

## A Framework to Assess the Supports Provided for Muslim Students in a Public School

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### Abstract

Many studies and surveys show that Islam is a misunderstood religion in many areas of the world. Therefore, Muslims in the West are a “poorly understood” minority group (Envionics Institute, 2016). While other ethnic or racial minorities feel moderately comfortable defending themselves, their groups, and asserting their identities, Muslim youth “face qualitatively different identity tasks than do many of their peers,” largely due to feelings of “being under attack or scrutiny because of their religion” (Stonebanks & Sensoy, 2009). The purpose of this article is to present a framework that educators and administrators can use to identify the current supports provided for Muslim students and the gaps in what is available to help Muslim students feel welcomed in their schools. The framework is a two-dimensional matrix with six major challenges that Muslim students experience and the corresponding supports utilizing Banks’ Five Multicultural Dimensions (Content Integration, Knowledge Construction, Equity Pedagogy, Prejudice Reduction, Empowering School Culture and School Structures). The six challenges most prominently faced by Muslim youth, as articulated in the literature review and documents provided by school boards on the guidelines for different faith-groups are: religious practices, dress code, sexual ethics, stereotypes and biases, Islamophobia, and curriculum-related challenges.

*Keywords: Muslim, Students, Public School, Supports, Well-being, Sense of Belonging, Banks’ Multiculturalism Dimension, Islamophobia*

Muslims, in general, worry about visually and verbally self-identifying out of fear of facing discrimination, assault, prejudice, and disrespect.<sup>1</sup> Muslims, including students who outwardly identify as Muslims or who adhere to Islamic guidelines and practices, face specific challenges for

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<sup>1</sup> D. Helly, “Are Muslims discriminated against in Canada since September 2001”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 36 no. 1 (2004), 24-47; CAIR-CAN, *Life for Canadian Muslims the morning after: A 9/11 wake-up call*, (Ottawa: Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2002); A. Hildebrandt, “Aboriginal people, Muslims face discrimination most: poll”, *CBC News*, March 15, 2010, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2010/03/15/discrimination-poll-2010.html>; A. Chung, “Canadians less tolerant after 9/11: Poll”, *Vancouver Sun*, September 7, 2011, <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/9-11-anniversary/Canadians+less+tolerant+after+Poll/5366720/story.html>; D. Mehta, “‘She was punched all over and kicked’: Police say ‘no doubt’ attack on Muslim woman ‘hate-motivated’”, *National Post*, 2015, <http://news.nationalpost.com/toronto/police-treating-alleged-assault-robbery-of-muslim-woman-near-school-on-monday-as-hate-crime>; S. Fine, “Muslim convert attacked while wearing niqab in Toronto”, *Globe and Mail*, October 4, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/muslim-convert-attacked-while-wearing-niqab-in-toronto/article26646425/>; A. Miller, “Woman Wearing Hijab Attacked in Hate Crime”, *Global News*, December 4, 2015, <http://globalnews.ca/news/2381216/woman-wearing-hijab-attacked-in-hate-crime-related-assault-in-mississauga/>; K. Hammer, 2011). “Toronto District School Board defends hosting Muslim prayer sessions”. *Globe and Mail*, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/toronto-district-school-board-defends-hosting-muslim-prayer-sessions/article585899/>.

which they may require support from their schools.<sup>2</sup> Islam and Muslims are perceived as strange and different by over 50% of the population.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Muslims continue to observe their religious practices and identify as Muslims despite facing unique challenges:

Muslims are one of the most religiously observant groups in Canada, and their religious identities and practices appear to be strengthening rather than weakening as their lives evolve in Canada. Being Muslim is a very important part of the identity for most followers of Islam.<sup>4</sup>

Muslim youth who want to practice their faith in schools (e.g., wear Hijab, pray five times a day, wear looser clothes during gym classes, etc.) face numerous challenges directly from administrators and teachers, but also indirectly from their peers.<sup>5</sup> Misconceptions about Islam held by teachers exacerbate Muslim youths' anxiety about practicing their faith and identifying outwardly as Muslims.<sup>6</sup> The obvious "difference" visible to others observing Muslims in prayer or other forms of worship contributes to Muslim students' feelings of alienation and self-consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Researchers maintain that those defined as "different" usually find it difficult to gain access to opportunities and resources available to the majority.<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this article, I will be using Ontario as an example and the documents of the Ontario Ministry of Education. Policies and procedures in Ontario public schools require school administrators and teachers to "ensure equity" for all of their students.<sup>9</sup> Equity, according to Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy is "a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people,"<sup>10</sup> meaning that everyone has fair access to knowledge and learning. In order for Muslim students to have "fair, inclusive and respectful treatment," they need supports. The purpose of this article is to present a framework as a tool for educators and administrators to

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<sup>2</sup> G. Rezai-Rashti, "The dilemma of working with minority female students in Canadian high schools", *Canadian Woman Studies*, 14 no. 2, (1994)76-82; M. Sisak, "Hateful backlash stokes Muslim children's anxiety", *Globe and Mail*, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/hateful-backlash-stokes-muslim-childrens-anxiety/article27755201/>; J. Nuttall, "New Guide created to combat Islamophobia in schools", *The Tyee*, 2016, <http://thetyee.ca/News/2016/08/26/Islamophobia-School-Resources/>; J. Zine, "Muslim youth in Canadian schools: Education and the politics of religious identity", *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 32, no.4 (2001): 399-423.

<sup>3</sup> Environics Institute, *Survey of Muslims in Canada 2016*, (Environics Institute, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Sisak, "Hateful Backlash; Nutall, "New Guide".

<sup>6</sup> S. Niyozov & G. Pluim, "Teachers' perspectives on the education of Muslim students: A missing voice in Muslim education research", *Curriculum Inquiry*, 39 no. 5 (2009), 637-677; A. Kassam, "Locating identity and gender construction in a post 9/11 world: The case of the hijabi girl", *Intercultural Education*, 18 no. 4 (2007), 355-359.

<sup>7</sup> J. Zine, *Canadian Islamic Schools: Unraveling the politics of faith, gender, knowledge, and identity* (Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> J. Ryan, "Promoting inclusive school-community relationships: Administrator strategies for empowering and enabling parents in diverse contexts", *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 2 no. 1 (2002), 1-20; J. Ryan, *Inclusive Leadership* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Jossey-Bass, 2006); G. S. Dei, I James, L. Karumanchery, S James-Wilson & J. Zine, *Inclusive schooling: A teacher's companion to removing the margins* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2002); D. Byrne, *Social Exclusion* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Province of Ontario, Ministry of Education, *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, (2014).

<sup>10</sup> Province of Ontario, Ministry of Education, *Equity and Inclusion Strategy* (2009), 4.

identify the current supports provided for Muslim students and the gaps for what is needed to help Muslim students feel welcomed in their respective schools.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Table 1) is a two-dimensional matrix representing the five dimensions of Banks' multicultural education<sup>11</sup> and the common struggles and challenges that Muslim students face in schools, adapted from the literature.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> James A. Banks, "Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice" in J.A. Banks & C.A.M. Banks (Ed.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 3-29.

<sup>12</sup> J. Esposito, *What everyone needs to know about Islam?* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002); J. Esposito, *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004); Y. Emerick, *What Islam is all about* (Lebanon: Noorat Inc., 2007); S. Shah, "Leading multiethnic schools: A new understanding of Muslim youth identity", *Educational Management & Leadership*, 34 no. 2 (2006), 215–237; E. Chan & C. Schlein, "Supporting Muslim students in secular public schools", *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 4 no. 4 (2010), 253-267; C.D. Stonebanks & Ö. Sensoy, *Muslim voices in school: narratives of identity & pluralism* (Boston: Sense Publishing, 2009).

		Dimensions of Multicultural Education				
		Content Integration	Knowledge Construction	Equity Pedagogy	Prejudice Reduction	Empowering School Culture and Social Structure
Common Challenges	Islamophobia					
	Religious Practices					
	Dress Code					
	Sexual Ethics					
	Myths and Stereotypes and Biases					
	Curriculum-related issues					

*Table 1. Two-Dimensional Matrix Outlining Supports for Muslim Students Using Banks' Multicultural Education.*

I often hear teachers and administrators wondering how they can support Muslim students and genuinely exploring ways to provide a sense of belonging for their Muslim students. In my research, as well as my conversations with principals, when I ask about schools' current supports for Muslim students, I am always directed to the board's religious accommodation procedures and the Ontario Human Rights Commissions' (OHRC) Policy Statements on religious accommodations in schools. Only two of the challenges identified in the matrix (religious practice and dress code) align with the accommodation procedures used by the boards. Furthermore, the procedures do not provide a description, an explanation, or even a context to the challenges, and, therefore, it becomes a mechanical and logistical procedure that is checked off on principals' annual reports regarding religious accommodations under equity and inclusive practices. This article provides some depth and insight into the challenges faced by Muslim students and corresponding supports. I also elaborate briefly on the issues with the word "accommodations" under the section defining "supports."

