NAVIGATING THE LANDSCAPE:

YOUNG MUSLIMS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

OF SCHOOL-BASED, INFORMAL, PARENTAL, AND ISLAMIC

SEX-EDUCATION IN CANADA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Religious Studies

University of Regina

by

Maysa Haque

Regina, Saskatchewan

August, 2019

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Maysa Haque, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies, has presented a thesis titled, ***Navigating the Landscape: Young Muslims' Perceptions and Experiences of School-Based, Informal, Parental, and Islamic Sex-Education in Canada,*** in an oral examination held on August 8, 2019. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner:	Dr. Rubina Ramji, CapeBreton University*
Co-Supervisor:	Dr. A. Brenda Anderson, Department of Religious Studies
Co-Supervisor:	Dr. F. Volker Greifenhagen, Department of Religious Studies
Committee Member:	Dr. Darlene Juschka, Department of Religious Studies
Chair of Defense:	Dr. Roger Petry, Department of Philosophy, Luther College

*Present via Skype

If you just present one perspective the entire way through, then that can lead to a lot of shock and confusion later when kids get older … they realize that the world isn't just black and white. Because it's never just black and white, it's always grey in everything, and that can cause a lot of confusion. I know it's caused me a lot of confusion.

Kawthar, female interview participant

I do know that the Quran places emphasis on acquiring knowledge, and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), a lot of men and women were never shy to ask him about private affairs, like sexuality and all of that. But now it kind of has a stigma attached to it. But Islam puts emphasis on knowledge and openness, so I just don't see how [Islam and sexuality] could be mutually exclusive.

Maya, female interview participant

I didn't do it discreetly. … I asked, "Hey, sir" or whatever, "what's a clitoris? I've never heard of this thing. What's a labia? I have no idea what this is. I don't think I have one, but, if I do, fantastic!" And he didn't even answer. He said, "Don't worry about that." So me being me, I looked it up in the Oxford Dictionary.

Jamal, male interview participant

Abstract

This study examines the landscape of experiences and perceptions of young Muslims in Canada regarding school-based, informal, parental, and Islamic sexual-education (sex-ed). The concept of religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed is also discussed. This study explores the messages conveyed to young Muslims by these different sources of sex-ed and how they negotiate them. Focusing on Muslims in Canada between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine, data from 251 online survey responses and fourteen interviews were collected. Survey responses were analysed as quantitative data and used to contextualize interview data, which was analyzed using grounded theory in NVivo 11.

Similar to young people from other backgrounds in Canada, young Muslims in Canada demonstrate a wide variety of opinions and experiences with regard to sex-education. Informal sources such as the internet and friends/peers were found to shape survey respondents' and interview participants' understandings of sex-ed the most, followed by public school sex-ed. Parents, religiously designated schools, Islamic teachers/authorities, Muslim gatherings, and pornography provided the least sex-ed. Through their navigation of sex-ed, many of the Muslim youth in this study demonstrated the adoption and integration of Canadian educational and social values into their beliefs and practices of Islam, for instance, multiculturalism, critical thinking, and individual autonomy.

Participants indicated that greater clarity regarding how to navigate sex-ed from parents, "Islam", Muslim communities, school, and mainstream Canadian society would have especially benefited them during their school years by mitigating confusion and increasing a sense of security and confidence in their Muslim identities. Three strategies that could help achieve this goal arose from the data. The first strategy employes a more comprehensive and multiculturally competent school-based sex-ed, which would include recognition that following religious teachings is a normal choice for some. The second strategy would emphasize more openness from parents, religious teachers, and Muslim communities towards discussing Islamic and non-Islamic sex-ed. The third strategy would develop a greater degree of connection between "rule book" Islam and the reasons, ethical objectives, and spiritual meaning behind Islamic teachings concerning sex, gender, and sexuality. Participants indicated that these three strategies would help them more confidently bridge potentially conflicting information.

Acknowledgements

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

Firstly, I acknowledge that I am enormously privileged to be able to pursue graduate studies. I acknowledge that I completed this project on Treaty Four Territory, the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Assiniboine, Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota peoples, and homeland of the Métis. I re-affirm my responsibility to do better as a settler on this land.

I am extremely grateful to my co-supervisors, Dr. A. Brenda Anderson and Dr. Franz Volker Greifenhagen, for their mentorship, hand-delivered Eid cards, and conversations over tea and chocolate, as well as the many hours they spent reading my work, assisting me, and for their patience with my needy student ways. I definitely know that they care. I would like to thank them for supervising me despite being on sabbatical, academic leave, or puppy raising duty. Thanks are also due to their partners and families, who humoured them while they worked despite trying to enjoy various vacations. I am also grateful to my committee member and professor Dr. Darlene Juschka for her patience, attention, and encouragement.

Credit is especially due to my parents Samiul Haque and Zarqa Nawaz, who may have denied me a pet cat, but who certainly provided me with exceptional sex-ed, and who continue to support me in all ways. I am grateful to my grandmother Nilufar Haque, late grandfather Anwarul Haque, and grandparents Ali and Parveen Nawaz for their support and belief in the importance of educating their daughters and granddaughters. Thank you to my dear cousin Raeesa Ashique for her editing, and to the members of Spice Gals 2.0 and Centers of the Universe, who consistently model the compassion, resilience, and brilliance of women of faith and/or colour. I am also grateful for the patience and support of my family and friends, especially Rabia, Eli, and Brittney, who have spent two years gracefully listening to me freak out.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Dr. Yuan Ren, whose warmth and companionship brightened my entire degree, and also to Dr. William Arnal, for his instruction and humour. I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students Connor Thompson, for his help conducting interviews, and Esther Guillen, both of whom provided me with support and feedback, while always reminding me that “Ideas are Important.”

This research was supported by a Canada Graduate Scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am also grateful for the financial support of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Department of Religious Studies in the forms of awards, travel assistance, and employment. Thank you to Luther College at the University of Regina, and the Luther College Multi-Faith Chaplaincy, for their support in the forms of community and employment, as well as the support of the Regina Multi-Faith Forum and the UR Pride Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity in the forms of community and conference travel assistance.

Post Defence Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr. A. Brenda Anderson, Dr. Franz Volker Greifenhagen, and Dr. Darlene Juschka for serving on my committee and for helping to make my defense an engaging, stress-free, and surprisingly enjoyable experience.

Thank you also to Dr. Kevin Bond for his co-ordination efforts as the Head of the newly minted Department of Gender, Religion, and Critical Studies.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my external examiner Dr. Ruby Ramji, and to thank her for her time, insightful comments, and generous encouragement during my defense.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the hundreds of young Muslims across Canada who participated in it.

I especially dedicate it to the interview participants:

Bushra, Junnah, Kawthar, Maya, Nilu, Saba, Tanya, Musa, Adnan, Bilal, Hamza, Jamal, Khalid, Rahim.

Thank you for your time, honesty, and good humour.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The sexual health education (sex-ed) of young people, especially in multicultural and religiously diverse countries, appears to be a site of perennial controversy and moral panic. Recently in the Canadian province of Ontario, reforms and repeals of the provincial public school Physical Health Education curriculum, which includes sex-ed, have brought this issue to surface. The new curriculum was introduced but immediately halted in 2010, reintroduced with modifications and implemented in September 2015, and proceeded to become a provincial election issue in 2018, after which it was repealed by the new provincial government.[1] According to Heather Shipley, a distinct voice that was featured by Canadian news media throughout this controversy was that of religious people, including Muslims, who were often constructed as unequivocally opposed to sex-ed, especially regarding issues of sexual and gender diversity.[2] This view did not take into account that "Muslims" are not a monolithic entity,[3] and also largely ignored the diversity of religiously identified groups and individuals who supported school-based sex-ed, gender and sexual equality, as well as those "who live at the intersections of religious/spiritual and gender or sexual diversities".[4]

---

[1] Heather Shipley, 'Teaching Sexuality, Teaching Religion: Sexuality Education and Religion in Canada', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Sexuality Education*, ed. Louisa Allen and Mary Lou Rasmussen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), 162; Caroline Alphonso, 'Ford Government Scraps Controversial Ontario Sex-Ed Curriculum', *The Globe and Mail*, 12 July 2018, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-doug-ford-government-scraps-controversial-ontario-sex-ed-curriculum/.

[2] Shipley, 'Teaching Sexuality, Teaching Religion', 165.

[3] Pamela Dickey Young, 'Examining Competing Claims in the Dialogue over Sex Education in Ontario: Women, Rights, and Religion', *Religious Studies and Theology* 36, no. 2 (2017): 123–38.

[4] Shipley, 'Teaching Sexuality, Teaching Religion', 161.

Notably, sex-ed controversies are not unique to Muslim communities, nor are sex-ed controversies involving Muslim communities unique to Canada, having also occurred in other Euro-western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.[5] Reasons for some Muslims' dissent often include the perceived divorce of sex-ed from moral content and respect for modesty,[6] that sex-ed presents as acceptable behaviours that Muslims consider to be sinful,[7] and that sex-ed undermines Islamic concepts of family life.[8] In response to these concerns, parents sometimes call for the exclusive right to educate their children regarding such matters; and parents, religious leaders, and researchers often advocate for "religiously and culturally sensitive" sex-ed.[9] Young Muslims' exposure to and navigation of information regarding sex, sexuality, and sexual health more generally are not well understood. As Shipley notes, since youthful vulnerability "is frequently cited as the reason [sexual health] education should only

[5] Jonathan Zimmerman, *Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 12; Fida Sanjakdar, *Living West, Facing East: The (De)Construction of Muslim Youth Sexual Identities*, vol. 364, Counterpoints: Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education (New York: Peter Lang, 2011); J. Mark Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education', *Journal of Moral Education* 26, no. 3 (1997): 317–30.

[6] For example, condom demonstrations and explicit anatomical diagrams. Muhammad M. Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education among Muslim Adolescents in Canada', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 3 (2010): 397.

[7] For example, extra-marital relationships and sex, non-heterosexual sexual activity, masturbation.

[8] For example, privileging personal choice, preference and personal autonomy over familial and religious obligations. Fida Sanjakdar, '"Teacher Talk": The Problems, Perspectives and Possibilities of Developing a Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Curriculum for Australian Muslim Students', *Sex Education* 9, no. 3 (2009): 264–65.

[9] Sobia Ali-Faisal, 'What's Sex Got to Do with It? The Role of Sexual Experience in the Sexual Attitudes, and Sexual Guilt and Anxiety of Young Muslim Adults in Canada and the United States', *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 10, no. 2 (2016): 37; Kerry H. Robinson, Elizabeth Smith, and Cristyn Davies, 'Responsibilities, Tensions and Ways Forward: Parents' Perspectives on Children's Sexuality Education', *Sex Education* 17, no. 3 (2017): 324.

occur at home, under the guidance of parents who also transmit moral and ethical values, it is critical to ask young people to reflect on these issues."[10]

The goal of this study is to broadly examine the landscape of experiences and perceptions of young Muslims in Canada regarding sexual health (sex-ed). The term "sex-ed" is defined per the Public Health Agency of Canada as "the process of equipping individuals, couples, families and communities with the information, motivation and behavioural skills needed to enhance sexual health and avoid negative sexual health outcomes", as well as their acquisition of knowledge regarding sex, sexuality and sexual health more broadly.[11] Focusing on Muslims in Canada between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine, this thesis is based upon data from 251 online survey responses and fourteen interviews. Based on both quantitative and qualitative data, this thesis investigates what messages are conveyed to young Muslims by different sources of sex-ed, their opinions of these messages, and how they negotiated them.

Theory and methodology are discussed in chapter 2, and the study design and procedure in chapter 3. The body of the thesis explores the above-mentioned research questions within three sources of sex-ed. Chapter 4 examines school-based sex-ed, focusing on public-schools, Catholic schools, and Islamic schools. "Informal sex-ed," which encompasses such sources as the internet, peers, family, and especially parents, is discussed in chapter 5. Chapter 6 examines "Islamic" sex-ed sources and messages. Chapter 7 examines participants' thoughts regarding the possibility of religiously and

[10] Shipley, 'Teaching Sexuality, Teaching Religion', 158.

[11] Public Health Agency of Canada, 'Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education', 2008, 5, http://sieccan.org/pdf/guidelines-eng.pdf.

culturally sensitive sex-ed. Lastly, chapter 8 contains the conclusion of the thesis, which includes a summary and discussion of the findings, as well as an overview of how the present study contributes to existing literature on the topic.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Frames

Before discussing the project's theoretical frames, it is important that I exercise personal reflexivity in relation to this research. This is because my identity and beliefs directly impact my choice of the topic, my decisions regarding theory and framing, and my ability to recruit research participants and analyse the data. Randi Warne noted that a survival strategy of women in religious studies, which I believe can also be applied to religious and ethnic minorities in academia, is to develop an "expertise of the margins" by founding their academic authority upon topics that male scholars are disinclined to approach. This strategy can simultaneously reward the women who engage in it while punishing those who do not.[1] While this could be true of my project, I identify more with Canadian Muslim scholar Jasmin Zine's more recent writing about "academic forms of colonialism," in which "the narratives and lived experiences of Muslims have been co-opted by those who do not share in this identity or in the costs and implications of labelling and defining the experiences of others."[2]

As a practicing Sunni Muslim woman of mixed South Asian heritage, I am a peer to my study participants in many ways. This facilitated the recruitment and gaining of trust of my participants, and gives me insight into their worlds, but also entails carrying over my assumptions and biases into the research. Having grown up in a post-9/11 world

[1] Randi R. Warne, '(En)Gendering Religious Studies', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 27, no. 4 (1998): 433–34.

[2] Jasmine Zine, 'Introduction: Muslim Cultural Politics in the Canadian Hinterlands', in *Islam in the Hinterlands: Muslim Cultural Politics in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 27.

preoccupied with talking about Muslims, and also having experienced the different worlds of academic Islam, the teachings of Muslim scholars, and the lived practices of my communities, I am especially interested in privileging what Muslims themselves have to say about their own lives and beliefs. I am also aware of socially, politically, and theologically motivated desires that many Muslims hold against "airing our dirty laundry." I believe, however, that progress and understanding cannot be developed without tackling difficult issues directly. This is especially true because community building and activism are important to me. My family has a history of being active in the foundation and maintenance of our mosque community, the Islamic Association of Saskatchewan in Regina. My mother is a public Canadian Muslim figure who introduced me to feminist Muslim scholars at an early age, and whose past professional work has at times been critical of Muslim communities' practices.[3] I have also been active within my mosque community, and work and volunteer for other organizations that address issues of faith, gender, and sexuality.

Judith Plaskow, and more recently, Kecia Ali, have pointed out that studying religion and sexual ethics unavoidably singles out the treatment of sexual issues in certain religious communities as uniquely problematic, an assertion that was borne out during the Ontario sex-ed debates.[4] Although sex-ed and sexual ethics can be issues in Muslim communities, I do not think that they are in the forefront of most people's daily

[3] Zarqa Nawaz, *Me and the Mosque* (Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 2005).

[4] Kecia Ali, 'Introduction', in *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), xviii; Judith Plaskow, 'Decentering Sex: Rethinking Jewish Sexual Ethics', in *God Forbid: Religion and Sex in American Public Life*, ed. Kathleen M. Sands (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 30.

lives, at least as I have observed in my personal life and through this research project. Based on the emails and Facebook messages I received in response to my study, however, as well as survey responses and conversations with interview participants, these are still topics with that young Muslims in Canada grapple and wish to discuss. Plaskow and Ali justify their studies on the premise that the benefits of responsible scholarship that stands in solidarity with those it impacts outweigh the risks, a stance that I am also adopting.[5]

2.1 Lived Religion, Islam(s) and Muslims

The study of "lived religion" has shown that there is generally a wide gulf between primary religious sources and what religious adherents actually know, believe, and do on a daily basis.[6] Lived religion focuses on the experiences, opinions, and practices of laypeople, rather than official religious spokespersons and institutions.[7] This framework allows researchers to investigate religion "as an ever-changing, multifaceted, often messy - even contradictory - amalgam of beliefs and practices", and has increasingly been applied to Muslims living in non-Muslim majority countries.[8] In contrast, both academic and emic Islamic Studies tend to privilege scripture in order to

[5] Ali, 'Introduction', xviii–xix; Plaskow, 'Decentering Sex', 38.

[6] Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji, eds., *Growing Up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 8.

[7] David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Robert Orsi, 'Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion', in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David D. Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3–21; Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[8] McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, 12; see Beyer and Ramji, *Growing Up Canadian*; Nyhagen and Halsaa, *Religion, Gender and Citizenship*.

determine "what Muslims believe" over sociological approaches,[9] and can also disproportionately privilege the beliefs of the highly involved practitioners when they are studied sociologically.[10] In adopting the lived religion approach to Islam in this study, I take the position that there is no single form of Islam in Canada (or anywhere), but rather multiple emic Islams that are learned, constructed, and lived by laypeople. Adopting the notion of multiple Canadian "Islams" also challenges the popular notion that Islam is a fixed and monolithic entity that exists in contrast to "the west" or Euro-west,[11] and also moves away from the unnuanced "globalized five pillar-model of Islam".[12] By studying lived Islams, I recognize that it is not actually possible to speak categorically about "Muslims" in Canada, and that their intersectional identities must be recognized. Muslims in Canada are an amorphous group of people who may or may not identify with each other; who come from myriad different regions, ethnicities, sects and schools of thought; and whose levels of practice, religiosity and religious knowledge vary wildly and change over the course of their lifespans.

---

[9] Abdolmohammad Kazemipur, *The Muslim Question in Canada: A Story of Segmented Integration* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 56.

[10] Jennifer Selby, '"'Muslimness'" and Multiplicity in Qualitative Research and in Government Reports in Canada', *Critical Research on Religion, Special Issue: The Muslim Question* 4, no. 1 (2016): 76. While it is important to represent orthodox and conservative Canadian Muslim views, Selby points out that non-orthodox participants are often wary of participating in qualitative interviews. This happens out of the concern that they are not "Muslim-enough" to be of academic value, and possibly in recognition that they do not match media stereotypes regarding Muslims (Selby, 77). An effective way of methodologically countering the essentialization of Muslims is to include a wide range of narratives in academic studies, even if these accounts "conflict or include participants that do not practice according to normative definitions of Islam", which I have attempted to do in this study (Selby, 82).

[11] I prefer the term "Euro-western" because it both emphasizes the European location and/or influence on countries traditionally considered to be "western" while also encompassing countries such as Australia and New Zealand, which may not be considered geographically "west".

[12] Selby, '"Muslimness" and Multiplicity', 74.

Yet, my study is about "Muslims". I made this decision because "Muslim" has become an increasingly common discursive category. In North America, similar to Europe, people who had formerly been labelled by their region-of-origin, socio-economic status, citizenship status, or racial category are now increasingly being identified as simply "Muslim" in sociopolitical discourses.[13] French sociologist Olivier Roy argues that the Islamisation of Muslim-majority countries is a contemporary and reactionary phenomena in the face of colonization, westernization, and globalization, a phenomenon that can be extrapolated to Muslims living outside of Muslim-majority countries.[14] Increased self-identification as "Muslim", however, is not simply a response to westernization. In Euro-western countries, it is also a general reaction to the widespread experience of being "cast, categorized, counted, queried and held accountable as Muslims in public discourse and private interaction" wherein Muslims are not only held responsible for themselves, but also for the actions of other Muslims.[15] Increasingly visible in politics, the media, and scholarship, this shift is argued to have

[13] Rogers Brubaker, 'Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013): 2.

[14] Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 14–15. An example of personal "re-Islamisation" that has been well supported by Leila Ahmed, Meyda Yeğenoğlu and Saba Mahmood is Muslim women's increased adherence to veiling and piety movements. Ahmed and Yeğenoğlu have explored Islamization in relation to the nationalist and independence movements that followed Egypt's colonization, when the veil became a medium through which (primarily male) subjects fought to either liberate women from "the prison of Islamic orthodoxy" or for women's "authentic Islamic piety" through veiling and adhering to traditional gender roles. Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, Cambridge Cultural Social Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 125-6, 131, 137; Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (Yale University Press, 2011), 44. Similarly, Saba Mahmood's study of Egyptian women's mosque movements in the 1990s shows that participants practiced piety via veiling as part of a larger, religiously obligatory project of modest behaviour that was viewed as countering the "western" problem of secularization. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 56.

[15] Brubaker, 'Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice', 3; Nyhagen and Halsaa, *Religion, Gender and Citizenship*, 73.

occurred in response to the increased visibility of Islam in the Euro-west over the last several decades, boosted by wars in Muslim-majority countries, 9/11, and terrorist attacks in the Euro-west.[16] This generally negative visibility seems to have increased the trend of Muslim self-identification as a way to revalorize what has been de-valorized and to seek "authenticity" where it has been attacked and removed.[17] To remain silent about their identities is the privilege of the majority non-Muslim population, a privilege that Muslim minorities do not generally possess.[18] As such, I do think that it is academically, socially, and politically appropriate to study "Muslims", thereby giving them a voice when it is often denied, while always keeping in mind that this must be done responsibly by recognizing the diversity of both Islams and Muslims.

2.2 Feminist Frame and Grounded Theory

Complementary to lived religion, this study is also shaped by a feminist frame within which identity is considered to consist of multiple subjectivities.[19] Considering the many lenses through which each individual sees the world, postmodern feminism rejects the notion of a singular, objective truth.[20] This equips theorists to view normative

[16] Brubaker, 'Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice', 2–3.

[17] Brubaker states that this is because "Some self-identifications react directly to hegemonic other-identifications. This is most obviously the case where other-identifications are experienced as powerfully stigmatizing. The experience of being stigmatized as Muslims in everyday interaction or public discourse leads some to reactively assert a Muslim identification," Brubaker, 3.

[18] Nyhagen and Halsaa, *Religion, Gender and Citizenship*, 81–82. As minorities, even those who may not identify as religiously involved may come to associate more strongly with the Muslim label, sometimes qualifying it with the descriptors "cultural" or "secular" Muslims, or on the opposite end of the spectrum, denouncing Islam outright and distancing themselves from it. Brubaker, 'Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice', 3.

[19] Mary Maynard, 'Beyond the "Big Three": The Development of Feminist Theory into the 1990s', *Women's History Review* 4 (1995): 302.

[20] Mary Hawkesworth, 'Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 31 (1989): 537.

systems of belief and ethics as the productions of specific sociocultural contexts, and to theoretically accommodate individuals' intersectional identities, in congruence with grounded theory.[21] Developed by Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory methodology entails a bottom-up generation of social theory from the data itself.[22] This allows researchers to attend to the meanings that people attach to events within their own worlds and discern the fundamental social processes at work.

The feminist framing of this study fosters analytical attentiveness to identity and intersectionality, which especially influenced the recruitment methods, survey design, and the significant amount of time and effort invested in recruiting diverse research participants. In recognition that "Muslim women" are often the objects of stereotypical discourse and othering, a growing number of counter-discourses have risen to feature the voices of Muslim women regarding identity[23] as well as sexuality and sexual health.[24] This study contributes to this movement. The study was designed to be inclusive of gender and sexually diverse people, as this is a population that is often overlooked in Muslim communities. Including male Muslim voices was also an important goal of this

[21] Judith Wuest, 'Feminist Grounded Theory: An Exploration of the Congruency and Tensions Between Two Traditions in Knowledge Discovery', *Qualitative Health Research* 5, no. 1 (1995): 127.

[22] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967).

[23] Shahnaz Khan, *Aversion and Desire: Negotiating Muslim Female Identity in the Diaspora* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2002); Amani Hamdani, *Muslim Women Speak: A Tapestry of Lives and Dreams* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2009); Nyhagen and Halsaa, *Religion, Gender and Citizenship*; Alia Youssef, Photo Blog, The Sisters Project, n.d., www.thesistersproject.ca.

[24] Aida Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication and Education about Sexuality among Muslim Immigrant Girls in the US', *Sex Education* 4, no. 3 (2004): 255–71; Rebecca Meldrum, Pranee Liamputtong, and Dennis Wollersheim, 'Caught Between Two Worlds: Sexuality and Young Muslim Women in Melbourne, Australia', *Sexuality & Culture* 18 (2014): 166–79; Anneke Wray, Jane Ussher, and Janette Perz, 'Constructions and Experiences of Sexual Health among Young, Heterosexual, Unmarried Muslim Women Immigrants in Australia', *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 16, no. 1 (2014): 76–89.

research. This is because, although Muslim male populations are included in mixed-gender studies regarding sex-ed,[25] their views and experiences of sex-education have received relatively less attention in the Euro-west,[26] as the focus tends to be upon vulnerable populations such as women and sexual minorities.[27]

In conclusion, my identity is inextricably linked with the theories and methodology that I employed in this study. This yields both the positive impact of my perspectives on the topic and my increased commonalities with participants, and the negative impact of my own biases. Ultimately, I feel that it is most honest to state this explicitly. As Christian feminist Rosemary Radford Ruether points out, "Neutrality hides a commitment to the status quo. All liberation scholarship is advocacy scholarship. This should not make it any less objective in analyzing what has actually been the case… But this objectivity is in the services of passionate commitment."[28] With the "costs and implications" of this project in mind, I have attempted both to privilege Muslim voices

[25] Sanjakdar, *Living West, Facing East: The (De)Construction of Muslim Youth Sexual Identities*; Yahyaoui Abdessalem et al., 'Acculturative Processes and Adolescent Sexuality: A Comparative Study of 115 Immigrant Adolescents from Cultures Influenced by Islam and 115 French Adolescents from Cultures Influenced by Christianity', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 37 (2013): 28–47; Arshia Zaidi et al., 'Ethnic Identity, Religion, and Gender: An Exploration of Intersecting Identities Creating Diverse Perceptions and Experiences with Intimate Cross-Gender Relationships Amongst South Asian Youth in Canada', *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 46, no. 2 (2014): 27–54; Ali-Faisal, 'What's Sex Got to Do with It?'; Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale et al., 'A Profile of the Sexual Experiences of African, Caribbean and Black Canadian Youth in the Context of Canadian Youth Sexuality', *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 25, no. 1 (2016): 41–52.

[26] A notable exception to this is Jesse Mills, 'I Should Get Married Early: Culturally Appropriate Comprehensive Sex Education and the Racialization of Somali Masculinity', *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* 1, no. 1 (2012): 5–30.

[27] Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle, *Living Out Islam: Voices of Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Rusi Jaspal and Marco Cinnirella, 'Identity Processes, Threat, and Interpersonal Relations: Accounts From British Muslim Gay Men', *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, no. 2 (2012): 215–40.

[28] Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Preface', in *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), xii.

and to address a sensitive topic both directly and ethically through my choice of theoretical frameworks, participant recruitment, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 3

Procedure and Design

This study received ethical approval from the University of Regina[1] and included three phases of data collection: an online survey, individual interviews, and follow-up interviews. The study was conducted solely in English, excluding French-speaking Muslims in Canada.

3.1 Recruitment

Survey recruitment was done via email, Facebook, and posters (see appendix 1). The most engaged recruitment came through university-based Muslim Student Associations on Facebook. Although some ethnicity-based groups were contacted, Muslim-identifying organizations were primarily targeted, likely resulting in selection bias against those who where not involved with such organizations. After receiving negative feedback from Muslim community centers and mosques regarding the research topic, I did not pursue these avenues further.[2] Other groups contacted electronically

[1] See appendix 9.

