but of what form and to what extent? And how might these relate to other educational expectations and purposes, especially those contained in the Ontario curriculum, or its counterpart in other Western societies? I sought to explore this complex of questions by asking what are the purposes of a specific Ontario Islamic school and how are they influenced by the social contexts in which it operates? Ramadan's (1999, p. 2) question of how "milestones" can be provided which would help young Muslims find their way in the modern West lies at the heart of this complex of issues. Can Islamic schools such as the London Islamic School [LIS] be reasonably expected to provide such "milestones" for Muslim youth – or might they have the character of millstones that impose additional burdens on these young people as they seek to find their way?

In Ontario, more than ninety percent of children attend government financed and regulated public or separate schools. The public schools, which enrolled 68 percent of students attending government financed schools in 2005-06 (Ontario, 2008), are secular places which are prohibited from including religious instruction in their curriculum, or sponsoring religious observances. Separate schools, accounting for 32 percent of state school enrolment in 2005-06, are authorized to provide Protestant or Roman Catholic religious instruction and to sponsor appropriate religious observances. The provision for Protestant schools is an anachronism, only one such school, enrolling some 250 students, remains open. In effect, then, publicly funded religious education is only available to Roman Catholics and close adherents to that Christian creed. Many non-Catholic parents

choose to send their children to Catholic schools for reasons other than religious instruction and Roman Catholic separate secondary schools are required under the *Education Act* to accept such students.

Ontario parents wishing to provide any other kind of religious education for their children must seek out an independent school operating outside the public system. There were 869 independent schools registered in Ontario in 2006, enrolling six percent of the total school enrolment in the province. A substantial number (329) offered some form of Christian education, but there were also 43 Jewish and 37 Islamic schools (Van Pelt, Allison & Allison, 2007, p. 9).

Independent schools in Ontario

An important report dealing with independent schools in Ontario was *The Report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario* issued by the Shapiro Commission in 1986. This Royal Commission was significant for my research problem as it articulates reasons why private schools (and therefore faith-based schools) are important for Ontario.

Toward the end of his tenure as Premier of Ontario, William G. Davis announced his intent to remedy long-standing differences in the funding of publicly operated schools by extending equal per-student funding to the Separate schools. Because the financial arrangements in place at that time only funded Separate schools until the end of Grade 10, some of the schools that would benefit from this initiative had been operating as private, fee-charging schools. This, and broader equity considerations, created a need to consider the possibility of extending public funding to other private schools. Bernard J. Shapiro was appointed as the sole member of a Royal Commission established to make recommendations on this issue and "review the role of these schools in educating our

children" (Shapiro, 1986, p. 1). After fifteen months of investigation and deliberation, Shapiro recommended funding private schools through public boards, provided they offered "satisfactory instruction" and employed "qualified teachers." This recommendation has never—or not yet—been implemented. Nonetheless, the discussions of the history and nature of private schools included in Shapiro's report have ensured its continuing importance in the literature, and made it a key resource for my thesis.

Dr. Dalton J. McGuinty, a teacher, professor, Ottawa Public School Board Trustee, and the father of the current Premier of Ontario, submitted a pertinent letter to the Shapiro Commission. McGuinty started his letter by stating his preference for the term "independent school" instead of private or faith-based school. He declined to use the term private because of what he saw as "elitist" and "snobbish" connotations. He outlined why "independent-alternative-schools are relevant in our society of today and are worthy of public support" (McGuinty, 1984, p. 2). First, McGuinty pointed out that independent schools exist by virtue of interest. Parents who send their children to these schools pay their school taxes, as well as paying fees to the school. They are also "simply and factually significant in number and in size and in quality" (p. 2). Second, independent schools justify their right to exist in that they "efficiently serve the needs of their pupils and parents, and society, by fulfilling the basic function of the school" (p. 2). Third, these schools serve significant social needs. In developing this point, McGuinty implicitly drew on Coleman's (1981, 1988) social capital theory by associating education with enculturation and the transmission of values, noting that "the family has a right to look to the school as in some ways an extension of itself", as an extension of the family's

values and beliefs and practices (p. 3). Such congruence helps avoid social conflicts a pupil might otherwise encounter, and what Zine (2008) calls the "split personality syndrome" where one "develops a double person in their efforts to resolve the cultural contradictions between home and school" (p. 4). Whereas modern public schools are required to take a neutral stance on religious doctrine, beliefs and values so as to cater to the variety of religious or non-religious backgrounds of pupils, independent schools can provide religious instruction and inculcate particular religious (and other) values within their students, enhancing the possibilities of ensuring a "morally informed and sensitive citizenry" (McGuinty, 1984, p. 3). McGuinty talks about morality and the responsibility of the home and church in developing children's values and honing virtues. But he also clearly sees the school as an important participant in inculcating morality and shaping an individual's value system, if only due to the number of waking hours students spend at school compared to home.

Shapiro echoed McGuinty's view that values have to be proactively promoted in schools. Indeed, Shapiro sought to remind us of the need for this, arguing that "the public schools too easily assumed that the mere physical presence of various groups within their student bodies somehow, of its own accord, bred tolerance and understanding, "doubting that many public schools could actually demonstrate that their core programs are "multiculturalized" (Shapiro, 1986, p. 50). Even so, Shapiro acknowledged that "the public schools represent the only institutional vehicle that is available for providing a common but non-commercial experience for young Ontarians of, at least potentially, widely different personal and family backgrounds" (p. 50).

With regard to Shapiro's recommendation that public finding be provided to independent schools through school boards, he stipulated a need for some minimum educational standards such as those affirmed by the United Nation's 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. He also stated that "all school programs in Ontario be offered by qualified teachers … holding an Ontario Teacher's Certificate (OTC)… or an individual deemed by the Ministry of Education to be qualified to teach at a private school" (p. 42). He concluded by stressing that, "in a pluralistic and multicultural society, schools can contribute to the strengthening of the social fabric by providing a common acculturation experience for children" and not inculcating socially objectionable beliefs and values (p. 39).

Ontario has not acted on these recommendations so that independent schools remain formally free to adopt any lawful curriculum and have it taught by teachers who are not members of the College of Teachers. Still, the realities of the marketplaces in which they must necessarily compete encourage independent schools to respect established standards and expectations. In this respect, Natour's (2003) comparative survey of the web sites of a wide range of Ontario independent schools found all those she reviewed stressed that they taught the Ontario curriculum. Further, the preceding quotation from Shapiro captures the essence of a widely respected social consensus that private schools are expected to honor by ensuring their independence is not used to promote objectionable beliefs and values, but to respect social cohesion: "in a multicultural society, tolerance was among the supreme civic virtues (Shapiro, 1986, p. 50). Ramadan, in his work, takes this a step further by reminding us to be cognizant of the commonality of values among different religious and non-religious groups which,

together with our shared ownership of Western culture, further extends Shapiro's recognition of the importance of tolerance (Ramadan, 2009, p. 13, 14).

A recent study (Van Pelt, Allison & Allison, 2007) classified the 839 independent schools registered in Ontario in 2006 into three categories: academically-defined schools, religiously-defined schools and special schools. Schools in the first two categories were considered to derive their identity from either a distinctive academic or religious tradition. Academic traditions included Montessori and Waldorf, for example; religious traditions included established religions such as Judaism and Islam, as well as Christian denominations such as Roman Catholic, Mennonite and Amish. Special schools primarily cater to exceptional and other special student populations. The authors stressed that the recognition of an academically defined category was not intended to imply that schools in the other categories were less concerned with academic matters. On the contrary, the authors observed that independent schools, regardless of category, appear to characteristically regard themselves as being dedicated to pursuing robust academic outcomes. Enrolment in these schools ranged from a minimum of six students to a maximum of 1500, with 50,075 (44%) students attending academically-defined schools, 57,366 (51%), religiously-defined schools, and 5,246 (5%) special schools (Van Pelt, Allison & Allison, 2007, p. 9).

In addition to providing a valuable description of the variety of Ontario independent schools, the Van Pelt, Allison and Allison (2007) study investigated parental reasons for choosing independent schools for their children in preference to public schools. The most frequently cited reasons identified by the parents surveyed were the dedication of the teachers and an emphasis on academic quality (p. 23). However,

> Respondents from religiously-defined schools gave particularly high ratings to features such as teaching right from wrong, supporting family values, and reinforcing the family's religion within a context of parent-teacher collaboration and student discipline. Strong ties to home, faith, cultural heritage, and family are very important to parents who choose these schools. (p. 24)

There is relatively little government regulation of independent schools in Ontario. Section 16 of the Ontario *Education Act*, entitled "Intention to operate a private school", establishes the requirement for a notice of intention to be submitted to the Minister of Education, the fine for operating a school without filing proper notice, and the requirements for inspection of schools or teachers and for entering into voluntary agreements with the Minister of Education regarding testing pupils or reporting the results of tests. Ontario is one of three Canadian provinces that funds Roman Catholic separate schools, yet is alone in providing no direct financial assistance for other faith-based schools. Ontario's policy of minimal regulation and no funding appears to have encouraged diversity by allowing for a wide variety of different kinds of independent schools to become established, giving parents many choices.

In this context Islamic Schools are one option among many. By investigating the understood purposes of one of these schools – the LIS – I hoped to develop a grounded understanding of the considerations that lead parents to choose such schools over the readily available option of a free education in the public schools or, for that matter, other kinds of independent schools.

Public apprehension of Islamic schools

In his Royal Commission report, Shapiro (1986) made reference to public fears that can be associated with religious schools. By explicitly teaching religious beliefs and values, he explained, independent schools can be viewed as a potential threat to social

consensus and cohesion, even as a source of antisocial views and activities (p. 50). As noted earlier, in his brief to the Shapiro Commission, the elder McGuinty (1984) recognized this fear, but took pains to argue it is typically over exaggerated and rarely, if ever, supported by verifiable evidence. To the contrary, McGuinty argued religious independent schools benefit society by promoting religious and multicultural diversity and family and community identity (p. 3). Even so, recent events such as the attack on the World Trade Center that followed Osama bin Lauden's (1998) fatwa urging Muslims to kill the Americans and plunder their money, the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq led by the United States, and various violent acts by self-declared Islamic jihadists, have fomented public distrust of Islam and, in turn, deepened fears regarding the threat of hostile indoctrination in Islamic schools

In August 2007 John Tory, then leader of Ontario's opposition Progressive Conservatives, announced his party would support public funding for faith-based schools in the impending general election, provided they taught the Ontario curriculum, participated in provincial testing, and employed qualified teachers, much as Shapiro had recommended earlier. Although representatives of Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh faith groups expressed support for Tory's decision, the proposal was rejected by the governing Liberal party on the grounds that it would divert scarce tax monies from the public schools and weaken social cohesion along the lines sketched above. It was also opposed by some Muslims, as illustrated by a *Toronto Star* article by Fatah and Siddiqui (2007, June 16), in which they declared "private religious education will simply nurture narrow-minded segregation, isolating an already marginalized and vulnerable Muslim community to send their children to poorly funded schools" (*sic* ¶ 10). In a subsequent *Star* article,

Sheikh, Simard and Awan (2007, September 20) carried the point further by addressing what they described as public squeamishness for funding—or even tolerating—Islamic schools. Ill-founded "assumptions and fears come into play", they explained, "ranging from equating Islamic schools with the stereotyped 'madrassa' to presuming that these schools will trample over women's rights" (¶ 2). They pointed out that there was no evidence that the many Islamic schools operating in Canada, publicly funded or not, were operating in accord with these derogatory stereotypes, or that they constituted a threat to social cohesion.

Even so, references to Islamic or Muslim schools are likely to be associated with images of militant *madrassas* in the public eye (Zine, 2008, p. 7). The socio-political context that shapes the public's attitude is suffused with media images and sound bites of al Qaeda schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan as "training grounds for religious extremism" (p. 7) and terrorist activities. In such circumstances it is not surprising that the North American public—including the Ontario public—would be suspicious of Islamic Schools. Europe is also subject to such suspicions as discussed in a report on British Muslim schools that described how Islamic schools came under scrutiny and their competence to raise young Muslim British citizens was questioned in the aftermath of the London transit bombings (Mandaville, 2007).

The word *madrassa* comes from the root word "*darasa*", to study. In essence then, a *madrassa* is a place to study. Indeed, the Arabic word for a school is also *madrassa*, and is commonly used even for those students in the Arab world who attend English schools with a Canadian or British or Australian curriculum. Yet the term is frequently used in the media to denote seminaries that teach only Islamic and Quranic

subjects. There is more than a grain of truth in this. A large population of Pakistan are faced with an escalating rise of armed vigilante groups, spearheaded by *madrassa*-trained individuals (Ali, 2009). These kinds of *madaras* (plural of *madrassa*), which are not restricted to Pakistan, are characterized by an authoritarian approach to instruction with an emphasis on rote memorization of doctrinal texts that is devoid of critical thinking and analysis, killing the creative and critical mind, undermining curiosity, and imparting knowledge without room for challenge. The Yale Center for the study of Globalization investigated media coverage of Pakistan after September 11th and concluded *madrassa* had become a politically charged word. "When articles mentioned *madrassas"*, the analysts explained, "readers were led to infer that all schools so named are anti-American, anti-Western, pro-terrorist centers having less to do with teaching basic literacy and more to do with political indoctrination" (Moeller, 2007, ¶ 12).

John Tory's Progressive Conservatives did not succeed in unseating the governing Liberals in the 2007 Ontario election, and it seems clear public opposition to his proposal to fund faith-based schools contributed to the result; a survey commission by *The Globe and Mail* (2007, September, 21) found 71 percent of voters opposed to Tory's position. It is doubtful whether fears of *madrassa*-like indoctrination in Islamic schools figured prominently in the voters' rejection of the policy, the public seemed to be opposed to public funding of all religious schools, including the constitutionally guaranteed Roman Catholic separate schools. But it would be unrealistic to assume that public suspicions about the purposes of Islamic schools, the content of their curriculum, and the form of their pedagogy, did not have some effect, or that such concerns have dissipated entirely. For this and other reasons, I decided that my inquiry into Islamic schools must

necessarily include a review of Islam itself and an examination of Muslim educational traditions.

The main focus of my inquiry was nonetheless the London Islamic school and its purposes. I did not set out to demonstrate that LIS is not at all like the stereotypical *madrassa* discussed above. Yet I could not ignore public suspicion over possible ominous purposes, which was akin to the proverbial "elephant in the room" throughout my inquiry. In the conceptual frame borrowed from Ramadan, Islamic schools in the West that operate with the single-mined doctrinal focus of the stereotypical *madrassa* would be millstones for young Muslims, rather than milestones along a path to "post-integration" (Ramadan, 1990, p. 67). Indeed, media and public concerns over possible hidden purposes of Islam schools are potential millstones themselves.

Approach to Inquiry

To recap, the research problem addressed was, *What are Islamic schools and why do they exist? More specifically, what is the London Islamic School, how did it come to be, and what do members of the school community see as its purposes?* As a member of the London Muslim community who has taught Grade 4 at LIS for 2 years, I approached the problem with the advantages and limitations of a participant observer. The advantages accorded by this status included rich background knowledge of the school, its participants and routines, but requires scrupulous observance of ethical research standards. One implicit disadvantage was the possibility of overlooking important aspects of LIS which I might take for granted, but which would need to be made explicit for open and defensible analysis. To help address this concern, I structured my inquiry

by seeking answers to the four more specific sets of research questions given below. I also drew on documentary and interview data, the latter coming from a range of different participants and external observers. Finally, I sought to inform and guide my work by drawing on several independent conceptual frameworks, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Research questions

I sought to address my research problem by seeking answers to the following sets of more specific questions:

1. What is Islam and what are its educational traditions? Any adequate understanding of the existence and purposes of the London Islamic School must necessarily include an appreciation of the precepts and teachings of Islam itself and its educational traditions. This was considered important for clarifying and appraising religious content in the LIS program of studies, but also as a partial means for appreciating the tensions between traditional religious teachings and contemporary Western values and norms discussed by Ramadan (1999) and other contemporary Islamic scholars such as Esposito (1998). Chapter 3 presents a brief account of Islam and its educational traditions drawn from the works of Esposito (1998), Afsaruddin (n.d) and Ramadan (2004) together with a review of how Ramadan views religiously rooted challenges facing Muslims in the West and how they relate to the education of children born into Muslim families. Insights from discussions with several Muslim scholars are also included in this chapter. I also included the questions "What is Islam?" and "What does Islam mean to you?" in the interviews with members of the LIS community so as to compare their views with the literature-based account developed in Chapter 3.

2. What is the history of the London Islamic School? When, how and why was it established? Who were the key figures who contributed to its establishment? What was their vision for the school? Answers to these and related questions are developed in the first part of Chapter 4 by drawing on interviews with knowledgeable members of LIS and reviews of documents associated with the founding of the school.
3. What is life and learning like at LIS? What is the curriculum, how is it taught and by whom? How is the Ontario Curriculum supplemented and extended? What is the content of any specific religious instruction? What religious observances and activities form part of the life of the school? As discussed further in Chapter 2, one of the generic purposes of all schools is to socialize students into the normative standards of appropriate behavior approved by the sponsoring social group. To at least partially explore socialization in LIS, I sought to probe what is accepted in LIS as proper conduct with regard to cross-gender interaction. These questions are addressed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 by drawing on interviews, personal observations, school documents and interviews.
4. What do selected administrators, teachers, students, parents, and non-Muslims identify as (a) the challenges facing Muslim youth and (b) purposes of LIS? Chapter 5 presents the answers to this set of questions based on an analysis of 27 transcripts of interviews with members of the LIS community

Tentative working hypothesis

Ramadan's (1999) *To be a European Muslim* was an inspiration for my work. Central to the milestone – millstone problem discussed above, he argues, is the enduring

problem of "How to maintain a spiritual life in a modern – understood as both secular and industrialized – society and, consequently, how to transmit the necessary knowledge which permits genuine freedom of choice" (p. 138). It is plausible to view independent Islamic schools, such as the LIS, as representing a sincere effort at delivering this "necessary knowledge" by providing an education that can serve as a source of at least some of Ramadan's milestones for young Muslims faced with the challenges of constructing their identity in the modern West. This was my initial, tentative, starting point in seeking to address my research questions.

Methods

I used a range of methods to address my research questions, including document analysis, literature review and analysis of semi-structured interviews with selected key informants. To assist in addressing Research Question 2 on the history of LIS, I asked the chair of the governing body of the mosque on whose grounds the school is located to provide access to documents pertinent to the founding of the school. One particularly useful document obtained in this manner was the 1984 report of an initial feasibility study. To assist in addressing Research Question 3 on life and learning at LIS, I compared the teacher schedules at LIS with the Thames Valley District School Board document entitled *Elementary Time Allocation Guideline.* In addition to the semi-structured interviews outlined in the following paragraph, I also discussed the purposes of Islamic schools with four keynote speakers at the Islamic Society of North America Education Forum held in London on April 2-4, 2010. I was also able to have an informative conversation with Sheikh Abdulla Idris Ali, who is known to be a pioneer of Islamic schools in Canada.

Interviews

My main source of data for Research Question 4 and parts of other questions came from semi-structured interviews with 27 key informants using the interview schedule in Appendix I. The key informant approach is well established "in the field of cultural anthropology and is now being used more widely in other branches of social science investigation" (Marshall, 1996, p. 92). The aim is to exchange information on specific aspects of organizational, academic, legal, political and other such features (EURACT, 2008) with selected individuals who have access to perspectives or observations not always accessible to the researcher (Goetz & Lecompte, 1984). Key informants are not randomly selected, but are chosen carefully because of their pertinent knowledge and their willingness to share this knowledge (Heyrman & Goedhuys, 2008). Sherry (2008) describes these key informants as different members of your community who are especially knowledgeable about a topic, and described the essence of the method as "asking them questions about their experiences … within that community" (p. 1). Details of the key informants interviewed and how they were recruited are given below.

I conducted three pilot interviews, during which I noticed that the participants all wanted to give positive comments about the school and were hesitant to articulate negative issues. During the main interviews, I sought to counter-balance these tendencies by explaining to participants that my thesis is an independent, academic work which would be strengthened by honest answers to my questions. I also stressed that all responses would be anonymous when the findings are reported.

The interviews were conducted during March and April 2010. Each lasted between 15 and 40 minutes. Precautions were taken to limit influences by the

interviewer, myself. Some interviews were conducted over the phone, but most were conducted face to face in a neutral environment on the school premises or in a coffee shop. All the interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and stored in password protected files on a computer with back-up files on a portable USB device. Handwritten notes were also taken during most interviews. Notes and recordings of each interview were transcribed into written form with transcripts ranging from two to five pages of double spaced print.

Strengths and limitations

Interviews are more labor intensive than surveys, but provide far greater opportunities to personalize data collection and to allow for answers to be probed. As such, interviews can allow researchers to gain more comprehensive understandings of the situation under examination. Interviews also have higher participation and completion rates than do remotely administered surveys.

A further issue identified in the literature concerns the possibility that the data collected through interviews would be too diverse, making it difficult or perhaps impossible to extract coherent findings. While he acknowledged this possibility in his application of the key informant approach, Bernie Lawrence (2009) did not find this to be a concern in his recently completed UWO M.Ed. thesis in which he probed parent and student views at the London APPLE School in a study which was similar in various respects to this inquiry.

In terms of limitations there were three main ethical concerns with the interviews. First, because I was a teacher at LIS, I anticipated that acquiring informed consent without implied coercion might be difficult. I have developed a rapport with most of the

families in the school and the community, which I believed would serve to minimize perceptions of coercion. In addition I obtained initial informal oral consent before seeking formal written consent to ensure participants fully understood the nature of the study and their rights to decline to participate or withdraw. Second, complete confidentiality is impossible in an interview. I ensured appropriate confidentiality when writing the thesis – which is a public document – but whatever who said in an interview would obviously be known to both parties. There were also some interviewees whose anonymity could not be protected when reporting findings, such as the principal, whose identity would be revealed by his or her role. All potential interviewees were fully informed of this, and I made it clear I was committed to treating all information obtained with proper and professional care, sensitivity and respect. Furthermore, while some parents or students appeared to feel that they needed to give certain answers that were socially correct or otherwise thought to be the "right" answers, I sought to stress my commitment to openness and authenticity as a way of decreasing such inclinations. Even so, I recognize that there would appear to be no way to ensure fully candid responses. Third, due to the nature of interviews, one cannot foresee all the consequences that might occur. Asking intrusive questions requesting parents or students to share their perspectives on the school was perhaps uncomfortable for some. I began all the interviews by reminding participants of the voluntary nature of their participation and stressing that it would be best for participants to give answers reflective of their thoughts, rather than what they thought would be acceptable to me.

Participants

Selection of participants is clearly crucial to this type of research and, in a close-knit community such as LIS, not selecting some members could create a feeling of jealousy. I addressed both of these issues by being as open as possible about my research and by seeking to recruit participants from within pools of eligible informants.

The key informants identified for this study were London Islamic School parents, teachers, students, board members and administrators as well as non-Muslims with some affiliation to the school, with the final selection of participants being guided by characteristics that would likely assist in identifying particularly knowledgeable individuals. My goal was to interview: ten LIS students, five currently enrolled and five graduates; ten parents, five with LIS students and five with children who had graduated from LIS and who were currently enrolled in a public secondary school; three teachers, two with long experience at LIS and one more recently employed; three board members, at least one of whom was involved in the founding of LIS; two members of the administrative team, one of whom would be the current principal; and five non-Muslims from the London Community, one of whom would be a serving politician and another the school Health Unit Nurse with responsibility for LIS.

I assumed that those that are not involved on a regular basis with the school will not have a reflective understanding of the purposes of the school, therefore I did not include individuals outside of the LIS community.

In instances where only one individual satisfied the selection criteria (principal, nurse) those individuals were invited to participate using an appropriate version of the Letter of Information. To assist in identifying potential interviewees in the other

participant groups, I invited the principal and three experienced teachers to serve on an advisory selection committee which drew up lists of potential interviewees, taking care to ensure there was wide representation from various economic, academic, and ethnic groups. Potential participants were then randomly selected from these initial lists and sent Letters of Information. Three board members were invited to participate on the basis of length of service on the board with a view to spanning the range of experience. The parents or guardians of students under the age of 16 received a separate Letter of Information seeking permission to invite their child's participation. For various reasons I was unable to interview the target numbers of participants in each identified group. Table 1.1 compares the numbers of planned to actual interviewees.

Table 1.1
Planned and Actual Interviewees by Participant Groups

	Planned	**Actual**
Parents	10	5
Current parents	5	3
Parents of graduates	5	2
Students	10	10
Current	5	5
Graduates	5	5
LIS Staff	5	6
Teachers	3	5
Administrators	2	1
Board members	3	4
Founder	1	1
High experience	1	2
Low experience	1	1
Non Muslims	5	2
Politician	4	1
Nurse	1	1
Total	33	27

During the period when conducting interviews, Sheikh Abdulla Idris Ali[1], a pioneer of Islamic Schools in Canada, came to London to give a lecture on Smart Integration. I attended and recorded his lecture, and also sat with him after his lecture and he spoke to me on tape about Islamic Schools. I drew on these experiences to augment my analyses of the interview transcripts in Chapter 4 and 5.

Interview participants were given a code to maintain their anonymity as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2
Reference Table for Participant Groups' Interviews

Acronym for Participant	Description
CFPN	Current Female Parent
GMPN	Graduate Male Parent
GFPN	Graduate Female Parent
CMSN	Current Male Student
CFSN	Current Female Student
GFSN	Graduate Female Student
TFN	Teacher Female
NMN	Non-Muslim Male
NFN	Non-Muslim Female
AFN	Administrator Female
BMN	Board-member Male

My main concern when recruiting participants was ensuring appropriate representation from each participant group, but I did not notice a developing gender imbalance in the interviewees. When all the interviews were completed, there were six

[1] Sh. Abdullah Idris Ali, public speaker and fund-raiser, served as ISNA (Islamic Society of North America) President from 1992-1997. He co-organized the Canadian Islamic Banking Conferences for 1996 and 1997. Ali serves as a member on the Board of Trustees for the Islamic Teaching Center (ITC) and North American Islamic Trust. He also is on the Board of Advisors of the American Muslim Council, and past Board member of the Council of Islamic Schools in North America. Now an ISNA school principal, Ali developed and implemented Islamic and Arabic Studies curricula for elementary and junior high students. He has written various articles in Islamic Horizons and is a member of the ATP Editorial Board. Abdalla Idris Ali is a native of the Sudan and currently resides in Toronto, Ontario.

(22%) males and 21 (78%) females overall. Females were particularly over-represented among Graduates (100%), Teachers (100%), Parents (80%) and Students (80%). Almost all teachers at LIS were females except for two male staff members. Moreover, 75 percent of the Board members were male, and thus in both cases the final numbers were roughly representative. Yet on reflection, I realize I should have noticed the imbalances earlier and taken steps to recruit more male graduates, teachers and parents. Having recognized the issue I took care to remain sensitive to any strong gender bias in my analysis of the interview transcripts reported in Chapters 4 and 5

Interviews provide "access to what is 'inside a person's head', and make it possible to appreciate what a person knows, thinks, believes and feels" (Tuckman, 1972). Current students and recent graduates of LIS were included in the key informants interviewed; Eder and Fingerson (2003, p. 43-4) say that adolescents typically appreciate the one-on-one interaction experienced during interviews. The interviews conducted in this study followed a standard yet open-ended approach using the schedule of questions shown in Appendix I. Asking predetermined questions in the same sequential order helped to systematize data collection and increase the comparability of the responses. All interviews were audio taped and then transcribed.