The conceptual framework shown in Table 1 offers a "graphic organizer," a term used in education for a visual tool that educators use to organize ideas, to help administrators and teachers assess the supports, or lack thereof, for Muslim students, specifically with respect to their unique challenges. Each cell in the table provides space to record observations, conversations, or artifacts as evidence of the supports in the school. In the segment below, I will briefly provide an example of how this conceptual framework can be used as a tool for educators to identify and provide supports for Muslim students.

#### *An Example of How to Use the Conceptual Framework*

The framework can be used as a tool to identify the supports that are in place in a school setting, as well as a way to conduct a systematic needs assessment to identify gaps. Educators who choose to use this tool can interview teachers, parents, and students to get a broad overview of supports and gaps. For example, some questions that they can ask the Muslim students in their schools are:

- Can you tell me about your experiences as a student in this school?
- What do you think the challenges are for Muslim youth/students today?
- How do you feel about attending this school? (This question relates specifically to the school culture.)
- Why do you feel the way you feel in your school? Do you see yourself represented in the curriculum of specific classes? Do you relate to the curriculum?

Some examples of probing questions:

- Do you feel supported and understood in the school?
- Are there special programs or practices in this school that you feel are supporting (or not supporting) you? Why or why not? Are you aware of any supports, affordances or constraints provided by the programs?

Other ways to carry out a needs assessment is to ask direct questions related to Islamophobia or curriculum related challenges students might be having due to being Muslim. In the next segment, I first define the concepts “Muslim,” and “challenge,” and then explore what is meant by the word “support” in the context of education and Ontario Ministry of Education documents. Discussion of the main support systems follows, and finally, a representation of how these are connected is shown within the conceptual framework.

## Defining Muslim

I start with answering the question “who is a Muslim?” This is important so that administrators can support their Muslim students. This discussion could easily get very complex, but for the purposes of this article, I define some basic criteria as a foundation of knowledge by which we can avoid confusion.

### *Defining ‘Muslim’ and ‘Visible Muslim’*

The legal definition of a Muslim, according to Islamic jurisprudence, is anyone who believes that “there is no God but God, and Muhammad is his final prophet.” This belief in Islam is called the *Shahada* or the declaration of faith. However, for the purposes of this article, anyone who identifies himself or herself as Muslim is considered to be a Muslim. This may include, but is not limited to, Muslims who are born to Muslim parents and believe in the declaration of faith but choose not to practice some or all the five pillars and Muslims who are born to Muslim parents and do not believe in the declaration of faith or practice the five pillars, or individuals who are not born to Muslim families but identify as Muslims. Therefore, just like in any faith group, a Muslim is someone who identifies as one, and there is a wide range of ways of expressing Muslim-ness.

Muslim students are not all the same. The inherent universality of Islam necessitates diversity across its practitioners, meaning that Muslims are not expected to look, dress, behave, eat, and conduct their lives like one another; that would be unrealistic and absurd. Just because one is a Muslim does not mean anything is known about them. In this changing world, with varying climates, terrains, agriculture, histories, and cultures, how one lives requires a variety of interpretations and consideration of the “plurality of cultures.” Even though almost a quarter of the world’s population identify as Muslim, Islam is a religion comprised of a variety of cultures and civilizations.<sup>13</sup>

“Visible” Muslims are those who can be identified as Muslims because of their dress (wearing the Hijab, *kufi*, niqab, *thawb*)<sup>14</sup>, by the way they wear their beard with a trimmed moustache, or how

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<sup>13</sup> Asma Ahmed, *Exploring the Experiences of Muslim Students in an Urban Ontario Public School* (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> A *kufi* is a kind of a hat Muslim males choose to wear. A *thawb* is a kind of long male dress that men wear. A *shilwar kamez* is a long shirt (or man-dress) and loose pants that men wear mostly from South Asian countries. A *niqab* is a veil Muslim women choose to wear to cover their face.

they overtly practice their faith (e.g., they pray anywhere - in malls, on the street, in public parks, in restaurants; they let others know they are fasting).

### Defining Challenge

The word “challenge” is used in this article frequently. The definition of “challenge” varies depending on how it is used in a sentence. In this article, and in Ontario Ministry of Education documents, the word “challenge” and “challenges” as nouns usually refer to “difficulty/difficulties.” The reason why the word “difficulty” is not used in ministry documents is because of its negative connotation. “Challenge,” on the other hand, connotes a difficulty or a problem that can be overcome. When I present the challenges faced by Muslim students in the conceptual framework, I mainly use the word to mean the difficulties that Muslim students face in their respective public schools—as adopted from literature in the field—which is mainly experienced by those who adhere to the Islamic faith. I explain those difficulties in detail toward the end of this chapter.

### Defining Support

Before I explore the concept of “support” in this article and how it is used in Ministry of Education documents, I would like to briefly discuss equity and inclusion. Initially, I chose the term “accommodate” instead of “support” when I initiated this research proposal. Over time, however, I realized the limitations of the word “accommodate.” Specifically, “accommodation” in the curriculum documents refers to assessment accommodations that allow pupils “to participate in the curriculum and to demonstrate achievement of expectations.”<sup>15</sup> These accommodations may include “visual supports to clarify verbal instructions, assistive technology, or some form of human support.”<sup>16</sup> The Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) provides the “duty to accommodate,” which refers to “changing a rule or making an exception to all or part of it for the person concerned.”<sup>17</sup> Muslim students in the public school system may need accommodations for prayers, for instance, which is one form of support (see the conceptual framework). But the distinct challenges of Muslim youth necessitate more than accommodations. Furthermore, some Muslim students may experience a “compounding impact”<sup>18</sup> due to additional barriers and intersecting factors such as race, gender, and class. I therefore carefully selected the word “support” rather than “accommodation” because modification of a rule does not “promote [a] sense of belonging” in a population, as mentioned in the seven guiding principles of the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* above. Furthermore, “accommodation” also does not “promote well-being,”<sup>19</sup> it merely

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<sup>15</sup> Province of Ontario, Ministry of Education, *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, Reporting in Ontario Schools* (2010), 72.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Province of Ontario, Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Policy on creed and the accommodation of religious observances* (1996).

<sup>18</sup> Province of Ontario, Ministry of Education, *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119: Developing and implementing equity and inclusive education policies in Ontario schools* (2009), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Province of Ontario, *Achieving Excellence*.

provides a quick fix to a problem. “Support,” on the other hand, is a commonly used term in Ontario Ministry of Education documents; the motto in each ministry document states, “support every student.” Therefore, “support” seems like a more fitting word when it comes to helping Muslim students feel safe, included, and connected.

I define “supports” in this article as actions or modifications that assist development of a positive sense of self, well-being, and belonging. Examples of supports are clubs, such as the Muslims Students Association, having a teacher or a paraprofessional (e.g., Support worker or a counsellor) who is Muslim, policies that provide prayer rooms and fasting accommodations during exams or lunch times, Eid announcements or Eid songs played in certain spaces in the schools for specific periods of time, etc.

While “supports” can refer to those actions or modifications that were intentionally created for Muslim students, they also include those that serve the Muslim population at the school but were not exclusively created for them, such as diversity clubs that showcase different Muslim cultures and traditions. The support criteria that I will be using for this framework is from Banks’ “Multicultural Education.”<sup>20</sup> Below, I elaborate on the criteria and further highlight the distinct challenges of Muslim students.

### **The Five Dimensions of Banks’ Multicultural Education**

Banks is considered the founding father of multicultural education. Multicultural education in Canada focuses on equivalency in achievement, intergroup harmony, and cultural heritage and pride.<sup>21</sup> However, other scholars purport that multicultural education is an umbrella term that means different things to different people. Supporters advocate a “greater equality of opportunity”<sup>22</sup> for academic excellence through countering discrimination against individuals and institutions.<sup>23</sup> The Ontario Ministry of Education speaks to intergroup harmony in that students should be equipped “with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to live and work effectively in an increasingly diverse world, and encourage them to appreciate diversity and reject discrimination attitudes and behaviours.”<sup>24</sup> For this article, I chose the working definition of multicultural education encapsulated by Banks and Banks:

An idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional

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<sup>20</sup> Banks, “Multicultural Education”.

<sup>21</sup> Earl Mansfield and John Kehoe, “A critical examination of anti-racist education,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 19, no.4 (1994).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 419.

<sup>23</sup> James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, *Multicultural education: issues and perspectives* (New York: Wiley, 2001); Eleanor W. Lynch and Marci J. Hanson, “Community Developing Health Cross-cultural Nursing,” in *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with young children and their families* (Baltimore: Brookes Publishing, 1992); Geoffrey Short and Bruce Carrington, “The Development of Children’s Understanding of Jewish Identity and Culture,” *School Psychology International* 13, no. 1 (1992).