[2] For example, I received a cordial message from the administrator of an Alberta mosque with which I had a previous research relationship. He had reviewed the survey and felt that "Some of the questions seem to be a bit intrusive, quite direct and not worded in the most proper way." I believe that many mosques would have difficulties sharing this material for reasons similar to why Islamic schools have difficulty including sex-ed content, which is explained more fully in chapter 4. As such, I decided to focus my attention on more youth-centered organizations, which proved to be more fruitful. For example, an Alberta-based MSA circulated my recruitment material to their membership, and emailed me to wish me "all the best on [my] research endeavours" because "it is very refreshing to see a Muslimah pursuing interesting research of this kind." Previous research regarding young Muslims in Canada, however, has shown that individuals who are highly religiously involved are more likely to be involved in their mosque communities than those who are not (Beyer and Ramji, 124–26). As such, not recruiting via mosques may have excluded highly religiously involved individuals from this project, especially those who were not involved with university MSAs or other youth-oriented Muslim groups.

included Ahmadiyya, Ismaili and Shia mosques and associations;[3] Unity Mosques; universalist and progressive Muslim groups; and LGBTQ+[4] Muslim organizations. The recruitment poster was posted in the University of Regina and McMaster University.[5]

Upon completing the survey, respondents who had completed some secondary schooling in Canada were presented with the option of participating in an interview (see appendix 2). The purpose of the additional requirement to the original survey inclusion criteria was to target respondents who were likely to have received some sex education in Canada. This strategy was only successful in recruiting female interview participants.[6] Since balanced gender representation was important, I amended the project to include a male interviewer and new Facebook messages directed exclusively towards recruiting male interview participants (see appendix 1.3). These measures were surprisingly effective, and all male interview participants were recruited afterwards. Only two male participants opted for the male interviewer, and option included in the original recruitment material. As such, specifically seeking Muslim men in the recruitment process seemed to be the most important factor in recruiting male participants. In order

[3] I seriously attempted to recruit non-mainstream Sunni participants through personal contacts and by reaching out to various public groups via email and Facebook. I emailed mosques and official religious associations, and also contacted the AMSAs (Ahmadiyya Muslim Student Associations) and ISAs (Ismaili Student Associations) that I could find on social media. Finding these organizations and engaging with their members proved to be more difficult than doing so with MSAs (overwhelmingly Sunni-oriented Muslim Student Associations). This is perhaps because of my status as an outsider, as well as because of the minority status of many of those organizations, which seemed to be linked to smaller membership and more private online presences.

[4] Throughout this thesis, the acronym "LGBTQ+" will be used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other gender and sexuality diverse identified people.

[5] This was simply a practical choice due to my relationship with those universities. Although I contacted many other Canadian universities, they did not allow me to put up posters.

[6] For clarity, "respondent" will be used for those who completed the survey, and "participant" will be used for those who completed the interview and optional member-check.

to attract a larger pool of participants, however, the amended recruitment material did not include having attended at least some Canadian secondary school in the inclusion criteria. As a result, some male participants had spent less time and received less education in Canada than their female counterparts. I accepted this discrepancy as it enabled me to include male perspectives in the project. A similar male-specific amendment was not made to the survey, and the number of male survey respondents was significantly lower than that of female respondents.

3.2 Survey

The online survey was designed to include a wide range of identities. It was hosted on Qualtrics from September 2018 until January 1, 2019 (see appendix 3). The inclusion criteria to participate in the research were to reside in Canada at the time of the study, to identify as Muslim, and to be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine. Respondents thirty years old or older were not precluded from participating in the survey, however their specific age ranges were not recorded, and they were not invited to participate in interviews. Survey respondents were presented with a short Information Letter prior to beginning the survey, which also stated that their participation implied their free and informed consent. The online survey was anonymous, included thirty-two questions and took approximately seven minutes to complete. All survey questions were multiple choice except for one long answer question. The survey collected demographic

Table 1: Demographics of Survey Respondents

Demographic	N = 251	%	Demographic	N = 251	%
Age			**Place of Birth**		
18-19	42	16.7	Born in Canada	106	42.2
20-21	61	24.3	Born Elsewhere	145	57.8
22-23	47	18.7	**Time in Canada**		
24-25	32	12.7	Born in Canada/in Can whole life	85	33.9
26-27	29	11.6	Born in Canada/in Can 20+ years	4	1.6
28-29	20	8.0	Born in Canada/in Can 10-20 years	13	5.2
30+	20	8.0	Born in Can/in Can 5-10 years	4	1.6
Religion			In Can 20+ years (born elsewhere)	26	10.4
Sunni	188	75.0	In Can 10-20 years (born elsewhere)	69	27.5
Just Muslim	23	9.2	In Can 5-10 years (born elsewhere)	23	9.2
Shia	13	5.2	In Can 0-5 years (born elsewhere)	27	10.8
Just Muslim, Sunni	12	4.8	**Ethnicity**		
Sufi, Sunni	5	2.0	South Asian	114	45.4
Mixed religion*	5	2.0	Middle Eastern	46	18.3
Ismaili	4	1.6	Mixed Ethnicity*	26	10.4
Sufi	1	0.4	Southeast Asian	18	7.2
Level of Practice			East African	16	6.4
Very Practicing	55	22.0	North African	12	4.5
Moderately Practicing	166	66.1	West Central Asian & Central Asia	7	2.8
Rarely Practicing	27	10.8	African-Canadian/American	3	1.2
Not Practicing	3	1.2	Other	2	0.8
Status in Canada			Southern African	2	0.8
Citizen	217	86.5	South/Central American, Caribbean & Bermudan	2	0.8
Permanent Resident	21	8.4	West African	2	0.8
International Student	13	5.2	Oceanian	1	0.8

information and queried respondents' levels, sources, and opinions of sex-ed. Portions of the demographic questions were adapted from Sobia Ali-Faisal's doctoral research.[7] Only questions regarding inclusion criteria were mandatory, or "forced choice". Otherwise, respondents were given the option to leave responses blank, include supplementary text entries, or choose all responses that applied. The latter two options were given in recognition of respondents' intersectional identities and yielded the "mixed responses" entries in the data tables. Due to the time constraints of the project, neither the survey nor the interview guide were formally tested with focus groups. Although they were circulated to my supervisors as well as a small group of individuals for feedback, the survey in particular could have benefitted from a more rigorous design, especially regarding how to include mixed response answers.

3.3 Survey Respondent Characteristics

The population used for analysis was comprised of 251 respondents who completed at least 80% of the survey. The majority of respondents were between eighteen and twenty-five years old (see table 1 on Demographics). The data of participants ages thirty or older (8%) is included in the study, and I have signaled when age was relevant to responses. Seventy-five percent of respondents identified as Sunni, and the other 25% identified as Shia, Ismaili, Sufi, or as having a mixed religious identity. The majority of respondents were either "very" or "moderately" practicing, and

[7] Sobia Ali-Faisal, 'Crossing Sexual Barriers: The Influence of Background Factors and Personal Attitudes on Sexual Guilt and Sexual Anxiety among Canadian and American Muslim Women and Men', *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, 1 January 2014, 255–60, https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/5051.

Table 2: Gender, Orientation, and Relationship Status of Survey Respondents

Demographic	N = 251	%	Demographic	N = 251	%
Gender			**Sexually Experienced**		
Female	174	69.3	Not at all	110	43.8
Male	73	29.1	Moderately	39	15.5
Transgender	1	0.4	Somewhat	37	14.7
Questioning	1	0.4	Not Really	37	14.7
Male, Other	1	0.4	Very	26	10.4
Male, Questioning	1	0.4	Unassigned	1	0.4
Orientation			Other	1	0.4
Heterosexual	222	88.4	**Relationship Status**		
Bisexual	9	3.6	Single	167	66.5
Mixed orientation*	7	2.3	Married	38	15.1
Asexual	3	1.2	Dating	19	7.6
Gay or lesbian	2	0.8	Pre-engaged	13	5.2
Heterosexual, asexual	2	0.8	Engaged	8	3.2
Queer	2	0.8	Other	3	1.2
Questioning	2	0.8	Divorced	2	0.8
Other/Unassigned	2	0.8	Common-law	1	0.4

12% indicated that they were "rarely" or "not" practicing. Most respondents were Canadian citizens, and slightly more were born outside of Canada than in Canada. Approximately 40% of respondents were born and raised in Canada, and approximately 11% were born elsewhere and had been in Canada for five years or less. The remaining roughly 50% of respondents were mostly born outside of Canada but had lived in Canada for five or more years. Forty-five percent identified as South Asian, followed by 18.3% as Middle Eastern, 7.2% Southeast Asian, and 6.4% East African. The remaining respondents represented a wide range of "other" and mixed ethnicities. "Mixed response" tables are included in appendix 4.

Approximately 69% of respondents identified as female, 29% as male, and less than 2% as transgender, questioning or with a mixed response.[8] The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (88.4%), followed by bisexual (3.6%). The remaining respondents identified as asexual, gay, lesbian, queer, questioning, or with mixed responses. Less than half of respondents described their level of sexual experience as "not at all" and 10% as "very." The remaining respondents were distributed approximately equally between "not really" to "moderately" experienced. About two thirds of respondents indicated that they were single and 15% were married. About 8% indicated that they were either engaged or "pre-engaged," meaning that they were discussing marriage with a partner, and 7.6% were dating. Additional information can be found in table 2.

[8] I suspect that specifically recruiting sexually and gender diverse participants, similar to what I did with male participants, could have increased these numbers. I did not do this however, as the original survey was inclusive of gender and sexually diverse people and advertised in venues specific to this population.

Table 3: Occupation of Survey Respondents

Demographic	N = 251	%
Education and Occupation		
Undergraduate or college Student	141	56.2
Working	47	18.7
Graduate or Professional Student	32	12.7
Post-secondary Graduate	17	6.8
Looking for work	5	2.0
Home-maker, Parent/expecting	5	2.0
Other	4	1.6

Table 4: School System and Location of Survey Respondents

Demographic	N = 251	%	Demographic	N = 251	%
School System			Location of School System		
Public	121	48.2	Ontario (ON)	110	43.8
Outside Can	37	14.7	Unassigned	43	17.1
Other Mixed School Systems*	29	11.6	Mixed Locations*	26	10.4
Public, Islamic	23	9.2	Alberta (AB)	25	10.0
Public, Outside Can	20	8.0	Saskatchewan (SK)	20	8.0
Islamic	12	4.8	ON, Other	14	5.6
Private	3	1.2	British Columbia (BC)	6	2.4
Other	3	1.2	Manitoba (MB)	3	1.2
Catholic	2	0.8	Quebec	2	0.8
Home	1	0.4	Other	1	0.4
			Yukon	1	0.4

Just over half of respondents identified as undergraduate or college students, followed by those who were working full or part time (18.7%), and graduate or professional students (12.7%). Additional information regarding education and occupation can be found in table 3. Regarding secondary school systems, almost half of respondents attended Canadian public schools, 28.7% attended mixed school systems, followed by 15% percent who attended school outside of Canada. Only 4.8% of respondents attended Canadian Islamic schools. Forty-four percent of respondents attended school in Ontario, 10.4% in mixed locations, 10% in Alberta, and 8% in Saskatchewan. See table 4 for additional information regarding school systems.

3.4 Interviews

Individual interviews were the primary method of data collection. Survey respondents who indicated their interest to be interviewed were emailed the Interview Information Letter and invited to choose an interview medium and time (see appendix 5). Contact information was not linked to survey responses. In total, fourteen interviews were conducted in-person at the University of Regina, over the phone, or over Skype between late September and late November 2018. Twelve interviews were conducted by myself, a racialized hijab-wearing female Muslim, and two were done by my colleague Connor Thompson, a white non-Muslim male Religious Studies graduate student.[9] Connor interviewed two male participants who opted for a male interviewer.

[9] I chose Connor, the only full-time male student in the Religious Studies M.A. program, out of pragmatism, although it should also be noted that he had an interest in conducting individual interviews and background in university Islamic studies. He was very generous with his time.

The Information Letters and Consent Forms were provided electronically and in-person when applicable to all participants prior to their interviews (see appendix 6 for the latter). Prior to all interviews, participants signed the Consent Forms and were given time to voice any questions or concerns. The Consent Form included an option to have the participants' anonymized transcript emailed to them, stipulated that the interview would be audio recorded for subsequent transcription, and asked whether the participant was interested in doing a follow-up interview and receiving the study results. Interviews averaged around one hour and forty-five minutes. The topics covered in the interview were demographics; general knowledge, experience and opinions of formal and informal sex-education; sex-education in Islam; and opinions regarding religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed (see appendix 7.1). Participants were compensated for their time with a $15.00 gift card. For me, the interviews were the highlight of this project. Participants' candidness, senses of humour, and serious concern for and interest in the research topic were a continual source of inspiration. I am deeply grateful for their time.

3.5 Interviewer and Respondent Bias

The majority of interview participants were university students in their twenties, as were both interviewers. This could have increased trust between interviewers and participants, although respondent bias is always present in interview-based research. It has been noted that differences in ethnicity impacts respondents' responses to race-related questions, which could also be extrapolated to religion.[10] As a white, non-Muslim

[10] Michael F. Weeks and R. Paul Moore, 'Ethnicity-of-Interviewer Effects on Ethnic Respondents', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1981): 245.

male, it is possible that participants perceived Connor as a member of the dominant population with whom they would have to censor themselves. That said, the tone of his interviews seemed friendly. Participants sometimes adopted the role of teaching him about their beliefs and practices, occasionally reassuring him that their intention was not to convert him to Islam.

I was a peer to most of my female participants, which could have increased their trust of me. Given the sensitive nature of the research, however, it is also possible that this peer relationship increased their anxiety of being judged, especially given that my hijab can be perceived as a marker of heightened piety. Some participants addressed these concerns directly before divulging sensitive information.[11] Gender differences could also have created bias, as some male participants may have been uncomfortable speaking explicitly about sex-related topics with a female Muslim interviewer. Interview participants were not directly asked about their sexual experiences, as I believed it would be a deterrent to recruiting participants due to fear of judgement and embarrassment. There were, however, opportunities for those participants who were comfortable to speak about their sexuality and sexual experiences, and several did so.

3.6 Follow-up Interviews

The last phase of data collection was an optional member-check or follow-up interview in which participants who opted to review their anonymized transcripts could add, change or redact information (see appendix 7.2). This was intended as an ethical

[11] Others mentioned that they had researched me online and noticed that I was a volunteer member of the UR Pride Centre for Sexuality and Gender Diversity. From this, they extrapolated that they could more safely disclose LGBTQ+ identities or extra-marital sexual activity.

way to give participants ownership over their words, given the sensitive nature of the topics discussed. Informed consent for follow-up interviews was obtained using the same procedure as the initial interview, and the interviews took place in late December 2018 (see appendices 5 and 6). Participants were offered a $10.00 gift card for their time. Three participants opted to have follow-up interviews with me, and one opted to submit transcript changes via email. Of these participants, one made some changes and substantial additions, two changed minor details, and one made no changes.

Although I maintain the value of member-checks, there were several issues that impacted their usefulness in this project. Most obviously, I over-estimated the degree to which participants wanted and were prepared to deal with their interview transcripts. It would have been more effective to have presented them with a short report and analysis of their transcript. Furthermore, the time lapse between the initial interview and the member-check resulted in most participants losing interest in the project, and the member-check schedule conflicted with exam and holiday schedules of university student participants. Additionally, the process of member-checking and obtaining Transcript Release Forms was time consuming and delayed the data analysis (see appendix 8). The compensation was also unduly influential, as three out of four member-check participants explained that they participated to obtain the gift card, but made very minor changes. As such, it would have been more pragmatic to include a transcript release clause within the initial interview consent form and forgo the member-check compensation. Then, member-checks could be considered as a gesture of courtesy towards the participants, who may partake if they are motivated to do so by the content of a shorter report based on their transcript.

3.7 Interview Participant Characteristics

The interview participants were seven Muslim men and seven Muslim women residing in Canada, with an average age of 23.07 years (standard deviation 2.95) and an age range of eighteen to twenty-nine years old. Throughout the body of the thesis, participants are referred to with pseudonyms, which can be found in table 5 along with some accompanying demographic information.[12] Further demographic information, categorized by gender, can be found in table 6.[13] Ten participants identified as heterosexual, one as bisexual, one as lesbian, and two preferred to leave this category as unassigned. Ten of the participants were single. Of these participants, two had prior relationship experience. Two participants were respectively in relationships, one was pre-engaged, and one participant was married. None had children. Half of the participants were university students, with five pursuing undergraduate degrees and two pursuing graduate studies. The remaining participants had completed a university degree and had entered the workforce. Their fields of work and study were diverse, including commerce, education, entertainment, English literature, engineering, health studies, law, nursing, political studies, psychology, social work, and real estate. All participants identified as Sunni except for two who identified simply as Muslim. Five participants self-identified as highly practicing, seven as moderately practicing, and two as somewhat

[12] Confidentiality was a key concern throughout this research. Information such as specific ages and the provinces in which specific participants reside and/or were educated are not linked with pseudonyms.

[13] Notably, asking about "Living Status" (ie. living with parents, roommates, alone) would have been a valuable addition to the data, for example, shedding light upon privacy issues. This was an oversight on my part.

Table 5: Interview Participant Pseudonyms and Demographics

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Religion	Level of practice	Time in Canada	Relationship
Kawthar	Female	East African	Heterosexual	Muslim	Moderate	Entire life	Single
Nilu	Female	South Asian	Heterosexual	Sunni	Moderate	Most life	Relationship
Junnah	Female	South Asian	Heterosexual	Sunni	High	Entire life	Married
Saba	Female	South Asian	Heterosexual	Sunni	Moderate	Most life	Pre-engaged
Maya	Female	South Asian	Lesbian	Sunni	Moderate	Entire life	Relationship
Bushra	Female	South Asian	*	Sunni	High	Entire life	Single
Tanya	Female	South Asian	*	Muslim	Somewhat	Entire life	Single
Musa	Male	Arab	Heterosexual	Sunni	Moderate	< 5 years	Single
Adnan	Male	South Asian	Heterosexual	Sunni	High	Entire life	Single
Hamza	Male	South Asian	Heterosexual	Sunni	High	Entire life	Single
Jamal	Male	South Asian	Heterosexual	Sunni	High	Entire life	Single
Khalid	Male	South Asian	Heterosexual	Sunni	Moderate	Entire life	Single
Rahim	Male	South Asian	Heterosexual	Sunni	Moderate	5-10 years	Single
Bilal	Male	South Asian	Bisexual	Sunni	Somewhat	Entire life	Single

* Participant preferred not to specify this category for publication.

Table 6: Additional Interview Participants Demographics

Demographic	Women (n=7)	% of women	Men (n=7)	% of men
Place of Birth				
Canada	5	71.4	5	71.4
Other	2	28.6	2	28.6
Citizenship				
Canadian Citizen	7	100.0	5	71.4
Canadian PR	-	-	2	28.6
Education				
Undergraduate Student	3	42.9	2	28.6
Graduate Student	1	14.3	2	28.6
Completed Undergraduate Degree	3	42.9	2	28.6
Completed Graduate Degree	-	-	1	14.3
Previous Relationships				
Unassigned	4	57.1	1	14.3
No	3	42.9	3	28.6
Yes	-	-	3	28.6

practicing.[14] All participants had Muslim fathers, and all grew up with Muslim mothers except for two, whose mothers had different faith backgrounds. All participants identified as South Asian except for two, who identified as Arab and East African respectively.

The majority of the participants' parents immigrated to Canada in the 1990s, although several also immigrated in the 1970s, 1980s, and 2000s. Two participants' parents did not live in Canada, and one participant had one parent who was born and raised in Canada. Regarding the participants, ten were born in and had spent their entire lives in Canada. Of the four non-Canadian born participants, two had spent most of their lives in Canada, one had lived in Canada for five to ten years since immigrating for high-school, and one had lived in Canada for less than five years after immigrating for university. Only two male participants attended middle school and some or all of high school outside of Canada. All others completed their educations in various Canadian education systems. Three participants attended Islamic middle schools and two attended some or all of high school in Islamic schools in Ontario and Saskatchewan. One participant attended a private middle school, one participant attended a Catholic middle school, and two participants attended Catholic high schools, all in Ontario. Seven participants attended public middle schools in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, and ten attended some or all of high school in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Saskatchewan public schools (see table 7).

[14] Because participants' levels of religiosity and practice were self-declared, I am unable to provide an "objective" measure of what this means. Participants seemed to perceive being "somewhat" practicing as a distinct category between being "non-practicing" and "moderately" practicing.

Table 7: Education Systems and Locations of Interview Participants

Demographic	Women (n=7)	% of women	Men (n=7)	% of men
Middle School System				
Catholic	-	-	1	14.3
Islamic	2	28.6	1	14.3
Mixed	-	-	-	-
Private	-	-	1	14.3
Public	5	71.4	2	28.6
Outside of Canada	-	-	2	28.6
High School System				
Catholic	-	-	2	28.6
Islamic	1	14.3	-	-
Mixed	1	14.3	1	14.3
Private	-	-	-	-
Public	5	71.4	3	42.9
Outside of Canada	-	-	1	14.3
Middle School Location				
Alberta	3	42.9	1	14.3
British Colombia	1	14.3	-	-
Ontario	2	28.6	4	57.1
Saskatchewan	1	14.3	-	-
Mixed	-	-	-	-
Outside of Canada	-	-	2	28.6
High School Location				
Alberta	3	42.9	1	14.3
British Colombia	-	-	-	-
Ontario	2	28.6	4	57.1
Saskatchewan	1	14.3	-	-
Mixed	1	14.3	1	14.3
Outside of Canada	-	-	1	14.3

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

Survey data were cleaned to removed responses that were less that 80% complete, and were processed using Excel and NVivo 11. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, anonymized them, thematically coded them in NVivo using grounded theory. The majority of codes were derived from the interview guide categories. The transcripts of each participant were also analyzed as a cohesive unit to ensure that important information had not been so compartmentalised during the thematic coding process that it was used out of context during the analysis. Emphasis was also put on comparing and contrasting responses based on gender, as preliminary analysis suggested that gender significantly impacted participants' relationships, their experiences of sex-education and their involvement in Muslim communities.

As the data analysis is presented in the following chapters, survey data will most often be presented in and used to contextualize the responses of interview participants. Interview data will be the described in the most detail, and interview participants will be referred to by consistent pseudonyms. Overall, there are certainly areas in which the procedure and design of this project could have been improved. I believe, however, that the attention to complex and intersectional identities built into the design was fruitful and resulted in rich interview data.

CHAPTER 4

School-Based Sex-Education

The inception of North American sex-education dates to the early 1900s, when growing moral panic regarding young people's sexual behaviour in a time of increased urbanization and social change spurred American social reformers into action.[1] Sex-ed information was first introduced into Canadian classrooms in 1942, and by 1988, about 57% of Canadian school districts were offering either sex-ed or family life education, the content of which varied greatly and continues to vary.[2] According to this study's interview data, participants learned about sex-ed related topics in a variety of courses, including health, science, biology, physical education and life management. Topics covered in these courses varied greatly, but could include abstinence, anatomy, contraception, healthy relationships, puberty, reproduction, safe-sex, and sexually transmitted infections and diseases. Some topics, especially abstinence and safe-sex respectively, were often taught through guest presentations in both public and religiously designated schools. Sex-ed topics were relatively less varied in religiously designated schools, and mostly related to abstinence, puberty, respecting one's body, and the negative effects of extra-marital sexual behaviour. These topics were mostly taught by teachers in religious studies and ethics classes, through guest presentations, or through extra reading. Participants across school systems noted that some of their teachers did

[1] James W. Maddock, 'Sexuality Education', *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality* 9, no. 3–4 (July 1997): 6–7; Kristin Luker, 'The Birth of Sex Education', in *When Sex Goes to School: Warring Views on Sex - and Sex Education - Since the Sixties* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 35–62.

[2] Janet Ajzenstat and Ian Gentles, 'Sex Education in Canada: A Survey of Policies and Programs', Human Life Research Institute Reports (Toronto: Human Life Research Institute, 1988), 7, 55.

not seem prepared or enthusiastic to be teaching sex-ed, and that manner in which the material was covered was often "shy" or "vague".

Assessing the provision and content of school-based sex-ed in Canada is a difficult task for several reasons. Firstly, there is no unified Canadian education system. Rather, there is a decentralized system governed "in and for" each province and territory,[3] which can contain a public school system, independent/private schools, and a separate Catholic system.[4] Secondly, although the Public Health Agency of Canada published national sexual health education guidelines in 1994, 2003 and 2008, these are not binding national curricula.[5] This is because curriculum objectives, the extent to which different school types must adhere to them, as well as teacher certification, are generally determined by a provincial authority and can thus vary significantly.[6] Thirdly, some provinces and school-boards offer parents and guardians the option to withdraw or "opt students out" of sex-ed classes when they are offered.[7] Lastly, individual teachers' attitudes, especially regarding sensitive or controversial material, are linked with

[3] Government of Canada, 'Constitution Act', § 93 (1867), https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-4.html#h-21; CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada), 'Responsibility for Education', Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, accessed 1 February 2019, https://www.cmec.ca/299/education-in-canada-an-overview/index.html.

[4] Other options include home-schooling, federally administered education for First Nations, as well as being educated outside of Canada.

[5] Public Health Agency of Canada, 'Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education', 2.

[6] Claude Lessard, 'La "gouvernance" de l'éducation au Canada : tendances et significations', *Education et societes* 18, no. 2 (December 2006): 185, 190.

[7] Ashley Csanady, 'Law Allows Parents to Opt out Their Children from Controversial Ontario Sex-Education Curriculum', *National Post*, 23 February 2015, https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/law-allows-parents-to-opt-out-their-children-from-controversial-ontario-sex-education-curriculum; Glen Hansman, 'The Past, Present, and Future of Sexual Health Education in BC', *British Columbia Teachers' Federation Magazine*, December 2015, https://www.bctf.ca/publications/TeacherArticle.aspx?id=38521.

learning outcomes, and Canadian teachers are not always willing or prepared to teach sex-ed.[8]

Within this complex context, this chapter explores young Muslims' experiences and opinions of school-based sex-ed based upon this study's survey and interview data. The chapter will explore issues faced within different school systems, the perceived adequacy of the sex-ed participants received, the extent to which they believe sex-ed "causes sexual activity," and concludes with the question of whether Muslims in Canada should be receiving sex-ed.

4.1 Public Schools and Opting Out

Canadian public schools are government funded and governed by public bodies.[9] The majority of students in Canada attend these schools, as did about half of the interview participants and 74.1% survey respondents.[10] All interview participants who attended public schools reported that sex-ed was offered to them, with the exception of Tanya and Rahim, who only joined public school systems in their final years of high

[8] Jonah E. Rockoff, 'The Impact of Individual Teachers on Student Achievement: Evidence from Panel Data', *The American Economic Review* 94, no. 2 (2004): 247–52; Jacqueline N. Cohen, E. Sandra Byers, and Heather A. Sears, 'Factors Affecting Canadian Teachers' Willingness to Teach Sexual Health Education', *Sex Education* 12, no. 3 (July 2012): 299–316; Melody Morton Ninomiya, 'Sexual Health Education in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools: Junior High School Teachers' Experiences, Coverage of Topics, Comfort Levels and Views about Professional Practice', *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 19, no. 1–2 (2010): 15–26.