The interview data were prepared for analysis by creating a matrix with the questions horizontally lined up and each participant group categorized on the vertical axis. The answers of each participant group to the respective question were placed in the appropriate cell of the matrix. Bullet points were used to differentiate the responses of each participant within that group. This format helped to distill the major themes and responses to each question by participant group.

The interview questions (Appendix I) were developed to generate data pertinent to Research Question 4 or parts of the other Research Questions. Five common questions were posed to all the participants, these being: (1) What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you? (2) What are the challenges of Muslim youth today? (3) How do you think LIS is similar and different from other schools? (4) In what ways do you think the relationships of the students at LIS with the opposite gender are similar to, or different from, those of similarly aged students attending other schools? (5) What do you see the purposes of LIS? Parents and graduates were also asked if they were aware of any differences – negative or positive – between graduates of LIS and their Grade 9 – 12 classmates that could be attributed to their LIS experience, and if they thought LIS does/did a good job of preparing the graduates for high school?

Chapter Summary

As both a teacher and a member of the Muslim community, I am continuously asked why I teach at an Islamic school and, if I were a mother myself, would I enrol my children there? In staff meetings, and perhaps more commonly, during board meetings, the purposes of Islamic schools are frequently discussed. This thesis grew out of an interest in finding grounded answers to questions such as these, answers which will help address the broader questions of identity and purpose raised by Ramadan. This introductory chapter presented the research problem and questions which guided the study together with a consideration of the social and educational contexts which frame them, together with a discussion of the methods employed.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

> My purpose, [is]… to understand the universality of the message of Islam and to highlight the means we are given to help us live in our time, in the West with respect for ourselves and for others. (Ramadan, 2004, p. 3)

In this chapter I discuss education and schooling, starting with the purposes of education followed by the five purposes of schools. The two main theories I draw upon are Coleman's social capital theory and Ramadan's extensive work on the integration of Muslims in the West. His theory includes a stage model which I have adapted to produce an integration and post-integration checklist which I use later to summarize findings from my analysis of the interviews conducted at LIS. The chapter concludes with a look at the conceptual contrast between the ideas of millstone and milestone and how it relates to the stage model and Ramadan's checklist.

Education and Schooling

Chapter 1 opened with an epigraph from Shapiro where he distinguished between the overarching concept of education and the more focused process of schooling. The purposes of education and schools are clearly interrelated; indeed, the two terms are often used as synonyms. But despite these similarities, there are differences between the two activities and how they are conceptualized. The discussion of education and schools which follows draws primarily on Western, particularly North American, ideas and scholars. While the discussion focuses on what are called the purposes of education and schooling, the ideas discussed are also referred to in the literature as the functions or aims of education and schooling. Some terms, "functions" in particular, are associated with

contested theoretical frames such as, in this case, structural functionalism as usually attributed to Talcott Parsons (1975). Although the discussion here has indeed been influenced by Parson's writings, I have tended to use the term "purpose" in preference to "function" so as to avoid the implicit acceptance of the overly deterministic and harmonious view of society criticized in some rejections of structural functionalist approaches.

Purposes of education

Specific aims of education and schools are in constant flux with the changes and challenges of the times. In 1938 John Dewey wrote, "It would not be a sign of health if such an important social interest as education were not also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical..." (Dewey, 1997, p. v). He continued by proposing that the purpose of education is ultimately to provide an opportunity for "every individual to develop to his full capacity" (p. 187).

Dewey (1938) argued that education is not just the acquisition of valued and approved knowledge, but also the development of understanding which empowers the learner to apply knowledge through his or her actions. "Understanding, by its very nature, is related to action" he said, "just as information, by its very nature, is isolated from action or connected with it only here and there by accident" (Dewey, 1987, p. 184). Understanding requires that an individual knows how things work and how to do things. Dewey gives the example of politicians who "talk glibly, write elegantly, argue forcibly" but who are not able to deliver on their promises (p.189). In this case, knowledge or understanding may be isolated from action rather than being interconnected to action: to act effectively requires the acquisition of appropriate skills (Dewey, 1987, p. 189). In my

opinion, however, understanding does not necessitate action. One can have an understanding of a concept but may lack the motivation, the responsibility and/or the commitment to initiate action, or continue to act. Dewey further elaborates that education forms or shapes attitudes, "which will express themselves in intelligent social action" (Dewey, 1987, p. 189).

Education breeds cognitive and affective dispositions that are beliefs, attitudes and values through both instruction and socialization, both of which are prominent purposes of schools as discussed later in this chapter. Dewey wanted education to help a student make informed decisions, think critically, and challenge the status quo. Therefore, there are four important elements to Dewey's theory of education: it is the acquisition of (1) valued knowledge (which he also referred to information) which forms a foundation for the development of (2) understanding which can guide action through acquired (3) skills and form desirable (4) attitudes with the whole aimed at ensuring opportunities for "every individual to develop his full capacity" (p. 187). The Ontario *Education Act* includes the following:

> (2) The purpose of education is to provide students with the opportunity to realize their potential and develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, caring citizens who contribute to their society. (Ontario Education Act, 2009, c. 25, s. 1)

Purposes of schools

Schools are one of the means of education, but education is only one of the recognized purposes of schools. Shipman (1975) and Allison (1980, 1983, 2009) discuss the following five purposes of schools: (1) education, (2) socialization, (3) safety, (4) selection, and (5) certification. Education and socialization usually dominate, although

certain specialized schools, or parts of schools, may emphasize one or more of the final three. The overt educational purpose of schools provides perhaps the most obvious basis for differentiating among various types, especially when grounded in the certification function. Thus, while primary, secondary and post-secondary schools characteristically cater to children, adolescents and adults respectively, the central differences between these kinds of schools are rooted in the form and content of the education and socialization provided, as evident in their official curricula and the social norms and conventions that are characteristically promoted and discouraged. Differences in curriculum content and socio-cultural norms and expectations also lie at the heart of schools dedicated to specific philosophies of education and learning such as, for example, Montessori or Waldorf schools. This is also the case for religious schools. Thus Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and schools of other religions can be expected to provide age-appropriate instruction in the knowledge that defines and is associated with the religion concerned, while also promoting or discouraging the beliefs, attitudes and actions required, approved of, or proscribed by, the religion. The latter is an important aspect of socialization in schools with respect to religious rituals such as prayers as well as the form of *tarbiyah* character education discussed in Chapter 3.

In Ontario and other North American jurisdictions, public schools – that is primary and secondary level schools publicly funded and operated by the state or its local agents – are typically prohibited from providing explicit instruction in the knowledge or doctrines of any single religion, although various limited exceptions exist. Such public schools are also required to ensure their educational activities follow the officially approved curriculum and that the social norms, expectations and behaviors that are

promoted or discouraged conform to community standards or, in some cases, those officially proclaimed by the state, such as, for example, progressive attitudes to sexual norms and homosexuality. These are examples of social norms that may be promoted in public schools that are in direct contrast to the teachings and values of some religions, such as Islam. In contrast, Islamic schools can be expected to facilitate an environment for cross-gender interactions that promote mutual respect and also maintain and elevate the dignity of both boys and girls, as discussed further in the following chapter.

Schools that explicitly teach religion or follow a distinct educational philosophy are usually established and operated independently as private or non-public endeavors. Four Canadian provinces provide some form of limited public finance and support for such schools, except in the case of Ontario, as discussed in Chapter 1. In return, religious and other independent schools receiving public monies are usually subject to various forms of regulation, the almost universal requirement being conformity to the official curriculum and employment of teachers with state approved credentials. The religious education provided by such schools is, therefore, provided in addition to the knowledge and skills specified in the official curriculum. Although independent schools in Ontario are not required to conform to the provincial curriculum unless they wish to award secondary graduate credits, they typically choose to do so (Natour, 2003). As in the rest of Canada – indeed North America – religious education in Ontario independent schools is thus typically provided in addition to instruction in the official curriculum, as is the case in the publicly funded and regulated Roman Catholic separate schools. This is discussed further in the consideration of Islamic education in Chapter 3, and in Chapter 4 which describes life and learning at LIS.

Safety is a priority in Ontario and other North American schools. Keeping schools safe is usually understood in terms of ensuring physical safety for the pupils and staff at the school; it helps in the day-to-day running of the school and creates an atmosphere of stability and security. But rules, other normative standards, and disciplinary practices established to promote safety and security are also important socialization media and agents. Certification and selection go hand in hand. Most schools are divided into grades, and movement from one grade to another certifies that the student has acquired the basic minimum knowledge of that grade, however that may not be true of all schools in Ontario, and perhaps other parts of the world, where the student can be moved to higher grades by virtue of his/her age, rather than level of knowledge. Selection is primarily evident in the structural differentiation that is developed based on classroom and school evaluations that form the basis for official reports. Schools become "a system acting as an allocating agency, it is a basis of selection for future status in society" (Parsons, 1959, p. 83).

With regards to socialization, Robert Dreeben (1968) in his book *On what is learned in school* argues at length that the norms of an industrialized society are different from the norms in a family setting. One of the purposes of public schools is to ensure "pupils learn to accept principles of conduct, or social norms and to act according to them" (p. 44). He continues by explaining,

> That the experiences schools afford their pupils, such as tasks, structural arrangements, constraints, sanctions, and opportunities for the generalization of ideas and investment of emotions can produce normative changes. If schooling consisted simply of pupils reading books and teachers exhorting them about the right way to act, the conditions would not be adequate for the acquisition of norms. (p. 55)

Pertaining to socialization and selection, Parsons (1959) observed that a school will "internalize in its pupils both the commitments and capacities for successful performance of their future adult roles" (p. 81). But with religious schools "the commitments and capacities" are likely to be different, and more demanding in some respects than in public schools or other independent schools. "Commitments may be broken down in turn into two components: commitment to the implementation of the broad values of society and commitment to the performance of a specific type of role within the structure of society" (p. 81). Both components are pertinent to discussions of Islamic schools in Ontario, as their focus on knowledge about and commitment to Islam does not overrule the necessity to abide by the values of the broader society.

Coleman's Social Capital

In their influential book, *Public and Private High Schools,* Coleman and Hoffer (1981) discussed how private schools in the United States, especially religious private schools, typically drew support from a community that creates a dominance of values in the school, and which both reflects and encourages shared understandings of the purpose of education and the operation of the school (Coleman & Hoffer, 1981). Earlier studies conducted in the United States had shown that students of some private schools had lower dropout rates and higher academic achievement than their counterparts in public schools (Coleman, 1988, p. 101). Coleman and Hoffer sought to show that such differences could be partly accounted for by a lack of value consensus and community support in the "value-heterogeneous residential area" from which public schools typically draw their pupils. Moreover, they argued that the staff of public schools are less likely to demand

adherence to a common and consistent set of social values from their students, than are teachers in independent religious schools that draw students from a value-homogenous community (p. 62).

Coleman coined the term social capital to capture his theorized source of these kinds of differences, noting that the term constitutes "an unanalyzed concept ... [where] something of value has been produced for those actors who have this resource available and that the value depends on social organization" (Coleman, 1988, p. 101). Those that attend private religious schools, he contended, develop stronger social bonds with people in the school and the supporting community, especially extended family and friends, and this creates and sustains a strong social network that provides access to social "capital" on which students can draw to help them succeed. "Norms arise as attempts to limit negative external effects or encourage positive ones", and "closure" of a social network helps with the creation and socialization of individuals into the norms (p. 105).

The socio-cultural environments of independent schools must be expected to differ from those of comparable public schools. Parents who have deliberately chosen a school other than the "default" public school which serves their neighborhood will presumably have a particular interest in their children's education beyond the interests reflected in the nature and purposes of public education and be likely to pay close attention to how they are doing at school. School choice is not necessarily restricted to private schools, of course, but the payment of fees typically is, and parents who pay school fees are likely to have a direct interest in what they are getting for their money, and can thus be expected to take an interest in and become informed about school affairs and operations. This is not to suggest that public school parents are not interested,

informed or engaged in their children's schools: there are clearly many dedicated public school parents who serve on school councils and support other important school activities. Even so, it will be rare for a public school to enjoy a comparable level of parental awareness and involvement to that which can be reasonably expected in a school consciously chosen by all parents, who also pay most of the costs of operating the school. Given these particular interests on the part of parents, independent schools can be expected to have more homogeneous and supportive parent communities. As Coleman and Hoffer found, these supporting communities can extend beyond the parents of current students to include extended family members, alumni and others sympathetic to the school and its purposes. Since religious communities also typically evidence a distinct sense of identity and solidarity, religious independent schools can reasonably be expected to benefit from even greater levels of social capital.

Moreover, within this theoretical frame, families of students who attend independent religious schools are likely to experience "intergenerational closure", where parents interact with the parents of their children's friends' parents, which provides access to an extended form of social capital (Coleman, 1988, p.116). There will logically be connections between and within networks. Much as physical capital enhances economic productivity, Coleman contends that social capital creates contacts and connections with other people which can build capacity for individuals and the social groups involved, ultimately enhancing productivity (Coleman, 1988). Independent religious schools can thrive on this form of social networking which can help create and maintain effective norms, draw on community expertise to help build and maintain the school, assist in instruction and learning, create networks among families to further

support learning and socialization, as well simply to keep the students on track. Other positive effects associated with rich stores of social capital include consensus about and support for learning and socialization to valued norms, good working relationships between parents and teachers, fewer discipline problems and high attendance and achievement.

Plight of the Muslims in the modern West

The Middle Ages is normally when one would start to discuss the presence of Muslims and Islam in Europe. The Heritage and Citizenship strand in the current social studies section of the Ontario Curriculum includes a Medieval times topic which outlines the "Muslim influence on arts, architecture, and the sciences" as well as "events and practices" in which various religions shaped medieval society (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 27). In the Middle Ages, from about 500 to 1500 CE, Islam in Europe had made "major contributions to the rationalism, secularism and modernity of Western thought" (Le Monde Diplomatique, 1998, ¶ 1). In the early 20th century the musicologist Henry George Farmer wrote that a "growing number of scholars...recognize(d) that the influence of the Muslim civilization as a whole on medieval Europe was enormous in such fields as science, philosophy, theology, literature, aesthetics, than has been recognized" (MacDonald, 1931).

In more modern times, the presence of Muslims in Europe and North America has been associated with various levels and forms of debate and conflict. The wave of modern Muslim immigrants to Europe was driven by dire economic conditions in North Africa, Turkey, India and Pakistan. The possibility of creating a European or North

American Islam would have been a farfetched concept given the economic instability of these early immigrants and their struggles for basic needs and settlement (Le Monde Diplomatique, 1998). Their children and grandchildren live in different times and changed circumstances, in which international and local events have created various tensions. As eloquently described by Ramadan (1998, ¶ 3), these range from the "Rushdie affair to the excesses of the Taliban, from the violence and killings in the Middle East to the daily horrors in Algeria." Such events have, as he explains, "Engendered a climate of fear" (Le Monde Diplomatique, 1998, ¶ 3). A 1997 report by Britain's The Runnymede Trust referred to this as Islamophobia (Commission on British Muslims, 1992, ¶ 1).

Mosque leaders and Islamic organizations have recognized that this poses a difficult yet inescapable problem for contemporary Muslims, especially Muslim youth. Adults have,

> found themselves obliged to adapt to the situation of their young people, speak their language, reshape the format of religious education and redefine their structures of social and cultural activity. On the other hand, the renewed fashion for religious observance among a minority of young people has led to the creation of a large number of Islamic associations" (Le Monde Diplomatique, 1998, ¶ 5).

Many Muslim youth now see themselves as "having a right to be in Europe [or North America] and they expect recognition of their civil rights" (Le Monde Diplomatique, 1998, ¶ 6).

In the 1990s *ulama* (scholars) from the Muslim world and Muslim leaders and intellectuals in Europe recommended the following five principles for Muslims that live in Europe: (1) a Muslim, whether resident or citizen, should see himself as involved in a contract, both moral and social, with the country in which he lives, and should respect that country's laws; (2) European legislation (which is secular in nature) allows Muslims

to practice the basics of their religion; (3) the old concept of the *dar al harb* (the abode of war), which does not derive from the Quran, and is not part of the prophetic tradition, is seen as outdated; other concepts have been suggested as ways of reading the Muslim presence in Europe in more positive terms; (4) Muslims should see themselves as citizens in the full sense of the term, and should participate (while at the same time seeking respect for their own values) in the social, organizational, economic and political life of the countries in which they live; (5) in European legislation as a whole, there is nothing to prevent Muslims, or any other citizens, from making choices that accord with their religion (Le Monde Diplomatique, 1998, ¶ 11). There are specific references to the endorsement of these principles in Canada: The Charter of Rights and Freedom, for example, stipulates that,

> Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:
>
> **(a)** freedom of conscience and religion;
> **(b)** freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
> **(c)** freedom of peaceful assembly; and
> **(d)** freedom of association (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, 1982)

There are also similar provisions in the Ontario Human Rights Code, which also protects discrimination in hiring for legitimate reasons, such as ensuring Muslim teachers in Muslim schools as indicated by section 19 and 24:

> **24.** (1) the right under section 5 to equal treatment with respect to employment is not infringed where,
>
> (a) a religious, philanthropic, educational, fraternal or social institution or organization that is primarily engaged in serving the interests of persons identified by their race, ancestry, place of origin, color, ethnic origin, creed, sex, age, marital status or disability employs only, or gives preference in employment to, persons similarly identified if the qualification is a reasonable and *bona fide* qualification because of the nature of the employment. (Ontario Human Rights Code)

Tariq Ramadan's view of Muslim youth in the West

Tariq Ramadan's work was selected to guide discussion in this thesis due to his extensive work on integration and the plight of Muslims in the West. His books, articles and lectures revolve around integration and post-integration issues and stress the necessity of Muslim contributions to Western society. This is pertinent to any discussion of Muslim education and especially the process of integrating Muslim students to become confident citizens of any Western country. Ramadan holds an MA in Philosophy and French literature and a Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Geneva. In Cairo, Egypt, he received one-on-one intensive training in classic Islamic scholarship from Al-Azhar University scholars. Tariq Ramadan is currently Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University (Oriental Institute, St Antony's College). He teaches in the Faculty of Theology at Oxford.

In discussing the challenges faced by a Muslim living in a modern Western society, Ramadan (1999) observes that most have reduced Islam to sets of rules and regulations which separate the lawful (*halal*) from the unlawful (*haram*), and that they tend to believe that *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) has the answer to all the problems Muslims face (p. 10). Such an understanding of Islam, he argues, makes it "impossible to give birth to an affirmative, confident and constructive perception of Muslim identity which develops real abilities to inscribe itself in the European landscape" (p. 10). On the one hand, the Islamic Juridical framework is seen by some Muslims as "fixed", having been generated by past *ulama* (scholars) who did not reside in or understand western culture. On the other hand, one finds Muslims speaking of *ijtihad* (which literally means

"effort") as "the freedom to stipulate rational rulings when the sources do not give clear and adapted answers", thus offering a potential *carte blanche* to "justify everything" without regard to the methodology of Islamic jurisprudence, or knowledge of its evolution (p. 56). He maintains that proper *ijtihad* requires an in-depth understanding of the objectives of *shariah*, *Maqasid al shariah*, usually translated as the objectives of the Islamic Way, as well as "deduction and extraction based on knowledge and understanding", which is similar to European jurisprudence and its processes of deduction and application of underlying legal principles to specific cases (p. 86).

Ramadan further argues it is necessary "to return to the sources and study of global rulings in order to identify the parameters against which we have to measure the accuracy of our positions, interpretations and solutions" (1999, p. 57). This approach helps one to be open to new and original interpretations, which may at first glance seem novel, yet is authentically grounded in the teachings of the Quran and the *Sunna* (prophetic tradition). Ramadan emphasizes the importance and the necessity of human reason in such an endeavor.

The stage model in Table 2.1 shows the three stages of immigrant integration that Ramadan (2009) articulates in his book *What I believe*. He argues that Muslim immigrants and their descendents should pass through the stages in this model, including those practicing Muslims who are hesitant to integrate because they fear they will lose their identity or religion in the process. The settlement stage is common to all immigrants, where everyone starts. At this first stage, immigrants settle into their new environment and get acquainted with their new surroundings. Their immediate goals are

Table 2.1
Ramadan's Stage Model

Stage	Description
Settlement	Us versus Them mentality Struggling to make ends meet
Integration	"Struggling adaptation reform" (p. 85) Participation and Contribution
Post-integration	Master language and the legal framework Creative transformational reform

Adapted from Ramadan (2009, p. 5-6)

to meet basic needs such as food, water, shelter and employment. To some an immediate need is also "protecting themselves … the survival of their religious identity" (Ramadan, 2004, p. 52) which relates to the first objective of *Maqasid al Shariah* as discussed in Chapter 3. Some may develop an "Us versus Them" mentality. Or perhaps become "reticent to express their Muslimness openly and to facilitate integration they [may have] engaged in 'survival strategies' such as the Anglicization of names" (Nyang, 2000, p. 2). Muhammed Jummah changes his name to Michael Friday and Musa Abdulla changes his name to Moses Abdullah to "weather the icy waters of racial or cultural prejudices" (Nyang, 2000, p. 2).

Ramadan mentions that this stage of survival or settlement is "without a shadow of doubt fundamental and particularly necessary … we must nevertheless be aware that it was [to some still is] a stage and that we should rethink our presence in the West more comprehensively" (Ramadan, 2004, p. 53).

Ramadan's second stage, integration, is described as being characterized by struggles to adapt or reform during which immigrants strive for equal treatment as well as for laws and policies to protect minority rights (Ramadan, 2009, p. 5-6). Ramadan argues that it is at this stage that a psychological and intellectual sense of belonging can be

achieved – a feeling of being home (Ramadan, 2004, p. 67). To realize such an outcome, he argues central questions such as those below need to be addressed and satisfactorily resolved:

> Are Muslims truly capable of living in secularized societies? Are their values compatible with those of democracy? Can they live side by side and mingle with their non-Muslim neighbours? Can they combat the shocking behaviour exhibited in their name, in the form of terrorism, domestic violence, forced marriage, and the like? Can they free themselves from their social ghettos, those breeding grounds of unemployment, insecurity, and marginality? (Ramadan, 2009, p. 125)

In essence, the dynamics and debates of integration usually revolve around feelings of not belonging to trying to belong. Ramadan pushes beyond such concerns to what he calls a post-integrative stage. In this stage immigrants have mastered the language and the legal framework of the host country (p. 71-72) and attitudes of participation and contribution are fostered (p. 5-6). Ramadan refers to this stage as "creative transformational reform" (Ramadan, 2009, p. 48). He argues the process of integration and post-integration requires continuous reconciliation, including reconciling "individuals with the different dimensions of their being, their origins, and their hopes" (p. 38) so as to empower them to let go of defensive, passionate and anxious reactions when dealing or interacting with others. How one feels about oneself is a major factor in determining how one is able to act, and what one feels about who they are affects what they see themselves as being – and as capable of becoming (Akbar, 1985). Therefore, integration and post- integration requires self-knowledge, self-acceptance, self-help, self-discovery, self-preservation (Akbar, 1985).

Ramadan's conclusions are relevant to our discussion of Islamic schools because the students come from a variety of backgrounds, and their family background might

predispose them to be located at any one of Ramadan's three stages, or intermediary positions. How is such variety to be viewed within an Islamic school or single classroom? It is important to understand what schools should ultimately work towards with students. Is the school – its teachers, officials, curriculum and culture – to accept family expectations in this regard, or should Islamic schools in Ontario and elsewhere in the West encourage progress toward higher stages of Ramadan's model? How might this be done? What type of school environment, curriculum and pedagogies would foster progress toward the post-integrative stage while being sensitive to each student's different and unique background? These and related concerns became important as my inquiry proceeded. Ramadan makes it clear in his integration and post-integration stages that "everything a society or culture produces and accepts that is not in opposition to a clearly stipulated prohibition is in fact integrated and considered part of the Islamic universe of reference" (2004, p. 54). This understanding becomes clearer in Chapter 3 when I discuss the comprehensive character of Islam.

The stage model as shown in Table 2.1 has parallels to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. When an immigrant family is struggling to make ends meet, concerns about belonging and contributing are not likely to be a priority. Even so, if the children in such a family attend school, they will necessarily interact with their classmates and others which, in turn, will generate pressures for integration, assimilation or isolation. If the family is locked into one of the lower stages in Ramadan's model, the children or the youth of that family might be at or close to moving to another stage. In this respect, Ramadan (2009) speaks of "genuine applied, critical pedagogy" that can foster movement through his stages by reconciling "individuals with the different dimensions of their

being, their origins, and their hopes" in ways that "can enable them to overcome anxious, reactive and passionate reactions when encountering others" (p. 38). He goes on to say that this kind of shift and revolution in thinking requires day-to-day and real life encounters for individuals to feel a sense of comfort and confidence in who they are and with whom they are dealing. This would seem particularly important when the learners are children. This kind of pedagogy requires a support system, a community that recognizes the challenges faced by the young and has an understanding of the goals and purposes of integration and post-integration. In short, the kind of support system that can be provided by a school and supporting community sensitive to the situation and learning needs of such children. Regular public schools may be able to provide such environments, but this will be particularly difficult if the immigrant children concerned are part of one distinct minority among others.

Ramadan's work includes many ideas on how post-integration can be achieved and what it looks like. Table 2.2 presents a checklist generated from his work. This checklist has both elements of the journey towards his Stage 3 and the end goals for achieving what Ramadan calls post-integration. I used this to help inform and assess the situation in the London Islamic School as represented in the interviews with key informants. Ideally, in retrospect, I would have liked to have given this checklist to board members, staff, parents and administration to see which of the items they thought were present in the school and which ones the school could work towards, but since the checklist was not generated until a later stage of my writing, it was not available to be incorporated in the interviews.