<sup>24</sup> Province of Ontario, Ministry of Education and Training, *Antiracism and ethnocultural equity in school boards: Guidelines for policy development and implementation* (1993), 5.

students, and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school.<sup>25</sup>

Some of the terms associated with multicultural education are also associated with multiethnic education, antiracist education, and culturally responsive education. Mostly the differences seem to be a matter of emphasis as mentioned above.<sup>26</sup> Banks developed a model to assist educators and school leaders based on his work in the field, his research, and his observations since the 1960s.<sup>27</sup> There are many different theories, typologies, and models of multicultural education, such as those referenced by Sleeter and Grant, and Burnett.<sup>28</sup> All of those would fit into one or more of Banks's multidimensional frameworks. Banks outlined five dimensions of multicultural education: (a) content integration; (b) knowledge construction; (c) equity pedagogy; (d) prejudice reduction; and (e) empowering school culture and social structure.<sup>29</sup> Banks suggests that all the above dimensions have to be espoused to create and implement a comprehensive multicultural educational program. These dimensions are distinct, but they are interrelated and part of a whole. Each plays a role to level the playing field for students; however, none of them are sufficient on their own.<sup>30</sup>

### *(a) Content Integration*

Content integration refers to the extent to which teachers use symbols and examples from an array of cultures. The Ontario curriculum is viewed as having a Eurocentric lens and colonial contexts,<sup>31</sup> thus students navigating the dominant school culture may face normative expectations that may differ from those that they hold for themselves, rooted in their faith, family beliefs, and cultural practices. The diversity of the student population is not reflected in the curriculum. "Students who do not belong to the dominant group have a hard time finding themselves and their communities in the curriculum ... when they see themselves it will be through the distorted lens of the dominant

<sup>25</sup> Banks & Banks, *Multicultural education*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Mansfield and Kehoe, "Critical Examination"; Darren Lund and Paul Carr, "Antiracist Education," in E.F. Provenzo (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> James A. Banks, *An introduction to multicultural education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994); James A. Banks, "Teaching for social justice, diversity, and citizenship in a global world," *The Educational Forum* 68, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>28</sup> Christine E. Sleeter and Carl A. Grant, *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class and Gender* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, 1999); Gary Burnett, *Varieties of multicultural education: An introduction* (New York, NY: Eric Clearinghouse on Urban Education, 1994).

<sup>29</sup> J.E. Adams, *Taking charge of the curriculum: Teacher networks and curriculum implementation* (New York ed.) (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000); Banks, *Multicultural Education*; James A. Banks, "Citizenship education and diversity implications for teacher education," *Journal of teacher education*, 52 no. 1 (2001), 5-16; James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks, *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004); M.R. Olneck, "Immigrants and education" in J. A. Banks, & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 310-327.

<sup>30</sup> Banks, "An Introduction."

<sup>31</sup> L. Cherubini, J. Hodson, M. Manley-Casimir & C. Muir, "'Closing the gap' at the peril of widening the void: Implications of the Ontario Ministry of Education's policy for Aboriginal education", *Canadian Journal of Education*, 33 no.2 (2010), 329-355; N. N. Wane, A. Kempf & M. Simmons, *The politics of cultural knowledge* (Rotterdam: Sense, 2011); Y. Guo, *Diversity in public education: acknowledging immigration parent knowledge* (Edmonton, AB: Prairie Metropolis Centre, 2012); R. Hopson, *'People like me' Racialized teachers and a call for community* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 2013).

group.<sup>32</sup> The *Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* mentions “when students see themselves reflected in their studies, they are more likely to stay engaged and find school relevant.”<sup>33</sup> By drawing on students’ experiences and backgrounds, teachers seize opportunities to help students feel connected to their learning.<sup>34</sup>

### *(b) Knowledge Construction*

The knowledge construction process moves a step further, whereby teachers help students to understand and investigate implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, and perspectives of the specific topic they explore. Asking questions like, whose frame of reference are we using? What are the assumptions used in this research? Whose knowledge? And what is knowledge? For example, Muslims believe that revelation from God (the Quran and the Sunnah) is the highest level of knowledge that is indisputable. Standardized curriculums in most English-speaking countries omit the study of the history and philosophy of science, which hampers the means to understand science as knowledge. Natural sciences are usually attributed with objectivity and neutrality. Learning about the nature of science provides grounds for students and teachers to discuss conflicting arguments between science and religion.

### *(c) Equity Pedagogy*

Equity pedagogy refers to teachers changing their teaching approach to match students’ learning styles. Fullan states that student achievement can be improved by “a sustained and deliberate focus on individual students’ strengths and needs.”<sup>35</sup> For example, Islam is considered a collectivist religion, therefore those who have adopted that worldview may find cooperative teaching more helpful than the competitive and individualistic way of teaching experienced in some classrooms.

### *(d) Prejudice Reduction*

Prejudice reduction focuses on reducing racist attitudes and finding ways to use teaching approaches and materials to develop positive attitudes.<sup>36</sup> Research shows that “adolescent

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<sup>32</sup> Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (New York: Longman, 2000), 97.

<sup>33</sup> Province of Ontario, *Equity and Inclusion*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> A.M. Villegas & T. Lucas, “Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum”, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53 no. 1 (2002), 20–32; J. Ryan, K. Pollack & F. Antonelli, “Teacher Diversity in Canada: Leaky Pipelines, Bottlenecks, and Glass Ceilings”, *Canadian Journal of Education* 32 no. 3 (2009), 591-617; J. Kugler & N. West-Burns, “The CUS Framework for Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy”, *Our Schools, Our Selves*, 19 no. 3 (2010); P. Toulouse, “Fostering literacy success for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. What Works?”, *Research into Practice*, 45 (2013).

<sup>35</sup> Michael Fullan, *Great to Excellent: Launching the next stage of Ontario’s education Agenda* (2012); Province of Ontario, Ministry of Education, *Learning for all* (2011),10.

<sup>36</sup> S.R. Levy, L. Rosenthal & A. Herrera-Alcazar, “Racial and Ethnic prejudice among children”, in J.L. Chin (ed.) *The psychology of prejudice and discrimination* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2010).

prejudice is very real, and that kids come to school with prejudices toward different groups.”<sup>37</sup> Delving deeper and asking questions like, “How is it that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world and in Canada, yet there is negativity surrounding those who adhere to this religion?” can help students question racist and prejudicial attitudes.

#### *(e) Empowering School Culture and Social Structure*

Empowering school culture refers to grouping and labeling practices outside the classroom, as well as sports participation and interaction among staff members. It focuses on the culture, policies, practices, and procedures of the school. Multicultural education is founded on the belief that all students, irrespective of their backgrounds (ethnicity, race, religious affiliation, gender, cultural orientation, language, social class, or exceptionality) should be provided with equal opportunities to access school knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

The conceptual framework in Table 1 is intended to be interrelated, complex, and dynamic. The five dimensions of multicultural education, and the possible challenges of Muslim students are interconnected. By filling the cells in Table 1, it will become apparent where the supports are concentrated and where they are lacking, and which of the challenges faced by Muslim students need more support.

### **Pros and Cons of Using Multicultural Education as Criteria for Support for Muslim Students**

I selected “multicultural education,” as opposed to “anti-racist education,” as a framework through which to assess the supports for Muslims students in a school. *The Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* defines “multicultural education” as “a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates for this purpose content concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioural sciences, and ethnic studies and women’s studies.”<sup>39</sup> Whereas anti-racist education is defined by the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate as “the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.”<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> James A. Banks, “Approaches to multicultural curricular reform” in E. Lee, D. Menkart & M. Okazawa-Rey (eds.) *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Antiracist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development* (Washington, DC: Network of Educators on the Americas, 1998)

<sup>38</sup> Banks, *Multicultural Education*; Banks, “Citizenship education”; C.I. Bennet, *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice* (5th ed.) (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 2002); M. Basadur, “Leading others to think innovatively together: Creative leadership”, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15 (2004), 103-121; S.P. Chamberlain, “Recognizing and responding to cultural differences in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners”, *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 40, no. 4 (2005), 195-211; G. Ernst-Slavit & D. Slavit, “Educational reform, mathematics & diverse learners”, *Multicultural Education*, 14, no. 4 (2007), 20-27; C. Tomlinson & J. Jarvis, “Teaching beyond the book”, *Educational Leadership*, 64, no. 1(2006), 16-21.

<sup>39</sup> Banks & Banks, *Handbook of research*, xii.

<sup>40</sup> Dei, George J. Sefa “Chapter One: Critical Issues in Anti-Racist Research Methodologies: An Introduction,” in *Counterpoints* 252 (2005): p.4.