[9] Derek J. Allison, Sazid Hasan, and Deani Neven Van Pelt, 'A Diverse Landscape: Independent Schools in Canada' (Fraser Institute, June 2016), 2, https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/a-diverse-landscape-independent-schools-in-canada.pdf.

[10] Deani Neven Van Pelt et al., 'Where Our Students Are Educated: Measuring Student Enrolment in Canada' (Fraser Institute, October 2015), v, https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/where-our-students-are-educated-measuring-student-enrolment-in-canada.pdf.

school.[11] Even when offered, however, not all public school participants actually attended all sex-ed classes, as some parents opted them out. Full-time public school students Bilal, Hamza, and Nilu received the most sex-ed, as they were never opted out, although Bilal and Nilu's parents had to be persuaded to consent to their child's participants in sex-ed classes.

The practice of seeking parental consent and allowing parents to opt their children out of specific curricular content varies across Canada. It is a point of contention among some educational theorists and policy makers, who perceive it as undermining the state's educational authority and potentially violating students' right to education.[12] According to the survey data, Muslim students in Canadian public school systems are far more likely to attend sex-ed classes than to be opted-out of them, as the 76.8% of survey respondents who attended Canadian public schools received sex-ed compared to 23.7% who were opted-out.[13] Notably, this study provides evidence against claims that the decision to opt out is always made by parents and never students themselves.[14] According to the survey, a minority of youth do in fact make this decision themselves. Of the 17.9% (n=45) of survey respondents from all school systems who were opted-out of sex-ed, 6.37% (n=16) either made the decision to opt-out themselves, or in consultation with their parents/guardians. All those who made the decision with

[11] Although some provinces offer sex-ed content during the early years of high school, it is often not offer in the later years.

[12] Lauren Bialystok, '"My Child, My Choice"? Mandatory Curriculum, Sex, and the Conscience of Parents', *Educational Theory* 68, no. 1 (2018): 12–16; Keith Brough, 'Sex Education Left at the Threshold of the School Door: Stricter Requirements for Parental Opt-Out Provisions', *Family Court Review* 46, no. 2 (2008): 409–24.

[13] See figures 1 and 2 for additional details.

[14] Bialystok, '"My Child, My Choice"?', 24.

their parents (n=11) were female, five of whom were born in Canada. Those who made the decision on their own were two Canadian-born Muslim men, and three Muslim women, one of whom was Canadian-born. Wray et al.'s study of sexual health among Australian Muslim immigrants sheds light upon why women may make this decision. They suggest that young women's "sexual self-understanding" and desire to remain "pure" may preclude learning about sexual health information deemed unnecessary, immodest or un-Islamic. This occurred due to community pressures regarding what it means to be a "good Muslim woman" and the self-policing of knowledge intake.[15] As such, the decision to opt-out is not necessarily due to parental coercion, but because youth themselves, share the values of their parents and communities.[16]

In the case of the interview participants, however, the choice of opting-out was always made by their parents. Three public school participants were opted out of elementary or middle school sex-ed by their parents for at least one grade, and in Maya's case, for every year it was offered. There were several reasons given for why parents opted their children out of sex-ed, including the "not us" argument,[17] parental concern that their children were not mature enough, or because the class was not gender

[15] Wray, Ussher, and Perz, 'Constructions and Experiences of Sexual Health among Young, Heterosexual, Unmarried Muslim Women Immigrants in Australia', 80–81.

[16] Similarly, Saba Mahmood cautions academics from interpreting Muslim women's actions as either the reproduction or subversion of patriarchal oppression. Rather, actions can be viewed through the lens of self architecture, wherein certain behaviour can be understood as "disciplinary practices through which pious dispositions are formed" (128). If we apply this lens, the choice to opt-out of sex-ed is related to young Muslims' decision to cultivate their education as they deem appropriate based on any number of factors, including religious beliefs. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 152.

[17] The "not us" argument, based on the belief that sex-ed is not necessary for Muslims youth who should be following Islamic guidelines around appropriate sexual behaviour, and other parental communication strategies around sex and sexuality are discussed in depth in chapter 4.

segregated and thus considered inappropriate. Participants' reactions to being opt-ed out varied. Maya and Junnah recall being upset at being left out and made fun of, especially when other Muslim students were not opting out. Junnah eventually used these reasons to convince her mother to sign the consent form. Hamza and Saba both indicated that although it was somewhat odd not to be attending class, they were not overly bothered and in fact welcomed the free period to do homework or watch TV at home. Maya in particular did not feel that her parents made the right decision because she wanted to learn the course content.[18]

4.2 Religiously Designated School Systems

In addition the public school system, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario have publicly funded Roman Catholic (Catholic) and, more rarely, Protestant "separate" school systems.[19] Between 20-30% of students in these provinces attend separate Catholic schools, although these students need not be Catholic.[20] Separate Catholic schools generally follow provincial curriculums, but may also add courses such as religious studies, family life education, and Christian ethics, and present provincially mandated sex-ed with "a distinctly Catholic view".[21] Jurisdictions across Canada may

[18] Notably, Maya and all participants who were opted-out indicated that they had learned what was covered in class from other informal sources, as discussed in chapter 4.

[19] Allison, Hasan, and Van Pelt, 'A Diverse Landscape: Independent Schools in Canada', 2.

[20] Jason Clemens et al., 'Measuring Choice and Competition in Canadian Education: An Update on School Choice in Canada' (Fraser Institute, February 2014), 17–18, https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/measuring-choice-and-competition-in-canadian-education.pdf; Van Pelt et al., 'Measuring Student Enrolment in Canada', v.

[21] 'Curriculum', Calgary Catholic District School Board, accessed 6 February 2019, https://www.cssd.ab.ca/Programs/Curriculum/Pages/default.aspx; 'History of the SCBSA', Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association, accessed 6 February 2019, https://www.scsba.ca/about-us/history-of-the-scbsa/; 'Understanding Ontario's Health & Physical Education (HPE) Curriculum, 2016' (Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2016),

Figure 1: Levels of School-Based Sex-ed (Survey)

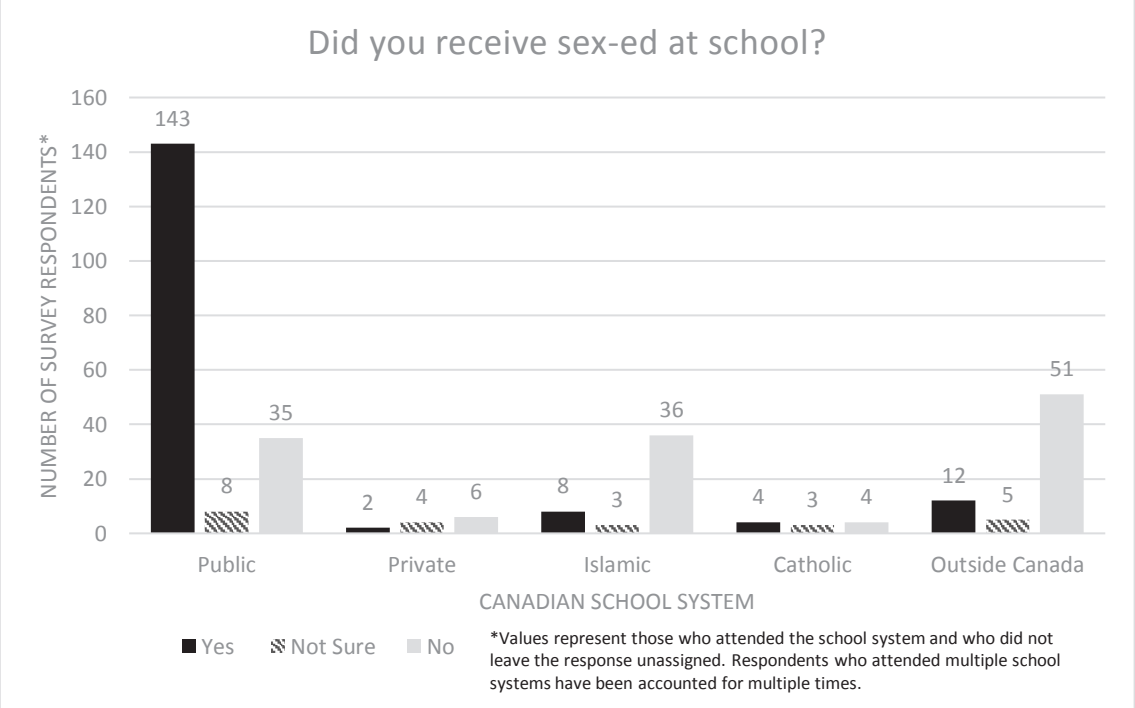
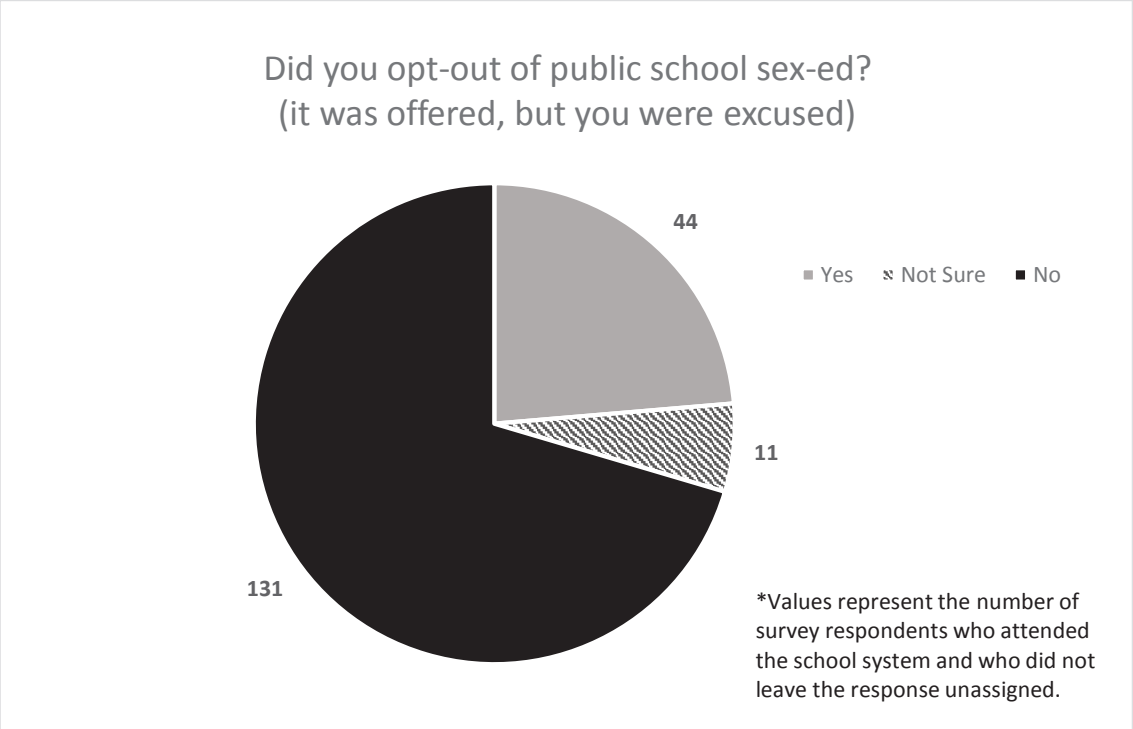


Figure 2: Opting-out of Public School Sex-ed (Survey)



also have "independent" or "private" schools, which sometimes receive some governmental funding, and are usually governed by "non-profit boards of governors accountable to parents".[22] It is under this category which Islamic schools and other non-separate religiously designated schools fall.[23] As of 2013, independent schools accounted for up to 12% of overall provincial student enrollment.[24] About 5% of these are schools are Islamic schools, accounting for about 9% of national independent school enrollment as of 2014.[25] The provinces with the highest percentage of independent school students attending Islamic schools are Ontario (7.2%), Saskatchewan (5.5%) and Quebec (3.9%).[26] According to Zine, Islamic schools in Canada "see it as their central mission to develop a knowledge base and ethos rooted in Islamic beliefs, traditions, and thoughts".[27] They "play a vital role in the social reproduction of Islamic identity and community" when harmonized with a "home environment that validates and reinforces those same values".[28]

Parents elect to send their children to Islamic schools for a variety of reasons, including to provide a socially and spiritually religious environment, to rehabilitate

---

https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/BoardServices/ReligionFamilyLife/Documents/Health%20and%20Physical%20Education%20Curriculum%20brochure--FAQs.pdf.

[22] Allison, Hasan, and Van Pelt, 'A Diverse Landscape: Independent Schools in Canada', 2; Van Pelt et al., 'Measuring Student Enrolment in Canada', v.

[23] Included within this category are Catholic schools that are not part of the separate system.

[24] Van Pelt et al., 'Measuring Student Enrolment in Canada', v.

[25] Allison, Hasan, and Van Pelt, 'A Diverse Landscape: Independent Schools in Canada', iii.

[26] Allison, Hasan, and Van Pelt, 9.

[27] Jasmine Zine, *Canadian Islamic Schools: Unravelling the Politics of Faith, Gender, Knowledge, and Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 6–7; Ghazala Ahmed, 'Muslim Parents at Crossroads: Choosing the Right School for Their Children', *Comparative and International Education / Éducation Comparée et Internationale* 42, no. 2 (13 December 2013): 12, https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol42/iss2/4.

[28] Zine, *Canadian Islamic Schools*, 152.

"wayward" students, and because of a general preference for their subject content and pedagogical approaches.[29] As such, parental discomfort with perceived public school sex-ed content and pedagogy can influence their preference of Islamic schools or even separate Catholic schools, the latter of which has the additional benefit of being free, unlike many Islamic schools.[30] Interview participants in Islamic and Catholic schools received the least sex-ed, although they accounted for less than a quarter of the total number of interview participants.[31] Based on the interview data, which was limited for Catholic school students, the factors that limit the provision of sex-ed differ between Catholic and Islamic schools.[32]

Catholic schools seemed to be balancing a stance between the Catholic theological prohibition of non-procreational sexual activity and contraception, and the content of non-sectarian provincial curricula. For example, Catholic school student

[29] Zine, 95.

[30] Kate Hammer, 'Muslim Students Enrolling in Catholic Schools', *The Globe and Mail*, 5 September 2011, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/muslim-students-enrolling-in-catholic-schools/article4180638/; Ahmed, 'Muslim Parents at Crossroads', 14.

[31] The survey and interview categories captured the faith identity of participants' schools, but did not accurately capture the host school system type, making difficult to connect these responses to policy. For example, although most Islamic schools are "private/independent" schools, they can also be fall under semi-private or blended public school systems. Furthermore, Catholic schools can be separate or private/independent schools.

[32] Keeping in mind distinctions between official religious doctrines and lived religion, as well as the diversity inherent in religious traditions, there are differences between "Catholicism" and "Islam" that should be noted. Roman Catholicism is a branch of Christianity that is led by the centralised papal authority. "Islam" refers to an entire religious tradition, wherein the Sunni majority is not led by a single centralized authority. Shi'a, Ismaili, and Ahmadiyya sects however do have more centralized authority structures. The presence of a centralized religious authority can simplify the determination of an official position regarding matters of sex and sexuality. The only obvious difference that arose from the interview data related to contraception. Although it is difficult to speak of an official "Islamic" stance regarding contraception, it is reasonable to state that Sunni Islamic authorities are more accepting than Catholic authorities of married couples' use of contraception. Dariusch Atighetchi, 'The Position of Islamic Tradition on Contraception Medicine', *Medicine and Law* 13 (1994): 717–28; Paul VI, 'Encyclical Letter Humanae Vitae on the Regulation of Birth', Vatican website, n.d., http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

Khalid recalls that his school had to "take a very delicate stance" regarding contraception as "a harm reduction method", since his school preferred promoting abstinence over contraception. He also remembered learning about the body's sacredness and the impermissibility of extra-marital sex in his religious ethics class, as well as receiving pamphlets about puberty and attending a guest presentation that included information regarding pornography addiction. Jamal, who attended his Catholic high school's International Baccalaureate program, remembers discussing human sexuality in philosophy class, but otherwise received the majority of his formal sex-ed while attending a non-sectarian private school.

In contrast, neither Islamic theologies nor provincial curricula seemed to be major factors influencing the provision – or lack thereof – of sex-ed in Islamic schools. Rather, the schools seemed to be grappling with the discomfort of parents and teachers around speaking openly about sex and sexuality. For example, according to Islamic school students Bushra and Tanya, their respective Islamic school teachers were more likely to ignore or skip over sex-ed related content because the teachers deemed it to be embarrassing or immodest. The trend of Islamic school interview participants receiving limited sex-ed was also supported in the survey data, as 76.6% of the forty-seven survey respondents who attended Islamic schools reported that they did not receive sex-ed.[33] Interview participants Adnan, Kawthar, and Tanya, all of whom attended both Islamic and public schools, did not remember receiving formal sex-ed in Islamic school, although Tanya recalled a brief conversation about the impermissibility of and

[33] The survey data regarding Muslim students attending Catholic school was too limited to show any clear trends.

punishment for extra-marital sex in her Islamic school's Islamic studies class. Islamic school student Bushra noted that she did not receive sex-ed until she turned fourteen years old because her various health teachers did not have the time or did not deem the class mature enough to learn about it. The classes were eventually taught, but only because Bushra herself asked the teacher to do so after pointing out that many of her fellow female classmates did not understand menstruation.

Like Canadian Islamic students, Musa did not receive any sex-ed in his Syrian public school, with the exception of a single chapter in a grade nine religious studies class that covered anatomy and reproduction. Rahim received no sex-ed while studying at a private school in Dubai. Overall, these findings are consistent with previous research that finds that Islamic school authorities often relegate sex-ed to the "null curriculum", defined by Elliot Eisner as the "options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use, the concepts and skills that are not part of their intellectual repertoire."[34]

Although it may seem natural to compare Catholic and Islamic schools because both are religiously designated, there are significant differences between separate Catholic schools and Islamic schools that must be taken into consideration. A key difference between the two types of schools is that separate Catholic schools are fully and publicly funded, whereas private/independent Islamic schools are not, though they may receive partial funding depending on the province.[35] Though publicly funded

[34] Sanjakdar, *Living West, Facing East: The (De)Construction of Muslim Youth Sexual Identities*, 364:187; Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, c1994), 107.

[35] Clemens et al., 'Measuring Choice and Competition in Canadian Education', i–ii.

independent schools must hire provincially certified teachers and adhere to provincial curriculum, many non-funded independent schools are not required to do so and have more curricular autonomy.[36] These differences can have a tangible impact on relegating sex-ed to the null curriculum in Islamic schools. As Zine points out, Islamic schools cannot access financial or institutional resources comparable to the separate Catholic systems in order to develop religiously sensitive sex-ed material.[37] Furthermore, many Islamic schools are small, tuition-charging, community based institutions that are governed by and held accountable to tuition-paying Muslim parents.[38] As will be discussed in chapter 4, many of these parents may not see sex-ed as an appropriate subject of instruction, which, combined with the fact that some Islamic schools may not be obligated to teach provincial curriculums, renders uncertain the status of sex-ed in these schools. As such, the easiest solution regarding sex-ed in some Islamic schools may simply be to not provide any. It should be noted, however, that some parents of Islamic school students are concerned that their children are receiving "vague and meaningless" sex-ed,[39] and this is an area in which some teachers and parents feel that Islamic schools should improve.[40]

[36] Allison, Hasan, and Van Pelt, 'A Diverse Landscape: Independent Schools in Canada', iii–iv.

[37] Zine, *Canadian Islamic Schools*, 22. There is one non-profit organization in the US called HEART Women and Girls that has developed some guidelines to help Muslim communities develop religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed programs. Notably however, this organization is run by volunteers and does not receive government funding. 'About', Heart Women and Girls, 2015, http://heartwomenandgirls.org/about/.

[38] Zine, *Canadian Islamic Schools*, 83–89.

[39] Ahmed, 'Muslim Parents at Crossroads', 14. For additional discussion of parental objections to public school sex-ed, see chapter 4.

[40] Sanjakdar, '"Teacher Talk"'.

4.3 (In)adequacy of School-based Sex-ed

The effectiveness of sex-ed is often assessed by measuring student adherence to or retention of knowledge-, value-, or behaviour-based curriculum objectives.[41] These curriculum objectives are usually designed with the interests of the majority student population in mind, in accordance with mainstream research and views regarding sex and sexual health.[42] In Canada and other Euro-western countries, it is well documented that Muslim youth and youth from non-majority ethnic and recent immigration backgrounds have different sexual practices, values, and expectations regarding what constitutes positive sexual behaviour and outcomes than those of the majority population.[43] Thus program and curriculum objectives deemed to be officially adequate may not be viewed as such by Muslim students or parents themselves.[44] Designing sex-ed curriculums is highly challenging, and there are a variety of factors that influence why

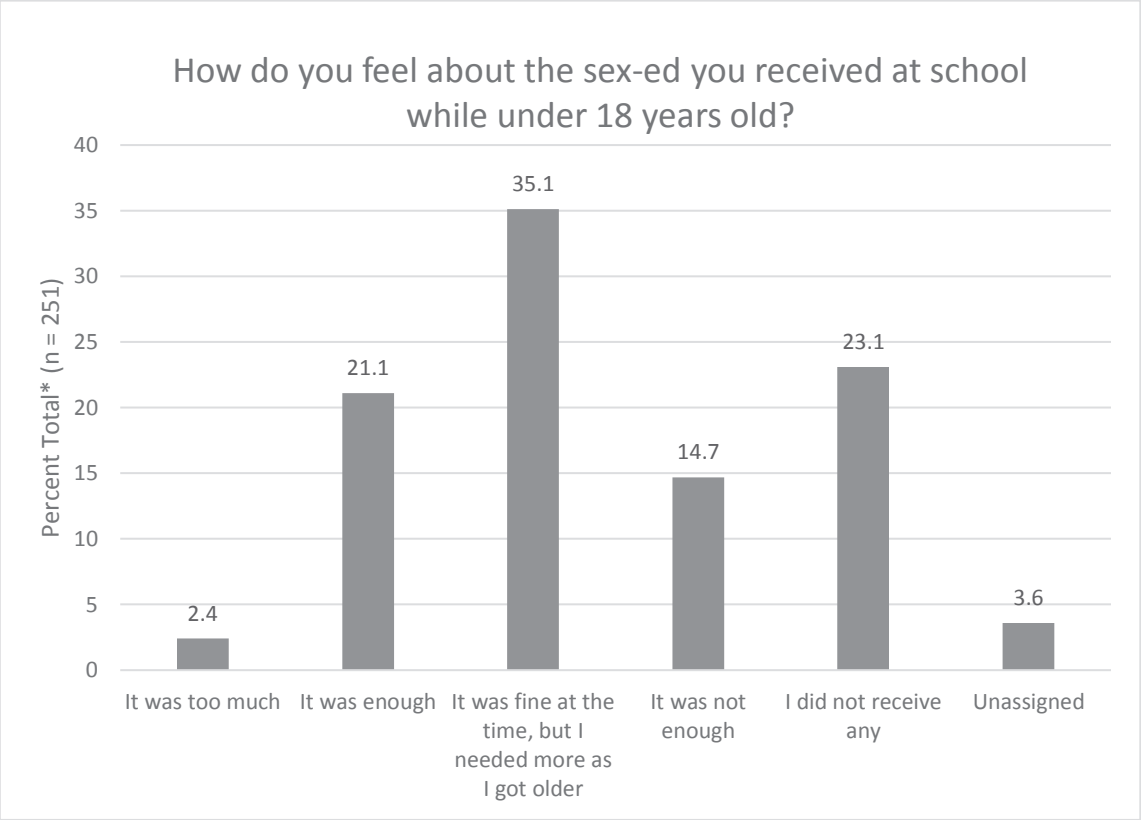
[41] Maya M. Kumar et al., 'Sexual Knowledge of Canadian Adolescents after Completion of High School Sexual Education Requirements', *Paediatrics & Child Health* 18, no. 2 (February 2013): 74–80; Paul James Birch, Joseph M. White, and Kaylene Fellows, 'The Broad Effectiveness of Seventy-Four Field Instances of Abstinence-Based Programming', *Sex Education* 17, no. 1 (January 2017): 14–25.

[42] Maddock, 'Sexuality Education'.

[43] Maticka-Tyndale et al., 'A Profile of the Sexual Experiences of African, Caribbean and Black Canadian Youth in the Context of Canadian Youth Sexuality'; Meldrum, Liamputtong, and Wollersheim, 'Caught Between Two Worlds: Sexuality and Young Muslim Women in Melbourne, Australia'; Jason D. Pole, Sarah Flicker, and Toronto Teen Survey Team, 'Sexual Behaviour Profile of a Diverse Group of Urban Youth: An Analysis of the Toronto Teen Survey', *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 19, no. 4 (2010): 145–56; Sanjakdar, '"Teacher Talk"'; Chris Smerecnik et al., 'An Exploratory Study of Muslim Adolescents' Views on Sexuality: Implications for Sex Education and Prevention', *BMC Public Health* 10, no. 533 (2010): 1–10; Josephine Pui-Hing Wong et al., 'Understanding the Sexuality and Sexual Health of Muslim Young People in Canada and Other Western Countries: A Scoping Review of Research Literature', *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 26, no. 1 (2017): 48–59; Wray, Ussher, and Perz, 'Constructions and Experiences of Sexual Health among Young, Heterosexual, Unmarried Muslim Women Immigrants in Australia'.

[44] This discrepancy is most obviously demonstrated with regard to parents and is not unique to Muslims.

Figure 3: Perceived Adequacy of Minors' School-based Sex-ed (Survey)



youth may consider their sex-ed inadequate. The objective measurement of sex-ed's adequacy falls outside the scope of this project. Rather, in recognizing that responses would be subjective, survey respondents were simply given five options to describe how they felt about the sex-ed they received at school while under eighteen years old, as detailed in figure 3 and described below. Interview participants were also asked if they felt that the sex-ed they received was adequate in enabling them to live the way that they wanted to live and to make healthy decisions (see appendix 7.1 for precise wording).According to the survey, 21.1% of respondents indicated that the sex-ed they received at school while under the age of eighteen was "enough," and 35.1% indicated that "it was fine at the time, but I needed more as I got older". Cumulatively these two groups represented 56.2% of the survey respondents, suggesting that over half of the survey respondents felt they were receiving an adequate quantity and/or quality of school-based sex-ed as minors.[45] In contrast, a cumulative 37.8% of survey respondents either did not receive sex-ed (23.1%) or felt that what they did receive was not "enough" (14.7%).[46] The majority of interview participants fell into this smaller category, which is important context for the qualitative data regarding the inadequacies of sex-ed that follow.[47]

[45] Interestingly, 2.4% of survey respondents indicated that the sex-ed they received was "too much". Although this group was small, it contained the highest proportion of participants who identified their level of religious practice as "very practicing", suggesting a relationship between participants perceived level of practice and perceptions of sex-ed.