Table 2.2

Stage 3: Integration and Post-Integration Checklist

1.	The 7 Cs: Shall have confidence, consistency, contribution, creativity, communication, contest and compassion (p. 85, 86.).
2.	Shall have a pedagogy of solidarity: to take into account the dignity and culture that fashions a person before reducing them to needs (p. 13)
3.	Shall recognize that one can have multiple identities and multiple loyalties (p. 36, 38)
4.	Shall never extend a blind support to any of their identities. One shall remain faithful to justice, dignity, equality and criticize and demonstrate against government [when justified] (p. 38)
5.	Shall recognize the Muslim contribution in the construction of Europe (p. 81).
6.	Shall be Confident, through education, to develop better knowledge of oneself and one's history, to shape a conscience and intelligence that is confident and serene: that is both sure of itself and humble towards others. Ultimately, self-confidence shall be allied to confidence in others (p. 87).
7.	Shall have a reformist approach: to take Quaranic verses and recognize the various interpretations and suggest understandings and implementations that take into account context that one lives in (p. 63.)
8.	Shall control passion and emotion: have a balanced, critical and self-critical intervention (p. 14).
9.	Shall have a spiritual initiation, a quest for the liberation of their inner selves in a global world dominated by appearances and excessive possession and consumption (p. 33).
10.	Shall recognize the commonality with Judaism and Christianity and values advocated by humanist, atheists and agnostics (p. 13). Our values and hopes are more essential and numerous that differences (pp. 14, 20).
11.	Shall accept Muslim faith and Western culture, to be faithful to fundamental religious principles and have ownership to [sic] western culture (p. 42, 44).
12.	Shall become gifts and questions to our fellow citizens, Muslims must remain "questions": with their faith, their practices, their behaviour, and their day to day civic commitment, they must positively challenge their fellow citizens. (p. 116).
13.	Shall set up local initiatives where women and men of different religions, cultures and sensitivities create spaces for mutual knowledge and shared commitment: spaces for trust. (p. 94).
14.	Shall have shared projects, day-to-day mingling with fellow citizens and personal involvement to awaken the minds, bring awareness, and spurs the desire to go further, to understand better and to carry out a dialogue. One must really live and work *together* on *shared* projects (p. 115).
15.	Shall develop trust of their fellow citizens (p. 130).
16.	Shall see the West as the abode of witness versus the abode of war, the witness is no longer to a stranger in the other's world, neither is he linked to the other by a contract: he is at home, among his own kind, and he simply tries to be consistent with his beliefs and in harmony with the people with whom he lives

	and builds his future (p. 52).
17.	Shall understand that secular does not mean wiping of religion, it ensures equality, it means separation of church and state (p. 31).
18.	Shall contribute to a reformulation of the political questions of the day. (p. 126).

Source: Adapted from Ramadan (2009)

Millstones

The Millstone in the title of this thesis is intended to serve as a contrast to Ramadan's usage of Milestone in "Who will … give them some milestones which should permit them to find, consciously and freely, their own way?" (Ramadan, 1999, p. 2)

A millstone is "a large round stone used for grinding grain", my title uses the term figuratively to refer to "something that hinders or handicaps. Table 2.3 seeks to illustrate the essence of the figurative milestone that Ramadan talks about in his work on Muslim integration, by drawing contrasts with what Ramadan advocates. As sketched in Table 2.3, the millstone in the thesis title can take the form of an extreme, fundamental and literalist perspective on Islam and Muslims. It is grounded in the view which sees the Western countries as the abode of war. As explained by Sheikh Atiya Saqr, the former head of Al Azhar Fatwa committee,

> Muslim scholars maintain that the labeling of a country or place as *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) or *dar al-harb* (abode of war) revolved around the question of religious security. This means that if a Muslim practices Islam freely in his place of abode, then he will be considered as living in a *dar al-Islam*, even if he happens to live in a secular or non-Islamic country (Saqr, 2002, ¶ 2).

Some Muslim extremists do categorize the West as an abode of war, and view the West as territory that is not governed by the rule of Islam and which can thus be legitimately attacked (Moshayer, n.d.). Earlier in Chapter 1, this concept was discussed with regards to public apprehension of Islamic Schools being seen in accord with the

media image of *madrassas.* There is no evidence whatsoever to suspect that the London Islamic School was founded and is currently committed to perpetuate or advance a fundamentalist, *abode of war*, form of Islam. The fear is that it may be perceived as such, and that this perceptions would become a millstone. Table 2.3 seeks to illustrate this by comparing the images of Millstone and Milestone.

Table 2.3
Conceptual contrasts between Ramadan's Milestones and Millstones

Millstones	**Milestones**
Having a mindset of a discriminated against minority.	Thinking of oneself as among the majority -- as a citizen with the same and equal rights.
Victimized mindset	
Abode of war	Abode of witness or testimony
Mistrust of fellow citizens	Revolution of trust (p. 124)
	To become gifts and questions to fellow citizens (p. 115)
True loyalty citizenship	Critical loyalty citizenship
One identity	Multiple identities
Literalist/cultural	Reformist (p. 3)
Defensive/ apologetic approach (p. 62)	
	Deconstructing and reconstructing without disconnecting (p. 126)
	Reconciliation (p. 38, 129)

Adapted from Ramadan (2009).

Ramadan's discussion of the negative consequences of having a discriminated minority mindset in the settlement stage in Table 2.3 above illustrates how that can act as a millstone. In contrast he urges the embracing of a more positive attitude, explaining

> The universality of the message of Islam and the principle of integration that is at its heart invite us to integrate everything that is positive, to move forward selectively, and to act from within, as full members in our society, in order to promote what is good, to work against injustices and discrimination, and to develop alternatives. (Ramadan, 2004, p. 55)

Chapter Summary

The chapter opened with general statements about education and schooling and briefly considered how education is a more encompassing concept which subsumes the more specific process of schooling. Although each school has its own focus and may have more purposes than the five generic functions discussed in this chapter, education remains a major explicit pillar of schools. Besides the discussion on education and schools, Coleman and Ramadan's theories were utilized to prepare the ground for considering the purposes of Islamic schools in the West, specifically the London Islamic school. The three stages of Ramadan's model of integration were presented and discussed as a way of helping to assess where families, communities and institutions stand with regard to integration. The institution at the focus of this inquiry is the Islamic school in London, Ontario. But before describing LIS in more detail, the next chapter is intended to help clarify for the reader the nature and meaning of Islam and to provide an overview of Islamic educational traditions.

Chapter 3

ISLAM AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION

…to find the way of faithfulness in everyday life (Ramadan, 2004, p. 129)

Definitions

Hadith: reported and authenticated traditions about what the prophet said, did, or approved (Ramadan, p. 360).

Hayaa: comes from the Arabic word *hayat* meaning "life", being that which keeps one spiritually alive. Associated emotions include shame, humility, self-respect, honor, bashfulness, shyness (Introduction to Islamic character).

Ijtihad: literally "effort." It has become a technical term meaning the effort made by a jurist, either by extracting a law or a ruling from scriptural sources that are not explicit or by formulating a specific legal opinion in the absence of texts of reference (Ramadan, p. 360).

Fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence

Shariah: (1) on the basis of the root of the word, means "the way" ("the path leading to the source") and outlines a global conception of creation, existence, death, and the way of life it entails stemming from a normative reading and understanding of scriptural sources. It determines "how to be a Muslim."
(2) for the jurists, *Shariah* is the corpus of general principles of Islamic Law extracted from its two fundamental sources (the Qura'n and the *sunnah* (the tradition of the prophet)). It also uses other secondary sources (Ramadan, 2009, p. 360). So it is a broad code of conduct governing all aspects of life – from dietary rules to the wearing of the *hijab* – which Muslims can choose to adopt to varying degrees as a matter of personal conscience (Stewart, 2008).

Maqasid Al-shariah: objectives of the Islamic Way or the objectives of *shariah*

Shumuliyat al –Islam: literally means "the comprehensive character of Islamic teaching"

Tarbiyah: is a systematic, comprehensive (all aspects of the personality: spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, physical, etc), and continuous program of character development.

Tawheed: the oneness and unity of God.

Taqwa: God Consciousness.

Islam: Belief and practice

Islam is the last of the three monotheistic Abrahamic religions. The creed mainly constitutes a belief in one God, the acknowledgement of Mohammed as his prophet, and

belief in the Day of Judgment. Islam is currently the second largest religion in the world with about 1.57 billion adherents around the globe, which is 23 percent of the estimated world population of 6.8 billion in 2009 (Pew Research Center, 2009). Islam is an Arabic word with two meanings, one being to submit to the will of God, the other meaning coming from the root word "salima", which means surrender and peace (Emerick, 2002). "Islam is surrendering your will to Allah and finding peace" (p. 50). Followers of Islam are called Muslims. The definition of a Muslim is thus someone who believes in the one God, the prophet Mohammed, and the Day of Judgment (Emerick).

Currently, "more than forty-four Muslim countries extend from Senegal to Indonesia, [and] the message of Islam and significant Muslim populations may be found in such diverse environments as the [former] Soviet Union, China, India, England and the United States" (Esposito, 1998 p. 1). There are many clear indications of the increased presence of Muslims in North America. Mosques and Islamic institutions are apparent in every major city, women wearing Islamic style veils are commonly sighted, and Muslim holidays are gaining recognition in metropolitan cities such as Los Angeles, Toronto, New York and so forth. Stamps have been printed to commemorate Islamic holidays with photographs of renowned Muslims such as Malcolm X (Emerick, 2002). Islam has spread throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America, and regardless of where one works, encountering and interacting with Muslims is now more likely than ever before and, for many, inevitable.

Fundamentals

This section outlines the basic fundamentals of Islam, which are: (1) the five pillars of Islam; (2) the six articles of faith; (3) the fundamental objectives of Islam; and (4) the emblematic character of Islam.

The five pillars of Islam that every practicing Muslim follows are as follows:

(1) the declaration of faith "to believe in God and the prophet Mohammed as the final messenger",
(2) the five daily prayers,
(3) fasting during the month of Ramadan,
(4) alms giving, and
(5) performing pilgrimage for those who are capable physically and financially.

The first pillar "affirms Islam's absolute monotheism, an unshakable and uncompromising faith in the oneness or unity (*Tawheed*) of God" (Esposito, 1998, p. 88). The concept of *Tawheed* is essential to being a Muslim.

> God does not forgive anyone for associating something with Him, while he does forgive whomever He wishes for anything else. (Quran 4:48)

The five pillars all require Muslims to engage in activities considered to constitute an outward manifestation of an adherent's belief. The six articles of faith listed below are an inward commitment to Islam that does not require manifestation through action: "acceptance of these beliefs renders one a believer (*Mumin*); to reject them is to be an unbeliever *(Kafir)"* (Esposito, 1998, p. 68). The six articles are,

(1) belief in God,
(2) belief in the angels,
(3) belief in the scriptures (the Articles of Abraham, the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Quran),
(4) belief in the prophets (from Adam to Mohammad),
(5) belief in the day of judgment
(6) belief in predestination.

In Islam, "the purpose of life is not simply to affirm but to actualize; not simply to profess belief in God but to realize God's will ... . Faith without works is empty, without

merit; indeed, it is the Book of Deeds that will be the basis for divine Judgment" (Esposito, 1998, p. 69)

The five pillars, especially the declaration of faith (the first pillar stated above) affirms one as a Muslim, and *shariah* shows "how to be and remain Muslim" (Ramadan, 2004, p. 32). Besides the articles of faith and the pillars of Islam, *Maqasid al shariah*, which means the objectives of the Islamic Way, has three classes. The first class lays out the five objectives called *daruriyat* "the essentials", which are protection of faith, life, lineage, intellect and property. These five interests are significant and "essential to normal order in society as well as to the survival and spiritual well being of individuals, so much so that their destruction and collapse will precipitate chaos and collapse of normal order in society"(Kamali, 2005, p. 3). The second set of objectives is *hajjiyat* "complementary interests", referring to standards and steps that remove or minimize hardship and make life easier. The third class is *tahsiniyat,* "the embellishments", which seek "to attain refinement and perfection in the customs and conduct of people at all levels of achievement" (Kamali, 2005, p.3). *Maqasid al shariah* is pertinent to my inquiry into the London Islamic School because students are expected to experience the "way of Islam" – the essentials, the complementary interests – as well as the embellishments in the life and learning of the school. Taking this a step further, Islamic jurisprudence is constructed and crystallized using the principles of *Maqasid al shariah*. Ramadan says that the three tiers of objectives identified above "contain all that can be thought of relating to the human *maslaha* (public interests) for a human being as much as a worshipper, and this categorization leads neither to debate nor to polemics" (Ramadan, 1999, p. 77). This was discussed when considering Tariq Ramadan's work on Muslim

immigrants in Chapter 2 where he calls on Muslims to reappropriate and clarify Islamic terminologies. Such a discourse would help one get a better understanding and mastery of Islamic concepts by engaging in a critical debate which would relate then to one's understanding of the "legal framework of Western societies" (2009, p. 57). When considered in the context of some more traditional approaches Ramadan is essentially promoting a paradigm shift by proposing that

> ... all the laws that protect human life and dignity, promote justice and equality, enforce respect of Nature, and so on, are my *shariah* implemented in my society, even though this is not a Muslim majority society or those laws have not been devised and produced by Muslim scholars. I follow the Way since those laws enable me to be faithful to its fundamental objectives and therefore to be faithful to Islam's message and principles. (Ramadan, 2009, p. 57)

Students in Islamic schools such as LIS may not identify such experiences according to the accepted terminology in the three tiered system given above, but they are nonetheless expected to get a sense of "the way of Islam." Ramadan suggests integrative approaches to help with one's – students and older immigrants – multiple identities as Muslims and Canadian youth. As discussed further in the following chapter, activities at LIS intended to introduce students to Islam are primarily concerned with inculcating the five pillars. For instance, during the month of Ramadan students in the primary grades (K–3) fast half days from dawn to noon, as opposed to the prescribed dawn to dusk to help prepare them for their future fasting endeavors. This adaptation is justified as a complementary interest or embellishment. Also, when performing their five daily prayers, students at LIS perform their afternoon prayers at school. One of the rituals to prepare for prayers is ablution, which requires one to rinse the mouth, wash the face and hands up to the elbows, and also wash the feet. There is an established complementary

understanding in jurisprudence that one can wipe over one's socks for convenience, but only if one has performed a full ablution before putting on one's socks, Authentic scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah have confirmed the permissibility (Kutty, 2003). The students are socialized into these and other expectations and exceptions by living these moments daily in their school environment so they can acquire basic understanding of their religion and its rituals.

Islam is not monolithic

There is one single Islam when it comes to fundamentals such as the pillars of Islam and the articles of faith as outlined above. "Islam is one and unites all traditions (both *Sunni* and *Shia)* on the basis of the Quranic revelation and of prophetic traditions (*sunnah*) that set the common framework and principles" (Ramadan, 1999, p. 41). However, Islam has a concept called *shumuliyat al Islam,* which literally means "the comprehensive character of Islamic teaching" which touches on all aspects of one's life and the world in general. When Muslims refer to Islam, they see it as a "way of life" due to its pervasive nature. But one source does not necessarily mean "similarity of approach" (Ramadan, 2004, p. 34); Muslims follow the Quran, the *sunnah* and the state of the world (*al-waqi*),

> Sustained by faith, strong in reasoning ability and guided by ethical injunctions, a believing consciousness must live within his own time, at the heart of his society, among other human beings and put his energy into his constant dialectical movement between the essential principles determined by Revelation and actual circumstances. (p.37)

The scholar Ibn al Qayyim al-Jawziyya (753) crystallized the Islamic understanding in the following statement:

> The principles and fundamentals of *shariah* concerning the injunctions and the good of humankind in this life and the next are all based on justice, mercy, the good of man, and wisdom. Every situation in which

> justice succumbs to tyranny, mercy to cruelty, goodness to corruption, wisdom to foolishness, has nothing in common with the *shariah*, even if it is the result of an allegorical interpretation. For the *shariah* is the justice of God among His servants, the mercy of God among His creatures, His shadow upon His earth, and His wisdom, which is both the proof of His own existence and the best witness to the authenticity of His prophet." (p. 1)

Such principles also include a variety of interpretations and "plurality of cultures." Indeed, Islam's inherent universality necessitates some diversity (Ramdan, 1999, p. 5). *Shariah* stipulates that everything that is not against an established principle is considered to be Islamic (Ramadan, 2004, p. 54). In other words, "integrating the good from wherever it may come, which has made it possible for Muslims to settle in, and make their own, without contradiction, almost all the cultures of the countries in which they have established themselves, from South America to Asia, through West and North Africa (Ramadan, 2004, p. 54). The sources of *Shariah*, the Quran and prophetic tradition, permit "a plurality of readings (albeit such reading must, in order to be accepted, respect certain normative criteria" (Ramadan, 1999, p. 238).

There are many approaches that have been adapted by many groups. Each group will have "their respective postures vis-à-vis their manner of reading the sources – the status of the Text, the margins of interpretation, the degree of literality, the role of reason, etc., are significant measures that explain the differing and differentiated commitments of the various groups" (p. 238). Five major approaches are usually identified: (1) scholastic traditionalism which subsumes various different schools including Hanafi, Maliki, Salafi, Hanbali, Zadi, Ja'fari, and others; (2) Salafi traditionalism; (3) Salafi reformism; (4) political and literal Salafiyya; (5) Liberal or rationalist reformism (Ramadan, 2004, 24-29). Each of these major tendencies has its own interpretation on issues such as moon sighting (see below), political activism, ablution and other jurisprudential matters based

on their own history and their own understandings of the textual sources. For instance *Hijab* is the piece of cloth Muslim women wear to cover their hair. It comes from the Arabic word "*hajaba*" which means "to cover." The requirements of *hijab* as given by Sheikh Ahmad Kutty, a senior lecturer and Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto are five: (1) it should cover her whole body except face and hands; (2) it should be loose-fitting; (3) it should not be transparent or revealing; (4) it should not be an attire specifically worn by men only; (5) it should not be perfumed (Mostafa, 2006). If any attire fulfills the above conditions, it is deemed a proper *hijab* according to fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). Even so, each country, each city, and even each person can have their own way of fulfilling those conditions. Some women wear bright clothes, others stick to black; some tie their *hijab* in creative flowery shapes and others just pin it and tie it around. There are thus many ways of wearing the *hijab.* The fundamentals of Islam provide the guidelines, but different people and different cultures interpret or embody the *hijab* requirements differently. Furthermore, the fifth requirement becomes tricky and raises questions. What if the soap and deodorant one wears are perfumed? What about cream? This perhaps is a simple or medium level jurisprudential issue.

Other issues can be more complicated. One example concerns the beginning of the important fast of Ramadan, which is observed in the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. But Islam follows the lunar calendar within which the beginning of each month is indicated by the first appearance of the full moon. The moon is sighted in the east on a different day than the west. Does the Islamic month of Ramadan begin when the new moon appears in the Middle East or locally, for instance in London, Ontario? What if a

clear full moon is not seen? By whom should it be seen? Even with today's advanced technology, Muslims are divided on this matter.

Most Muslims in London, Ontario go with the Saudi moon sighting following the position adopted by the Director of the London Muslim Mosque's Board of Directors. Still, there are Muslims in London who start their Ramadan fast on a different day than the majority. Students at Islamic Schools live this debate every year at Ramadan. Also, they see the way girls wear their *hijab.* The requirements of *hijab* may not be not articulated in each Islamic studies classroom, but the students definitely get opportunities to see the variety of *hijab*-wearing in their fellow female students and ask questions. They experience the variety of ways people live Islam.

Emblematic character of Islam

Rights and duties in Islam are divided in two categories: (1) duties to God, "*ibadaat*", which include the five pillars of Islam mentioned above; and (2) duties to others, *"muamalat",* which mainly include social interaction (Esposito, 1998, p. 89). In terms of *muamalat*, social interaction, it is important to recognize the ultimate significance of the value system. Islam shares many values with other religions, such as honesty, compassion, truthfulness, and respect. A human state that is distinctly attributed to Islam but not exclusive to just Muslims is termed *hayaa* in Arabic. Words that capture the meaning of *hayaa* include shame, humility, self-respect, honor, bashfulness, shyness (Introduction to Islamic character, n.d). *Hayaa* comes from the Arabic word *hayat* meaning "life", being that which keeps one spiritually alive. *Hayaa* (ending with an 'a' rather than a 't') is an internal form of being alive, so that *hayaa* keeps the spirit, the soul and the conscience alive. *Hayaa*, and *tarbiyah* as discussed below, are not usually

mentioned in introductions to Islam but are mentioned here because of their relevance to Islamic education and schools.

Prophet Muhammad said: "Every religion has a distinct call, an emblematic quality. For Islam the emblematic quality is *hayaa*" (Hadith Database). As such, it is widely believed to be the cornerstone of Islam. In another narration the Prophet said, "*Haya* (modesty) and *Iman* (faith) are two that go together. If one is lifted, the other is also lifted" (Hadith Database). Jamaluddin Zarabazoni's comments in the *hadiths* on *hayaa* identify four manifestations of *hayaa*. First is *hayaa* from God, where a Muslim would have a sense of shame when he or she does something that would displease God. This level of shame is more dominant when one commits a sin alone, without the presence or knowledge of anyone else. The second dimension of *hayaa* is from the angels, those supernatural beings that are watching over us, this sense of shame coming from the other sets of eyes watching us. The third level of *hayaa* is toward other human beings. Interacting with other beings in a gentle, kind and compassionate manner requires *hayaa* (The Hadiths, 2002). This form of *Hayaa* features frequently in cross-gender interactions. Normative expectations for appropriate cross gender interactions in Islam are based on mutual respect and non-interference, and this also applies to teacher-student interactions. The last dimension is the *hayaa* towards oneself, to be ashamed of oneself when one is acting inappropriately (The Hadiths, 2002).

Summary

This section gave an overview of the basic definition of Islam, its beliefs and practices, following with the mention of the emblematic and distinguishing character of Islam identified as *hayaa* by a prophetic tradition. When stating the basics and the

fundamentals, it is important to be cognizant of Islam's plurality and diversity. Chapter 2 provided a general discussion of education and schooling. This chapter continues by exploring aspects of Islamic education.

Traditions in Islamic Education

The first word revealed to the prophet Mohammed by angel Gabriel in 610 CE was "Read": "Read in the name of your lord who has created [all] things" (Quran, 96:1)

From the beginning, then, reading and acquiring knowledge became an exceptionally sacrosanct quality within Islamic tradition and practice, in the words of Afsaruddin (n.d, p. 1), associate professor in Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. Afsaruddin continues by pointing to a pertinent *hadith* (saying of the prophet) approved by all scholars, which states that "The pursuit of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim, male or female." Al-Hibri and El Habti (2006) expand on this as follows:

> The Qur'an exhorts Muslims, men and women, to seek education and knowledge. In particular, the prophetic tradition in the matter is rich and clear about women's right to knowledge and education. There is a general agreement among Muslim scholars that educating women is a duty, not just an option or luxury. It is also a consequence of the equal religious duties and obligations incumbent upon both males and females. Since understanding one's religion is *fardh ayn* (a duty that is incumbent on each Muslim), as al-Ghazali put it, Muslim women, just like men, require full access to religious education. Indeed, history makes clear that the religious education of women in early Islam proceeded hand in hand with that of men. Women entered into debates with men about the proper interpretation of the Qur'an and the *hadith* as well as the significance of events in the world around them. Women also were major reporters of *hadith*. As a result, many prominent men came to them for religious education and guidance. (p. 211)

Another *hadith* pertinent to knowledge is "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets", indicating that it is not only the acquisition of knowledge which is important, but also its dissemination (Afsaruddin, n.d., p. 1).

For the first three centuries after the revelation in 610 CE, the major center of education in Islam was the mosque. The Prophet's mosque in Medina (currently in Saudi Arabia) was the main area for "private and public worship and for formal instruction in religious law and related fields" (Afsaruddin, n.d., p. 2). Formal instruction took place either inside the mosque or in the courtyard with students sitting with Mohammed, and at times the scholars were women. Aisha for instance, the Prophet's wife, was considered to be one of the foremost scholars of Islam's early age with some historians crediting up to one-quarter of the Islamic *shariah* (Islamic religious law), to the collection of *hadiths* derived from her narrations (Goodwin, 1994).

By the tenth century a hostel had been established close to the mosque in Iraq and similar facilities appeared in other provinces of the Islamic world. These where places where students would gather for the intensive instruction needed to become a religious scholar. *Madrassas* became established with the development of the four schools of thought (mentioned earlier in this Chapter with respect to Islam is not monolithic) and Islamic law (s*hariah*) in the tenth and eleventh century. These "places of study" (*madrassas* in Arabic) were where scholars such as Abu-Hamid al Ghazali, Salahuddin Al ayubbi (Saladin in the West) went to school in Syria and Egypt (Afsaruddin, n.d., p. 3)

> Henceforth, the *madrasa* became the principal venue and vehicle for the transmission of religious education in the major urban centers of the Islamic world, such as Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, and Jerusalem. It was the institution of higher learning comparable to a modern college of which it was its precursor... (Afsaruddin, n.d., p. 4)

Libraries, which had initially been located inside mosques, also began to spread into the public domain making books on logic, philosophy, music, astronomy, geometry, medicine and alchemy more available.

The curricula of *madrassa* consisted of two categories of education: (1) *ulum al naqliya* (transmitted sciences) which was essential religious instruction based on the Quran, *hadith* and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence); and (2) *ulum aqiliya* (rational sciences), which primarily included philosophy, math and natural science and which was heavily influenced by Greek scholarship. Makdisi, according to Afsaruddin, in his book *The Rise of Colleges: institutions of learning in Islam and the West (1981)* identifies the sequence of learning as beginning with the Qur'an, *hadith*, then Qur'anic sciences such as the study of exegesis, variant readings of the text, and *hadith* sciences, which involved the study of the biographies of the *hadith* transmitters. The next stage would be to study two "foundational sciences:"

> *usul al-din*, referring to the principles or sources of religion, and *usul al-fiqh*, the sources, principles, and methodology of jurisprudence. The student would additionally learn the law of the *madhhab* (school of law) he was affiliated with, the points of difference (Ar. *khilaf*) within the same *madhhab* and between the four schools of law, and dialectic (Ar. *jadal*), also called disputation (Ar. *munazara*). Following *dialectic* came the study of *adab* or belles-lettres, including poetry, prosody, and grammar. (Afsaruddin, n.d., p. 5)

Methods of instruction and learning could be informal and unstructured, based on the tendencies of the teacher and student, but there were more formal pedagogic expectations in the case of Quran and *hadith* where instructors would lecture and dictate and the student was expected to memorize and understand. The word *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) literally means "understanding." In legal studies disputation was the main method of instruction. This was encouraged by the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid who

hosted hearings at his court. This form of learning often attracted audiences for many hours (p. 7).

In summary, while Islamic educational traditions placed great emphasis on religious instruction and interpretation, broadly understood, there was also a strong thread of other knowledge, including literature, math and science. Moreover, and contrary to modern views, women were included in educational activities from the beginning, or at least not formally excluded. Finally, although implicit in the accounts reviewed it appears that, as in the West during the Middle Ages, formal education was normally only available to those young adults whose families could afford the substantial costs, or whose potential had attracted the attention of the powerful.

Ramadan and Islamic education

Ramadan expresses the concern that families in the West have with respect to passing Islamic values on to their children by asking "how can the flame of faith, the light of spiritual life, and faithfulness to the teachings of Islam be preserved in environments that no longer refer to God and in educational systems that have little to say about religions?" (Ramadan, 2004, p. 126). He acknowledges that immigrant families may have a tradition of having children participate in mosque-based, largely informal "*madrassa*-type" educational activities in their homelands (p. 126). Ramadan nonetheless recognizes that such activities involve the rote and technical memorization of prophetic traditions, and rules without a real spiritual dimension, devoid of critical understanding and analysis (p. 127). He recognizes that this approach to Islamic education is against the Islamic message because spirituality is being reduced to ritual activities, and the life of the prophet is also reduced to "a series of dates and events" which disconnect the youth

from loving the prophet. Reliance on such activities has brought up a generation of youth who have memorized long chapters of the Quran, but who have developed no informed understandings that could be manifest in their outward behavior. Ramadan sets a standard to help understand the objectives of Islamic education in the West when he says, "if the objective is to stop importing pedagogical methods and curricula from countries of origin and to think of a project adapted to the realities of our societies, we still need to know the aims of this education" (Ramadan, 2004, p. 128). Ramadan is not suggesting a "new Islam": on the contrary, he recommends using the universality and comprehensive character of Islam to adapt to its environment without losing its universal principles in the Quran and the *sunnah*.