Multicultural and anti-racist education have different focuses. For example, multicultural educators emphasize “educational underachievement,”<sup>41</sup> whereas anti-racist educators focus on “educational disadvantage.”<sup>42</sup> Anti-racist education explores a deeper layer of discrimination or inequity. There are also many similarities between the two approaches: both deem their initiatives a mandatory application to the entire curriculum<sup>43</sup> as opposed to being optional or requiring partial integration in the curriculum. Multicultural and anti-racist educators also work diligently against any bias or ethnocentrism in the curriculum.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, both promote working in small groups and dialoguing to increase interaction between students,<sup>45</sup> and building stronger connections between the home and school environments.<sup>46</sup>

The main goal for this conceptual framework is to explore the supports provided in a public school for Muslim students. The framework will not discuss past and present racism and discrimination in schools<sup>47</sup> or help students find examples of institutional racism and confront them.<sup>48</sup> I believe the reality on the ground, unfortunately, is that schools are interested in the goals and focuses of multicultural education: identifying culturally-relevant teaching strategies<sup>49</sup> and curricula<sup>50</sup> for Muslim students, providing basic knowledge of (Muslim) students’ own backgrounds,<sup>51</sup> and providing a positive sense of self for Muslim students.<sup>52</sup> Multicultural education does not look at systemic barriers in the school.<sup>53</sup> Exploring institutional racism, or looking deeply at assessment inequalities,<sup>54</sup> is the focus of anti-racist education. Granted, the question arises, can authentic and long-term supports actually be assembled without any assessment of the structural and discursive barriers? I compiled this framework in 2014 based on my preliminary observation and conversation with teachers and administrators. Digging deep into institutional racism and systemic inequalities of schools or district school boards towards Muslims requires the commitment to deep

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<sup>41</sup> Banks & Banks, *Multicultural Education*.

<sup>42</sup> Cecile Wright, “Black students, white teachers,” in Barry Troyna (ed.) *Race inequality in education* (London, UK: Tavistock, 1987).

<sup>43</sup> S. Fillipoff, “Just what is multicultural education?” *The B.C. Teacher*, (January- February, 1983), 119-120; B. Troyna & B. Carrington, *Education, racism and reform* (London, UK: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>44</sup> K. Moodley, “The predicament of racial affirmative action: A critical review of Equality Now”, *Queen’s Quarterly*, 91 (1984), 795-806; B. Thomas, “Principles of Anti-racist Education”, *Currents: Readings in Race Relations*, 2 (1984), 20-24.

<sup>45</sup> Troyna & Carrington, *Education, racism and reform*.

<sup>46</sup> A. Darder, *Culture and power in the classroom: A critical foundation for bicultural education* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> J. McGregor, “The effect of role playing and anti-racist teaching on student racial prejudice: A meta-analysis of research”, paper presented at CSSE (1990).

<sup>48</sup> Thomas, “Principles of Anti-racist Education”.

<sup>49</sup> G. Gay, “Changing Conceptions of Multicultural Education” in H. Baptiste & M. Baptiste (eds.) *Developing Multicultural Process in Classroom Instructions: Competencies for Teachers* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), 18-30.

<sup>50</sup> A. Fleras & J. Leonard-Elliot, *Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Nelson, 1992).

<sup>51</sup> D. Hoopes & M. Pusch, “Definition of TErms” in M. Pusch (ed.) *Multicultural education: A cross-cultural training approach* (Chicago, IL: Intercultural Network Inc, 1979).

<sup>52</sup> Fleras & Leonard-Elliot, *Multiculturalism in Canada*.

<sup>53</sup> B. Troyna, “Can you see the join? A historical analysis of multicultural and antiracist education policies” in D. Gill, B. Mayor & M. Blair (eds) *Racism and Education: Structures and Strategies* (London, UK: Sage Publication, 1992).

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, “Principles of Anti-racist Education”.

equity from those higher in the system, such as directors of education, superintendents, and principals. Therefore, the conceptual framework, although limited in depth, looks mainly at the reality on the ground: How are Muslim students being supported at their school, using the framework and language that was in place in schools at the time?

### General Potential Challenges of Muslim Students

Muslims in the West face many challenges due to anti-Muslim sentiment towards their religious practices, their creed, and their identification as Muslims, especially with the media's negative portrayal of Muslims. This is not limited to immigrant Muslims, but also to those who were born and raised in Canada and are now, more than ever, afraid to practice their religious beliefs and adhere to a certain dress code.<sup>55</sup> There are numerous reasons why this article focuses on Muslim students, specifically high school students, instead of the rest of the Muslim population. First, for Muslims, high school is a time when they are mandated by their religion to practice their beliefs. Once a Muslim reaches puberty, he or she is obliged to consistently pray five times a day, fast the month of Ramadan, perform the pilgrimage (if physically and financially capable), and give alms. The Arabic word *baligh* in Islam refers to the time when a person reaches puberty and therefore signals a time of greater responsibility toward observing the religious practices of Islam. Second, research has shown that the adolescent years are a difficult time for youth, given the multitude of pressures from society, home, and school. "Navigating puberty is one of the major challenges faced by adolescents."<sup>56</sup> Adolescents are known for experimenting and also for establishing boundaries:

Adolescence represents a crucial period in preventing health compromising and problem behaviors. Many of these critical health-damaging behaviours—such as substance use and abuse, unsafe sexual practices, and dating violence—begin largely during adolescence and can form the basis of lasting behavioral patterns.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to the pressures and challenges that come with practicing their beliefs, Muslims also feel the challenges that all other adolescents feel. Third, Muslim students may feel more vulnerable during this stage because they are not well versed in their religion and its corresponding practices.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, navigating not being able to articulate complex reasoning from their faith to use as evidence when asking for a prayer room, or time off for Eid, or to dismantle the stereotypes about

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<sup>55</sup> Helly, "Are Muslims discriminated against"; CAIR-CAN, *Life for Canadian Muslims*; Stonebanks & Sensoy, *Muslim Voices*; Hildebrandt, "Aboriginal people, Muslims"; Chung, "Canadian less tolerant"; Environics Institute, *Survey of Muslims*.

<sup>56</sup> R. K. Silbereisen & B. Kracke, "Self-reported maturational timing and adaptation in adolescence" in J. Schulenberg, J. L. Maggs & K. Hurrelmann (eds.) *Health risks and developmental transitions during adolescence* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75.

<sup>57</sup> D. A. Wolfe, P. G. Jaffe & C. V. Crooks, *Adolescent risk behaviors: Why teens experiment and strategies to keep them safe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 46–47.

<sup>58</sup> K. Ghanea Bassirri, *Competing visions of Islam in the United States: A study of Los Angeles* (London: Greenwood, 1997); M. Mohamad, "The Misunderstood Religion", The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Oxford, April 16, 1996. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/berkeley-center/960416MohamadIslamMisunderstoodReligion.pdf>

Muslims in a class discussion, are difficult challenges. Fourth, adolescents are known to stay under the radar and avoid unnecessary attention during this time of life when they are trying to “table things out,” and while their bodies are undergoing “rapid physical, cognitive and emotional maturation.”<sup>59</sup> Asking for accommodations and support to practice their faith can be a daunting and draining task. Fifth, Muslim students feel that they are “different” from their counterparts. Adolescence is when children most want to “fit in,” and Muslim students feel that if they practice their faith or are identified as Muslim, they will be seen as “different.” Adolescent years are known to be a vulnerable and anxious time; when coupled with additional pressures to practice a faith that has been stereotyped and demonized (specifically by the media, and perhaps perpetuated by their teachers and peers), Muslim youth are faced with challenges many adults would struggle with.

Reviewing the literature and the *Guidelines and Procedures: For the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances*,<sup>60</sup> I have categorized the potential challenges that Muslim students face in their schools in six categories: religious practice, dress code, sexual ethics, myths and stereotypes, Islamophobia, and curriculum-related issues.<sup>61</sup> These challenges are all intertwined; they are all interrelated. Muslim students may or may not feel all/some/none of those challenges. The horizontal rows of the conceptual framework (Table 1), show the overt differences that demarcate the additional potential challenges that face Muslims versus their peers. I have focused on the general overt practices and challenges that distinguish Muslim students from their non-Muslim peers. These potential challenges are directly related to Muslims’ adherence to their faith and their outward visibility as “Muslims.” There are other case-by-case differences that may emerge on a day-to-day basis. For example, Sabry recalls when her then sixth-grade daughter came home from school and asked for a Christmas stocking.<sup>62</sup> When Sabry refused on the grounds that Muslims have different celebrations, the daughter was distraught. Because she did not bring a Christmas stocking to school, she did not receive any candy.

Research on Muslim students shows that Muslims tend to highlight their religious identity, unlike other faith groups,<sup>63</sup> albeit the “highlighting” of Muslim students’ identity could simply be a direct effect of the school’s exclusion of Muslim students in explicit and implicit curricula. In other words, when Muslim students are not included in the overall and specific culture of their classrooms and their respective schools, then naturally they will appear “highlighted” and they will stand out as the “other.” Therefore, it is difficult for a Muslim who is in continuous contact

<sup>59</sup> Wolfe, Jaffe & Crooks, *Adolescent risk behaviors*, 47.

<sup>60</sup> Toronto District School Board, *Guidelines & procedures for the accommodation of religious requirements, practices, and observances* (Toronto: Toronto District School Board, 2000).