[46] The survey data measuring participants who did not receive sex-ed at school appears to be different in figure 1 than in figure 3. This is because the values represented in figure 1 are not percentages, but integer values representing respondents, where respondents who attended multiple school systems have been accounted for multiple times. In contrast, the data represented in figure 3 are percentages, wherein each respondent is only accounted for once.

[47] Selection bias was likely an influencing factor here, as those who had concerns about sex-ed were may have been highly motivated to participate in this study.

Not surprisingly, when asked if their school-based sex-ed had been adequate, interview participants who received minimal or no formal sex-ed responded that it was not. Many of these same participants felt that their "informal sex-ed," or provision of sex-ed outside of school, had also been lacking. The reason for this seemed to be that participants who grew up in environments where the open discussion of sex and sexuality was discouraged, such as Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, as well as some Muslim households and Islamic schools in Canada, also tended to be the least likely to receive informal sex-ed. This silence around sex-related topics in their formative environments created additional barriers for these participants, such as shyness, shame, and a lack of vocabulary for which to seek information about sexual health and sexuality.

For example, three male participants who voiced this concern, Musa, Bilal and Hamza, made strikingly similar comments about wishing that they had been taught, or "warned" about puberty so that they could have been spared the bewilderment they remembered experiencing when they were young. Musa commented:

> when you start to grow, and your body starts to change, you have all those questions, like "Is that normal… should I go tell my mom?" You start to feel aware, or cautious of your body because of those changes. … I had no idea about what's going to happen to me. I was worried, like, "Is that ok? Am I odd? Am I an alien?" (laughs).

In addition to wishing that he had been taught about physical change in public school sex-ed, Bilal noted that he wished someone had explained the physiological and psychological connection between puberty and developing an interest in sex. As he put it, it would have been ideal to have had someone

> not necessarily saying like "Go and have sex" but at least having some sort of articulation, like "Oh, you have sexual thoughts, that's normal"…. Just anybody to explain that to me would have been very revealing … because I didn't know.

This was because his burgeoning interest in sex and pornography seemed like particularly shameful and inexplicable developments after having grown up in a Muslim household in which such topics were never mentioned or explained.

Even those participants who had received some or a fair amount of school-based sex-education did not feel like it adequately addressed age-appropriate concerns and issues regarding sex and reproductive health. Participants were cognizant that some of their topics of curiosity, such as masturbation, sex positions, and oral sex, would be difficult for teachers to broach depending on the age and maturity of their students. Two specific areas of concern that participants had regarding school-based sex-ed are discussed below: a lack of education regarding healthy relationships, and limiting sex-ed to discussions of abstinence or protection.

a. *Healthy Relationships*

Several participants wished that they had received education regarding relationships and interpersonal skills as part of sex-ed. Kawthar explained that one reason she believed this was important was that having

> knowledge and that understanding of what relationships are and healthy relationships, I think it helps youth navigate everything that leads up to sexual activity, not just dealing with sexual activity. Because sexual activity doesn't happen just in isolation.

Including this information was also important to those who felt that they did not see healthy relationships being modeled at home, or whose parents' relational norms were different from the cultural scripts participants considered normal in a Euro-western

Canadian context.[48] At the same time, only being presented with Euro-western Canadian relationship norms was also an issue. For instance, Bilal noted that when relationships were mentioned in school, they were in the context of dating, which was not considered to be an acceptable practice in his household. Such contradictory messages were thus "really confusing [and] none of that emotional education that they even did provide was really applicable to my life and my cultural lens".

b. Safe-sex and Abstinence

Both male and female participants stressed that solely emphasizing safe-sex or promoting abstinence did not feel like sufficient sex-ed. These approaches did not adequately prepare them or their Muslim peers to deal with peer pressure and other complexities of navigating sexual encounters. There were two additional criticisms of the focus on safe-sex. One participant mentioned that protection was only taught in the context of heterosexual sex, giving them the impression that same-sex sexual encounters did not require protection and thus leaving them unprepared. Participants also felt that when safe-sex is the main emphasis of sex-ed, students are implicitly being taught that sex is "just a fun thing to do," and that legitimate reasons for choosing abstinence are not acknowledged. That said, participants were also critical of being solely provided with abstinence-based sex-ed.

[48] For example, parents might refrain from hugging or kissing in front of their children, or from addressing each other by their first names or from using terms of endearment, using formal titles instead. For children who grow up in Canada, their parents' actions can be read as unloving, rather than culturally different.

For example, even as someone intending to practice abstinence, Nilu believed that teaching abstinence without teaching students about the realities of sex was unrealistic, as it is natural for young people to be interested in and to eventually engage in sexual activity. She and several others pointed out that this was especially important "with the way the media is and the way that… a lot of things are hypersexualized". Similarly, Khalid, who was not sexually active, still felt that sex-ed was necessary so that his level of knowledge would be similar to that of his sexually active peers. In fact, the majority of participants who felt that both themselves and other Muslim students should learn about sex in a comprehensive way were not sexually active in high school, and affirmed their belief in the importance of abstaining until marriage or a committed relationship.

4.4 Does Receiving Sex-ed Cause Sexual Activity?

As with addressing the adequacy of school-based sex-ed, objectively assessing whether receiving school-based sex-ed causes sexual activity falls outside the scope of this project. Rather, this section seeks to assess the opinions of Muslim youth regarding this question.[49] It is intended to address a long-standing social and public health debate regarding negative impacts or unintended consequences of sex-ed, which has also resurfaced in some Muslim communities in the wake of Ontario's most recent attempted

[49] I have retained the use of the phrase "causes sexual activity" because this is how I worded the survey question. In retrospect, it would have been better to use a less direct and more nuanced phrasing such as "encourages extra-marital sexual behaviour," but to do so at this stage would be to misrepresent the survey responses.

public school sex-ed curriculum reforms.[50] Based on this study's survey data, the response to this question was a fairly resounding "no". According to the survey, 71.4% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "sex-ed causes Muslim youth in Canada to become sexually active". Notably, a significant 21.1% remained neutral and only 6.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (see figure 4). This study is not well suited to address generational differences of opinion due to participant age restriction. However, it is interesting to note that respondents in the latter group were evenly distributed across the eighteen to twenty-nine age range, but were largely foreign-born Canadian citizens, whereas those who disagreed or strongly disagreed were more evenly distributed between foreign- and Canadian-born Muslims.

Similar to the majority of survey respondents, the majority of interview participants, based on their personal experience with Muslim communities, did not think that sex-ed was a direct cause of sexual activity for Muslim youth in Canada. As Nilu said, "I had sexual education in public school… but I didn't become active right away. It wasn't even in my mind. It was more like, 'this is something that adults do' and that was it." Rather, the decision to become sexually active was something participants viewed as being influenced by multiple factors, of which school-based sex-ed was only one. Half of participants felt that the attitudes towards sex and sexuality that children learned at home

[50] Joseph J. Sabia, 'Does Sex Education Affect Adolescent Sexual Behaviours and Health?', *The Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management* 25, no. 4 (2006): 783–802; Sanjakdar, *Living West, Facing East: The (De)Construction of Muslim Youth Sexual Identities*, 364:187–88; Zimmerman, *Too Hot to Handle*, 37; Shahid Athar, 'Sex Education: An Islamic Perspective', *IslamiCity* (blog), March 2018, https://www.islamicity.org/2191/sex-education-an-islamic-perspective/.

Figure 4: Opinions Regarding the Impact of Sex-ed on Sex Activity (Survey)

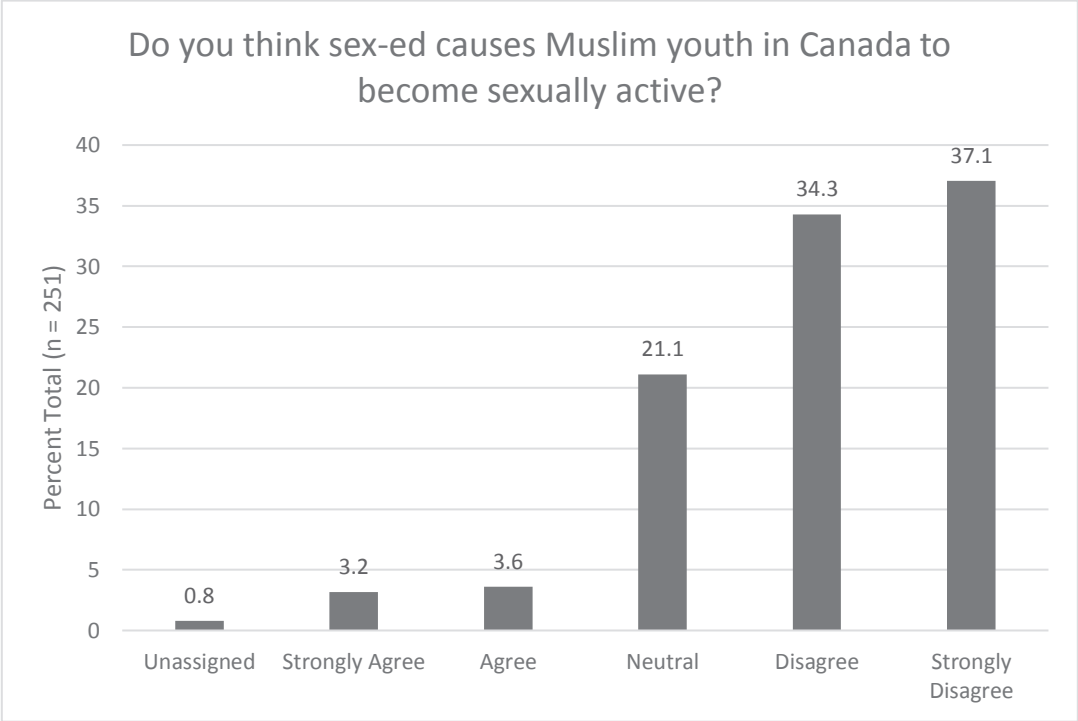
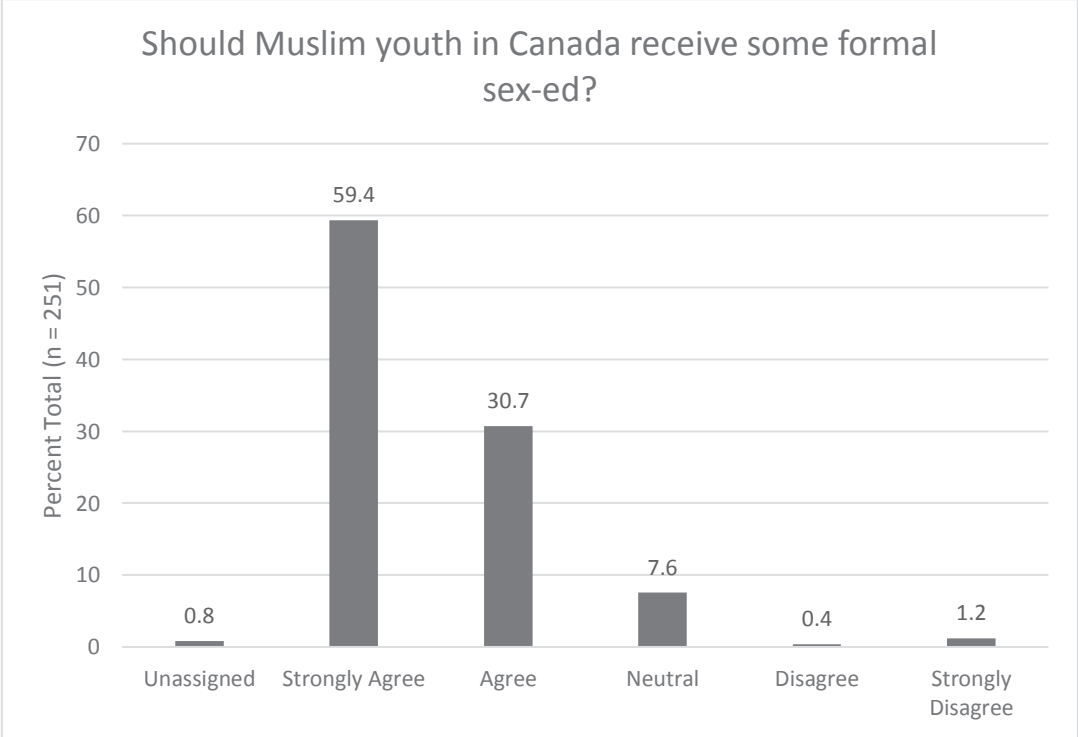


Figure 5: Opinions Regarding Sex-ed Provision for Muslim Youth (Survey)



were more likely to influence their relationship to, and practice of, sexual activity than what they learned at school, as discussed further in chapter 4. Other participants criticized this question as irrelevant, stating that they had been curious about sex before learning about it at school, and that young people regularly come across sexual content from daily life. In fact, participants considered school-based sex-ed as either a neutral or preventive factor for sexual activity. Bushra, for example, believed that learning about sex at school would disincentivize youth from becoming sexually active, because it would be presented in a way that was "boring and gross" rather than mysterious and enticing. Other participants agreed with her, adding that school was a preferable vehicle of education, as it is meant to provide information that is more neutral than that provided by peers or popular media.

4.5 Should Muslim Youth in Canada Receive Sex-ed?

All interview participants believed that Muslim youth in Canada should receive formal sex-ed. The vast majority of surey respondents (90.1%) also agreed or strongly agreed that this should be the case (see figure 5). There were several reasons for this, many of which will be elaborated upon in subsequent chapters. The first was that they believed that Muslim youth were particularly unlikely to receive accurate or adequate sex-ed at home. Second, they also knew from experience that youth are interested in sex and learn about it outside of school, but that these sources do not always provide appropriate information at appropriate times. Thirdly, participants were aware that Muslim youth do have premarital sex, and that sex-ed is thus important in order for them to make safe and well-informed choices with regard to their health. Jamal, for example,

stated that it is not healthy, on an individual or communal scale, to pretend that sex and sexual desire do not exist until after marriage, as this can have negative impacts for individuals and community dynamics.

A fourth reason for which participants felt sex-ed was important was because they believed that Islam encourages Muslims to seek knowledge. This finding is interesting, as it may be seen as counterintuitive to frame learning about sex and sexuality as part of one's religious practice. For example, participants in Wray et al's 2014 study of heterosexual, unmarried Australian Muslim immigrant women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five considered maintaining their ignorance and naivety regarding sex and sexuality as part of "their adherence to idealised 'Muslimness'."[51] These women viewed their "ignorance of all matters sexual in nature as normative and expected."[52] In contrast however, in both Orgocka's 2004 study of American Muslim immigrant girls between the ages of fourteen and nineteen, and Al-Dien's 2010 study of Canadian Muslim youth,[53] some female participants "considered learning about sex and sexuality as part of their duty of being Muslim women" when this learning occurred within the framework of Islam.[54] Male and female participants in the present study expressed similar sentiments.[55] As Maya explained, "the Quran places emphasis on acquiring knowledge, and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), a lot of men and

[51] Wray, Ussher, and Perz, 'Constructions and Experiences of Sexual Health among Young, Heterosexual, Unmarried Muslim Women Immigrants in Australia', 80.

[52] Wray, Ussher, and Perz, 80.

[53] Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education', 402.

[54] Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication', 264.

[55] Notably, only two of the female participants were immigrants to Canada, and both had spent most of their lives in Canada.

women were never shy to ask him about private affairs, like sexuality and all of that." Notably, none of the female participants in this study expressed that maintaining ignorance and naivety of sex and sexuality was part of their adherence to proper "Muslimness". Rather, male and female participants cited Islam's encouragement to seek knowledge as a reason why it was important to obtain Islamic and non-Islamic sex-ed.

Lastly, even when Muslim youth are not sexually active, participants noted that they nonetheless live in a world where many of their peers are, and that these peers sometimes assume that Muslim youth have a certain level of sexual knowledge. According to the interview participants, this disparity can place Muslim youth in situations where they are vulnerable to sexual coercion, assault, or abuse. Overall, participants' arguments in favour of school-based sex-ed support Beyer and Ramji's findings that Canadian Muslim youth have been found to absorb key values of Canadian education systems.[56] However, it should be noted that the majority of the arguments presented above are not unique to Canadians, Muslims, or Muslims in Canada, and many of these lines of thinking developed internationally alongside sex-ed in the 20th century.[57]

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the majority of participants in this study attended Canadian public schools and attended sex-ed classes, even though some were given the

[56] Peter Beyer, 'Growing Up in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe', in *Growing Up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists*, ed. Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 296.

[57] Jonathan Zimmerman, 'The Birds, The Bees, and the Globe: The Origins of Sex Education, 1898-1939', in *Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 14–48.

option to opt out. Parents tended to make the decision to opt their children out of sex-ed, although the survey indicates that some students make the decision to opt out themselves. Participants in Catholic and Islamic schools received different and more limited sex-ed than their public-school peers, although the reasons for this differed between Catholic and Islamic schools. Although half of the survey respondents indicated that they received "enough" sex-ed while under the age of eighteen, the majority of interview participants did not feel this way. Rather, they identified several inadequacies of school-based sex-ed, including a lack of culturally sensitive information regarding healthy relationships, and overemphasizing abstinence or safe-sex to the point of neglecting other important topics.

Despite these inadequacies, the majority of participants believed that receiving sex-ed does not directly cause Muslim youth to become sexually active, and that Muslim youth in Canada should receive some kind of formal sex-ed. The study participants' overwhelming response in favour of Muslim youth in Canada receiving formal sex-ed should not be viewed as an endorsement of the way that sex-ed is currently taught in Canadian educational institutions, as participants were highly critical of the sex-ed that they received. The more salient questions to pose are what the qualities and content of this sex-ed should be; who or what institutions should provide it; and how this fits into Canadian social educational ideologies. These are longstanding debates and areas of research to which the addition of Muslim voices in Euro-western countries are relatively new, and which will be provided in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 5

Informal Sex-ed and Parental Sex-ed

Although school-based sex-ed seems to receive a great deal of media attention, young people in North America access sexual health information from a variety of sources. This chapter will explore how young Muslims in Canada receive sex-ed from a variety of sources other than school-based sex-ed. Some of these sources include the internet, friends/peers, and books, and are referred to as "informal sex-ed". "Parental sex-ed" refers to information regarding sex, sexuality, and sexual health that comes from parents or guardians. Keeping in mind that demographics impact which sex-ed sources youth access, and that different sources convey different underlying beliefs, this chapter provides valuable information from the perspectives of young Muslims in Canada.[1]

Many of this study's interview participants received school-based sex-ed, however, the majority of participants reported that their largest sources of sex-ed were informal (see figure 6). According to the survey, respondents' understanding of sex and sexual health were shaped "some" or "lots" by the internet (86.8%) and friends/peers (85.3%), followed by school (74.9%) and books (64.6%). The sources that were the least frequently reported as shaping respondents' understanding of sex and sexual health "some" or "lots" were siblings (23.1%) and spouse/partner (29.6%). For context, it is

[1] Amy Bleakley et al., 'How Sources of Sexual Information Relate to Adolescents' Beliefs About Sex', *American Journal of Health Behavior; Star City* 33, no. 1 (February 2009): 37–48; Atika Khurana and Amy Bleakley, 'Young Adults' Sources of Contraceptive Information: Variations Based on Demographic Characteristics and Sexual Risk Behaviors', *Contraception* 91, no. 2 (February 2015): 157–63.

Figure 6: Impact of Different Information Sources on Shaping Muslims' Understanding of Sex and Sexual Health (Survey)

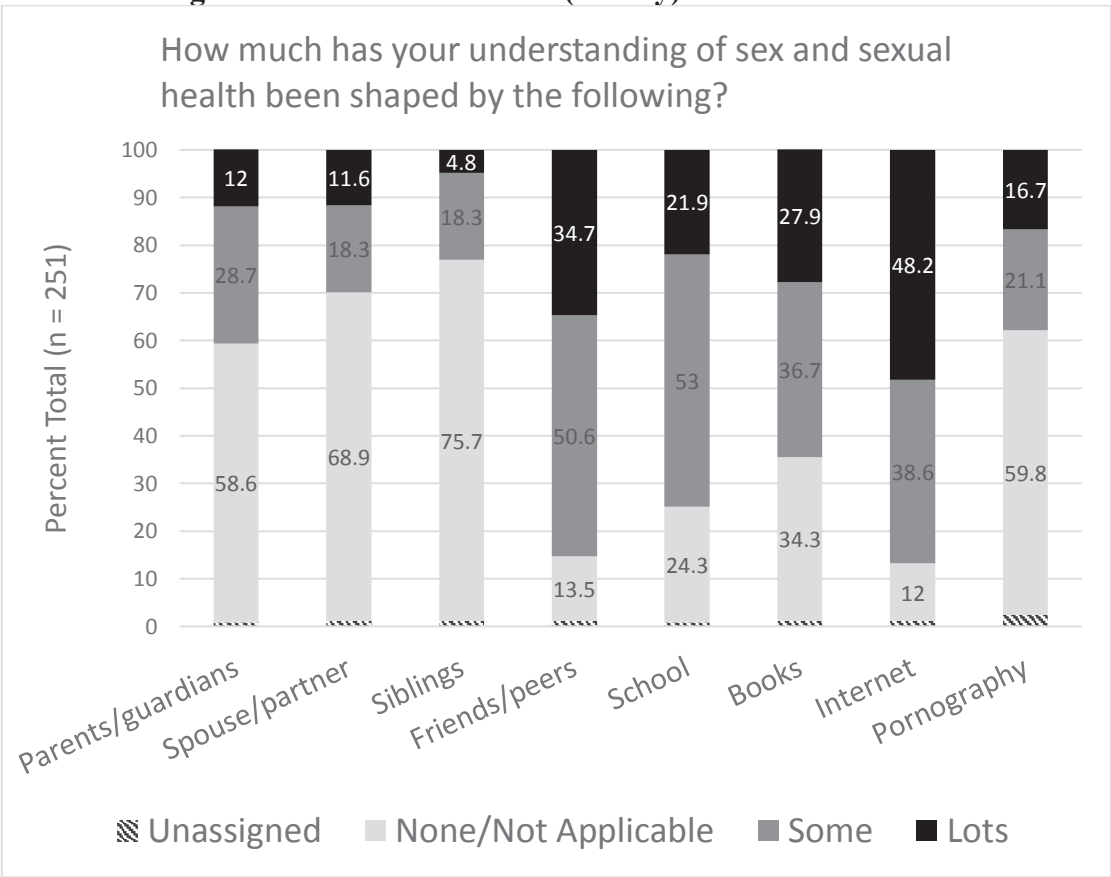
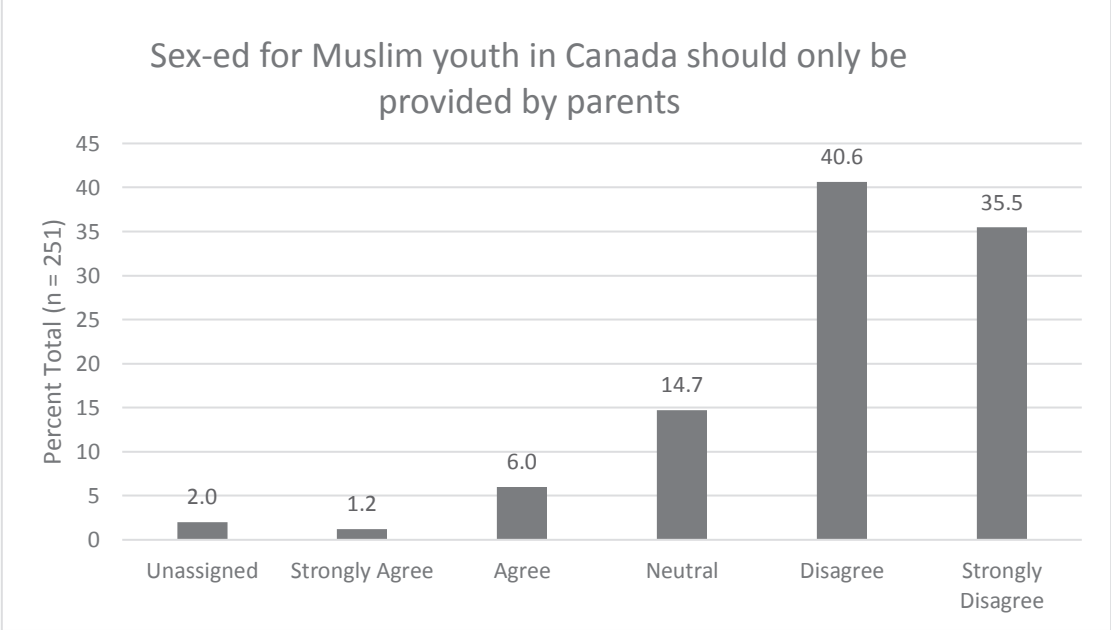


Figure 7: Opinions of Parents' Role in Providing Sex-ed for Muslim Youth (Survey)



important to bear in mind that not all respondents have siblings, and that the majority were single. The other three sources that were the least commonly indicated to shape respondents' understanding of sex and sexual health "some" or "lots" were pornography (37.8%), religious teachers (39.1%), and parents/guardians (40.7%). Each area is examined below, with the exception of religious sources of sex-ed, which will be discussed in chapter 6.

5.1 Internet

According to a 2013 literature review of adolescents' use of the internet to obtain sex-ed, between 20% to 76% of sampled youth have engaged in this behaviour in North America.[2] There are many reasons why the internet is becoming an appealing and normative source of sex-ed. It may be used to supplement offline sex-ed that is found to be lacking, and its appeal is also linked to "the Internet's ease of use, its availability to increasingly large numbers of adolescents, and its perceived anonymity regarding sensitive topics."[3] This study's survey found that the internet was the source of information that shaped the most respondents' understanding of sex and sexual health, and all but two interview participants reported using the internet as a general source of sex-ed. In terms of their motivations for using the internet, several participants mentioned wanting to better understand information or references that they did not understand but that they recognized were taboo. For them, the internet was a natural and

[2] Laura Simon and Kristian Daneback, 'Adolescents' Use of the Internet for Sex Education: A Thematic and Critical Review of the Literature', *International Journal of Sexual Health* 25, no. 4 (October 2013): 307.

[3] Simon and Daneback, 306.

accessible source of information, and also one that could be used without worry of arousing suspicion, anger, or embarrassment if they were to ask another person for clarification.[4]

The perceived accuracy of information accessed online varied. Only a minority of participants felt that everything they had read online was accurate. Some participants combined information gleaned online with speaking to trusted adults and friends; this was easiest with the topics that were the least directly related to sexual intercourse, such as puberty. Others mentioned that they regretted having been exposed to certain types of information, regarding specific sex acts for example, or to inaccurate information at young ages. They felt, however, that they were able to self-correct and gain more accurate information at they got older through further online research, school lessons, talking to people, and from life experience. That "adolescents are savvy users capable of determining what makes an on-line resource trustworthy" has been found by several other studies, and this finding was supported here.[5] With the exception of exposure to pornography, the majority of participants believed that looking up information related to sex-ed online was a normal and unproblematic part of growing up. This was especially the case when it was difficult to gather information from "traditionally" reliable sources such as adults and teachers.