The objectives of Islamic education as delineated by Ramadan are: (1) the education of the heart which is to be conscious of God (*taqwa*) and *hayaa* to recognize our responsibilities towards "ourselves, our bodies, our relatives, our communities, and the human family at large;" (2) the education of the mind which is to have an understanding of the primary sources of Islam (Quran and *sunnah*), having an awareness of one's surroundings to, as the epigraph of this chapter states "find the way of faithfulness in everyday life'" and (3) joining the education of the heart and the mind to allow for personal growth (Ramadan, 2004, p.129). Ramadan emphasizes the study of environment and people to help with integration rather than creating isolation as some might imagine is suggested in the second objective.

***Tarbiyah* and Islamic education**

Ministries of Education in Arab countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are called the Ministry of Education and *tarbiyah*. *Tarbiyah* is used by Muslim educators and

parents to discuss the process and progress of a child's education. As suggested by Tauhidi (2001), *tarbiyah* is a systematic, comprehensive (all aspects of the personality: spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, physical), and continuous program of character development (Tauhidi, 2001). The word *tarbiyah* comes from the Arabic root *raba'*, meaning to grow or to increase. The application to education means to nurture children toward wholeness, completeness, or a God-centered consciousness (*taqwa*) (Memon, 2009, p. 294). I am introducing *tarbiyah* in this segment because of its wide usage when it comes to character education and the inculcation of virtues.

Dawud Tauhidi (2001) says that *tarbiyah* emerges from the environment – the Milieu – which will influence the socialization functions of schooling as discussed in Chapter 2. Tauhidi is a native of Philadelphia. He completed his master's degree in Islamic Studies at the University of Michigan and his doctorate in 1985 and went on to institute "The Tarbiyah Project," with the aim of reforming Islamic Education in North America. The project views *tarbiyah* as being based on the view that the goal of Islamic education is not to fill our children's minds with information "about" Islam, but rather to teach them what it means to "be" Muslims (Tarbiyah Project, 2001, p. 2). This document articulates the mission of Islam as being "to positively effect and transform the world, and that the purpose of Islamic education is to prepare young men and women capable for carrying out this mission" (p. 3). Ramadan uses the word transformation as well, particularly in conjunction with the post-integration Stage 3 of his integration model (Table 2.3). He suggests an intellectual evolution, a reformist approach, explaining "efforts are required in many fields and we must get involved, steadfastly and

consistently, in accelerating and accompanying the transformation process" (Ramadan, 2009, p. 113).

Tauhid established his project because of what he saw as deficiencies in some approaches to Islamic studies, Quran and Arabic courses that were being used in Islamic schools in North America (Tauhidi, 2001). His project is based on Islamic values education with a focus on nine content areas considered crucial to character development, these being "beliefs, duties, values, manners, rights and responsibilities, feelings, attitudes and moral literacy skills" which he claims was the essence of the prophetic tradition (Tarbiyah Project, 2001, p. 6). He hopes to achieve this by critically assessing traditional ways of teaching religious subjects and by revisiting "how and what we teach our children about Islam" (p. 1). He calls for "authentic instruction" in four focus areas: higher-order thinking, deep knowledge, substantive conversations, and real-world connections. Moreover, the project also has rigorous "authentic assessment" based on organization of information, consideration of alternatives, disciplinary content, disciplinary process, elaborated communications, connection to the world and the audience beyond the school (Tarbiyah Project, 2001, p. 5). This appears congruent with Ramadan's integrative and post integrative approach, especially as Tauhidi's approach also recognizes the importance of integration into the larger society, as illustrated in his two last assessment criteria, connection to the world and audience beyond the classroom together with expectation that students will come to "communicate their knowledge, present a product or take some action for an audience beyond the classroom" (p. 5).

This approach to *tarbiyah* requires the course of study to be meaningful and relevant for the students and for instruction to be integrative —"encompassing and

engaging the whole child" to make it "tawheedic" [oneness of God], value-based, challenging and active (p. 3-4). This is one approach to teaching *tarbiyah* in Islamic schools, but it is not obligatory. Schools can choose other approaches such as Pillars of Power, a program focused on the basic pillars of Islam with respect to the concepts, values, understanding and application (p. 14). Another example is the Children for Charity Program which is a service-learning "of systematic charity work and fundraising by students," this is intended to instill in the students social responsibility and "provide... them with opportunities to develop the importance of values of giving and sharing, collective decision making (*shurah*), prioritizing, cooperation, and other core values" (Tauhidi, 2001, p. 15). The main point to be made is that *tarbiyah* – education into Islamic character – is widely accepted as an indispensible part of a Muslim child's education. The Tarbiyah Project provides one way to do this which appears to conform to Ramadan's recommendations. One particularly interesting aspect of Tauhid's project is that it uses and embodies modern curriculum and pedagogic ideas to provide what is essentially an "off the shelf" instructional package to deliver instruction in *tarbiyah*. As such, it could be taken as a living example of Ramadan's goal of adapting essential Islamic instructional goals to modern Western practices.

Ramadan says that if Islamic institutions are to "rise to the criteria of openness, contextualization, and interaction with the surrounding society," that will be needed to realize the promise of integration and post-integration (Ramadan, 2004, p. 133). Other desirable expectations articulated by Ramadan in developing his post-integration approach that appear applicable to education and schooling are articulated in Table 2.2 in Chapter 2, and are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Chapter Summary

This chapter, as the title indicated, was presented in two parts: Islam and Islamic education. I started out with the basic definitions of Islam such as *fiqh*, *hadith* and *shariah*. I then gave an overview of the beliefs and practices of Islam which entailed the fundamental five pillars, six articles of faith and three tiers of *Maqasid al shariah*. After laying the groundwork for the basics, I wanted the reader to recognize the plurality of Islam, to see that it is not a monolithic religion, even though the fundamentals are the same. Islam promotes diversity and can be integrated to any culture. This is where the comprehensive character of Islamic teaching was introduced to illustrate that the source of Islam is one but the approaches are many. The segment on Islam ended by outlining what the Prophet identified as the emblematic character of Islam: *hayaa*, the development of which will be aided by appropriate education and *tarbiyah*, character development.

The discussion on Islamic education began with a brief overview of the traditions in Islamic education and culminated with a summary of Ramadan's views, especially as they relate to the concept of *tarbiyah* and character education.

Chapter 4

THE LONDON ISLAMIC SCHOOL: HISTORY, LIFE AND LEARNING

> Muslim youth, I think, [are] trying to find the balance ... there are so many different parts of you; there is the Muslim part, then there is the cultural, and then there is also being Canadian. So you want to try to find the balance that fits your life, and sometimes it can be a really big struggle, you end up upsetting your parents because you want to be more Canadian, or if you're more Muslim then you feel like you're kind of excluded or you can't participate in the things that society views as cool or fun or as norms, and trying to fit religion in your life, that's like one of the biggest things ... how much you want to put religion in your life, at least that's what I find in my life, with Islam. (LIS Graduate Student 2)

This chapter seeks to provide answers to Research Questions 2, what is the history of the London Islamic School? And 3, what is life and learning like at LIS? The first section concentrates on the founding of the school, drawing on documents made available by members of the current board of governors, enriched with memories shared by senior members of the school community, either during interviews conducted during my inquiry or during less formal discussions. The second section draws on my personal observations and responses to interview questions from key informants who describe the organization of a typical day at LIS, selected special events, expected standards of behavior among the students, and how these are encouraged. The third and final section is devoted to describing learning activities at LIS, including the program of study and religious observances.

History of London Islamic School

Establishment

London Islamic School was opened in 1996 as indicated by a public advertisement authorized by the Board of Directors. Today LIS is a properly registered

private K-8 day school that is in full compliance with Ontario's Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines (London Islamic School, 2008). The school grew rapidly from about 40 students in 1996 to accommodate 189 students and 23 staff members by September of 2009. Current class sizes are between 12 and 28 students, with an assistant in classes of over 25 students. There are ten class rooms in the building, 2 staff rooms, 1 principal's room, 1 secretary's office, 1 library, 1 Gym and 1 kitchen. It is anticipated that enrolment will continue to increase at least in the near future. The school is located adjacent to the London Muslim Mosque and operates under the Mosque's jurisdiction. The London Islamic School numbers among the 37 Islamic schools in the province of 869 independent schools (Van Pelt, Allison & Allison, 2007, p. 9).

I looked through a collection of papers, newspaper articles, advertisements, community newsletters, floor plans and pictures passed to me in response to my request for documents on how and why LIS was established. There were minutes from planning meetings in1984 and a feasibility study that was conducted the same year. I was pleasantly surprised with all the documentation that I received. I had not known such papers existed.

The 1984 feasibility study investigated programs and facilities the Muslim community in London and area needed and wanted. When I asked about who commissioned it and how many individuals participated in the study, a member of the Board of Directors explained:

> It was commissioned by the Board of Directors of the Mosque, and I'm sorry I don't know how many people were surveyed, but I recall that this survey was completed by a "good number" of the members of the community at that time. So we felt that it reflected well the sentiments of the community.

The report of the study begins “The Muslim community in London, Ontario began around the turn of the century with the immigration from Lebanon” (LMM Feasibility study, 1984, p.1). The study continued to say that groups from other areas, such as South Asia, the Middle East, East Africa and Yugoslavia, moved to London and its surrounding area. The population of the Muslim community in 1984 was estimated to be around 15,000. The feasibility study did not indicate the number of participants who were surveyed or how they were selected. The study requested participants to identify facilities they would like to see erected for the Muslim community. Respondents indentified five main facilities: a Hall (or Gym), a school (education facilities), funeral facilities (cemetery facilities), ladies’ prayer facilities and parking. The participants who prioritized these facilities in terms of the most important to the least were divided into three age groups: elders, married couples and youth. Generally, the school and the gymnasium were the first priorities by all groups. The elders and married couples showed interest in the funeral facilities as a third priority. Today all three facilities, full-time school, gymnasium, and cemetery are well established.

The understanding in the community is that the feasibility study conducted at the time was the basis for the establishment of these facilities. The study recognized that constraints embedded in “site limitations, community size and [the] community’s ability to raise funds limits the program…”, concluding that “longer term objectives will be phased to fit both the community’s financial ability and their changing needs” (p. 4). The study mentioned the possibility of establishing a community center adjacent to the mosque that would include a gym on the model of the YMCA or the YWHA (Young Women’s Hebrew Association), explaining “Islamic social values are quite similar to

those religions of the Book, namely Christianity and Judaism" (p. 4). Later in the study the idea of the community center was changed to a multi-purpose space referred to as a "Hall or Gym", for "sports and banquets" with locker rooms, kitchen and a storage room (p. 5). I find it interesting that the study has references to the common traditions, values and sacred literature that Muslims share with other faiths of The Book. Such a statement leads me to believe that the Muslim community at the time, twenty-five years ago, did not want to cocoon itself and isolate the people from the larger community, but was trying to draw on commonalities while seeking ways to maintain their Muslim identity, in ways that conform to Ramadan's views on integration. The objective, even back then, was integration rather than isolation or assimilation. This was mentioned in my interview with one of the board members who was not directly involved in the founding, but remembers the construction of the school and the discussions revolving around the purposes: Education, faith and integration, he said. "They [those that helped with establishing the school] had a passion for education; they valued the school, not just academically but the overall upbringing of the children" (BF4).

A brochure was circulated to encourage donations from the Muslim community to build the school which included the statistics shown in Table 4.1

Table 4.1
Descriptive data in brochure circulated in 1996

-Population:	310,000
-Muslim Population:	10,000
-Muslim Population within 50 Miles Radius:	15,000-20,000
-Number of Mosques:	One Mosque
-Islamic Schools:	None

The brochure also included information on the history of the Muslim Community, stating that "Muslims began to arrive in London, Ontario in the late 1800's.... in 1956 a building was purchased by the small community and renovated for use as a mosque.... in 1962 with only 17 families in London a decision was made to build a new mosque after a fire destroyed the renovated building…this would be the first mosque to be built in Ontario and the second in all of Canada" (Brochure, 1993). The brochure clearly reflected the choice made by the demographic groups in the study, declaring:

> the Islamic school has become the main objective for our community so that future generations will have a facility that will serve their religious, educational, social and cultural needs." It further elaborated that "students will have an opportunity to be educated while at the same time gain knowledge of their faith and make lifetime contacts with many other Muslim children. (Brochure, 1993, p.2)

> Our goal is to see a full-time Islamic school in London for our children to grow up with strength in faith and bonds with their community. (Brochure, 1993, p. 2)

The Board members who were interviewed were asked a sub-question about the founding vision for the school. One founding member mentioned disagreement among the older members of the community and the young couples:

> … having an Islamic school in London has been a great inspiration for many many years. There was a divide between two [cohorts]. The older community thought a weekend school is sufficient but the younger generation wanted a full-day. They thought Islamic school is the answer to the challenges to build an Islamic environment and the generation of Muslims who would lead the Islam in North America [sic]. It started in 91 to raise funds, started construction in 93 and finished 96. The vision was articulated after the school was erected. We started to consider specific vision, is not just that to produced Muslim citizen of tomorrow, the leaders of tomorrow for the larger community. But also someone that will contribute and bringing the Muslim values to the larger London community. (BM2)

Another board member articulated the vision in a more precise manner:

> … very simply [the current vision is] quality of education and academics in Islamic teachings and education and personal growth. By personal growth I mean acquiring the skills and knowledge that one needs while retaining their identity. That is an important issue. Other schools don't have that, the identity part…you keep your identity at private religious school, our focus in a homogenous concept. (BM3)

There is one other elementary Islamic school in London, Ontario. Al Taqwa Islamic School is also full time day school located in East London and run by one member of the Muslim community. The facility is smaller than LIS, and there is little information about its history on the school's website.

Life at London Islamic School

A total of 8 out of the 23 staff members (35 percent) are members in good standing of the Ontario College of Teachers [OCT]. Six of the 23 staff work with kindergarten students. There are two JK and one SK classes and each has a teacher and an assistant. Two of the staff at this level have their OCT qualification. From Grades 1 to 8, there are seven teachers (Grade 7/8 is a split class), and one assistant for both Grade 1 and 2, due to their large class sizes of over 25 students. Five of these seven teachers are OCT qualified. The Teachers who teach Arabic, Quran and Islamic Studies are not OCT certified. The LIS website claims: "Virtually all LIS teachers have their Ontario Teacher Certification (OTC)" (London Islamic School, 2010).

LIS has a Parent Council, similar to public schools, that meets regularly throughout the year to keep the parents of the school informed and engaged. The school also has a 7 member Board of Directors, 4 of whom were interviewed during the course of my study. Three members of the Board who work closely with the school's day to day operation are professional educators employed by the Thames Valley Board of

Education; two are elementary teachers and one is a secondary school Vice Principal. Students from any ethnic or cultural background are welcome at LIS, but all students are expected to participate in the Islamic studies and observances that are at the heart of the school's culture and mission. All parents pay fees. While various discounts and supplements are available according to financial circumstances of the paremts, the cost of attending LIS is a not insubstantial burden for many families: the basic rate in 2010 being $275 per child per month (London Islamic School, 2010).

There are a few distinct features of this school that one does not find in the public system, mainly because it adheres to the Islamic faith. First, the school has three extra classes that are directly related to Islam: Quran, Islamic Studies and Arabic Studies. Second, all staff are Muslims. Third, all female staff and all female students above and including those in Grade 4 wear the *hijab* (the veil). Fourth, school uniform is mandatory. The school uniform for girls is long and loose fitting, while boys wear pants and a shirt that are also loose fitting. Students in Grade 4 and beyond participate in prayers every day in the afternoon, in congregation, in the Gym, for 20 minutes. On Fridays, staff and students participate in the Friday congregation with the Muslim community at large. The intent is for the students to live and learn "how to be and remain Muslim" which is by definition what *shariah* entails, as mentioned by Ramadan in Chapter 3.

LIS follows a normal two recesses and one lunch schedule day plan. The school starts at 8:25 am and ends at 3:20 pm, with 9 periods of 40 minutes each. On Fridays the instructional day runs from 8:25 to 2:30pm, when prayers begin. Students meet at morning line-up, starting their day with prayers and a recitation from the Quran in an assembly usually held in the Gym in the winters and in the school yard in the fall, spring

and summer. Every month the school has a Student of the Month assembly where one or two students are recognized from each grade. Some teachers take this opportunity to present songs or skits that their classes have been working on during that month, celebrating collective achievements. This is discussed further later in this chapter.

In terms of special events, the school is part of many contests with the wider community such as the Jump rope for heart, MS Readathon, London District Science and Technology Fair, London-Middlesex Health Unit Contests, All Science Challenge, Gauss Math Challenge, Mathmatica, as listed in Table 4.1. As in many other independent schools, regular routines include monthly board of directors meeting and monthly staff meetings. A newsletter goes home every month to inform the parents of the activities at the school.

The core program of studies is based on the Ontario Curriculum and includes English, Math, Science, Social Studies, French, Physical Education and Art. All classes are co-educational except for Grade 6 and 7/8 Physical Education. One of the board members who works in the public school system said that the dedication of the teachers for professional development and their hard work is similar at LIS to that which exists in public schools. Furthermore,

> Now there is a vision of moving over to the next phase, to try see it as an established school, to make progress.... now the focus is on academic progress and establishing a name for the school, before there were social implications and importance of having the school. Now there is a move towards results and achievement. (BF4)

LIS has two regular visitors throughout the year, a school Nurse who is employed by the London and Middlesex Health Unit and who has been working with the school for about ten years, and a constable assigned by the London Police Department, who has been with the school for five years. The current constable followed another gentleman

who used to work with the school. Both these individuals help to create a sense of safety in the school. The nurse chairs the Health Squad meetings which take place once every month. She described her capacity in an interview as "a public health nurse, promoting health, leadership and consultation" regarding health and learning. Some of the activities of the Health Squad are health campaigns such as "Finding Vitamin C" and "Let's go Bananas" and the Anti-Bullying program. The school Nurse noted that:

> You have to teach the core subjects of Ontario curriculum. You like to have fun, you like to promote Health. It doesn't mean phys-ed is not promoted here and physical activity. It is big time, but you just don't have that integration with other schools. You're more segregated, but you're doing the best you can. But it's hard because of culture and what not, to, when you're a private school ... you know, you like to have contests, you like to have school spirits... you have student grad; you have a board of directors which is like your school board. Not as big as the other boards, but you do have people over you that are higher up than the principal. You like to have guest speakers, but you work just as hard as any other school on science and technology, on preparing kids for math... You do a lot for charity. I think that's similar to other schools I would say...And you do, with Ramadan and all other different times, part of your faith is charity, helping others. I would say all schools are socially conscious.

The school has a principal and this year (2010) a [part-time] vice-principal. The governing board and administrators have adopted policies that tighten the bonds between the school and its supporting community by insulating the school from its immediate physical environment. School buildings are usually locked, even during school hours, and entry and exit are monitored by cameras. If someone wants to enter the school during business hours, they must ring the bell for an administrator or custodian to open the door for them. These strict measures were implemented in the interests of safety, but they have had the effect of amplifying the sense of distinct identify for school members and visitors. Vending machines, vulgar words, magazines with scantily clad ladies or men, and unapproved music and electronic gadgets are prohibited on school property because

they are seen as having negative effects. Positive influences that meet the expectations of the Islamic environment such as National Geographic magazine, The Economist, the London Fee Press and specific types of popular music such as that by Maher Zain, Cat Stevens (also known as Yusuf Islam), Sami Yusuf and others, are all welcomed and celebrated in the school. Such controls over the positive and negative effects create norms for the school. Parents send their children to this school experience the "way of Islam" as described in Chapter 3 with regards to living *Maqasid al shariah*, which governs the day-to-day activities of a Muslim. As described in my interview with Teacher 5, this includes,

> ...to educate our youth about Islam and let them have the experience to be in an Islamic environment. To feel what Islam means, not just to memorize it, but to feel it, to live it in their heart and their everyday activities.

A board member gave an example of this:

> ... Like, you want to pray? You need to know how to pray, how to make *wudu* (ablution), you have to know the times of prayers. It's acquiring knowledge; this is the basics so as to prepare children to be Muslims of tomorrow.... My son was living with me and I did everything in my capacity to make sure that he's a practicing Muslim. Now the challenges I'm thinking every time is that, 'did I prepare my son to be a good Muslim father?' 'Did I prepare my daughter to be a good Muslim daughter?' So the school helps to prepare my child outside the home (BM1).

Although LIS has incorporated these features as well a staff modeling good Islamic behavior and incorporating Islamic terms in their communication and instructions, the school did not have a systematic, school-wide, and overarching system for character education until 2009-2010. In my first year teaching there (2008-2009), a school-wide initiative was adopted to remind students of Islamic values and to guide their inner moral compass. One of the teachers suggested that we follow a book given to her by her deaf son's therapist entitled *Building Moral Intelligence* by Michele Borba (2001).

There are seven virtues listed in the book and the school started to celebrate a virtue a month. The staff decided to call the campaign "Character of the Month." This was part of a broader attempt to institute a systematic *tarbiyah* program in the school. The teachers endorsed this campaign because they saw it as necessary given the importance of character education in Islam, and because of some reoccurring incidences of profanity and lack of respect amongst students. The Tarbiyah Project developed by Dawud Tauhidi (Year) as outlined in the previous chapter includes a similar campaign called the "Value of the Month" as one of its programs to inculcate the Islamic values. Tauhidi does not list any specific values, but rather refers to a "core value":

> Each month, the school focuses on one core value. This program provided the school with a values-based theme for each month. Teachers are requested and expected to find "teachable moments", or opportunities, to incorporate the month's theme into the curriculum, including language arts, social studies, science and Islamic studies. Teachers and students are encouraged to find and create stories, poems, songs and artwork that tie into the month's theme. (Tauhidi Project, 2001, p. 14)

Each month a value from Borba's book is printed on labels for the 23 staff, cut out, and laminated for them to wear throughout the month. During morning line up, an excerpt on the Character of that Month is delivered in the "radio-show", which is a presentation organized by a designated class each day. The student host of the radio-show poses a Question and the person with the correct answer gets a prize and their name is announced. This fostered a climate of attentive listening during the shows. Each class from Grade 4 and up was responsible for organizing one day of the show; Grade 4 on Monday, Grade 5 on Tuesday and so on. At the end of the month the class that was most prepared, enthusiastic, and had a quote or remark on the Character of the Month would be recognized for being the winner of the radio-show for the month.

An example of how a class embedded the Character of the Month in their learning while meeting the expectations in the Ontario Curriculum occurred when the Grade 7/8 home room teacher presented a mural on the virtue Empathy as part of her art class. She dimmed the lights and allowed the students to do an abstract drawing or coloring or any depiction that came to mind in connection with the word Empathy. With some relaxing music, the students illustrated their vision of Empathy on a sheet. The art work was then posted on the door to celebrate the character of the month. This contributed to creating an atmosphere of awareness in the school. I remember some of the Grade 3 and 6 students standing outside the grade 7/8 class mesmerized by the mural. Other teachers started to incorporate the Character of the Month in their teaching in various ways which further created a buzz in the school. It became the "Cool" thing to do. In the month of January teachers were ready with new handouts, new lanyards in each of the teachers' cubbies with the new virtue of Conscience. Still, "Keeping the staff motivated and still buying into the campaign every month was a difficult task" recalled a teacher.

Drawing parallels and exploring common ground between Islamic tradition and core western virtues was a central goal of the character education activities described above. The seven virtues discussed by Borba (2001) and used in the LIS character development campaign, namely empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness, are all enduring qualities in the Islamic tradition. Thus, while the campaign's main practical goal was to create a school climate and culture conducive to mutual respect and care, it demonstrated shared values

The character development campaign also served as a reminder that the Canadian population is a multi-cultural, multi-faceted, and pluralistic community. It is important for the students to know that this kind of education provides common ground for others outside our school property. By sharing the same values and principles, this helps one to build bonds with others and facilitates cooperation with others.

Learning

With respect to the generic school functions of selection and certification, the only formal certification or selection processes at LIS are report cards and awards. LIS does not assess the special education needs of students or place students in Individual Educational Plans [IEPs]. At the end of the year each teacher suggests students from the class who have a record of outstanding achievement in each subject and they receive awards. Additional awards are given at the Grade 8 graduation, including the citizen's award and the Principal's Choice award. These awards are left to the discretion of the Principal with the advice of all Grade 8 teacher and other staff members.

The Character of the Month campaign discussed earlier is an example of both education and socialization, which are central to the development of both Islamic and Western knowledge and Muslim and Canadian values and character. LIS appears rich in Coleman's (1988) social capital, which appears pervasive in the school's life and culture. Coleman states that "something of value has been produced for those actors who have this resource available and that the value depends on social organization" (Coleman, p. 101). With its strong sense of community and family-oriented culture LIS creates an environment for families to work together with the school to help their children in their education. There is a sense of genuine care for the child's well being. As articulated by

one of the students, "I feel that the teachers here really care about me and my future, they are not just concerned about my marks but also how I behave and interact with others" (GFP2).

Table 4.2 below shows the full range of subjects taught at LIS, including s those which are in addition to the Ontario Curriculum, together with the overall time assigned to instruction in each subject. The numbers indicate how many minutes of instruction are scheduled in each subject for each grade per five day cycle. In conformity with the Ontario Curriculum, history and geography are only taught in Grades 7/8.

There is a total of 1720 instructional time scheduled per week. Effective September, 2010, the total hours will be 1800 minutes, which will be achieved by adding two more lessons on Friday. The following section reviews the content of the program of studies at LIS organized under two headings: non-religious and religious instruction.

Table 4.2
Current Core Courses at the LIS (per week in minutes)

Grade	English	Math	Science	Social Studies (History & Geography for grade 7/8)	Physical Edn and Health	Art	French or Library	Quran, Arabic, Islamic Studies	Total
1	560	200	200	80	120	80	40	440	1720
2	680	200	120	80	120	40	40	440	1720
3	440	280	200	40	120	40	40	560	1720
4	280	280	200	80	120	80	200	480	1720
5	360	200	200	80	120	80	200	480	1720
6	360	200	200	80	80	80	240	440	1720
7/8	320	240	200	160	80	80	240	400	1720

Non- Religious instruction

The school uses the Ontario curriculum and as shown in Table 4.2, the non-religious instruction in the prescribed subjects dominates instructional time.

To assess the amount of time devoted to instruction in core subjects, I collected, organized and classified each teacher's timetable and then compared the results for the Junior Division grades (4-6) to instructional times in using the June 2002 *Elementary Time Allocation Guidelines* from the Thames Valley District School Board, which are based on *The Ontario Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1997) documents. I did not find the time allocations on the Ministry of Education website; my principal gave me the aforementioned Thames Valley document. Table 4.3 summarizes the results of my analysis. The LIS teachers' timetables were organized by lesson and each class period was 40 minutes in length, so five classes equates to 200 minutes of scheduled math classes per five day weekly cycle, which is equivalent to three hours and twenty minutes of instruction. The comparisons shown in Table 4.3 are for Junior Division subjects (Grades 4 – 6).