<sup>61</sup> Esposito, *What everyone needs to know*; Esposito, *Oxford Dictionary*; Emerick, *What Islam is all about*; S. Shah, “Leading multiethnic schools: A new understanding of Muslim youth identity”, *Educational Management & Leadership*, 34, no. 2 (2006), 215-237; Chan & Schlein, “Supporting Muslim students”; Stonebanks & Sensoy, *Muslim voices*.

<sup>62</sup> Sabry, 2007

<sup>63</sup> A. Brah, *Cartographies of diaspora: contesting identities* (London: Routledge, 1996); J. Jacobson, *Islam in transition: religion and identity among British Pakistani youth* (London: Routledge, 1998); T. Modood, “Ethnicity and intergenerational identities and adaptations in Britain: the socio-political context”, in M. Rutter & M. Tienda (eds.) *Ethnicity and causal mechanisms* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Shah, “Leading multiethnic schools”.

with other non-Muslim individuals (e.g., at work, in school, in residence) to practice his or her religion without being a “visible” Muslim; someone who is identified and seen as a “Muslim.” However, the research specifically shows that Muslim students generally, compared to other faith groups and irrespective of the surrounding culture, showcase their Islamic identity.<sup>64</sup> For example, the Environics Institute survey shows that Muslims are more likely to place a higher importance on their religious identity over their Canadian identity.<sup>65</sup> This is often characterized as Muslims’ division of loyalties, but the Islamophobic milieu of 2016 perhaps pushed Muslims to choose between continuing to wear their Hijab (their Islamic identity) and taking it off to “fit in” with the dominant culture and feel safe. Muslims may have attributed feeling unsafe, targeted, and losing their freedom to their practicing of their religion freely. However, such association is flawed because the socio-political climate was Islamophobic, and therefore such sentiments reflected and were encouraged by the social fabric of society. Many researchers in this field have challenged the clash of civilization theory, demonstrating that one can be both Muslim and a Westerner, even though with so many cultures, languages, and social differences, the Western hemisphere and those who are Muslims are hardly homogeneous.<sup>66</sup>

Regarding the potential challenges of Muslim students in schools, a guideline surfaced in the early 2000s and was adapted by the district school Boards in Ontario entitled *Guidelines and Procedures: For the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances*<sup>67</sup> geared toward all faiths. The guideline is divided into two sections. One section gives general guidelines and procedures on multiple topics, such as religious holidays, dietary requirements, religious attire, and so on. The second section gives a description of each religion and the corresponding challenges that students may face, along with suggestions for accommodations. The section on Islam has about 13 pages detailing challenges and corresponding accommodations that Muslims may face with respect to their everyday school activities. This guideline is a resource used by principals and administrators when a student asks for an accommodation. I looked at all the potential challenges to Muslims listed in the guideline, and the potential challenges listed in the conceptual framework of this chapter captures the challenges categorically. The challenges listed in the conceptual framework also include “myths, stereotypes and biases,” and Islamophobia, which the guideline does not mention. I have listed, in detail, a breakdown of the six challenges that Muslim students may face in their schools. All the challenges are related to one another; one challenge does not stand alone without the others. For example, the challenges of the Islamic dress code and Islamic sexual ethics are interrelated with curriculum-related issues. However, I have discussed each challenge below separately for clarity purposes. These challenges are mainly associated with students in a public school in the West because of their adherence, in

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Environics Institute, *Survey of Muslims in Canada*.

<sup>66</sup> B. Nagra & I. Peng, “Has multiculturalism really failed? A Canadian Muslim perspective”, *Religions*, 4 no. 4 (2013), 603-620; N. Kibra, *Young British Muslims: Identity, Culture, Politics and the Media* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); S. Sirin & M. Fine, *Muslim American Youth: Understanding Hyphenated Identities through Multiple Methods* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

<sup>67</sup> Toronto District School Board, *Guidelines & procedures*.

varying degrees, to their faith. Other faith groups may face one or more of these challenges; however, they are more specific and relevant to those who adhere to the Islamic faith—Muslims.

### *Religious Practice*

Religious practices refer to the five pillars of Islam with the three mainly relevant pillars of Islam in relation to schools being prayers, fasting, and perhaps performing the pilgrimage.

With respect to prayers, Muslim students may face the challenge of where and when to pray. The two main prayers that fall during the school hours are the afternoon (*dhuhr*) and the evening (*‘Asr*) prayers. Prayers can be performed anywhere. Students may pray in a corner in their cafeteria, in their classrooms, in the school yard, in the school parking lot, and so on. However, students may not feel comfortable performing their prayers unless there is a specific space designated to do so. Muslim prayer takes five to ten minutes, and students may feel distracted, anxious, self-conscious, or they may be interrupted if they pray in a space that is not specifically designated for prayers. Therefore, students may require a quiet space to pray during the allocated prayer times. Also, prior to performing their prayers, students are required to do a ceremonial wash called *wudu*, or an ablution, and they may not feel comfortable performing that in the regular school washrooms. This wash includes the washing of the face, hands, and feet.

Because of the fasting requirement, students may need extensions on assignments, exams postponed, or a physical education class cut short. Ramadan is the month when Muslims, who have reached puberty and are physically able, are mandated to fast 29 or 30 days from everything (food, drink, and sexual activity) from dawn to dusk. Islam follows the lunar calendar. For example, in 2016, Ramadan fell in June. In 2017, it will fall in May. In summer, which is a stretch of 18 to 19 hours from dawn to dusk, it may be difficult for some students who choose to fast to focus during class or exams. The sick, pregnant, breastfeeding and lactating mothers, menstruating women, and travelers are exempt from fasting, if needed.

The pilgrimage (*Hajj*) is mandated for anyone who is physically and financially able to participate. It takes place in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, once a year. Students who go with their families to perform this ritual require two or more weeks off from school. This is only mandated once in the lifetime of a Muslim.

### *Islamic Dress Code*

There are 1.7 billion Muslims in the world and subsequently dress code will vary from person to person, family to family, city to city, and country to country. There is diversity of individual interpretations on dress code and sexual ethics. In the following paragraphs, I will be specifically discussing the guidelines from the major two sects of Islam, the Sunni (mainly the 4 schools of thoughts: Hanafi, Hanbali, Shaafi, and Maliki) and Shi’a, which are derived from the Quran and the Sunnah (the prophet’s sayings and doings), regarding dress code and the conduct of men and

women. Exploring the following topics briefly here will help teachers and administrators to some degree understand the Muslim students who adhere to all, most, or some of these guidelines.

Dress code is part of the emblematic character of Islam. Men and women's Islamic dress codes are different based on what constitutes the private areas of the body ('*Awra*). For a man, the private area of his body, according to Islamic jurisprudence, is from the navel to the knee. For a woman, it is the same area when she is in the presence of other women. Breasts are not considered private in the company of other women in order to make it easier for lactating mothers to breastfeed in front of female friends and family members without any restrictions. In the presence of men who are not family members, women cover all their body parts except for their hands and face. Some Muslim women choose to cover their hands and face as well, because they adhere to different schools of thought. Men and women are also required to dress modestly by wearing loose and non-transparent clothes. Although not mandatory, some Muslim males choose to wear a kufi, or a thawb, and Muslim women choose to wear a niqab.

Even when swimming at public beaches or public pools, Muslim women cover. Muslim women are also required to cover their head with a veil called Hijab, which means "a cover." Research shows that the wearing of Hijab in a non-accepting environment may lead to low self-esteem, and not conforming to dominant social rules of dressing can compromise one's academic achievement.<sup>68</sup>

It is important in this section to briefly outline and mention the media's increasing attention regarding the dress of Muslim females. In 2015, a controversy brewed over a woman wearing niqab during a Canadian citizenship ceremony.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the news reported the introduction of a Burkini ban in France. Muslim women who wanted to go to the beach were not allowed to wear a special kind of swimsuit (Burkini) that covered them from head to ankle.<sup>70</sup> Recently, Quebec introduced the Laïcité Law, or secularism bill, Bill 21, prohibiting the wearing of religious symbols (e.g., Hijab, Karpan, etc) by public servants, such as teachers.

### *Islamic Sexual Ethics*

Islam, according to the four major schools of thought in the Sunni tradition and the major schools of thought in the Shi'a tradition, is a gender-specific religion. The challenges of Islamic sexual ethics mainly revolve around cross-gender relations and modesty in clothing, as well as the issue

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<sup>68</sup> J. W. Berry & R. C. Annis, "Acculturative stress: The role of ecology, culture and differentiation", *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 5 no. 4 (1974), 382-406; S. Fordham & J. U. Ogbu, "Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting White'"", *The Urban Review*, 18 no. 3 (1986), 176-206; S. Fordham, "Racelessness as a factor in Black students' school success: Pragmatic strategy or pyrrhic victory?" *Harvard Educational Review*, 58 no. 1 (1998), 54-85; J. d'Amato, "Resistance and compliance in minority classrooms", in E. Jacob & C. Jordan (eds.) *Minority education: Anthropological perspectives* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993).

