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GENDER ISSUES IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS:
A CASE STUDY OF TWO SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

by

Hilda Yacoub Abu Roumi Sabbah

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundation
Brigham Young University

December 2005

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the dissertation of Hilda Abu Roumi Sabbah in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

GENDER ISSUES IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

Hilda Yacoub Abu Roumi Sabbah

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundation

Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

This study sought to explore and explain how boys, girls, teachers, and principals “do gender” in Islamic schools in the United States. The goal is to seek plausible explanations of how boys and girls interact formally and informally during the day, how they create differences, and how they interact with teachers and principals. This descriptive study utilized a case study design.

The education of girls is very important for their individual growth and development, as well as for the welfare of both the Islamic and American societies and nations. Therefore, scholars and educators should work together to solve problems interfering with the education of girls. Research studies indicate that issues that impact girls’ education include discrimination against girls in classrooms, interaction between boys and girls, effects of gender on education, and hidden curriculum. This study is

very important for the Islamic communities to improve education of girls in the United States. The value of this study is to explore and explain how boys and girls “do gender” in Islamic schools in the United States and how this “doing” affects girls’ academic achievement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The education of girls involves many variables related to gender¹. Discrimination against girls in educational settings can be sensed by the students and reflected in their academic achievement. This statement is supported by Kimmel's (2000) work, which points out, "The classroom setting reproduces gender inequality. From elementary school through higher education, female students receive less active instruction, both in the quantity and in the quality of teacher time and attention" (p. 154). Teachers often discriminate against girls, unaware that they are doing so. Kimmel further emphasizes this issue by stating, "Teachers call on boys more often and spend more time with them. They ask boys more challenging question than they do girls, and wait longer for boys to answer. They urge boys to try harder, constantly telling boys that they can do it" (p. 154). The issue of discrimination against girls in classrooms is studied by Sadker and Sadker (1994), who report that many female students become invisible members in classrooms because teachers don't recognize their presence as they interact more with male students. Sadker and Sadker explain that despite the fact that boys and girls sit together in the same classrooms and are taught the same topics, they are taught in different manners by teachers.

¹ Importantly, a distinction between the terms *sex* and *gender* should be made early on in this discussion. According to Cornwall (2002), the word *gender* was introduced to social science as a partial solution to the ongoing debate about differences between men and women and whether those differences were the result of nature (biology) or nurture (socialization). The word *sex*... would be used to refer to male/female differences of biological origin. The word *gender* would be a term reserved for describing the differences between men and women originated in social interaction and varied across cultures (p. 1).

Researchers have explored why students in general do not get equal outcomes although they give equal inputs. Additionally, research has focused on what effect these unequal outcomes have on the societies in which these students live. Hutmacher, Cochrane, and Bottani (2001) state,

Throughout schooling, students perform unequally in relation to prevailing standards; they receive unequal marks and rewards, obtain access to unequal tracks and curricula, achieve unequal knowledge and competencies, and attain unequal grades. After completion of schooling, the returns on investment are unequal, and unequal levels of education typically have major consequences in terms of economic, social and cultural inequality. (p. 5)

Moreover, research has explored a phenomenon almost all societies suffer from: gender inequality or discrimination in schools due to cultural practices and socioeconomic backgrounds of families. An example of gender inequity and absence of justice towards girls is illustrated in a recent report in the *New York Times* about education of Afghani girls. In the report, Bearak (2000) states,

Kabul-Afghanistan. Her name is Fatima, and she was risking a beating. Defiantly, she stood outside, talking to a man. Her face was uncovered. Under Taliban² rule, such openness by a woman is forbidden. But Fatima said she did not care. She was growing used to a life with some risk. Three months ago, she and a few other women decided to break the law. They opened a school for girls. (p. 1)

The cultural norms of a society can negatively impact the academic achievement of girls (Thorne, 1993). Often cultures lead girls to believe that because they are girls,

² The Muslim group which ruled in Kabul- Afghanistan for the past decade. They mistreated women and did not give them any civil or religious rights.

they should be different than boys, less successful than boys in certain subjects, and achieve lower scores than boys in schools, in most cases. Sanders (1997) points out,

The notions that males excel in mathematics, science, and technology, and that females excel in the arts are two of many beliefs and cultural influences that are passed down through generations. The dynamic is all the more powerful in that adults may not realize they are holding these beliefs and acting on them. Subtle and unintended messages can create the idea among girls and boys that there are fields they cannot be successful in because of their sex. Children reflect and reinforce this attitude through their peer interactions. (p. 1)

Many studies have been conducted in order to evaluate and determine reasons behind underachievement of girls in schools compared with boys. Age, learning climate, type of cognitive activity, and course choice in schools are among these important reasons. Trusty (2002) explored course choice in his research and argued that women in high school preparing to enter universities and colleges choose math and science at a lower rate than men, and prefer and value language-related skills and tasks, while men value math related tasks.

While many studies support girls' weakness in math and sciences after middle school, other research supports girls' strength in verbal abilities. Brannon (1996) confirms this gender-related difference by saying, "Verbal abilities consist of various skills and ... girls and women generally have the advantage" (p. 91). In support of the arguments regarding the reasons behind girls' academic underachievement Arum and Beattie (2000) point out,

Differences in the academic achievement of males and females involve issues of both performance and motivation. Differences in performance are mediated by age and by type of cognitive activity...girls generally do better in school until puberty. The new learning climate of the junior high school, which is more competitive and more individualistic than is the elementary school, works against girls' strengths, such as working cooperatively in groups. (p. 329)

Other studies examine the hidden curriculum perpetuated by teachers. Opinions differ in defining what the hidden curriculum is and how it affects girls' academic achievement. Klein (1985) defines the hidden curriculum as a "collection of messages transmitted to young people about the status and character of individuals and social groups" (p. 282). Teachers' behavior inside the classroom is an example of the hidden curriculum. Teachers tend to praise boys in a better manner than girls when they answer a question (Sadker and Sadker, 1994). Boys also get more classroom attention and superior and more rewarding teacher feedback than girls, whether the teacher is a male or a female Sadker and Sadker report from their observations in the classroom, "Male students control the classroom conversation. They ask and answer more questions. They receive more praise for the intellectual quality of their ideas...they get help when they are confused" (p. 42). This claim is also supported by Thorne (1993), who states, "Teachers frequently give boys more classroom attention than girls" (p. 2).

Teachers' hidden curriculum, girls' academic achievement, gender discrimination inside the classroom, and gender equity are present in different schools settings, whether the school is public or private. Islamic schools are also affected by these issues, including those in the United States.

Culture and Religion

Cultural and religious factors influence the educational experiences of girls, including Muslim girls educated in Islamic schools located in the United States. This study will explore gender issues, specifically those concerning education in Islamic schools in the United States.

As an immigrant religion to the United States, Islam has undergone changes and adaptations to function within the American culture (Nimer, 2002). Similarly, Islamic education has gone through comparable adaptations and changes to merge into the American society and culture. Traditionally, Islam gives equal rights to men and women in education; however, Islam prescribes that boys and girls be educated separately. But Islamic education in the United States has been adapted to the American education paradigm and culture, which encourage boys and girls to be educated together and treated equally in schools. In the United States, strong beliefs prevail concerning equal educational opportunities for boys and girls; public education is coeducational.

Coeducation in the United States provides means to study relationships between boys and girls. Gender research examines what happens in schools as a result of behavior between boys and girls, and relationships between students (boys and girls), teachers, and principals. Some researchers suggest that schools reflect practices in societies, with males empowered over females. Thorne (1993) illustrates this idea by stating, “The gender divisions one sees on [a] school playground, structures of male dominance, the idea of gender itself--all are social constructions” (p. 2). This dissertation explores and explains how boys, girls, teachers, and principals conduct themselves relative to gender in Islamic schools in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

In order to study the complexities of gender, culture, and religion in educational settings, researchers must identify theoretical frameworks and research tools that can capture the complexities of gender, culture, and religion.

The field of sociology proves useful in considering factors such as gender, culture, and religion in educational settings. Sociologists have studied different paradigms related to gender. The “doing gender” paradigm developed by respected scholars West and Zimmerman (1987), has been selected by the researcher as most appropriate to form the theoretical framework for this study. In addition, studies on postsecondary education (Lee, 2002), K-12 education (Shleef, 2000; Trusty, 2002), gender issues at the work place (Oshagbemi, 2000), and diverse gender issues (Lombard, 2001) will also prove helpful.

The main goal for this study was to examine gender and education in private Islamic schools in the United States. The researcher will (a) explore how boys and girls “do gender” in Islamic schools, (b) examine how teachers and principals reinforce gender differences, and (c) examine whether the academic achievement of girls and boys are distinctly different in Islamic schools. The following sections will familiarize the reader with issues and subjects relevant to gender and Islamic education.

Gender equity may be considered as fairness and justice for all students. Koch and Irby (2002) defined gender equity as being “fair and just toward both men and women, to show preference to neither, and concern for both. All research, programs, products, actions, and attitudes that work toward eliminating gender as a limiting characteristic promote gender equity” (p. 5). Performing and applying gender equity in education should have an impact on the outcomes and achievements of education for boys and girls,

creating equal inputs and processes. Our schools and students need gender equity to be implemented, not merely proposed. Each student has the right to be treated fairly through gender equity and to be free from the differences created by “doing gender.”

For this dissertation study, the researcher chose the “doing gender” paradigm, advocated by West and Zimmerman (1987), to explain how teachers, principals, boys, and girls “do gender” in Islamic schools in the United States, and how boys and girls interact on a daily basis in these schools. West and Zimmerman explore the effects of social expectations for men and women: how each should behave and who should control and have power to lead these societies. According to “doing gender,” these societal classifications have resulted in empowering men over women (Thorne, 1993). West and Zimmerman (1987) define “doing gender” as follows:

Creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the essentialness of gender...the physical features of social setting provide one obvious resource for the expression of our essential differences. (p. 137)

The “doing gender” paradigm also explores gender power roles, the cause of most gender differences and conflicts in our societies. West and Zimmerman (1987) continue their argument: “Doing gender is unavoidable because of the social consequences of sex-category membership: the allocation of power and resources not only in the domestic, economic, and political domains, but also in the broad arena of interpersonal relations” (p. 145). This dissertation explores what doing gender looks like in the Islamic schools in the

United States, taking into consideration that the American educational system is mainly coeducational.

Islamic Schools in the United States

The Islamic communities are growing fast in the United States, and the number of Muslim children attending schools is increasing. Muslim parents have many concerns about their children attending public schools, including the lack of religious teaching.

Nimer (2002) explains these concerns as follows,

Muslim children make up a growing segment of the student population in North America. Private education is too expensive for most Muslim families, so the public school system has become the default choice for most. Nevertheless, public education has posed challenges to Muslim children and their parents. Although school curricula have become increasingly sensitive to diversity, this inclusiveness has not been extended to Muslims in many school districts. (p. 53)

Muslim parents tend to send their children to private schools, hoping to get religious education from an Islamic perspective. This situation has created a need for more Islamic schools in the United States to serve these populations.

The vision and mission of Islamic schools are almost the same whether the schools are run by or run independent of Islamic Centers. For example, the Islamic Foundation of North America (IFNA) expresses their mission as follows,

Our mission is to systematize and organize the methodology of effective Islamic Education. We seek to identify and implement the best educational strategies and to make our research available to Muslim educators everywhere on planet Earth

and beyond by making sense of traditional and modern education and its proper implementation now. (2003, p. 1)

Muslims in different societies, especially in the United States, realize that they must adapt to their community growth and to rapid changes occurring in the world around them. This can mean allowing Muslim children to attend coeducational schools. At the same time, because of their religious beliefs, Muslims are compelled to implement educational equity to preserve girls' rights in their schools.

Statement of the Problem

Islam clearly dictates distinctive roles for men and women but reinforces equity between them. However, Islamic society, like other societies, suffers in practice from gender differences between men and women. The religious obligation for this society to promote equality between the two genders is reflected in the mandate for Islamic schools to provide equal educational opportunities for girls. Islam gives girls equal rights with boys in almost all aspects of life; education is one of those aspects.

It is important to know whether or not girls in Islamic schools in the United States are disadvantaged compared to boys and how gender is treated in the schools to make sure equality is being preserved.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to explore and explain how boys, girls, teachers, and principals do gender in Islamic schools in the United States. The goal was to seek plausible explanations of how boys and girls interact formally and informally during the day, how they create differences, and how they interact with teachers and principals.

Research Questions

To accomplish this study, the following research questions were explored:

1. What gender distinctions operate in the curriculum in Islamic schools in the United States?
2. How does the advising or career counseling provided to boys and girls in Islamic schools in the United States reinforce gender difference?
3. To what extent are certain teachers' different instructional styles related to teachers' and students' genders in Islamic schools in the United States?
4. To what extent do teachers reinforce gender differences in classrooms in Islamic schools?
5. How do girls and boys differ in their academic performance in the two Islamic schools?

Research Design and Methodology

This descriptive study utilized a case study design. The researcher studied two independent case studies in two different small Islamic private schools. This type of methodology is the best approach to deal with a complex setting involving gender, cultural, and religious issues. Eisenhardt (1989) points out, "The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings" (p. 534). The case study utilized separate focus groups of students, also including observations in classrooms and interviews with teachers and principals of the two Islamic high schools. Due to the political tension surrounding most Islamic schools in the United States after the events of September 11th, 2001 along with politics in the societies

surrounding these schools, the researcher's access to students at the schools was limited to focus groups, the principals, and the teachers. Individual interviews would be perceived by the schools and parents as invasive, making them feel suspected and interrogated.

The study used a quantitative approach to answer the research question on the academic achievement of the students. The researcher obtained the students' grades, explored and explained the differences between boys' and girls' academic achievement, and related the findings to the "doing gender" in the school.

Settings for the Case Study and Subjects

The subjects of the two case studies were selected from two independent private Islamic schools in Kansas City, Missouri. These schools had both elementary and secondary grades. Both schools were independent from the Islamic centers that sponsor or supervise some Islamic schools, providing funding, curriculum, and some control. The first school to be investigated was a coed K-12 school with a male principal. It was an accredited school. The second school was a K-10 coed school with a male principal. It was recognized by the state and in the process of getting accreditation.

Students were selected for the focus groups by random sampling, stratified according to gender and grade level. The stratified sample is defined by Fink (1995) as "one in which the population is divided into subgroups or 'strata,' and a random sample is then selected from each subgroup" (p. 11). Different focus groups of students were formed, and one-on-one interviews were conducted with both the principals of the two schools and the teachers.

Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative data were collected from the focus groups, observations, and interviews at the two schools. The quantitative data were obtained from the schools, including curriculum, records, students' grades, advising reports, and academic plans for both schools.

The researcher spent one week in each school collecting data. Establishing a rapport with the administrators and students crucially impacted the quality of data received. The researcher is a Muslim woman from Jerusalem, who shares religious and cultural background with the Muslim educators and students. This shared background was particularly important as the political climate prevailing in the United States today, after the bombings on September 11, 2001 and the establishment of the Homeland Security Act, causes Middle Easterners to fear that discrimination and unjust detentions might result from information given. The fact that the researcher is a woman facilitated interaction with the female students.

Each focus group lasted for an hour and thirty minutes. The interview questions were semi-structured, consisting of two to five questions with follow up questions if needed. The researcher taped the group discussions.

During observation inside the classrooms, the researcher focused on interaction of the teacher with girls and the teacher with the boys to record differences if they existed. The observations extended to the interaction between boys and girls and the interaction of each principal with teachers and students. Grade records, advising records, and curriculum material from both schools were collected to provide quantitative data for the study. The

record collection took place with the aid and support of the principals of the schools. The researcher took notes during her classroom observations.

The researcher transcribed all the tapes of the focus groups and interviews, then examined the data to discern themes and patterns to address the research questions. The NVivo software program facilitated analysis of qualitative data by identifying various themes and establishing connections and relationships among them. The program was also used to analyze the main themes that were related to equity in this research.

Quantitatively, the researcher used descriptive statistics to compare academic achievement between girls and boys in the same school and between girls in the two schools. The statistical package of SPSS were to serve this purpose.

The research sketch for this study is a visual overview of the research methodology that is proposed to approach answering the research questions (see Figure 1). Group and individual interviews, class observations and records of students' grades in all subjects were collected from both schools to be used in the analysis process to answer the research questions.

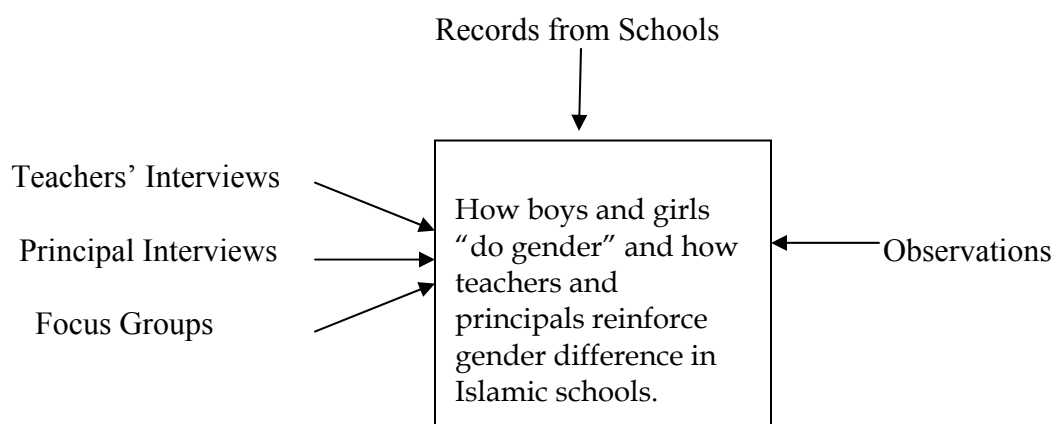


Figure 1. Sketch of Study.

The research strategy of triangulation, as depicted above, provided a rich, layered approach to data collection. Comparisons were made between the stories, provided by the different data sources, supporting the conclusions of the study. Triangulation contributed greatly to the trustworthiness of this study. The researcher was able to synthesize these stories and extract important themes and characteristics.

Delimitations

The goal of this research was to study gender issues in education in Islamic private schools in the United States of America, specifically in the state of Missouri. The study was limited to two different Islamic private schools. The findings of this case study may not be generally applicable to other private schools.

Outline of the Study

This study is composed of six chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction of the whole study. The second chapter is a general literature review of gender issues in the United States and problems facing girls' education in general. The third chapter is a literature review of Islamic education and women's rights in Islam, comparing the concept of gender in the modern world with gender in Islam in general and focusing on girls' rights in Islamic schools in the United States in particular. The fourth chapter deals with the research design and methodology of the study, including the proposal for collecting and analyzing the data. The fifth chapter describes the "doing gender" in the two Islamic schools. The sixth chapter reports the findings of the study. This study ends with a synthesis of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future studies to correspond to the needs of Islamic communities and schools in general.

Summary

The education of girls is very important for their growth and development, as well as for the welfare of both the Islamic and American societies and nations. Therefore, scholars and educators should work together to solve problems interfering with the education of girls. Research studies indicate that issues that impact girls' education include discrimination against girls in classrooms, interaction between boys and girls, effects of gender on education, and hidden curriculum. This study is very important for the Islamic communities to improve education of girls in the United States. The value of this study is to explore and explain how boys and girls "do gender" in Islamic schools in the United States and how this "doing" affects girls' academic achievement.

By examining the dynamic intersection of gender, culture, and religion, I have been able to recommend different approaches to the administrators and educators of the two schools regarding how to utilize my findings for the sake of better education for boys and girls.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Roles and relationships of males and females are conceptualized differently in various religious and ethnic contexts. This study explored the educational opportunities provided for Muslim girls in Islamic schools in the United States, comparing them with the opportunities of Muslim boys in the same schools. Thus the Western conceptualization of gender must be addressed in addition to the conceptualization of gender and educational opportunity from a Muslim worldview. The Muslim concept of gender and educational equality has been briefly presented in Chapter 1 and will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter 3.

This chapter will present prominent sociological approaches to gender found in Western theoretical writings and empirical research and will delineate which approach best suits this particular study. After establishing the gender paradigm that will be utilized in this study, attention will be turned toward the specific area of gender in education. This chapter will review how the topic of gender and education has been approached in the United States on the levels of policy, theories, program, and results/achievement. Each of these discussions will illuminate special concerns that this particular study must address. Additionally, reviewing the existing literature in these areas will demonstrate the need for this study's unique approach to studying the educational equality and academic achievement of Muslim girls in United States Islamic schools.

Definitions of Gender

It is very important for any reader or researcher to understand and differentiate the use of the words *gender* and *sex* when scholars use them. In his research, Cornwall (2002) differentiated between these terms:

The word *gender* was introduced to social science as a partial solution to the ongoing debate about differences between men and women and whether those differences were the result of nature (biology) or nurture (socialization). The word *sex*... would be used to refer to male/female differences of biological origin. The word *gender* would be a term reserved for describing the differences between men and women originated in social interaction and varied across cultures. (p. 1)

Other researchers have defined gender differently. Frenstermaker and West (2002) defined gender as “an achieved status: that which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means” (p. 3). They also described it by asserting that “gender is a socially scripted dramatization of the culture’s idealization of feminine and masculine natures” (p. 7). They went on to differentiate sex from gender by stating “sex... was ascribed by biology: anatomy, hormones, and physiology” (p. 3).

Other researchers also contributed to gender study with insightful findings. Gilligan (1982) is a leading scholar, exploring the differences between boys and girls biologically, including the effect of these differences on girls’ social attitudes and development. These differences were said to affect the academic achievement of girls. Gilligan argued that boys are more open for change and development than girls because of the close relationship of girls to motherhood. Girls’ social attitudes and biological differences from boys are important pieces in the puzzle of gender.

In addition to merely stating distinctions between *sex* and *gender*, an observable definition of *gender* must be established. In this dissertation, *gender* will be used to describe the lived experiences of boys and girls. Thus the definition is subjective to the particular individual and culture rather than objectified and static. Indeed, gender in this

study will refer to far more than biological differences. The term will acknowledge socially imposed characteristics of gender put forth by the scholars referenced above. However, the term *gender* in this dissertation must also refer to aspects that are dynamically observable in various cultures. The field of sociology provides a dynamic definition of *gender* as opposed to a static one.

In sociology, scholars divide the study of gender into three main paradigms (theoretical frameworks): gendered organizations, gender as institution, and doing gender. Acker (1990) is the leading scholar for gendered organizations. Acker has claimed that organizations are not gender neutral, but are primary locations for the production of both gender and class relations.

The paradigm gender as institution is described by its scholar, Lorber (1994), as a means to separate people into differentiated gendered statuses such as body shapes, clothing, sexuality, and roles.

West & Zimmerman (1987), the leading scholars establishing the doing gender paradigm, have offered new definitions of both *gender* and *sex*, presenting the social norms and expectations of people towards gender. They defined *gender* as “an accomplishment, and achieved property of situated conduct” (p.126), while they considered *sex* to be related to biology of both men and women. Cornwall (2002) classified the differences between the two paradigms of doing gender and gendered organizations as follows,

The doing gender perspective analyzed micro-level phenomena by focusing on interactions between individuals and the way these interactions reinforce and recreate gendered behaviors. The gendered organizations perspective analyzed

meso-level phenomena. At this level of analysis, we are primarily interested in more complex structures—families, corporations, the labor market, religion, schools and universities, and media. (p. 12)

The “doing gender” paradigm represents a dynamic conceptualization of gender. School settings are dynamic, as they include a variety of social interactions between various ages and genders in formal and informal contexts. In order to study the experiences—equal or otherwise—of Muslim girls in United States Islamic schools, this type of dynamic conceptualization of gender at the micro-level is necessary.

For this study, the researcher asserts that gender bias and problems are socially and culturally constructed. Cultural and societal practices affect children in schools, especially the way they look at their peers of the opposite sex. Cultural beliefs and societal structures play major roles in how children are raised and how they differentiate between the powers given to men versus those allocated to women. Interestingly, in this particular research the Muslim cultural beliefs will come into contact with Western United States societal structures. The doing gender paradigm best represents the many aspects of gender that are incorporated into this study.

West and Zimmerman assert, “Doing gender is unavoidable because of the social consequences of sex-category membership: the allocation of power and resources not only in the domestic, economic, and political domains, but also in the broad arena of interpersonal relations” (1987, p. 145). This study explored to what extent doing gender is affecting Islamic educational equity in Islamic schools in the United States. This study presents unique opportunities to explore how religious cultural beliefs supporting boy/girl equity come into contact with a society where it is argued, according to research, that

inequity exists in the education of boys and girls. How will the Islamic ideals of equal education of girls and boys be impacted as that education takes place in schools in the United States? This research offers an opportunity to explore how the paradigm of doing gender holds up in such an attractive setting.

Approaches to Doing Gender

Research examining the manifestations of gender in educational settings can be addressed on the levels of policy, theory, program, and results/achievement. This section explores each of these approaches to gender in education in the following order (a) policy focus, (b) theoretical focus, (c) programmatic focus, and (d) results/achievement focus.

Policy Approach

In the United States, legal maneuvers are heavily relied on to regulate and insure equality in society (e.g. The Civil Rights Act) and in education (e.g. Brown vs. Board of Education and many others). Contrasting with this reliance on legislative and judicial processes, an Islamic approach to equality in society and education is rooted in religious rather than civil channels. The Islamic notion of equality for the education of boys and girls originates in a religious conviction of the sacred rights of all people.

Mandating Equality through Legislation and the Courts—A Secular Approach

Girls' rights in the United States are expected to be preserved because of federal legislation—Title IX. The United States is known for its laws and claims of preserving individual rights in almost all aspects of citizens' lives. These rights are preserved by the United States Constitution that regulates and organizes the American society. An important federal legislative act regarding education is called Title IX, put forth in the year 1972. Title IX stresses the importance of avoiding discrimination against different

genders in the American educational system, as well as providing equal educational opportunity for every single student on American soil. Responding to pressure for equity between the sexes in educational settings, Title IX states,

No exception in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance, except that in regard to admissions to education institutions, this section shall apply only to institutions of vocational education, professional education, and graduate higher education, and to public institutions of undergraduate higher education. (20 U.S.C.A. § 1681, 1972)

Sadker and Sadker (1982) have discussed whether Title IX is needed or not and why. They argued that girls have been denied enrollment in many courses designed for boys, and boys are denied enrollment in certain courses designed for girls. They point out, “Girls were often denied the opportunity to enroll in traditionally male courses such as industrial arts, and boys were often denied the opportunity to enroll in home economics... Girl’s physical education programs were generally inferior to boys’ programs” (p. 42). The Title IX regulation prohibits “provision of different aid, benefits, or services on the basis of sex; separate of different rules of behavior, punishments, or other treatment, on the basis of sex; limitation of any right, privilege, advantage, or opportunity on the basis of sex” (20 U.S.C.A. § 1681, 1972).

It is obvious from the language of Title IX that all students should be treated equally despite the difference in their sexes. Saker and Sadker (1982) explained,

The language of Title IX clearly makes it illegal to treat students differently or separately on the basis of what sex they happen to be. All programs, activities, and opportunities offered by a school district must be equally available to all students. In addition, school districts are required to remedy the effects of past discriminatory practices with affirmative measures when necessary. (p. 44)

Equality in education is regulated by Title IX. The assumption then must be made that in the United States, a piece of legislation can mandate the implementation of equity in all American schools, whether they are coeducational schools or single-gender schools. Researchers and educators talk about the issue of equity and equality in education, with the desire to make it better for all students despite their gender, age, or social class. At the same time, all international bodies and laws have agreed on these sacred rights of students regardless of where they are and what gender they belong to. As long as they are human beings, they have all human rights. Hutmacher, et al. (2001) states the importance of these rights,

In modern societies, all human beings are considered to be free, having equal legal and political rights and equal dignity. This fundamental principle had been embedded in constitutions of Western democracies since the 19th century and is nowadays part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations more than 50 years ago. In the meantime, representations, norms and values corresponding to these principles of liberty, equality and dignity have deeply permeated the prevailing visions of human beings and the human condition in modern societies, setting the context for major struggles against segregation and discrimination. (p. 4)

If all nations have agreed on the basics of human rights, that all students should get equal educational opportunity according to law, why are many children denied this right? Different societies have different tensions and complications: some have tension between what is right and what is wrong, and others have a problem of applying civil rights of students that might contradict with the legal rights set in that society. Hutmacher, et al. (2001) explained such tensions in their book:

At the same time however, education and educational systems lie at the heart of crucial tensions between formal civic and legal equality, on the one hand, and the inequality or real social conditions and positions on the other. Inequality is indeed integral to the operation of schools and education systems because they distribute desirable goods unequally. (p. 5)

This secular worldview of faith in legislation as a means of promoting equitable treatment of all people can be contrasted with a non-Western approach to the same end.