Table 4.3
Time allocation for core subjects recommended by Thames Valley District Board compared to scheduled time allocations at LIS for the Junior Division (Grades 4-6)

Junior Division time allocations recommended by TV Board adjusted to a five day cycle	Assigned times at London Islamic School Grades 4-6 per five day cycle	Comment
English: 450 minutes	English: Grade 4 = 280 minutes Grade 5 = 360 minutes Grade 6 = 360 minutes	Grade 4 falls short by 170 minutes which is 4 lessons. And Grade 5 and 6 falls short by 90 minutes, which is a little over 2 lessons.

Mathematics: 300 minutes	Mathematics: Grade 4 = 280 minutes Grade 5 = 200 minutes Grade 6 = 200 minutes	Grade 4 is short 20 minutes and Grade 5 and 6 short by 100 minutes.
Science and Technology: 240 minutes	All Junior grades have 200 minutes of science classes	LIS falls short 40 minutes which is an equivalent of one lesson with respect to time allocated by the Ontario Curriculum for Science and Technology.
Physical Education/Dance: 180 minutes	All Junior grades have 120 minutes of physical education	LIS is shy by 50 minutes with respect to time allocated by the Ontario Curriculum for physical education.
Social Studies: 120 minutes	All Junior grades have 80 minutes of social studies	LIS falls short by 40 minutes with respect to time allocated by the Ontario Curriculum for social studies.
The Arts: 230 minutes	All Junior grades have 80 minutes of Arts	LIS falls short by 150 minutes with respect to time allocated by the Ontario Curriculum for the Arts.
French: 240 minutes	All Junior grades have 200 minutes of French	LIS is shy by 40 minutes, an equivalent of one lesson per week.

This coming school year, beginning in September 2010, the timetables and school hours will change to better satisfy the instructional times recommended by the Ministry of Education. The Board of Directors has extended the Friday hours from 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm to provide for a total of 1800 minutes of instructional time during the five day cycle which will be equivalent to the six day cycle used in public schools, because LIS has half an hour of extra instructional time every day.

Currently, it is clear from Table 4.3 that LIS is not fully meeting the instructional time recommendations in the Ontario curriculum. The disparity is a result of scheduling

instructional time for Arabic, Quran and Islamic Studies, which account for at least 400 minutes of instructional time per week, with a maximum of 560 minutes in Grade 3. Given what appears to be the high levels of achievement by LIS students in academic subjects discussed in the next chapter, this perhaps is not an issue. It does, nonetheless, raise the question of what would be an appropriate amount of time to devote to religious instruction. In doing so, it also focuses attention on how the time allocated for religious instruction is used, an issue that is also explored in the following chapter and in my conclusions.

A board member involved in curriculum and the day-to-day running of the school explained during an interview that the school is "doing its best to meet the Ontario curriculum, meeting the targets set by Ministry of Education. We are about student success, helping children navigate their way through out their education and learn their skills required for secondary school." But another board member cautioned,

> I don't want [LIS] to be an exclusive school; I don't want it only to focus – to be academic oriented. The initial feelings of social reasons, helping kids with their identity is appropriate. For some families having a school that understands the sensitivity of religious and cultural practices is important. I don't want to see the school mimicking other private schools, with kids just happening to be Muslims. We shape and create leaders of tomorrow. We shouldn't lose sight on the religious focus, to be taught to be critical not just impart forbidden and permissible … to achieve critical thinking to be our leaders in the future. (BF4)

In addition to its formal instructional program, the London Islamic School has participated in numerous city-wide academic competitions as summarized in Table 4.4. To illustrate the academic caliber of the school, this year, 2009-2010, LIS won numerous awards in each of the competitions in which it participated.

Table 4.4
LIS Participation in Educational Competitions

Competition/Activity	Description
Gauss Math Contest	The Gauss contest is for Grades 7 and 8 students and is designed to encourage students to work at mathematical problem solving in an effort to improve these skills. (http://www.cemc.uwaterloo.ca/contests/gauss.html)
London District Science and Technology Fair	LDSTF seeks to support, encourage & operate activities that promote the advancement of science and technology among students of all ages and abilities: to benefit both the educational systems and the community in general.(http://www.ldstf.ca/)
All Science Challenge	Lets Talk Science (http://www.letstalkscience.ca/en/teens/all-science-challenge.html)
Healthy Living Champions Award Middlesex-London Heath Unit	The "Healthy Living Champions" Award is given to elementary schools in Middlesex-London for their outstanding commitment to physical activity and the promotion of healthy eating using the Healthy Schools Framework which includes four components: High-Quality Instruction and Programs, Supportive Social Environment, Community Partnerships and Healthy Physical Environment. (http://www.healthunit.com/article.aspx?ID=12523)
UN's "Our Time Project"	
Mathematica	There are seven different contests: the Thales (grade 3), Byron-Germain (grade 4), Fibonacci (grade 5), Pythagoras (grade 6), Euler (grade 7), Lagrange (grade 8), and Newton (grade 9) Contests. These contests will be written on April 14, 2010. Since 1990, approximately 800 000 students across Canada have participated in our contests and it is our hope that your students will again participate this year. (http://www.mathematica.ca/eng/index.htm)

Religious instruction: Quran, Arabic, Islamic Studies

As indicated in Table 4.1, religious instruction, which mainly entails Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies, amounts to an average of 11.5 classes a week. The Imam

gives special instruction, mainly to the Junior - Intermediate grades (4 -8), but also in some instances to the primary grades. The Imam does not give instruction regularly; he is called upon when required, if there is a specific topic at hand that needs discussion. For instance, two years ago there was an issue with a student in the grade 7/8 class who swore at the teacher. Because the Imam is seen as an authority figure in the school, he was called on to provide corrective intervention. He discussed this issue with the whole class, drawing on prophetic tradition of respect and restraining oneself. There is a relevant clause in the checklist derived from Ramadan's work in Table 2.2 #8 "Shall control passion and emotion. During monthly divisional meetings, the Imam sits with the Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers to review curriculum, provide support, and discuss any concerns or questions that may arise.

The Quran curriculum is straightforward. There are 114 chapters *(surahs)* of varying lengths in the Quran and a crosscutting division to 30 parts (*juz'*) of equal length. Each Grade takes one of the 30 parts *(juz')* of the Quran and memorizes it. For instance the Grade 4 curriculum expectation is to memorize part 29 which has 11 chapters and have a brief idea of what each chapter in part 29 entails.

The Islamic Studies curriculum is formulated by International Islamic Publishing House (IIPH), located in Maryland. The main author is Dr. Bilal Philips, who was born in Jamaica and raised in Canada. He converted to Islam at the age of 20. Both of his parents were teachers and his grandfather was a Church Minister and Bible scholar. He received his B.A. degree from the Islamic University of Medina and his M.A. in *Aqeedah* (Islamic Theology) from the King Saud University in Riyadh (Ontario Ministry of Attorney General, 2001).

The curriculum includes exegesis of the small chapters of the Quran, *hadith*, *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and *Tawheed* (the oneness of God).

The Arabic curriculum comes from IQRA foundation in Chicago and is designed to teach Arabic as a Second Language program. The IQRA website claims that,

> IQRA has produced a comprehensive, systematic and integrated system of Islamic religious knowledge, involving 150 textbooks, workbooks, teacher's guides, curriculum manuals and other educational materials. It is a program that is extremely popular in North America and in many English-speaking communities across the world. (IQRA International Education Foundation, 2010)

One of the teachers interviewed offered the following comments on the IQRA curriculum and Arabic instruction:

> Our school begins using [the IQRA] curriculum at Grade two and continues to Grade 8. Teachers of earlier grades are more comfortable with a different curriculum because they have found that it better suits the need of their students' in terms of literacy (e.g. rather than teaching single isolated words to Grade one, they are presented with weekly literary pieces with the expectation of fluency in reading and spelling but without any meaning or comprehension expectations) Having said that teachers of all grades come together periodically to coordinate amongst each other to fulfill cohesiveness as kids advance from one grade to the next. In general, Arabic curriculums remain a challenge. There is yet to be a curriculum which is appealing to the kids (e.g. colorful, animated), cohesive in terms of building vocabulary and grammatical structures, and which encourages conversation through interactive exercises which pertain to a child's everyday life (e.g. a scene in the park, in the grocery store , buying a pet, in the airport, etc). This curriculum also begins with a heavy focus on building vocabulary and basic conversation then makes a huge leap into focusing on grammatical structures and totally abandoning thematic vocabulary and conversation building. Therefore to compensate for this loss, a teacher always finds himself/herself resorting to other curriculums to fill the gaps and disconnects in order to establish cohesiveness within the curriculum. Another feature this curriculum lacks is a teacher's manual (only grade three comes with a teacher's manual).

Participants' views of the school

This section presents several observations made by interview participants that are focused on the theme of life and learning in the school. When asked how LIS is similar

to or different from public schools, a graduate who was waiting for a response from university for the upcoming year had a quite common response, "Education! We (LIS) have a very good education system. Although different from other schools, we have a lot higher expectations and success rates" (GSF5). In the course of my interview with the principal, she told me that the secondary schools that have students who have attended LIS often report that they perform relatively better than graduates from area public schools. There were a few negative comments on funding and teachers when some participants spoke about similarities and differences between LIS and public schools. One parent noted that the LIS's inability to retain teachers from year-to-year negatively impacted on her confidence in the school, saying. "I don't have the same security or peace of mind to know that the Grade 4 teacher or the Grade 1 teacher will be [the same] next year. I feel as if our school is much more unstable in that respect" (CFP2). A similar concern was expressed by another parent who said, "the excessive continuous change in teachers is not very comforting when it comes to the LIS. People would like to see consistency and see the turnover being reduced" (GPM1).

The relative lack of funding and relatively low salaries paid to the teachers is seen as one of the reasons for the high turnover of staff. As a graduate student explained,

> … private schools have issues with funding and that affects the teachers and their stress levels. I feel like Islamic Schools in general suffer from a lack of funding and it does take its toll on both teachers and students.

Other comments on the difference between LIS and public schools focused on the intertwining of religious education and mainstream curriculum. Religious instruction at

LIS covers basic notions such as "what is Islam" and provides parents with the hope that their children are

> ...going to experience Islam on a day to day basis and provide them with an Islamic environment, not taking away from the academics they would get at a public school. But to put them in an environment that would be Islamic that would reinforce what they are learning at home. (CFP2)

One of the major outcomes that parents hope to achieve, as voiced by one of the parents, is that their children will memorize a certain portion of the Quran, which is regarded by many as an essential aspect of the Muslim child's upbringing. The topic of gender interaction, which is discussed further in Chapter 5 also emerged in discussions of differences between LIS and other schools. One of the board members mentioned that there are expectations that limit interactions between boys and girls to a greater degree than in public schools. "It is embedded in the culture of the school, it is not necessary a protocol... It is an expectation" (BF4). Students recognized that they were taught how to interact with members of the opposite gender in ways that maintain mutual respect. They also realize that dating is not an option. As described by one of the students:

> Well, in Islamic school, we have limits ... we don't sit next to each other. We can play soccer and basketball, we can play sports together but there are limits so we can't play football or tackle or anything. But in public schools, there is no limit for that because they are not following Islam. They have different relationships, they have boyfriends and girlfriends and their interaction can't differentiate between the two genders (CSF2).

Chapter Summary

This chapter started with the history of London Islamic school and then considered life and learning at LIS. The organization and day-to-day activities of LIS were reviewed and the Character of the Month Campaign, a school-wide initiative that integrates western and Islamic virtues, was described. An overview of both religious and

non-religious instruction was provided, including an overview of the curriculum used for religious instruction. The chapter concluded with a sample of participants' views of LIS.

Chapter 5

PURPOSES

…(not only) integrate but integrate with Muslim values. (Board Member 2)

This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the interviews conducted with selected key informants involved with the London Islamic School in order to address Research Question 4: What do selected administrators, teachers, students, parents, and non-Muslims identify as (a) the challenges facing Muslim youth? and (b) the purposes of LIS? The specific interview questions asked of participants in each group to explore these broader questions are articulated in the reports presented below.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first summarizes my analyses of the interviews under the following three headings: (1) Conceptions of Islam, (2) Challenges facing Muslims, and (3) Purposes of LIS. The second offers a reflective discussion of my findings with reference to Ramadan's characteristics of integration and post-integration as presented earlier in Table 2.3.

Interview Findings

I undertook the interviews to gain insights into London Islamic School and into how people involved with the school appeared to understand its purposes. As described more fully in Chapter 1, interviews were conducted with selected individuals from a variety of participant groups. While all interviewees were asked a common set of questions, members of some participant groups were also asked questions specific to their experiences, as shown in the full interview schedule in Appendix I. Responses to some

interview questions were drawn on in the previous chapter on life and learning at LIS. The discussion in this chapter focuses on responses to questions probing participant conceptions of Islam, their views on the challenges facing Muslim youth, and the purposes of LIS and Islamic schools in general. Given the complex nature of the interview schedule my findings are reported under those three headings rather than according to the specific interview questions.

Discussions in each of the three sections are organized according to themes that emerged during my analyses of the interview transcripts. Some of these themes appear to represent broadly shared views or conceptions, while others were distinctive of a particular participant group or perspective. I did not establish any formal criteria for identifying these themes. In essence, each 'theme' was a pattern or emphasis that appeared to provide meaningful insight into my research problem.

I would like to note that all four board members interviewed mentioned that they regularly visit the school, typically once or twice a month, and usually after school hours. As initially reported in Table 1.2, a code has been assigned to anonymously identify each participant in a way that indicates their participant group and gender. These codes are used in this chapter to attribute quotations to the respective participant. Regarding the imbalance in the ratio of male and female participants discussed in Chapter 1, I did not notice any strong gender bias in my analysis of the interview transcripts.

Conceptions of Islam

If one cannot conceptualize an understanding of Islam, then it would be difficult to have an "Islamic" school. What makes a school "Islamic" is the "Islam" component of

the school. One board member noted that "To have an Islamic school that is like the public school but with Muslims around is just a school with Muslims, not an Islamic school" (BM1). So what is Islam? All interviewees were asked this question as well as the more personalized "What does Islam mean to you?" In Chapter 3 Islam was discussed in greater detail with regards to fundamentals such as the five pillars, the six articles of faith, the emblematic character of Islam, and *Maqasid al shariah* (objectives of the way (rules) of Islam).

Islam is everything

This was the most frequently mentioned theme with some facet of the idea being expressed by 80 percent of interviewees overall. The theme occurred in the transcripts from all participant groups, although the adults generally expressed the idea in broader and more abstract ways, as would be expected. Specific statements classified under this theme included the following:

> 1.01. Islam is submission to God in your life and practices. It is a way of life and [I try] to live according to the teaching of Islam and try to implement that in my life and in my family. (BM2)
>
> 1.02. Islam means teaching basic principles. The first thing is how to behave, how to show respect and how to be a good human. (TF2)
>
> 1.03. Islam is a religion. The name came from complete submission to Allah. Our purpose of being here is to worship one God. It's a way of life, and Islam is my life too. I can't imagine my life without Islam. It affects my actions too of course and without Islam my actions would be different and even my judgments to things would be different too. It's a way of life, it means a lot to me. (TF3)
>
> 1.04. Islam means everything to me. It is the code of life; it's very near and dear to my heart. (TF5)

Some adults saw Islam as a source of comfort in stressful times, as mentioned by TF5: "whenever I find myself in trouble or [facing] a problem, I get comfort from it. It

lightens me in a lot of ways and whenever I am stressed, I go to Quran. I get what I need to have at that moment." Board member 4 articulated the importance of not viewing Islam as a religion with dos and don'ts, and reducing it to rules and regulations, saying that "...takes away from the sincerity that we should have..." Ramadan (1999) made a similar point in his discussion of how many Western Muslims appear to have reduced Islam to sets of rules and regulations which separate the lawful (*halal*) from the unlawful (*haram*) (p. 10).

Ramadan further cautioned that such an understanding of Islam can make it "impossible to give birth to an affirmative, confident and constructive perception of Muslim identity which develops real abilities to inscribe itself in the European landscape" (p. 10). There were some indications of this in the interview responses, but there were also clear indications of more sophisticated views similar to those expressed by Board Member 1. A graduate, for example, who is active in organizing youth camps for children and working in youth groups looked at the bigger picture of Islam and its approach to building identity, said

> 1.05. I don't like to define it [Islam] as a religion; it is reducing it to things permitted and forbidden. It is easy to tell you what it is not than what it is. It is not a list of things to do or can't do; [that] simplifies it and takes away from the sincerity that we should have. It comes down to relationship with God, how it shows with the relationship with other people. How is your relationship with God and how do you make others feel? A lot of that is not explored enough, we focus on what is allowed and not allowed to do. (BF4)

Parents' responses to this question tended to be infused with aspects of their parenting role and concerns for the wellbeing of their children, as well as the influence of Islam on their children. Many parents viewed Islam as a gift that would help their children make better decisions in life and become well mannered individuals.

> 1.06. Islam in my family means everything. We try to apply Islam in every single thing in our life; how to raise our kids, how to interact between each other as a wife and a husband, between parents and children, my kids and the teachers, how to respect older people, how to take what the Quran said and apply it in their life and perfect it. The prophet told us to perfect everything we do. Alhamdulila (praise be to God), I see the results, 14 years in school now, it really pays off in my kids. (CFP1)

> 1.07. Islam for me, and my family, is a way of life that guides decisions that we make, the way that we carry out our day to day activities, our priorities for our children. It's not something that we can departmentalize, it is who we are and that is what we are trying to pass on to our children... (CFP2)

Students' responses to this question resembled the adult responses, but the students gave explicit examples concerning gender interactions and dress code which can be interpreted as indicating how Islam is interwoven into their daily lives. In this and other ways, it appears that the basic challenges faced by youth as discussed later in this chapter are related their understandings of Islam.

> 1.08. I have my religion and I have my belief system and like, that's very central to me and very important to me. So, like I don't date boys, I don't have boyfriends, I don't have boys that are my friends that I hang out with outside of school or anything like that. As opposed to my friends who do date, who do have boyfriends, who form close bonds with boys and yeah .... (GFS3)

> 1.09. Islam means a lot to me, um, it's my religion, it's my foundation. It determines how I go about my life every day, my conduct with people, the way I dress. It covers many levels basically and different terms. (GFS1)

A Grade 7 student brought together two facets in the themes above in a way that touched aspects of Ramadan's concerns about religious literalism by saying "Islam's not just a religion that you can view, like reading Quran and praying, it's a way of life" (CFS4). Yet despite the range and sophistication of the views canvassed above, some participants simply identified Islam as a religion and did not make a distinction between a

religion and a way of life, although in some cases their elaborated answer appeared to embrace a more encompassing view: "I guess my religion, it forms my identity, I pretty much incorporate it in my everyday life …" (GFS2).

Islam is a Protection

One of the parents who is also a leader in the Muslim community saw Islam as having protective qualities, saying "we vaccinate our children with Islam and let them go so [they] are protected and armed against the ills of society" (CFP3). A Grade 7 student who had been at LIS since JK said, "Islam is [a] kind of protection from all the bad things in the world" (CFS4). A graduate of LIS who is currently in third year university echoed this view, referring to Islam as "a preventative religion; it tries to protect you and guard you from all the bad things in life, and that's why it instructs us with certain guidelines like don't drink." It is worth noting that she was attributing to Islam characteristics that are attributed to conscious, willing, living things with constructions such as "it tries." She further elaborated on her basic point as follows:

> 1.10. Everything [in Islam] is pretty much for your own benefit, for your own safety, and yeah as far as my values and principles, like how I act, I try to base it around my religion. It is all encompassing in my life, or I guess I try to make it all encompassing in my life. (GFS2)

A grade 8 student gave an example of how Islam is a form of protection.

> 1.11. It has reasons for everything. For example drinking – it's bad for your health, not good for your health. It doesn't… not good for your mind. And not allowed to... and there's a general reason for that. (CFS2)

Overall this theme of Islam as a protection was found in approximately a third of the interview transcripts, being particularly dominant in those from present and past LIS

students. This belief in protection and safety is revisited later in this chapter when discussing participant views on the purposes of an Islamic school.

It is relevant to God

I thought that most of the responses to the first interview question would revolve around God. However, it was interesting to see how little participants talked about their relationship with God. Table 5.1 summarizes the number of times the words God, Allah or Lord were mentioned by members of different participant groups. The terms were mentioned by 14 of the 23 interviewees, in some cases multiple times so that there were a total of 21 mentions overall. Eleven out of the 21 times the terms were voiced by current students. Graduates used the terms 9 out of the 21 times. The students' references to God were often more meaningful than a basic "belief in God" response. Student CFS2 said, "Islam is a religion from a God we believe in and we can't see him but we know He is there and He is protecting us." Student GFS3 described her relationship with God by saying "Islam to me is pretty much an outlet that I can turn to, a thing that I can turn to when I want to look to God and look for guidance."

Eight out of the 21 times the word God appeared in the transcripts, it was in the phrase "belief in one God." Instances included the following:

> 1.12. Islam is believing in a God, and that prophet Mohamed is his messenger and praying five times a day. (CFS3)
>
> 1.13. And essentially it's believing in one God and following the five pillars and pretty much using the Quran and applying that to my daily life as best I can. (GFS3)

Table 5.1
Participants who Mentioned God in Response to Question #1

	Mentioned God	Number of times God was mentioned
Parents		
Current parents	2	2
Parents of graduates	1	1
Students		
Current	2	2
Graduates	3	9
LIS Staff		
Teachers	2	2
Administrators		
Board members	4	5
Non Muslims	0	0
Total	14	21

One of the teachers who had worked at LIS for over eight years articulated the purpose of one's existence. "The name [Islam]," she said, "came from complete submission to Allah. Our purpose of being here is to worship one God" (TF3). The concept of worship is contingent upon one's intention. If one's intention is the pleasure of God rather than the satisfaction of worldly desires, then any act can qualify as worship.

> 1.14. Islam is very simple. It's really whatever works well with being humane and knowing to choose the right from wrong. I think Islam is not just exclusive to Muslims, there are lots of people out there who practice it and don't know it. It's being centered and that centers the devotion to God, in my case. But in a more general case, it's a devotion to doing the right thing. (CFP3)

Islam encourages service to humanity

Participants intermittently mentioned contributions and service with regards to Islam. Some said that Islam helps raise people who are positively contributing to society at large.

> 1.15. ... is not just that to produce Muslim citizens of tomorrow, the leaders of tomorrow for the larger community, but more like to produce citizen who will be contributing to bringing the Muslims values in the larger community. (BM2)

> 1.16...they contribute more effectively and they have knowledge and they work better with others and become a healthy part of a whole. (TF1)

Others mentioned service in the context of submitting to God as part of God Consciousness:

> 1.17. ...peace, purity and acceptance and submission to the will of God, conducting myself as [a] human being that treats other human beings with equality, justice and respect. For me its humility, self discipline. (BM3)

> 1.18. To serve humanity which is serving our *deen* (way of life). Service is a major part of it. To have this level of consciousness. (BM1)

Islam is monotheistic but not monolithic

As partially illustrated in Chapter 3, Islam has many similarities to the other Abrahamic religions. The Quran mentions Moses 164 times: he is the most frequently identified prophet in the Quran. A parent who had one child at LIS and two children in a public secondary school and who has been involved in inter-faith activities drew on this commonality when responding to the "What is Islam?" question, saying: "Because if you go back in this [Western] society, they [Christians and the Jews] have the same principles too and these societies are built on [these principles]" (CFP3).

Even though Islam has its five pillars, the six articles of faith and a jurisprudential approach, there is plurality and diversity in Islam. One of the students who had attended LIS since JK but who comes from a home with non-practicing Muslim parents talked about her experience with Islam as follows: "I think Islam is a lifestyle that you choose to use. It is, um, a belief system which you can incorporate into any lifestyle" (GFS5).

Summary and reflections

The main themes generated from the questions "What is Islam? and What does Islam mean to you?" were: (1) Islam is everything; (2) Islam is a protection' (3) it is relevant to God; (4) it encourages one to be of service to humanity; and (5) Islam is monotheistic, but not monolithic. In addition, five or so people mentioned that Islam is not as it is typically portrayed in the media, and certainly not dedicated to violence, but I chose not to identify this as a theme in the responses to this question, deferring discussion of this theme to the challenges facing Muslims in the next segment.

Perhaps the most interesting pattern that emerged was the general absence of textbook accounts of Islam as, for example, articulated in Chapter 3. Generally, the interview participants did not talk about Islam in this way, references to the five pillars or the six articles of faith or God Consciousness being infrequent, even among the students. There were four interview responses which included text book type accounts of Islam, but, in contrast, many participants talked about Islam as an important – often a defining, encompassing, constant – part of their life. 50 percent of the student transcripts included statements of this kind such as, for example 1.06 and 1.07 above. This would seem to imply that LIS and its supporting community promotes and sustains an Islamic way of life and outlook on the world, rather than just teaching a literal form of the religion.

This is central to any discussion of the purposes of Islamic schools because it sheds light on how participants understand Islam and how children should be encouraged to know and live the religion. As articulated by a parent later in her interview,

> 1.19. I think that there was a recognition that an Islamic school could give the kids a more holistic experience of Islam, which goes back to the first question of 'what is Islam?' (CFP2)

None of the participants mentioned Islam as an oppressive restriction of freedom or growth as sometimes portrayed in the media. Perhaps that could be attributed to the fact that most of those participants know me and even if they did see Islam through a negative lens, they perhaps would not have felt comfortable saying so. But I doubt this as I detected no trace of dissimulation or defensiveness in participant responses.

When participants, mainly students, referred to Islam as an entity where everything makes sense, they appeared to be assuming that everything in Islam should make sense. I believe such a statement is inherently flawed, but I recognize that this view could be a result of limited linguistic expression and perhaps encouraged by pride in their religion. Also, my participant groups were largely composed of Muslims who could be expected to have "everyday" rather than theological views of Islam, as was consistent with my focus on exploring Islamic schools, rather than investigating Islam.

Challenges facing Muslims

All participants were asked "What are the challenges of youth today?" and "What are the challenges of Muslim youth?" These questions were intended to gauge difficulties specific to young Muslims living in the West with a view to comparing responses to Ramadan's views. The questions followed those probing participants' views of the nature of Islam and were intended to serve as a logical stepping stone to

subsequent questions on the purposes of Islamic schools. When the challenges facing youth, in general, and Muslim youth, in particular, have been identified, one is in a position to assess whether LIS appears to be addressing those challenges in ways recognized in Ramadan's integration and post-integration stage.

Plethora of distractions

There was wide agreement about the breadth of distractions and temptations for young people in today's society. When asked about distractions and the effect such distractions have on Muslim youth, a board member working with one of the public boards in London listed distractions facing all youth as being "...iPods, cell phones, internet... . I think sometimes they pose themselves as obstacles for human interaction." He then observed that LIS students are not permitted to bring such gadgets to school with them, and then went on to say "many parents [of students attending the Islamic school] do not permit their kids to watch as much TV..." (BM3). Another distraction not exclusive to Muslim youth mentioned by another board member was that the "work ethic is a challenge. It's a me generation, I want it but I don't want to work for it" (BM3).