<sup>69</sup> S. Chase, "Niqabs 'rooted in a culture that is anti-women,' Harper says", *Globe and Mail*, March 10, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/niqabs-rooted-in-a-culture-that-is-anti-women-harper-says/article23395242/>

<sup>70</sup> K. Yakbuski, "With burkini bans, France buries its head in the sand", *Globe and Mail*, August 22, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/with-birkini-bans-france-buries-its-head-in-the-sand/article31470392/>

of modesty in behaviour. I use the word “modesty” here, but the correct term in Arabic and Islam—Hayaa—does not have an equivalent word in English. There are a few issues in sexual ethics that apply within a high school context, after reaching puberty:

- The rules of cross-gender relations in Islam stipulate that men and women try not to engage in any body contact, such as playing tag, high fives, pats on the back, shaking hands, and so on.
- Islam prohibits any intimate relations before marriage; therefore, having a boyfriend or a girlfriend is not allowed in Islam.
- Muslim males and females who adhere to Islamic sexual ethics do not change their clothes in front of one another, because their body from the navel to the knees is considered private (Awra).

Granted, not all Muslims follow these guidelines. Some Muslims follow more restrictive rules, while others are more lenient, and others do not follow nor believe in this aspect of Islam. When it comes to Muslim youth in high school and perhaps beyond, the youth who choose to follow the restrictive rules face specific challenges surrounding sexual ethics as those rules are the most difficult to adhere to. The challenge with sexual ethics is that the dominant culture in the West has a different view of sexual ethics, which conflicts with the Islamic view, upheld by both Shi’a and the Sunni schools of thoughts mentioned above. The dominant view of sexual ethics in the West also views the Islamic worldview of sexual ethics (which includes dress code) as oppressive and inferior, and hence makes it difficult to seek understanding and accommodation.

### *Myths, Stereotypes, and Personal Biases*

The negative portrayal of Muslims in the media may lead individuals to believe negative myths and stereotypes about Muslims. A stereotype is when one perceives another person based on a specific category; thereby, squeezing him or her into a limited definition.<sup>71</sup> Human beings stereotype all the time; making a general statement about something is to stereotype. This kind of stereotyping helps to reduce the complexity of the information we receive.<sup>72</sup> However, stereotyping becomes problematic when one stereotypes other people because of their membership of a certain group. For example, a common stereotype about Muslims is that men dominate women.<sup>73</sup> Myths, on the other hand, are beliefs held about other people that are untrue.<sup>74</sup> For example, people may believe that all Muslims are Arabs, whereas in reality only 24% of Muslims

<sup>71</sup> T. K. Gamble & M. Gamble, *Communication works* (7th ed.) (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002).

<sup>72</sup> M. Hewston & H. Giles, “Social groups and social stereotypes: A review and model of intergroup communication” in M. Hewstone & H. Giles (eds.) *Sociolinguistics* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986).

<sup>73</sup> A. Sultana, “Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis”, *The Arts Faculty Journal* 4 no. 1 (2012), 18.

<sup>74</sup> W. G. Stephan & C. W. Stephan, “The role of ignorance in intergroup relations” in M.B. Brewer & N. Miller (eds.) *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation* (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), 229-225.

are Arabs. Lack of correct information leads to both stereotyping and the developing of myths.<sup>75</sup> Those stereotypes and myths become a personal bias, which may lead one to treat or think of another person unfairly. Even people who have strong egalitarian values and believe that they are not biased may unconsciously behave in discriminatory ways.<sup>76</sup> It is difficult to rid oneself of personal bias. However, research shows that when one group interacts with a member of another group, one may deconstruct their personal biases. This kind of contact between a marginalized and non-marginalized group is summed up by the intergroup contact theory,<sup>77</sup> which states that the more contact an in-group (non-Muslims, in this case) has with an out-group (Muslims), the greater improvement in attitudes and fewer biases are held against them. However, this is not the case all the time. Further, research suggests that when there are preconceived notions or negative stereotypes of an out-group, then there is increased public anxiety, which reduces the beneficial effects of contact with the out-group<sup>78</sup>, as well as increasing the in-group's reliance on negative stereotypes. Personal biases do not just cause anxiety; some researchers even suggest increased hostility occurring against the out-group.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, the idea that "familiarity breeds liking," or what social psychologists call the "mere exposure effect",<sup>80</sup> and the intergroup contact theory explained above, seem to be evident in today's emerging surveys regarding Muslims.<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, Chalabi states that her survey demonstrated that younger non-Muslims who are in continuous contact with Muslims tend to have a more positive view of the Muslim population than older non-Muslims.<sup>82</sup> The age that separates the young from the old was not specified in the aforementioned survey.

When it comes to schools, studies have been conducted on teachers' attitudes toward Muslims. Results of the studies show that some teachers in public schools hold negative attitudes toward Muslims.<sup>83</sup> Teachers' preconceived notions, attitudes, and biases affect curricula and their

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<sup>75</sup> S.T. Fisk & S.L. Neuberg, "A continuum of impression formation, from category-based to individuating processes: Influences of information and motivation on attention and interpretation", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 23 (1990), 1-74.

<sup>76</sup> J. F. Dovidio, "On the nature of contemporary prejudice: The third wave", *Journal of Social Issues* 21 no. 2 (2001), 170-86.

<sup>77</sup> Gordon W. Allport, *The nature of prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954).

<sup>78</sup> Stephan & Stephan, "The role of ignorance"; W.G. Stephan & C.L. Renfro, "The role of the threat in intergroup relations" in D.M. Mackie & E.R. Smith (eds.) *From prejudice to intergroup emotions: Differentiated reactions to social groups* (Psychology Press, 2002)

<sup>79</sup> E.A. Plant & P.G. Devine, "The antecedents and implications of interracial anxiety", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29 no. 6 (2003), 790-801.

<sup>80</sup> R.F. Bornstein, "Exposure and affect: Overview and meta-analysis of research 1968-1987" *Psychological bulletin* 106 no. 2 (1989), 265.

<sup>81</sup> M. Chalabi, "Americans are more likely to like a Muslim if they know one" *FiveThirtyEight*, February 13, 2015, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/americans-are-more-likely-to-like-muslims-if-they-know-one/>; T.F. Pettigrew & L.R. Tropp, "A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 no. 5 (2006), 751.

<sup>82</sup> Chalabi, "Americans are more likely to like a Muslim".

<sup>83</sup> E.g., M.S. Merry, "Social exclusion of Muslim youth in Flemish and French speaking Belgian schools" *Comparative Education Review* 49 no. 1 (2005), 1-23; R. Richardson, *Curriculum, ethos, and leadership: Confronting Islamophobia in UK education* (Staffordshire, UK: Trentham, 2004); Jasmin Zine, "Muslim youth in Canadian schools: Education and the politics of religious identity" *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 32 no.4 (2001), 399-423.

relationships with their Muslim students at both conscious and subconscious levels.<sup>84</sup> Teacher attitudes and worldviews are considered to be part of the hidden or deep curriculum of the school.<sup>85</sup> The Ontario Royal Commission on Education spoke highly of the importance of teachers in students' lives: "the teacher is the keystone of the educational arch: in the final analysis, the fulfillment of educational aims rest with him/her".<sup>86</sup> Teachers are an integral part of the education system. The way they perceive and interact with their students manifests in the pupil's emotional and academic well-being. Furthermore, studies have shown that positive relationships lead to better academic outcomes.<sup>87</sup> However, conflict in this relationship also leads to antisocial behaviour and aggression from the students.<sup>88</sup> Teachers' personal biases may result in unfair treatment or prejudice of students and cause tension in student-teacher relations. Amjad suggests that teachers' lack of understanding of the experiences of their Muslim students, as well as the students' cultural and religious backgrounds, led to their annoyance and impatience when it came to helping their Muslim students.<sup>89</sup> For example, "Often, teachers made comments in front of other students without realizing how hurtful they might be for their young students, who have a natural need for respect among their peers."<sup>90</sup> Another pertinent study by Niyozov and Plum extensively reviews comparative and international literature on teachers' views of Muslim students in public schools, and acknowledges that there are negative biases held by teachers. However, the researchers also conclude that the teachers in public schools in Canada and in the West are trying "to understand and accommodate the needs of Muslim students...it is important to acknowledge the progress and the system's willingness to accommodate."<sup>91</sup>

### *Islamophobia*

Recent polls have shown that there is an epidemic of Islamophobia in Ontario. Islamophobia is defined as "the dread, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims perpetrated by a series of closed views that imply and attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes and beliefs to

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<sup>84</sup> Niyozov & Plum, "Teacher's perspectives".

<sup>85</sup> A. Mukherjee & B. Thomas, *A glossary of terms* (Toronto: Toronto Board of Education, n.d.), 7; A. Bhyat, "Bias in the curriculum: A comparative look at two boards of education" Unpublished paper, Department of Sociology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1993.

<sup>86</sup> Ontario Royal Commission on Education & Hope, J.A. *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario, 1950* (Baptist Joohnston, Printer to the King, 1950), 564.