Equality a Sacred Right—an Islamic Approach

From its inception, the Muslim faith has stressed the importance of followers to be educated—both men and women. Literacy is viewed as a crucial component of the ability to know the word of God, as it enables believers to read the sacred texts. Thus rather than mandates handed down through secular courts and legislation, the mandate for equal amounts of literacy among boys and girls in an Islamic setting comes from God. It is a sacred right that has no need for civil laws to back it up. An in-depth discussion of the importance of education for both males and females will follow in Chapter 3. In this chapter it is sufficient to stress the differences in a Western and an Islamic impetus for equally educating girls and boys.

Defining Equality in Educational Settings

Many studies discuss and attempt to define concepts such as “equality in education.” Benadusi (2001) introduced educational equality as follows,

Educational inequality is one of most relevant issues in the history of the sociology of education, even if research has focused on the analytical question regarding the cause of inequalities or their change over time and space, rather than on the normative one (i.e. what people think about the relationship between inequality and equity). (p. 25)

Coombs (1994) offered this perspective: “If the principle of equality cannot responsibly be interpreted as requiring equal distribution of educational programs or achievements, how should we interpret it?” (p. 282). Coombs extended and applied this view as follows,

There are, I believe, good reasons for interpreting it as the requirement that access to educational resources be distributed equally. Educational resources are to be understood as conditions or objects which facilitate desirable educational achievements. They include such things as instruction, books and material, stimulating colleagues and a physical environment conducive to learned.

Educational resources do not ensure educational achievements; they increase the chances of success on the part of those who are striving for the relevant achievement. (p. 282)

Coombs (1994) placed the concept of equality in the contexts of both input and outcome:

The notion of equal educational opportunity has been given an input interpretation by some and an outcome interpretation by others. According to the input interpretation, equality of educational opportunity is achieved when the same quality and range of educational programs is made available to all students. The outcome interpretation suggests that equal educational opportunity obtains only when educational arrangements produce approximately the same level and range of educational achievement in every social group. (p. 282)

On the other hand, Benadusi (2001) applied a different type of formula for assessing the concept of equality:

According to the prevalent current praxis among sociologists, equality of educational opportunity is defined as the lack of any statistical association between indicators of success in students' scholastic careers (such as number of school years completed, highest degree obtained and transition points passed) and indicators of their social origin (such as family income, father's occupational status, and father's and mother's educational level). (p. 43)

Then how can equality in education be achieved for all students despite all the differences in race, culture, religion and other issues faced in classrooms and schools? How can policy makers and educators reduce or eliminate inequalities in schools? Many researchers suggest social change as an important component to solving this problem. Benadusi (2001), for example, asserts,

Sociology of education, like sociology in general, has powerfully contributed to diffusing the idea that inequalities are not (or not only) produced by biological factors, but rather by predominantly social ones that may be removed though

social change. In the long-standing dispute between geneticist explanations and environmentalist ones, sociology of education has made the case for the latter.

(p. 51)

Then what does *equity* in education mean? *Equity* and *equality* in education are used in the same way by many researchers in this field. The best definition of *equity* related to *equality* is by Hutmacher et al. (2001). The researchers compare both definitions by stating,

Equity [is] frequently used as a synonym for “equality” and, in practical terms, the two raise very similar concerns... Much depends on the interpretation and contents given to the notion of “equity” in practice; frequently it is used as a catchall label rather than in any more precise way. Its political radicalism depends on the substantive interpretation of fairness and justice that lies behind it. (p. 197)

For the purpose of this study, the researcher uses the term *equity* to refer to equality of genders in Islamic private schools in the United States.

Equity in education is required of all administrators and teachers in all schools. In this review of related literature, the most comprehensive definition found for *gender equity* is by Koch and Irby (2002): “to be fair and just toward both men and women, to show preference to neither, and concern for both. All research, programs, products, actions, and attitudes that work toward eliminating gender as a limiting characteristic promote gender equity” (p. 5). Coombs (1994) called attention to evolution of this concept: “Equity concerns associated with gender differences have undergone considerable evolution over the past 15 years. When such concerns were first raised, it was assumed that gender differences should make no difference to the kind or amount of

educational resources given to persons” (p. 291). Fennema (1990) stressed progress brought about by change: “The set of behaviors and knowledge that permits educators to recognize inequality in educational opportunities, to carry out specific interventions that constitute equal educational treatment, and to ensure equal education outcomes” (p. 1). Fennema’s perspective basically requires equal input and process in education for both boys and girls, hoping to get equal output. Thus schools should provide equal access to the same curriculum and material for all students to establish justice for students in general.

This study explores how these Western paradigms of gender interacted with the Islamic arguments for and definitions of equitable education for both girls and boys. Islamic schools require that equity be implemented and not merely proposed. Application of gender equity in education should have an impact on the outcomes and achievement of education for both boys and girls, because girls will feel justice and will work harder if they know that they have a chance for education equal to their male colleagues. Researchers have proposed different approaches for gaining outcomes from gender equity. Some of these approaches will be covered in the next section.

Programmatic Approach

Programmatic attempts to promote equal education of girls and boys have ranged from the organization of schools to the education of teachers focused on promoting sensitivity to gender issues. Regardless of the programmatic strategy adopted to address equal education for boys and girls, all attempts must address two major issues: (a) what does equality look like when implemented? (b) what are the effects when equality is and is not implemented?

Single Sex or Coeducation?

When researchers discuss gender discrimination, what do they mean, and to what extent is this gender bias carried out? These questions were emphasized by Sadker and Sadker (1994):

Sitting in the same classroom, reading the same textbook, listening to the same teacher, boys and girls receive very different educations. From grade school through graduate school female students are more likely to be invisible members of classrooms. Teachers interact with males more frequently, ask them better questions, and give them more precise and helpful feedback. Over the course of years the uneven distribution of teacher time, energy, attention, and talent, with boys getting the lion's share, takes its toll on girls. Since gender bias is not a noisy problem, most people are unaware of the secret sexist lessons and the quiet losses they engender. (p. 1)

Many girls in schools feel like they are second class citizens compared to boys in the same classroom and taught by the same teachers. Why does this occur? What effects does it have on these girls who are the future women of every nation? Sadker and Sadker (1994) pointed out,

Girls are the majority of our nation's [United States] schoolchildren, yet they are second-class educational citizens. The problems they face loss of self esteem, decline in achievement, and elimination of career options are at the heart of the educational process. Until educational sexism is eradicated, more than half our children will be shortchanged and their girls lost to society. (p.1)

Sadker and Sadker further explored the effects of such discrimination on girls, “Psychological backlash internalized by adult women is a frightening concept, but what is even more terrifying is a curriculum of sexist school lessons becoming secret mind games played against female children, our daughters, tomorrow’s women” (1994, p. 1). Along with Sadker and Sadker, Coombs (1994) has examined the issue of self respect and academic achievement of females compared to males:

Since there are no grounds for preferring male values to female values within the educational context, such educational provisions are clearly unjust to females. They discriminate against females by unjustifiably making educational achievement and the acquisition of self-respect more difficult for them than for males. They also discriminate by providing resources for educational achievements that are more valuable for males than for females. (p. 291)

Coeducational schooling is the dominant mode in the United States and the West in general. However, it is considered to be a strange practice by those in the Middle East and some Asian countries that emphasize a single-gender educational system. Lee, Marks, and Byrd (1994) have pointed out a serious potential problem with this system: “With coeducation now virtually the norm in United States elementary and secondary schools, a critical perspective is emerging that depicts coeducational schools as environments that socialize young men and women into a society stratified by gender” (p. 96).

Most research supports single gender-schooling as being more advantageous for both girls and boys compared with coeducational schools. Harker (2000) has argued, “Single-sex schools (for both boys and girls) are held in greater esteem by the community and are generally thought to achieve better academic result for their students in public

examinations” (p. 203). Haag (2000) supported the concept of greater self-esteem for girls in single-gender schools:

Studies of the effect of school type on girls’ self-esteem suggest that the sources of self-esteem for girls may differ in single-sex and coeducational schools. Studies that have found higher self-esteem for girls in the single-sex, as compared with the mixed-sex, environment have typically used multidimensional measures composed of subcategories such as academic, athletic, and social esteem. (p. 1)

Single-gender schools are more advantageous for girls’ self-esteem, but who goes to single-gender schools? In the United States, single-gender schools are private schools; all public schools are coeducational. The problem lies with private schools being very expensive, which most parents cannot afford. So private schools are available to families of certain social status and are not open to all students. Lee et al. (1994) discussed this in their research:

Because schools that are organized by gender are available only in the private sector and charge tuition, such traditional stratifying factors are race, ethnicity, and social class are less likely to differentiate the clientele of single-sex and coeducational schools...a recent study of elite secondary schools found no social class or racial differences between boys or girls who chose single-sex or coeducational schools...researchers to conclude that families and students who chose either boys’ or girls’ schools generally were seeking a traditional structure, rather than an opportunity structure, because of the students’ higher religiosity and the greater likelihood that their parents attended private [schools] themselves. (p. 96)

Therefore, parents' choice plays an important role in gender equity and is society's view of girls' education in general.

The implementation of single-sex and/or coeducation models is greatly impacted by Islamic culture as well. Additional discussion of the matter will be presented in Chapter 3.

Teacher Education

In the past, teachers were not taught to be equitable with boys and either in pre-service or in-service training. Brannon (1996) noted, "Gender equity is not a large part of the curriculum for prospective teachers; neither is it a frequent topic of in service training for teachers" (p. 303). In 1980 Sadker and Sadker examined textbooks used for teacher training and found that these texts devoted very little space to gender equity issues. However, much work has progressed since that time in the field of teacher education. Gender equity issues continued to be discussed into the late 1990s. Titus (1993) concluded that teachers whose training does not address gender stereotyping tend to treat their students in gender stereotypical ways.

Teachers, however, are not the only influence in advancing and applying gender equity in classrooms and schools. Curriculum, scholarships, extracurricular activities and other aspects of the school situation contribute to equity areas as well. Coombs (1994) described these by pointing out, "Differences in the treatment of males and females which are prima facie inequitable include differential access to courses, differential treatment with regard to counseling, extracurricular activities, scholarships, teacher expectations and teacher attention" (p. 291).

Coombs (1994) also discussed discrimination between boys and girls in educational interaction:

Differences in gender become relevant because the values which permeate schooling tend to be biased in favor of males. That is to say, ways of acting and interacting that are typically associated with males are more highly valued than those typically associated with females. Thus, if we treat gender differences as irrelevant in determining what is just educational encouragement, we run a serious risk of encouraging an assimilation of women's identity, interests and values to men's ... Females are unable to profit from current educational provisions to the same extent as males unless they adopt the values and ways of acting typically associated with males. (p. 291)

Teacher gender is another factor that affects girls' academic achievement. Girls have better achievement in single-gender schools than in coeducational classrooms partly because they are more likely to have female teachers. This is supported by research conducted by Lee et al. (1994) in their work on the influence of teacher gender on girls' confidence in science and mathematics: "In term of role identification, girls in single-sex schools are less likely than are girls in coeducational schools to perceive the physical sciences as stereotypically masculine and are more likely both to have female science teachers as role models and to be expected to achieve in the sciences" (p. 98). Teacher's gender is not the only element in gender stereotyping, but teachers in general are. This was pointed out by Logan (2001) who stated that, "Teachers tend to unintentionally reinforce traditional gender stereotypes in single-sex classrooms, often sending mixed

messages about gender” (p.28). It will be interesting to examine how Muslim women teachers may or may not circumvent this effect.

Girls’ Academic Achievement

Educational research has examined girls’ academic achievement as an indicator of equality or lack thereof in educational settings. Almost all societies suffer from gender inequality in their schools, due to such factors as cultural practices and socioeconomic background of the families in these societies. Therefore, girls achieving less academically than boys became a norm in all societies. This could lead to girls believing that this is true because they are girls and different than boys. Sanders (1997) points that out by declaring,

The notion that males excel in mathematics, science and technology and that females excel in the arts are two...[of] many beliefs and cultural influences that are passed down through generations. The dynamic is all the more powerful in that adults may not realize they are holding these beliefs and acting on them. Subtle and unintended messages can create the idea among girls and boys that there are fields they cannot be successful in because of their sex. Children reflect and reinforce this attitude through their peer interaction. (p. 1)

A contradicting opinion and argument is presented by Arum and Beattie (2000) by pointing out the following, “Women can and do achieve academically as well as do men. The myth of female under achievement has been exposed by many studies that have indicated that women’s motivation and behavior to achieve not only equal but often surpass that of men,” (p. 326). They also proceeded by saying, “Today, as in the past, more girls than boys graduate from high school and more women than men receive baccalaureate degrees” (p. 326).

High academic achievement does not come with luck, but with hard work and insistence to achieve better. Sanders (1997), continues discussing this issue by pointing out,

Gender-biased attitudes become a self fulfilling prophecy, strengthened by the fact that many girls attribute their success as due to luck, which is fickle, while many boys attribute theirs to ability, which is reliable. This helps to explain the lower self-confidence, despite higher performance, of many girls in schools. (p. 1)

Many studies were conducted in the area of exploring girls' academic achievement in order to study problems and issues affecting girls' academic achievement. One of the most important elements, as Haag (2000) points out, is school type. She states that,

Studies finding positive achievement effects attributable to school type tend to view their findings as specific to certain contexts and group characteristics (including socioeconomic status). Some studies recognize that some single-sex schools are doing something different that may be reproducible in the coeducational context. (p. 3)

Along with this argument, Lee et al. (1994) pointed out, "United States single-sex Catholic secondary schooling has been shown to produce benefits, especially for young women, on a range of outcomes, including academic achievement, academic attitudes and aspirations, less stereotypical views of sex roles in family and professional life, and political activism" (p. 96). These factors will also be attended to in this dissertation study of Islamic schools.

In reviewing girls' academic achievement especially in sciences, many researchers stress the underachievement of girls in general in sciences, especially math. Researchers refer the decline in academic achievement, in these topics specifically, to different reasons

that will be explored in this section. Lee (2002), in his research in the area of sciences and engineering, concluded, “Women in the United States are underrepresented in science, mathematics, and engineering (SME) educational programs and careers. One cause is the dramatic and disproportionate loss of women who intended in high school to pursue science related careers” (p. 349). He also proceeds in the same manner by concluding,

Research has found that boys’ and girls’ self concepts differ in ways that make them feel more compatible or less compatible with particular SME disciplines. Perceptually, some disciplines appeal more to girls (e.g., biology, and psychology), whereas others appeal more to boys (e.g., engineering and physics)... I turn to social factors that may affect self-concepts and lead to decisions to drop out of SME studies. (2002, p. 351)

Lee’s (2002) concepts support Sadker and Sadker (1982) findings as well when discussing the differences between boys and girls in math and sciences. Sadker and Sadker reported,

Math and science are content areas that need special attention if sex equity is to be achieved. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the largest testing of educational achievement that occurs in the United States, males demonstrate higher achievement in these areas particularly at the secondary level. Researchers tell us that math and science have been stereotyped as male domains. Boys are more likely than girls to value these subjects and see them as useful to future occupations. (1982, p. 189)

On the other hand, Brannon (1996) declares, “Most studies with children as participants show either no gender differences or advantages for girls in mathematical

ability, which is defined as proficiency in arithmetic computation. Around age 13 years, gender differences favoring boys begin to appear in many of the assessments of mathematical ability, and these differences persist through adulthood” (p. 92). She also proceeds in stressing the weak quantitative abilities of girls, “Women, not men, have a small advantage in quantitative ability” (p.92). So, why do girls perform poorly in math and sciences after the age of 13 according to research? Brannon (1996) comments on the reasons by stating, “The difference in mathematics ability they [researchers] observed was the expression of innate, biological abilities and thus reflected innate differences between boys and girls... their [girls’] experience with mathematics might differ according to parental attention and encouragement, computer experience, and peer acceptance” (p. 93).

Arum and Beattie (2000) also discussed academic achievement and explored reasons behind differences between boys’ and girls’ academic achievement. They pointed out,

Differences in the academic achievement of males and females involve issues of both performance and motivation. Differences in performance are mediated by age and by type of cognitive activity...girls generally do better in school until puberty. The new learning climate of the junior high school, which is more competitive and more individualistic than is the elementary school , works against girls’ strengths, such as working cooperatively in groups. (p. 329)

While many researches support girls’ weakness in math and sciences after middle school, other research supports girls’ strength in verbal abilities. Brannon (1996) confirms that by saying, “Verbal abilities consist of various skills and that girls and women generally have the advantage” (p. 91). Halpern (1992) also noted that boys and men are

more likely than girls and women to have language-related problem, such as stuttering and reading problems. Brannon also stressed on the idea that “gender related differences in mathematics performance do not exist in the general population, but differences appear in selected groups” (1996, p. 97). Along with these findings, many researchers added other reasons, such as culture and personal choice, to affect both boys’ and girls’ academic achievement. Klein (1985) states that,

It is commonly thought, among professionals as well as the general public, that sex differences in verbal and quantitative skills represent two sides of a coin: girls excel in verbal skills; boys, in quantitative skills. As is true of most human phenomena, reality is considerably more complex than these simple statements would make it seem. Patterns of verbal ability, including reading, shift with age, culture, general ability level, and the particular skill being studied; the same factors influence quantitative skills. (p. 269)

Exploring different gender related problems and issues is an important piece to understanding the whole picture of problems and issues affecting girl’s academic achievement. The hidden curriculum is an additional gender related problem that exists in classrooms. The hidden curriculum is defined in many ways, and one of these definitions according to Klein (1985) is, “The hidden curriculum consists of the collection of messages transmitted to young people about the status and character of individuals and social groups...the hidden curriculum in social studies works through organizational patterns in schools, colleges, publishing houses, and professional organizations” (p. 282).

On another occasion, Hemmings (2000) defined the hidden curriculum in another way, stating, “the term hidden curriculum was coined by Jackson to refer to the unofficial

3 Rs-Rules, Routines, and Regulations which structure life in classrooms. In order to make their way satisfactorily through school, students must learn how to wait for things, curry special favors, be alone in a crowd, and otherwise go along with implicit procedural expectations” (p. 1). Wren (1999) talks about the hidden curriculum as well and points out the importance for students to be aware of it, otherwise they will be excluded and this will affect their performance at school as well as in their own societies. Wren points out,

Students experience the unwritten curriculum characterized by informality and lack of conscious planning. In fact, all students must internalize a specific program of social norms for training in order to function effectively as members of a smaller society, the school, and later on as productive citizens of the larger American society. (p. 593)

The societal expectations and hidden curriculum of the Western world, particularly the United States, was interestingly juxtaposed on a Muslim worldview when the education of Muslim girls in Islamic schools in the United States was studied. This dissertation has the potential to explore how the supports and constraints of girls’ academic achievements, as put forth in the literature reviewed above, play out in an Islamic school setting or not.

Summary

Many different and serious problems affect girls’ academic achievement. The paradigm of “doing gender” greatly enhances the researcher’s ability to examine the complexities involved in the perplexing circumstances surrounding girls’ academic achievement. However, the application of the paradigm has traditionally only been applied to Western settings. This study presented an opportunity to explore how well, or not, this

paradigm can be applied not a strictly Western setting such as Islamic schools located in the United States.

This dissertation study is unique because it brings the Western concepts of gender and research on girls' equal education into conversation with an Islamic context. In today's diverse United States demographic landscape, it is crucial to examine how Western paradigms and research models help describe, or fall short of, non-Western educational contexts located on United States soil. In this intersection of Western and Islamic paradigms and settings, new theory and practical applications can emerge.

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATION IN ISLAM

In this chapter, the review of literature, the researcher intended to give a brief historical background about education in Islam that covers the Prophet's education as well as his followers. At the beginning of this chapter the researcher stated the main five pillars of Islam as a basic review of Islam as a religion. The review proceeded to explore the beginnings of writing, reading, translation, and traveling seeking knowledge in early Islam. Also, an important point is the establishments of Madrassa (school) in Islam. In order to reach the core of this study, the researcher explored in depth education according to Sharī'ah¹ (Islamic law), as well as women and their rights in Islam. She continued in explaining women's role as educators and learners at the same time.

A very important explanation about segregation between genders is explored as well. Then it is followed by the Western and Eastern influences on Islamic societies. The researcher ended this chapter by reviewing Islamic schools in the United States, their missions, visions, and applications of the Sharī'ah. She also explored if they are real Islamic schools corresponding to Islam teachings, and whether they apply equality in their schools in education for both boys and girls.

Historical background

Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, was born in the Middle East. This region of the world has a long, rich, diverse, and turbulent history, which has influenced each religion's spread through civilization and its relation to the other faiths. The name of this religion, Islam, is derived from the word "salam," which is often interpreted as meaning "peace." However "submission" would be a better translation. A Muslim is a follower of

Islam. “Muslim” is an Arabic word that refers to people who submits themselves to the will of God. These meanings are clearly interpreted by Siddiqui (1997) by stating,

Islam: The root word in Arabic is s-l-m meaning “to be safe”. Islam is the practical demonstration of that Īman [faith]; s-l-m with a different grammatical formulation makes the word Muslim. A Muslim is one who “surrenders oneself to God” through obedience to His will, revealed to mankind through God’s messengers throughout the ages. The inner conviction of Īman and the practice of Islam are intertwined in that faith and righteous conduct go hand in hand. The word Muslim is not used exclusively in the Qur’ān³ for the followers of Muhammad but also ‘for those who were followers of earlier prophets, (Qur’ān 3: 52)⁴. (p. 2)

The Five Pillars of Islam

The five Primary Obligations of Islam are known as “The Five Pillars of Islam,” as it is said that without all five Pillars, Islam would collapse. The following illustration is adapted from Haw (1998):

1. Sal-at (prayers): this pillar is compulsory for every Muslim (males & females), who is above the age of nine years, five times a day. It should be performed at a tahir (clean) place or spot anywhere. It can be performed alone or in a group, preferred in a group.
2. Saum (fasting): It is an individual activity. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims don’t eat or drink or any sex-related physical relationship from fajr (sunrise) to maghrib (sunset).

³ The researcher used the English transliteration system according to International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)

⁴ In this study, the researcher used the translation of the Qur’ān according to Al Hilali.

3. Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca): Annual gathering of Muslims from all over the world in Mecca during the month of Haj. Haj is recommended for all Muslims, once in a lifetime.
4. Zak-at (alms-giving): An annual compulsory 2.5 percent alms-giving by Muslims for their personal savings, and possessions, including the value of gold and silver they own. It is given to needy people, and for the general welfare of all Muslims.
5. Jihad (struggle): It can be an individual or a group activity. Its aim is the expansion and protection of Islam and it is performed for Allah (God). Jihad can take different forms such as: helping the poor, protecting the weak, seeking knowledge, supporting the family, fighting social evils, and defending Islam and Muslim lands.

The Central Pillar of Islam is prayer, without prayer, the very edifices of Islam would crumble.

Education of Prophet Muhammad

Mohammad the prophet of Islam used to meditate thinking of the creator of the universe. After marriage, he was able to spend more time in meditation. At the age of 40, he was visited in Mecca by the angel Gabriel. He developed the conviction that he had been sent as a Prophet and given the task of converting his countrymen from their pagan, polytheistic beliefs and what he regarded as moral decadence, idolatry, hedonism, and materialism. Glubb (1998) tells the story of Muhammad and the night he became a Prophet: “Suddenly, one night in the month of Ramadan 610, a vision came to

him...unexpectedly the Truth came to him and said, ‘O Muhammad, thou art the Messenger of God’”(p. 84).

The Qur’ān is the book that Muhammad carried to his people. “The Qur’ān is the revelation of God, the central fact of the Islamic religious experience. As the very word of God, for Muslims the Qur’ān is the presence of the numinous in history (space and time)” (Esposito, 2001, p. 3). Although Muhammad was an illiterate man, he was able to memorize the first words revealed to him. The words of this book were revealed to him through the angel Gabriel in different occasions to serve different purposes during the establishment of the Islamic state.

This common knowledge was supported by Esposito (2001) who stated, “The Qur’ān was revealed to Muhammad over a period of twenty–three years in order to meet the needs of the Islamic society in Mecca and then in Medina. It gradually provided an Islamic ideology for the community and, in the process, modified or supplemented existing customs not meeting Islamic standard” (p. 3). The first words were the most important ones. Islam began with stressing on the importance of education, mainly reading and writing. To seek knowledge is a sacred duty; it is obligatory for every Muslim, male and female. The first word revealed in the Qur’ān was “Iqra” which means to read, seek knowledge, educate yourselves, and be educated:

Read, in the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists). Has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen [the first person to write was Prophet Idrees (Enoch)]. Has taught man that which he knew not.

(Qur’ān, 1-5:96)

As pointed out previously, Islamic education began with the first words to the Prophet. Those words were followed by much stronger teachings encouraging Muslims to educate themselves. The Qur'ān stresses learning and education in several verses and different chapters, some are, “Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?”(Qur'ān 39:9), and “Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit” (Qur'ān 2:269).

The prophet taught the Qur'ānic words to his few followers at the beginning, which encouraged them to learn reading and writing to be able to understand the great words of their religion. In addition to the Qur'ān, Muslims were asked by Allah to follow the Prophet's teachings and practices, which are called the sunna'h and hadith. In an attempt by the Prophet to explain and expand the meanings of the holy teachings, he always related a hadith to a surrah ⁵ or an occasion. The definition of both sunna and hadith is interpreted by Esposito (2001) as follows,

Qur'ānic values were concretized and interpreted by the second material source of law, the Sunna of the prophet. Just as Muslims turned to the Prophet for decisions during his lifetime, so after his death they looked to his example for guidance...the Sunna of the Prophet consists quite simply in the normative model behavior of the Prophet. The importance of the Sunna of the Prophet is rooted in the Qur'ānic command to obey and follow Muhammad: ‘O believers obey god and obey his Apostle...Should you quarrel over any matter, and then refer it to God and the Apostle.’ (Qur'ān 4:59) (p. 5)

Esposito (2001) proceeds in the same manner to explain the meaning of the hadith by saying, “The record of the Prophetic words and deeds is to be found in the narrative

reports or traditions (hadith) transmitted and finally collected and recorded in compendia” (p. 5). The Qur’ān and hadith were written in Arabic. The Arabic language uses different words to provide the same meaning, therefore, it is very difficult to interpret verses in the same way, especially for Muslims who are not Arabs.

The Qur’ān and Hadith were written and recited in Arabic, which, like other languages, has native intricacies. Many Arabic words have several meaning, often literal and more figuratively nuanced alternative...because the Qur’ān makes use of some of this equivocal terminology, scholars sometimes differ in their understandings of given texts or contexts. (CSIW, 2002, p. 4)

Jurists and Muslim scholars differ in interpreting different verses after the death of the Prophet, but they always came to a close meaning of the words, or used alternative words to give the same or closer meaning, “Textual ambiguities, however, can be used to support alternative interpretations” (CSIW, 2002, p. 4).

Prophet’s Followers’ Education

Ibn Mas’ud ⁶ (Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (prophet Muhammad) said, The position of only two persons is enviable; the person whom Allah bestowed wealth empowering him to spend it in the way of righteousness, and the person whom Allah gave wisdom with which he adjudges and which he teaches to others.

Therefore, the Qur’ān established the first base for Muslims to educate themselves and be educated in different fields and different places. No man becomes truly a Muslim without knowing the meaning of Islam, because he becomes a Muslim not through birth

⁵ a Qur’ānic verse

⁶ A Muslim scholar

but through knowledge. It is well known as conventional wisdom that education and knowledge in Islam began with religious knowledge to understand the new religion, and how to practice it to become a great believer and to be closer to Allah (God). The absence of educational systems or settings forced Muslims to gain and learn their religion from their prophet and his closed friends and followers in the mosques. The mosques were the first schools in Islam.