Reflecting back on her secondary years, a current university student who was a graduate of the London Islamic School shared her struggles growing up in a somewhat contrasting way.

> 2.01. during that time, it's a lot about forming your own identity, so you're getting influenced by so many different directions, like your parents want you to do something, there is also the media, which is a really, really big part ... so like what you see on TV shows, like all the smoking and the drinking and the drugs, that's a really big thing that influences you. (GFS2)

Such distractions were further emphasized by other interviewees. Parent CFP2 explained, there's a lot more expectations in terms of sexuality and what is expected in terms of how they look, what they do, with who. Given such distractions, this parent also felt that such disruptions were becoming more frequent and recurrent. "The reason why I say it is more frequent," she continued,

> 2.02. is because of spending more time on the computer, the internet, having more access to phones… you know, the new trends, whatever they may be are coming… it just seems to me they are becoming more frequently and strongly. And the norm is for young people to have all of these things. (CFP2)

Furthermore one parent felt that "There's a lot more expectations in terms of sexuality and what is expected in terms of how they look, what they do, with who and the reason why I say it is more frequent" (CFP2).

Gender relations

Gender interactions are a common source of challenges for the young and this can be complicated when the normative expectations of a young person's social groups differ from those of the larger society. Many interview participants identified aspects of gender interaction such as flirting and dating as a particular challenge for Muslim youth. As described in the previous chapter, all female teachers at LIS adhere to an Islamic dress code and boys and girls are segregated for gym classes in Grade 6 and after, and after Grade 6 are discouraged from making any body contact.

The boundaries on gender interaction at the LIS are not articulated in writing, but they are nonetheless known to members of the school community. A parent of a current student noted that staff were selective in their choice of books given to students to read,

so as not to expose students outwardly to dating and other sexual relationships. More specifically, she mentioned that her daughter was about to turn nine and

> 2.03. … you can tell from the books of age nine up, automatically you can tell that those books have the themes of dating and gender relationships between girls and boys and crushes and all the rest of it. I'm not saying that doesn't or will not happen in our school, but I do think in similarly aged children, say another nine year old girl, may in fact start talking more openly with her peers about crushes, than maybe our girls would and it may actually start playing out into you know, little dating or relationships, or boyfriend girlfriend kind of thing … flirting earlier and considered to be acceptable and absolutely normal, in … in public schools or non-Islamic environments. (CFP2)

Graduates from the LIS face particular gender related challenges in high school. A current Grade 12 student described her transition into secondary school after leaving LIS as follows:

> 2.04. When I came into high school and started mingling and started forming relationships with non-Muslims, I noticed there are a lot of relationships like between boys and girls, and like boyfriends and girlfriends. That was a major ... I don't know how I can say it ... and now you see that girls and boys not only play with each other, but are also going out with each other, and experimenting [with] different things. (GFS3)

A similar response, from another LIS graduate further explained,

> 2.05. Most of my friends, they were brought-up in Canada, they were born there and they have good relationships with guys who are their friends. I feel it's hard for me to interact with them when they are interacting with males because I don't want to put myself out as acting inappropriate, right? Because the way I act… my gender interaction would be different from the way they do on a personal note, where like I don't hang out with them or go to their houses, but…we could talk at school. (GFS5)

Identity crisis and double personalities

As discussed by Ramadan (1999), Muslim youth in the West, Canada included, experience challenges related to forming and understanding their identity, as well as

finding their place and position within a Muslim community that is framed by a dominant culture. They also have to negotiate between the Canadian culture they live and breathe daily, and the respective immigrant culture(s) of their families. Additionally, as Muslims they face certain barriers that prevent them from assimilating easily into the mainstream culture; an environment where they feel they are depicted with negative stereotypes perpetuated by events beyond their control and widely disseminated the media. It appears that integrating into Western culture is a difficult process, especially when one's own beliefs and values appear as impediments. The tensions created can result in an identity crisis and encourage the development of a double personality. Zine (2008) calls it "split personality syndrome" where one "develops a double person in their efforts to resolve the cultural contradictions between home and school" (p. 4). A current board member at the LIS described this struggle as a pressure to "integrate [with] the current materialistic culture of this society, because they [the youth] start to see a divide between their values and their beliefs" (BM2). This was complicated, he explained, by "in the larger community, the culture of the media, commercialism and disintegration of family units." As a result, he continued, the system places great pressure on the young to conform to the norms of the society, pushing individuals to accept things they don't necessarily agree with.

> 2.06. They have to participate in things that go against their value system ... a double whammy for the Muslim youth [because] in addition to what other youths are experiencing, the Muslim youth has other internal problems. The extreme is that the kids feel that they have to live different lives. That is a huge pressure on somebody to establish a personality ... where they put a different face, when they step out of the home. The outside is a direct contradiction to their heritage, and before they act they stand out as different from the rest of the community [at large]. (BM2)

Differences between expectations at home and those in society at large and the public schools can fuel additional confusion. As TF2 put it, "The major problem the youth face is that the rules in their homes are different than outside. So it is very difficult for them to decide which is best." TF3 added, "Muslim youth, I feel, have some discrepancies in their life; so they see things at the Islamic school and when they come out, there is a cultural shock. It's different."

Often, parents of Muslim youth are new immigrants, which adds to the social disconnect a child can experience. This gap is a challenge for Muslim youth as they not only have to cope with differences between themselves and other youth, but also with those between themselves and their parents. Another factor that would increase the gap further is that, as Idris, a pioneer of Islamic schools in Canada said in conversation with me: sometimes the contradiction is that the parents do things they don't want their children to do. And children live with their parents and see what they do.

Muslim youth face personal struggles to discover their understandings of self, other, and their location, and in this "they generally do not have support from elders in their community to interpret and understand these struggles" explained BF4, a board member who has worked with the older members of London's Muslim community. Some educators attribute this to parents and elders having faced similar struggles themselves trying to find their place as Muslims in their Canadian communities. As a result, parents "don't have a strong community foundation", which hinders youth from approaching their parents and, as one teacher articulated, the youth do not know to whom they can turn.

> 2.07. …their elders and parents and teachers trying to figure out where we belong as Muslims in the community, adults are trying to figure things out.

> They don't have a strong community foundation; it's there, its starting. But it's not affecting. They don't know where they can go. (BF4)

Myths and stereotypes

Muslim youth are faced with some difficulties in their day-to-day life simply because they follow a specific religion. Such challenges are not exclusive to youth but extend to adults, the elderly and all other members of the Muslim community. These specific difficulties arise as a result of myths and stereotypes surrounding Islam. A student who had been struggling in the public schools before he moved to LIS recalled that there is

> 2.08. Terrorism and the stereotypes that surround us from the news and facing people at school is tough, and then trying to confront people who ask questions and they [the Muslims] don't necessarily know how to answer if they don't have enough knowledge. So when people don't have enough knowledge of our religion to answer then this becomes a struggle of being in a public school. (GFS1)

Five participants mentioned violent media stereotypes of Muslims and how these create challenges for the young. A teacher who has three children attending public schools explained "Islam or Muslims have become associated with terrorism – those general feelings you have around you. You cannot escape, you just can ignore" (TF5). One parent of an LIS graduate noted that he did not see or sense any significant differences in the treatment of Muslims and the challenges facing Muslim youth: "I wouldn't say that there is any significant racism or discrimination affecting them [the Muslim youth] to a large degree" (GMP1).

Environment not conducive to maintaining an Islamic identity

The environment and its pressures cannot be controlled by any one individual. Youth, especially those in media-rich North America are told by many people and entities

who they are and who they should be and it can be difficult to find a place free from such pervasive forces where they can decide who they really are. This is intensified for young people living a religion in an overwhelmingly secular environment.

A graduate from the LIS talked about her encounters with difficulties arising from such a situation during her transition into high school. These were difficulties experienced specifically by Muslim girls attempting their daily religious exercises. As Graduate GFS1 explained, finding a place for Friday prayer, gathering up the youth [the Muslim youth] to pray in their classroom … it's a challenge for them and some of them are embarrassed to make *wudu* (ablution) in front of non-Muslims. Another graduate, facing similar pressures from her surroundings, described the absence of such pressures during her years at LIS. She explained that parents

> 2.09. … want to surround their children with people who have the same beliefs and they don't want them to go drinking or have to deal with drugs, or to have to deal with all these negative things that exist in the public school system … in LIS it didn't exist, like I never interacted with drugs or drinking or girls or boys…it was just, it was a clean, safe environment. (GFS2)

Teachers at the LIS, despite being past their youth, still seem to be aware of the challenges that exist. One teacher observed,

> 2.10. I don't want to say "you don't know what the right thing is anymore." Morals and values have become relative in our time, so relative, that people are really confused. And with the youth, it's even more [so] because they lack experience so they are even more confused …. For most Muslim youth now, they are children of new immigrants. So the parents sometimes, who are the prime support system for the youth, are not really there. (TF1)

By which she meant because they had had no first-hand experiences of their new culture, they were unprepared and thus unable to directly assist their children in coping

with their personal challenges. This point was expanded by another teacher who observed,

> 2.11. For most Muslim youth now, they are children of new immigrants. So the parents sometimes, who are the prime support system for the youth, are not really there .... Immigrant parents are preoccupied with bringing food to the table and even finding ways to ..... They don't even always know the system; it's totally new to them. Sometimes they could maybe go and get a much better job, but they don't know the channels, connections etc. (TF1)

Summary and reflections

Five main themes found in the interview responses to the question concerning the challenges of Muslim Youth in the West were: (1) plethora of distractions; (2) gender relations; (3) identity crisis and double personalities; (4) myths and stereotypes; and (5) environment not conducive to maintaining an Islamic identity. Table 5.2 relates these challenges to the interview participants that predominantly identified them.

Table 5.2
Interview Participants Identifying Themes Concerning Challenges Facing Muslim Youth

Themes	Who mainly identified by
Plethora of distractions	All participants
Gender relations	Parents and students
Identity crisis and double personalities	Parents, teachers, board members
Myths and stereotypes	All participants
Environment not conducive to maintaining an Islamic identity	Graduates and teachers

The participant group who frequently identified the identity crisis and double personalities to be a challenge were mainly adults, none of the current students and only a few of the graduates mentioned these challenges. Perhaps the adults see the double

personality of the students when they see them in different settings. Ramadan recognizes this as a problem facing Muslin youth, noting,

> ...it is made more evident by the presence of two contradictory tendencies: an initial and intimate culture of duty and community in contrast to an environment promoting freedom and autonomy but which, in fact, exerts a natural attraction over people. Who are we then? (Ramadan, 1999, p. 2)

However, it is worthy of mention that a graduate recognized that the struggles of Muslim youth can be shared by Western youth in general:

> 2.12. We all struggle with the same things, like you have fights with your parents, you want to rebel, you want to do things that your parents maybe don't agree with, your struggling with school, trying to find your own identity. It's just overall themes that everyone struggles with on a day-to-day basis. (GFS2)

If the only challenges facing Muslim students were the same as those facing other students in the wider community, then what would be the purpose of an Islamic school? When one can identify the challenges of Muslim youth, one can use those as parameters to evaluate whether those challenges are recognized and tackled actively by the school.

Purposes of LIS

All interview participants were provided with opportunities to talk about the purposes LIS, this being a main focus of my research. Chapters 1 and 2 summarized selected accounts of the purposes of education, schools and independent schools, while Chapter 3 discussed Islam and fundamental aspects of this faith that could be the subject of religious instruction and socialization activities in Islamic schools. The description of life and learning at LIS offered in Chapter 4 highlighted and discussed how these and other features are present in the school. Here the focus is on how people in and around the school view its purposes and the purposes of Islamic schools in general. The themes

emerging from my transcript analyses of participant views of the nature of Islam and the challenges facing Muslim youth as discussed immediately above provide a meaningful background to the themes presented below. These themes were intertwined in the interview transcripts, rather than emerging as separate and distinct responses. Specific questions and sub-question in the interview schedule that contributed to the responses below were: All things considered, why do you think LIS was established, and what do you see as its current purposes? Do you think LIS does/did a good job of preparing your child for high school? If yes how so? If not, why not? Board members were also asked; Do you talk about the purposes of LIS in your board meetings? Are there common themes that usually emerge in those discussions?

The order in which the following themes are presented is important. The first two themes – academic standards and resources – are essential for the very existence of the school, and as such, can be viewed as prime purposes. But they are also generic ones that can be seen as applying to all schools, particularly to academically-oriented independent schools. The third theme of community flows from the first two, especially because of the centrality of community-based fundraising and other activities that help maintain the day-to-day operation of the school. More discrete and focused themes concerning environment, identity-building, and integration follow.

Even so, the logical order underlying my presentation of the themes outlined above has been imposed on the participants' responses through my interpretation of the transcripts. While each interviewee offered her or his own views on purposes, and while there was overlap and conceptual commonalities across the transcripts, each was a

different account. One of the board members made a comment regarding different approaches to considering the purposes of Islamic schools which helps reinforce this.

> 3.01. … so the model that one would [use to] talk about the purpose of LIS is different [from] that [of] administrators and teachers – they are coming out of the classroom, and we are not: their role at the school is far different than ours. They are having … they are going to [have] … fingers more on the pulse of the school… their idea of the purpose might be a little bit more meaty, substantive because they are interacting everyday with the students. Where the person comes from and what they see as the purpose will vary. (BM3)

Another board member noted that purposes can be contingent on the issue that the school is facing during a particular interlude. Even so, he ended with what could be taken as a succinct statement of enduring purpose, saying

> 3.02. At times it depends on what we are dealing with. If we are going to do this, what is the purpose of it? We talk about purposes, but I don't think it's a philosophical discussion; it's more embedded in a specific area that might come up. … Education can be an abstract philosophical discussion, but it can also be concrete: you look at it, you see it. LIS also has an extension to its purposes: teach students Quran, Arabic and about their religion and history. …prepare you for the next phase of your education but at the same time equip you with the knowledge of yourself and your religion and the knowledge of the language of your religion. (BM3)

High Academic Standards

One of the sub questions asked parents whether LIS students are prepared for high school. One parent said,

> 3.03. I'm told that they are. What parents are told is that kids who graduate from the LIS do very well in high school. [But] I worry about critical thinking skills; I worry about self confidence and just a lot of the character development that our kids are going to need to get through high school. But I am not convinced… I guess I am convinced until a certain grade that they are doing well, but I am not convinced that today our senior program is doing enough to prepare them for high school. (CFP2)

In some ways, this parent's hesitation was encouraged by what she saw as a lack of resources at the school.

> 3.04. Clearly LIS is suffering from a lack of resources in comparison to public schools. So it doesn't have the resources to, for instance, have the same pieces of equipment that public schools have, like Smart boards, or computer facilities. I don't know this, but my sense is that kids at a public school would probably use computers more readily and in a more integrated fashion with their studies than our kids do at the LIS. (CFP2)

In contrast, a LIS board member who is currently affiliated with the public schools confidently declared that "if we take a survey of individuals [who have graduated], the vast majority will have done very well in secondary and post secondary schools, both academically and athletically" (BM3). GFS5 agreed, acknowledging that when she

> 3.05...entered secondary school most of the stuff that we were taught in English class, I had already learned in my grade 7 and 8 classes. So I think LIS highly prepares you for the secondary level, in a way where you are reviewing everything you know - what you've already been taught. (GFS5)

A parent of a graduate somewhat hesitatingly concluded that LIS prepared his daughter well for High School:

> 3.06. It's difficult for me to attribute it to LIS. I would be able to do a general statement and say that the transition was easy and she found herself to be more than qualified to move into Grade 9 and really to be able to excel in it fairly easy.... I'm saying that LIS may not certainly be the 100 percent cause of it, but it certainly they deserve part of the credit for that. (GMP1).

Graduate GFS5 went on to say that she experienced great academic success following her time at the LIS. "I have won the English award all through high school: I won it four times, so it was one of my strong points and I think LIS prepared me extremely well for that" (GFS5).

The board members agreed about the importance of student success and achievement. As one said,

> 3.07. … for me my common purpose is the student success, I mean I am there for the children; I am not there for the parents. When I am there for the children then I am also there for the staff, when I equip the staff….the productivity of the children will be maximized. When the staff's lives are faced with too many challenges in and out of the school that does have the effect on what they are doing. It is just human nature. It always revolves around the students. What do we need to do in the school to make it more successful? (BM3)

A Community-based facility

Interviews with students, teachers, and parents yielded many references to ways in which common experiences help create strong bonds, and a sense of "family" within the school, references which echoed Coleman's conception of social capital in many ways. Student GFS5 referred to this sentiment when she said, "we are very fortunate that in the London Islamic School the teachers are really close with their students and with their students' parents."

> 3. 08. It feels like a huge family, everyone's nice to each other. There's no like popular and not popular… everyone's the same. (CFS5)

> 3.09. I think we feel more like a family here – we feel connected in some way. We're more like a family, we're family oriented. (AF1)

Teachers typically know each other on a personal level outside of their classrooms and these friendships contribute to creating a sense of community within the school. Other elements that helped create a cohesive community within the LIS were identified by teachers as smaller classroom sizes and a common faith, Islam. There was general agreement that the religious identity of LIS members paved the way for a tight-knit community.

> 3.10. I feel like I'm in a close family when I go in the school: they all know me, who I am: they take care of me and [they're] not just there to preach to me, and you learn. I felt much safer when I was in the Islamic school and wearing the *hijab* was much easier because everyone else wore that too. (GFS1)

> 3.11. ... my sense and I don't know, because my kids have never gone to a public school, but my sense is that my kids have more of a family feel when they go to the school. It's almost like a second family. I'm not sure that they would get that same feeling, or I don't think they would get that feeling from going to a public school. So it is, it has more of a community environment, families are more connected, the teachers may be somebody that you know on a personal basis and you are not going to get that at a public school. (CFP2)

The theme of "family" was also reiterated by parents who implied that the LIS was a home away from home, and a "second family" to their children, which some parents doubted a public school could offer. Families felt "more connected" to teachers who they knew on a personal level, which also provided a sense of security for their children; an advantage that they cannot find in public or Catholic schools. One of the graduates commented on this:

> 3.12. You feel like you're in a family when you're there, with people who really do care about you. It's not just like a Catholic school where everything is structured based. Here they have it like we are your family and we want to protect you, you know what I mean, that kind of stuff. (GFS1)

She also elaborated that it is the close-knit feeling that she got from the school that gave her a familial affinity towards other students.

> 3.13. I think positive is just like, leaving that school setting and just how family oriented they were and how much they really cared and they were there as students and staff, I think going into university now you see like how like your Muslims on campus and you say I want to hold these people close to my heart and obviously you care about. (GFS1)

Other similar comments from different participant groups included the following:

> 3.14. So when you see people on campus you think "Oh these are my Muslim brothers and sisters regardless", you want to help them out first. So that tight-knit family feeling .... (GFS2)

> 3.15. ... like once you are connected to a religion, no matter what the religion is, you share that with other people. No matter what faith, a family that prays together stays together (GFS4)

When referencing LIS one of the board members frequently used the words "LIS family": "People may come to a different background, sometimes it becomes lost, and the religious and cultural influence is intact in the religious and LIS family" (BF4). Similar language was frequently used by the other board member interviewed. Perhaps using language such as this at a board level helps drive policies and programs to further perpetuate the sense of family in the school.

However, both parents and teachers also recognized this benefit could have adverse effects as it could affect the professional relationship between teachers and students. Teachers also recognized disadvantages presented as a result of the close bonds developed between teachers and parents:

> 3.16. The teachers may be somebody that you know on a personal basis and you are not going to get that at a public school but that has its drawbacks in terms of professionalism. (CFP2)

> 3.17. Sometimes parents are a problem to deal with, because they feel "I know you from the community and so you should be a bit more accommodating." They mix professionalism with personal relationships, so that conflict is there. (CFP3)

A safe, protected and nurturing place to be a Muslim

Being in an environment with people of the same faith encourages a person to more comfortably practice his or her religion. A current LIS student recognized that, had she not been in an Islamic school, she may have had different priorities: "If I went to a

public school right now, I probably wouldn't have the Islamic values I have now. I probably wouldn't even be wearing the *hijab*" (CFS3). She continued that at the LIS, "I'm in an Islamic environment. So I feel so much safer than I would even in a public school." The idea of being comfortable with one's religion appeared in some 85 percent of the interview transcripts and was clearly regarded as a main focus of the school. A board member mentioned that the LIS tries to protect the kids, protect their identity, [and] help them through the things that we have [by giving] them opportunities to think things through [and] give them the basic education. Coleman's social capital theory describes the environment created in independent schools in terms of norms that attempt to control negative external effects or promote positive ones (1998). This was captured by a teacher when she described the purpose of the school as "trying to offer a healthy atmosphere for a child to grow, minimal unnecessary distractions, through his education (TF4). A former LIS student noted that,

> 3.18. ...some parents come from back home [meaning from their country of origin] so they want their children to have the best of both worlds; the Islamic School can provide that for them. It provides them [with] a window into Western society and then lets them go and finish the rest of their schooling here. The students benefit educationally [while] being able to understand their native tongue. [The school] is another way that [parents] protect their kids. They hope their religion will be able to help them and [the LIS] is a facility that provides students with the norms and a little extra. (GFS4)

A similar comment was made by each of the board members with regards to protecting the children from the plethora of distractions mentioned above:

> 3.19. It's a good space to put kids and eliminate the distractions that they would be exposed to, destructive to their sense of self. It is tough to grow up in an environment where you are such an exception where girls feel comfortable to wear the *hijab*, opportunity to build the strength to wear it. Kids are nasty towards each other. (BM1)

> 3.20. The LIS spares our children the requirement to display different personalities. They practice with those coming from the same religious backgrounds, so [they start] understanding the issues. (BM2)

> 3.21. [The purpose of LIS] is to immunize the student community from unwanted negative influences that some students might carry [as] baggage with them when they come to school. (GMP1)

Parents at the LIS appeared increasingly concerned with the safety of their children. The concern is not just for the physical safety of the child, but more for psychological, emotional and social safety for the child to be Muslim.

> 3.22. Yea these are the things that we have to protect the kids, protect their identity, to help them through these things. (BM3)

> 3.23. It [LIS] was established to create a good and safe environment for students where they can grow academically, intellectually and physically. Most importantly spiritually, we care about their religion and their morals. (TF3)

One Parent articulated the importance of ensuring the children are not burdened by societal pressures.

> 3.24. Children just need to live their childhood to the full where they are not subject to what the conventions of society are. That's exactly why I wanted them here, because I wanted them to be away from the social conventions that are imposed on children. (CFP3)

> 3.25. ...providing a safe environment for Muslim children to interact and learn from each other. (GFS5)

The emphasis the school places on both social and physical safety was recognized as one of the school's assets by a former student who explained, "The Islamic School is different in a sense; there are uniforms, the [influence of] media and society is decreased in a sense because everyone [here] is dressed the same" (GFS4). Such a controlled environment creates certain norms and expectations. The pressures of fitting in are minimized "because it is a smaller setting and everyone is close together like a tight

braid" (GSF4), which appears to be another example of Coleman's effective norms (1998, p. 107).

Students also made references to feeling relaxed at LIS.

> 3.26. Everyone thinks the same way as you, and [you] don't have anyone who is going to try to stereotype… everyone is Muslim so you are not going to have people [ask] what's *hijab*? What's terrorism in your religion? Everyone is on the same page as you…. Everyone just understands there are no issues that you have to clarify with anyone: your peers are on the same boat [sic] as you and you can just relax. (GFS1)

> 3.27. And then Eid you celebrate Eid with them and in Ramadan everyone is fasting so they just close the cafeteria up. (GFS1)

> 3.28. You don't have to wake up in the morning and be like Oh God, what if someone asks me about *hijab* today! (GFS1)

One student also mentioned that at LIS she felt safe to speak her mind.

> 3.29. …in other schools, you don't really have that relationship and similarities with teachers and students. Here you can speak your mind without judgment. (CFS4)

A teacher further mentioned that this sense of safety helps students to become contributing citizens.

> 3.30. They [students] contribute more effectively when they have knowledge of Islam and they work better with others and become a healthy part of a whole. (TF1)

Provides Islamic environment and Islamic education

When the interviewees used the words "Islamic education" in response to a question about the purposes of LIS, I asked them to explain more fully what they meant. Often they explained they were using the term somewhat loosely to refer to classes such as Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies. However, when talking to board members and teachers about Islamic education, they saw it in broader terms that encompassed "the environment and the *tarbiyah* and the development of character" (CFP2). Other

interviewees made direct and indirect reference to an important purpose of Islamic schools being to provide an Islamic environment as well as an Islamic education, as is illustrated in the quotations below.

When speaking about Islamic environment, participants mainly referred to socialization processes at the school. An example of this is the corrective intervention of teachers and their roles as models:

> 3.31. If you do anything, they [teachers and administrators] approach you with a religious view, like well this is wrong in Islam because of this, this and that, and they keep you God conscious basically the whole time you are in school and they protect you. (GFS1)
>
> 3.32. Since the class is under the management of teachers, the activities, partners, projects are all in a controlled environment. But if it gets out of hand, like kids start dating and stuff, then I think they [teachers and administrators] should take proper measures. (GFS1)
>
> 3.33. The parents trust that the teachers will be good influences around their children, and they want to surround their children with people who have the same beliefs and they don't want them to go drinking or have to deal with drugs, or to have to deal with all these negative things that exist in public school systems. (GFS2)

Another example of socialization is "cherry picking", when teachers expose students to selected Islamic exemplars:

> 3.34...to continue to provide them with cherry picked Islamic education and environment and it helps them increase their Islamic observance that might be lacking at home... and become enlightened in a modern way. (GMP1)

As would be expected, there were abundant instances of respondents, from all participant groups, identifying the provision of basic Islamic education, such as the Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies, in response to the questions about purposes, the following being a sample:

3.35. To gain basic education for my kids and to learn Arabic and religion. And alhamdulila [Praise be to God] I see them doing this. (CFP1)

3.36. ...to give the children an Islamic education as well as an education that will set them on their way for university. (AF1)

3.37. To give the children an opportunity to learn the religion and the native tongue. (GFS4)

3.38. Learning what Islam is and how to practice it, how to write Arabic, how to read it, what the Quran is, how to memorize it, what these s*urahs* [Quranic Chapters] really mean. It's an opportunity for their children to really learn what it is about. (CMS1)

3.39. The purpose of LIS is to positively provide them with Islamic education. (GMP1)

3.40. To have the best education in our Islamic environment. (GFP2)

3.41. I think that there was a recognition that an Islamic school could give the kids a more holistic experience of Islam, which goes back to the first question of 'what is Islam?' So the hope would be that the kids are going to experience Islam on a day to day basis and [the school will] provide them with an Islamic environment, not taking away from the academics they would get at a public school. But to put them in an environment that would be Islamic that would reinforce what they are learning at home and that would also then give them... and my guess is that parents probably... this is the piece that would be most important to them ... is that they would come out having memorized a certain portion of the Quran without going to Sunday school and would come out with Arabic and religious studies. (CFP2)

The two non-Muslim participants echoed the same responses of acquiring the knowledge of one's religion and language of Arabic.