<sup>87</sup> J.N. Hughes, W. Luo, O.M. Kwok, & L.K. Loyd, "Teacher-student support, effortful engagement, and achievement: A 3-year longitudinal study" *Journal of educational psychology* 100 no. 1 (2008), 1; G.W. Ladd, S.H. Birch, & E.S. Buhs, "Children's social and scholastic lives in kindergarten: Related spheres of influence?" *Child Development* 70 no. 6 (1999), 1373-1400; R.C. Pianta, B. Hamre, & M. Stuhlman, "Relationships between teachers and children" in W. Reynolds & G. Miller (eds.) *Comprehensive handbook of psychology (vol. 7): Educational psychology* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2003), 199-234.

<sup>88</sup> Ladd et al., "Children's social and scholastic lives"; B.T. Meehan, J.N. Hughes, & T.A. Cavell, "Teacher-student relationships as compensatory resources for aggressive children" *Child Development* 74 no. 4 (2003), 1145-1157.

<sup>89</sup> A. Amjad, "Muslim students' experiences and perspectives on current teaching practices in Canadian schools" *Power and Education* 10 no.3 (2018), 315-332.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>91</sup> Niyozov & Plum, "Teachers' perspectives", 660.

Muslims.”<sup>92</sup> According to the survey published by Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, half of Ontarians in 2016 feel that Islam promotes violence.<sup>93</sup> One in three Canadian Muslims have experienced discrimination.<sup>94</sup> Muslim women and Muslim youth are the main recipients of this discrimination.<sup>95</sup> Visible Muslims are immediately identified due to their appearance, and, therefore, are at a higher risk for being victims of hate crimes. Individuals who choose to adhere to the Islamic dress code can be easily identified as Muslims. Such a choice may come with risks and challenges—risks of discrimination and of being the target of hate crimes—in addition to the internal and social challenges of feeling accepted, respected, and having an “equal status” to the majority, as suggested by Banks.<sup>96</sup> Just to mention a few examples, in Toronto—a city that is considered the most diverse in Canada—multiple hate crimes were committed against women wearing Hijab.<sup>97</sup> A woman was punched and had her Hijab removed from her head when she was picking up her child from school. Another woman wearing Hijab was pushed and called a terrorist on a Toronto bus. Yet another woman, who was not Muslim, was assaulted because she wore a scarf similar to a Hijab.<sup>98</sup> The negative portrayal of Islam in the media feeds these hate crimes and the pre-existing stereotypes and myths about Muslims.

In schools, Islamophobia can manifest in different ways. Systemic Islamophobia refers to a system whereby Islam and Muslims are disadvantaged in the policies, procedures, and practices of an institution that may appear to be neutral. Such forms of discrimination are manifested in the lack of hiring of Muslim teachers and of not promoting Muslim teachers into positions of leadership. The background of Ontario teachers does not reflect the background of the students in their respective schools. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) identified this as one of the contributing factors to the disproportionate suspension and expulsion of racialized students as a lack of teacher representation.<sup>99</sup> Despite the increasing number of diverse students in Ontario public schools, the majority of teachers continue to be from white, middle class, monolingual backgrounds.<sup>100</sup> Another way that systemic Islamophobia is demonstrated is through the perpetuation of Eurocentric ideology and maintaining a subhuman narrative of Muslims in class and school materials.<sup>101</sup> A specific example of systemic Islamophobia is in the dispute that arose

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<sup>92</sup> Runnymede Trust Commission, *Islamophobia: A challenge for us all* (London, England: the Runnymede Trust, 1997).

<sup>93</sup> N. Keung, “Ontario facing ‘epidemic of Islamophobia’ survey finds” *The Star*, April 7, 2016,

<https://www.thestar.com/news/immigration/2016/07/04/ontario-facing-epidemic-of-islamophobia-survey-finds.html>.

<sup>94</sup> Environics Institute, *Survey of Muslims*.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Banks, “Teaching for social justice”.

<sup>97</sup> Mehta, “She was punched all over”; Fine, “Muslim convert attacked”.

<sup>98</sup> Miller, “Woman Wearing Hijab Attacked”.

<sup>99</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Terms of Settlement [between OHRC and the Ministry of Education]*, April 10, 2007, <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/news/edsettlementen>.

<sup>100</sup> R. Childs, K. Broad, K. Gallagher-Mackay, Y. Sher, K.A. Escayg & C. McGrath, *The teachers Ontario needs: Pursuing equity in teacher education program admissions* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 2010); G. Cho & D. DeCastro-Ambrosetti, “Is ignorance bliss? Pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards multicultural education” *The High School Journal* 89 no. 2 (2005), 24-28.

<sup>101</sup> Irfan Toor, “Edi Blog - Ramadan Ready” *Ontario Principals Council*, March 31, 2022, <https://www.principals.ca/en/who-we-are/ramadan-ready.aspx>.

when Valley Park Middle School's principal allowed 400 Muslim students to perform their Friday prayers in the cafeteria in March of 2012. The majority of students in Valley Park, which is in Markham, Ontario, were Muslims—over 800 students. The controversy around this erupted when some members of the community feared that having Muslim prayers in the cafeteria could “spread their (Islamic) ideology” and open doors to the other more than “50 different ethnicities and religions asking for different accommodations.”<sup>102</sup> Though holding Friday prayers in schools has become common practice for most schools in Ontario, increased scrutiny and negative stereotyping and discrimination are experiences that Muslims still feel within their communities. Students are reporting that every year they have to re-establish with the school administration the rationale and re-negotiate the space for Friday prayers and their daily prayers as opposed to having those supports as given affordances according to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.<sup>103</sup>

### *Curriculum-Related Issues*

There are two types of curricula in schools: the explicit curriculum and the implicit or deep curriculum. Curriculum is defined in many different ways.<sup>104</sup> In simple terms, a curriculum is everything a student experiences in a school.<sup>105</sup> The explicit curriculum is what is observed in ministry documents and teachers' plans. The educational environment in which the actual, or explicit, curriculum is taught is referred to as the implicit curriculum,<sup>106</sup> the deep curriculum,<sup>107</sup> or the hidden curriculum.<sup>108</sup>

The explicit curriculum identifies the colonial and Eurocentric narrative that exists in class materials and textbooks. Abukhattala searched Canadian textbooks and found that “their portrayal of Islam contains erroneous factual claims, questionable assertions and omissions that reinforce negative stereotypes.”<sup>109</sup> Muslims are “depicted as fanatical terrorists, sexually enticing, and/or

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<sup>102</sup> Hammer, “Toronto District School Board”.

<sup>103</sup> Toor, “Edi Blog”.

<sup>104</sup> R. Barrow & G. Milburn, *A critical dictionary of educational concepts* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990); G. Beauchamp, “Basic components of a curriculum theory” in A. Bellack & H. Kliebard (eds.) *Curriculum and evaluation* (Berkley: McCutchan, 1977), 22; I.F. Goodson, *Studying Curriculum* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1994); W.S. Longstreet & H.G. Shane, *Curriculum for a new millennium* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993); C.J. Marsh (ed), *Perspectives: Key concepts for understanding curriculum* (London; Washington, DC: The Falmer Press, 1997); L. Wood & B.G. Davis, “Designing and evaluating higher education curricula” *AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Report No. 8* (Washington, DC: The American Association for Higher Education, 1978).

<sup>105</sup> A.W. Foshay, “Curriculum”, in R.I. Ebel (ed.) *Encyclopedia of educational research: a project of the American Educational Research Association* (4th ed.) (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 5-119; D. Tanner & L. Tanner, *Curriculum development: Theory into practice* (New York: Macmillan, 1975).

<sup>106</sup> H. Goldstein, *Experiential learning: A foundation for social work education and practice* (Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education, 2001).

<sup>107</sup> G.S. Dei, “The role of Afrocentricity in the inclusive curriculum in Canadian schools”, *Canadian Journal of Education* 21 no. 2 (1996), 177.

<sup>108</sup> P.W. Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Hold, Rinehart & Winston, 1968).