The common knowledge for all states that Muslims pray five times a day in different times according to the sun's position in the sky; before the sun rises, after it rises, the middle of the day, towards the end of the day, after the sun sets, and before midnight. This helped to organize the learning process for men in the mosques. They came to pray in the mosque anyway, then after prayers people gathered to learn their religion and all issues related to their social, economical, cultural, and educational life. They can then carry this knowledge to their families at home. They will teach their kids who are still in a young age to attend such seminars in the mosques, as well as their wives. Women in Islam have many sacred roles in taking good care of the family and doing their best to raise great, well-educated Muslim youth. In order to do so, women gained knowledge from the men in the family, as well as from special seminars for women only in the home of the prophet's wife, or from close knowledgeable women that could teach them all they needed for their lives.

Islam requires segregation between men and women in almost all aspects of life. "Islamic culture does not consider segregation of the sexes to be unnatural. For Muslims this is an argument that implies that the extent to which men and women interact socially is biologically determined rather than socially conditioned by cultural, religious, social

and economic values, beliefs and practices” (Haw, 1998, p96). Therefore, women (girls) should seek knowledge in an Islamic environment, where they don’t interact with men so often. Islam gave women the right to choose their lifestyle and what they want to be in life. “Women may choose to be just wives and mothers or may choose economic or political roles for themselves in addition to their family responsibilities, but in neither case are they considered to be of less worth than men, whatever their roles.” (Haw, 1998, p. 97). The Qur’ān also stressed on this by pointing out, “Men and women will be rewarded equally by God for their labours” (Qur’ān 3:195).

Muslims appreciated the gift of learning and understood its importance in understanding the correct practices of Islam. In order to progress and get closer to their God, it was an obligation that each Muslim (man and woman) pursues some kind of education. Prophet Muhammad stressed on that in his Hadith: “Seeking knowledge is faraz (obligatory) in Islam, for both men and women” (Al-Hibri, 82).

Learning Writing and Reading (Exchange with Non-Muslims)

At the beginning of Islam, the followers of the Prophet were mainly the poor and the unfortunate among the Arabs. Most of them were illiterate; they couldn’t read or write. The Prophet as well as the Qur’ān always reminded Muslims of the importance of educating themselves. Education enabled Muslims to understand their religion better and helped them avoid evil, “...let them devote themselves to studies in religion and admonish their comrades when they return to them so that they may guard themselves against evil” (Qur’ān 9:121). The Prophet took many steps to encourage Muslims to learn reading and writing from the beginning. During the first battle of Islam, Bedr, the enemy prisoners were given a chance to be released if each one of them taught ten Muslims how to read

and write. Educated Muslims, who came from the rich families in Mecca, also helped in this process. It was very important for Muslims to read the Qur'ān and memorize it as well as writing it on paper to carry it to other far lands and give copies to people of these lands so they could read and understand it. Writing the Qur'ān kept it from being lost during the years after the death of the Prophet.

Travel to Far Areas Seeking Knowledge

Muslims lived in the Arabian Peninsula and spoke Arabic only. They communicated with other nations in other lands and countries through trade. Most of the Arabs were merchants and used to travel outside their borders to get merchandise and goods to sell. They reached far lands such as India, Persia, and China. China was very far for Arabs. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), encouraged Muslims to travel and interact with other nations to learn new knowledge and to bring it back to share with all Muslims in order to be aware of the updated information and knowledge in the world. In one of his sayings (hadith), the Prophet said, “Seek knowledge even in China (as far as china).”

At the same time, new Muslims, who joined Islam after the establishment of Islamic State, traveled from their countries and came to Medina and Mecca to learn from the Prophet and his followers. After the death of the Prophet, people kept traveling to his city to learn from the Muslim scholars.

Translations of Different Sciences

After establishing the Islamic State, strengthening its economy, and fighting most battles, Muslims began exposing themselves to ancient sciences during peacetime. They learned Latin and began the translations of all the scholarly work of the ancient Greeks and Romans. They brought with them all the documents they found when they conquered

the unbelievers in far Asia, the Roman Empire, and the Persian Empire. They translated most sciences into Arabic, such as: Math, Medicine, Astronomy, Art, Philosophy, Algebra, and all other related sciences. They learned these sciences and added to them or deleted from them anything that denies the presence of God, and they made it useful from an Islamic point of view to serve Muslims and help them progress and catch up with surrounding civilizations. Nasr (1976) explains this by stating,

Faced with the great array of various pre-Islamic sciences made available through translation along with the vast river of both exoteric and esoteric sciences that had flowed from the inexhaustible ocean of the Qur'ānic revelation, Muslim intellectual authorities set out to classify the sciences, hoping in this way to elucidate their hierarchy and contribute to the solution of the problem of the harmony between reason and revelation, or religion and science. (p.12)

Nasr proceeds in his article to explain how Muslims were very careful about the sciences and knowledge they brought into their communities in order to fit God's orders and the Prophet's directions. He states,

With the continuous development of the Islamic sciences new branches and forms of science came into being and at the same time the sciences which were taken over from the pre-Islamic civilizations were ever more Muslimized and fitted into the Islamic hierarchy of knowledge. (p. 15)

Establishing the Madrassa (School)

The center in which the Islamic sciences have been taught over the ages have been an integral aspect of Islamic civilization, participating in its formal unity in the same way that the content of the sciences became integrated into the all embracing intellectual unity

of Islam. Nasr (1976) further explores this topic by reporting that, from the beginning, the mosque was at once the religious and social centre of the Islamic community as well as the centre for learning. To this day Qur'ānic schools (where the fountainhead of all the Islamic sciences, namely the Qur'ān, is taught to the young) are connected with the local mosques in various quarters of Muslim cities. Nasr (1976) proceeds in his exploration stating that,

But historically there gradually developed a distinct institution called *madrassa* (literally 'the place for lessons'), which grew alongside the mosque and is still closely associated with it. At the beginning certain parts of mosques were used for lessons in religious sciences, each master occupying a corner or pillar of his own which in fact often became associated with his name. Then as teaching became formalized and extended, buildings were often erected specifically for teaching purposes, with mosques attached to them. (p. 20)

Later on, these schools⁷ developed to become universities in some areas such as al Azhar University in Cairo, to teach different sciences beginning with religious law and ending with astronomy (Nasr, 1976). The *madrassa* was not the only place to learn or study, teaching and learning were affiliated with different organizations and entities, such as a hospital. One of the famous teaching hospitals was Baghdad hospital in Iraq. As Nasr (1976) also reports, the observatories were among the most important places to teach. In addition, many Islamic parties had their own circles in mosques to teach their followers; Muslim scholars used to have a special corner in the mosque as well to teach people about different topics and answer their questions.

⁷ See Appendix B: pictures of different types of Islamic schools through the Islamic world, adapted from Nasr (1976).

Islamic Education in Islamic Societies (Islam is the Core)

There is a misconception about the concept of Islamic education. People think that it is purely religious education, in other words, Islamic religious education. Education in Islam is a process, according to Cook and Malkawi (2005); they defined it as: “Education, as envisioned in the context of Islam, claims to be a process which involves the complete person, including the rational, spiritual and social dimensions” (p. 26). It is called Islamic education, because Islamic teachings and laws should be the core of such education. It is required from Islamic societies to apply Islamic teachings and rules—Sharī’ah, “the Divine Law” (Esposito, 2001, p.130). Siddiqui (1997) defined it as,

Sharī’ah means “the path”, “the way to the water”. As water symbolizes the source of life, so the Sharī’ah represents the source of Muslim existence. The basis of Sharī’ah is the Qur’ān, in which norms and values have been laid down by God. It is also found in the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and how those norms and values were implemented in his lifetime; but Sharī’ah actually covers only a small part, or outlines some basic principles of norms and values. The rest is left to interpretation by the community. (p. 6)

In an Islamic community, all schools should teach the Qur’ān, the Sunna, and related Islamic sciences in addition to other sciences such as math, pure sciences, and applied sciences.

In order to be clear about women’s rights in Islam, one should understand where Muslims refer their life matters. The main organizer for Muslims lives, or in other words, their constitution, is the Qur’ān and the Hadith. From these two main sources, comes Islamic law (Sharī’ah). “Sharī’ah is the Arabic word meaning the way to a watering place.

The connection between the word and the culture or way of life in Arabian society, where the religion of Islam first developed, is clear” (CSIW, 2002, p. 2). The Sharī’ah was created to protect Muslims and their rights, especially women’s rights, through the ages. “The Sharī’ah was created as the root of, and path to, equity and justice. Muslims consider equity and justice to be requirements to a viable and healthy society” (CSIW, 2002, p.2). The Qur’ān didn’t ignore the importance of a certain law to organize and control Muslim’s lives, “We made for you a law, so follow it, and not the fancies of those who have no knowledge” (65:18).

Islam evolved in Arabia with the need of social reforms. The Sharī’ah was set up to assist in this reform and regulate Muslim’s lives and communications, “The Sharī’ah, Islamic law, is an evolving code which defines social structures and relationships in the Muslim community” (CSIW, 2002, p. 2). At the same time, the Sharī’ah cannot be considered simply a legal code for people to adopt or to use as a reference in the conduct of daily life. It is also the result of a process pursued by selected and well-schooled individuals referred to as Muftis (jurists).

An important question to ask is this: If Muslims have the Qur’ān and Hadith, why do they need the Sharī’ah? The answer is simple: The Qur’ān generally deals with the broad principles or essentials of the religion, although it contains many specific and detailed descriptions. The Prophet provides many of the details, either by demonstrating in his practices how an injunction should be carried out or by presenting explanatory passages. The Sharī’ah, Islamic law, addresses the problem of interpretation and how the rule of law is to be determined when seemingly contradictory Qur’ānic verses address similar issues, or when understanding of one verse affects understanding of another.

Traditional Islamic Gender Issues

Many verses are found in the Qur'ān stressing equality between men and women, but most verses refer to both with the word Man, which refers to human being whether a male or a female. A reader of the Qur'ān will think that most verses addressed men only, but the word refers to gender as a whole and not one sex. A long verse addresses both men and women together using the words referring to their sexes. The Qur'ān states,

For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true [truthful] men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise, for them has God prepared forgiveness and a great reward.

(33:35)

In this verse we notice that God addressed men and women in an equal manner to stress that they are equal in front of him. "Balancing virtues and ethical qualities, as well as concomitant rewards, in one sex with the precisely identical virtues and qualities in the other, the passage makes a clear statement about the absolute identity of the human moral condition and the common and identical spiritual and moral obligations placed on all individuals regardless of sex." (Ahmad, 1992, p. 65). Islam and the Qur'ān gave a social dimension for the definition of gender and the matter of equality. Ahmad (1992) proceeds in this manner by stating,

The implications are far-reaching. Ethical qualities, including those invoked here—charity, chastity, truthfulness, patience, piety—also have political and social

dimensions. The social and political dimensions of virtue were well recognized by Aristotle, for example, whose gender-based understanding of the nature of virtue might serve as a foil against which the Qur'ān ethical egalitarianism appears even more clearly. (p. 65)

Islam is very clear on issues of equality between men and women. In the Holy Qur'ān, Allah (God) states very clearly that Allah has created men and women from the same source, and that they are equal partners who complement each other so that happy life is unimaginable for one of them without the other. To start with, the Qur'ān states very clearly that men and women are absolutely equal in humanity. It declares: “O mankind! We have created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other” (Qur'ān 49:13). In another verse the Qur'ān says, “O mankind! Fear your Guardian Lord who created you from a single person, created his mate of like nature and from them both scattered countless men and women” (Qur'ān 4:1).

Islam honors women in all their capabilities as mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters. As mothers, Islam confirms that Paradise is under the feet of mothers, (an extracted meaning to one of the Prophet's Hadith). This means that the only gate to Paradise and to the pleasure of God, for that matter, is through gaining the pleasure and satisfaction of mothers. This is the meaning of one tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. As mentioned before, there is a misconception by people about polygamy in Islam. In point of fact, the great majority of Muslims, both modern and old, married one wife only. The legislation of polygamy is there in Islam to solve certain problems and to face certain

circumstances. Islam believes in the purity and chastity of society; it does not allow sex outside marriage.

Islam stressed in many occasions through the Qur'ān and the Hadith on human rights in general and women's rights in particular:

Human rights protections, according to the divine message of the Qur'ān and to Muslim jurists, is a primary goal of the Sharī'ah. The Sharī'ah consolidates these rights and secures them for the development of the human personality which then could be exercised in the various divisions of the law (commercial, criminal, and family). (CSIW, 2002, p. 6)

Islam teaches Muslims that they have individual rights, and that those rights should be coordinated with other individuals' rights in their societies. On the other hand, the Sharī'ah gave five areas in which there should be gender equality for both men and women, "Gender equality is stipulated in five areas in the Sharī'ah: right to life, rights within the family, exercise of the human mind, development of faith, and ownership and use of property"(CSIW, 2002, p. 6).

In order to ensure that the state and the individual play their appropriate roles in maintaining and supporting individual and social rights, the Sharī'ah supports a balance between individuals' spiritual or moral development and maintenance and equality in social exchanges:

Indeed, even after time, did we send forth the conveyors of our message with all evidence of truth; and through them we bestowed revelation from on high, and a balance with which to weigh right and wrongs, so that men behave with equity;

and we bestowed from on high the ability to make use of iron, in which there is awesome power as well as other benefits for man....(Qur'ān 57:25)

Islam set forth very clear basis for gender and required segregation between men and women for reasons other than inequality. This segregation had positive effect on women's lives and progress. Women could interact with men under certain rules and circumstances. They could be educators and learners at the same time—they taught men and were taught by men. They were able to do some tasks that men didn't have access to because of segregation. During the Abbasid era, women had great chances to get jobs because men didn't have access to them because of segregation; Ahmad (1992) explains this in her book:

Although women had little power over their sexual, psychological, and emotional lives, some elite women did command fortunes and consequently did have power over the lives of some men and women. The system of segregation also created employment opportunities for some women-in the service of harem women. They could be hair combers, bakers, reciters of the Qur'ān, washerwomen, midwives, washers of the dead, mourners at funerals, and female spies. (p. 84)

Both genders are entitled to equality before the law and courts of law—justice is genderless. According to the Qur'ān, men and women receive the same punishment for crimes such as theft (5:38), fornication (24:2), and murder and injury (5:45). As Badawi (1995) further explores, women do possess an independent legal entity in financial and other matters. One legal issue is widely misunderstood: testimony. A common but erroneous belief is that as a “rule” the worth of women's testimony is one half of men's testimony. A survey of all passages in the Qur'ān relating to testimony does not

substantiate this claimed “rule.” Most Qur’ānic references to testimony (witness) do not make any reference to gender. Some references fully equate the testimony of males and females, such as the following:

And for those who launch a charge against their spouses and have (in support) no evidence but their own, their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth; And the fifth (oath) (should be) that they solemnly invoke the curse of Allah on themselves if they tell a lie. But if would avert the punishment from the wife if she bears witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that (her husband) is telling a lie; And the fifth (oath) should be that she solemnly invokes the wrath of Allah on herself if (her accuser) is telling the truth. (Qur’ān 24:6-9)

The general rule in social and political life is participation and collaboration of males and females in public affairs (Badawi, 1995). The Qur’ān supports this in the Holy verse: “The believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His apostle. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is exalted in power, Wise” (9:7).

Women and Women’s Rights in Islam

The Qur’ān, Hadith and Sharī’ah gave a certain framework for Muslims to work within and to regulate their lives, which had a positive affect on the Muslim society, guaranteed women’s rights, and defined their roles in society. “It is clear that the Islamic framework continues to be of great importance and to have a strong hold when it comes to defining women’s roles within the family” (Haddad & Esposito, 1998, p. 47). Muslims in

recent centuries still follow the Qur'ān, Hadith, and the Sharī'ah where interpretations to modern issues measured and based on the Qur'ān and Hadith are accepted by Muslim scholars only. "Muslims as long as they remain Muslims, cannot give any court, parliament, or Muslim sectors other than religious scholars and jurists the exclusive right to interpret the Qur'ān...within this context, Islam mandates that Muslims accept the entire Qur'ān and entire Sharī'ah" (CSIW, 2002, p.10).

Women have played an important role since the dawn of Islam. Khadijah, Prophet Muhammad first wife, was a wealthy woman who had influence on her clan and surrounding people. The Prophet married her at the age of twenty-five when she was forty years old. She was the first believer in him and the first convert to carry on with him this new religion to spread the word of Allah (God). "Khadijah became his first convert. The faith of this mature, wealthy woman of high standing in the community must have influenced others, particularly members of her own important clan, the Quraysh, to accept Islam" (Ahmed, 1992, p. 47). In this step, women proved their importance and contributions to society.

Islam gave women their rights and required them to participate in almost all aspects of life. They were involved in religion and politics as well as being educators and scholars. Ahmad (1992) argues,

Broadly speaking, the evidence on women in early Muslim society suggests that they characteristically participated in and were expected to participate in the activities that preoccupied their community; those included religion... Women of the first Muslim community attended mosque, took part in religious services on feast days, and listened to Muhammad's discourses. Nor they were passive, docile

followers but were active interlocutors in the domain of faith as they were in other matters. (p. 72)

As mentioned, women also participated in the most important battles Islam faced in order to spread the word of God. Women were side by side with men, taking care of the wounded and fighting at the same time. Ahmad (1992) proceeds in her argument by stating, “War was one activity in which women of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia participated fully. They were present on the battlefield principally to tend the wounded and to encourage the men, often with song and verse. A number of women became famous for their poems inciting warriors to fight fiercely, lamenting death or defeat, or celebrating victory. Some women also fought” (p. 70).

A remarkable example of Muslim women, who fought better than men in some occasions, is Umm Umara. She fought with the Prophet in all his battles and continued to fight after his death till she lost her hand in one of the battles of Islam. “Umm Umara also fought ...along with her husband and sons. Her courage and her effectiveness with weapons led Muhammad to observe that she had acquitted herself better than many men. Umm Umara continued to fight in Muslim battles during Muhammad’s lifetime and afterward, till she lost her hand in the battle of ‘Uqraba’” (Ahmad, 1992, p.70). Muhammad’s other wife, Aisha, played an important role at the dawn of Islam and continued to do so after the death of her husband. She was a scholar, an educator, a warrior, and a politician. “Aisha, as Muhammad’s favorite wife, ...Acknowledged as having special knowledge of Muhammad’s ways, saying, and character, she was consulted on his *sunna*, or practice, and gave decisions on sacred laws and customs” (Ahmad, 1992, p. 60). In another event, Aisha lead Muslims and gave orders for them to fight: “Aisha still

took an active and eventually public role in politics, though acting out a part that entirely belonged to a dying order. When Uthman (A Muslim Caliph) was murdered, she delivered, veiled, a public address at the mosque in Mecca, proclaiming that his death would be avenged” (Ahmad, 1992, p.61).

Some people count a negative point on Islam for requiring women to be veiled. The Western occupation of some Arab and Muslim countries claimed that Muslim women were oppressed by veiling. The misunderstanding of this issue needs to be cleared up. The veiling existed before Muhammad’s time, where Christian and Jewish women were veiled in surrounding areas of Arabia. “Veiling was apparently not introduced into Arabia by Muhammad, but already existed among some classes, particularly in the towns, though it was probably more prevalent in the counties that the Arabs had contact with, such as Syria and Palestine. In those areas, as in Arabia, it was connected with social status, as was its use among Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Assyrians, all of whom practice veiling to some degree” (Ahmad, 1992, p. 55).

Muslim women were asked and ordered to veil in clear verses in the Holy Qur’ān: “Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (in abroad). That is most convenient, that they should be known and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (33:59). The Qur’ān also continues, “And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and their ornaments except what appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty...” (24:31).

Women's rights were conserved and protected by Islamic teachings. During the pre-Islamic era, most Arab women didn't get all their rights. They were second-class citizens. The first right Islam gave to women was the right to live. Arabs used to kill their girls at birth. The Qur'ān explains it in verses 16:58-59:

And if the birth of a daughter is announced to any of them, his face turns black, and he is enraged. He hides from the people on account of the evil news broken to him; should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Evil is what they judge.

This verse explains how males (fathers) in Arabia used to judge females the minute they were born and kill them in order not to be humiliated in the future.

Islam continued stressing the importance of women's rights, beginning with life and going through most aspects of life. Islam gave women rights in marriage, divorce, and inheritance: "Islam grants women equal rights to request and secure a divorce. Divorce can be achieved either through oral statement or in writing" (CSIW, 2002, p. 9). Women can choose their husbands and get what belongs to them from dowry and any related expenses. Islam treated women as human beings and not as an object of sale. "The contractual nature of marriage in Islam makes the woman a party to the marriage agreement, rather than an object of sale. Islamic law requires the consent of the adult woman to the marriage" (Esposito, 2001, p.15).

The Qur'ān mentions the dowry in this verse: "And gives women their dowers as a free gift" (4:4). Islam also cleared the concept of polygamy. Many people interpret polygamy in Islam as a humiliation for women, but they misunderstood how Islam permits polygamy. The Qur'ān mentions this issue in different chapters and verses:

“Marry such of the women as appeal to you, two three or four; but if you fear that you cannot be equitable, then only one” (4:3). Elsewhere the Qur’ān continues: “You will never be able to treat wives equitably, even if you are bent on doing that” (4:129). From these verses one can understand that the rule is one wife, and the exception, for exceptional reasons such as sickness or being incapable of bearing children, is more than one wife with the mentioned condition of being fair and equitable. This is the stand point of Islam on polygamy with preserving all rights for women.

Muslims practiced polygamy at the dawn of Islam for different reasons—the main one was the death of most men in battles, leaving their families behind. Muslim men were obligated to have more than one wife, especially from the women who were not from Mecca who traveled from their homeland to be with the Prophet. Ahmad (1992) explains that more by stating, “The Muslim community consequently found itself with the responsibility of providing for them [Muslim widows]. Encouraging men to marry more wives both settled the matter of support for the widows and consolidated the young society in its new direction” (p. 52).

The modern Islamic countries chose a different approach to apply the Sharī’ah (Islamic law) concerning polygamy: “Throughout the Muslim world today, family codes addressing polygamy differ. Some countries have chosen to permit polygamy under the conditions outlined ...others have rejected polygamy and eliminated it from their legal coder. Others permit polygamy only with court permission following presentation of compelling evidence” (CSIW, 2002, p.8).

Social and legal scholars studied the Qur'ān and Islam closely to understand how women were given equal rights with men and looked upon as equal to men in their communities. Esposito (2001) continues by arguing,

Qur'ānic reforms corrected many injustices against women, introducing new rights and, in some cases, guaranteeing existing rights-the right to contract their own marriage, receive dowry, retain possession and control of wealth, and receive maintenance and shares in inheritance. (p.46)

Esposito (2001) also explains why men have more rights even in modern societies by adding, “Because men had more independence, wider social contacts, and higher status in the world, their social position was translated into greater legal responsibilities, as well as more extensive legal privileges proportionate to those responsibilities” (p.46). These inequalities occurred because of different cultures and practices in modern societies where some laws give men more rights and privileges than women.

The most important issue is giving women (girls) the right to be educated.

Narrated Abu Musa Al-Ashari, “The Prophet said, ‘He who has a slave-girl and teaches her good manners and improves her education and then manumits and marries her, will get a double reward; and any slave who observes Allah’s right and his master’s right will get a double reward’” (Bukhari, 1976, No 723). It is the responsibility of every Muslim (man & woman) to know his or her rights within the context of Islam and seek the truth: “O you who have attained to faith, do not deprive yourself of the good things of life which God has made lawful to you, but do not transgress the bound of what is right” (Qur’ān 5:87).

Through different chapters of the Qur'ān and many of the Prophet's Hadith, the importance of education for both men and women always came up and was stressed upon for the good of all Muslims in their communities. Educated Muslims are better than uneducated Muslims, because they will have the ability to interpret and implement Islamic law in their lives and societies: "Education in Islamic teachings is necessary for adequate implementation of Islamic law" (CSIW, 2002, p.7). Prophet Muhammad indicated that education is a right and obligation of every Muslim and necessary to promote justice, "Seeking knowledge is *faraz* (obligatory) in Islam, for both men and women" (Al-Hibri, 1982).

Women status changed dramatically after the early years of Islam when the presence of the Prophet and his close companions became the Caliphs and leading Muslims. This change was caused by different reasons, the main one being the spread of Islam to different lands and countries that had different social systems and laws regarding women. It wasn't easy to apply Islam in these countries as it had been applied in Arabia. Muslims studied these new societies and worked with the new Muslims to teach them how to be good practitioners of Islam. Women constituted a large section of these new societies and didn't accept all new ideas that Islam brought to them. The new women's situation and the affects of the rapid spread of Islam is clearly illustrated by Ahmad (1992) who stated,

Within ten years of Muhammad's death Arab conquests had carried Islam to lands far beyond, and fundamentally different from, Arabia to societies that were urban and that already had elaborate scriptural and legal traditions and established social mores. These societies were more restrictive toward women and more misogynist;

at least their misogyny and their modes of controlling women by law and by custom were more fully articulated administratively and as inscribed code. (p. 67)

This enormous spread of Islam brought different ideas, caused social change, and affected the relationship between men and women in Islam. At the same time, Muslims began bringing new blood to Arabia. They brought all the women and children from different nations with them after they defeated the men of these nations. These women worked as maids and servants in Muslim palaces and served rich and powerful Muslim women. Muslim men saw different women who were Romans or Persians and married them to keep them legally, instead of having illegal relations and committing adultery. This situation was very clear during the Abbasid era (AD 750 - 1258):

In Abbasid society women were conspicuous for their absence from all arenas of the community's central affairs. In the record relating to this period they are not to be found, as they were in the previous era, either on battlefield or in mosques, nor are they described as participants in or key contributors to the cultural life and productions of their society. Henceforth, women of the elite and bourgeois classes would live out their lives in seclusion, guarded by eunuchs in wealthy. (Ahmad, 1992, p. 79)

In modern days, Islamic countries tend to exclude women from vital and important sectors where they can make a difference. They exclude women's voices where the Prophet himself sought his wife's assistance in the most important and critical event in anyone's life. CSIW (2002) reports,

Women are among the groups for which both the Qur'an and the Hadith intended advocacy and guarantees of a voice in reforms. The Qur'an presents women as a

minority sector and emphasizes the need to secure their rights. Muslim women however, increasingly have been isolated from opportunities to examine the potential for change. They have largely been excluded during modern times from a role in developing Shari'ah interpretations. (p. 4)

Muslim Women as Educators

At the dawn of Islam, only rich individuals, or those who came from powerful families and tribes, were educated. They mainly knew how to read and write, and they exposed themselves to other people's work from surrounding countries. In the pre-Islamic era, men were leading the educational process that was limited to certain people as mentioned above. Some women had access to knowledge if they came from the same wealthy families or strong tribes. When Islam came, women were given equal rights with men in almost all aspects of life, and education was among those rights. Women became educators and learners at the same time.

The education process began with religious education. Muslims had to know and learn all aspects of this religion in an attempt to be closer to God and to understand Islam better. Men used to learn from the Prophet or his companions in the mosque or at their homes where they held a type of seminar. Women, on the other hand, were taught mainly at the homes of the Prophet's wives or the female members of the Islamic scholars and Prophet's companions. Women taught other women issues related mainly to their social lives as well as their religion. Sex education and husband and wife relationships were among the very sensitive issues that men couldn't talk about with other Muslim women, so Muslim women who obtained knowledge in these topics took their knowledge to other women.

The Prophet's (Muhammad) wives and daughters were the first and main source for Muslim women seeking knowledge in their sex life and religion at the dawn of Islam. Then women progressed and learned reading and writing and were able to translate and write their own work to teach others, including men. Aisha, one of Prophet Muhammad's wives, not only narrated so many of his Sayings, and taught many Muslims many laws about Islam during the Prophet's life and after his death, she actually led an army of 60,000 Muslim men after the Prophet died. That battle was called the "Battle of Camel." It is a very popular battle. Women used to have seminars in mosques and other places established for people to gather to discuss state issues and to learn new knowledge, such homes or places that were called Dar al Hikma (the House of Wisdom). When women taught, there had to be a barrier between them and the men, as an implementation of Islamic law in segregation between males and females in certain settings. Also, women could attend seminars conducted by men in the same manner, with a barrier to separate them from each other. They were able to learn, ask questions, argue, and teach at the same time.