Interview participants reported researching medical, physiological, and psychological sex-ed information online, but also other types of information particular to

[4] See section on Parental Communication Strategies for further discussion of why this is the case.

[5] Simon and Daneback, 'Adolescents' Use of the Internet for Sex Education', 310.

Muslims. Studies have found that young peoples' ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender impact the types of sex-ed they access online.[6] This study suggests that religion can also impact the types of online sex-ed that young people in Canada access. For example, blogs and discussion forums were another medium that some participants used to access discussions about, for instance, the sexual experiences of other Muslims. This included seeking and sometimes receiving advice, support, and even validation for their own personal experiences. Additionally, some participants also reported researching Islamic legal opinions and advice, as well as translations of the Quran and *hadith* for guidance related to permissible sexual activity and how to properly conduct a sexual relationship. Notably, participants were often critical of "Islamic" information, obtained online or offline, and employed a variety of strategies to navigate it, as is discussed in chapter 6.

5.2 Pornography

Although prevalence and rates differ greatly, a significant body of evidence shows that it is common for young people around the world to access online pornography.[7] Studies of religious youth, usually Christian, have found that those who

[6] Simon and Daneback, 312; Khurana and Bleakley, 'Young Adults' Sources of Contraceptive Information'. Notably, North American and European studies of young Muslims have found that the impact of ethnic background declines among second generation youth, differing significantly between those who have spent up to ten years in the Euro-west versus ten to twenty years. This could mean that ethnicity does not impact the types of sex-ed accessed online for some youth. See Beyer, 'Growing Up in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe'.

[7] This article addresses literature regarding adolescent pornography use in Europe (the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Greece, the Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland), Asia (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Cambodia, China, Malaysia, Thailand), North America (Canada, United-States), Africa (Ethiopia, Morocco, Nigeria, Uganda), Australia and Israel. Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg, 'Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research', *The Journal of Sex Research* 53, no. 4–5 (May 2016): 509–31.

attend religiously aligned schools or who identify as religious tend to report viewing less pornography. This distinction has been linked to negative religiously and culturally defined perceptions of pornography.[8] Although there is a lack of research regarding rates of pornography usage among Canadian Muslim youth, a study of young Muslim adults in Indonesia, a "sexually conservative, Muslim-majority country with strict anti-pornography laws", found that "pornography is as widely and readily consumed and accepted as in comparable international studies predominantly using Western-background samples from more sexually liberal and less religious countries".[9] Furthermore, the presence of pornography-related queries, usually seeking help to cease pornography use, on Muslim question and answer forums in both English and French suggest that Muslims in Euro-western countries also access pornography.[10] Studies also report that more men than women consume pornography, a finding that was supported

[8] Gustavo S. Mesch, 'Social Bonds and Internet Pornographic Exposure among Adolescents', *Journal of Adolescence* 32, no. 3 (June 2009): 601–18; Sam A. Hardy et al., 'Adolescent Religiousness as a Protective Factor against Pornography Use', *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 34, no. 3 (May 2013): 131–39.

[9] Gert Martin Hald and Teguh Wijaya Mulya, 'Pornography Consumption and Non-Marital Sexual Behaviour in a Sample of Young Indonesian University Students', *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 15, no. 8 (September 2013): 991.

[10] Nader Alami, 'Je Regarde Du Porno Toute La Nuit!', in *19 Thèmes Sur La Sexualité Des Musulmans: Questions/Réponses de Musulmans Du 21ième Siècle Sur Leur Sexualité* (Paris: Bayane, 2015), 49–52; Raidah Shah Idil, 'I Am Addicted to Pornography. What Do I Do?', Q&A Forum, *SeekersHub* (blog), 20 March 2017, http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2017/03/20/pornography-3/; Raidah Shah Idil, 'I Am a Young Woman Addicted to Pornography. What Should I Do?', Q&A Forum, *SeekersHub* (blog), 14 March 2018, http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2018/03/14/young-woman-addicted-pornography/; Raidah Shah Idil, 'Telling Future Wife about Pornography Addiction', *SeekersHub* (blog), 2 January 2019, http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2019/01/02/telling-future-wife-about-pornography-addiction/.

among Indonesian Muslims.[11] Women in general, however, including Muslim women, have also been found to view online pornography.[12]

Although pornography use was not emphasized in the interview guide, it was included in the survey and emerged as an relevant topic during the interviews.[13] According to the survey, approximately 25% of female respondents and 70% of male respondents reported that some or a lot of their understanding of sex and sexual health had been shaped by pornography, yielding a total of 37.8% of respondents overall who chose this response (see figure 6). The responses of four survey respondents who identified as neither male nor female were evenly divided between being influenced "lots" and "none/NA" by pornography. Six interview participants, four male and two female, reported having watched online pornography, beginning during their preteen and early teenage years. Although it is not clear to what extent pornography shaped these participants' views of sex, it was the most consistently and frequently accessed information source for several participants, both male and female. Some participants felt that this was shameful and "spiritually unhealthy", or that it impacted them negatively because it was an addictive "time sink" when they were young. Others took a more matter-of-fact approach to their experiences with pornography, viewing it as "part of that growing process".

[11] The study addressed gender using a male-female binary, and there does not appear to be data regarding the pornography consumption of non-binary Muslims.

[12] Peter and Valkenburg, 'Adolescents and Pornography'; Hald and Mulya, 'Pornography Consumption and Non-Marital Sexual Behaviour in a Sample of Young Indonesian University Students'.

[13] Several interview participants who spoke about pornography were extremely concerned about confidentiality. Although I have already tried my outmost to remove details that would identify participants through the study, I have opted not to employ pseudonyms in this section out of respect for their concern.

Two female participants who were familiar with pornography but who did not report watching it regularly, expressed their concern that Muslim men's, including their potential future partners', views of sex would be highly influenced by pornography. They worried that this would lead to unhealthy and unrealistic expectations of them as women.[14]

5.3 Friends and Peers

A number of social situations in and outside of school provided opportunities for informal sex-education. According to the survey, friends/peers were the sources that shaped the most survey respondents' understanding of sex and sexual health "lots" (34.7%). All but one of the interview participants cited their friends and peers as having impacted their views and knowledge of sex-ed. The exception to this was Islamic school student Bushra, who believed that she acted more as an educator for her friends and peers than vice versa. Friends and peers were an especially important source of information for students who were opted-out of sex-ed in school, as these participants all reported learning course content from their classmates afterwards, both directly and indirectly. For example, Maya was opted out of all school-based sex-ed. She recalled her shock at learning about childbirth from another student in grade four,

> I didn't believe them at first (laughs). My parents told me that Allah put a baby in a family as soon as they're married. So the little girl was like "Your parents had to have sex to have you" and I was like, "No, Muslims don't have sex" (laughs).

[14] None of the participants who spoke about watching pornography expressed the concern that their own views of sex had been negatively or unrealistically influenced, although this was not one of the interview questions. If asked, this question could have skewed the data.

Learning about sex by socializing with grade-school friends and peers was less common for Islamic school students and students whose group of friends consisted primarily of other Muslims, especially for female participants. For example, regarding talking about sex with Muslim friends, Kawthar said that "It's something that's shrouded, not necessarily in mystery, but… there isn't a lot of open dialogue or even how to bring it up." Catholic school student Khalid recalls that although he talked about sex with school friends, these conversations did not take place with Muslim friends. This changed somewhat as participants aged. They recalled learning about sex and relationships from their non-Muslim friends in grade-school, and, subsequently, from both Muslim and non-Muslim friends in university. For example, Maya became more knowledgeable in university when she "got a group of friends that were kind of more liberal Muslims… [who were] more open to discussions about that kind of stuff."

Male participants' grade-school socialization appeared to be different, as they reported a higher prevalence of "immature" or "obscene" talk and jokes about sex and anatomy. Even when participants did not understand the jokes or want to partake in such behaviour, it was difficult for them to avoid because it occurred frequently, and because refusing to take part would result in mockery. As Hamza said, "I don't want to say that [it was a] 'boys will be boys' mentality, but it was like that." To avoid being bullied for their questions, participants learned to exercise discretion when determining which of their peers were suitable to ask sex-related questions.

5.4 Family Members

The survey did not include "family members" as a general source of sex-ed, although it did include parents/guardians and siblings. Other family members, however, such as cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other extended family emerged as important and varied sources of participants' informal sex-ed during the interviews. For example, Musa, who grew up in the Middle East, believed that cousins and siblings of the same gender are an important source of information "when it comes to young adults in… any conservative Arab country." He explained that young people could speak with these family members about such topics "freely, with no constraints. … You have this very friendly relationship with them, to the extent that you can talk [about] anything with them, no need to be afraid. Especially [with] the married ones."

This was not the experience of participants raised in Canada. Nilu noted that no one in her immediate family in Canada spoke openly about sex, but that when she visits her parents' South Asian country of origin, her aunts are "more open to talk about that kind of stuff" and "have jokes about sex, or humour that's kind of – funny – but definitely inappropriate and sexual in nature." This difference between families in Canada versus in parents' countries of origin could be attributed to the phenomenon of increased religiosity among first-generation immigrants. For some, joining religious communities in their new countries can be an important way to form community, even if religious identity was not something with which they strongly identified before immigrating.[15] Additionally, it may also be reasonable to assume that participants in

[15] Ron Geaves, 'A Reassessment of Identity Strategies Amongst British South Asian Muslims', in *Religious Reconstruction in the South Asian Diasporas: From One Generation to Another*, ed. John R.

Canada did not communicate as openly with their relatives because they did not live nearby, perhaps due to varied immigration patterns.

Participants' experiences with siblings varied based on their ages and family dynamics. Some male participants remember having fruitful discussions with older brothers, while others were angrily told not to inquire about such things. Several female participants learned about menstruation from their older sisters, but did not speak with them regarding sex or sexuality until they were adults, if at all. Junnah explained that she could not imagine discussing sex or reproductive health with her older sisters, as they were like "mother-figures," and she would never speak to her mother about such things. Musa and Kawthar both offered to speak about sex-ed topics with their younger siblings, with varying success.

Another important source of more official sex-ed were family members who were also medical practitioners and closer to the participants in age than their parents. These figures sometimes initiated sex-education for the participants, teaching them things they believed the participants should know. Participants also used them as resources to clarify information that they had received from less authoritative sources, or to answer more personal questions. Notably, parents were the least likely source of participants' sex-education, as will be discussed in the next section.

Hinnells (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 21–24. Notably though, this may be more characteristic of British South Asian immigrants than of Canadian Muslim immigrants. This is because of the difference in the ways that Islam is perceived in these two countries, and the impact that this has on the religious identities of new immigrants. Interestingly, in North America it seems to be the second generation that demonstrates higher religiosity than their immigrant parents as they construct different forms of Islam. See Beyer, 'Growing Up in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe'.

5.5 Parental Sex-ed

An established body of literature demonstrates the important impact of parent-adolescent relationships on adolescent behaviour and consideration for parental guidelines, including around sexual behaviour.[16] The quality of parent-adolescent relationships, as well as parents' attitudes, and the communication styles they employ with their children are linked with reduced or delayed adolescent sexual behaviour, higher emotional well-being, and greater odds of discussing sexual health with partners.[17] According to the survey, 58.6% of respondents indicated that their parents/guardians had not shaped their understanding of sex and sexual health, or that parents/guardians were not an applicable sources of information (see figure 7). Similar to other studies regarding Muslim youth, this chapter's findings support the conclusion that although some Muslim youth would like their parents to communicate with them regarding sex, sexuality, and sexual health, they perceive the parental sex-ed they received, if any, to be lacking.[18]

---

[16] Michael D. Resnick et al., 'Protecting Adolescents From Harm: Findings From the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health', *JAMA* 278, no. 10 (September 1997): 823–32; Elise DeVore and Kenneth Ginsburg, 'The Protective Effects of Good Parenting on Adolescents', *Current Opinion in Pediatrics* 17, no. 4 (August 2005): 460–65.

[17] Vincent Guilamo-Ramos et al., 'Paternal Influences on Adolescent Sexual Risk Behaviors: A Structured Literature Review', *Pediatrics* 130, no. 5 (November 2012): e1313–25; Joanna Crichton, Latifat Ibisomi, and Stephen Obeng Gyimah, 'Mother–Daughter Communication about Sexual Maturation, Abstinence and Unintended Pregnancy: Experiences from an Informal Settlement in Nairobi, Kenya', *Journal of Adolescence* 35, no. 1 (February 2012): 21–30; Meredith S. Hicks, Annie-Laurie McRee, and Marla E. Eisenberg, 'Teens Talking with Their Partners about Sex: The Role of Parent Communication', *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 8, no. 1–2 (January 2013): 1–17; Adam A. Rogers et al., 'Quality of Parent–Adolescent Conversations About Sex and Adolescent Sexual Behavior: An Observational Study', *Journal of Adolescent Health* 57, no. 2 (August 2015): 174–78.

[18] Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication'; Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education'.

a. Parents, Culture, and Muslim Communities

Similar to studies of Muslims in Euro-western countries, many participants distinguish between Muslim or Islamic "culture", and "Islam." They often consider the former to be a significant factor in creating and perpetuating what they perceive as negative ideas around sex and sexuality, as is discussed in this section. Participants sometimes employed the latter as a conceptual tool to justify ideas that they perceive to be more acceptable, which will be discussed at length in chapter 6.[19] The "culture" to which participants refer is often the culture of origin of their parents and other Muslim community members prior to immigrating to Canada. During the interviews, this culture was sometimes specified as Arab, South Asian, East African, or simply "Muslim" or "Islamic" culture. As the majority of participants were South Asian, South Asian culture was spoken about with the most frequency. However, there were no major differences between participants' views of South Asian, Arab and East African culture.[20]

There are several reasons for why this could be the case. Euro-western-born Muslims' identity could be "rooted in Islamic universalism" that "transcends both their allegiance to nationality and the ethnic loyalties of their parents" as Geaves argues is the case for British-born South Asian Muslims.[21] Although Beyer and Ramji have supported this claim with regard to highly religiously involved Canadian Muslim youth, I do not

[19] Beyer, 'Growing Up in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe', 294–96; Sanjakdar, *Living West, Facing East: The (De)Construction of Muslim Youth Sexual Identities*, 364:125–28; Geaves, 'A Reassessment of Identity Strategies Amongst British South Asian Muslims', 17–19.

[20] This supports Ramji and Beyer's finding that ethnicity is not an important identifier for second-generation Muslim youth in Canada.Beyer and Ramji, *Growing Up Canadian*.

[21] Geaves, 'A Reassessment of Identity Strategies Amongst British South Asian Muslims', 22.

think this accurately describes all the participants in this study.[22] A more likely explanation is that the majority of participants were raised and educated in Canada, less closely connected to their ethnic cultures than their parents, and exposed to a variety of Muslims from different backgrounds. Though Muslim communities in Canada can be segregated by culture, there is also a large degree of cultural and ethnic mixing, especially in smaller cities, communities or within institutions such as Islamic schools. Having noticed similar attitudes towards sex in diverse or different Muslim communities, it would seem that participants perceived "Muslim" or "Islamic" culture as a homogenous entity.

Regarding sex and sexuality, participants tended to characterize the people, communities or institutions that they viewed as propagating "Muslim culture" as being "conservative", "backwards" or as having "back home" or "old school" mentalities. For example, Musa felt that his Arab community was very "conservative", meaning that they did not talk about sex or want children to learn about such topics in schools or at home. Similarly, Kawthar said that her Muslim community portrayed sex and sexuality as "something that's supposed to be secret, shameful, etcetera". Bushra expressed that "I feel like it's in our culture. Like in South Asian culture, or even in Indian-Muslim country culture, sex is almost worse than not being Muslim."

Tanya felt that South Asian culture played a role in perpetuating the normalcy of sexual assault. She also felt that both "religion and culture" play a big role in the reason

[22] See Beyer, 'Growing Up in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe', 295.

why LGBTQ+ Muslims may not wish to disclose their identities to other Muslims, as they "make it seem like it's such a sin and it's such a bad thing".

This view of "Muslim culture" was constructed in relation to an equally essentialized view of "Canadian," "Western" or "secular" culture.[23] Participants used these terms interchangeably to refer to a culture that was "non-Muslim". Participants characterized this non-Muslim culture as immodest, sexually permissive, and as Kawthar said, "they do really see sex as something that's just no strings attached". Some participants considered their parents' Muslim views of sex to be a reaction to this non-Muslim culture. Most participants described their parents as falling into the category of "cultural Islam," which was something they attributed more towards their parents' status as immigrants to Canada rather than to generational differences. Participants were generally sympathetic towards their parents' views, but expressed greater frustration and less sympathy towards Muslim communities at large for espousing the same communications strategies regarding sex-ed as their parents, as will be discussed shortly.

b. Parental Demographics

Participants' parents were predominantly South Asian, mostly from Pakistan, but also from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Two sets of parents were Arab and East African respectively. Parents were Muslims born into Muslim families, with the exception of two participants' mothers, who belonged to different religious groups. The majority of participants' parents had immigrated in the mid- to early-1990s. Several

[23] Notably, participants did express nuanced views of these various types of culture, but often resorted to generalizations in order to express their main points.

participants' fathers had been in Canada since the 1970s or 1980s, and the most recent couple to immigrate to Canada had come in the early 2000s. All but two sets of parents lived in Canada. Only one participant's mother was Canadian-born and raised. Roughly two-thirds of the parents had university educations from either their country of origin or Canada. About half of participants' mothers were homemakers, and the other half worked in education, social work, technology, medicine, and finance. Fathers' occupations included pharmacy, engineering, finance, management, and transportation. Several participants' parents were unable to work, were deceased, or were absent from their lives.

5.6 Parental Sex-ed Strategies

Although participants' experiences of parental sex-education varied, for the most part they were absent or minimal, and generally uncomfortable. Describing the role his parents played in providing sex-ed, Jamal said, "Yeah, not my parents. Definitely not my parents. I could say that again and it wouldn't be redundant." It was common for participants to have a negative formative experience with a parent while in elementary or middle school regarding a sex-related inquiry. From these experiences, they learned their family's culture regarding sex, and to predict the strategies their parents employed in response to such queries. Participants described three broad parental sex-education communication strategies that I will refer to as the "Never speak of this," the "Not us," and the "Just don't" strategies. These approaches could be combined or altered depending on the particular family. These strategies were not unique to parents, and were also employed by other family members and religious authority figures. Since

participants were asked specifically about their views of parents and sex-ed, these strategies were thus featured most prominently in discussions regarding parents, and are explained below.

a. "Never Speak of This"

The "never speak of this" approach was characterized by the censure and silence of any sex-related topic. Participants' learned that their parents' reactions to bringing up these topics would be shame, anger, or simply being ignored. They thus learned that it was best to "never speak of this," as explained by Hamza,

> There was never any reason for having these conversations, and it was very, very, very stigmatized to the point of absolute silence. We could not. There could be no mention of this sort of 'filth' in a family setting, at a family dinner table, even in closed, private conversation with your parents, you know?

Hamza, for example, was ignored when he accidentally broached the topic of menstruation after hearing the word in a Friday sermon: "I just remember turning to [my dad] and saying, 'What's a menstrual cycle?...' and my dad was just stone cold, just completely, and that's the first time I remember my dad ignoring me." Musa was also censured as a teenager. Knowing that his mother would not be open to discussing sex, he bought an educational book, but was caught reading it by his mother. "I [said] 'Mom ok, you are taking away the book, how can I know about that?' And she told me 'Before you get married, by one day [the day before], I will tell you everything' and I [said] 'Thank you mom, that's helpful' (laughs)." The most extreme example of shaming within this approach took place in Bilal's household, where he said the notion of sex was surrounded with "a lot of fire and brimstone. I felt like even liking a girl was as if I was having like the flames of hell lick at my feet. To even have a sexual thought was this

demonic, shameful thing." His mother's reaction to his transition to puberty was abusive, and he learned not to approach her regarding the issue. The majority of participants' experiences, however, did not reach Bilal's level of severity. For example, after Khalid's parents got angry when he mentioned the possibility of meeting a potential spouse at school, he realized that if something as "righteous as marriage is disqualified from the conversation, then definitely any sex-ed is questionable." Jamal, Saba and Adnan's families also followed the "never speak of this" approach. This strategy was the most commonly employed, and was often combined with the "not us" strategy.

b. "Not Us"

The "not us" approach was characterized by a nominal parental acknowledgement of sex, and was most commonly used to frame a child's participation or non-participation in school-based sex-ed. For students who attended sex-ed, parents prepared for or reacted to their children's lessons by framing certain practices as applying to other people, but "not us". For example, Bushra's parents framed sex-ed for her younger siblings who attended public school as "important knowledge, but [that] you don't need to apply it right now". The "not us" strategy was also used by parents to explain why they were opting their children out of school-based sex-ed. For example, Junnah's mother told her that "we're Muslim, we don't take these classes", and Hamza's mother explained that he did not need to attend class because the content was not "what we believe in". In these cases, "not us" was stated factually, as if parents considered Muslims and pre-marital sexual behaviour or sexual behaviour in general as mutually

exclusive categories. Kawthar explained this mentality, as well as some of its potentially negative impacts:

> Especially when it comes to things like STIs and stuff, there is really that narrative that this doesn't happen to Muslim people, so we don't have to worry about those kinds of things. Sometimes it even extends to girls' vaccinations, like how kids get vaccinations at school for HPV.

c. *"Just Don't"*

Another communication strategy that parents employed appeared to be an attempt to control potential sexual behaviour with simplified prohibitions. For example, when Tanya became an adult who presumably knew about sex, her mother's communication approach to sex-ed topics was an uncontextualized command telling her not to "do it":

> Occasionally, I guess now my mom feels like she has to talk to me about it. But it's just very awkward. She's just like "Just don't do it!" (laughs)…. and I'm like "Obviously mom, why would I ever do something like that?" (laughs).

Similarly, in an attempt to prevent him from interacting with girls in middle school, Hamza's mother simply told him that girls were bad:

> I wasn't ever allowed to date in middle school and high school. But [my parents] never told me why… "Girls are bad," that's what they said, I remember my mom clearly telling me this. "Girls are bad." She said that. "Girls are bad." Bad? The entire 50% of the population is just bad?

As is clear from the end of the quote, the simple statement that girls are bad, and the implication that Hamza should stay away from them was confusing to him when he was young. As an adult, he learned that it was not accurate and so ignored the statement. Tanya simply found her own mother's comments amusing, and saw no reason to engage in any further discussion regarding sexual activity with her mother beyond outwardly agreeing with her, and keeping her personal choices private.

5.7 Outcomes of Parental Communication Strategies

All of the above-mentioned approaches stigmatized sexual behaviour to different extents. The outcome of the "never speak of this" approach was that participants would seek all of their sex-education from sources other than their parents. As Nilu said, "It's better that the school does [sex-ed]. (Laughs) I don't think I could ever look in my parents' faces and talk about that." During this process of self-education, participants would often feeling guilty for having questions related to sex, or for coming across sexually explicit information. Four participants observed that youth who grow up in households that strictly employed the "never speak of this" strategy seemed more likely to rebel against their parents' restrictions and values. Bushra believed this was because sex was considered to be "such a forbidden fruit thing that [you] just got hooked onto the idea of it". This applied to both men and women, as Bilal explained,

> it's really this rebellion, sexual rebellion…and I think it leads to a lot of fetishization of sex. It leads [young Muslims] to go into unhealthy relationships just because they really want that safe place to have sexual thoughts and feelings, and it's something that I do too. I'm so desperate to find a safe place for my sexuality, and it leads me to unhealthy relationships.

Both Bushra and Bilal felt that they had experienced this reaction to varying degrees, and that it was one which they had witnessed in their communities. Bilal elaborated that the silence surrounding sex and the "forbidden fruit until marriage mentality" can negatively impact men's view of women, "Because it's tied to like – 'ok don't have sex now, young man, don't have sex! But once you get married [thumps table for emphasis], you've got a fuck doll'…. a place to take out your sexual angst on that you've been saving all these years."

Although the "not us" strategy was far from ideal in the minds of the participants, some preferred it to the others. This is because their parents sometimes used it to rationalize the limits of what they considered to be appropriate behaviour, rather than giving no explanation at all. Participants believed that if parents supplemented school-based sex-education with Islamic perspectives such that youth became "strongly grounded in it", they would not likely be influenced by un-Islamic perspectives. For some participants, this "not us" conversation was the closest thing to sex-ed that they received from their parents.

In addition leading to shame and rebellion, participants perceived these parental sex-ed communication strategies as stigmatized sexual behaviour to the point of rendering it impossible to bring up, even in the most serious of cases. Generally, participants felt that Muslims in general would not be able to disclose sexual assault or rape to their parents, and that their parents would not be able to provide them with support if they did. For example, in the experience of two participants as well as some of their close friends, it was simply impossible to disclose negative pre-marital sexual experiences to their parents. In these cases, the young people involved could not conceive of a situation in which speaking with their parents could be beneficial, and thus relied on their friends, professionals, or no one at all. Nilu explained that she never wanted to approach her parents with any questions or disclosures because "there's always this fear that if you do something wrong … the ramifications could go from 'We won't talk to you for a week' or you'll get disowned."

5.8 Idealized Visions and Realistic Expectations of Parents' Roles

Although participants were cognizant of the negative consequences of parental sex-ed communication strategies, they were also understanding of why their parents employed them. They acknowledged that parenting is difficult and easier to criticize than to do, noting that it is especially difficult for parents who were raised in countries where approaches to sex and sex-education differ significantly from Canadian norms. In Saba's words,

> I always kind of wished that my mom provided all of this information to me, but at the same time, I guess I kind of understand where she was coming from too. Because my parents came from Pakistan. And I don't think they – or at least in their generation - they didn't have any formal sex-education.

Several participants also acknowledged that not all parents are able to teach their children about sex or model healthy relationships due to past trauma or a lack of education on their own part. Other participants were appreciative of the efforts that their parents did take to educate them.

When asked what they thought the ideal role of parents should be in providing sex-ed, most participants believed that it should be the joint responsibility of parents and educational institutions. Generally, participants believed that an ideal educational arrangement with their parents would be a safe and non-judgmental space to ask questions, as explained by Kawthar:

> The role that [parents] can have is cultivating a relationship and an environment where they can have open dialogue with their children. So that they feel like their children don't need to hide things from them and that [the children] can come to their parents for anything.

When asked if they thought their ideal visions for the role of parents in providing sex-ed were realistic, the majority of participants agreed with Musa's statement that this was

"an ideal, but not realistic at all". This is similar to Al-Dien's 2010 study of nine Canadian Muslim adolescents' view that "it was their parents' duty to provide for them the moral and emotional information regarding sexuality-related topics and to challenge any confusion associated with sexuality being a taboo subject", but that parents largely were not able to play this role due to embarrassment and lack of skills.[24]

A minority of this study's interview participants expressed optimism that their parents' role in providing sex-ed could evolve to match their vision, but noted that this evolution would be a lengthy process for parents who were not been born or raised in Euro-western countries. Confirming the recommendations of other academics and advocates, Saba and Kawthar believed that it would be beneficial for Muslim parents to be educated about the role of sex and sexuality in Canadian society, to learn the sex-ed content their children receive at school, and to be taught how to speak to their children about these topics. They did not think these approaches came naturally to parents.[25] Jamal put it more bluntly, stating that "step one is that we stop being prudes…. Like we first have to accept that sexuality is ok." He did not believe that this was realistic to expect of South Asian immigrants of his parents' generation. The majority of participants also believed that, although their ideal vision of parents' role in providing sex-ed was unrealistic for their own parents, it was more realistic for second and third generation Muslim parents in Canada such as themselves. They believed that they had a

[24] Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education', 401–400.