<sup>109</sup> I. Abukhattala, “The new bogeyman under the bed: Image formation of Islam in the Western school curriculum and media” in J.L. Kincheloe & S.R. Steinberg (eds.) *The Miseducation of the West: How Schools and Media Distort Our Understanding of the Islamic World* (Praeger, 2004), 164

the despotic other.”<sup>110</sup> Similarly, with respect to the implicit curriculum, intentionally or unintentionally neglecting to represent other communities’ societal and historical contributions in both the curriculum and the classroom affects the learning environment for students of those communities.<sup>111</sup> Some examples of implicit curriculum are representation and recognition of Muslims and Muslim contribution to knowledge production. Language and practices, such as celebration of holidays, are other examples of the implicit curriculum that is imparted in schools. In Canada, Eurocentric knowledge continues to be the starting point for all sciences, social sciences, and literature in the curriculum,<sup>112</sup> which can be alienating for Muslim students.<sup>113</sup> Research has shown the negative impacts of a Eurocentric curriculum on those who do not identify as European or “white.”<sup>114</sup> Gay suggests that classrooms be more consistent with students’ cultural orientation. Classrooms should be more reflective of the students and their identities so that students can self-identify with their learning and in their classrooms.<sup>115</sup>

Integrating Muslim knowledge and contributions, and representing them in the “mainstream” curriculum, is part of inclusive education and is one of the tenets of multicultural education. The integration process does not just involve celebrating Ramadan and Eid, accommodating daily prayers, and celebrating a Diversity Day; rather, it should go beyond superficial and sentimental efforts, and involve a more meaningful discussion.<sup>116</sup> By including Muslim perspectives, teachers can help engage Muslims in the learning process by providing them with content relevant to their experiences and culture, which would increase their sense of belonging and improve their self-esteem. Other students can benefit from Muslim knowledge, contributions, and symbols by being introduced to intercultural knowledge and experience, and also by sparking meaningful dialogues among different cultural groups, as well as among teachers and students. Such knowledge can also challenge the dominant Western paradigm and expand a learner’s horizons beyond that which is

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<sup>110</sup> A. Ahmed, “Yearning for ‘Normal’ Lives” *Annals of Social Studies Education Research for Teachers* 2 no.1 (2021), 34.

<sup>111</sup> Dei, “The role of Afrocentricity”.

<sup>112</sup> G. Rezai-Rashti, “Introduction” *Canadian and International Education* 33 no.1 (2004), 1-5; D. Zinga, *Navigating Multiculturalism: Negotiating change* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006); G.S. Dei, I. James, L. Karumanchery, S. James-Wilson, & J. Zine, *Inclusive schooling: A teacher’s companion to removing the margins* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2002); Hopson, “People like me”.

<sup>113</sup> M. Anwar, *Young Muslims in a Multi-Cultural Society* (London: Islamic Foundation, 1986); K. Murad, *Muslim Youth in the West* (London: Islamic Foundation, 1986); M. Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam: A teacher’s guide to meeting the needs of Muslim pupils* (Stoke-on-Trent, UK: Trentham, 1995); Rezai-Rashti, “Introduction”; A. Yousif, *Muslims in Canada: A Question of Identity* (Ottawa, ON: Legas Press, 1993); J. Zine, *Muslim students in public schools: education and the politics of religious identity* (MA thesis, University of Toronto, 1997); L. Sweet, *God in the Classroom: The Controversial Issue of Religion in Canada’s Schools* (McClelland & Stewart, 1997); R. Berns McGown, *Muslims in the Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); R. Shamma, “Muslim Youth of North America: Issues and Concerns” in A. Haque (ed) *Muslims and Islamization in North America: Problems and Prospects* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1999), 323-330.

<sup>114</sup> Cherubini, et al., “Closing the gap”; Guo, “Diversity in public education”; Hopson, “People like me”.

<sup>115</sup> G. Gay, *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000).

<sup>116</sup> G.S. Dei, I. James, L. Karumanchery, S. James-Wilson, & J. Zine, *Removing the margins: The challenges and possibilities of inclusive schooling* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2000); J. Donald & A.T. Rattansi, (eds.) *“Race,” culture and difference* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992).

familiar to them.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, “the inclusion of Muslim history and Muslim contributions in Western public school curricula is surely legitimate, not only for affirming Muslim students’ self-esteem and identity, but also because it is part of the antihegemonic discourse.”<sup>118</sup> This is not intended to exclude other knowledge—other non-Western knowledge would also challenge the current discourse—“but to contribute to a plurality of perspectives and knowledge about schooling in the Euro-Canadian context.”<sup>119</sup> Especially in light of the negative portrayals of Muslims so prominent in the media, knowledge of Muslims and their contributions may act as a healthy barrier against fear, racism, and discrimination.

### **An Example of What the Conceptual Framework Can Look Like**

Having now defined each of Banks’ Five Dimensions of Multiculturalism and identified the challenges most prominently faced by Muslim youth, as articulated in the literature review and the documents provided by Ontario school boards, I would like to refer back to the framework and demonstrate how the matrix can look by providing an example for each of the categories (Table 2). The idea is not to fill out each cell with an example of support, but to use the framework as a graphic organizer to ensure that each of the six common challenges that Muslim students face are alleviated so that no matter who they are and how they identify, each student feels supported and can have a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self. There is an understanding in equity studies that by sharing other people’s ways of knowing and doing, everyone benefits.

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<sup>117</sup> J. Kincheloe & S. Steinberg, *Changing multiculturalism* (Buckingham, UK; Philadelphia, US: Open University Press, 1998).

<sup>118</sup> Niyozov & Pluim, “Teachers’ perspectives”.

<sup>119</sup> Dei, “The role of Afrocentricity”, 177.

		<b>Dimensions of Multicultural Education</b>				
		Content Integration	Knowledge Construction	Equity Pedagogy	Prejudice Reduction	Empowering School Culture and Social Structure
<b>Common Challenges</b>	Islamophobia	Showcasing Islamic history, Muslim intellectuals, Muslim inventions, and regular Muslims from the local neighbourhood community and wider Canadian community contributing to society (e.g., Khaled Sultan, Canada's top wealth advisors).	Asking students if Islamophobia is manufactured, and who would benefit from its construction.	Meeting Muslim intellectuals or regular Muslims in the school community (e.g., a Muslim teacher or a Muslim parent or a Muslim doctor as guest speakers). Showing that Muslims are not monolithic, and Muslims are not a race.	Confronting Prejudice	Involving the schoolteachers, principals and administrators in the conversations on the manufacturing of Islamophobia and recognizing that the climate of Islamophobia in the Canadian context.
	Religious Practices	In certain subjects such as arts, social studies or physical education show religious practices of Muslims (e.g., for healthy and physical education show prayers as a de-stressing and wellness mechanism for Muslims)	Asking students whose religious practices is dominant, normative and accepted in policy and practice. And why is that so? Why aren't other religious practices included in our policies and practices in schools and in society?	Seeing Muslim students pray. Inviting someone who wears hijab to speak about their hijab. Inviting someone who wears niqab to speak about their niqab and Bill 21.		Muslim students are included in school decision-making. Muslim students are included in sports activities if they choose to adhere by a dress code. Adding school accommodations (e.g., prayer room, Eid holidays, exam accommodations during fasting month) in the agenda of the Muslim students so they do not have to muster up the courage to ask.
	Dress Code & Sexual Ethics	In certain subjects (e.g., arts, social studies and health and physical education) show	Asking students why is the dress code of Muslims (e.g., hijab, loose and longer shirts	Trying the Muslim dress code (e.g., hijab or wearing looser clothes with long shirts during		Hiring Muslim teachers who wear hijab and adhere to a certain dress code.

	the different dress codes Muslims wear and the reason why Muslims wear Niqab or looser clothes (e.g., to show their devotion to God)	when playing sports) looked down upon or not accepted? Who makes the rules? What are the assumptions when these rules are made?	sports) on for a day as social experiment to see how people react.		
Myths & Stereotypes & Biases	See Islamophobia above	Asking students how are myths and stereotypes about Muslims and Islam constructed? Where does bias come from? Why do we hold on to such biases?	See Islamophobia above	Questioning assumptions and beliefs. Eg, 'How do we view the "other"?' 'How do we view Muslims?'	Muslim students see themselves in their teachers, leaders, sports teams, student council, school plays, etc. There are clubs such as MSA (Muslim Students' Association)
Curriculum-Related Issues	Using texts and resources from the Muslim culture (e.g., poetry, quotes, books or novels that contemporary Muslim writers have written such as S.K. Ali, Uzma Jalaluddin)	Understanding and investigating the implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference in each subject. (e.g., What is knowledge? Whose knowledge is prioritized? How does one's implicit assumptions play out in the construction of knowledge? )			There is a specialist whom the teacher can contact to ensure that their curriculum is not feeding into the Muslim stereotypes and Islamophobia. Teacher training on culturally responsive practices for Muslims and anti-Islamophobia training.

*Table 2. Two-Dimensional Matrix with An Example.*

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this article is to present a conceptual framework for public school administrators and educators to assess their support systems provided to Muslim students. The conceptual framework offered in Table 1 is a two-dimensional matrix representing the five dimensions of Banks's multicultural education, and the six common struggles that Muslim students face in schools, adapted from the literature. Schools and those in the school system can use this conceptual framework as a starting point to assess the supports, or lack thereof, in place for Muslim students. The framework is not meant to substitute for deeper conversations and investigations that are required for each school to identify the institutional and structural barriers and discrimination that are embedded in the school systems.

Table 1 offers a graphic organizer to check off the cells and also provides evidence (using artefacts, observations, and conversations with student and staff) to give a visual representation of which of the challenges of Muslim students are adequately being met vis-à-vis the categories of Banks's multicultural criteria and which of their challenges need further support. This article provides some details on each of the challenges faced by Muslim students in a school setting and suggests using Banks's multicultural education and specific ways of offering the necessary supports.

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