Some Islamic countries (where the majority of the people are Muslims), apply Islam in a different way, away from the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Some scholars call those Muslims "extremists." A mis-implementation of the teachings of Islam regarding women's rights and education is well illustrated in Afghanistan. The only country or group of Muslim extremists that ban women from education is the "Taliban" group in Afghanistan. The rest of the 1.4 billion Muslim population doesn't have any laws that prohibit women to be educated or to seek the highest academic degrees they desire. Saudi Arabia is a country, however, that bans women from driving cars, but not from

gaining an education. They have very well organized schools and colleges. Women in Saudi Arabia can teach at schools and colleges for girls only.

In Islam, Muslims have to follow their leaders only when the leaders' authority is Islamic—in other words, when the leaders are applying the true Islam and Islamic law. Therefore, Muslim leaders should be well chosen, highly educated, and knowledgeable in the Qur'ān and implementing the *Sharī'ah*, as well as modern approaches for different issues. Following the leaders came as a direct order from God to obey the Prophet and all those who came after him to lead the Islamic Ummah (nation). The Qur'ān orders Muslims to follow their leaders by stating, “O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Apostle, if ye do believe in God and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination” (4:59). At the same time, educated Muslims who know right from wrong should not in any case follow leaders who are leading in a manner against Islamic teachings and rulings. This idea is obvious in the Prophet's Hadith:

The Prophet said, ‘A Muslim has to listen to and obey (the order of his ruler) whether he likes it or not, as long as his orders involve not one in disobedience (to Allah), but if an act of disobedience (to Allah) is imposed one should not listen to it or obey it.’ (Bukhari, 1976, No 258)

Another misconception of women's role in Islam is the idea that women cannot lead. Women led battles, educational seminars, and other tasks in Islam. Some people claim that the Qur'ān didn't give women the right to lead because they are more passionate than men will affect their judgments. But Badawi (1997) argues,

There is no text in the Qur'ān or Sunna that precludes women from any position of leadership, except in leading prayer (however, women may lead other women in prayer), due to the format of prayer, as explained earlier. There are exceptions even to this general rule...Another common question relates to the eligibility of Muslim women to be heads of state. (p. 15)

Badawi continues in the same manner to explain the headship status of women in Islam according to the Qur'ān and Hadith:

There is no evidence from the Qur'ān to preclude women from headship of state. Some may argue that according to the Qur'ān (4:34), men are the protectors and maintainers of women. Such a leadership position (responsibility or qiwamah) for men in the family unit implies their exclusive leadership in political life as well. This analogy, however, is far from conclusive. Qiwamah deals with the particularity of family life and the need for financial arrangements, role differentiation, and complementary of the roles of husband and wife. These particularities are not necessarily the same as the headship of state, even if some elements may be similar. Therefore, a Qur'ānically based argument to exclude women from the headship of state is neither sound nor convincing. (p. 16)

Therefore, Islam dealt with gender in a clear manner. Men and women are equal and have different tasks that they perform differently. It is not up to Muslims to interpret the Qur'ān and Hadith to suit and serve their own purposes; they should be honest and more precise and give rights to both men and women as they were asked to do. Heading a state is not a purely male task, but people want to make it be so. Badawi (1997) argues this point clearly as follows,

Some argue that since women are excluded from leading the prayer for a mixed gathering of men and women, they should be excluded from leading the state as well. This argument however overlooks two issues: (1) Leading the prayer is a purely religious act and, given the format of Muslim prayer and its nature, it is not suitable for women to lead a mixed congregation. This point was discussed earlier. Leading the state, however, is not a “purely” religious act but a religiously based political act. Exclusion of women in one instance does not necessarily imply their exclusion in another. (p. 18)

Western and Eastern Influences on Muslim Societies

At the beginning of the 18th century, some Europeans began colonizing Muslim and Arab lands. The Europeans brought with them alien ideas and thoughts which they tried to impose on Islamic societies. Muslims and Arabs refused such ideas and tried to fight back, but some societies were affected by the imposition. Muslims and Arabs became very weak at the end of the Ottoman era (1299 – 1923), which negatively affected them and pulled them back to the dark ages, while the Europeans and the West in general were advancing in sciences and technology. Some Muslims wanted to benefit from colonization, while others saw it against Islamic teachings:

When Europeans colonized Muslim lands at the beginning of the 18th century, Muslims were introduced to shocking material and moral differences. Many were forced into humiliating oppression by foreign invaders. Some responded with anger; others were impressed by European technologies and administrative organization. Muslims who adopted positive attitudes toward what they considered

to be benefits of Western progress included thinkers and writers.

(CSIW, 2002, p. 5)

Muslim and Arab countries were involved in many wars fighting for their independence, and they also took part during World Wars I and II. Many Muslims developed hatred towards anything from the West, including modernization. They tried to fight modernization because they pictured it as being against all the teachings of Islam and having a negative effect on Muslim societies. The situation resulting from war opened the eyes of Muslim women, and some political movements, beginning with the Abbasid era and ending with the Ottomans, started which supported the idea of educating women all over again after losing their rights. They demanded to educate women because Islam gives them this sacred right along with other rights.

By the end of World War II, hostility toward the West had grown stronger, along with Muslim antipathy toward so-called modernization and its effects on Muslim social traditions and cultural identity. At the same time, women's roles were expanding beyond the confines of the home, and women were demanding greater access to education. As they increasingly engaged in activities within the larger society, women challenged men in all professional sectors (CSIW, 2002, p.6).

After the colonization and war era, many Arab countries exchanged technologies and other industries with the West on a one-way route only; they adopted Western ideology without affecting it or adapting it to their societies. Muslims at the dawn of Islam translated all sciences and adapted many civilizations, but they melted all foreign ideas within their Islamic morals and ethics. At the same time Muslims added to them and left their Islamic, Middle Eastern touch. "Muslim countries were either emerging from

colonization or linking their new economics structures to the West during the 1950s and in the following years. This situation facilitated the one-way exchange of technologies and science from the West to the East” (CSIW, 2002, p. 7).

Muslim movements adapted extremist positions and tried to eliminate any Western affects on their societies. While other activists, women activists specifically, refused to go back to the interpretations of the Qur’ān and the Hadith on what is required from women and what is their main role in the society. This situation affected gender relations in Islamic and Arabic societies. Ahmad (1992) explained this by stating,

National liberation and emerging forms of nationalism provided the context and idiom for political and social development in many arenas, from politics to gender relations. Gender relations, however, proved more complex and enigmatic. In no area was the force of tradition felt more strongly and the clash of civilizations more apparent than that of the status and role of women. Secular modernists were seen by religious leaders and more Islamically oriented Muslims [as] Westernizers whose reforms threatened religion and culture, family and society. (p. 1)

As a result of this Westernization, many women rebelled and replaced the veil and Islamic dress with a western dress to give them a more civilized look, according to their own interpretation. Other women in the Muslim society remained veiled and kept their Islamic identity along with more Western thinking and approach. The strongest effect this Western influence had was on education, mainly the educational system. The establishment of coeducational schools in the Arab world was borrowed from the West and was fought by many people in Muslim society who saw the alien idea as very harmful to their beliefs and social structures.

Segregation of Gender and Coeducational Schools in Islamic Societies

Muslim religious teachers insisted on keeping women separate from men unless the men are their *mehrīm*⁸. (However, this wasn't the case at the time of the Prophet Muhammad when women came to him seeking advice and knowledge.) Women in Islam were kept home and traveled with a *mehrīm* only with full Islamic dressing⁹. The rationale behind such action was to prevent women from being harassed by men and to prevent women from communicating with outsider males who were considered strangers to them.

In addition, some Muslim scholars, such as Ibn Sahnūn, supported the Islamic teachings of segregating boys from girls in education. Ibn Sahnūn (in press) said, "I disapprove of a teacher's teaching girls and mixing them with the boys, because that is corruption for them" (p. 20). Ibn Sahnūn continued his argument about the disadvantages of mixing boys and girls together in the same classroom by adding, "I hate to see the teacher teach girls and put them together with boys. That will cause them to do mischief" (p. 20).

On the same issue, Abu al-Ḥassan al-Qābisīy (in press), another Muslim scholar, supported Ibn Sahnūn's thoughts on mixing boys and girls in the same classroom. Al-Qābisīy reported, "It is a measure of serving their [boys and girls] best interests and taking good care of them not to put males and females together [in the same classroom]" (p. 21). These actions refer to the prevention of any opportunity for any sexual misconduct. Muslims saw this as the best and safest approach to keep their societies pure, according to Islamic ethics, especially after the invasion of the Western thought and technology.

⁸ Members of women's immediate family

⁹ Women should be covered from head to foot

Modern Muslim thinkers say there is no reason that women and men cannot meet together for work or other “proper” purposes, though most add “as long as the women are properly (i.e. Islamically) dressed.”

Coeducation is an alien idea for the Islamic society. Muslims do not find any good social or economic reason for it. Only primary level children may be educated together. Beyond the age of about 9-10 years, girls must be provided separate premises and woman teachers and instructors, according to the Islamic point of view of segregating genders. Coeducation is only one dimension of the bigger issue. Islam’s position on gender segregation is well articulated in the Qur’ān (al-Ahzab, al-Noor) and Sunna and manifested in the injunctions concerning “Hijab” (veil). In exceptional cases, and for very specialized areas, teachers and instructors of the opposite sex of the students could be allowed, particularly where the teacher–student age gap would only inspire mutual respect. Otherwise, Muslims find no sound economic and social reason why students of the two sexes be necessarily grouped together, particularly after they have reached the age of maturity.

Coeducational Schools in Arab and Islamic Countries

The populations of the Arab and Islamic countries are not purely Muslims; other religions exist as minorities. One can find Christians, Jews, and members of other religions in the same country and merged into the same society, but the majority of these societies and countries are Muslims. In order to serve the citizens of those religions and parties, special schools were established by their leaders to serve their children. Coeducational schools were established to educate both boys and girls in the same classroom. Those schools were mainly established by religious affiliations such as

churches or diplomatic missions. Coeducational schools are considered private schools run by those bodies and have a different curriculum than the one taught at public schools. The curriculum is taught mainly in Arabic (in Arab countries), as well as English and other foreign languages according to the foreign country supporting and funding the school.

Most of these schools are not restricted to Christians or Jews only—they also accept Muslim students who choose to attend. Many Muslims attend these schools because of the strong curriculum and advanced technology taught there, which public schools usually lack. To compete in this area, many Muslim and Islamic organizations began establishing their own private schools that provided similar curriculums as the Christian coeducational schools, but with one big difference. Islamic private schools are coeducational for the first six grades only, and then boys are separate from girls and each go to different schools that have the same curriculum.

Private schooling in Islam is not a new idea. All Islamic schools are considered to be private for its affiliation with the mosque and religious curriculum. The public school system is a new system that was adopted after the European colonization of the Arab countries.

Islamic Private Schools in the United States

The Islamic communities are growing fast in the United States, and Muslim children are an expanding segment in the student populations in North America. According to The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), there are around 400 Islamic schools in the United States. Most of the schools are elementary schools, but there are a few high schools. High schools are found mainly in large states with large Islamic

populations, such as Colorado, Michigan, Virginia, and Illinois. Muslim parents are very concerned for their children who attend public schools because of the absence of religious teachings in the public systems. Nimer (2002) explains these concerns as follows,

Muslim children make up a growing segment of the student population in North America. Private education is too expensive for most Muslim families, so the public school system has become the default choice for most. Nevertheless, public education has posed challenges to Muslim children and their parents. Although school curricula have become increasingly sensitive to diversity, this inclusiveness has not been extended to Muslims in many school districts. (p. 53)

Muslims, like other religious minorities, face difficulties with their religious practices in new communities. In the United States, each Islamic school is established and run by an Islamic center in the area: “In some Muslim communities in North America, focus on building Islamic schools almost immediately followed the establishment of Islamic centers” (Nimer, 2002, p. 54).

The whole of Islamic communities face challenges as well as the girls who are part of these communities face many challenges. Nimer (2002) proceeds in his argument about Muslims’ situations in North America by stating,

Many textbooks and teachers lectures depict Islam and Muslims in grossly distorted ways. Muslims, like members of some other religious minorities, have had a difficult time persuading schools to accommodate their religious practices. Many girls have faced harassment for wearing a headscarf¹⁰ or for refusing because of Islamic teachings regarding modesty to wear T-shirts and shorts for gym classes. (p. 53)

Therefore, Muslim parents tend to send their children to private schools hoping to get some religious education—but not to any private schools, to Islamic private schools. This desire for religious education has required the establishment of more Islamic schools in the United States to serve the Muslim populations. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) stresses on this point as well by Zarzour (2003) who explained,

Islamic schools in the United States are a true grassroots' effort. Local leaders of the Muslim community all over the country are responding to a growing need in the community for Islamic schools by establishing schools at a fast rate. Most Islamic schools start out as a labor of love by a few extremely dedicated people who, at any cost, would like to provide their children and Muslim children at large a safe and supportive environment so they can learn not only reading, math, and writing, but also to learn about their religion and culture. (p. 1)

Ghazali (2003) also stresses the need for Islamic schools by stating, “Parents trust that their kids are in a safe place that is free of foul language, drugs, guns, sex, and other problems that public schools have” (p. 3).

On the other hand, many Muslims in America believe in public schooling and see it as a chance for their kids to interact and communicate with people from this new community and to establish a good understanding of their differences and similarities. The parents who send their children to public schools think of their children's future and what they want to be. They understand that these new people will be their “neighbors, coworkers,” and friends Nimer (2002). Nimer explains this issue further by emphasizing,

Still, some Muslims believe public education offers the best chance for their children to socialize with their future coworkers, neighbors, and fellow citizens.

¹⁰ Headscarf is the veil for Muslim girls were they were ordered in the Qur'an to wear it.

Some also believe that the school experience will allow others to learn about Muslims firsthand process they see as crucial for Muslim integration into North American society. Muslim leaders encourage parents of public school children to participate more effectively in parent-teacher associations and school boards so that they may influence curriculum decisions and local regulation regarding religious accommodations. (p. 53)

The question that faces many Muslims in the United States is then whether Islamic schools are indeed established according to Islamic teachings and laws. The answer is very difficult and has many facets. It might be very difficult for people living outside their original communities where almost all citizens are the same and share the same beliefs and cultures, to apply the same beliefs and cultures in a new community where they are a minority. Some Islamic schools try their best in presenting as much as they can from Islamic teachings and laws. Ghazali (2003) observes this situation by stating,

Any Muslims who go to Islamic centers believe that Islamic schools are the solution to our problems. They help us to safeguard our children against most of the problems that young people face in this country. However, some parents sometimes become disappointed when they see that their local Islamic school does not match the picture that they have in their minds about Islamic schools. (p. 1)

Mohammad Nimer (2002) also explains that,

Many Islamic schools stress the concept of Islamic identity in their mission statement and bylaws. This usually means acquainting students with the Islamic sources of knowledge and teaching them Islamic ethical values. In addition,

Islamic schools conform to halal ¹¹ dietary standards and schedule classes and other school activities around the requirements of daily prayers, Ramadan¹², and other significant holidays. (p. 55)

Most Islamic schools are very aware of the criticism that they are purely religious schools, like the schools called Madrassa in some Islamic countries such as Pakistan, where they teach only the Qur'ān and the Hadith. As Udavant (1998) points out,

But the education is often limited. Many of the schools teach only the Koran and stress the responsibilities of Muslims to fight for Islam. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government tried to reduce government funds to the religious schools and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sought to regulate curriculum. But the efforts were derailed by small right-wing religious parties. (p. 1)

Another supporting point to this issue comes from Jones (1999). The concept of teaching the Qur'ān and Hadith in Pakistan is also stressed. Jones reports,

The militants enjoy widespread support in Pakistan, particularly in the madrassa or Islamic schools. Hundreds of children sat cross-legged on the ground at one such madrassa, rhythmically chanting the Koran which they were learning by heart...

Many of the boys would live in the madrassa from the age of six until sixteen.

(p. 1)

Islamic schools in the United States merged both the religious teachings as well as all other curricular topics to complete the circle of educating Muslim students in this

¹¹ Halal: The word refers to food that is allowed for Muslims to eat and drink especially meat. Muslims have to slaughter the allowed animals like cows and sheep in a special way to drain all the blood from the animal. The word is called kosher in the case of Jews.

¹² The fasting month for Muslims where they fast for thirty days according to the lunar calendar. They don't eat or drink anything from the sunrise till the sunset. They can eat at night.

civilized world. Islamic schools distinguish a clear separation between religion and history. Nimer (2002) explained that,

A growing number of schools distinguish between religion and history. Religion is presented in terms of beliefs, practices, and moral conduct. History is presented as events involving people. Increasingly, student of Islamic schools are exposed to textbooks that voice various times and places of their globe (as opposed to a selective focus on North America and the Muslim World). Students are also encouraged to appreciate diversity in Muslim life. (p. 56)

Muslims in the United States are aware that their children need more than Muslim religious education made up of Islamic teachings and religious readings. They want their children to be enrolled in different schools and to participate in community activities with other Muslims, because these are the communities they will end up living in. The Islamic schools took this point into consideration and included these vital programs, extracurricular activities, in their schools. Nimer (2002) supports Muslim parents' views of the importance of their children interacting with their societies and keeping their Islamic identity at the same time:

Parents who send their children to Islamic schools seek to ensure that their children are not only aware of their Muslim identity, but are also able to compete for jobs and college seats after graduation. The schools demonstrate sensitivity to such desire by participating in national and state standardized test. (p. 55)

In addition to the official curriculum, many Islamic schools in large Islamic communities have involved their students in extracurricular activities in an attempt to help their societies: "Some school programs in large Muslim communities involve student in

community services, such as feeding the indigent, visiting nursing homes, participating in activities at homeless shelters, and sponsoring orphaned children” (Nimer, 2002, p. 57). Islamic schools are also aware of the need for their students to be on the same line of knowledge as their American counterparts in public and other private schools. “Islamic schools usually select books that highlight the multicultural nature of the United States and Canada, so that children can develop their own sense of belonging to the larger society” (Nimer, 2002, p. 56).

Another concern for Muslim parents and Islamic communities in the United States is girls’ education. The education of girls in a safe environment is a big issue for Muslim parents in the United States, as well as in any other Western country. They want to make sure that their girls are educated in a safe and very protected environment. Nimer (2002) discusses this issue, stating,

Islamic schools also place an equally significant emphasis on the quality of their reading, math and science programs. The initiatives of these schools may define high academic standards in terms of class size or special programs, such as technology courses. Some parents choose private Islamic schools for other reasons. In the view of some parents, for example, Islamic schools offer girls and education in a protected environment. For this reason, the enrollment of girls in some Islamic schools is higher than that of boys. (p. 55)

Furthermore, Islamic schools adopt the local school curriculum in their area and add some religious studies and Arabic language to that curriculum. As Nimer (2002) points out,

Arabic language is very important because Muslims need to read their Qur’ān in this language and understand the meanings of it in English. On the other hand,

some Islamic schools who serve non-Arab Muslims tend to teach in their own language and use the same textbooks used in their home countries. (p. 56)

Nimer continued to explain this issue, “A few schools with some ethnic bent still use language and religious textbooks from their countries of origin” (p. 56).

Vision, Mission, and Organization of Islamic Schools

Islamic schools are serving a large section of the Muslim community in America and providing many jobs, especially for Muslim women. Nimer (2002) wrote that “Islamic schools provide several thousand jobs, especially for Muslim women, who occupy a large percentage of teaching positions” (p. 59). In continuing with the same concept, Nimer (2002) follows the funding for these schools and the difficulties they face by pointing out, “Although tuition is the main revenue source for Muslim schools, it usually falls short of expenses. To sustain their programs, schools seek local and federal funding whenever eligible” (p. 59).

The funding of Islamic schools is followed by a management process by the bodies funding them. Nimer (2002) points out that the decisions in these schools are made by local boards in the area and the Islamic center establishing the schools, but the management is tied to the sponsoring center.

On the other hand, visions and missions of Islamic schools are almost the same and set forth by Islamic centers that own and run these schools. For example, IFNA (2003) states their mission as follows,

Our mission is to systematize and organize the methodology of effective Islamic Education. We seek to identify and implement the best educational strategies and to make our research available to Muslim educators everywhere on planet Earth

and beyond by making sense of traditional and modern education and its proper implementation now. (p. 1)

Islamic schools are still young schools and may not be “real” Islamic schools according to Islamic teachings and Islamic schools through history. Islamic schools are facing many challenges including organization, finance, stability, and accreditation. Nimer (2002) explains this situation in depth by stating,

Generally, Islamic education suffers in the absence of quality control on curriculum and the lack of teacher development programs and instruction methods. There are no regional or national board’s to help in the development of standards of learning, codes of conduct, and testing policies as there are, for example, in the case of Catholic schools. (p. 62)

The questions that need to be answered in this study will determine whether or not those Islamic schools practice gender equity as required by Islam and provide girls with equal rights like boys in education.

Summary

This chapter explored education in Islam on different levels. It began with the Prophet Mohammad and ended up with Islamic schools in the United States, which is the core of this study. Education in Islam was not for men only—women also had a major role in teaching, learning, and spreading knowledge. Muslims were scholars in different sciences, and they carried their knowledge to different places through battles or as missionaries.

Muslim communities are growing in the United States, and their needs are growing as well. Islamic schools are trying to meet these needs, and this study is aimed to explore

and explain what is the real educational status of girls in these schools and if they are getting an equal education to boys.

Finally, the researcher can not certify in this study whether these schools are real Islamic schools as traditional Islamic schools, so she will have to take their word for it. This study is aiming to explore and study whether there is justice and equality between boys and girls in Islamic schools according to Islamic teachings with equality for both genders.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research methodology, research design, population studied, the sample, methodology of collecting the data and its source, data analysis, and the conclusions made from this research. The research questions were primarily drawn from the literature review of both gender education in general in the United States and gender education specifically in Islamic education.

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following key questions:

1. What gender distinctions operate in the curriculum in Islamic schools in the United States?
2. How does the advising or career counseling provided to boys and girls in Islamic schools in the United States reinforce gender difference?
3. To what extent are certain teachers' different instructional styles related to teachers' and students' genders in Islamic schools in the United States?
4. To what extent do teachers reinforce gender in classrooms in Islamic schools?
5. How do girls and boys differ in their academic performance in the two Islamic schools?

Research Problem

Islam clearly dictates distinctive roles for men and women, even though it reinforces equity between the two. It is a religious obligation for this society to provide equality between the two genders. This commitment is reflected in Islamic schools where it is a religious obligation to provide equal educational opportunities for girls. Islam gives

girls equal rights with boys in almost all aspects of life, and education is one of those aspects. On the other hand, Islamic society, like other societies, suffers from gender differences between men and women.

It is important to know whether or not girls in Islamic schools in the United States are disadvantaged compared to boys, and how gender is playing out in the schools.

Research Design

This study utilized a case study design, as Eisenhardt (1989) suggests: “The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings” (p. 534). A case study design was ideal for this study because it allowed for multiple sources of data, including open-ended questions in the focus groups and teachers’ interviews. The study included independent case studies of two Islamic schools in Missouri. The case studies are organizational case studies, combining both qualitative and quantitative data (Yin, 1981).

Due to the political situation surrounding Islamic schools in the United States after the events of September 11th, 2001, the enactment of the Homeland Securities Act, and politics in the American and Islamic societies surrounding these schools, the researcher’s access to students of the schools was limited to focus groups rather than individual interviews. Individual interviews could have potentially connoted a setting of interrogation that would be uncomfortable for the participants. Through correspondences with the school officials, the researcher was aware that the students’ parents would not be comfortable with single interviews with their children. Therefore, individual interviews were only conducted with the principals of both schools.

A case study may be very “simple or complex” according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994). They also pointed out, “It [the case study] may be a child or a classroom of children” (p. 236). The case study approach assisted the researcher in better understanding the real life situation of girls’ academic achievement in the two private Islamic high schools.

These two case studies involved two Islamic high schools. These two settings allowed the researcher to better understand the educational experiences of girls in Islamic schools and the equal educational opportunities in both schools. Additionally, the researcher was given the opportunity to evaluate girls’ academic performance and achievement in the two Islamic schools. Both schools are coed but have different grade levels: one school goes up to only the 10th grade, and the other one goes up to the 12th grade.

Denzin and Lincoln set out six steps that are required for developing a case study approach (1994, p. 244). The six steps, and examples of how this study meets these steps, are as follows:

1. Bounding the case, conceptualizing the object of the study: The researcher limited, or bound, the research to the two private Islamic schools in Kansas City, Missouri. The focus of study was limited to an examination of gender differences (existence of gender play) between boys and girls in these two schools.
2. Selecting phenomena, themes, or issues; the research questions, to emphasize:

The research questions were focused around issues of:

 - a. Gender differences/discriminations between boys and girls regarding the curriculum offered for boys and girls

- b. whether boys and girls get the same advising and counseling services
 - c. whether any hidden curriculum based on gender is present or not in these schools and, if so, its impact on girls' education
 - d. the way teachers treat boys and girls and what effect it has on girls' education
 - e. Girls' academic performance in the two Islamic schools as compared to that of boys in these schools.
3. Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues: After the data was collected from the focus groups of students, teachers, and parents, from the observations in the classrooms, and from the interviews with both principals of the two schools, the data was then coded, categorized, and reordered using NVivo software. The step of seeking patterns in the data occurred as the researcher explored the text in order to find the different themes within the data and identified relationships between the themes. Finally, the different themes and patterns were checked back against the data.
4. Triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation: After the collection of the data, the researcher transcribed the data, analyzed the qualitative data using NVivo software, and used SPSS for descriptive statistics of the quantitative data. The triangulation of the data occurred at the school level in order for the researcher to maintain the credibility of the study. To maintain the credibility of the study, triangulation included the results of multiple sources of data, including focus groups

(students and teachers), the two principal interviews, and class observations.

5. Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue: The researcher produced different hypotheses during the later stages of data analysis in order to facilitate the dependability of the study, as different potential interpretations were possible. The researcher then chose the hypothesis that best explained the results.

6. Developing assertions of generalization about the case: This step was addressed as follows:

- a. It was noted that findings can only be applied to the two Islamic schools in the study.
- b. The researcher provided an analytical generalization, which means that the findings of the study were generalized in order to build a theoretical model from the findings.
- c. The proposed model was then used to propose recommendations to the two schools in an attempt to assist them in providing better education for girls.

School Visits

This study required a visit to the two Islamic high schools in Kansas City, Missouri. Each school was researched separately. The visit for each school lasted for one week and constituted the qualitative portion of the study. During this time, interviews with the principals, teachers, focus groups with students, and observation of students and teachers in the classrooms took place. In addition, the researcher collected qualitative records and archive data to examine academic performance. These latter sources of data constituted the quantitative sources of data for this study. The study focused on the three

upper grades in each school: 8th, 9th, and 10th. The researcher conducted a one-time visit during the second semester of the school year.

Establishing rapport with the participants was crucial to ensuring the quality of the data. The researcher is a Muslim woman from Jerusalem. Thus, she shared major cultural and religious characteristics with the participants in the study. These shared cultural and religious backgrounds facilitated an easier exchange of information in interviews and focus groups. The fact that the researcher speaks Arabic, which is the first language for most of the new students attending these two schools, also facilitated an easier and more authentic exchange of ideas during the interviews. Additionally, the researcher's presence at the school was not as "out of the ordinary" as it would have been if she were a Westerner. Establishing shared cultural and religious characteristics was particularly important due to the political climate currently prevalent in the United States as described above.

The Sites: Two Islamic High Schools in Missouri

Both of the schools the researcher visited are coed. The first school goes up to the 10th grade, and the second one goes up to the 12th grade. Both schools have the same curriculum. Both schools have a male principal, are independent schools with a board of directors, and are not affiliated with any Islamic center. Islamic centers often support the schools affiliated with them through funding and have some control over the curriculum and the school in general. Schools independent from Islamic centers are free to choose the curriculum and policy they see best to run their schools. According to the principal of the first school, the ratio of boys vs. girls in the school year 2003-2004 was 45:55. It is predicted to be around the same ratio every year. It is also an accredited school by the

state of Missouri. The second school is in the process of receiving accreditation. Student numbers keep changing throughout the academic year, and they didn't give the researcher a certain ratio of girls vs. boys.