[25] Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication'; Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education'; HEART Women & Girls, 'Let's Talk About Sex (Education): A Guide to Effective Programming for Muslim Youth' (Chicago: HEART Women & Girls, 2014), http://heartwomenandgirls.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/HEART_Guide_sexed_programming.pdf.

better understanding of being a young person in Canada, the role of sex and sex-ed, and the adequacy of sex-ed as provided in Canadian schools. As Bilal put it, "my kids are gonna be so lucky."

None of the interview participants believed that sex-ed should be the sole responsibility of parents. Similarly, 76.1% of survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "sex-ed for Muslim youth in Canada should only be provided by parents", and only 7.2% who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (see figure 7). According to interview participants, the overarching reason for this was that the majority of their parents had never had conversations with them about puberty, sex, sexuality or relationships. Furthermore, participants felt that parents should not be solely responsible for providing sex-education because it would be too embarrassing or awkward for one or both parties, to the point of rendering such conversations impossible. Participants believed that it would be better for schools to provide sex-education so that youth would receive it from at least one reputable source, and so that all youth would have a basic level of knowledge regardless of their parents' comfort with the topic.

5.9 Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, this chapter shows that, consistent with young people around the world,[26] Muslim youth in Canada access information, beliefs, and values regarding sex, sexuality, and sexual health from a variety of sources other than school and their parents;

[26] See Simon and Daneback, 'Adolescents' Use of the Internet for Sex Education'; Khurana and Bleakley, 'Young Adults' Sources of Contraceptive Information'; Peter and Valkenburg, 'Adolescents and Pornography'; Hald and Mulya, 'Pornography Consumption and Non-Marital Sexual Behaviour in a Sample of Young Indonesian University Students'.

that many youth are aware that these sources vary in quality and accuracy; and that they desire better communication regarding these topics from their parents. The internet and friends/peers were reported to shape the largest percentage of this study's participants' understandings of sex and sexuality; and parents, religious teachers, and pornography the least. Although Muslim parents and religious leaders are unlikely to appreciate that they reportedly shape Muslim youths' understandings of sex and sexual health at similar rates to pornography, they may find comfort in knowing that the impact of pornography was reportedly low.[27] Furthermore, the ways in which these different sources shape young peoples' knowledge is likely quite different. For example, other studies indicate that sources such as parents, grandparents and religious leaders have been found to convey information associated with beliefs likely to delay youths' sexual debut. In contrast, friends, cousins and media have been associated with beliefs more likely to increase it.[28]

Compared to a 2013 literature of adolescents' internet usage to obtain sex-ed information, this study's survey findings suggest that Muslim youth in Canada may be engaging in this behaviour at higher rates than other young people in North-America.[29] However, differences in the wording of the questions and changing internet usage habits[30] likely account for this difference. It has been noted that the internet is used as an alternative to sex-ed when it cannot be obtained from authoritative sources such as

[27] That said, I suspect that survey respondents likely underreported the role of pornography due to shame or embarrassment.

[28] Bleakley et al., 'How Sources of Sexual Information Relate to Adolescents' Beliefs About Sex'.

[29] Simon and Daneback, 'Adolescents' Use of the Internet for Sex Education'.

[30] More recent research that takes into account the use of smartphones would likely show that adolescents' overall use of the internet, including to obtain sex-ed information, is even higher than the numbers reported in the study cited above.

schools and parents. As such, young Muslims may be particularly driven to seek information online if their parents do not speak about these topics, opt them out of sex-ed, or if sex-ed is not provided in religiously-identified schools. Furthermore, young Muslims may be more likely to seek particular types of information online that they are less easily able to access in person. This could include advice, support, or validation regarding questions and experiences around sexuality from Muslim perspectives, and Islamic legal guidelines regarding permissible behaviour. This may also be the case because though friends and peers were an important and highly accessed source of information, these were primarily non-Muslim friends and peers.

According to the interview participants, though parents were considered to be effective at conveying certain rules, values, and prohibitions related to sex and sexuality, they were not viewed as sources of practical sex-ed. In fact, the majority of parental sex-ed strategies were found to stigmatize sexual behaviour, such that participants preferred not to engage their parents in conversation on the topic and did not imagine that they could disclose sexual assault or abuse to their parents. In the absence of parental communication, the internet, friends, and peers were the most important sources of education regarding puberty, sex, and relationships for interview participants. With this in mind, it is reasonable to conclude that opting students out of school-based sex-ed and not engaging in parent-child discussions are not effective ways of preventing young Muslims from learning about sex, sexuality and sexual health.

These practices are, however, effective ways of preventing Muslim youth from accessing "official" sex-ed information from sources that they are likely to believe, as schools and parent figures are sources of authority for young people. This lack of

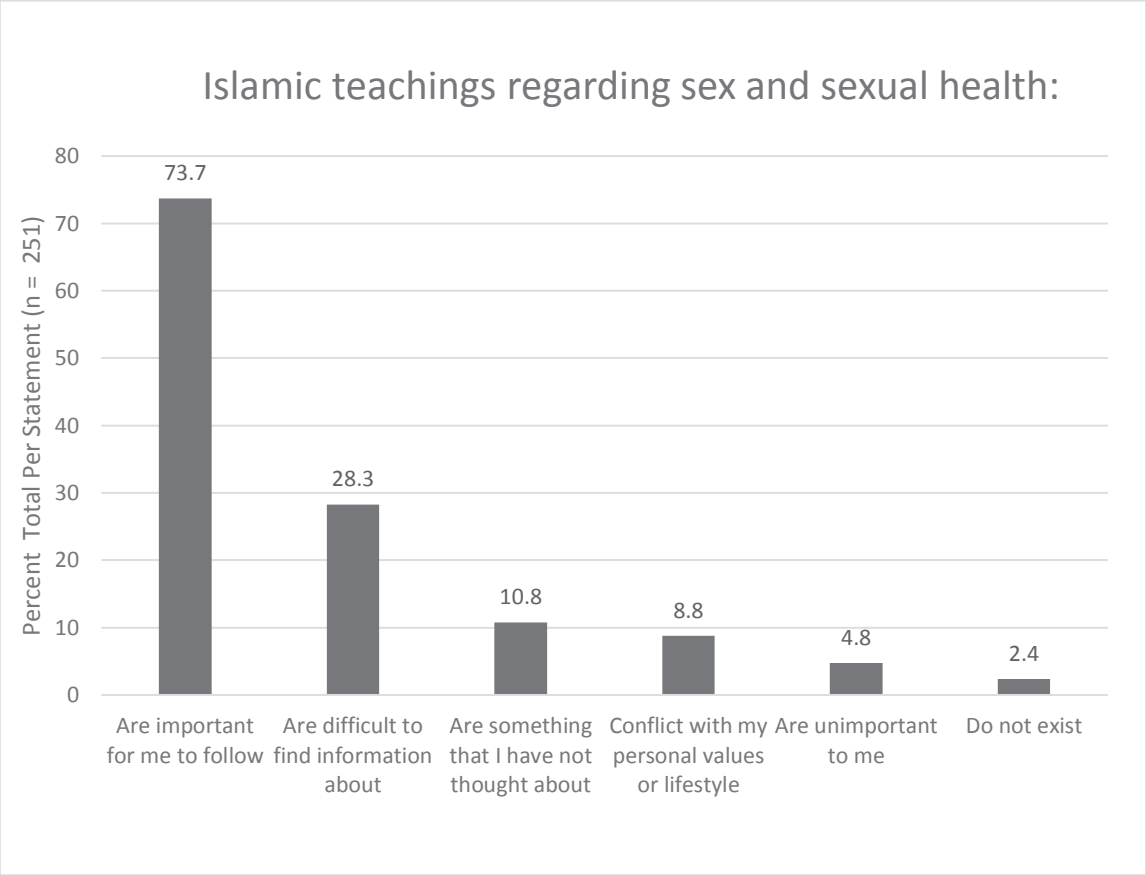
communication also increases young Muslims' confusion around sex-ed topics and increases their shame or guilt for being curious. Furthermore, a lack of school-based sex-ed or parental sex-ed appears to impact Muslim youth's ability to assess the accuracy of the informal sex-ed they inevitably receive from other sources, especially in elementary and middle school. Although many participants expressed that they would have liked to have learned more regarding sex and sexual health from their parents, they also understood why their parents did not provide them with information. This points towards a larger issue of religious, cultural and generational gaps between children and their parents, and the desire to have more open communication in general, including but not limited to topics such as sex, sexuality, and sexual health.

CHAPTER 6

"Islamic" Sex-ed

"Islamic" sex-ed or "Islamic teachings" about sex, sexuality and sexual health shape many Muslims' views of these topics. According to the survey, 73.7% of respondents indicated that Islamic teachings about sex and sexuality "are important for me to follow", a sentiment shared by the majority of the interview participants (see figure 8). Interview participants were asked whether they thought "Islam has any teachings or lessons regarding sex, sexuality or gender," and if so, what they were. Neither "Islam" nor "teachings" were defined, allowing the meaning of the term to be shaped by the participants. They largely described "Islamic teachings" as rules or guidelines governing ideal sexual behavior, relationships, and identities. Participants did not speak about Islamic teachings as relating to medical advice, biological processes, or scientific explanations of sex or sexuality, information which I will term "non-Islamic" sex-ed. As Musa saw it, "There's no Muslim perspective on that, because (laughs), that's fact. A tree is a tree, whether it's a Buddhist perspective or a Muslim perspective." For example, Islamic teachings could address questions such as "With whom can I have sex?" or "What forms of birth control are allowed in Islam?" but did not address questions such as "What is sexual intercourse?" or "How can pregnancy be avoided?". The term "Islamic sex-ed" will refer to these "Islamic" teachings as described by participants.

Figure 8: Views of Islamic Teachings about Sex and Sexual Health (Survey)



The first part of this chapter will explore the content and sources of Islamic sex-ed, and the degree to which participants considered them important. As discussed below, participants' sources and processes of gaining Islamic sex-ed overlapped with informal and parental sex-ed. The second part of the chapter will explore the strategies that participants used to navigated Islamic sex-ed, including varied forms of acceptance, reconciliation, struggle, and rejection.

6.1 "Rule Book" Islam

When asked about what they had learned regarding sex and sexuality in Islam, all but one of the participants spoke within an Islamic legal (*fiqh*) framework of differentiating between what is forbidden (*haram*) or permissible (*halal*), sometimes also mentioning the categories of discouraged and encouraged behaviours. Similar to Junnah's quote below, five participants spoke about "rule book" Islam as being found directly in the Quran:

> There's a lot of mentioning in the Quran about things that are right and things that are wrong. Obviously we know in the Quran it says that being homosexual is *haram*, so that. And then there's a lot of talk about women and marriage, things like that in the Quran. …there's a lot of stuff that says, "don't have sex before marriage" in the Quran as well.

Notably, though the Quran and *sunnah*[1] are the primary source material from which Islamic law is derived,[2] only a minority of Quranic verses set legal imperatives.[3] Although they spoke within a legal framework, less than half of the participants seemed aware that there was a difference between *fiqh* and the Quran/*sunnah*. Further, all but one participant reported that because they did not understand Arabic, they relied on English translations of the Quran, which most participants had not read in its entirety. Keeping in mind that all but two participants were Sunni (the other two identifying simply as Muslim), only one mentioned following any specific *madahib* or schools of legal thought, indicating either a monolithic or post-*madhab* view of Islam, or a general lack of awareness regarding differences within *fiqh*. All participants mentioned that Islam had some rules governing sex and sexuality, but as Adnan said, many were unsure about "the greater meanings behind these rules," a phenomenon he described as "just boiling down Islam to a rule book". This "missing link" between participants'

[1] *Sunnah* refers to the prophetic tradition, which is based upon what Prophet Muhammad said, did, allowed or prohibited. These teachings were recorded in orally transmitted reports, or *hadith*, and these too were compiled in written form after his death.

[2] While both of these primary sources are acknowledged to be the points of origin for Islamic law, there is less consensus regarding how and to what degree they should be influenced by each other. Imam Al-Shafi'i's work has been interpreted to argue that the entirety of Islamic law has been revealed in the Quran, and that the *sunnah* explains and elaborates upon it. Thus Quranic interpretations must consistently and logically conform to the authentic Sunnah David Vishanoff, 'A Reader's Guide to al-Shafi'i's Epistle on Legal Theory (al-Risala)', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28, no. 3 (n.d.): 246–49. Alternatively, some Muslim feminist scholars have adopted a Quran-centric approach, and do not seem to have devoted as much attention to examining the *hadith* and *sunnah* as they have on the "spirit" of Quran. Ayesha Chaudhry, 'Producing Gender-Egalitarian Islamic Law: A Case Study of Guardianship (Wilayah) in Prophetic Practice', in *Men in Charge?: Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition*, ed. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Mulki Al-Sharmani, and Jana Rumminger (London: Oneworld Publications, 2015), 89.

[3] Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2003), 25–26.

knowledge of "rule book" Islam and the processes whereby the rules are derived likely contributes to their frustration with them.

Regarding these rules, most participants simply mentioned that pre- and extra-marital sexual relations are forbidden and incur a severe punishment in Islam, both socially and in the form of divine judgement, and then expressed confusion regarding whether further Islamic sex-ed existed. The next most commonly learned rules were that Islam discourages acting on sexual desire in any way prior to marriage, including masturbation, followed by the belief that it is either forbidden to be homosexual or to engage in same-sex sexual behaviour. Some participants went on to explain additional *fiqh* rulings: that bestiality and anal sex are sins and are forbidden; that Islam forbids marriage between certain relatives; and that a married couple cannot have sexual intercourse while the wife is menstruating, or while both parties are fasting during Ramadan. Some participants also expressed their uncertainty with the Islamic permissibility of several issues, including using sex-toys, engaging in oral sex, if same-sex relations are allowed in heaven, whether Muslims can be transgender, and whether a husband can strike his wife.

Regarding aspects of sex and sexuality that were permissible or encouraged in Islam, most participants reiterated that the only avenue for sex is heterosexual marriage; that Islam encourages people to marry and have children; that unmarried men and women should control their sexual desire; and that a recommended way of doing this is

by fasting regularly.[4] Some participants believed that Islam teaches that the natural state of a human being is to be heterosexual and cisgender. Others mentioned that foreplay is *sunnah,* that a husband should not leave his wife sexually unsatisfied, and that he should ensure that sex is pleasurable for her. Both pleasure and procreation were considered acceptable reasons for married couples to have sex, and having sex with one's spouse was considered to be an act rewarded by God. Regarding gender roles and gender specific teachings, some participants explained that men should be providers for their families; that gender segregation is an important part of Muslim society; and that men and women are equal in Islam. Others explained that Islam affords women rights, such as consenting to marriage and to having sex; and that modesty is paramount in Islam for both men and women. Lastly, it was mentioned that women must ritually cleanse themselves after their menstrual periods and couples must ritually cleanse themselves after sexual intercourse.

Clearly, participants had indeed received some Islamic sex-ed. This did not mean, however, that they were satisfied with what they had learned. Although Jamal spoke about *fiqh*, he was also the only participant to explicitly mention "*tasawwuf*"[5] as an alternative framework within which sexual behaviour and sexuality could be understood. In his view, "*fiqh* is an important bar, but it's not the highest bar… spiritually, *tasawwuf*,

[4] One participant who tried this method assured me that it was neither a helpful nor realistic long-term method of controlling one's desire, especially when trying to remain healthy, study, and work full-time.

[5] *Tasawwuf* is an Arabic term which literally means "to become Sufi". The term describes "the process of realizing ethical and spiritual ideals" which emphasizes "the psychological dimension of purifying the heart and the role of divine grace in choosing the saintly." Carl W. Ernst, 'Tasawwuf', in *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, ed. Richard C. Martin, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 684–90.

is the highest bar actually." Several participants expressed frustration at being expected to accept "rule book" Islam without being taught the "greater meanings" behind them. The uncritical nature of "rule book" Islam was an implicit critique or reason for why six participants disagreed with "cultural" teachings, the values they learned from their parents, or the lessons they learned from religious institutions regarding sex and sexuality. According to two participants, "rule book" Islam is extremely rigid and monolithic, and does not treat sex or sexuality as a topic of debate or interest. Adnan, in particular, feared that this could turn followers away from Islam:

> From my experience, you're taught just the rules of Islam, but you're not really taught the true meaning, or the substance behind those rules. And when that happens as a kid, when you just take your religion as a set of rules, that doesn't really give you the true appreciation of your religion. … you're never going to bring in that – generate – that appreciation among young Muslims and they might leave Islam.

Though none of the participants had left the religion for this reason, "rule book" Islam did lead some to believe that learning about sex or sexuality in Islam is generally a fruitless or nonsensical pursuit. Hamza, for example, felt that Islam strongly discouraged discussing sex, sexuality or any topic that could lead to thinking about these subjects; to do so is inherently immodest and may cause people to act inappropriately. As he put it, "Islam very strongly prohibits even the notion of sexual conversation. That's why the idea of sex is so antithetical to Islam altogether." Nilu interpreted the lack of explicit Islamic sex-ed to mean that it simply was not a topic that was discussed in the Islamic tradition. "It's important, I just have a feeling that I'll just find the same stuff. Like that you can't have sex before marriage. I have a feeling that's what I'll find." Perhaps linked to the perceived lack of discussion around or provision of Islamic sex-ed, 2.4% of survey

respondents indicated that they did not believe Islamic teachings around sex and sexual health existed at all, while about 11% indicated that this was not something that they had even thought about.

6.2 Sources of "Islamic" Sex-ed

As discussed in the previous chapter, parents were a problematic source of sex-ed, sometimes invoking their Muslim identities as a reason for delaying or preventing their children from receiving school-based or parental sex-ed. Nor did participants feel that religious figures or institutions were helpful in explaining Islamic sex-ed. Approximately 60% of survey respondents reported that religious teachers had not influenced their views of sex or sexual health at all (see figure 9). As shown in figure 10, Muslim gatherings generally did not provide survey respondents with much sex-ed, "Islamic" or otherwise. The type of gathering that provided the most sex-ed were *halaqat*, or discussion groups. Of the 61.8% of those who attended them, only 2% reported that they provided "lots" of sex-ed, and 17.9% reported receiving "some" sex ed. Mosques, which were attended by 81.7% of respondents, only provided 0.4% with "lots" of sex-ed, and 12% with some. Other "Muslim" gatherings mentioned by survey respondents were university Muslim Student Associations and *jamatkhana*,[6] neither of which provided sex-ed.

[6] *Jamatkhana* means "house of congregation." It is a term that describe a place of worship and learning, most often used by Nizari Ismaili Muslims, a minority Shia group who recognize the Aga Khan's leadership. Due to an oversight on my part, I did not include it in the survey list of "Muslim gatherings". Though one respondent added it in the text-entry section, *jamatkhanas* were likely underrepresented in the survey. Sharmina Mawani, 'Sanctuary for the Soul: The Centrality of the Jamatkhana in Religious Identity Formation', in *Perspectives of Female Researchers: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Gujarati Identities*, ed. Sharmina Mawani and Anjoom A. Mukadam (Berlin: Logos Verlag Berlin, 2016), 75.

Figure 9: Religious Teaching's Influence on Views of Sex and Sexual Health (Survey)

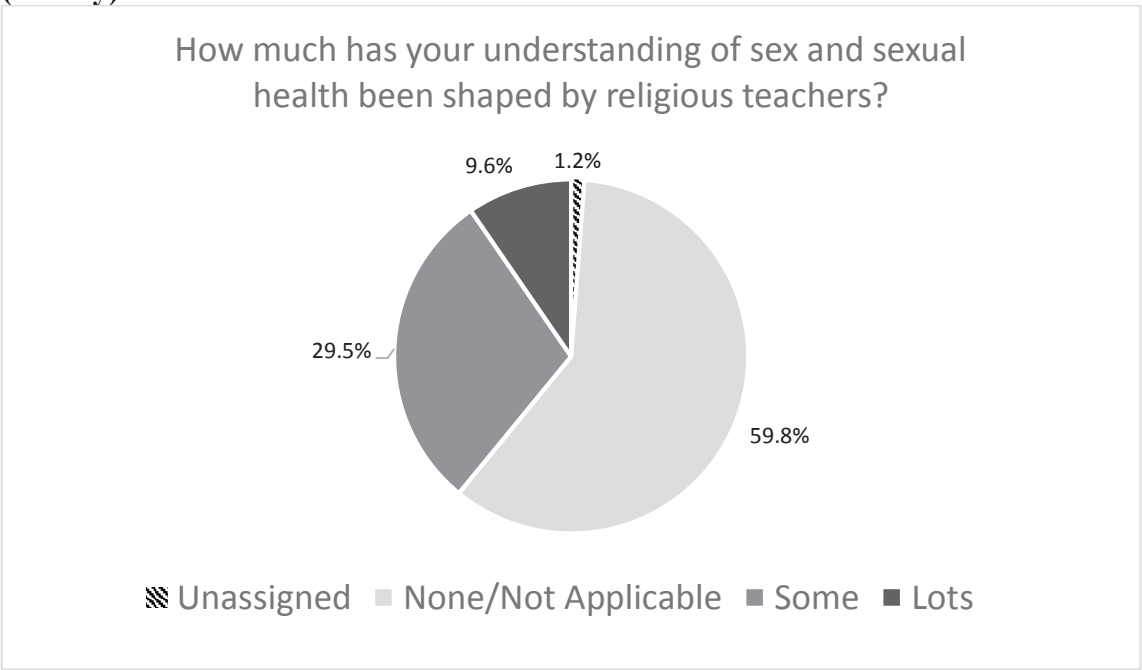
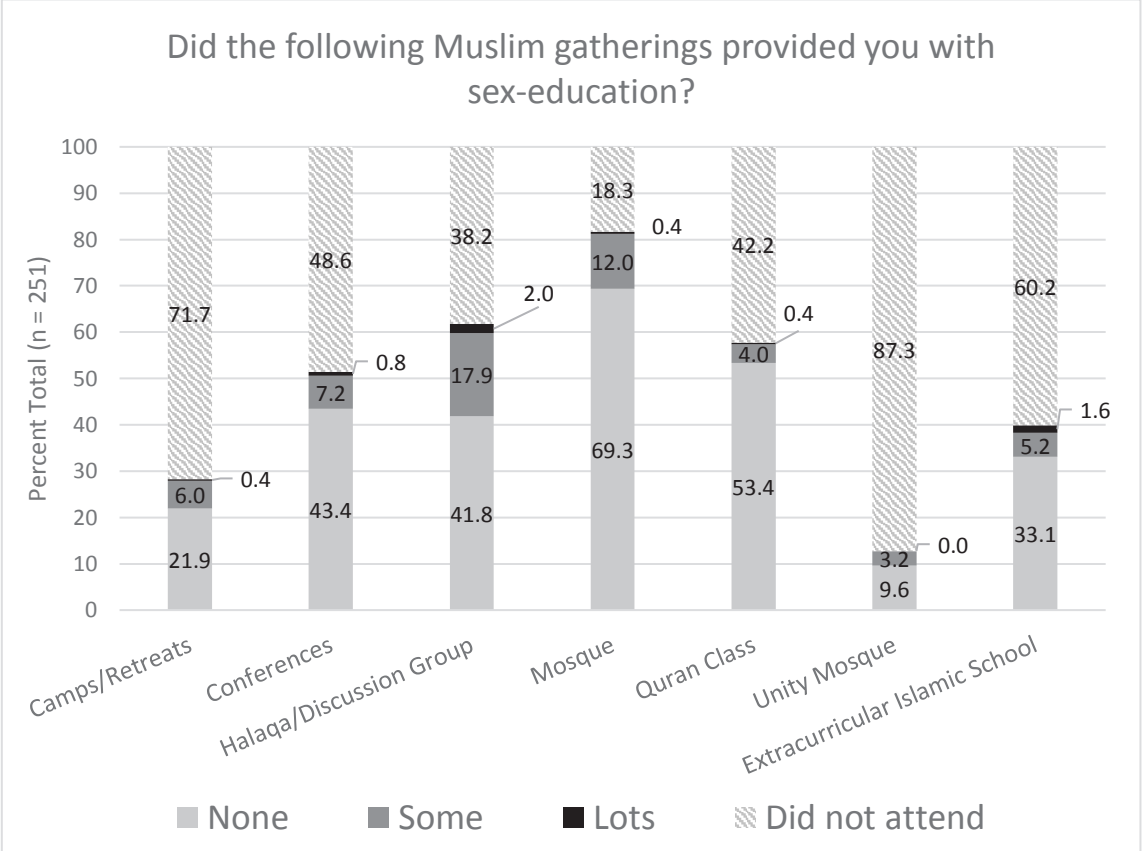


Figure 10: Levels of Sex-ed Provided at Muslim Gatherings (Survey)



Interestingly, this study differs significantly from Al-Dien's 2010 study on Muslim adolescents' perceptions of sex education in Canada regarding the role of Islamic centers in providing Muslim youth with sex-ed. Based upon semi-structured interviews with nine Muslim adolescents in Canada, this study found that "Most respondents confirmed that they depended upon using resources offered by Islamic centers to get true and honest information about sexuality."[7] Al-Dien notes that this findings was not consistent with that of other research. Similar to the data presented in the present study, however, Sobia Ali-Faisal's 2014 doctoral study of 403 Canadian and American Muslim men and women between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five found that only 4.2% of participants reported having "received sex education at the mosque".[8] It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that mosques, religious authorities, and Muslim gatherings are likely not providing most young Muslims in Canada with sex-ed.[9]

Some examples from the interviews show how Muslim youth may be learning about sex and sexuality in religious contexts. Hamza recalls that lessons related to these topics from the Quran or lives of the prophets were ignored or glossed over when they arose at the mosque or week-end Islamic school. For example, he remembers that his week-end Islamic school teachers taught that *zina*[10] and adultery were strictly forbidden, but that they did not teach him the meaning of either word. Maya remembers inferring that premarital sex was condemned because she was taught that dating was forbidden,

[7] Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education', 39.
[8] Ali-Faisal, 'Crossing Sexual Barriers', 128.
[9] It also seems like Muslim youth in Canada are not turning to religious authorities for sex-ed information in the first place.
[10] Unlawful sexual activity in the context of Islamic law. Sometimes translated from Arabic as "adultery".

adding that "we would never talk about sex, when men are women are going to get married, or how they're supposed to get married."

There were notable exceptions to the trend of silence regarding sex-ed among interview participants and survey respondents in religious settings. Approximately 30% of the latter group indicated that their views of sex and sexual health were "somewhat" shaped by religious teachers, and about 10% indicated that they had been shaped a "lot." For example, to her all-girl's Quran class, Saba's teacher explained the importance of respecting one's body and "not giving it away" until marriage. Musa noted that, albeit rarely, imams in the Middle East sometimes addressed issues related to sex during Friday sermons in men-only mosques. These examples indicate that single gender settings are an important condition for discussions regarding sex and sexuality to take place.