3.42. And by having them come here and learn the language and the teachings of that particular belief that helps establish that for future generations – I think that's important. (NM1)

3.43. I see people coming who are first and second generation Canadians that welcome Canadian cultures but they want to maintain their heritage and the principles in which they believe. (NM1)

3.44. ...to have an enrichment of your culture and religion along with the core subjects of Ontario and the curriculum. (NF1)

Some saw the value of Islamic environment of LIS as stemming from ways in which it differs from some students' homes rather than being extensions of them.

> 3.45. I think it is there for parents who are not equipped to teach their children about Islam. (GFS5)

> 3.46. You've got kids who, it's very hard for them to have a strong Muslim identity when they're going to public school, unless they've got a really strong family at home. (GFP2)

There was a sense that LIS provides a compartmentalized Islamic education, as one parent called it, an "add on", as opposed to a more interwoven holistic Islamic education. This was eloquently captured by current parent below, but in all there was an aggregate of five similar responses from parents and teachers.

> 3.47. Okay: I think for the purposes of LIS, as it currently exists and as I have currently experienced it, [it] gives kids is the straightforward curriculum and to add on to it Quran, Arabic and Islamic studies. That's how I see it, straightforward like give them the Ontario curriculum and add on to it Arabic and the Quran. (CFP2)

Earlier in this chapter in the discussion of what is Islam, one of the themes that was raised frequently was "Islam is everything." For example, one of the students mentioned that Islam to her is all encompassing, saying,

> 3.48. Everything [in Islam] is pretty much for your own benefit... It is all encompassing in my life, or I guess I try to make it all encompassing in my life. (GFS2)

When Islam is taught in the school in compartments as indicated in 3.38 and 3.47 above, the students could well reduce Islam to the school subjects of Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies as opposed to learning to live Islam in its entirety in the school. Ramadan

cautions against reducing Islam to subjects or rules and regulations. A parent expressed a similar view when she observed,

> 3.49. What ideally for me, is that it should teach you to go to another level and instill more the Islamic environment and a systematic, interlaced *tarbiyah* program that is what I would like to see as the purpose and the goal of LIS. (CFP2)

One of the students felt that LIS does provide a solid "Islamic Foundation" that grounds students in their religion and allows them to be "better Muslims" and more confident. Another student said that the main reason her parents enrolled her at LIS was because they want her to be in an Islamic environment from a young age and gain an understanding of Islam and being a Muslim to develop strength and resilience.

> 3.50. My dad said to me, even if there was an Islamic high school, he wouldn't let us go because he wants to start us out in the Islamic environment, but he wants us to get a taste of the real life after that. (CFS5)

> 3.51. I think it's actually a good thing we have an elementary school, but a high school wouldn't be a good idea because we're stuck [in an Islamic environment] all our life. Maybe just to start off our character with Islamic stuff but we'll leave this eventually. (CFS3)

> 3.52. I definitely knew my values; I knew I had a core foundation that was strong that I couldn't be influenced by other people. I knew what I wanted, I knew what was right and what was wrong and no one had to remind me or tell me. (GFS4)

Some participants suggested that exposure to an Islamic environment at a young age helps with integration into the broader society and that this itself is a purpose of LIS. A former LIS board member explained that integration within the larger community is aided when the school provides higher academics, builds leaders, and creates a sense of belonging [to the larger London community] by asking the children to volunteer. When this is achieved, he says the students will "(not only) integrate but integrate with Muslim

values" (BM2). A current LIS staff member agreed, saying it's important to "get out there and [have] more social activities for the community at large, rather than just the Muslim community." She continued, "I'd like to see more of that," noting "we try, with the London Food Bank and the Ronald McDonald House, but I'd like to see [the students] do more."

Others felt that the Islamic environment created barriers for integration. A former LIS student mentioned a feeling of isolation when she was enrolled at the school.

> 3.53. [LIS] needs to, I feel like, open its doors, interact with other students and other schools, to help both the students in the public school system and the students in the Islamic school system see the differences. (GFS4)

This sentiment was echoed by another graduate of the school, who said,

> 3.54. I felt that the school was a little bit sheltered and focused a lot more on how things should be and how we should act as opposed to how we really act and how other people really act. (GFS3)

Another graduate expanded on this, saying her experiences at the LIS kept her "sheltered in the Muslim world where everyone had the same beliefs and the same values and I wasn't exposed to as many different people" (GFS1). The lack of exposure to diverse ideas and values was identified by others as one of the negative aspects of LIS. More specifically, the LIS's norms and guidelines regarding male-female interaction were identified by some as being so different from those of public schools that they are a potential obstacle to interacting comfortably with the opposite gender later. Even so, as illustrated by quotations 2.04 and 2.05 above, LIS graduates, while acknowledging this does pose a serious challenge, were able to adjust.

Summary and reflections

There were four major themes that emerged with regard to the purposes of LIS: (1) high academic standards; (2) a community-based facility; (3) provision of a safe, protected and nurturing place to be a Muslim; and (4) provision of an Islamic environment and Islamic education. In retrospect, I noticed as I read the transcripts that some participants' responses were concentrated on what they saw as the current purposes of LIS, while others focused on what should be the purposes of LIS.

There was some disagreement with respect to the academic standards of the school. The graduates, except for one (GSF4), agreed that they were well prepared academically for high school. However, two out of the four current students interviewed at LIS did not agree that LIS prepared them academically because of the quality of some teachers, which was also the reason GS4 gave for her lack of success at high school. Although Van Pelt, Allison and Allison (2007) in their study of Ontario independent schools found that the reason most frequently selected by respondents as very important in their choosing a private school was the dedication of the teachers (91% of all parents), the quality of teachers did not appear to be the main reason why parents choose LIS. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the turnover rate for teachers at LIS is high, which creates a sense of instability. Even so, there was clear evidence in the interview transcripts that LIS parents appreciate the commitment of the teachers and the extent to which they take an interest in their children and work with them individually, there were the same qualities particularly important to the independent school parents in the Van Pelt, Allison and Allison study, many of whom pointed to the perceived scarcity of similar levels of

dedication in public school teachers as a factor in their decision to choose an independent school.

It is important to discuss the apparent place of what some described as the "add on" subjects of Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies. To the extent that these classes are viewed and treated as separate teaching and learning activities, as opposed to being interwoven in the school culture, this could hinder the promise of building a confident Muslim identity and, in turn, become something of a millstone, impeding the integration of students into the wider community, especially if the students only acquire limited understandings of the basic Islamic concepts taught in those classes. Ramadan says in this regard,

> . …observing Islam from the reduced side of an opera-glass, it becomes impossible to give birth to an affirmative, confident and constructive perception of Muslim identity which develops real abilities to inscribe itself in the European landscape. (Ramadan, 1999, p.10)

The environment of an Islamic school cannot be fully "Islamic" if subjects such as Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies are not interwoven in other parts and activities of daily school routines. If what is taught in class is not lived or acted upon outside of the classroom, then there will likely be a disconnect. For instance, if the children are learning about giving charity to the poor in Islamic Studies and the teacher or the school does not suggest and facilitate a venue for them to actually give charity, then Islam is reduced to rules and regulations devoid of action. Furthermore, if the students are not encouraged to exercise their higher order thinking skills developed in English, Math, Science and Social Studies in their study of Quran, Arabic and Islamic Studies, then they are not receiving as

good an education as one could wish. Nor will they receive the benefit of a balanced, critical and self-critical understanding of Islam as called for by Ramadan (2009, p. 14).

Comparison of Ramadan's Integrative and Post Integrative Features

Table 2.2 was developed to summarize Ramadan's conception of integration and post-integration using specific descriptive features presented in his work. Table 5.3 below comments on the presence or absence of each of those features at LIS in light of my analyses of the interview transcripts as reported in this and the previous chapter and, where pertinent, my four years of experience at LIS.

Table 5.3
Comparison of Ramadan's view of Integration and Post-integration with related aspects of London Islamic School

	Ramadan's Features	General Comments
1.	The 7 Cs: Shall have confidence, consistency, contribution, creativity, communication, contest and compassion (p. 85, 86).	Some of these qualities are encouraged at LIS, but there is no evidence for a systematic and deliberate effort to inculcate these attributes.
2.	Shall have a pedagogy of solidarity: to take into account the dignity and culture that fashions a person before reducing them to needs (p. 13)	One can see intermittent evidence of this at LIS, as stated in the analysis with respect to "community-based and tight-knit" theme. The whole child is certainly taken into account.
3.	Shall recognize that one can have multiple identities and multiple loyalties (p. 36, 38)	LIS students appear to recognize they have multiple identities, but there doesn't appear to have been a discussion of this among the school's staff or leadership
4.	Shall never extend a blind support to any of their identities. One shall remain faithful to justice, dignity, equality and criticize and demonstrate against government [when justified] (p. 38)	No evidence to support or reject this.
5.	Shall recognize the Muslim contribution in the construction of Europe (p. 81).	There is no evidence of this beyond the expectations articulated in the Ontario Grade 4 Social Studies curriculum in the context of Medieval times. A few years ago

		students were encouraged to present a pertinent Muslim scientist in their science fair projects, but this appears to have been abandoned.
6.	Shall be Confident, through education, to develop better knowledge of oneself and one's history, to shape a conscience and intelligence that is confident and serene: that is both sure of itself and humble towards others. Ultimately, self-confidence shall be allied to confidence in others (p. 87).	No deliberate effort at developing this quality as described, but traces clearly evident in interviews with LIS graduates.
7.	Shall have a reformist approach: to take Quaranic verses and recognize the various interpretations and suggest understandings and implementations that take into account context that one lives in (p. 63.)	Quran classes at LIS are mainly focused on memorization and literal translations, but this is not necessarily inappropriate for the younger students.
8.	Shall control passion and emotion: have a balanced, critical and self-critical intervention (p. 14).	Character of the Month mentioned in Chapter 4 helps with controlling emotions.
9.	Shall have a spiritual initiation, a quest for the liberation of their inner selves in a global world dominated by appearances and excessive possession and consumption (p. 33).	There are numerous features in the school that discourage "excessive possession and consumption" such as strict school uniform, no vending machines, limited exposure of popular images and popular celebrities. *Hijab* (the veil) and sense of *hayaa* is also used at the school as an expression of rejecting popular clothing fads. Also the teachers and students are well aware of the prophetic tradition to live simply and give charity. The school partakes in a yearlong food drive.
10.	Shall recognize the commonality with Judaism and Christianity and values advocated by humanist, atheists and agnostics (p. 13). Our values and hopes are more essential and numerous that differences (pp. 14, 20).	I have witnessed slivers of deliberate teaching with respect to commonalities with the other two monotheistic religions. However when it comes to values, the school's 'Character of the Month' campaign draws on a "secular" book to teach the values as discussed in Chapter 4.
11.	Shall accept Muslim faith and Western culture, to be faithful to fundamental religious principles and have ownership to western	Students at LIS are socialized to believe that Muslim faith and Western culture are faithful to

	culture (p. 42, 44).	fundamental principles, but I have not witnessed any intellectual discussion over this topic.
12.	Shall become gifts and questions to our fellow citizens, Muslims must remain "questions": with their faith, their practices, their behavior, and their day to day civic commitment, they must positively challenge their fellow citizens. (p. 116).	The school partakes in activities such as going to the food bank, visiting the elderly, Ronald McDonald house charities and other which appear to be stepping stones to integrate with the wider community and "develop trust of their fellow citizens." LIS has also long participated in community-based academic activities which engage students, teachers and others with their fellow citizens as summarized in Table 4.4
13.	Shall set up local initiatives where women and men of different religions, cultures and sensitivities create spaces for mutual knowledge and shared commitment: spaces for trust. (p. 94).	No evidence to support this.
14.	Shall have shared projects, day-to-day mingling with fellow citizens and personal involvement to awaken the minds, bring awareness, and spurs the desire to go further, to understand better and to carry out a dialogue. One must really live and work *together* on *shared* projects (p. 115).	No evidence to support this.
15.	Shall develop trust of their fellow citizens (p. 130).	No evidence to support this.
16.	Shall see the West as the abode of witness versus the abode of war, the witness is no longer to a stranger in the other's world, neither is he linked to the other by a contract: he is at home, among his own kind, and he simply tries to be consistent with his beliefs and in harmony with the people with whom he lives and builds his future (p. 52).	There was no evidence in the interviews or in my observations that would suggest that either the school or the participants see the West as the 'abode of war'. On the contrary, contextual evidence in the interviews shows that the participants saw the West as home. The students certainly saw themselves to be "among his [their] own kind."
17.	Shall understand that secular does not mean wiping out religion, it ensures equality, it means separation of church and state (p. 31).	Following the point above, the interview participants did not appear to accept that that Canadian society or social policy is deliberately trying to "wipe out" religion. On the

		contrary the very existence of the school on Canadian soil is accepted as evidence that one can practice religion freely.
18.	Shall contribute to a reformulation of the political questions of the day. (p. 126).	No evidence to support this.

The features of Ramadan's conception of integration and post-integration that appeared most evident at LIS were, in order of their apparent presence at LIS: (16) does not view the West as abode of war; (17) an understanding that Western secularism does not imply the elimination of religion, but rather ensures equality by protecting freedom of religion while ensuring separation of church and state; (2) a pedagogy of solidarity that takes into account dignity and that culture that fashions a person; (9) a spiritual initiation that involves a quest for the liberation of one's inner self in a global world dominated by appearances and excessive possession and consumption illustrated in the emblematic character of Islam: *hayaa* discussed in Chapter 3; (3) recognize and accept multiple identities, they are socialized to recognize their duties as law-abiding citizens and their duties as Muslims with respect to their day-to-day practise.

With respect to features 11 and 16, I think students definitely do not see the West as the abode of war, hence its mention as the strongest integration and post-integration feature at LIS. However there is no evidence that students see the West as the abode of witness, as the balance of feature 16 indicates. The abode of witness entails,

> The witness is no longer to a stranger in the other's world, neither is he linked to the other by a contract: he is at home, among his own kind, and he simply tries to be consistent with his beliefs and in harmony with the people with whom he lives and builds his future. (Ramadan, 2009, p. 52)

Furthermore, feature 11 suggests ownership of Western culture, for which there was no clear evidence in the interviews or my observations, and which I do not think students can acquire at the school if they are not engaged inside and outside the school.

The features that had least or no support can be organized into two themes, namely integration and a critical and self-critical approach. With respect to integration, the school partakes in academic and non-academic activities as summarized in Table 4.4. While extensive, these appear to fall short of extensive forms of integration recommended by Ramadan, which include commitments: (12) to becoming gifts and questions to our fellow citizens, where Muslims remain "questions" with their faith, their practices, their behavior, and their day to day civic commitment providing vehicles to positively challenge their fellow citizens; (13) to setting up local initiatives where women and men of different religions, cultures and sensitivities create spaces for mutual knowledge and shared commitment: spaces for trust; (14) to shared projects, day-to-day mingling with fellow citizens, where one must really live and work *together* on *shared* projects which finally would lead to (15) developing trust of their fellow citizens.

The critical and self-critical approach requires one not to (4) extend a blind support to any of their identities. One shall remain faithful to justice, dignity, equality and criticize and demonstrate against government [when justified], (6) be confident, through education, to develop better knowledge of oneself and one's history, (7) have a reformist approach: to take Quaranic verses and recognize the various interpretations and suggest understandings and implementations that take into account context that one lives, (8) control passion and emotion: have a balanced, critical and self-critical intervention.

Ultimately this would, in Ramadan's view, help lead to the (18) reformulation of the political questions of the day.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of my analyses of the interview transcripts augmented with references to personal observation and informal talks I had with staff and community members. The analyses of the interviews were organized under three headings: conceptions of Islam, challenges facing Muslims, and purposes of LIS. Each of the segments was, in turn, structured under emergent themes that encapsulated the variety of responses. The Conception of Islam had five main themes: Islam is everything, Islam is a protection, it is relevant to God, it encourages one to be of service to humanity and Islam is monotheistic but not monolithic. Themes emerging from responses to questions concerning the challenges facing Muslims in the West were a plethora of distractions, gender relations, identity crisis and double personalities, myths and stereotypes, and environment not conducive to maintaining an Islamic identity. With respect to the purposes of LIS, the themes were high academic standards, a community-based facility, provision of a safe, protected and nurturing place to be a Muslim, and provision of an Islamic environment and Islamic education.

The application of integration and post-integration checklist in Table 5.3 helps one understand where LIS stands when viewed through the lens of Ramadan's vision. LIS was established in 1996, so it has only been around for fourteen years. Perhaps in the first few years, or even the first decade, life and learning at LIS may have been closer to Ramadan's more rudimentary "settlement" stage as shown in Table 2. 1. Even so, one

board member mentioned that from its beginning, the purpose of LIS was "education, faith and integration – or trying to figure out in that spectrum where we belong … and what [would be] the next natural step given the growing population" (BF4). Given the results of the analyses presented in this and the previous chapter, and as summarized by the comparisons with Ramadan's conception of integration and post-integration in Table 5.3, LIS appears to be making its way through the integration to the post integration stages. It is a milestone for its students and the supporting community, not a millstone.

The next and final chapter summarizes the research, presents my conclusions and offers some final discussion and reflection.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

> LIS also has an extension to its purposes: teach students Quran, Arabic and about their religion and history. … [it] prepares you for the next phase of your education but at the same time equips you with the knowledge of yourself and your religion and the knowledge of the language of your religion. (Board Member 3)

The questions posed in this study were inspired by personal and professional interest. My family moved to Canada from Kuwait when I was fifteen. I have one sister and four younger brothers. For the first few years of our life in Canada, we were settling in and getting acquainted with our environment. In Kuwait we had been attending British schools, and when we moved to Canada, we thrived academically. My youngest brother was nine at the time, still formulating his idiosyncratic and Islamic identity. My sister, my two brothers and I didn't struggle too much to adjust to Canada. However my two youngest brothers struggled and are still struggling to find a balance. I attribute that to coming to Canada at an early age. I have wondered at times, that had they been in an Islamic environment would they have had a different trajectory in terms of forming their identity? This got me interested in building identity, integration and becoming contributing global citizens. All those concerns regarding identity and having a socially safe environment for individuals to experiment in and build a foundation raised the question of how does one build and preserve an identity?

Problem and Research Questions

When the opportunity came to write a thesis, I was working at the London Islamic school [LIS] and enjoying the experience, working with like-minded individuals to help

educate and raise the next generation. I had begun reading Ramadan, and his books on integration and the challenges of youth in the West helped me to better understand the identity crisis. The Islamic school was growing, and it was attracting the children of young first and second generation Muslim Canadians. Given my privileged position as a participant observer at LIS, my experiences and those of my family as immigrants to Canada, and my interest in how people come their identities, I decided to focus my research on LIS, its activities and the experiences and expectations of those who are the school. I phrased my research problem as follows: *What are Islamic schools and why do they exist? More specifically, what is the London Islamic School, how did it come to be, and what do members of the school community see as its purposes?* I structured my inquiry by seeking answers to the following more specific research questions:

1. What is Islam and its educational traditions?
2. What is the history of the London Islamic School? When, how and why was it established? Who were the key figures who contributed to its establishment? What was their vision for the school?
3. What is life and learning like at LIS? How is the Ontario Curriculum supplemented and extended? What is the content of any specific religious instruction? What religious observances and activities form part of the life of the school?
4. What do selected administrators, teachers, students, parents, and non-Muslims identify as (a) the challenges facing Muslim youth and (b) purposes of LIS?

The Research Process

Tentative working hypothesis

Tariq Ramadan's work, particularly his 1990 *To be a European Muslim,* was both an inspiration and a conceptual guide for my work. When outlining the difficulties faced by young Muslims in the West, Ramadan (1999) asks, "who will restore to them the elements and sense of their identity? Who will reconstruct it or, at least, give them some milestones which should permit them to find, consciously and freely, their own way?" (p. 2). This image of providing milestones to help young people find their own way to their identities appeared to provide a powerful way of conceptualizing one of the possible purposes of Islamic schools in Western societies such as Ontario. But progress along any journey must typically be made in the face of difficulties, even impediments. This is so for all young people seeking their way in the world, but young members of immigrant families can face the additional challenges of learning a new language, adapting to new social customs and expectations and, often, learning about and living a religion which lacks a history and an accepted place in the new society. In contemporary times, such challenges are likely to be exacerbated for young people in Muslim families by media reports and images of violence and barbarity committed in the name of Islam, and perhaps by inaccurate stereotypes of the religion itself. As discussed in some detail in Chapter 1, Shapiro's (1984) Royal Commission Report on Ontario private schools pointed to public apprehensions about private religious schools which, by explicitly teaching religious beliefs and values, can be viewed as potential threats to social cohesion (p. 50). A specific concern in the case of Islamic schools is the politically charged image

of the *madrassa* where rows of young boys commit religious texts to memory without open and critical discussion or even, perhaps, understanding. As represented in my title, these concerns point to the possibility of LIS being more of a millstone than a milestone for Muslim youth.

Central to this milestone – millstone problem, is what Ramadan (1999) described as the enduring problem of "how to maintain a spiritual life in a modern – understood as both secular and industrialized – society and, consequently, how to transmit the necessary knowledge which permits genuine freedom of choice" (p. 138). To guide my inquiry, I adopted as a tentative hypothesis the view that independent Islamic schools, such as the LIS, represent a sincere effort at delivering this "necessary knowledge" by providing an education that can serve as a source of at least some of Ramadan's milestones for young Muslims faced with the challenges of constructing their identity in the modern West. This was my initial, tentative, starting point in seeking to address my research questions.

Methods

I utilized three research tools in my inquiry: key informant interviews, literature and document analysis and, to a lesser extent, participant observation. In seeking an appropriate method for gathering the views of members of the LIS, I envisioned an approach that would allow me to consider a wide range of voices from the community. The key informant interview method described by Goetz and Lecompte (1984) and Marshall (1996) and as recently used by Bernie Lawrence (2009) in his inquiry into the London APPLE School, appeared to satisfy this expectation well and was adopted.

The goal of the key informant method is to exchange information on aspects a specific situation, in this case aspects of LIS, with individuals who can reasonably be

expected to have access to perspectives not readily available to the researcher. As such, interviewees are not randomly selected, but are chosen carefully because of their pertinent knowledge and their willingness to share this knowledge. I decided to recruit my interviewees from five groups of LIS participants: parents, students, staff, board members and non-Muslims with some direct knowledge of the school. I used advice gathered from an advisory selection committee to draw up lists of potential interviewees to ensure there was wide representation of various economic, academic and ethnic groups within and across the participant groups. As summarized in Table 1.1, I initially sought to recruit a total of 33 interviewees, but was ultimately successful in recruiting only 27 key informants, composed of five parents, ten students including five graduates, six staff members including the principal, four Board members and two non-Muslims.

I interviewed these key informants using the schedule of questions shown in Appendix I. The common questions posed to all the participants were: (1) What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you; (2) What are the challenges of Muslim youth today; (3) How do you think LIS is similar and different than other schools; (4) In what ways do you think the relationships of the students at LIS with the opposite gender are similar to, or different from, those of similarly aged students attending other schools; (5) What do you see the purposes of LIS? In addition, parents and graduates were also asked if they were aware of any differences – negative or positive – between graduates of LIS and their Grade 9 – 12 classmates that could be attributed to their LIS experience, and if they thought LIS does/did a good job of preparing the graduates for high school? All interviews were audio taped and then transcribed.

Findings

For convenience my main findings are summarized below with reference to the four research questions used to structure my inquiry.

1. What is Islam and its educational traditions?

The first part of Chapter 3 provided an overview of Islam which reviewed the fundamental beliefs and practices of the religion by drawing on Esposito (1998), Ramadan (2004) and other scholars. The second part of the chapter considered Islamic educational traditions concluding with brief review of Ramadan's views on Islamic education and an overview of *tarbiyah* and character education.

As noted previously, all interviewees were asked "What is Islam?" and "What does Islam mean to you?" These were seen as important background questions for establishing participant understanding of the purposes of Islamic schools. The main themes that emerged from my analysis of the responses were: (1) Islam is everything; (2) Islam is a protection; (3) it is relevant to God; (4) it encourages one to be of service to humanity; and (5) Islam is monotheistic but not monolithic.

2. What is the history of the London Islamic School?

This and related questions were addressed in the first part of Chapter 4 by drawing on documents obtained from the school and interviews with knowledgeable members of LIS, especially board members. In brief, LIS was established in 1996 as a properly registered, private, fee charging, K-8 day-school that is in full compliance with Ontario's Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines (London Islamic School, 2008). In 2009-2010, the school had an enrollment of 189 students and employed 23 staff members. It is located adjacent to the London Muslim Mosque and operates under the

mosque's jurisdiction. The London Islamic School was one of 37 Islamic schools operating in Ontario within the total of 869 registered independent schools in 2006 (Van Pelt, Allison & Allison, 2007, p. 9).

3. What is life and learning like at LIS?

The second part of Chapter 4 presented answers to this question with specific attention to how *The Ontario Curriculum* is presented, the content of the religious instruction provided, and the routines and religious observances and activities that form part of the life of the school. Chapter 2 provided a brief discussion of the generic purposes of schools noting the importance of activities which socialize students into the normative standards approved by the sponsoring social group. Aspects of socialization at LIS were considered in Chapter 3, with particular focus on the character development (*tarbiyah*) activities promoted by the Character of the Month program.

4. What do selected administrators, teachers, students, parents, and non-Muslims identify as (a) the challenges facing Muslim youth and (b) purposes of LIS?

Chapter 5 was devoted to exploring answers to these questions by drawing on analyses of the 27 interview transcripts. The chapter began by considering the interview responses to the questions on the nature of Islam as reviewed under research question 1 above, where the five themes emerging from the analysis were noted. The themes emerging from the analysis of responses to the questions concerning challenges facing Muslim Youth in the West were: (1) a plethora of distractions; (2) gender relations; (3) identity crisis and double personalities; (4) myths and stereotypes; and (5) environment not conducive to maintaining an Islamic identity. Those concerning the purposes of LIS were: (1) high academic standards; (2) a community-based facility; (3) provision of a

safe, protected and nurturing place to be a Muslim; and (4) provision of an Islamic environment and Islamic education.

Table 6.1 below juxtaposes the themes emerging from the three questions considered in Chapter 5. The themes associated with the purposes of LIS have been placed in position (B) in the middle of the array to better relate the themes associated with (A) What is Islam and (C) Challenges facing Muslim youth.

Table 6.1
Comparison of Themes Emerging from the Analyses of the Interview Transcripts

(A) What is Islam?	**(B) Purposes of LIS**	**(C) Challenges of Muslim youth in the West**
(1) Islam is everything (2) Islam is a protection (3) it is relevant to God (4) it encourages one to be of service to humanity (5) Islam is monotheistic but not monolithic.	(1) high academic standards (2) a community-based facility (3) provision of a safe, protected and nurturing place to be a Muslim (4) provision of an Islamic environment and Islamic education	(1) plethora of distractions (2) gender relations (3) identity crisis and double personalities (4) myths and stereotypes (5) environment not conducive to maintaining an Islamic identity

Common threads appear to link views of what Islam is and the Purposes of LIS in the themes A1 (Islam is everything) and B4 (Islamic environment and Islamic education) and also between A5 (Islam is not monolithic) and the socialization aspect of B3 (provision of a safe, protected and nurturing place to be a Muslim), overlapping with B4 as stated above. With respect to A2 (Islam is a form of protection) this appears to be reflected in the essence of B3 (protected environment) and may link to C3 (identity crisis) and C4 (myths and stereotypes). There is a clear connection between challenges in C5 (living in an environment not conducive to maintaining an Islamic identity) and the

purpose of B4 (providing an Islamic environment) and this connection may link through A2 (Islam as a protection).