Subjects

The researcher studied students in grades 8 through 10 in both schools, as well as collecting data for future research from the 11th and 12th grades in the school that offers these grades. Focus groups and interviews with teachers were formed for each grade level of the two schools. The researcher also conducted interviews with the principals of the two schools. A focus group is a qualitative research method positioned somewhere between participant observation and in-depth interview (Morgan, 1997). Focus group sessions consist of semi-structured panel discussions between a small group of people representing a specific target audience, such as the students in the school. Focus groups elicit the exchange, exploration, and testing of ideas, feedback, brainstorming, and discovery (Edmunds, 2000; Morgan, 1998a 1998b; Morrison, 1998; Templeton, 1996).

For the focus groups, each school provided a list of students' names for each grade level. A stratified random sampling method was used to choose the participating students depending on gender and grade level. Table 1 provides a better illustration of the six focus groups that were formed in school A and the four focus groups that were formed in school B in the study.

Each focus group included six students. The researcher chose six students in accordance with Fowler's (2002) suggestion that "focus group discussions are best with six to eight people" (p. 107). The selection of six students was also practical because neither school has a large student population.

Table 1

Numbers of Participants in Each Focus Group for the Various Grade Levels

| Grade Level | # Boys | # Girls |
|-------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| 8 th Grade | 6 | 6 |
| 9 th Grade | 6 | 6 |
| 10 th Grade | 6 | 6 |
| 11 th Grade ^a | 6 | 6 |
| 12 th Grade ^a | 6 | 6 |

^aSecond school only

Data Collection

The qualitative data was collected through interviews with the principals and teachers of the two schools, as well from the various focus groups. The researcher spent approximately one week at each school to collect the data. Each focus group lasted for one and a half hours. The focus group questions were in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire that had 2-5 questions with sub-questions or follow up questions if needed. Discussions took place in whatever language the participants felt most comfortable speaking, that is, English or Arabic. The researcher recorded the events taking place in the focus groups using a tape recorder and took notes at the same time. The questions for the focus groups and teachers and principal interviews are found in Appendix A.

Observation of both teachers and students also took place inside the classrooms as the research took notes. Grade records, advising records, academic plans, and curriculum

material from both schools were collected for the quantitative portion of the study. The researcher obtained hard and digital copies from each school for all the required records for the quantitative part of this study.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The analysis was as follows:

Qualitative Data

The researcher transcribed all the tapes obtained from the different focus groups. Then, using the NVivo program, the researcher proceeded through the coding process. The coding process divided the data into different categories, including concepts and themes, then broke properties into dimensions (Hueser, 1999). Coding was also important in identifying different parts of the text. Gibbs (2002) states, “Coding is the process of identifying and recording one or more discrete passages of text of other data items that, in some sense, exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea” (p. 57). The researcher used three types of coding: open, axial, and selective coding.

According to Gibbs (2002) open coding is used to “examine the text for salient categories of information by making comparisons and asking questions. These categories are labeled” (p. 167). Axial coding is the next step of coding, connecting categories found in open coding in order to uncover causal conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The final coding step is selective coding. This step is well-defined by Gibbs (2002) as, “selective coding, where the core category, or central category that ties all other categories in the theory together into a story, is identified and related to other categories” (p.167). In this specific research, it was the identification of common themes and patterns both within and across the schools.

A comparison of the results of focus groups and interviews was divided into different themes, and connections and relationships were identified between these themes. The program was also used to analyze the main themes related to equity in this research. The researcher then interpreted the results to produce a conclusion explaining what role gender plays in these schools and how that role plays out.

This work is not valid unless it can be replicated by other researchers. They might get different results as a result of using different methods and applications, but they should be able to replicate this work. In order to maintain this important quality of qualitative research, the researcher introduced the importance of qualitative research validity, trustworthiness, which is compatible with validity in quantitative research in the following section.

Validity in Qualitative Research: Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers reject the framework of validity that is commonly accepted in quantitative research. Instead, they support trustworthiness, which addresses the issue of validity in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is composed of four important elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Those important elements are also stressed upon by a variety of qualitative researchers when answering the question of how trustworthiness is established. The question is well answered by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) by stating, “Trustworthiness is established in a naturalistic inquiry by the use of techniques that provide truth value through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through conformability” (p. 132).

The researcher demonstrated the trustworthiness of this study through each of the four elements established by Marshall and Rossman (1989). First, the credibility (internal validity) criteria involved establishing that the results of qualitative research were credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. The researcher provided segments from the raw data to her doctoral cohort members to analyze, and she provided segments from the findings to the participants (students, teachers, and principals) in order to confirm the findings and make sure that this was what they really meant from their answers. This last procedure is called “a member check,” and it is a very important check in qualitative research needed to properly validate the research. The researcher can choose any appropriate method to fulfill this procedure as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest, “We may cross-check our work through member checks and audit trails. As a rule, in writing up the narrative, the qualitative researcher must decide what form the member check will take” (p. 216).

The researcher kept a field journal of the observations inside the classroom, as well as during focus groups, to maintain a persistent recording of the events as they occurred. This journal helped the researcher keep a record of the development of her thinking as well as keep a record of the events which occurred during the collection of the data. The researcher used the journal during the analysis of the data to refer to certain events and tie the ideas together. In other words, field notes consist of the events witnessed and researcher’s reflections of what it all meant. The researcher also triangulated data from the different sources (focus groups, principal interviews, teacher interviews, class observations) to produce different themes and results. This study also

went through the IRB review for approval on the research techniques and procedures as well as the persistent observation by the researcher during the collection of the data.

Second, transferability (external validity) refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. The researcher provided thick description of the sampling process, context, and the findings of the study. Though the researcher could not specify the transferability of findings, she could provide sufficient information to help other researchers determine whether the findings are applicable to the new situation or not.

Third, dependability (reliability) emphasized the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher was responsible for describing the changes that occurred in the setting and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached the study. The researcher had an external auditor (the committee chair) audit the methodological decisions and data collection, as well as the production of different hypothesis for the study.

Fourth, conformability (objectivity) refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. The researcher documented the procedure of checking and rechecking the data through the study, using quotes from the transcript, providing detailed descriptions of the research process, and making the interpretation of data clear and logical. In addition, the researcher provided segments of the raw data, analysis notes, synthesis products, process notes, and personal notes to be shown to her professors and chairman for auditing. Finally, the researcher accounted for consistency between the data collected and the interpretations presented between the researcher and

respondents' viewpoints. In this way, the researcher tried to control her bias towards the study.

Quantitative Data

The researcher used descriptive statistics (multivariate tests) to compare academic achievement between girls and boys in the same school, and between the girls in the two schools. The researcher used students' grades for all the subjects they study at school along with their final results at the end of the school year. The statistical package of SPSS was used to serve this purpose.

General Sketch of the Study

The research sketch for this study is a visual overview of the research methodology used to answer the research questions (see Figure 1). Focus groups, principal interviews, class observations, and records of students' grades in all subjects were collected from both schools to be used in the analysis process to answer the research questions.

Summary

The research used a case study design to study two cases. Specifically, an organizational case study design that depends on combining both qualitative and quantitative data was employed. This approach assisted the researcher in exploring and explaining the doing gender between boys and girls in those two Islamic schools in the United States.

In this chapter, the researcher proposed the research problem and research questions. The researcher also explained the use of case studies and qualitative research, as well as the use of focus groups. An explanation of the formation of the research questions, the choice of the sites of the study, and a thorough description of the study

approach was also provided by the researcher. In addition, the researcher also described data collection and the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CASES OF TWO ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

The primary focus of this study is to explore and explain whether gender plays a role in Islamic schools in the United States between boys and girls in two secondary schools, and between students and teachers, and how it affects students. This chapter will mainly be a description of the two Islamic schools, focusing on their similarities and differences. This chapter is an introduction to the findings and results chapter which will follow, providing a description of the two school settings, and discussing the four major differences found between the two schools after the analysis. The main topics explained in this chapter are the concepts of whether or not students consider their Islamic school to be Islamic, teacher–student interaction, cultural differences between teachers and students, and finally the leadership style operating in the two schools.

The Two Islamic Private Schools' Settings

The researcher noticed that the two schools selected for this study have the same physical facility settings inside and outside the classroom. Students in both schools have a dress code which includes a special uniform to wear to school. Boys wear blue pants with a white shirt. Girls wear blue uniforms, white shirts, and pants under the uniform, as well as the veil. “Even non-Muslim students, both boys and girls, have to follow our dress code” (A-4P: 5).¹³ In both schools, students are separated inside the classroom. In some classrooms, boys sit in the front and girls sit in the back with an empty row of chairs separating the genders. In other classrooms, boys sit on one side of the classroom

¹³ Quotes from respondents are referenced using this format: *case-respondent: passage*. This example means case one, respondent 4 from passage 5.

and girls sit on the other side. Students don't share notes, discuss homework, or mix inside the classroom.

Boys and girls are seated in the same classrooms. Boys sit in front and girls in the back in order to apply some sort of segregation according to Islamic teachings.

There is a row of empty chairs separating boys from girls in the same classroom.

No interaction between boys and girls so far. (RO: 8)

During recess, the boys play on the playground, but the girls are not allowed to play outside in front of the boys. During lunch, the students are separated into two lines, one for boys and one for girls. The students sit at separate tables to eat, as students are not allowed to interact with the other gender during lunch. Students and teachers in both schools pray in the middle of the day in the mosque affiliated with the school. The researcher concluded that both schools are applying gender as institutions within the Islamic context by separating boys and girls in this school setting.

Two Cases

During the collection and analysis of the data through interviews, focus groups, and observations, the researcher noticed four major differences between the two schools that may contribute and assist in explaining how and why gender may play a role in these two schools. The interpretations and explanations of the doing gender and differences in the two schools are not necessarily generalizations about Islam and how Muslims do apply gender. The researcher took into account that within the two schools, teachers, principals, and students come from different backgrounds and have different personal preferences. Therefore, each case will be explained separately according to its

characteristics, whether it can be explained within an Islamic context, an Arabic cultural context, or American societal practices. This step is an important one, helping the researcher to present logical explanations of the doing gender play within each specific case.

The researcher noticed that four major differences between the schools emerged in this study. These four differences included: (a) opinions on whether the school is an Islamic school or not, (b) teacher/student interaction, (c) cultural differences among students and staff, and finally (d) leadership style.

In order to explain the differences, the researcher will describe the two schools independently based on these four factors. School one will be referred to as case 1 and school two will be referred to as case 2.

Case 1

The high school includes all grades up to the 12th grade. The students were interviewed in separate focus groups: three focus groups comprised of boys, and three focus groups comprised of girls, with a total of twenty students (11 boys and 9 girls). Six teachers (4 males and 2 females) and the principal were interviewed one-on-one as well.

Islamic or not? Student opinions varied between considering the school an Islamic school and not considering the school an Islamic school. Most of the students (75%) confused the concepts of private and Islamic, merging the concepts of private school and Islamic school into one. Most of their responses indicated that they consider the school Islamic, therefore it is private for them. Most teachers said it is a private school. In this section, the different opinions are illustrated as follows.

Students: Seventy-five percent of the students had defined their school of being private Islamic school or not each in their own way; that is, they defined the school as Islamic because it teaches Islamic studies and the majority of the school population is Muslim. For the remaining 25% of the students, the school was also private because of the teaching of Islam in addition to the teaching of Qur'ān, and because the majority of students are Muslims. "Well, it is private because mostly the Muslims go here because they teach Qur'ān and Islamic studies, all the teachers are Muslims, and they respect your religious rights, and they wouldn't do that in a public school" (A-9g: 44). A few other students thought of it as a private Islamic school because of the school setting: "Because we're separate from girls. We don't sit next to each other" (A-8b: 29). Another student expressed his agreement about the school being a private Islamic school by stating, "Because there are times to pray" (A-8b: 30).

In addition, few other students expressed their negative opinion by stating that it is not private but Islamic, "Well, I think in a private school, they'd be a lot stricter, you know? And I think the boys would be separate classrooms and the girls would be in separate classrooms and there, I think they'd be a lot harder on the girls than the boys" (A-8g: 5). Another student expressed his opinion that the school is not private by stating, "Because anyone can come here. We've had some non-Muslims come here. We're always inviting non-Muslims to come here. It's not that we have problems with it, it's just not a private school" (A-9b:3).

Teachers: All teachers agreed that their school is a private Islamic school although they expressed different reasons as to why. They discussed their feelings about teaching

Islamic studies and Qur'ān, funding, the combination of funding and Islamic studies, and finally the Islamic dress code. One teacher described her school as a private Islamic school by saying, “Islamically it is an Islamic school because we teach here the Qur'ān and Islamic studies and we follow every day procedure that let the students live an Islamic day. All the day, they live Islamic laws” (A-3:5). Another teacher highlighted the private nature of the school due to the source of the school's funding: “Because [it's] not fund[ed] by the government. It is funded privately by our own parents and our community and our well, rich supporters” (A-4P:19). Another teacher merged the concepts of funding and Islamic teachings together to provide her understanding of her school as a private school,

So therefore the funding comes from individuals and in my mind that makes it private. It is an Islamic school because within our curriculum we have topics, subjects that are basically about the religion. And as we instruct, we instruct our classes using Islamic themes and Islamic context, so that's what makes it an Islamic school. (A-7: 9)

The principal also expressed his thoughts about the school being Islamic and private because they have an Islamic dress code. He stated, “Yes, they have to wear the Islamic dress, which covers the hair and a long, you know, pant or jilbab [a wide dress] that covers the whole body except for the hands and the face” (B-1P: 17). Another student confirmed the principal's view on the dress code by saying, “Well, we have a dress code. And we learn Islamic stuff, and Qur'ān” (B-7b: 4).

Judging from the different opinions given about whether the school is private and Islamic or not, the majority of students and teachers confirm that their school is a private Islamic school.

Teacher/student interaction. It was noticeable that the majority (71%) of high school teachers in the first school are males. The school has seven teachers teaching the high school—five of which are males and two are females. Boys and girls have more freedom to interact with teachers in this school than in the other school. Students said that they joke with the teachers, play with them, and feel they are all one family. One teacher told a story about racing a boy in the hall. He said,

In terms of equity, because for example I can, today I raced a boy. You know I mean, I said, “Hey.” I saw them running, and I [the teacher] said, “Okay, I will race you.” And then the girls are also very, very friendly with me. But I still have to maintain certain amount of distance because of Islamic duties. (A-2: 174)

All teachers reported that they treat both boys and girls equally inside and outside the classroom. For instance, the boys reported that a male teacher stands by them and defends them all the time because he wants the boys to receive equal treatment with girls. The boys reported,

He would defend us, for like student of the week. We have that every Friday, [and] he would defend most of us. Because it’s mostly...most of the teachers would vote for a female student most of the time, because they think that all of the boys are bad. And he would go out and defend us and say, like, not all of the boys are bad.

(A-9b: 855)

On the other hand, friendship and family relations sometimes have a negative effect on teacher–student relations. Everyone who works at the school knows everyone. It is a small school serving a small community. All of the students and teachers are connected to each other through families or neighbors. Some students expressed their negative attitudes towards this setting. One of them told a story about the effect his mother teaching in his school had on him. He reported,

I do want to say one thing. I went to a teacher, but the same teacher, I went to a teacher like last year and this year, and we used to be okay and talked, but see, since he didn't like my mom, and I used to tell him a lot of stuff, he started using what I told him and things against me. (A-9b: 859)

Boys and girls had opposing opinions about the way they were treated by their teachers. Boys would say that the teachers are biased toward the girls and girls would say that teachers are biased toward the boys. From their stories, the researcher concluded that boys and girls depend on certain stories and base their judgments on them. For example, the girls were reporting stories such as this one:

Well, one, I think they [the teachers] think we need to be separated, and two, this school [teachers and principal] is always like, “Serve them [the boys] first, serve them first, serve them first.” And I'm not trying to say anything to offend anyone, but I think it's just their mentality [teachers' mentality that boys are better than girls], it's just the way they are. (A-9g: 490)

Another girl reported the following story about how male teachers are sometimes biased toward the male students,

I was standing in line with the girls, and all the boys had already gone, and four boys came up to get their lunch and the male lunch person, who was giving the lunch, would have let the girls go, but they had, he [the male lunch teacher] was saying: have the boys go, but one of the guys was making a fuss to let them go, and he let them go first. (A-9g: 496)

In addition, the boys reported several stories pointing out that teachers are biased toward girls. One story goes as follows,

For one, if some of us are talking, like me and another boy for instance, if we're talking, then she'll like, look over at us, which is what she's supposed to do, but...if all the girls are talking, she'll just look at them and then shrug and go on. (A-9b: 228)

Another story illustrates a boy's perspective of the claimed teacher bias towards girls:

Yeah, and he knows that the injustice is going on between girls and boys, how girls are being treated better. And so, there was this one instance where my brother was punished because he was chewing gum, and this other girl got it, and she was chewing gum too, so he went to the board, and he [complained to the teacher] that, 'I [my brother addressing the teacher] see this girl smacking her lips all the time with gum in her mouth. And then, I only chewed the gum once, [but she is not punished]'. (A-9b: 875)

Cultural differences between students and staff. This school serves a primarily African-American community that includes new converts to Islam as well as many who were born Muslims. This combination has an effect on the school's culture, students'

interaction with each other, and students' interaction with teachers. As the principal told the researcher, 50% of the school population is African-American. The school also has other races, such as Hispanics and Arabs, among students and teachers.

The researcher, upon talking with the principal about the different percentages of different races of student population in the school, noticed that 75% (according to the principal) of the students don't know the Arabic language according to the principal, which is the basic language to learn in order to understand Islamic teachings as taught by the prophet. This is a great challenge to many students and affects their grades and their attitudes towards other students and teachers, because they feel like they are lower achievers among Muslims. A student expressed his frustrations by saying, "We learn Qur'ān, but we don't ever learn the English reading of it. Yeah, all we do is learn to memorize. It's like, memorizing the Qur'ān, but what good is memorizing it if you don't know how to read it or don't even know what it means?" (A-9b: 31). Another female student expressed her feelings towards the problem of not knowing Arabic by stating,

We get to learn the Qur'ān, and, because a lot of us are Americans, we don't have the Arab background so we can't...just open it up and start reading it and go and understand it ourselves. We have the opportunity to learn, to memorize, to understand, to practice, to teach the Qur'ān in Arabic. (A-9g: 62)

However, another student supported the same point by reporting the following story: "One thing is, some of us in Qur'ān or Arabic class, we're not good at it, and they give us a letter grade for it, and it brings down our GPA. And it holds you back if you fail a grade" (A-8b: 660). On another occasion, the students reported specific incidents to the researcher relating how their background as African-Americans had a negative effect on

the way teachers judged their behavior at school. The students (who were mostly African Americans in this specific focus group) explained that wearing certain colors indicated to the teachers that they belonged to a certain African-American gang. The students reported,

B1: They also, this is something that is messed up. They complain about what we wear under our clothes. Like under our school shirts, we're wearing a red shirt, or green, or something, or some color they don't like, they'll complain.

B2: Because they'll think we're part of a gang or something. The Bloods and Crypts.

B1: Or if we have a picture and they can see it through our white T-shirt, or even if they can't, if they even see a vague shape or anything. (A-9b: 961)

The principal himself stressed these issues related to the students' background by illustrating some of the families' concerns about their children and their future. The principal reported this example,

Now that's what I'm talking now. Most African-American families are new Muslims. That's why I appreciate [it when] the parents came in and say: "Dr. Jitmoud, I don't want my children to be like me when I was in (jail)." So they put every effort to put their children in Islamic school. So they came with money that makes noise...[money they saved]... to bring their kids to school. They want their kids to be called Islamic [behave Islamically]. That's why I admire the parents like this. But we lack...in some extent the help in terms of Islam, because they are newcomers to Islam, which we understand. That's why we have to give and take. I have to train the teachers, tell the teachers that some of these parents are very

supportive to Islamic education. That's why I say we try to create understanding and minimize the problem. (A-4P: 309)

The cultural differences among students and teachers also have an effect on their relations. One incident was reported as follows,

B2: And one time, we were doing spelling words, not for spelling, for definitions, and one of the words was subjugate, as in, what did it mean?

B1: To enslave.

B2: Yeah, to enslave, and one of the questions on the test were "Is it right to subjugate illegal aliens?"

B1: And none of us studied, so we didn't know what it meant, so we said yes...

B2: And, I'm not sure, but I think our teacher is Mexican, so she went ballistic. She got really mad....for a while.

B3: She didn't grade anything for a while after that. (A-9b: 560)

Leadership style. The principal of the first school is a non-Arab Muslim from Thailand. Students and parents love him very much. He has a doctoral degree in education. He is very flexible in dealing with teachers and students within Islamic teachings' boundaries. The little boys and girls come to him and give him hugs and kisses whenever they see him in the hall. He is not very strict with punishment and he is easygoing with the students. Some girls in the school wear light makeup, which is forbidden in the other school. Girls also run in the hallway and have some sort of interaction with boys in the classroom and hallway. The principal expressed his feelings toward the girls and why he sometimes treats them differently than boys. He said,

I have four sisters and six brothers all in my family and Allah [God] didn't grant me any daughters. That's why my wife said if Allah gives you girls you probably spoil them. I don't know on this issue, I have to say that...somehow when I see girls I tend to feel...more protective, and kind of be careful of my words when I convey something to them. But for the boy, for the boys, I come to school...I seem to be a strict father at home, so maybe I carry that to school. (A-4P: 287)

Arabs are well known for being very strict with their children, and with others as well, which might give some explanation for why the principal of this school, who is a Muslim but a non-Arab, is more flexible. On the other hand, he tends to be less hard in punishment to students in his school compared with the second school's principal who is an Arab.

In conclusion, differences in teacher–student interaction, in cultural background, and in leadership style to students' treatment and their academic achievement were evident in school 1. The research will describe how these differences contribute to those main factors in the next chapter.

Case 2

The high school only goes up to the 10th grade. The students were interviewed in four focus groups: two focus groups for boys and two focus groups for girls combining for a total of twenty three students (12 boys and 11 girls). Five teachers (1 male and 4 females) and the principal were interviewed one-on-one as well.

Islamic or not? Opinions among students and teachers varied between considering their school a private Islamic school and considering the school either just Islamic or just

private. These different opinions illustrated Islamic ways, school size, and funding as issues related to students' understanding of a private school.

The students of the second school, as with the first school, expressed their opinions about the school being private because of their ability to practice Islamic ways. One focus group of boys expressed their understanding of their school as a private Islamic school as,

B1: Well, we have a dress code. And we learn Islamic stuff, and Qur'ān, and [not what a public school has].

B2: Because it doesn't have the things that a public school has. It has more Islamic teachings.

B3: They don't let the boys and girls mix like different schools.

B: I think it is private because everyone in the school is Muslim. (B-7b: 4)

Another definition of a private Islamic school was given by another student to relate the school size with the schools status of being private and Islamic or not. This opinion is expressed by a boy who said, "Because it's smaller, and you know everyone here, and in the public school, you're not used to [everyone else]" (B-7b: 28).

On the other hand, girls gave a different definition for private and Islamic school than boys'. They added new areas of why they consider their school to be not private. The girls reported,

G1: I think of private schools as really hard to get in [to].

G2: Yeah, private schools are so like, expensive, they're bigger.

G3: They're different.

G4: Here, everyone knows each other. (B-7g: 39)

On the other hand, other girls supported the opinion that they attend a private school because it is not funding and it enforces Islamic teachings. One girl said, “We fundraise for everything. We make our own money; we try to do what we can. I mean there are other Islamic schools, like ISKC, they’re supported by the government right? Well us, we make everything from scratch, that way” (B-8g: 5). Another girl mentioned that,

It’s applied by Islamic law. Actually, they try to incorporate [it] in everyday like studies, whether it’s science, math or biology, they try to remind us of Islamic scholars or people who spoke beforehand or how Islam is connected with whatever we learn or study. (B-7g: 9)

All of the teachers in the second school, as in the first school, agreed that their school is a private Islamic school in all ways. They were in agreement with the principal in their opinion. The principal commented on this issue by explaining,

Technically our school is a private school, because by the technical definition the state we are not a public school and we are a private school. However, we offer our services to the whole community—Muslims and non-Muslims. But statistically speaking, the number of non-Muslims is very limited, a few students.... And they come on their own we don’t ask what religion they are, as long as they are interested in following our curriculum, they are most welcome. (B-1P: 5)

The principal also added, “Yes, they have to wear the Islamic dress, which covers the hair and a long, you know, pants or jelbab [Islamic dress] that covers the whole body

except for the hands and the face” (B-1P: 7). The principal also explained the curriculum setting which makes the school private and Islamic:

We say it’s an Islamic school because we, the government rule in everything and the environmental. We create is Islamic, we add Islamic curriculum. And the Islamic curriculum, part of the Islamic curriculum is to teach math and science. So, if you look at our curriculum it is divide mainly into, the public school curriculum, which is the core curriculum, which is math, science, social studies, English and all these subjects that we have. And then we add to them, the Islamic curriculum, which is Arabic, Qur’ān and Islamic studies. We credit Arabic as a foreign language. We credit Qur’ān as fine arts, believe it or not. Yeah it is a kind of art, where they have to recite, read, and sing. So it is considered a kind of fine arts. And then we credit Islamic studies as religion. Because we offer sometime high school course, for example comparative religion, and so on and so forth, basically as religion. (B-1P: 32)

Teachers agreed with the principal on many of the concepts he addressed that defined the school as a private Islamic school. Some of the teachers expressed that the school is private because of funding, because of the separation between boys and girls, or because of the dress code. One teacher expressed her understanding about the issue by saying, “I think it’s an Islamic school because of the subjects they teach mainly. And the majority of the students who attend are Muslims. That’s my idea of the Islamic school and the fact that they teach Arabic and Islamic studies” (B-6: 7). Another teacher addressed the same topic stating,

Well, my understanding of private school is that [it is] a school [where] you go and pay tuition, that's a private school. And most of the time private schools they have a certain goal that makes them different than the rest of the schools so our difference here is religion. So we are Islamic Private schools, [it's] not necessary [to be] Muslim to be there but they know that they are going to be studying the religion of Islam and they are going to be paying tuition. (B-5: 5)

The same teacher also pointed out, “Well we're not applying the Islamic law, we are teaching Islamic studies” (B-5: 7). Like the first school, the majority of teachers and students in this school agree that the school is a private Islamic school.

Teacher/student interaction. The majority of the second school's teachers are females. Among the six teachers for the high school section, four are females and two are male (including the male principal).

Boys reported that they prefer female teachers because the female teachers treat them better, while the male teachers are very hard and strict with them. One student reported, “I'll prefer a female teacher, because, like, she's not going to be as strict as a male teacher, because, yeah, like, we had a social studies teacher, and he's a male, and he's pretty strict” (B-7b: 127). Boys reported that the male teachers might beat them, as Arabs do with their boys if they misbehave, but the teachers do not beat the girls. They reported another story about the same teacher: “And, like, if one of us gets in trouble, we'll get, like, a beating [laugh]. And the girls, he'll just talk to them. Yeah, he'll just talk to them. You can't hit a girl, man! You know that!” (B-7b: 565).

In addition, students expressed their frustrations toward the relationship with their teachers. The school environment is like the home or the Arabic community—an older

male has the right to punish and reward for misbehavior or good behavior. This Arab male teacher fulfills his cultural role even at school. The students pointed out, “The Islamic studies teacher, if you do something wrong . . . if he hears about it, he’ll come in the class all screaming about it” (B-7b: 1017). On the other hand, he plays the role of a father and treats girls differently, nicely. The boys related an incident about his treatment to them compared to the girls: “He doesn’t yell at them as much as us. Okay, we get out to the court first, the basketball court, we got there first, and the girls want to go play . . . he’ll kick us off” (B-7b: 553).

The girls explained how everyone knows everyone in the school, as if they are all one family, related or not. All the students know each other and the teachers know all the students whether they teach them or not. The girls stated,

G1: There is like, one hall, if you walk around with the little kids, the little kids will come up to you and hug you because they know you and they like you and they know all the teachers, how they are, and like, you know....

G2: It’s because, our school is just like one big family. Everyone knows each other. Like we would be walking in the hall, and I would know who is new. There would be like a new kid in first grade, and we would know this because it...is so small. (B-7g: 49)

The girls also reported that most female teachers favor the boys over the girls.