Overall though, neither parents, Islamic authority figures, nor Muslim gatherings appear to provide Muslim youth with significant Islamic or non-Islamic sex-ed. Rather than explicit information, interview participants primarily reported gaining implicit and value-based Islamic sex-ed from parents, and Islamic school teachers, leaders and institutions. About 28% of this study's survey respondents indicated that Islamic teachings regarding sex and sexual health were topics about which information is difficult to find, and about 11% indicated that it was "something that I have not thought about" (see figure 8). Keeping in mind that almost three quarters of survey respondents felt that Islamic teachings about sex and sexuality are important for them to follow, it is surprising that the former percentage is so low. This is likely because respondents obtained explicit Islamic sex-ed through individual online research as teenagers or adults, as was reported by the interview participants. For many participants, the lack of

explicit Islamic sex-ed knowledge coupled with fear of judgement lead them to seek further information independently online. In most ways, then, the process of gaining "Islamic" sex-ed was similar to and overlapped with the processes of gaining informal non-Islamic sex-ed.

One notable difference, however, was that participants did not tend to discuss Islamic sex-ed with Muslim or non-Muslim peers as frequently as they did non-Islamic sex-ed. In fact, the majority of participants expressed that they had never discussed sex, sexuality, or sexual health in Islam until the interview. Participants also became interested in Islamic sex-ed as teenagers or young adults, rather than as elementary and middle school students as was the case with non-Islamic sex-ed. Bushra was an exception, as she sometimes assumed the role of teaching and sharing her opinions with others. Talking about sex specifically in order to educate and support others who may not be comfortable or knowledgeable is a trait that researchers have found among a minority of women in North America, a category in which Bushra fits.[11] Although none of the male participants played this educational role to the same extent, several male participants had expressed the desire for such an educator in their adolescent years.

Another difference in participants' process of graining Islamic versus non-Islamic sex-ed was that participants were more trusting of online sources of non-Islamic sex-ed and of health care practitioners than they were of "religious experts" such as local imams, Islamic school teachers, and even popular online Muslim scholars. Although a stigma surrounding talking about sexuality likely extends to both medical/scientific and

[11] Beth Montemurro, Jennifer Bartasavich, and Leann Wintermute, 'Let's (Not) Talk about Sex: The Gender of Sexual Discourse', *Sexuality & Culture* 19 (2015): 147.

religious authorities, it was a greater inhibitor with the later. This may be because Muslims in Canada are more likely to access health care practitioners than religious experts, and because non-Islamic sex-ed is regarded to be more objective than Islamic sex-ed. The exceptions to this were Bushra and Jamal, both of whom were extremely motivated to gain Islamic knowledge, and who had access to religious authorities with whom they developed close enough relationships in order to feel comfortable asking questions about sex and sexuality. This did not mean, however that they accepted what they learned outright, as will be discussed in the upcoming section.

6.3 Navigating Islamic Sex-ed

Although interview participants had varying levels of knowledge and opinions regarding what constituted actual Islamic teachings regarding sex and sexuality, they all felt that these lessons were important to learn and follow to some degree, both personally and for Muslim youth in Canada more generally. Similarly, approximately 74% of survey respondents indicated that Islamic teachings around sex and sexual health were important for them to follow, compared to only 4.8% who did not. Participants gave a variety of reasons for following these teachings. About half believed that Islam, as they understood it, is a system of perfect and objective truth dictated to humanity by Allah. As Adnan put it, Allah would obviously "tell you how to live your life in the best way possible for you…. I would be pretty stupid to go against God's knowledge". Participants also mentioned that they wanted to live within the limits set out by Allah and that they did not want to commit sins. They felt that they would be in danger of adopting sinful beliefs and behaviour from the perspective of mainstream society if not

for Islamic knowledge. According to Bushra, submitting to Allah for the sake of paradise was worth the sacrifice of following rules. This was especially the case because, even if she faces certain temptations, "I'm only going to be on this earth for under 100 years, so it's not a big deal." Additionally, some participants believed that certain Islamic teachings should be followed because they are ethical and/or conform to their personal beliefs regarding logic and morality.

Approximately 9% of survey respondents indicated that Islamic teachings around sex and sexual health conflicted with their personal values or lifestyle. Interview participants' general belief in the importance of following Islamic guidelines regarding sex and sexuality did not always translate directly into their acceptance of or adherence to these teachings. Some participants viewed religious experts and online sources as having a variety of biases that prevented them from relaying "good" or "true" information, which complicated their willingness to follow what was taught. Jamal explained some of the biases that he saw:

> you have the post-modern stuff, and then you also have people lying about things who are non-Muslims and trying to pretend that they're Muslims for propaganda's sake, and then you have Muslims saying these extreme things because they're extreme, and then you have Muslims saying extreme things because they think that providing the most extreme opinion is going to lead to minimization of harm, which it won't…

Participants' distrust of experts' biases resulted in a predilection for learning directly and independently from the Quran and *hadith*, although few of them had actually done so. Two participants who did attempt to learn about sex and sexuality within Islam felt overwhelmed by the task, concluding that only scholars could hope to make sense of such discussions. Overall, over half of the interview participants had in fact gleaned

some Islamic sex-ed, employing a variety of methods of classifying, navigating and critiquing different Islamic teachings and demonstrating an "emphasis on argumentation, critical debate, and reflexive questioning" that researchers have noted young Muslims living in Euro-western countries apply in their constructions of Islam.[12]

The following sections will explore how interview participants employed a variety of techniques in order to negotiate Islamic sex-ed as well as the content of the teachings that were particularly amenable to negotiation. Although none of the participants explicitly referred to the term, some of their thought processes are reminiscent of *ijtihad*, or autonomous critical reasoning, which is practiced in *usul al-fiqh*, the process through with Islamic law is derived.[13] *Ijtihad* entails reading religious texts and scripture "in order to implement some Islamic rules concretely in a new environment and/or time," and is traditionally done by Islamic legal scholars and subject to many restrictions.[14] However, in an effort to democratize Islam, progressive Muslim

[12] Steven Vertovec and Rogers, Alisdair, 'Introduction', in *Muslim European Youth: Reproducing Ethnicity, Religion, Culture*, ed. Steven Vertovec and Alisdair Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 12.

[13] According to Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 820) *usul al-fiqh* has four main "roots." Two are sources: the Quran and *sunnah*; and the other two are methods or tools: *qiyas* and *ijma*. The Quran is considered to be the word of God, and consists mostly of stories and teachings related to belief and morality, with only a minority of verses related to laws. The *sunnah* refers what the prophet Muhammad is recorded to have said, done, allowed or prohibited. *Qiyas* refers to analogical reasoning, where a new ruling derived from revelation is applied to an issue that is deemed to be adequately similar to the original case. *Ijma* refers to consensus, and is a purely rational but binding source of law predicated upon the universal consensus of the Muslim community's scholars. These four points alone, however, do not provide an accurate description of this complex, theoretical discipline's breadth. *Ijtihad* is an important tool, among others, that is used in addition to the four mentioned above in *usul al-fiqh.* Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 25–26, 228, 264.

[14] Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22–23.

movements increasingly encourage individuals and communities to exercise their right to interpret Islam for themselves, as participants do in the following examples.[15]

a. Negotiated Acceptance: "Islam lets you do what you wanna do" - Bushra

Hamza, Tanya, and Jamal all believed that Islam is a "feminist" religion, but that this message was distorted by a variety of external forces.[16] Hamza explained that "prophet Muhmmad *sallalahu alayhi wasallam*[17] teaches that Islam [is] inherently aligned with the idea of feminism, because feminism advocates for equality for both men and women." Interestingly, he noted that Muslims in general may not agree with this view because of "how we package feminism," particularly third-wave feminism. Unfortunately, his fear of offending the interviewer prevented him from elaborating further.[18] Tanya felt that the position of women in Islam, both in general and with regard to sex, is misunderstood. In her view, "the Quran says that females are in a much higher

[15] See, for example: 'Musawah: A Global Movement for Eqality and Justice in the Muslim Family Framework for Action' (Musawah: For Equity in the Family, 2009), http://www.musawah.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MusawahFrameworkforAction_En.pdf; Rumee Ahmed, *Sharia Compliant: A User's Guide to Hacking Islamic Law*, Encountering Traditions (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018).

[16] In principle, this argument is similar to that made by feminist Muslim scholars such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas (see Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Asma Barlas, *'Believing Women' in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). These scholars argue that although the Quran could be read as a gender egalitarian text, this perspective has been historically overlooked because the primary interpreters have been men operating in patriarchal contexts, whose patriarchal exegesis overpowered what feminist scholars see as the Quran's original push for gender-equality. By the time Islam formed as a coherent religious tradition, they argue that patriarchal interpretations were considered official Islamic teachings (Barlas, 40–42).

[17] This Arabic phrase is often translated as "peace be upon him," and is used by Muslims after mentioning the prophet Muhammad as a sign of respect.

[18] This interview was conducted by my colleague Connor, whom Hamza seemed wary of offending in this instance. He ended the discussion stating that "whether your views are not like my views on [third-wave feminism] are a bit more complicated, so I'm not going to expand in detail on that." Connor did not press him any further.

position than men are, like females have a higher role in Islam than men do." The problem, as she sees it, is when people "try to make it seem like only men had the most power, because only men can lead prayer, because only men can memorize the entire Quran and be respected for it." Regarding the position of Muslim wives, Jamal completely disagreed with teachings that a proper Muslim wife should be extremely deferential to her husband, wear "as much makeup as possible" for him, and always agree to have sex with him so that "angels will pray for her". In his view, "there's a massive contextual problem with all this crap" and it "is completely ideologically driven." In these examples, participants interpreted feminism in Islam to mean social, spiritual and relational equality between men and women. Messages regarding both Islam and feminism that did not match this view were considered to be interpretive distortions based on erroneous views of feminism and Muslims' cultural and ideological views of women and marriage.

Three participants addressed the issue of same-sex attraction in Islam, using both interpretations of Islamic sources that were alternative to mainstream opinions, as well as their personal feelings and lived-realities to arrive at different conclusions. Based on her knowledge of "Islamic jurisprudence after the *khulifah al-rashidun*,"[19] and private conversations she had with female scholars and Islamic school teachers, Bushra believed that it is a misconception for Muslims to believe that same-sex attraction is *haram*. She

[19] This Arabic term is translated as "the rightly guided caliphs," and is used by Sunnis to describe the first four leaders/successors of the Muslim community after the death of the prophet Muhammad. The issue of who should have been selected as rightful caliph is contentious point of sectarian division, and this term is not generally used by Sias. Vernie Liebl, 'The Caliphate', *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (May 2009): 381.

had learned alternative interpretations of the story of Lot,[20] leading her to the conclusion that although it is a sin to act upon same-sex desires, it is not a sin to have them. In her view, "it's like for straight people, you have to wait until you're married to have sex. For gay and lesbian Muslims, you have to wait until you're in *junnah*[21] to have sex." She added that her imam did not agree with her latter interpretation. Similarly, Kawthar disagreed with the idea that "if you're not heterosexual it's a sin, and anyone who isn't is horrible and awful, and this is what Islam says." Both Bushra and Kawthar's comments indicated that they accepted same-sex orientations, but neither were able to justify acting upon them within an Islamic framework. In Bushra's case, this acceptance was based upon the interpretation of a Quranic story, whereas Kawthar seemed to base her opinion more upon her personal beliefs and what she had learned in university psychology classes.

b. Reconciliation: Coming "to peace with my identity" - Maya

Maya was unique among the interview participants in that she sought alternative interpretations of Islamic teachings to reconcile two aspects of her identity that she perceived to be in conflict: her Muslim identity and her identity as a lesbian. When she began to realize that she was not attracted to men, she also began researching homosexuality in Islam via YouTube lectures by prominent Muslim figures such as Nouman Ali Khan. Echoing Bushra and Kawthar's conclusions, these sources "all said

[20] For an explanation of how the story of Lot is interpreted to condemn homosexuality, as well as alternatives gay-affirming interpretations, see Junaid Jahangir and Hussein Abdullatif, *Islamic Law and Muslim Same-Sex Unions* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016).

[21] Heaven or paradise.

the same thing, they're like 'we don't judge you if you have any of these homosexual thoughts, but don't act on them. If you act on them you'll be going to hell.'" Maya explains that this message was particularly difficult for her to accept because she generally agreed with and respected the teachings of those same scholars in the past. This caused her to "ignore the lesbian side of me. I pushed it down. I was like, 'This is a phase, it's not something that's going to be real.'" As she put it, this conflict

> followed me through to university, where I didn't know – because I was a lesbian, if it was ok for me to also be a Muslim. You can choose your religion even if you can't choose your orientation, so why would I choose to be Muslim if I'm gay? … But a lot of that came back to … [that] I can't deny Allah in my life. I see his signs everywhere, I can't deny that Allah's real, and I know that Islam is the way for me.

Maya eventually explored the question of whether she could be both Muslim and lesbian in university, through contact with North American LGBTQ-affirming Muslim activists who introduced her to Islamic scholarship and Quranic exegesis that did not "deny" or "punish" homosexuality. This led Maya to the conclusion that same-sex relationships were not *haram*, and that Allah's compassion and mercy were higher ideals in Islam than the gender of one's partner,[22] allowing her "to come to peace with [her] identity." In her words, navigating this conflict "was a long process, it's still a process" but in the end, "I don't think that this is necessarily a test for me. I think it's kind of a test for other Muslims and how they react to me and if they're forgiving or compassionate or if they're just horrible."

[22] This method of thinking overlaps with "objectives-based" reasoning, as discussed in the next section.

The examples above demonstrate how some participants negotiated mainstream perceptions of Islamically acceptable forms of behaving, living, and being by identifying what they perceived as distortive influences upon "true" Islamic teachings, drawing upon alternative opinions and interpretations, and privileging their personal beliefs and realities. The next method that participants employed, especially in navigating the rigidity of "rule-based" Islam, was to identify the overarching objectives or rationales behind certain rules and engage with them rather than the rules themselves.

c. *Flexibility: "there's also the spiritual message" - Jamal*

Objectives-oriented formulations of Islamic law, or *maqasid al-shariah*, allow for an alternative approach to *fiqh* that is less "rule-based" and more influenced by *tasawwuf*, the realization of ethical and spiritual ideals. This objectives-oriented approach to Islamic law has seen a modern resurgence, but can be traced to pre-colonial Islamic legal philosophy, particularly to Sufi scholars.[23] Through this approach, practices can be deemed acceptable if their objectives align with the *maqasid*, or objectives of Islam. These objectives are not fixed. Rather, they are "rooted in the textual injunctions

[23] Imam al-Juwayni (d. 1085) is one of the earliest recorded scholars to have treated the *maqasid*, categorizing the objectives of Islamic law as protecting five "essential" necessities: religion, human life, the faculty of reason, progeny, and wealth. These were expounded upon by his student Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), and developed into a more substantive theory of *maqasid* by Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d. 1388). Ahmad al-Raysuni, *Imam Al-Shatibi's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law*, trans. Nancy Roberts (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005), 14–18; Abdessamad Belhaj, 'Legal Knowledge by Application: Sufism as Islamic Legal Hermeneutics in the 10th/12th Centuries', *Studia Islamica* 108, no. 1 (2013): 447. In traditional *usul al-fiqh*, rulings based on the *maqasid al-shariah* can only be applied in limited circumstances. Modern scholars, however, interpret the work of al-Shatibi as providing the basis for broadening *maqasid*-based reasoning from restricted issues of public interest to a fundamental source of law. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 350. Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008), 20–21; Ramadan, *Radical Reform*, 62.

of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but they look mainly at the general philosophy and objectives of these injunctions, often beyond the particularities of the text" into the realm of ethics and consideration for human well-being.[24] The interpretive shift towards considering the *maqasid* as a fundamental source of law has many exciting implications for modern Islamic law, and is especially useful regarding issues of gender, sexuality and relationships. The approach also supports Quran-centric arguments for gender-egalitarianism by validating gender equality as an objective of Islamic law.[25]

Although seven of the interview participants seemed to employ *maqasid*-oriented methods of navigating Islamic sex-ed in this section, only one, Jamal, mentioned learning it from an Islamic teacher.[26] The rest employed it intuitively as a logical way of thinking about Islam, usually without consulting the Quran or *sunnah*. Jamal framed his way of thinking as following a "spiritual path of beauty" in the context of *tasawwuf*. For him, this meant that

> there are all these specific messages that Islam has, and you're supposed to abstract them. That's what poetry is, right? Like you write about a daffodil, but it's supposed to mean love, it's not just plant cells with pectin in between and pollen… it's not a botany lecture. And similarly… there's the rule or *fiqh* aspect of these things from the Quran, but there's also the spiritual message, and I think those are what are lost and it pisses me off.

---

[24] Mohammad Hashim Kamali, 'Goals and Purposes (Maqasid) of Shari'ah: History and Methodology', in *Shari'ah Law: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 139.

[25] For example, for arguments supporting same-sex marriage in the interest of protecting religion, life and progeny, see Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2010). Another example can be found in the work of Amina Wadud, who argues that the "tawhidic paradigm," or monotheistic principle of unity above hegemony, "links us to the core and fundamental values of Islam." This "can be used to fulfil our ethical vision as Muslims" and propel us "out of the quagmire of patriarchy that threatens the life, well-being and continuity of our communities." Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Jana Rumminger, and Amina Wadud, eds., 'The Ethics of Tawhid over the Ethics of Qiwamah', in *Men in Charge?: Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2015), 267–68.

[26] In the interests of preserving confidentiality, the teacher is not named.

With regard to Islamic sex-ed, Jamal felt that "sexuality has some parts that have evils attached to them, and parts have beauties attached to them," and that part of a Muslim's spiritual path was "working on your evils and then developing beautiful characteristics." Adnan and Jamal both explained that Islam prescribed "temperance" as the "middle way" between chasing and repressing one's sexual desires. Neither believed that Islam was a "prudish" religion, but rather that Islam encourages cultivating self-discipline rather than engaging in sexual relationships in a "wrong", "hedonistic" or "careless" manner. Both explained that this was the case because Islam's underlying objective is to "choose the way that's safest for yourself and for society,"[27] and to "minimize harm, but also have pleasure."[28]

Furthermore, Jamal, Rahim, Kawthar and Bushra all expressed that Islam's guidelines around sex, including the importance of consent,[29] the emphasis on foreplay and pleasure, and considering marital sex to be a blessed act, all show that, as Bushra put it, "Islam is such a great guideline for healthy and emotionally healthy sex and a marital relationship." Jamal's explanation went further, as he viewed these guidelines as pointing towards a greater "spiritual teaching," which was that the highest value in a

[27] Adnan.

[28] Jamal.

[29] Participants' value of consent for sexual relationships, especially that of women, as an Islamic ideal is notable, as it is not supported by numerous pre-colonial exegetes. For further details on exegetes who considered husbands to have the right to forced or coerced marital sexual relations, see Ayesha Chaudhry, *Domestic Violence and the Islamic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). I suspect that participants' belief in the importance of consent is likely strongly influenced by contemporary ideals regarding healthy relationship dynamics, as well as the recent surge of consent education in Canadian educational institutions and the #MeToo movement. For a non-academic discussion of these developments in Canada, see Sarah Barman, 'What Consent Means in the Age of #MeToo', *The Walrus*, 18 January 2018, https://thewalrus.ca/what-consent-means-in-the-age-of-metoo/. Notably, objective-based Islam allows participants to value consent as Islamic through the belief in underlying objectives of minimizing harm and respecting women's rights, as have been mentioned in this chapter.

relationship is not justice, but mercy. For him, mercy did not entail "getting walked on" or insisting on "equal exchanges" within a relationship, but "do[ing] unto others better than you want done for yourself."

In a similar vein, Bushra and Kawthar felt that Islam is not "hard and fast" when it comes to regulating people's sexual behaviour, but is actually "pretty flexible." Bushra believed that Islam does not have strict rules about sex, but rather guidelines about how people should behave in certain situations which are designed to enable people to "be the best versions of themselves" while also doing what they want to do. For example, Islam allows divorce, which means that people can change sexual partners through divorce and remarriage. She also mentioned that in times of war or extreme situations, the rules regarding sex and marriage can change so that society does not suffer. For her current society however, Bushra noted that things like engaging in premarital sex, drinking alcohol or doing drugs are not things that she would engage in, "because that's not how I get to being my best self." She believed that if people realized this about Islam "everyone would be a lot happier and would be able to resist temptation**,** or be able to say 'you know what, yeah, I want to have sex right now, but am I going to? No! Because that's not how I achieve being my best self.'" In this way, Bushra considered Islamic regulations regarding sex as having the beneficial underlying objective of enhancing self-actualization, a concept that appealed to her.

Kawthar applied her belief in Islam's flexibility to prohibitions against premarital sex, noting that Islamic law requires there to be several witnesses in order to legally determine whether it has occurred: "the whole point of that is to show that it's nearly impossible to have witnesses if someone did that." She explained that this means

Muslims should not slander each other and should afford each other the benefit of the doubt regarding accusations of premarital sex. Tanya added that although she believes that premarital sex is a sin, it is "pretty much the same as any other sin" and "people have been doing it for centuries." According to Tanya, the issue is when one's engagement in premarital sex is socially obvious, and the solution is simply to be discrete. In both these cases, although the participants recognized that refraining from premarital sex is an Islamic ideal, they also believe that Islam accommodates its nonadherence.

These examples are indicative of some participants' belief in Islam as system of somewhat flexible, moderate, and comprehensive guidelines that are meant to protect society at large, encourage individual choice, and promote spiritual growth. This form of Islam encourages an understanding of the objectives behind rules, and an adherence to the objective rather than the rule itself. Participants demonstrated a variety of critical thought processes in negotiating their acceptance of Islamic sex-ed, however, there were some teachings that a minority of participants either struggled to accept or rejected outright, as discussed in the following sections.

d. Struggle: "I'm not happy with this answer" - Jamal

Two participants took a liminal stance between outright rejection and reconciliation regarding the permissibility of *liwat,* or anal sex, and pre-marital sex respectively. Jamal expressed difficulty understanding why anal penetration in particular was forbidden, especially "because *liwat* is not the only way for guys to have sex." For the time being, his answer to the question was that it was forbidden, although he was

"not happy with this answer" and did not think he "would tell anyone not to do it necessarily." Nilu believed that the prohibition against pre-marital sex did not make sense within committed relationships. This was because "saving something like that for after marriage and then [finding] out that it's not going to work – it's not really an option for me because I don't want to get divorced." This conflict has caused her to feel "guilty and awful" because the prohibition against premarital sex is "so ingrained in us. You do it and you're going to hell. So coming to terms with it… I'm still working on it if I'm being honest (laughs)." Although Nilu was navigating her own feelings of guilt, she did not attempt to negotiate with her Islamic belief beyond suggesting that it "might be meant for a different time period." Regarding these issues, both Jamal and Nilu inhabited a space of uncomfortable liminality in which their personal beliefs about what is logical or right did not correspond with Islamic teachings. Neither reconciled nor rejected the teachings completely; while Jamal adopted a stance of unhappy submission, Nilu's stance was more one of guilty tension.

e. Rejection: "You don't have to take that on your shoulders" - Bilal

A minority of participants simply rejected some Islamic teachings based on their personal views of proper ethics and morality, which appear more aligned to mainstream Canadian opinions.[30] For example, Nilu personally disagreed with prohibitions against the permissibility of LGBTQ identities and same-sex marriage in Islam, but did not try to

[30] For example, "Muslims are more likely than other Canadians to value patriarchy ('the father must be the master in the home') and to reject homosexuality." Keith Neuman, 'Survey of Muslims in Canada 2016' (The Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2016), 4, 34, http://nsiip.ca/wp-content/uploads/survey_of_muslims_in_canada_2016_final_report.pdf.

negotiate this belief by seeking alternative opinions or an underlying objective. She simply acknowledged that her opinion was "against traditional Islamic beliefs," and although that prevented her from speaking about her beliefs to other Muslims, it did not prevent her from holding her opinion. Bilal brought up several more topics that he found difficult to navigate, including the permissibility of a husband beating his wife, polygamy, and the balance between treating women with respect and the "vibe of your wife being something that's bequeathed to you".

Bilal identified Michael Muhammad Knight's novel *The Taqwacores*, which explores Islam through American punk culture, as having helped him navigate these complex issues. He described a scene that takes place between the novel's main character, a "basic Islamic engineer" who does "everything his parents tell him to," and Rabeya, a burqa wearing "riot grrrl."[31] In the scene, the two characters discuss "places in the Quran and Islamic culture about physical force against one's wife. And [Rabeya] has a Quran in her room, and he can see that she's literally taken a black sharpie and crossed out those lines in the Quran." Bilal continued to paraphrase the following monologue, in which the character Rabeya explains her actions:

> "I looked at what all the scholars said, even progressives like Asma Barlas… Sure, I did all the gymnastic tap dancing around that verse a desperate Muslima could do. Finally I said, fuck it; If I believe it's wrong for a man to beat his wife, and the Quran disagrees with me, then fuck that verse. I don't need to squeeze it for weak alternative readings. I don't need to excuse it with historical context, and I sure as hell don't need to just accept it and go sign up for a good ol'

[31] A woman who participates in feminist punk culture.

> fashioned bitch-slapping. So I crossed it out. Now I feel a whole lot better about that Quran."[32]

Bilal was extremely fond of and grateful to *The Taqwacores* for presenting the possibility of rejecting certain Islamic teachings while retaining an Islamic identity. Before, he had felt like he

> had to cast out this whole big part of me in order to be liberally minded or have free thought. But then that book was like, "Oh no, there are parts of Islam that you can accept, and there's good guidance in there and then there are other parts that are just not applicable to you, and you don't have to take that on your shoulders."

In this way, Bilal, like the character Rabeya, was able to navigate a personal and ethical conflict with Islamic sex-ed that enabled him to "have the best of both worlds" rather that taking an "all or nothing" approach.

6.4 Conclusion

Though interview participants and survey respondents did not indicate that they were learning Islamic sex-ed explicitly from Muslim gatherings or religious authorities, they were still able to identify many Islamic rules and guidelines around sex, gender, and sexuality. The majority of participants and respondents felt that these teachings were important to follow. Some participants, however, indicated that they were frustrated with being expected to follow "rule book" Islam without understanding the "greater meaning" behind the rules. Furthermore, just under half of the participants did not seem to be

[32] Michael Muhammad Knight, *The Taqwacores* (Autonomedia, 2004), 132. For an academic treatment of these "impasses" in feminist Quranic exegesis, and what may be required to solve them within an exegetic framework, see Aysha A. Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

aware that there is a difference between primary sources such as the Quran and *sunnah*, and the processes of deriving *fiqh* rules and guidelines from these sources. This "missing link" likely contributed to their desire to better understand where Islamic sex-ed rules come from. It is also indicative of an area in which religious authorities could improve education for Muslim youth.