These later connections appear to tightly link conceptions of the challenges facing Muslim youth in the West to the provision of a safe, protected and nurturing place to be and become a Muslim (B3) and provision of an Islamic environment and Islamic education (B4) and implicitly to all the other purposes. High academic standards (B1) promise to provide students with stepping stones leading to future academic success which, in turn, should help build their confidence. As discussed by Coleman (1988), the community-based facility (B2) generates a rich reserve of social capital on which students (and others) can draw to assist not just with their education but also in building their identity and dispelling the debilitating threats of negative myths and stereotypes. In these and other ways, any one of the purposes in column B can help in meeting one or more of the challenges in column C. The themes are intertwined. Moreover, the purposes in column B can be readily seen to be rooted in the basal conceptions of Islam in column A.

Broadly speaking, the purposes of LIS as articulated in the interviews and interpreted above match and complement the theoretical discussion of the purposes of education and schools developed in Chapter 2, especially with regard to the basic common schooling functions of education, socialization, and safety. With respect to education, although the school was not fully meeting all the expected levels of instructional time in each subject due to the need to schedule time for religious instruction, all core subjects in *The Ontario Curriculum* were being provided and changes were in place to rectify the time allocation expectations in 2010-11. Moreover, the

schools' academic record is strong and growing as illustrated by its strong reputation in the educational community and the strong performance of its students in city-wide academic competitions Many illustrations emerged during the interviews of how LIS provides a protected, supportive and social-capital rich environment for nurturing Muslim identity, Islamic beliefs and practices. Dewey (1938) argued that education is not just the acquisition of valued and approved knowledge, but also the development of understanding which can empower learners to apply knowledge through their actions

Through education, socialization and corrective intervention, LIS helps its students build and develop a sense of identity and pride. The safety provided by the school is what makes the above functions possible. The physical, psychological and emotional safety of the students on the school premises is a necessary purpose to allow for education. In these and related ways the theoretical purposes of schools discussed in Chapter 2 were clearly reflected the actual expectations of purposes stated by interviewees.

Millstone or Milestone?

As discussed above, my tentative, working hypothesis was that LIS represents a sincere effort at delivering the "necessary knowledge" that Ramadan sees as being needed for young Muslims to find their way and build a strong, solid and responsible Muslim identity in the modern West. Ramadan's integrative and post-integrative approach as outlined in earlier chapters and summarized in Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 was adopted as providing a rich conceptual frame for approaching this and related issues. Figure 6.2 has been developed to tentatively locate LIS with respect to the conceptual

contrast between the Milestone and Millstone concepts developed from Ramadan's stages of settlement, integration and post-integration on the basis of the findings discussed above.

Figure 6.1

Locating LIS on Ramadan's integration and post-integration continuum

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Millstone
One identity
Victimized mindset
True loyalty</td><td colspan="8">Milestone
Multiple identity
Majority mindset
Critical loyalty</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>LIS</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Settlement
Us vs. them mentality
Struggling to make ends meet</td><td colspan="4">Integration
Struggling adaptation reform
Participation and Contribution</td><td colspan="4">Post-Integration
Master language and legal framework
Creative transformational reform</td></tr>
</table>

The divided segments in each stage shown in the Figure 6.1 are intended to illustrate the continuum and allow for some graduated choice within each of the stages, rather than mark precise internal divisions. I have located LIS toward the middle of the Integration stage on the basis of my personal observations of the school and my interpretation of the interview findings reported in Chapter 5, giving particular weight to the assessment presented in Table 5.3 and Ramadan's objectives of education as discussed toward the end of Chapter 3.

Table 5.3 related the interview findings to the checklist of Ramadan's features of integration and post-integration originally developed in Table 2.2. The assessment in Table 5.3 identified features in the checklist that I considered had received strong, little or no support in the interview transcripts. There appeared to be strong support features such as (16) does not view the West as abode of war and (17) an understanding that Western secularism does not imply the elimination of religion, but rather ensures equality by

protecting freedom of religion while ensuring separation of church and state. Features that received little or no support included (8) control passion and emotion: have a balanced, critical and self-critical intervention, (12) becoming gifts and questions to our fellow citizens, where Muslims remain "questions" with their faith, their practices, their behavior, and their day to day civic commitment, thereby providing vehicles to positively challenge their fellow citizens, and (13) setting up local initiatives where women and men of different religions, cultures and sensitivities create spaces for mutual knowledge and shared commitment: spaces for trust. On balance, when considering the level of support for the 18 features in the checklist, I concluded that considerable room remains in which LIS could grow toward Ramadan's ideal of post-integration.

This view was confirmed when I considered Ramadan's discussion of the objectives of education as reviewed in Chapter 3. Ramadan (2004) recognizes three objectives (1) the education of the heart, (2) the education of the mind and (3) the education of both the heart and mind. As discussed and illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5, LIS educates and provides mechanisms for socialization focused on the heart so as to be conscious of God (*Taqwa*), and *hayaa,* so as to recognize broader values, conceptions of character, and responsibilities toward "ourselves, our bodies, our relatives, our communities, and the human family at large" (p. 129). The one and only systematic example of this of which I became aware at LIS was the Character of the Month program used as a *tarbiyah* initiative and described in some detail in Chapter 4. The second of Ramadan's objectives of education educates the mind to have an understanding of the primary sources of Islam (Quran and *sunnah*), and develop an awareness of one's surroundings to "find the way of faithfulness in everyday life" (Ramadan, 2004, p. 129).

As described in Chapter 4 and illustrated in parts of Chapter 5, the religious instruction at LIS does not seem to be as relevant and engaging to the students as could be wished, nor have a reformist and self critical approach. Furthermore, as noted by a current parent (CFP2) the Quran, Arabic and Islamic studies curriculum is fragmented, which not only weakens the A1 understanding of Islam is everything, but will likely hinder development of the more complete and integrated understanding of Islam advocated by Ramadan.

Furthermore, the interviews showed that at least some participants viewed the school and the students as being "segregated" or isolated from the wider London community. But Ramadan speaks of "genuine applied, critical pedagogy" (2009, p. 38) that can foster movement through his stages by reconciling "individuals with the different dimensions of their being, their origins, and their hopes" in ways that "can enable them to overcome anxious, reactive and passionate reactions when encountering others" (p. 38). The meshing of both these features is the intent of his third educational objective.

In sum, I placed LIS toward the middle of the Integration stage in Ramadan's model as portrayed in Figure 6.1 on the basis on my overall assessment of my impressions and the interview data, reinforced by my interpretation of the presence of specific features in the Table 5.3 checklist and his objectives of education. Five of the eighteen specific features listed in Table 5.3 received strong support, but some of these seemed to be somewhat rudimentary, such as not seeing the West as the abode of war. Furthermore, while LIS does provide education for the heart and mind in conformity with Ramadan's third objective, the religious instruction provided appears lacking in important respects, with traditional approaches and pedagogy overshadowing the prospects for a reformist approach. Ideally, the Islamic education provided should be

comparable to the sophistication of the curriculum and the quality of the pedagogy found in the non-religious program of studies.

Implications

For practice

I did not undertake this study with the intent of identifying weakness at LIS or proposing recommendation for improvement. Even so, given my conclusions with regard to the current location of the school within Ramadan's model of integration as summarized in Figure 6.1, I decided I had an obligation to suggest some ways in which the school could move toward the post-integration stage. The suggestions below have been generated from Ramadan's integration and post-integration checklist and from the themes summarized in Table 6.1.

1) *LIS should investigate ways of working together on shared projects with their non-LIS peers and explore other ways to increase the day-to-day interactions between members of the LIS community and their fellow citizens.*

Ramadan makes it clear that for most Muslim immigrants a shift in thinking is required to successfully live in the West as a secure and contributing citizen. This calls for day-to-day interactions and real life encounters for individuals both at school and in the community so as to develop a sense of comfort and confidence in who they are and who they are dealing with. The immediate goal would be to develop a sense of local mutual trust, which is particularly important when the learners are children. This requires a support system, a community, which is protective and supportive of its youth that recognizes the challenges they face and has an understanding of the goals and purposes of integration and post-integration. LIS already provides such a support system. This

recommendation envisages finding ways to build bridges from this strong support system to the broader community, bridges which would facilitate two-way traffic.

2) *LIS should seek ways to nurture and celebrate its students' multiple identities and multiple loyalties.*

Ramadan encourages acceptance of multiple identities and the multiple loyalties that comes with these identities. Canadian Muslims, for example, have the same civic responsibilities as other citizens, such as paying their taxes and contributing to the common good, but they also have distinct obligations rooted in their Islamic identity such as performing their daily prayers, fasting in Ramadan and so on.

3) *LIS should explore ways to inculcate in students acceptance of their obligations to become contributing global citizens, faithful to the ideals of justice, dignity, and equality.*

These values are at the heart of the Muslim identity and, as such, are in themselves milestones to be recognized and used in the education and socialization of the young. Ultimately these are the very values that would make one a socially conscious Muslim.

4) *LIS should constantly nurture God Consciousness*

The strongest theme running through participant responses to the question of what is Islam? was a recognition that Islam is an all encompassing entity that is woven in all aspects of their life. This presumably embodies a broad, widely shared expectation for the school. A strong and consistent way to both recognize this and foster its development in the young would be by nurturing God Consciousness in all aspects of the student's life. This would also further ensure congruency between home and school.

5) *LIS should give priority to developing a systematic tarbiyah program that is pervasive in all its daily activities and practices*

A well conceptualized and delivered character education and *tarbiyah* program would help socialize students into both broader Islamic values and the western virtues.

The Character of the Month program described in Chapter 4 is one example, but there must be other more systematic programs that could be considered for adoption. A suitable program would strengthen the protective, preventative properties of Islam which emerged as a theme during the analysis, as recognized in Table 6.1.

6) *LIS should take appropriate steps to ensure the pedagogy, curriculum and resources of the classes of Quran, Arabic, Islamic studies are engaging and relevant.*

This point was discussed earlier when considering Ramadan's objectives of Islamic education. The general aim would be to create resources that are pertinent to the students and would keep them engaged while still providing a sound program of religious education that would avoid alienating them from coming to know and understand the fundamentals of their religion. In addition to being a further step along the path to Ramadan's post-integration stage, pursuit of this objective would have the added benefit of removing the traditional rote memorization associated with old *madrassa*-style instruction.

For research

The strength of the semi-structured interview approach used in the study lies in its open ended but disciplined process. This was my first experience conducting interviews on such a large scale with a focused topic. I found it challenging, especially with regard to finding the best balance between probing and moving along when an interesting issue arose, and deciding when to maintain silence to allow space for the thoughts of participants to permeate and dominate the discussion. In retrospect, I realized there were perhaps more powerful questions that I could have asked, and that I could have probed some answers more thoroughly. Such reflections occurred frequently when I was listening to the interview tapes multiple times and when reading and re-reading the

transcriptions. An important implication for my own future research and for other students following me is that one should not hurry into the actual interview stage, but ensure one has a thorough grasp of the theoretical and practical grounding of the interview questions.

It is always difficult to confidently attribute causal relationships within the complex of relationships within and around the growth and development experienced by individuals and their educational experiences, and this was certainly the case with regard to my inquiry at LIS. The key informant approach cannot be used to formally test hypothesized causal links, but given the rich range of data and impressions considered when developing the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, I believe I can say with some confidence that those graduating from LIS have had a generally positive experience in terms of their identity, education and sense of community. LIS graduates drew meaningful connections between their experiences and their attitudes and skills when I asked them if they were aware of any differences between themselves and their high school classmates that they would attribute to their experience at LIS. Even so, one of the parents spoke directly to the analytical difficulties involved when he said "It's difficult for me to attribute it to LIS." In this case the parent was talking about his daughter's experiences when moving from LIS to high school, but the same difficulties arise when seeking to attribute any specific outcomes to some aspect of one individual's past experiences.

But that is not really what I was about or interested in discovering during this study. Rather that attributing specific causes and effects to individuals at LIS, I wanted to develop a well-grounded understanding of LIS as an Islamic school in an Ontario

community. Through seeking to better understanding its history, establishment and day-to-day life and learning, I was able to contextualize the themes that emerged in the interviews with respect to its purposes in meaningful ways and, in doing so, better assess its current capacity to deal with the challenges facing Muslim youth in the West.

For future research

The findings of this research should not be viewed as an end in itself, but rather as an outcome of a process to gauge the purposes of Islamic schools. While the findings of this thesis provides a strong understanding of what are the current purposes in the view of the LIS community, I recommend acquiring the views of those who are not in regular contact with the school such as the parents and students of those attending public schools. This will provide a unique perspective with respect to identity and integration.

For theory and policy

In *The Report of The Commission on Private Schools in Ontario* Shapiro (1986, p. 38) observed the more complex and dynamic the society, the greater is the need for clarifying the functions of its schools and the role that they should play in the ongoing attempt to realize a better society. In his submission to the Commission, the elder McGuinty stated that independent schools exist by virtue of interest, with parents that send their children to these schools paying their school taxes, as well as paying fees to the school. Further, he argued that independent schools justify their right to exist in that they "efficiently serve the needs of their pupils and parents, and society, by fulfilling the basic function of the school" (p. 2). For young Muslims growing up in a complex Western society such as Ontario, it is not at all clear that the public schools can provide an entirely adequate learning environment, especially as they do not seem to have any built-in ways

to help young people from widely diverse backgrounds to find their cultural and religious ways, and build appropriately diverse and distinct identities. For these and other reasons, McGuinty endorsed independent religious schools as important and relevant components of our society "worthy of public support" and, through his recommendations, Shapiro concurred.

But what kinds of school environment, curriculum and pedagogies would foster progress toward the post-integrative stage while being sensitive to each student's different and unique background? The recommendations for improved practice at LIS offered above point to one possible way forward. Greater emphasis, for example, could be placed on systematically developing students' sense of self-confidence through enriched history education, participation in more shared projects, and day-to-day mingling with students and citizens not enrolled in the school. The general approach would be aimed at nurturing feelings of mutual trust at a local level while fostering the development of a critical mind that can pave the road toward reconciliation between cultural traditions (Ramadan, 2009, p.132).

In essence, what appears to be required is a support system based on an understanding of Ramadan's integration and post-integration model. In a school such as LIS, an appropriate approach could be one in which the educational and socialization activities provided by the school and supported by the community are sensitive to the cultural and religious challenges faced by the children. Regular public schools may be able to provide such environments, but this will be particularly difficult if there are immigrant children from many distinct backgrounds, each with their cultural, and perhaps religious, challenges.

A powerful policy implication of my findings is that Islamic schools that seek to pursue Ramadan's path to post-integration will provide a service to not only the Muslim population but also to the larger community. Supporting Islamic schools that follow such guidelines, which can be delineated in policy, will enhance the prospects of confident Muslim youth being engaged in their communities and becoming contributing citizens of Canada. An alternative scenario would be one in which those parents who cannot afford to enroll their children in independent Islamic (or other religious) schools and who, in consequence, become locked into unaided struggles with the challenges summarized in Table 6.1, may become social and financial burdens on society.

Concluding Remarks

With education and socialization Muslims can free themselves from their "social ghettos" and the minority mindsets that can easily become millstones preventing them from finding "consciously and freely, their own way" (Ramadan, 1999, p. 2). Given the universality of the message of Islam as discussed in Chapter 3, Muslims are surely capable of living and succeeding in a secularized society. Their values and principles are fully compatible with democracy. They can live and work side by side with their non-Muslim fellow citizens and have the "confidence, consistency, contribution, creativity, communication, contest and compassion" (p. 85-86) to enable them to make valued contributions to the broader society.

Yet, in the final analysis my initial hypothesis was neither completely upheld nor falsified. LIS is on its way to becoming a vehicle to effectively and deliberately deliver the "necessary knowledge" to provide milestones for young Muslims to consciously

make their ways in this Western society. But insofar as it falls short of the full possibilities of Ramadan's conception of integration and post-integration, and as long as it embodies forms and methods of religious instruction which contrast with those that animate the non-religious curriculum, it may run the risk of becoming a millstone, if not in reality, then in perception. But there is another impediment, which may eventually become a millstone that will drown not just the promise of LIS and other Islamic schools, but all of Ontario's independent religious schools. Shapiro's recommendation for a balanced approach to providing public funds and regulation for faith based schools is now over a quarter of a century old. John Tory's most recent attempt to move forward on this policy issue was roundly rejected by the public. But if no acceptable policy solution is found to provide some meaningful financial support or relief for the parents and faith communities that are currently bearing the full costs of operating the schools that protect and preserve their religions, their ability to provide good quality education, both religious and non-religious, will become even more tightly limited. This may encourage some currently on the journey to integration to turn away from progress toward Ramadan's state of post-integration, turning milestones into millstones.

Society would be diminished in the absence of well-operated schools dedicated to educating and socializing the young into their parents' religion, be they publicly funded or not. The ability of fully secular public schools to adequately, respectfully, and humanely meet the full educational needs of all immigrant children is surely limited. There is thus an important place for schools that can provide safe and secure learning environments in which young people can live and learn about their religion, while also mastering the standard curriculum. As such the optimistic future for Islamic school

developed from Ramadan's vision in the previous pages can be extended to other religious schools. All can contribute to the greater good by providing an education that shapes a conscience and intelligence that is confident and serene: that is both sure of itself and humble towards others (p.87), and ultimately contributes to a reformulation of the political questions of the day (Ramadan, 2009, p. 126).

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APPENDIX I

Interview Questions

Board member Interviews
Questions for board members
Initial Background Questions:

a)	You were a board member at LIS for _______________ years
b)	Which years ______________________
c)	Do (did) your children go to this school? if no, why not?
d)	How frequently do you visit LIS?
e)	Do you think LIS follows-specific guidelines with regards to gender interaction?

Formal Interview Board member Questions:

	What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you? What are the challenges faced by Muslim Youth? How can education help?
	What is the challenges of Youth today?
	What is the challenges of Muslim Youth today?
	How do you think LIS is different from other schools? How do you think LIS is similar to other schools? Probes: a) In what ways are the early educational experiences for children at LIS different from those of their counterparts? -How many times have you visited LIS? b) How do these experiences affect the students? c) Are you aware of attitudes or values that are important to you that the students develop at LIS? d) Do you feel these are an asset or a handicap for the students? -at school -at home -in their life in general
	Who created the initial vision for LIS? What is the current vision of LIS? Do you talk about the purposes of LIS in your board meetings? Are there common themes that usually emerge in those discussions?
	All things considered, why do you think LIS was established, and what do you

	see as its current purposes?
	How well do you think LIS prepares students for high school?
	Is there anything you wish to add? Have I forgotten to ask anything that you feel is important? Do you have any questions for me?

Parent Interviews
Questions for LIS parents of current students
Initial Background Questions:

a)	Your child(ren) are attending LIS for grades ________________
b)	Have many children do you have? ________ Did they all attend LIS (if not, why not?) _________
c)	Do you think LIS follows-specific guidelines with regards to gender interaction?

Formal Interview Parent Questions:

1.	What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you?
2.	What are the challenges of youth today?
3.	What are the challenges of Muslim youth today?
4.	How do you think LIS is different from other schools? How do you think LIS is similar to other schools? Probes: a) How do you think your child's early educational experiences at LIS were different from those of children at other schools? b) How have these experiences affected your child? c) Are you aware of attitudes or values that are important to you that are developing in your child at LIS? d) Do you feel these have been an asset or a handicap? -at school? -at home? -in their life in general?
5.	In what ways do you think your child's relationships with the opposite gender are similar to, or different from, those of similarly aged students attending other schools? [probe for differences between public, Catholic, Independent schools]
6.	All things considered, why do you think LIS was established, and what do you see as its current purposes?
7.	Do you think LIS does/did a good job of preparing your child for high school? If yes how so? If not, why not?
8.	Is there anything you wish to add? Have I forgotten to ask anything that you feel is important? Do you have any questions for me?

Parent Interviews
Questions for LIS parents
Parents with children enrolled in public secondary schools who graduated from LIS
Initial Background Questions:

d)	Your child(ren) are attending LIS for grades ________________
e)	Have many children do you have? ________ Did they all attend LIS (if not, why not?) __________
f)	Do you think LIS follows-specific guidelines with regards to gender interaction?

Formal Interview Parent Questions:

1.	What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you?
2.	What are the challenges of youth today?
3.	What are the challenges of Muslim youth today?
4.	How do you think LIS is different from other schools? How do you think LIS is similar to other schools? Probes: a) How do you think your child's early educational experiences at LIS were different from those of children at other schools? b) How have these experiences affected your child? c) Are you aware of attitudes or values that are important to you that are developing in your child at LIS? d) Do you feel these have been an asset or a handicap? -at school? -at home? -in their life in general?
5.	When your child/children continued his/her/their education, through grades 9 to 12, were you aware of any differences –negative or positive – between your child and his/her/their classmates? To what extent do you think these differences could be attributed to their LIS experience?
6.	In what ways do you think your child's relationships with the opposite gender are similar to, or different from, those of similarly aged students attending other schools? [probe for differences between public, Catholic, Independent schools]
7.	All things considered, why do you think LIS was established, and what do you see as its current purposes?
8.	Do you think LIS does/did a good job of prepared your child for high school?

	If yes how so? If not, why not?
9.	Is there anything you wish to add? Have I forgotten to ask anything that you feel is important? Do you have any questions for me?

Student Interviews
Questions for Current LIS students
Initial Background Questions:

a)	You attended LIS for grades ________________
b)	How many brothers and/or sisters do you have? _________ Did they attend LIS (if not, why not?) __________
c)	Do you think LIS follows-specific guidelines with regards to gender interaction?

Formal Interview Questions of current LIS Student

1.	What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you?
2.	What are the challenges of youth today?
3.	What are the challenges of Muslim youth today?
4.	How do you think LIS is different than other schools? How do you think LIS is similar to other schools? Probes: a) do you think your experiences at LIS are different from those of children going to other schools? If yes, how so? b) Are you aware of attitudes or values that are important to you that you are developing at LIS? c) Do you feel these will be an asset or a handicap after you leave LIS? -at school? -at home? -in your life in general?
5.	In what ways do you think your relationship with the opposite gender similar to, or different from, those of similarly aged students attending other schools? [probe for differences between public, Catholic, Independent schools]
6.	Why do you think you go to LIS? Why do you think LIS is here? What would you change at LIS if you could and why?
7.	Is there anything you wish to add? Have I forgotten to ask anything that you feel is important? Do you have any questions for me?

Student Interviews
Questions for LIS Graduates
Initial Background Questions:

a)	You attended LIS for grades ________________
b)	How many brothers and/or sisters do you have? ________ Did they attend LIS (if not, why not?) _________
c)	Do you think LIS follows-specific guidelines with regards to gender interaction?

Formal Interview Student Questions

1.	What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you? What is the purpose of Islam? What does the presence of Islam offer a person in their daily life?
2.	What are the challenges of youth today?
3.	What are the challenges of Muslim youth today?
4.	How do you think LIS is different than other schools? How do you think LIS is similar to other schools? Probes: a) In what ways do you think your experiences at LIS were different from those of your friends at other schools? b) Are you aware of attitudes or values that are important to you that you developed when you were at LIS? c) Do you feel these have been an asset or a handicap after you left LIS? -at school? -at home? -in your life in general?
5.	When you continued your education, through grades 9 to 12, were you aware of any differences – negative or positive –between you and your classmate that could be attributed to your LIS experiences? [Probe for further details if appropriate]
6.	In what ways do you think the your relationships with the opposite gender similar to, or different from, those of similarly aged students attending other schools? [probe for differences between public, Catholic, Independent schools]
7.	Why do you think LIS exists? What do you see the purposes of LIS? How is LIS different or similar to your current school?

Principal/administrators Interviews
Initial Background Questions:

a)	You were a principal/administrators at LIS for ______________years
b)	Which years____________________
c)	Do you think LIS follows-specific guidelines with regards to gender interaction?

Formal Interview Principal/administrators Questions:

	What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you?
	What are the challenges of Youth today?
	What are the challenges faced by Muslim Youth? How can education help them?
	How do you think LIS is different from other schools? How do you think LIS is similar to other schools? Probes: a) Do you think the early educational experiences for children at LIS are different than those of their counterparts? b) How do these experiences affect the students? c) Are you aware of attitudes or values that are important to you that the students develop at LIS? d) Do you feel these are an asset or a handicap for the students? -at school -at home -in their life in general
	In what ways do you think the students' relationships with the opposite gender are similar to, or different from, those of similarly aged students attending other schools? [probe for differences between public, Catholic, Independent schools]
	All things considered, why do you think LIS was established, and what do you see as its current purposes? How is LIS different from or similar to other schools you have worked at?
	How well do you think LIS prepares students for high school? Is there anything it might do better in this regard?
	Is there anything you wish to add? Have I forgotten to ask anything that you feel

	is important? Do you have any questions for me?

Teacher Interviews
Questions for LIS teachers
Initial Background Questions:

a)	You taught at LIS for ________________years
b)	Which years ____________________
c)	Do you think LIS follows-specific guidelines with regards to gender interaction?

Formal Interview Teacher Questions:

	What is Islam? What does Islam mean to you?
	What are the challenges of Youth today?
	What are the challenges of Muslim Youth today? How can education help them?
	How do you think LIS is different from other schools? How do you think LIS is similar to other schools? Probes: a) Do you think the early educational experiences for children at LIS are different from those of their counterparts? b) How do these experiences affect your students? c) Are you aware of important attitudes or values that students develop at LIS? d) Do you feel these are an asset or a handicap for the students? -at school -at home -in their life in general
	In what ways do you think the students' relationships with the opposite gender are similar to, or different from, those of similarly aged students attending other schools? [probe for differences between public, Catholic, Independent schools]
	All things considered, why do you think LIS was established, and what do you see as its current purposes?
	Do you think LIS does a good job preparing its students for high school? If yes, how? If not, why not?
	Is there anything you wish to add? Have I forgotten to ask anything that you feel is important? Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX II

ETHICAL REVIEW

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number: 0912-7
Principal Investigator: Derek Allison
Student Name: Asma Ahmed
Title: *LIS: Milestone or Millstone?*
Expiry Date: April 30, 2010
Type: M. Ed. Thesis
Ethics Approval Date: January 19, 2010
Revision #:
Documents Reviewed & Approved: UWO Protocol, Letter of Information & Consents, Phone Script

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.
During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

Dr. Jason Brown (Chair)

2009-2010 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board

Dr. Jason Brown	**Faculty (Chair)**
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	**Faculty**
Dr. Jacqueline Specht	**Faculty**
Dr. Farahnaz Faez	**Faculty**
Dr. Wayne Martino	**Faculty**
Dr. George Gadanidis	**Faculty**
Dr. Robert Macmillan	**Assoc Dean, Graduate Programs & Research (*ex officio*)**
Dr. Jerry Paquette	**UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (*ex officio*)**

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