They mentioned one particular incident about a female teacher:

Sometimes, she would give the boys other advantages because they’re boys.

Because like, like she said, “In Islam, men and women are equal.” They’re just, they’re not equal; you can’t stand up and say men and women are equal because

we're not equal, we just have, we have an equal amount of duties, but we're not equal to each other. (B-7g: 695)

Girls complained about the female teachers, continuously explaining how they feel mistreated by those female teachers. One girl expressed her frustration and said, "The way she makes you feel, yeah, she puts you down, like whatever, you don't have to try so hard, because it doesn't really matter" (B-8g: 453). Girls from the other school had the same problems with female teachers and expressed that male teachers respected them more. The researcher cannot confirm that this favoritism is happening across the whole school because of lack of data to support these claims. The school only has two male teachers, which is not a reasonable number to explain female teachers' actions when they are the majority at the school. These incidents may be isolated and related to one particular female teacher.

Cultural differences among students and staff. The majority of the school population (students, teachers, and the principal) are Arabs. Few students are African-Americans or Indians. Most of the students were raised speaking and learning the Arabic language, which makes it easier for them to learn the Qur'ān and Islamic teachings firsthand. The students' knowledge of the Arabic language may have a positive effect on their academic achievement and their GPAs, which is the opposite of the students' situation in the first school. The researcher noticed that the teachers and the principal are very strict in their treatment of the students. They all share the same Arabic culture and agree that beating a child to make him behave better and learn discipline is something not out of the ordinary to do.

A few students and teachers privately reported that a few students are beaten at school by teachers if they misbehave. The interpretation of the teachers is that the students need to behave according to Islamic teachings and laws and they have to be punished to avoid repeating their misconduct. The students raised in the United States see the situation from another angle, believing this punishment to be an example of brutality and injustice because they see themselves as mature young men and women. In addition, the principal and teachers are very strict with the dress code, especially concerning the girls. Girls can't wear any makeup or any different colors than the uniform. They would be punished for doing so.

Another incident reported by an African-American student, the only one the researcher interviewed at this school, illustrates some teachers' actions towards other races and different cultures. This particular boy expressed how much a particular female teacher hates him, blames him for everything in the class, and gives him bad grades all the time. The researcher was not able to interview this particular teacher as the teacher was not available during the period the researcher conducted the interviews. The boy reported, "She is discriminative to all the boys, but especially me. And . . . sometimes even when I'm not at school and the boys are talking, she calls my name . . . shouts at me and I'm not even in the classroom" (B-8b: 651). It may be that the differences in culture and race have some effect on the interaction between teachers and students who are different from each other. Those cultural differences may be perceived differently by each individual depending on how he or she was raised and the values that were emphasized in his or her life, especially if those teachers and students are newcomers to the United States.

Leadership style. The principal of this school has a doctoral degree in education. He is an Arab born and raised outside of the United States. The principal has a strong personality, is very strict, and abides by Islamic law as much as he can with everyone. The researcher noticed that he was very hard on boys and punished them more than girls. Students feared him and would not joke with him or in front of him.

In addition to his status as the principal of the Islamic school, he is one of the well-known strong Muslim leaders in his community. The principal's social strength is extended to his administration of the school. The community authorized him to raise their children socially and academically, so he carries a burden of responsibility toward the students as if they were his own children.

The principal explained his reason for being strict as for the good of the students. He said, "We [the Arabs] have a certain way [strict] to raise kids. We want them to be committed, and apply the Islamic values. And these values will bring the best of them" (B-P1: 37). The researcher noticed that the students in the second school behave better than the students in the first school, according to Islamic teachings and behavior. The teachers were more serious and strict than the teachers in the first school. This seriousness may be a result of the leadership style of the principal of the school, who extends the authority given to him from the community to his teachers.

Comparison of the Two Cases (Two Islamic Schools)

This section's goal is to present a comparison table (See Table 2) of similarities and differences between the two Islamic schools. This comparison will mainly focus on the main four points of differences and similarities described in the chapter.

Table 2

A Comparison of Similarities and Differences between the Two Islamic Schools

| Factor | School A | School B | Comparison |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| Islamic/Private | Yes | Yes | Same |
| Teacher/Student interaction | Male teachers | Female teachers | Different |
| | Freedom for students | Strict with students | Different |
| | Family relations negative effect | Family relations negative effect | Same |
| Cultural Differences | 50% African Americans | 95% Arabs | Different |
| | Little Arabic language | Fluent in Arabic language | Different |
| | Mostly newly Converts | born Muslims | Different |
| Leadership Style | Muslim, non-Arab Principal | Muslim Arab principal | Different |
| | Flexible | Strict | Different |

Through the differences and similarities presented, Table 3 provides a quick comparison and lays out the basis for the description of the differences between the two schools. These differences and similarities also assist in answering a few of this study's research questions. The similarities in perception of the schools as Islamic schools and in teacher–student interactions in terms of family–community relations will not likely help in explaining differences regarding the research questions. However, differences in teacher–student interactions, culture, and leadership style may provide important perspectives to help explain differences between the schools regarding the research questions, especially the following research questions:

1. How does the advising or career counseling provided to boys and girls in the two Islamic schools in the United States reinforce gender differences?
2. To what extent are certain teachers' different instructional styles related to teachers and students' genders in the two Islamic schools in the United States?
3. How do boys and girls differ in their academic achievement in the two Islamic schools?

Summary

This chapter is included in this study to give a better understanding of the two different settings of the two Islamic schools, the level and differences of student/teacher interaction, cultural differences of the students and teachers, and, most importantly, the leadership styles of the two principals of the two schools. The most important findings describe the different treatment of boys and girls in the two schools. These differences may be related to the teacher's instructional styles, cultural differences, and the principal's leadership style. Students expressed feelings of frustration and unjust treatment. While

students also reported different incidents which were considered negative and which occurred with a certain teacher and a certain student, the incidents were considered isolated and do not represent a general overview of how boys and girls are treated in those two Islamic schools.

Gender discrimination was not systematic within or between the two schools. On the other hand, teachers tried to explain and justify their differential actions toward boys and girls. As an overall reaction, most students expressed their satisfaction in attending the Islamic school which allows them to show their identity and preserve their religious rights in practicing their religion freely.

However, students were very confused in their definition of a private Islamic school. According to literature, Islamic schools are schools that teach Islamic studies and Qur'ān, while some students defined an Islamic school to be a school for Muslims only which includes boys, girls, teachers, and principals, in addition to teaching Qur'ān and Islamic studies. Finally, this description of the two schools adds to the understanding of how boys and girls are educated and treated in these two Islamic schools and may provide the basis for explaining differences related to the research questions.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The focus of this study was to explore and explain how gender plays a role in secondary private Islamic schools in the United States between students (boys and girls), between students and teachers, and between students and principals. This chapter presents the findings and analysis of data in two forms: qualitatively, presenting two main emerging factors that explain the gender roles playing out in the two Islamic schools for this study; and quantitatively, presenting students' grades and academic achievement and their relationship with gender. However, given the description of the two Islamic schools in Chapter Five, and for the sake of focusing the findings of this study, this chapter will mainly address the two research questions that are most closely related to the findings of school similarities and dissimilarities. Those research questions are the following:

1. To what extent are teachers' different instructional styles associated with student genders in the two Islamic schools in the United States?
2. How do boys and girls differ in their academic achievement in the two Islamic schools?

Qualitative Findings: Two Main Factors

Making decisions about when and what to report is difficult for researchers perusing a case study format. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) agree with this difficulty by reporting:

The case study researcher faces a strategic choice in deciding how much and how long the complexities of the case should be studied. Not everything about the case can be understood, how much needs to be? Each researcher will make up his or her own mind. (p. 238)

Therefore, the researcher focused on two main factors in her analysis of the two schools for this specific study. The first main factor is equal treatment, which includes equal access to facilities, equal treatment for boys and girls inside the classroom, and equal treatment for boys and girls outside the classroom. The second main factor is academic achievement, which includes both boys' and girls' academic achievement in general, academic achievement due to individual student effort, and differences between boys' and girls' academic achievement.

The following sections illustrate results and findings for each factor. The researcher followed a three-step analysis strategy outlined, according to Denzin's and Lincoln's (1994) discussion about "...decisions made, both within and across cases" (p. 439). The three analysis steps include: Analysis within case 1 (school A), analysis within case 2 (school B), and analysis across cases, which is a comparison between the two cases to find differences or similarities. Denzin and Lincoln illustrated the concept and stated: "Cases in a set are inspected to see if they fall into clusters that share certain patterns or configurations" (p. 436). This strategy of analysis is used for each factor discussed in this chapter.

Tables 3a and 3b present the findings of the two main factors in the two schools. The findings reported in Table 3 for the first main factor, equal treatment of boys and girls in general, indicate that students have equal access to facilities in both schools, and that in the treatment of students inside and outside the classroom it is not clear whether boys and girls are treated equally or not. Findings for the second main factor, academic achievement, are also reported generally in Table 3b and indicate that girls are excelling more than boys in both schools, and that most students agreed that high academic

Table 3a

*Two Main Factors of “Doing Gender” in Private Islamic Schools:**Equal treatment of boys and girls*

| Factor | # of respondents | | | # of passages | | |
|--|------------------|----------|-------|---------------|----------|-------|
| | School A | School B | Total | School A | School B | Total |
| Equal access to facilities | 9 | 10 | 19 | 27 | 25 | 52 |
| Yes | 8 | 9 | 17 | 18 | 17 | 35 |
| No | 2 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| No response | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Treatment of boys inside the classroom | 11 | 10 | 21 | 116 | 1 | 117 |
| Equal with girls | 11 | 9 | 20 | 70 | 43 | 113 |
| Not equal with girls | 6 | 9 | 15 | 0 | 81 | 81 |
| No response | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Treatment of girls inside the classroom | 11 | 10 | 21 | 103 | 122 | 225 |
| Equal with boys | 11 | 9 | 20 | 66 | 33 | 99 |
| Not equal with boys | 10 | 9 | 19 | 33 | 47 | 80 |
| No response | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Treatment of boys outside the classroom | 9 | 9 | 18 | 57 | 37 | 94 |
| Equal with girls | 6 | 8 | 14 | 10 | 5 | 15 |
| Not equal with girls | 7 | 6 | 13 | 10 | 13 | 23 |
| No response | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Treatment of girls outside the classroom | 9 | 10 | 19 | 46 | 36 | 82 |
| Equal with boys | 8 | 7 | 15 | 12 | 10 | 22 |
| Not equal with boys | 8 | 7 | 15 | 25 | 17 | 42 |
| No response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 3b

*Two Main Factors of “Doing Gender” in Private Islamic Schools:**Academic Achievement*

| Factor | # of respondents | | | # of passages | | |
|---|------------------|----------|-------|---------------|----------|-------|
| | School A | School B | Total | School A | School B | Total |
| Boys' academic achievement | 11 | 10 | 21 | 111 | 86 | 197 |
| Good | 7 | 6 | 13 | 25 | 4 | 29 |
| Poor | 10 | 9 | 19 | 37 | 31 | 68 |
| No response | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Boys and girls differ in their academic achievement | 9 | 10 | 19 | 45 | 39 | 84 |
| Yes | 7 | 9 | 16 | 23 | 24 | 47 |
| No | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| No response | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Individual student effort | 9 | 9 | 18 | 27 | 17 | 44 |
| Yes | 5 | 7 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 21 |
| No | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No response | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Girls' academic achievement | 11 | 10 | 21 | 115 | 65 | 180 |
| Good | 11 | 10 | 21 | 44 | 22 | 66 |
| Poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No response | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

achievement is due to individual student effort. In addition, Appendix C illustrates the definitions of the main and sub-factors used in the analysis.

Equal Treatment of Boys and Girls

This factor means that boys and girls should be treated equally inside and outside the classroom in the school (see Appendix C for factor definitions). In addition, this factor also assists in explaining different themes related to the three research questions which deal with different gender roles of teachers and students, different teachers' instructional style, and explaining how such treatment may have an effect on boys' and girls' academic achievement. The main theme of this main factor is explaining and describing if boys and girls get equal treatment from teachers and principals in different settings and different occasions. Therefore, this section was divided into three sub-factors. The researcher presents each of the three sub-factors separately, supported with a table to help clearly illustrate the results.

Equal access to facilities. Equal access to facilities means that boys and girls have the same access to school facilities in the same manner (see Appendix C for factor definitions). The results the researcher obtained regarding whether boys and girls have equal access to facilities at the two schools are shown in Table 4. School A indicates that boys and girls have equal access to school facilities. The majority of respondent groups from school A (two-thirds of respondents or two respondent groups), confirmed this finding. A pattern of agreement on equal access is found in both the teachers' and the girls' responses. Boys reported on cases of equal and unequal access equally; they had no clear pattern either way.

Table 4

Boys' and Girls' Access to Facilities in School: Equal or Not?

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | Yes | 4 (57%) | 1 (50%) | 2 (100%) |
| | No | 1 (14%) | 1(50%) | 1 (50%) |
| | N/R ^a | 2 (29%) | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern ^b | equal access | none | equal access |
| School B | Yes | 5 (83%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | No | 2 (33%) | 1 (50%) | 1 (50%) |
| | N/R | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | equal access | equal access | equal access |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

School B also indicates a clear pattern of equal access across all respondent groups. All respondent groups responded that boys and girls have equal access to facilities. One of the girls reported: “Yea, it’s equal. Girls have their own team and guys have their own team, so I think we both have access to it [gym, or the playground] the same” (B-8g: 333). In addition, one of the teachers commented on this saying: “They have the computer lab. They [boys and girls] both go down at the same time” (B-6: 109).

A cross case analysis of the results gathered from the two schools suggests a pattern of equal access to facilities being provided for boys and girls at both schools. This finding is not consistent with recent literature, such as studies conducted by Coombs (1994) and Fennema (1990), which suggest that boys and girls frequently do not have equal access to facilities.

Treatment of boys inside the classroom. Treatment of boys inside the classroom was defined as how teachers responded to boys’ questions and answers compared with how teachers responded to girls’ questions and answers in the same classroom. A comparison of how teachers punished/rewarded boys versus girls according to their behavior inside the classroom was also taken into consideration (see Appendix C for factor definitions). Results obtained for this sub-factor are shown in Table 5. School A indicates a pattern of equal treatment of boys and girls inside the classroom. The majority of respondent groups (two-thirds or two respondent groups) confirmed this finding. All teachers and all girls indicated a clear pattern of equal treatment of boys compared to girls inside the classroom, while boys provided no clear pattern as to whether they are treated equally with girls or not. Both boys’ focus groups addressed the issue by saying the same

Table 5

Treatment of Boys inside the Classroom

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | equal w/girls | 7 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | unequal w/girls | 3 (43%) | 2 (100%) | 1 (50%) |
| | N/R ^a | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern ^b | equally w/girls | none | equally w/girls |
| School B | equal w/girls | 6 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 1 (50%) |
| | unequal w/girls | 6 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 1 (50%) |
| | N/R | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | none | none | none |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

thing. All boys talked about equal treatment during classroom instruction, reporting, “If we’re talking, he tells the boys to be quiet, but he’ll probably tell the girls as well” (A-8b: 664).

However, all boys reported unequal treatment for punishments: “And they blame the boys over the girls when stuff happens in the school” (A-9b: 467). School B indicated no clear pattern across all respondent groups. However, all teachers stated that they gave equal treatment to boys and girls when punishing the students. One teacher pointed out:

But I have a warning policy and they get a warning if they cuss, if they yell in class, if they misbehave. [For] certain things I give them a warning. And if they get a warning three times then they’re not allowed to go on the field trip. But it applies to all of them [boys and girls]. (B-6: 231)

All teachers also talked about unequal treatment regarding praise for students. They explained that they praise boys more than girls to encourage them to do better, as their academic achievement is comparatively lower than the girls’. One teacher reported:

Because they [boys] barely talk and they barely answer the questions, so when they answer a question or they give a comment you feel like, “Oh, I love it, they did something good. I have to praise them, to encourage them.” But the girls they don’t need that much encouragement because they speak out very well. (B-3: 218)

Unlike the teachers, the boys indicated no clear pattern. To them, equality and inequality depends on different factors such as grading homework and punishment, other than a simple “yes, we are treated equally” or “no, we are not treated equally.” All boys talked about equal as well as unequal treatment with girls inside the classroom regarding punishments at the same time. They answered both having equal and unequal treatment

compared to girls in their classroom, which made it very difficult for the researcher to confirm a pattern of either equal or unequal treatment of boys compared to girls inside the classroom. For example, one boy expressed equal treatment by pointing out: “They look at us just like the same type of people. They treat us the same” (B-8b: 1877). Another boy expressed equality in treatment by saying:

If you raise up your hand and if you did, he’ll [the teacher] tell you, like, “Stand up,” and then if the girls didn’t do it, he’ll tell them to stand up. The teacher...treats us equally. And then, like, if you did something, like, real bad, he says, “Go stand in the basement.” And if a girl did it, he’ll tell them the same thing. But they’ll be, like, in separate places, like, in the computer lab. (B-7b: 1263)

All boys also talked about unequal treatment regarding their homework and organization. A particular incident was reported by one boy, and the rest of the boys in the focus group supported his story. The boy reported:

And so she took my notebook, and took another girl’s notebook, and compared our notebooks, and she made me stop in front of the whole class, and she was staring at me, and she was saying how horrible my notebook was, and how unorganized it was. I ran to my other classroom and cried. (B-8b: 1209)

There is no clear pattern of equal or unequal treatment of boys inside the classroom across the two cases. On the other hand, boys’ responses presented a negative case in School A, while the girls’ and teachers’ responses indicated a pattern of equal treatment.

Treatment of girls inside the classroom. Results obtained for this sub-factor are shown in Table 6. This sub-factor means how teachers responded to girls' questions and answers compared with how teachers responded to boys' questions and answers in the same classroom as well as the punishment/reward of girls, compared to boys, for their behavior inside the classroom (see Appendix C for factor definition).

On one hand, school A indicates no clear pattern of equal or unequal treatment of girls compared with boys inside the classroom across all respondent groups: teachers, boys and girls. That is, some respondents indicated equality while others indicated inequality. For example, one teacher indicated equality as she described grading home work tests: "I ask them the same questions and I give them the same work, the same amount of work...It's not even a concern for me. If you are a boy, girl, or something I don't even know, if you are from outer space, I don't care" (A-1: 186). On the other hand, all teachers also expressed their thoughts about unequal treatment especially in terms of their preference for girls over boys with behavior. One of the teachers reported: "I told you [the researcher] it is not liking [girls more than boys], I say, I prefer girls. Why? Because they are more obedient, they are kinder, they are gentle, you see they do their homework and so on like this" (A-3: 167). However, no clear pattern is found in the teacher responses at school A.

Among the boys, the responses were mixed. All boys reported that girls are treated better and that the boys are blamed for problems all the time. For example, one boy reported: "And they [teachers] blame the boys over the girls when stuff happens in the

Table 6

Treatment of Girls inside the Classroom

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|--------------|----------|----------------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | equal w/ boys | 7 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | unequal w/ boys | 6 (86%) | 2(100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | N/R ^a | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern ^b | none | none | none |
| School B | equal w/ boys | 6 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 1 (50%) |
| | equal w/ boys | 6 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | N/R | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | none | none | unequal w/boys |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

school” (A-9b: 467). On the other hand, other boys expressed equal treatment in punishments given. One boy reported: “They both get the same punishment” (A-8b: 684).

Even among the girls, the responses were mixed. They talked about unequal treatment inside the classroom with regard to being given more chances in answering the questions. A girl reported:

Sometimes they will give more time to the boys just because there are more boys in our class than girls and, I don’t know, they might, they can assume that we already know the answer to the question, so they’ll let the boys have a chance. (A-9g: 603)

Yet girls also added that they are treated equally inside the classroom when they are assigned homework. One girl reported:

Also, the same homework assignments, and both sides were, you know, if you don’t stop talking, I’ll give you guys more homework, they won’t say okay, well you girls do it, the boys weren’t talking that much. So, she would just say, have the whole class do the assignment. (A-9g: 629)

For school B, the results are the same as school A, across two-thirds of the respondents. There is no clear pattern of equal or unequal treatment of girls compared to boys inside the classroom across the focus groups of teachers and boys. Both teachers and boys talked about both equal and unequal treatment. An example of unequal treatment is that teachers treat girls differently than boys in teaching human biology. The principal explained this by saying:

They study the female and male biology. They study it again with a male teacher, and they go over details. But they need some kind of privacy and no

embarrassment. The girls would do the same thing, they study with a female. It does satisfy the needs. (B-1P: 169)

Yet teachers also talked about equal treatment with regard to rewarding, praising, and punishing both boys and girls. A teacher said:

For praising, I praise both the same, ok, and I have lots of ways to, umm, this puts spirit in them to keep on working. They have a coupon, they have tickets they have... they take reward, I have lots of things the whole time to make them feel like they are appreciated for what they are doing. (B-5: 460)

The girls' responses, which consisted of one-third of respondents, were an exception to the other informant groups, as they did express a pattern of unequal treatment towards them inside the classroom. One girl reported: "Yesterday he [the teacher] was favoring the boys more than the girls" (B-7g: 681). Another girl also added: "She [the teacher] sees the boys chewing gum in class, she'll be like, 'Go throw it out.' If she sees me, she will launch me [ask me to stand] at the door of the classroom" (B-7g: 689).

Comparing the two cases, there is no clear pattern of equal or unequal treatment towards girls compared with boys inside the classroom among any of the informant groups. The finding of no pattern across the two schools might be due to different teacher/student interactions inside and outside the classroom as discussed previously in Chapter Five, which indicated that different teachers interact and treat boys and girls in different ways. Thus, interactions may be based more on the style or personalities of the specific teachers than on any pattern of gender play. In addition, the different cultures of students and teachers might also be a reason why there was no clear pattern in this case.

Some students might have interpreted a teacher who is strict to be a teacher who is mistreating them according to their understanding; on the other hand, a teacher being nice to students might be interpreted as being nice to some and not to all.

Treatment of boys outside the classroom. This sub-factor means whether boys are treated equally or differently than girls outside the classroom (see Appendix C for factor definition). Table 7 illustrates the results for this sub-factor. From Table 7, one can see that school A has no clear pattern across all respondent groups: teachers, boys and girls. Most teachers gave more than one response; they had cases for both equal and unequal treatment of boys outside the classroom. All respondents (three respondent groups) pointed out different factors in answering both yes and no.

One area in which respondents indicated that boys and girls are treated equally was in using the gym and playing on school property. The principal explained this by saying:

Yes, we do have equal opportunity to use the gymnasium or the library and cafeteria, and computer labs. But it seems like the girls utilize the gymnasium more than boys because we have 14 acres in the open field so we utilize the open field for boys more than girls, but of course they have equal chance. (A-4P: 153)

One area where teachers talked about issues of unequal treatment was that boys are disadvantaged because differences exist in extracurricular activities for boys and girls.

One of the teacher's comments was,

No. I would say the girls have a lot more access in this particular school. I don't know about other schools, but...our staff, as you know, is predominately women, and so when we start extracurricular activities, a couple of them, like public achievement, and I teach drama, those are mixed gender. But all the sports and

Table 7

Treatment of Boys outside the Classroom

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|--------------|----------|----------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | equal w/ girls | 7 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | unequal w/ girls | 6 (86%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | N/R ^a | 1 (14%) | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern ^b | none | none | none |
| School B | equal w/ girls | 4 (65%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | unequal w/ girls | 5 (83%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | N/R | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | none | none | none |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

other activities are separated by gender and so the people who get those things started are female teachers, and so of course they get them started for the girls.

(A-6: 99)

Boys agreed with the teachers on this issue. They said that girls would be given more chances to play outside. One boy reported: “[Teachers] just start getting angry; they’ll say it’s the boy-girl ratio. There’s much more boys than girls. So, it’s more likely they’ll let them slide” (A-9b: 467). Girls, on the other hand, generally reported that they are treated equally with boys outside the classroom when they use the gym. The girls all agreed with their friend when she said: “We use the gym equally: Two days for girls, and two days for boys” (A-8g: 386). This example illustrates the fact that there was no clear pattern regarding perceptions of treatment of boys outside the classroom, as both perspectives were prevalent.

School B had no clear pattern either. Both equal and unequal treatment of boys outside the classroom occurs, depending on the situation. Respondent groups indicated that they are treated equally in sports. One teacher explained: “They’re doing these basketball tournaments and football tournaments and they have the basketball for the girls and they’re doing the football for the boys. So, as far as I see, I think it’s pretty much the same” (B-6: 105). Boys expressed equal treatment during lunch. They explained that the teachers serving lunch hand out the same plate whether the student is a boy or a girl. One boy said: “They just put it on the plate and just hand it over” (B-7b: 606). Girls also expressed their opinions about gender equity in the school and framed their answers by saying: “It’s not a problem and there’s gender equity in the school; nobody feels left out and it’s just normal” (B-8g: 119).

Yet boys contradicted themselves when they reported unequal treatment during recess on the playground. They said:

B1: He doesn't yell at them [girls] as much as us.

B2: Okay, we get out to the court first, the basketball court, we got there first, and the girls [want] to go play . . . he'll kick us off . . .

B3: All they [got] to do is (tip with us) and he'll kick us off. Let them have it.

B1: He'll take us off the court. (B-7b: 553)

Girls supported boys' feelings of unequal treatment in extracurricular activities.

The girls also reported opposing perspectives:

Like for instance, we were working on the yearbook and like all of the girls are inside working on the yearbook and all of the guys are outside playing. "Oh, well just forget it they're not going to do anything anyway." She doesn't even try to get them in there. Then there'll be like one boy out of all of them that is working and she doesn't even give him recognition. She just excludes him. She puts up with all of the rest of the boys. (B-8g: 543)

The pattern is not clear across the two cases, and the researcher concluded that there is no pattern across the two schools or across all of the respondent groups.

Treatment of girls outside the classroom. This sub-factor means whether girls are treated equally or differently than boys outside the classroom (see Appendix C for factor definition). Results obtained for this sub-factor are found in Table 8. The results suggest that school A has no clear pattern at all across all respondent groups when they were asked about the treatment of girls outside the classroom. All respondents (three respondent groups), teachers, boys and girls, gave mixed answers and reported different cases for each question.

Table 8

Treatment of Girls outside the Classroom

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|--------------|----------|----------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | equal w/ boys | 7 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | unequal w/ boys | 6 (86%) | 2(100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | N/R ^a | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern ^b | none | none | none |
| School B | equal w/ boys | 4 (67%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | unequal w/ boys | 5 (83%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | N/R | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | none | none | none |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

The stories told by teachers, boys, and girls, were the same stories told when they were asked about the treatment of boys outside the classroom, though the girls gave a new story about unequal treatment during extracurricular activities. They reported:

I think it's like, if you see a boy coming, if we have a weekend affair here at the school, and they come in wearing jeans and a t-shirt and stuff, they'll say, "Okay." But they see a girl in something other than a hijab [veiled] or something that they personally wouldn't choose for us to wear, then they're a "bad Muslim" and they're a "rebel" and oh my God, "You have to go do something about your daughter." (A-9g: 474)

School B has the same results. No clear pattern is evident across all respondents. Teachers, boys, and girls reported and answered both questions by repeating the same stories and incidents cited for the treatment of boys outside the classroom. One teacher explained that she doesn't give girls and boys the same chance to use the bathroom for reasons she explained as follows:

I think I would let the boys more than the girls go to the bathroom, in some occasions and in other occasions I let the girls to go more than the boys. No, I don't think I treat them same because if I know for girls, they have a different situation I allow them to go. The boys actually don't ask to go to the bathroom, more of them. So when they ask I know that they really need to go. The girls, sometimes they go to the restroom to fix their skirt or to look at their faces or she will tell her friend... "I'll see you in the bathroom in five, six seconds." One of them goes and then a second one asked to go, so they will talk about something. So I usually allow the boys more to go. (B-3: 336)

The conclusion across the two cases is that there is no clear pattern of gender equality or inequality in either school for the treatment of girls outside the classroom.

In summary, this main factor of equal treatment of boys and girls described how boys and girls did have equal access to the same available facilities at their schools. However, no clear pattern existed regarding whether boys or girls were equally or unequally treated compared to each other by teachers outside the classrooms. All boys and all girls answered that they were both treated equally and unequally compared to each other outside the classroom. They reported the occurrence of both situations, which resulted in no clear pattern for either equal or unequal treatment.

On the other hand, this main factor may address the first research question regarding how the different teachers' instructional styles may be associated with the potential gender discrimination based upon differential treatment of boys and girls inside the classroom. No clear pattern existed across both schools as each school demonstrated a different pattern. In School A, both teachers and girls indicated that boys were treated equally to girls inside the classroom, suggesting the lack of gender discrimination (although boys at this school did not demonstrate a clear pattern either way). Thus, the data from School A suggests that teachers' instructional styles were not associated with gender discrimination. In School B, the only pattern found was that girls indicated that they were not treated equally with boys inside the classroom. Thus, the data from School B may indicate the possibility of teacher's instructional styles being associated with gender discrimination due to differential treatment based upon gender. As a result, the conclusion that gender discrimination may have an effect on girls' academic achievement in school B may warrant further examination.

Academic Achievement

The academic achievement of boys and girls refers to whether their academic achievement is good, poor, or whether boys and girls are achieving differently (see Appendix C for factor definition). This main factor includes four sub-factors: boys' academic achievement, girls' academic achievement, how boys and girls differ in their academic achievement, and individual student effort. The data regarding academic achievement provides a basis to address the research question about whether boys and girls in the two Islamic schools differ in their academic achievement. Please refer to Table 3b for general results and to the following separate tables for results on each sub-factor.

Boys' academic achievement. This sub-factor explores whether boys excel and achieve better grades than girls (see Appendix C for factor definition). Table 9 illustrates the findings for this sub-factor. According to the table, school A has no clear overall pattern, because both teachers and girls gave answers in both directions. For example, one teacher said that boys and girls are performing at the same level in his school: "Boys and girls are performing the same in my school, well" (A-2: 240). While not all course subjects were mentioned, the girls explained that boys do better than them in math. One girl said: "And of course you can't say that there aren't any women who are good in math, because you know that's not true, but the majority I would probably say that boys are better than girls in math" (A-9g: 288). On the other hand, one of the teachers commented that girls are doing better than boys in his math and science class, the teacher said:

I think girls [are doing better]. If I gave you the answer it probably would not be fair because I only teach math and science. And from what we know in research, girls perform better in liberal arts and others [other subjects] and boys perform

Table 9

Boys' Academic Achievement

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|--------------|----------|---------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | good | 4 (57%) | 2 (100%) | 1 (50%) |
| | poor | 7 (100%) | 1(50%) | 1 (50%) |
| | N/R ^a | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern ^b | none | good | none |
| School B | good | 2 (33%) | 1 (50%) | 1 (50%) |
| | poor | 6 (100%) | 1 (50%) | 1 (50%) |
| | N/R | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | poor | none | none |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

better in mathematics. Now, in my class I'm teaching only math and science. I'm teaching one science and two math classes, and science is full of math and the girls in general do much better than the boys in my class. (A-1: 67)

However, the boys' responses did indicate a pattern that boys' had better academic achievement than girls.

School B had no pattern across boys' and girls' responses regarding boy's academic achievement being better than girls. Girls had no clear response as they pointed out that it likely depended upon a variety of factors. For example, one girl indicated that: "In some cases, girls are [going] to be better than boys and in others, boys are going to be better than girls. And it's just a given" (B-8g: 275). Boys also did not indicate a clear pattern of response about boy's academic achievement being better than girls. In some cases, they didn't really indicate that academic differences actually existed although they tried to think about why such differences might exist. For example, in a focus group, one response was:

B 1: You know, boys have, like, a lot of other things to do, but the girls . . . I don't know, I just can't explain it.

B 2: Some people say, like, the boys, like, have their brains open or something, and the girls...

B 3: No, they say, like, boys think with half their brain, and girls (use) both sides of their brain.

B 2: Yeah. That's true. (B-7b: 172)

On the other hand, teachers demonstrated a clear pattern that boys' academic achievement is poor in comparison to girls. One of the teachers reflected the thoughts of

the other teachers in the following comment: “ Boys really, academically they are not doing as good as girls in our school” (B-4: 385).

Overall, there is no clear pattern across the two schools as the majority of respondents gave varying responses. Thus, the only pattern regarding boys’ academic achievement can be described as that at these schools no clear perception existed that boys performed academically better or worse than girls.

The researcher explains the presence of no pattern in the two schools as possibly being due to factors described in Chapter Five, mainly the cultural differences between teachers and students. As described previously, half of the student population in school A are non-natives in Arabic which caused a problem for all students in the grades obtained from Qur’ān and Islamic studies. As those students explained, they do memorize the two subjects without understanding the meanings, which results in getting lower grades, which affects their total GPA and would likely result in lower academic achievement equally across genders.

Girls’ academic achievement. This sub-factor means whether girls excel and achieve better grades than boys (see Appendix C for factor definition). Results for this sub-factor can be found in Table 10. The pattern is very clear from the results in the table. School A’s pattern is consistent, showing that all three respondent groups agree that the girls’ academic achievement is better than that of the boys. One teacher reported:

I’m teaching one science and two math classes, and science is full of math and the girls in general do much better than the boys in my class. I’m actually teaching math and science for 11th graders....So in that category I have the girls performing in general better than the boys. (A-2: 85)

Table 10

Girls' Academic Achievement

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|--------------|----------|----------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | good | 7 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | poor | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N/R ^a | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern ^b | good | good | good |
| School B | good | 6 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | poor | 0 | 1 (50%) | 0 |
| | N/R | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | good | good | good |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

In addition, boys confirmed the same fact when asked who is performing better in science. One boy stated: “Some girls achieve more than the boys” (A-8b: 309).

School B also shows a pattern, the same result as school A, with all three respondent groups agreeing that the girls’ academic achievement is better than that of the boys. The principal of the school gave an interesting argument for girls’ higher academic achievement than boys. He said:

The girls [achieve higher] in general. The number of girls in the honor list, for an example, are more than the number of boys. It is from my experience is a very consistent during my last 8, 9 years in this school. I would say in general, and it intrigued and has been thinking about it why I even discussed it with some medical doctors. They even said that there are even some logical reasons for that. I asked them and indicated to me that that agrees with some of the research that we do. It seems that they mature much faster than boys. (B-P1: 133)

Boys also argued that girls perform better academically. However, they attributed this higher performance to differences in how they work rather than in their academic potential. One boy stated, “They [the girls] work harder. We’re not trying, but I think we have the same mental capability” (B-8b: 259).

Thus, both schools demonstrated a clear pattern that girls’ academic achievement was higher than that of boys. Therefore, the cross case analysis suggests that there is a perception of a pattern of good academic achievement for girls in both schools.

Boys and girls differ in their approaches to academic achievement. This factor means boys and girls use different approaches to reach high academic achievement. They have different reactions and behaviors (see Appendix C for factor definition). Results for

this sub-factor are found in Table 11. The results suggest a pattern in school A because the majority of teachers and girls agreed that boys and girls have different approaches in their academic achievement. One teacher explained how boys and girls have different approaches and act in her classroom by saying:

I think that boys have more activity [sports] in school than the girls so they [girls] have more time for study and also in the class they [girls] concentrate better and behave better. I think these are many things that help them to be better than the boys. This is not, as a whole, but we have some boys that are better, but I am talking about boys and girls in general. (A-3: 130)

Another teacher had another comment on the same issue of boys and girls using different approaches to their academic achievement, this teacher reported:

Conduct, actually, to be honest with you, all the time, the girls are better, because of the way they behave and they have much less of trouble than boys. Because when you have less trouble, you are focusing more on your academic achievement. When you are in more trouble, you are wasting your time in discipline and other things, which really hold you back from your academics, like boys are doing in this school. (A-5: 83)

The boys, while indicating no clear pattern, attributed differences in approach not to gender but to effort and willingness. For example, boys in the focus groups stated the following:

B1: It depends, see, I mean, people are trying to make that [boys are smarter than [girls] a proven fact about boys and girls, that girls are smarter, that boys are

Table 11

Boys and Girls Differ in their Approaches to Academic Achievement

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | Yes | 7 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 1 (50%) |
| | No | 2 (29%) | 2(100%) | 0 |
| | N/R ^a | 0 | 0 | 1 (50%) |
| | Pattern ^b | boys & girls differ | none | boys & girls differ |
| School B | Yes | 6 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | No | 1 (14%) | 1 (50%) | 0 |
| | N/R | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | boys & girls differ | boys & girls differ | boys & girls differ |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

smarter, but it goes both ways. So you can have a group of girls who are, I don't want to say stupid, but they're not that smart, and boys that they can be stupid or smart. It depends on the influence and their effort [to achieve better].

B2: If the person doesn't want to do the work, and then, they're [the boys] not dumb, they [the boys] just don't feel like doing it. (A-9b: 449)

School B has a clear and unified pattern across all respondent groups. Teachers, boys, and girls all confirmed that boys and girls have different approaches in their academic achievement. One teacher explained how he views different approaches of boys and girls in their academic achievement by saying:

You see, the girls always are more interested in doing things. The boys they are very interested in playing basketball or...anything that you know have a relationship with football and playing outside. But the girls they love, you know, the [computer] lab they are more interested in doing... research on the computer... reading books. Actually the boys don't like these activities. (B-3: 87)

Given that both schools exhibited a pattern, the cross case analysis confirms that boys and girls at these two schools have different approaches to their academic achievement. However, there was no specific agreement as to the specific differences in their approaches.

Academic achievement due to individual student effort. This sub-factor means how hard a student, boy or girl, works in a certain subject to achieve better grades (see Appendix C for factor definition). Results for the last sub-factor in this analysis are found in Table 12. Table 12 suggests that school A has a pattern that academic achievement is

due to individual student effort. Both boys and girls, two-thirds of respondent groups, confirmed this result. Girls also explained that the boys are lazy and don't want to do the work. They said: "A lot of them [boys] would probably rather do something else, because they're more athletic than us and they'd rather play sports" (A-9g: 311). Another girl explained how students' different efforts gives different results. She said:

I think they [boys] have also a desire to study, if you really look at. Take my boys in my class, sometimes they don't even have a desire from inside. We [girls] have something built in us that we want to learn, we want to study, we have like some hunger for studying. But, for them [boys], it's like, you can tell that they're forced, they don't want to do it, that they have no desire to even study. (A-9g: 306)

A boy also comment on the same matter by saying: "Because some people [boys] like to study and some people [boys] don't. I study [so, I do well]" (A-8b: 321). Another boy added: "I like science, because I'm good at it" (A-8b: 217).

School B suggests a pattern of academic achievement being due to individual student effort across all respondent groups: teachers, boys, and girls. A teacher commented on boys' and girls' efforts for their academics by saying: "Girls put more effort in this age than boys. But from what I understand, later on in life, they [boys] will change. Boy will change and they will pay more attention to their... academic life and more than girls do" (B-3: 483). The boys on the other hand reported something else, they said:

B1: Because the boys, they, like, have other things on their minds [other than study], and the girls don't.

Table 12

Academic Achievement due to Individual Student Effort

| | | Focus Groups | | |
|----------|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | Teachers | Boys | Girls |
| School A | Yes | 3 (43%) | 2 (100%) | 1 (50%) |
| | No | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N/R ^a | 4 (57%) | 0 | 1 (50%) |
| | Pattern ^b | none | individual Student effort | individual student effort |
| School B | Yes | 5 (83%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |
| | No | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N/R | 1 (17%) | 0 | 0 |
| | Pattern | individual student effort | individual student effort | individual student effort |

Note. The number of respondents for the two schools is divided as follows: school A has 7 teachers and 4 student focus groups; school B has 6 teachers and 4 student focus groups.

A respondent could have provided more than one response.

^a No Response

^b To be considered a pattern, results/answers need to be a minimum of 2 and at least 50% of respondents.

B2: I think it's also because the girls . . . just, like, apply themselves a lot to study.

B1: Yeah. They . . . they put more effort into studying . . . they work more than boys do. (B-7b: 180)

Girls also had these thoughts on the same matter. One girl said: "The girls are probably doing better [academically] than boys are because boys slack off. Girls put the effort in" (B-7g: 393).

Given that both schools exhibited a pattern, the cross case pattern results also indicate that teachers, boys, and girls think that academic achievement is due to individual student effort. Many respondents agreed specifically that girls in the two specific Islamic schools are putting more effort in their academics, which is helping them to excel more than boys in most subjects and achieve higher grades than boys.

In summary, the results of the qualitative findings address the research questions regarding gender differences in teachers' treatment of students and in students' academic achievement. The findings suggest, based on responses from teachers, boys and girls, that patterns exist in some areas and not in others. These pattern findings are summarized in Table 13. Findings indicated that students all have equal access to facilities. However, no clear pattern emerged, either within or between schools, regarding teachers' treatment of boys and girls inside or outside the classroom. In terms of gender differences in academic achievement, findings indicated a clear pattern both with and across schools that girls' are perceived as having better academic performance. In addition, findings indicated that boys and girls have different approaches to their academic achievement and

Table 13

Summary of Different patterns in school A, school B, and across cases (the two schools)

| Factor | School A | School B | Across cases |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Research Question: To what extent are teachers' different instructional styles associated with student gender in the two Islamic schools in the United States? | | | |
| Boy's and girl's access to facilities in School: Equal or not? | equal access | equal access | equal access |
| Treatment of boys inside the classroom | equally with girls | no pattern | no pattern |
| Treatment of girls inside the classroom | no pattern | no pattern | no pattern |
| Treatment of boys outside the classroom | no pattern | no pattern | no pattern |
| Treatment of girls outside the classroom | no pattern | no pattern | no pattern |
| Research Question: How do boys and girls differ in their academic achievement in the two Islamic schools? | | | |
| Boy's academic achievement | no pattern | no pattern | no pattern |
| Girl's academic achievement | good | good | good |
| Boys and girls use different approaches in their academic Achievement | boys & girls differ | boys & girls differ | boys & girls differ |
| Academic achievement due to individual Student effort | individual student effort | individual student effort | individual student effort |

that academic achievement was based upon individual student effort. The potential conclusion that may be drawn from these findings is that girls, more than boys, may have more effective approaches to their academic performance and also put forth more individual effort

Quantitative Findings: Boys' and Girls' Academic Achievement

The quantitative findings were produced by using the SPSS statistical package, in order to explain and answer the research question: How do boys and girls differ in their academic achievement in the two Islamic schools? The quantitative results were drawn from the entire population of all students within the high school section of the two Islamic schools. Given the multiple variables, a multivariate analysis was the best choice to analyze the results. The researcher used two-way ANCOVA for this analysis to study the effect of gender on academic achievement. This quantitative analysis is descriptive of the population and cannot be generalized beyond the two schools in the study.

Table 14 is a general descriptive statistics table that shows the differences between boys' and girls' means with regard to their overall GPA, as well as their English, and Math GPAs. Table 14 indicates that the girls' mean GPA and English GPA mean is higher than the boys' in both schools. However, mean Math GPA differed by gender across the schools. The boys' mean math GPA is higher than the girls' mean Math GPA in school A, while the girls' mean math GPA is higher than the boys' mean math GPA in school B.

To further examine this question, two-way ANCOVA analysis was performed to test whether differences in mean GPA were significant. In this analysis, the dependent variables were GPA, Math, and English language. The two factors were gender and

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics: Boys' and Girls' Mean GPA

| | Gender | School | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>N</i> ^c |
|------|--------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| GPA | Male | School A | 2.84 | .71 | 14 |
| | | School B | 3.32 | .64 | 17 |
| | | Total | 3.10 | .70 | 31 |
| | Female | School A | 3.12 | .58 | 11 |
| | | School B | 3.56 | .49 | 11 |
| | | Total | 3.35 | .58 | 22 |
| | Total | School A | 2.96 | .66 | 25 |
| | | School B | 3.42 | .58 | 28 |
| | | Total | 3.20 | .66 | 53 |
| Math | Male | School A | 3.00 | .78 | 14 |
| | | School B | 2.94 | 1.19 | 17 |
| | | Total | 2.97 | 1.02 | 31 |
| | Female | School A | 2.90 | .83 | 11 |
| | | School B | 3.40 | .66 | 11 |
| | | Total | 3.15 | .78 | 22 |
| | Total | School A | 2.96 | .79 | 25 |
| | | School B | 3.13 | 1.03 | 28 |

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics: Boys' and Girls' Mean GPA (continued)

| Gender | School | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>N</i> ^c |
|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| | Total | 3.05 | .92 | 53 |
| English Male | School A | 3.06 | 1.02 | 17 |
| | Total | 3.06 | .93 | 31 |
| Female | School A | 3.55 | .52 | 11 |
| | School B | 3.40 | .86 | 11 |
| | Total | 3.48 | .69 | 22 |
| Total | School A | 3.28 | .73 | 25 |
| | School B | 3.19 | .96 | 28 |
| | Total | 3.24 | .86 | 53 |

^c All students grades from grades 8th-10th in both schools are included, whether they participated in the focus groups or not. The total number of students is 53, with 31 boys and 22 girls.

school, and finally the covariate is the grade level. Table 15 distinguishes between boys' and girls' mean GPA (overall, Math and English) and indicates whether girls are doing better than boys or vice versa. Table 15 shows that gender has no significant effect on academic achievement in terms of mean GPA.

Table 15 also indicates that the school had a significant effect on students' overall GPA ($F(3, 46) = 7.023, p = .011$), although not on Math GPA ($F(3, 46) = 0.759, p = 0.338$) or English GPA ($F(3, 46) = .100, p = 0.75$). This finding suggests that students at the two schools performed differentially on overall GPA, with school B outperforming school A. Based upon the differences found between the two schools in Chapter 5 (see Table 3), School B was characterized as having stricter teachers, greater percentage of Arab students, more students fluent in Arabic and more students born Muslims. In addition, school B's principal was both Arabic and a stricter leader. These school differences may be associated with the difference in overall GPA as this indicator of academic achievement would include studies of Islam and Qur'an, which would likely benefit from greater abilities in the Arabic language. On the other hand, math and English GPA would not be as affected by the lack of Arabic language skills.

The interaction factor of gender and school did not show any significant effects on academic achievement. This finding suggests, again, that gender has no significant effect on academic achievement given that while school alone did have an effect, when combined with gender this effect is no longer evident.

Grade level also shows a significant effect on mean math GPA ($F(3, 56) = 4.165, p = 0.047$), although not on mean overall or English GPA. While higher grade level is not directly related to the research question, this factor is included as a control in this analysis

Table 15

Two-Way ANCOVA: Gender, School and Grade-level Effects on Academic Achievement

| Source | Dependent Variable | <i>df</i> | <i>Mean Square</i> | <i>F</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|
| Corrected Model | GPA | 4 | .931 | 2.38 |
| | Math | 4 | 1.31 | 1.61 |
| | English | 4 | .85 | 1.17 |
| Intercept | GPA | 1 | 4.82 | 12.31 |
| | Math | 1 | 13.54 | 16.72 |
| | English | 1 | 9.18 | 12.63 |
| Grade level | GPA | 1 | .06 | .16 |
| | Math | 1 | 3.37 | 4.16*** |
| | English | 1 | 1.12 | 1.54 |
| Gender | GPA | 1 | .85 | 2.18 |
| | Math | 1 | .18 | .22 |
| | English | 1 | 1.74 | 2.40 |
| School | GPA | 1 | 2.74 | 7.02*** |
| | Math | 1 | .61 | .75 |
| | English | 1 | .07 | .10 |
| Gender * School | GPA | 1 | .00 | .00 |
| | Math | 1 | 1.75 | 2.16 |
| | English | 1 | .00 | .00 |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

to ensure that differences found in gender or school were not confounded by the students' grade level.

In conclusion, the quantitative analysis addressed the research question of whether boys and girls differ in their academic achievement in the two Islamic schools. Findings do not suggest that gender was associated with academic achievement, although other school factors may be associated with academic achievement.

Summary

This chapter presented qualitative and quantitative findings to address two research questions. This study first used qualitative analysis to identify patterns that addressed teacher/student interactions related to equality of treatment among boys and girls in the two Islamic schools. Overall, the qualitative findings of this study suggest that boys and girls in the two Islamic schools are treated equally in terms of access to facilities; however, no other gender patterns were evident in terms of equality of treatment inside and outside the classroom. In addition, the qualitative findings also addressed the research question regarding gender effects on academic achievement. Findings indicate patterns of common perceptions among informants, both within and across schools, of higher academic achievement for girls than boys, that boys and girls use different approaches to achieving academic achievement, and that academic achievement is due to individual student effort. Combined, these patterns suggest that girls may be extending greater individual effort and using more successful approaches to academic achievement than boys.

The findings from the quantitative analysis address the research question regarding whether academic achievement varies based upon gender and which gender performs

better. The quantitative findings indicate that while there is a difference in academic achievement by school, no gender effects were found. Thus, the quantitative findings of actual academic performance based on GPA do not agree with the qualitative findings which reflect the perceptions of the informants regarding academic performance.

These findings suggest that while no apparent gender effects actually exist within these two schools, both students and teachers assume gender effects in terms of students' academic performance, academic strategies and academic efforts. While the actual academic performance provides no evidence either way, these perceptions suggest that girls are not disadvantaged by being taught within in a coeducational Islamic school. The difference in academic performance by schools, however, combined with the descriptive differences between the schools (see Table 3 in Chapter 5) suggest that other factors, such as language and culture, may give certain students at an advantage in Islamic school settings.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section is a discussion of gender and education in the context of Islamic education in this study. The second section addresses the five key research questions. The third section explores the contribution of this study to gender research in education and gives recommendations on areas in which the two Islamic schools may be improved regarding gender equality to improve their schools and provide better education for boys and girls. Finally, the fourth section explores and suggests future research.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study and were explored:

1. What gender distinctions operate in the curriculum in the two Islamic schools in the United States?
2. Does the advising or career counseling provided to boys and girls in the two Islamic schools in the United States reinforce gender difference?
3. To what extent are teachers' different instructional styles related to students' genders in the two Islamic schools in the United States?
4. To what extent do teachers reinforce gender differences in classrooms in the two Islamic schools?
5. How do girls and boys differ in their academic performance in the two Islamic schools?

Based upon the findings, however, this discussion will primarily focus on specifically addressing the first, third and fifth research question. While the other

research questions were addressed during data collection, the findings did not warrant further exploration. Thus, this discussion will focus on the role of gender in institutional-level separation of boys and girls, equality of treatment in teacher/student interaction, school culture and academic achievement in the setting of the two Islamic schools.

Discussion

This study is based on two main assumptions about gender roles and differences in Islam and Islamic schools. First, Islam teaches about the existence of gender roles and differences, because males and females are different, yet, second, also reserves equal rights for both in almost all aspects of life, including education. In describing the two schools (see Chapter 5), both schools had clear Islamic influences and practices. This setting suggests that, as supported by Thorne (1993), schools reflect practices in societies. These schools had a clear strategic intent to reflect Islamic society. Given this societal perspective, these schools were expected to reflect and support the gender assumptions of Islam, as described by Thorne's assumption that gender is socially constructed.

Therefore, the researcher expected to see these gender roles played out in the two Islamic schools according to Islamic teachings, for example, the separation of boys and girls inside and outside the classrooms, and yet also see the equality of student treatment. Findings of this specific study indicate that practices did fall along gender lines within the two Islamic schools and were applied in accordance with two main concepts of Islamic teachings and rules: a) the separation of boys and girls inside the classroom and b) equality in treatment between males and females.

Gender and Separation

Regarding separation by gender, in this study, while boys did sit in one group on one side of the classroom, and girls sat in another group on the other side of the classroom, no clear pattern of gender discrimination in terms of treatment emerged from this study.

In an educational setting, gender can play a role in Islamic schools on two levels. Thus, suggested gender differences in this study can be divided into two levels: institutional and individual levels. Level one is between boys and girls, between teachers and students, and between principals and students. Individually, some teachers did not treat boys and girls equally, which is not in harmony with the teachings of the Prophet or the Qur'ān. A few boys and girls were not treated equally in some cases, including receiving the same education from the same teacher. However, these were isolated instances and did not reflect a pattern within or across schools.

Level two is at the institutional and classroom levels. Institutionally, Islamic schools apply gender differences in segregating between boys and girls in the way they are seated and in the absence of interaction between boys and girls inside and outside the classroom. The two schools both implemented gender differences in the structure of their classrooms by seating the students according to Islamic laws and instructions as Islamic law requires segregation between the two genders. Therefore, the finding of this study clearly indicates that gender did play a role at the institutional level, inside the classrooms of these schools.

Gender and Equality of Treatment

The findings suggest that students did receive equal treatment. Gender discrimination in equality of treatment was only reported as isolated incidents (see Chapter Six). In addition, institutionally, boys and girls seemed to be receiving the same

education from the same teachers, using the same curriculum inside the classrooms in the two Islamic schools. These findings suggest that both schools were following the Islamic teachings which call for separation yet equity in treatment. While further investigation in a larger population might result in identifying the existence of gender discrimination against boys or girls. Based on the results of this study, the isolated incidents cannot be used to judge that gender discrimination was occurring or had any effect on the quality of education that boys and girls received in the two Islamic schools.

Gender and School Culture

The school cultures may also have played a role in the potential for the playing out of gender in the educational setting. Gender differences may emerge in different situations. Although Islam calls for and teaches equal rights for both men and women, Muslims do not implement this requirement perfectly. Based on interaction with teachers, students, and principals, the researcher assumes that teachers and principals do their best to treat boys and girls equally inside and outside of the classroom and to give boys and girls equal access to the available facilities in the two schools. The qualitative data from teachers, boys, and girls confirmed this fact as no patterns of inequality of treatment were found within or between schools.

The data did suggest that teachers tried their best to treat students equally inside and outside the classrooms, but sometimes they fail to do so with certain students. While boys and girls did not give a clear pattern about this treatment, boys and girls both confirmed that teachers do try their best, and, in some cases, the teacher is not aware of being unfair unless students express their frustrations. Teachers also suggested that they were aware that they did not always succeed. One unique incident reported by one

student described an unjust treatment toward him by a certain teacher. However, given that this incident was an isolated incident and was not supported by other informants, the data do not support a claim that teachers are unjust in their treatment of boys and girls in the two Islamic schools.

While the school cultures had many similarities in terms of Islamic perspective, however, they differed on several critical dimensions that would be expected to have clear implications for gender and education. First, the schools differed in their potential for teacher/student interactions. Of specific note, teacher gender differed across the schools with school A having mostly male teachers and school B having mostly female teachers. While this raised the potential for differential treatment by teacher gender, no pattern was found to support this situation. Secondly, the schools differed in terms of the freedom granted to students, with school A providing more freedom and school B being more strict. This difference in freedom raises the potential that freedom may be related to student gender, no pattern was found to support this claim.

Cultural differences were also found between the schools in terms of the student characteristics of ethnicity, language and cultural background. School B demonstrated a much higher percentage of Arab students (95%) who were fluent in Arabic and had been born Muslim. The students at this school may be more familiar with Islamic traditions and laws. In terms of gender, then, school B may be expected to be more compliant with Islamic laws of separation and equality. However, given there was no clear pattern of difference between the schools in terms of separation, treatment or academic achievement, the cultural differences between the schools likely do not play a significant role in explaining gender differences.

Another aspect of school culture that differed between the schools was the school principal. In school B, the principal was a Muslim Arab who was quite strict in his leadership style. In comparison with school A, whose principal was non-Arab and much more flexible in his leadership styles, school B may be expected to more closely adhere to Islamic laws regarding gender. However, the lack of differences in treatment and equality between the schools suggests that the leadership style likely did not have a specific effect on gender treatment in the school.

However, while these two schools had clear cultural differences that could be expected to affect gender issues in the school, no argument of association with gender treatment and equality can be made. The qualitative findings either show that neither school had a pattern or that they had the same patterns regarding equality of treatment.

Boys and girls in these two private Islamic schools in the United States are likely similar to boys and girls in other schools in the United States. They too have their own interests, problems, and difficulties. The findings from this study suggest that some gender differences between boys and girls may occur in the two private Islamic schools as they may occur in all schools in the United States, according to different literature such as studies conducted by Sadker and Sadker (1994). This study also shows that while gender may play a role in the two Islamic schools, inequalities occurred only in isolated incidents with some students and teachers. Thus, this study's findings support the second assumption of this study that Muslim girls are getting the same rights and education as Muslim boys.

Gender and Academic Achievement

Findings regarding academic achievement in this study indicate that the girls are perceived as excelling more than the boys within and across both schools. This outcome was suggested in focus groups and individual interviews by the majority of teachers, boys, and girls in the two Islamic schools. This study's qualitative findings support the results of other studies discussed in Chapter Two, such as Arum and Beattie (2000), Halpern (1992), and Klein (1985), which explain that girls do achieve better scores than boys due to their motivation and effort. All respondents, within and across both schools, indicated that the girls' academic achievement was higher than boys. They also indicated that girls had greater individual effort and took different approaches to academic achievement than boys (see Table 11 in Chapter Six).

The researcher, after her interaction with boys and girls during focus group interviews, concluded that girls were determined to prove they are equal to boys in their intelligence and that they can achieve more if they want to. The girls' attitudes challenge the common sayings in their communities that Muslim males always achieve better than females in life in general, and in education in particular. The attitude of the community was the girls' motivation to work harder than the boys, to keep competing with them, and to try to achieve higher than them. The respondents also indicated that girls put more effort into their studies than boys, who had lost interest in schooling or were busy with sports.

Along with this fact, all respondents (see Table 10 in Chapter Six) also indicated that boys and girls differed in their approach to academic achievement in the two Islamic schools. They differ in the way they pay attention inside the classroom, in their

discipline, and in their obedience. The researcher's observations and interaction with students in the two Islamic schools suggest that boys and girls in these two schools also differ in if they are serious towards their future plans and higher education, are on time for classes, accomplish all of their homework, compete for the highest grades, and participate in extracurricular activities.

This qualitative outcome, however, contradicts much of the literature reviewed for this study, especially studies reported by Lee (2002), Haag (2000), Sadker and Sadker (1982), and Brannon (1996). The literature supports the idea of boys excelling in math and sciences and girls excelling in the arts. This literature also supports the idea that girls' possess better verbal skills than boys. However, this study suggests the opposite of this theory: girls were perceived as excelling more than boys in all subjects in the Islamic schools, including math and science.

When this same question is addressed with the quantitative data, however, the findings contrast with that of the qualitative data. While the qualitative data indicated that informants perceived girls to be performing better, the analysis of actual GPA (overall, Math and English) did not support this perception. Indeed, no significant difference existed in actual academic achievement based upon gender.

Research Questions and Findings

For the next part of this chapter, conclusions drawn from the qualitative and quantitative analysis help to answer each major research question independently.

Research questions are explained as follows:

Question 1: What gender distinctions operate in the curriculum in the two Islamic schools in the United States?

Curriculum in the two Islamic schools is almost the same for both boys and girls. Both schools use the state curriculum that is taught in public schools, with modifications and the addition of Islamic studies, including learning the Qur'ān and the Arabic language. The rest of the subjects are the same as any public school in the state, according to the two principals of the Islamic schools and curriculum material collected by the researcher. Boys and girls are taught the same subject material in the same manner delivered by the same teacher in the same classroom (see Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 in Chapter Six).

This study did not find any gender distinctions regarding the curriculum taught to boys and girls, except in one certain subject—biology. Teachers, principals, boys, and girls are satisfied with the separation of boys and girls from each other during the one or two periods when they are taught about the human body and anatomy in biology. They learn about their bodies separately to avoid any embarrassment to teachers, boys, or girls. Girls are taught by a female teacher, and boys are taught by a male teacher. This goes along with Islamic teachings and laws which say to separate boys and girls because of the biological differences they have. Students expressed their relief for this option because they can learn more without any embarrassment caused by the presence of the opposite gender.

Question 2: Does the advising or career counseling provided to boys and girls in the two Islamic schools in the United States reinforce gender difference?

The responses to this question provided by teachers, principals, boys, and girls in the two Islamic schools confirmed that boys and girls are typically advised similarly in most cases when they seek advice. Both Islamic schools lacked the resources to provide a

professional advisor or counselor for their students. Instead, boys and girls seek counsel and advice from their teachers and principals, who provide informal counseling. Students seek advice when they need it, especially regarding issues for their future professions. Girls are more interested in getting advice from teachers than boys, because boys refuse to express their thoughts and goals for the future to their teachers, and because boys fear the teachers for being very strict with them (according to boys). Instead, boys talk among themselves as friends.

Still, in almost one-third of the cases, gender may play a main role in certain male and female teachers' advice to boys and girls. Girls were advised to be wives, and boys were addressed as the "head of the family." This conclusion is suggested according to a few quotes and answers delivered by boys and girls during focus group interviews.

Question 3: To what extent are teachers' different instructional styles related to students' genders in the two Islamic schools in the United States?

Different instructional styles used by different teachers exist in the two Islamic schools of this study. The qualitative analysis of the interviews and focus groups revealed that all school rules are written and everyone in the school abides by them, whether teachers, principals, boys, or girls. But further analysis revealed the presence of the different instructional styles, according to Klein's (1985) and Thorne's (1994) definitions of the hidden curriculum/instructional styles discussed in Chapter Two. Teachers give boys more attention than girls. They also give boys more time to answer questions, and they praise them differently. Those are not written rules, but they were practiced inside the classrooms in the two Islamic schools (see Tables 4 and 5 in Chapter Six).

However, while isolated incidents may suggest otherwise, the valid patterns in the

qualitative data indicated, from both teachers and students, that both boys and girls received equal access to facilities. In addition, no pattern of equality or inequality was found in terms of treatment of boys and girls inside or outside the classroom. Thus, it can be concluded that teacher/student interaction does not seem to be associated with gender in these two Islamic schools.

Question 4: To what extent do teachers reinforce gender in classrooms in the two Islamic schools?

Teachers in these two Islamic schools are likely similar to teachers in other schools in that they have their strengths and weaknesses in teaching and interacting with boys and girls inside and outside the classroom. This study revealed biases and favoritism from some female teachers towards boys and from some male teachers towards girls. Teachers, boys, and girls all addressed this issue and confirmed it on many occasions (see Tables 3,4,5,6,7 and 8 in Chapter Six). Teachers' different instructional styles and behavior reinforced gender differences and gender discrimination towards boys and girls, which ranged from praising them differently, punishing them differently, and advising and counseling them differently, to rewarding them differently, encouraging them differently, and trusting them differently. But all respondents confirmed that teachers otherwise teach both boys and girls similarly, delivering the curriculum material in the same manner.

Question 5: How do girls and boys perform academically in the two Islamic schools?

The answer to this question is the most important finding in this study because it contradicts other studies that support girls being underachievers when compared to boys. Among those studies are those that were conducted by Coombs (1994), Sanders (1997),

and Lee (2002). This study reveals a perception of greater academic achievement of girls over boys. As a group, girls were perceived as excelling while boys are perceived as performing more poorly than girls (see Tables 8,9,10 and 11 in Chapter Six), a pattern that holds both within and across the two schools. However, as indicated previously, although girls have higher GPAs than boys in all topics across both schools (see Table 14 in Chapter Six), these differences were not statistically significant. Thus, no significant difference existed between boys and girls in their actual academic achievement. Still, according to the quantitative analysis, girls are doing at least as well as boys, which was not consistent with some previous literature suggesting poorer achievement for girls.

The only explanation for differences in school achievement was not gender, but rather the specific school which the student attended. Thus, students in school B performed better than students in school A in overall GPA. However, this performance difference did not extend to Math and English. This difference might be explained by differences in school characteristics (see Table 2 in Chapter five). Specifically, students at school B are better prepared with skills of the Arabic culture and language. Therefore, in their studies of Islam and Qur'an, these students would have an advantage over students at school B.

The results found for each research question can be summarized in one major point: gender does seem to play a role in the two Islamic schools in that boys and girls are segregated, and girls are perceived as excelling, which may be attributed to their individual effort and motivation as well as their academic strategies. However, individual differences in treatment by gender and occasional incidences of gender discrimination did not reveal a systemic pattern of gender discrimination in terms of

equal treatment. The practice of segregating boys from girls in Islamic schools, a main characteristic of the role of gender plays in Islamic schools, comes from applying Islamic law, which requires the two genders to be separated in such situations.

Research Contribution

This study is an important contribution to the literature on Islamic education in the United States in general, and to gender studies in education in particular. First, this study is important because it is the first of its kind. Islamic schools and gender discrimination in the United States have not been studied before. The data collected has been used to reveal weaknesses and strengths of the two Islamic schools included in this study, which benefits Islamic education in the United States in general.

In addition, this study also describes that gender roles and differences do exist across both Islamic schools in terms of perceptions of academic achievement as well as the effort and strategies used to accomplish this achievement. These findings may benefit the two schools involved in this study. In other words, even though it was not possible to make generalizations about gender differences in the treatment of the students in either of the schools, there were enough isolated incidences of some differential treatment as to: a) warrant the speculation that gender may play a role in teacher/student interaction and academic performance; and b) require further study of this issue both within in these two schools as well as in a larger population.

The different gender roles enacted by teachers and principals may be contributing to the perception of boys' academic achievement being lower than girls' academic achievement. Teacher/student interaction may also influence the negative attitudes of those boys toward attending those Islamic schools. Two-thirds of the students explained

that they attend the Islamic schools against their will to satisfy their parents. These and other findings can help improve the quality of education in these schools.

Second, the data collection, analysis, and interpretations with theory and literature will help the two Islamic schools to review their educational policies and make improvements for a better education for the students. With a greater understanding of their weaknesses, the schools can provide a better educational environment for Muslim students in their communities. This contribution is important to Muslim educators who try to make Islamic schools unique by providing equal education to boys and girls and helping students to excel academically. Such improvements might encourage a larger number of Muslim students to attend these types of schools.

Third, Muslims who do not implement Islamic teachings and instructions by not providing equal rights to men and women regarding teaching and instruction inside their schools may be encouraging gender differences and discrimination against boys and girls which violate the teachings of Islam. This study describes and suggests that gender discrimination does occur in isolated incidents, both on the personal level with teachers, principals, boys, and girls, and at the institutional level of the school itself through differing expectations for boys and girls.

Fourth, this study contributes to the literature of defining what an Islamic school is. According to this study's results, the definitions given by different students and teachers support definitions of Islamic schools in the literature (see Chapter Three). The schools were described as being Islamic by being safe, drug-and-alcohol-free environments for boys and girls to be educated in, by teaching the Holy Qur'ān and Islamic studies, by having time to pray and learn more about Islam, and by having an Islamic dress code.

Fifth, this study contributes to the field of gender studies in education because it explores a new aspect of gender roles. This study includes an in-depth look at educational gender roles in a religious Islamic context in the United States.=

Future Research

This study opens doors for further investigations in Islamic schools and Islamic education. The following suggestions can be considered for future research:

First, this study was limited to two Islamic schools in the United States; future research could be conducted on a larger scale, including a larger population of Islamic schools in the United States, in order to better generalize the findings and improve Islamic education as a whole.

Second, further investigation and study of perceptions of differences in academic achievement in these two Islamic schools are needed to discover the reasons behind these perceptions. Future research may investigate the factors that may help explain why girls were perceived of as doing better academically than boys in the two Islamic schools, when gender had no effect on boys' and girls' actual academic achievement. This future study may also investigate political and economic issues and explain the relationship between those issues and the affect on academic achievement and perceptions of academic achievement.

In addition, the results of this study contribute to existing literature on boys' and girls' academic achievement; this study indicates that girls in coeducational schools (the two Islamic schools) were perceived as excelling more than boys in the same schools, and according to GPAs were doing at least as well. This contradicts existing literature, including studies by Sadker and Sadker (1982), Byrd (1994), Harker (2000), and Lee (1994), which supports the idea behind girls excelling in single-gender schools and

achieving less than boys in coeducational schools. On the other hand, this study supports studies by Haag (2000) and Sanders (1997), that good academic achievement is due to individual student effort, whether the student is a girl or a boy. However, some of the findings from the qualitative analysis and students' quotes describe that girls are doing as well as boys in science and math in most of the cases (see Table 14 in Chapter Six), which contradicts with literature that supports boys' high academic achievement in science and math compared with girls'.

Third, this study also contributes to gender studies in education by describing gender differences and gender discriminations against girls compared with boys inside the classroom. Results of this study revealed isolated incidents of discrimination against girls and boys when they asked questions, when they were given feedback, and with gender bias in general by different teachers (male or female teachers) in the same classroom. Those results support existing gender differences and gender discrimination literature against girls reviewed in Chapter Two of this study (Sadker & Sadker, 1982).

Fourth, another suggested future research project could explore the effect a parent's level of education and the socioeconomic status of the family have on boys' and girls' choice in attending Islamic schools and their academic achievement in those schools.

Recommendations to the Two Islamic schools

This study has explored and described boys' and girls' education in the two Islamic schools. The findings of this study suggest that girls are perceived as excelling more than boys in almost all subjects, in part likely because of a concurrent perception that most girls are putting forth more individual effort and using more effective academic strategies.

First, the researcher proposes the idea of single-gender schooling for Muslim boys

and girls. Most teachers and the two principals expressed their positive feelings toward this suggestion. Most teachers would love to have only boys or only girls inside the classroom. Boys and girls did not see coeducational schooling as a problem, maybe because they are not aware of the advantages of single-gender schooling. This recommendation is supported by large bodies of literature showing the advantages of single-gender schooling compared with coeducational schooling, (Lee, Marks & Byrd, 1994), (Harker, 2000), and (Haag, 2000).

Second, the findings of this study suggest that most students are living under the stress of becoming good Muslims and behaving according to Islamic teachings and laws. They are trying their best to do so. The researcher suggests that giving Islamic students some freedom outside the classroom without continuous supervision and some space within the Islamic context and boundaries will support their self esteem and encourage them to love school more and be more productive.

Third, the researcher advises the two principals to provide workshops and training sessions for their teachers in different subjects related to teaching methods, gender roles, and other differences. Teachers need to be made aware of difference in treatment by gender and related problems in order to avoid them inside and outside their classrooms, thus enabling them to provide a better learning environment for boys and girls. This training will potentially assist teachers in being more productive and better teachers.

Fourth, the findings of this study suggest that boys and girls need more formal advising and counseling sessions in their schools. The researcher advises the two principals to make employing an appropriate advisor/counselor from both genders a priority. These counselors will be able to work with boys and girls separately and assist

them in solving problems related to their education. The researcher assumes that boys would need more advice and counsel than girls to better understand their needs and fears from the school environment, which is affecting their own perceptions of lower academic achievement compared with girls in the same Islamic school. The researcher suggests a collaborative effort by teachers, principals and students to make their school environment a positive environment where all individuals belonging to the school try to be more productive and efficient within Islamic teaching and laws.

Fifth, the researcher recommends that the two principals, as well as the teachers, of the two Islamic schools involve boys and girls of their schools in more extracurricular activities with other schools. This interaction will emphasize the strength of belonging in an Islamic school and diminish the idea that they are part of a closed environment separated from the surrounding communities. Additionally, their interaction with other teachers and students from other schools will emphasize their citizenship and their belonging to their Islamic school and community in particular, and the American society in general.

Sixth, the researcher also recommends that the principals and teachers advise boys and girls who need help, and provide extra help after official school time in subjects that students feel they are weak in and need more help with. This might be carried on as informal teaching in order to build better relationships and trust between students and teachers, which will positively reflect the way the students view their schooling and academic future.

Summary

This study contributes to studies on gender, differences between boys and girls, and boys' and girls' academic performances. Differences between boys and girls exist, and

different treatment by teachers, boys and girls exists. The leadership and cultural differences among the school's population may also affect the way teachers, principals, boys, and girls treat each other.

Finally, this study illustrates the presence of gender differences in the two Islamic schools, showing how this gender is reinforced in the school. The key finding of perceptions of differences based upon gender should be further explored to understand the potential implications of teacher and student perceptions on their actual gender-related behaviors. The most important recommendation to the two Islamic schools as a result of this research is to apply single-gender education in their schools; have a separate Islamic school for boys only and another Islamic school for girls only, which will benefit boys, girls, teachers, principals, and the community. This study is intended to highlight issues related to gender and education in order for the two Islamic schools to make the necessary changes needed to give the students the best Islamic education possible.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Focus Groups & Interview Questions

Questions for the students focus groups at both schools

Research question 1. What gender distinctions operate in curriculum in Islamic schools in the United States?

1. In your opinion, do you feel your school is a private Islamic school? Why?
2. What are the advantages of an Islamic school education? Why would a young Muslim girl / boy want to come to an Islamic school? Why not?
3. What is it like to be in the same classroom with boys / girls?
4. What classes are most favorite for you? Why? Do you think you would learn more interesting things in an American public school? Why?
5. Research says that “Girls are much likely to be less achiever in schools compared with boys in certain topics.” What do you think? Why?
6. What would you say to someone who thinks boys are smarter than girls?
7. From your experience in attending school, how would you compare the access of boys and girls to the school different facilities?

Research question 2. How does the advising or career counseling provided to boys and girls in Islamic schools in the United States reinforce gender difference?

1. Tell me about the advising and career counseling you receive in your school. How does it compare with counseling other girls in your school receive? Other boys in your school receive?
2. Talk to me about your educational future plans after you graduate from high school? Are you going for higher education? Which teacher has been most influential on your future plans? Why?
3. If you need more advice about your higher education or your future career,

which teacher would seek advice from and why?

Research question 3. To what extent are certain teachers different instructional styles related to teachers and students genders in Islamic schools in the United States?

1. Are boys / girls treated differently than you? How?
2. How do teachers treat boys and girls in other situations?
3. What do teachers expect from girls? Boys?

Research question 4. To what extent do teachers reinforce gender in classrooms in Islamic schools?

1. What do teachers assume about your future plans? How do male and female teachers compare in their assumptions of your future plans? Teacher?
2. How concerned are teachers about treating boys and girls equally?
3. How well do teachers do at treating boys and girls equally?
4. Can you give me an example of what do teachers might do when they are trying to treat girls and boys equally?
5. In terms of your education, do you have a preference whether the teacher is male or female, why? Who is your best teacher and why? Who is you favorite teacher and why?

Research question 5. How do girls and boys differ in their academic performance in the two Islamic schools?

This question will be answered quantitatively from student's grades.

Questions for the teacher's interviews:

Research question 1. What gender distinctions operate in curriculum in Islamic schools in the United States?

1. In your opinion, do you feel your school is a private Islamic school? Why?
2. Why did you choose to work at this school? If you had the chance to choose to work at this school again, how would you think about the decision? What factors would influence your decision? Would you choose to come here again? Why?
3. What can you tell me about your experience to be in a mixed gender classroom?
4. What is your opinion of whether the school curriculum is appropriate and satisfies student's educational needs? What would you change in the curriculum to make it better?
5. Research says that "Girls are much likely to be less achiever in schools compared with boys in certain topics." What do you think? Why?
6. "People say that girls and boys should have the same opportunities to study the same curriculum in the same manner." What is your opinion? Why?
7. From your experience in working at this school, how would you compare the access of boys and girls to the school different facilities?

Research question 2. How does the advising or career counseling provided to boys and girls in Islamic schools in the United States reinforce gender difference?

1. Tell me about the advising and career counseling you give to students in

your school. How does counseling of girls differ than boys in your school?

Why?

2. Talk to me about your advices to your students regarding their educational future plans after they graduate from high school? Do you advice them to pursue their higher education? Do your advices for certain careers differ between boys and girls? What are the careers and why?
3. If a student needs more time to advices for their future plans, do you spend more time with boys for more help? Do you spend more time with girls for help? Why?

Research question 3. To what extent are certain teachers different instructional styles related to teachers and students genders in Islamic schools in the United States?

1. From your educational working experience and interacting with your colleagues, and your students, how do you treat your students in the classroom? Equally? How?
2. How do teachers treat boys and girls in certain situations? Do you praise boys more than girls? Why?
3. What do teachers expect from girls? Boys?
4. Do you fell that boys are more relaxed around a female teacher? Are girls more relaxed around a male teacher? Why?

Research question 4. To what extent do teachers reinforce gender in classrooms in Islamic schools?

1. What do you as a teacher assume about your student's future plans? Is there any difference in your assumption if the student is a boy or a girl? Why?

2. How concerned are teachers about treating boys and girls equally?
3. How well do teachers do at treating boys and girls equally?
4. As a teacher, can you give me an example of what do teachers might do when they are trying to treat girls and boys equally?
5. In terms of your treatment to your students, do you have a preference whether the student is male or female, why? Who is your best student? Why? Who is you favorite student and why?

Research question 5. How do girls and boys differ in their academic performance in the two Islamic schools?

1. Do you feel that boys and girls are performing the same in your school? Why? How can you tell? What are your measurements of academic achievement?
2. Are you concerned about you colleagues (other teachers) performance and its affect on student's academic achievement? Why? Are your concerns more about girls in the school? Boys in the school?

Questions for the principals interviews:

Research question 1. What gender distinctions operate in curriculum in Islamic schools in the United States?

1. People come to this school assuming it is a private Islamic school. What is your say in this?
2. Administering a school is not an easy task. Why and how did you choose to be a principal of this school? If you were given another chance, will you still

choose to work in this school? Why?

3. Can you tell me anything about your vision for a private Islamic and coed school in the United States? Do your teachers and students share your vision with you? Why and how?
4. The school curriculum is directed to both boys and girls in your school, who chooses the curriculum? Do you like it? Are you satisfied with the content? Do you feel it serves the student's (boys and girls) needs? Do you teacher have any say about the curriculum? Why?
5. Research says that "Girls are much likely to be less achiever in schools compared with boys in certain topics." What do you think? Why?
6. "People say that girls and boys should have the same opportunities to study the same curriculum in the same manner." What is your opinion? Why?
7. From your experience in working at this school, how would you compare the access of boys and girls to the school different facilities?

Research question 2. How does the advising or career counseling provided to boys and girls in Islamic schools in the United States reinforce gender difference?

1. Tell me about the advising and career counseling you provide to students in your school. How does counseling of girls differ than boys in your school? Why? Who sets the times and duration of counseling session? Why?
2. How do you supervise your teachers responsible for counseling? Are you satisfied of their performance?
3. Talk to me about your advices to your students regarding their educational future plans after they graduate from high school? Do you advice them to

pursue their higher education? Do your advices for certain careers differ between boys and girls? What are the careers and why?

4. Do your teachers and staff come back to you in every problem facing them? Who complains more from the teachers, males or females? Why? Who complains more from the students, boys or girls and why?

Research question 3. To what extent are certain teachers different instructional styles related to teachers and students genders in Islamic schools in the United States?

1. From your educational working experience and interacting with your colleagues, and your students, Do you feel that the teachers follow the exact curriculum? Do students complain from any teacher's activities or acts that are not included in the curriculum? Give me an example?
2. How do teachers treat boys and girls in certain situations when they come to you to solve their problems? Do you praise boys more than girls? Why?
3. What do teachers expect from girls? Boys? How do they talk about them in meetings or when you ask for teacher's evaluations of their students? Do you feel that they have different attitudes towards girls than boys? Why?
4. Do you feel that boys are more relaxed around a female teacher? Are girls more relaxed around a male teacher? Why?

Research question 4. To what extent do teachers reinforce gender in classrooms in Islamic schools?

1. What do you as an administrator assume about your teacher's and students future plans? Is there any difference in your assumption if the teacher or the student is a boy or a girl? Why?

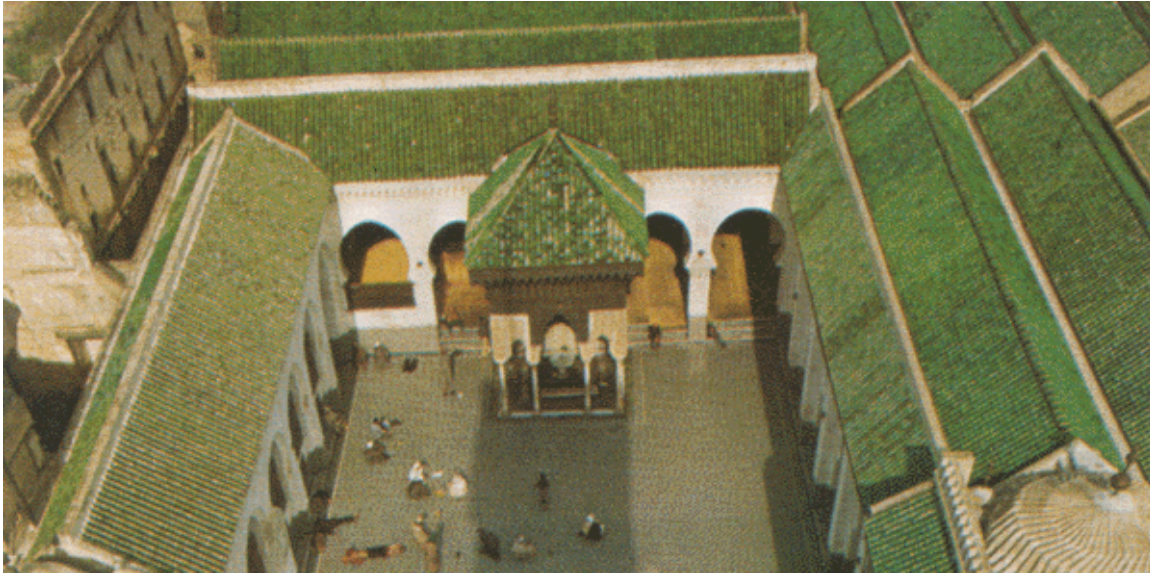
2. How concerned are teachers about treating boys and girls equally?
3. How well do teachers do at treating boys and girls equally?
4. As an administrator, can you give me an example of what do teachers might do when they are trying to treat girls and boys equally?
5. In terms of your treatment and advice to your teachers and students, do you have a preference whether the teacher or the student is male or female, why? Who is your best teacher and student? Why? Who is you favorite teacher and student and why?

Research question 5. How do girls and boys differ in their academic performance in the two Islamic schools?

1. Do you feel that boys and girls are performing the same in your school? Why? How can you tell? What are your measurements of academic achievement?
2. Are you concerned about teacher's performance and its affect on student's academic achievement? Why? Are your concerns more about girls in the school? Boys in the school?

Appendix B

Pictures of Some Old Islamic Schools (Different Types of Schools)



The Qarawiyyun Mosque and School, Fez, Morocco



General view of Bayazid II Kulliye

A University complex consisting of mosque, madrasah and hospital

Edirne, Turkey



Osmania Hospital, Hyderabad Deccan, India

Appendix C

Definitions and Examples of the Two Main Factors

Definitions and Examples of the Two Main Factors

| EQUAL TREATMENT OF BOYS AND GIRLS: | |
|---|--|
| Treating boys and girls equally inside and outside the classroom in the school. e.g. <i>“I don’t do anything differently from the boys and girls. For example, I have behavior rules and everybody gets a, you know, if they have, you know, if I see anybody talking they get three chances and those kinds of thing” (A-1:124). “The punishment is the same. And then, in grading, I’m never, I don’t see anyone by their gender or anything. They’ll get what they deserve, basically” (A-2: 128).</i> | |
| Equal access to facilities | boys and girls use the facilities at school in the same manner |
| Treatment of boys inside the classroom | How the teacher responds to the boys’ questions and answers compared with the teacher’s response to the girls’ questions and answers in the same classroom |
| Treatment of boys outside the classroom | Whether boys are treated equally or differently than girls outside the classroom |
| Treatment of girls inside the classroom | How the teacher responds to the girls’ questions and answers compared with the teacher’s response to the boys’ questions and answers in the same classroom |
| Treatment of girls outside the classroom | Whether girls are treated equally or differently than boys outside the classroom |

| ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: | |
|--|---|
| Academic achievement of boys and girls in the private Islamic schools. If their academic achievement is good, poor, or boys/girls are achieving differently. e.g. <i>“In the high school, the boys are, I think, in general, as a whole group, are behind the girls because they are not serious about studies, about their education” (A-1: 230). “It depends on the individual, because sometime we have boys performing better than girls but in small degree. But the majority girls perform much better” (B-1P: 520).</i> | |
| Boys’ academic achievement | whether boys excel and achieve better grades than girls |
| Boys and girls differ in their academic achievement | boys and girls use different approaches to reach high academic achievement- they have different reactions and behaviors |
| Individual student effort | how hard a student, boy or girl, works in a certain subject to achieve better grades |
| Girls’ academic achievement | whether girls excel and achieve better grades than boys |