This chapter has also shown that participants accepted, negotiated with, struggled with, or rejected Islamic sex-ed based on personal beliefs regarding ethics, spirituality, and reality, as well as what they deemed rational and reasonable for their own lives. These findings, especially those related to young Muslims' application of critical thinking, value of individual autonomy, and adoption of Canadian social and educational values are reflected in previous scholarship. Beyer and Ramji, for example, have noted that young Muslims' senses of self and of Islam have been shaped by values of Canadian education systems, as well as ideas of equality and diversity enshrined in Canadian conceptions of multiculturalism.[33] A 2016 survey of Muslims in Canada suggests that this applies to beliefs around gender and sexuality. It found that although Muslims in general have been found "more likely than other Canadians to value patriarchy ('the father must be the master in the home') and to reject homosexuality," second generation Muslims in particular "are closer to the majority perspective in both cases."[34] Second generation Muslims in Canada, however, are more likely to reject patriarchy than they are to accept homosexuality, a finding supported by this study as well. This indicates that, similar to other aspects of their identities, young Canadian Muslims' views on sex,

[33] Beyer, 'Growing Up in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe', 296.
[34] Neuman, 'Survey of Muslims in Canada 2016', 4.

sexuality, and gender in Islam are also subject to reconstruction and alignment to mainstream Canadian views.

Similar to the findings from the previous chapter on informal and parental sex-ed, this chapter has shown that, although participants did not feel that they had learned a great deal of explicit Islamic sex-ed, they did gather implicit knowledge, and were often able to access Islamic sex-ed on the internet. Participants' navigation of Islamic sex-ed differed from their navigation of non-Islamic sex-ed obtained either informally or from school, in that the former was subject to more varied interpretation and scrutinization. Although some participants did accept "rule book" Islam outright, this chapter has also shown that others used a variety of methods to navigate Islamic sex-ed, especially a sense of reason and ethics. Overall, whether Islamic sex-ed was obtained explicitly or not, participants were affected by the particular "Islamic" matrix of their upbringing and cultural context, such that they all attributed some of their beliefs regarding sex, sexuality, and gender to Islam.

CHAPTER 7

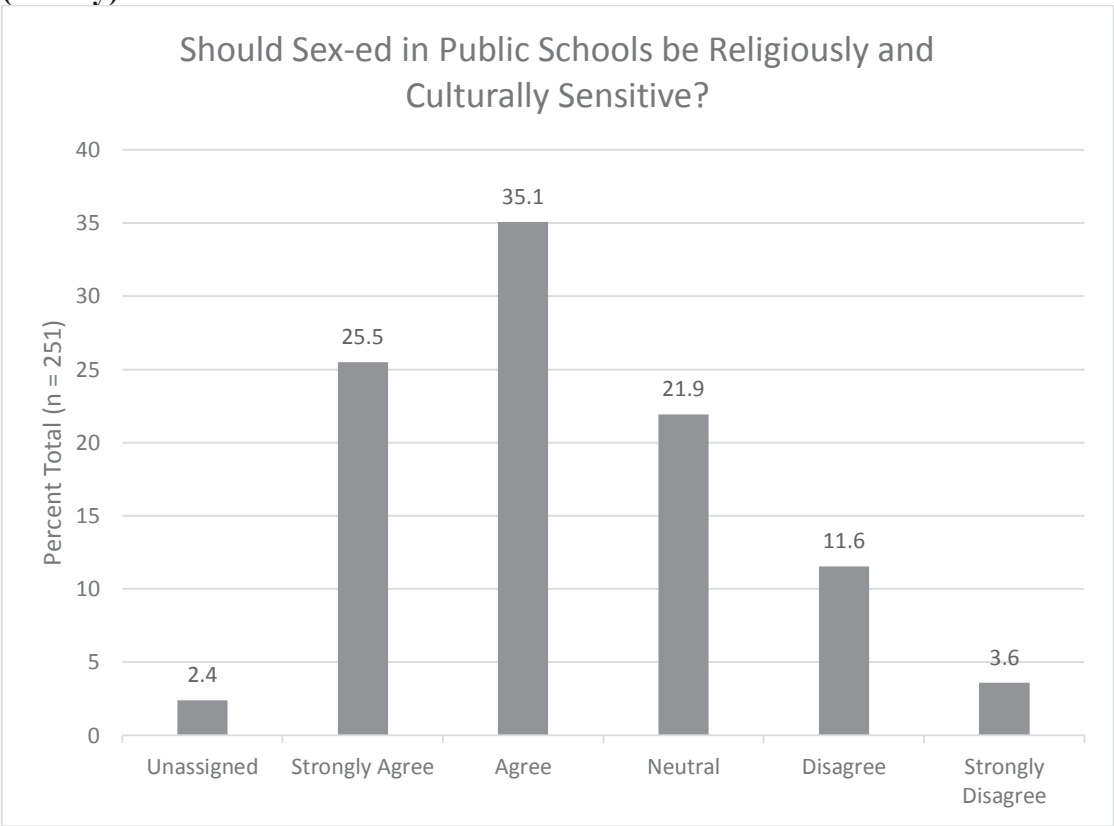
Religiously and Culturally Sensitive Sex-ed

A common trend that emerged as participants spoke about their experiences of school-based, parental, informal and Islamic sex-ed was the feeling that there is a "problem" that needs to be solved. For some, the "problem" was the attitudes of their parents, Muslim communities, or religious authorities toward sex-ed. For others, the "problem" was a perceived conflict of values between Muslim and Euro-western cultures, or a combination of all of the above. Sometimes participants described solutions to the problems that they saw, while others found these problems to be overwhelming and without viable solutions. A potential "solution" that I introduced in the final section of the interviews, and one which some participants anticipated and began to describe beforehand, was the concept of "religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed", which could be provided in a number of contexts, including schools, workshops and community settings.

In general, the opinions of young Muslims regarding the potential of religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed remains largely unexplored, and is focused upon in this chapter.[1] Participants were simply told that "religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed" was considered to be a good idea by some Muslims and researchers. They were asked whether they thought this would be a good idea, what they thought this type of sex-ed would include or omit, where and by whom they believed it might be appropriately implemented, and whether they thought certain controversial issues could be considered

[1] See Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education' for a Canadian example.

Figure 11: Providing Religiously and Culturally Sensitive Sex-ed in Public School (Survey)



in "religiously and culturally sensitive" ways. They were asked to focus upon their own opinions and ignore the logistics and policy considerations of implementing religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed.Half of the interview participants believed that having religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed in schools would be a good idea, while the other half expressed doubts and concerns. Of the latter group, only two participants[2] maintained that sensitized sex-ed should not be implemented at all, while the others felt that instructors and program designers would "need to proceed with caution". In contrast, survey respondents largely favoured sensitivity in public schools, with 60.6% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement and only 15.2% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (see figure 11). A significant 21.9% of respondents remained neutral on the issue, which is perhaps understandable given the complexity of the question and the lack of opportunity to qualify responses with additional details.

Calls for religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed for Muslims living as minorities in pluralistic countries have been made over the last two decades in North America, Europe, and Australia by researchers and advocates.[3] This has yielded a range of recommendations for how religious and cultural sensitivity could best be achieved. I have selected some (1-3) of the more prominent recommendations, and some (4-6) that are less prominent but that were nonetheless addressed by interview participants. These recommendations are:

[2] These participants were Musa and Bushra.

[3] Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education', 327; Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication', 263; Sanjakdar, '"Teacher Talk"', 5; Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education'; HEART Women & Girls, 'Effective Programming for Muslim Youth'; Ali-Faisal, 'What's Sex Got to Do with It?', 37.

1. segregating classes by gender and ensuring that classes are taught by a teacher of the same gender;[4]
2. placing a greater emphasis on modesty and eliminating immodest content such as condom demonstrations and explicit pictures or videos;[5]
3. ensuring that Muslim perspectives and guidelines on key sex education issues, such as sexual hygiene, marriage, pre- and extra-marital sex, and homosexuality, are "given equal respect and prominence alongside other perspectives";[6]
4. delaying lessons about explicitly sexual content until the end of high school, when students are closer to marriageable ages;[7]
5. emphasizing self-esteem, healthy relationships, and decision making in ways particular to Muslim communities;[8]
6. building critical thinking skills to examine personal, religious, cultural and stereotypical beliefs and messages.[9]

Although this study's participants were not directly queried regarding the above-mentioned recommendations, the extent to which participants brought them up is addressed in this chapter. The logistical and policy considerations of actually implementing this type of sex-ed fall outside the scope of this project, and will not be addressed.

[4] Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education', 328; Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication', 264; Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education', 403.

[5] Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education'; Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication', 263.

[6] Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education', 328; HEART Women & Girls, 'Effective Programming for Muslim Youth', 18.

[7] Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication', 266.

[8] HEART Women & Girls, 'Effective Programming for Muslim Youth', 18.

[9] HEART Women & Girls, 18.

7.1 Appropriate Locations and Instructor Qualifications

Participants imagined religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed as potentially taking place in a variety of settings. Four felt that mosques would be the ideal locations because they are meant to be community centers as well as places of worship. Four others disagreed, believing that community members would object to sex being spoken about in "the house of God." They also pointed out that mosques are not accessible to all types of Muslims, and many do not attend. Several felt appropriate venues could be neutral, non-Muslim spaces, or guest presentations in schools and possibly through Muslim Student Associations on university campuses. Seven participants believed that this type of sex-ed should be incorporated into public schools as part of a wider vision of education that would accommodate multicultural and religiously diverse student populations, while four felt that this type of sex-ed would be a natural fit for Islamic schools. This diversity of opinions suggests that though there are multiple venues that could be suitable to religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed, it is unlikely that providing such education in any single location would reach or appeal to all Muslim youth in Canada.

Participants agreed that religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should be taught by a Muslim teacher, who would best understand religious and cultural boundaries, and would also make the students feel most comfortable. They added that this teacher would need to have educational qualifications or experience, have relevant sex-ed knowledge, and also have Islamic knowledge. Five participants were clear it should not be "just an imam or a sheikh" whom they felt would lack sexual health information and perhaps even the ability to connect with youth. Bilal felt that such a

teacher should be someone "more open" and "younger and more contemporary", with experience navigating both Islam and Canadian culture and who valued living piously. Kawthar added that an ideal teacher is someone who is "nonjudgmental and who can hold space for someone regardless of what they come into the conversation with." Generally, participants noted that asking for such a teacher may seem unrealistic, but two mentioned that Muslim chaplains may be best suited for this task.

7.2 Content

a. Including the Same Content and Teaching Aids as School-based Sex-ed

For the most part, participants agreed that religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should not omit any information that would otherwise be taught in school-based sex-ed. Rather, it should be presented slightly differently, for instance, it should include additional Islamic content, or have a slightly different emphasis. In order to appease more conservative Muslim parents, many participants felt that explicit aspects of sex-ed such as visual teaching aids, including condom demonstrations, anatomical diagrams, and explicit photographs or videos, would have to be excluded.[10] About half of participants themselves, however, were not offended by the inclusion of these teaching aids during their own school-based sex-ed, and found them to be useful pedagogical tools.[11] Bushra believed that school was the most appropriate place for the use of such teaching aids, because it was a de-sexualized environment meant to facilitate learning.

[10] This has been supported in research about British and American Immigrant Muslim parents' views on school-based sex-ed. Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education'; Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication', 263.

[11] The remaining half were not against including such teaching aids, but either had not experienced them or did not express and opinion.

She paraphrased a *hadith*, stating that "there is no modesty in religion, there is no shame" when seeking education.[12] Hamza also felt that visual teaching aids were important, and preferable to young people gaining impressions from pornography, or from gaining none at all. Consistent with other studies, most participants did believe that maintaining gender segregated sex-ed classes would increase their personal comfort with sex-ed classes and help them feel more modest.[13] However, their opinions were almost evenly split regarding whether delaying the inclusion of sex-ed content to later in high school rather than in elementary or middle school would make them more comfortable or would only be necessary to appease parents.

b. Emphasizing Marriage, Modesty, and Other Islamic Guidelines

The main stipulation that participants had regarding religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed was that Muslim youth should not be taught, implicitly or explicitly, that it is encouraged to engage in sexual activity freely outside of marriage or that they *should* be exploring their sexuality before marriage in order to be normal. Rather, the majority stressed that the importance of waiting until marriage should be taught, and it should be made clear that Islam does not permit premarital sex. Both of these stipulations match the findings of previous research.[14] Hamza and Bilal also emphasized that youth should be taught that it is normal rather than shameful to have sexual thoughts and desires, and that learning self-control until marriage was also part of the maturing

[12] The exact *hadith* that she was paraphrasing was not clear.

[13] Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education'; Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication'; Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education'.

[14] Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education'; HEART Women & Girls, 'Effective Programming for Muslim Youth'.

process. Furthermore, six participants believed that it should be emphasized that sex is not simply a physical act, but one that has both spiritual and emotional ramifications.

Three participants felt that another useful topic would be to teach young people how to navigate Islamically appropriate ways of getting married in Canada. As touched upon in section 4.3.a, this was because some participants found that exposure to the North American dating culture, combined with parental discouragement from interacting with the opposite gender and simultaneous encouragement to marry, can be confusing and difficult to navigate. Kawthar added it is important to acknowledge that it is not realistic to expect that all Muslims marry, and that students should therefore be taught "strategies and toolkits to cultivate and maintain your spirituality, learn about sex-ed and other forms of it that aren't just abstinence only". This perspective was not mentioned in the reviewed literature's recommendations of Islamically appropriate topics to include in religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed. Half of the participants also believed that religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should also include the Islamic importance of women's sexual rights, specifically around issues of consent; of love and respect; and of the dynamics of healthy relationships. These topics were emphasized equally by male and female participants. There was consensus that Muslim youth should be taught Islamic guidelines regarding topics such as sex, gender segregation, masturbation, homosexuality, and transgenderism. Half of the participants also emphasized the importance of learning the reasons and objectives behind these guidelines, as discussed below.

c. Appealing to Reason and Fostering Self Confidence

Complementing their strategies of navigating Islamic sex-ed discussed in chapter 6, half of the participants emphasized that religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should not be used to coerce youth into following Islamic guidelines regarding sex and sexuality through appeals to shame, guilt, or fear of punishment in hell. Hamza believed that this was important because he felt that he "grew up in an … environment that was built on a culture of fear, and of

coercion or doing things for the sake of your parents – or following the religion for the sake of compliance as opposed to understanding why it is prescribed in the religion." Participants preferred that youth be taught the higher ideals of reason, explanations about where these rules come from in Islam, and why they make sense to follow. Kawthar felt this approach would foster self-confidence in Muslim youth so that "you're confident and you feel like you know enough about Islam to feel like this is the right thing for you" regardless of other messages from school or the media. Both findings were reflected in the research and recommendations of HEART Women & Girls, an American Muslim sexual health advocacy organization. This indicates a wider need for both Islamic sex-ed and religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed to accommodate some young peoples' proclivity toward critical thinking, as discussed in chapter 8.

7.3 Why Implement Religiously and Culturally Sensitive Sex-ed?

a. To Bridge Conflicting Sources of Knowledge

There were three main reasons given by interview participants as to why religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should be implemented in schools. Firstly,

Junnah explained that it could "correct" Muslim youth from believing that the normative values they absorb growing up in Canada regarding sex and sexuality are Islamically permissible, especially when their parents are not teaching them these lessons. Next, Saba believed that this type of sex-ed could also help students better understand their parents' perspectives, and could create opportunities to discuss sex at home with their parents.[15] Bilal took more of a fatalistic view, agreeing that religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed could be a helpful bridging dialogue between parental and school-based sex-ed, "even if it's messed up, at least it's a little bit more knowledge… if you add a third dialogue, then you can try to balance things out for yourself a little bit more… so might as well try." Lastly, Nilu and Kawthar felt that having religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed would mitigate students' feelings of guilt and embarrassment for learning potentially "un-Islamic" information in public school sex-ed classes. It might also address the dissonance that some young Muslims feel when comparing school-based sex-ed to their parents' values.

b. To Accommodate Multiple Perspectives in a Pluralistic Society

Interestingly, six participants believed that, although school-based religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed for Muslims could be a good idea, its necessity pointed to a larger issue of accommodating multicultural and religiously diverse youth in Canada. These participants were largely imagining this sex-ed to be taking place in public schools. From their perspectives, rather than simply teaching Muslim youth religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed content, it would be preferable to teach them that there are

[15] This sentiment was echoed in Orgocka, 'Perceptions of Communication', 263.

many different religions and cultures that have varying perspectives regarding intimacy, sex, and sexuality. As Adnan put it, this was because "you have to understand you're a Muslim living in Western society, [and] you're going to come across people of all worldviews, of all mindsets. So Islam is inclusive, it's saying, 'Ok, yes, we respect your way of life.'" Kawthar believed that normalizing the existence of multiple perspectives would be preferable to learning them implicitly and becoming confused.

Hamza took the approach that religious sensitivity is an important part of respecting students' intersectional identities, especially for students of various religions, gender identities, and sexual orientations. He felt that currently, school-based sex-ed is supportive of LGBTQ+ identities but does not recognize religious identities. He believed that both religious and sexual diversity should be recognized "So that there's no confusion… that they can be those two things simultaneously. That's their personal decision. Whether or not that's [Islamically] correct is something else that needs to be discussed". Notably, even though Hamza felt that Islam and sexual and gender diversity are "very difficult to reconcile," he did not want students to be taught that religious and LGBTQ+ identities were mutually exclusive. On the other hand, Jamal believed that the best way to accommodate for multicultural and religiously diverse youth would be to provide them with neutral, value-free sex-ed. In his view, this means that students should be taught physiological- and health-related information. For him, this would ideally include a variety of situational strategies and their consequences, including abstinence, so that they could make their own decisions rather than being taught that there is a "proper way" of acting.

7.4 Participant Doubts and Concerns

Half of the participants expressed concern about the viability of religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed. Musa and Bushra believed that it is most important for Muslim youth to receive good quality sex-ed, and that good quality sex-ed must be open and informative. They were highly skeptical that any sex-ed considered religiously and culturally sensitive would include those qualities. Instead, they believed that it would likely perpetuate the lack of sex-ed that Muslim youth receive from their parents, communities, and religious authorities. They feared that this would give official sanction to ignorance of some topics. For example, these participants were in agreement that parents would not want their children to learn about LGBTQ+ identities or learn about safe anal or oral sex regardless of their age. Maya believed that Muslim parents would simply use religious and culturally sensitive sex-ed to reinforce the prohibition of premarital sex. Furthermore, Bushra was concerned that implementing such a program in schools would reflect poorly upon Muslims, as it would "literally prove the point of when people say that Muslim people cause problems". Adnan expressed concerns about catering to cultural sensitivities, as "culture doesn't always fall in line with religion", and Jamal felt that "cultural sensitivity" was highly subjective and would therefore yield conflicting results.

The problematic prospect of even religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed being rejected by Muslim parents and communities has been noted by researchers.[16] Rather than giving parents control of the curriculum, these researchers recommend

[16] Sanjakdar, '"Teacher Talk"', 266; HEART Women & Girls, 'Effective Programming for Muslim Youth', 26–27.

educating parents about the importance of sex-ed. When creating religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed curricula for Muslim youth, they recommend involving a range of stakeholders, including religious authorities and health care practitioners, a process that could mitigate some of the concerns raised by the participants.

7.5 Conclusion

Although participants' opinions aligned with some of the suggestions made by advocates and researchers regarding the sensitization of sex-ed presented in the introduction of this chapter, this was not always the case. In particular, about half of participants did not personally object to the inclusion of educationally appropriate explicit visual teaching aids for sex-ed. Their opinions were also divided regarding whether the provision of sex-ed content should be delayed until the end of high school. Although they did think it was important for Islamic sex-ed to be taught, public school participants tended to emphasize this as an add-on to the same information as other Canadian youth received in school-based sex-ed. Participants conjectured that this would help bridge tension between mainstream Canadian norms and parental as well as Islamic sex-ed. This was because students would learn explicitly that they are operating within different belief systems while still obtaining mainstream knowledge at the same level as their non-Muslim peers. Similar to the findings of chapter 6, participants wanted Islamic guidelines to be taught in ways that appealed to reason, rather than emotions such as fear or guilt.

Several researchers have noted and expounded upon the premise that a key reason for Muslim dissent regarding school-based sex-ed is that it tends to present

certain behaviours that Muslims consider to be sinful, such as premarital sex and homosexuality, as acceptable.[17] Although this was certainly a concern for some participants, and without a doubt a key reason why the majority believed their parents and communities often held negative views towards school-based sex-ed, the participants themselves presented a slightly different critique. Their major complaint was that they were only being presented with a single perspective regarding what constituted acceptable and healthy sexual behaviour, and that there was no acknowledgement that there are multiple perspectives regarding acceptable sexual behaviour, inclusive of Islamic perspectives. Participants were not highly offended by the inclusion of "un-Islamic" or potentially "sinful" assumptions that Canadian youth engage in premarital sex, that sexual activity is defined more broadly than heterosexual penile-vaginal intercourse, or that LGBTQ+ content is taught. In fact, the majority of participants clearly stated that they did not want any content, including LGBTQ+ content, removed from religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed curriculum, as they felt that it was important information for Muslim youth to learn, even if they simultaneously believed that Islam condemned certain behaviour or orientations.

What did upset many participants was that assumptions underlying what they were taught, primarily in public school sex-ed, tended not to recognize that choosing to follow certain Islamic guidelines surrounding sex and sexuality, such as opting out of North American dating culture and abstaining from sex or sexual exploration until marriage, were in fact legitimate and normal perspectives for many. Even the few

[17] Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education'; Sanjakdar, '"Teacher Talk"', 265; Al-Dien, 'Perceptions of Sex Education', 392.

participants who did not follow these Islamic guidelines felt that they should be presented as an acceptable option. The complaint of those who were presented with religiously sensitive perspectives in Catholic and Islamic schools was that abstinence was emphasized to the point of eliminating comprehensive sex-ed content that they nonetheless deemed to be useful after marriage, and culturally necessarily as young people in Canada.

This chapter's findings support Beyer and Ramji's conclusion that Muslim youth in Canada are internalizing Canadian educational values such as individual autonomy, critical thinking, and multiculturalism,[18] and show that these values extend to participants' views of what would constitute religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed. Furthermore, participants' disagreements with and critiques of some experts' suggestions regarding how to properly make sex-ed religiously and culturally sensitive demonstrates both the subjectivity of such an exercise, and the diversity of opinion that will inevitably exist among Muslim individuals and communities.

[18] Beyer and Ramji, *Growing Up Canadian*, 296.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to broadly examine the landscape of experiences and perceptions of young Muslims in Canada regarding sex-ed. This was carried out according to data from 251 online survey responses and fourteen interviews, addressing school-based sex-ed, informal and parental sex-ed, "Islamic" sex-ed, and religious and culturally sensitive sex-ed. Overall, this study has found that informal sex-ed sources shaped survey respondents' and interview participants' understandings the most, followed by public school sex-ed. Parents, religiously designated schools, Islamic teachers and authorities, and Muslim gatherings provided the least sex-ed, Islamic or otherwise. Participants, however, noted that each of these sources of sex-ed could be improved. Furthermore, many of the Muslim youth in this study demonstrated the adoption and integration of Canadian educational and social values such as multiculturalism, critical thinking, and individual autonomy into their beliefs and practices of Islam.

8.1 Summary of Findings

The majority of survey respondents were moderately practicing Sunni heterosexual women, who were also university educated Canadian citizens from predominantly South Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds. The interviews had equal numbers of male and female participants, and provided some sexual diversity and additional male perspectives. It should be noted that the data in this study is highly Sunni-centric, and also did not take French-speaking Muslims into account. There are

many types of Muslims in Canada, and their demographics are continually shifting. There are many Muslims in Canada who will not see their beliefs or perceptions reflected in the findings of this study. As such, it would be irresponsible to assume that the findings of this study apply uniformly to "Muslims" in Canada in general.

Regarding school-based sex-ed, the majority of interview participants and survey respondents alike did not believe that sex-ed causes youth to become sexually active. They also indicated their belief that Muslim youth in Canada should receive some formal sex-ed. Public school participants wished that sex-ed was framed more broadly to include the dynamics of healthy relationships, rather than being limited to discussions of safe-sex. Islamic and Catholic school students seemed to receive the least sex-ed. When it was provided, their programs tended to emphasize abstinence to the exclusion of providing robust education around other sex-ed topics.

Notably, Islamic schools face unique challenges in implementing sex-ed. Because Islamic schools tend to be community-based institutions that do not receive full governmental funding, it can be difficult for them to educate students regarding topics about which tuition-paying parents do not approve. Depending on the province, private schools such as Islamic schools may not be required to teach provincial sex-ed curricula. Furthermore, due to historical differences in structure and funding, compared to the separate Catholic school system, Islamic schools do not have the same access to the resources or interprovincial networks necessary to develop their own sex-ed curricula. Educating parents about the importance of sex-ed in a culturally competent manner and providing Islamic schools with additional financial and networking resources to develop

or adapt sex-ed curricula to suit their needs could help Canadian Islamic schools implement sex-ed.

Parents often have the option to opt their children out of school-based sex-ed. According to the survey data, however, Muslim students in Canadian public school systems are far more likely to attend sex-ed classes than to be opted-out of them. Sometimes young people themselves, rather than their parents, make the decision to opt out of sex-ed. Why they do so was not clear, but could be because they perceive sex-ed to be unnecessary or un-Islamic. This is an area which religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed could have a positive impact.

None of the interview participants believed that sex-ed should be the sole responsibility of parents, and the majority of survey respondents echoed this statement. Participants' experiences of parental sex-ed were minimal and uncomfortable. They described their parents' communication strategies around sex-ed topics as almost always stigmatizing. This had two major consequences: leading participants to seek information from other sources, and making them feel like Muslim youth could not disclose sexual abuse or assault to their parents. Participants were appreciative when their parents were able to explain their views of sex and sexuality, even briefly. They were also understanding of the fact that parents were often not able to provide them with a more robust sex education due often to their lack of knowledge and comfort with this topic. Ideally though, participants wished that they could have more open communication with their parents.

Similar to youth around the world, Muslims in Canada access sex-ed from a variety of informal sources, including the internet, friends and peers, family members,

and pornography.[1] Given participants' lack of parental sex-ed and complaints regarding school-based sex-ed, it is hardly surprising that both the survey respondents and interview participants reported gaining more sex-ed from informal sources than from parents or school. Participants reported that they were generally able to find the sex-ed information they sought. They were also aware that not all sources of information are trustworthy, and thus verified it by cross-referencing information and consulting multiple sources.

Generally, both interview participants and survey respondents indicated that they were neither receiving significant levels of Islamic or non-Islamic sex-ed from religious authorities or Muslim gatherings. Rather, they learned values and some teaching implicitly from these sources, gaining the rest of their explicit Islamic sex-ed from the internet and other informal sources. Participants tended to frame Islamic sex-ed within an Islamic legal framework, described as "rule book" Islam. Participants tended to describe "rule book" Islam as a monolithic entity devoid of diversity of opinion or interpretation. Many participants were not aware of the difference between Islamic law, the primary sources from which laws are derived, and whether the broader objectives of Islam play a role in this process. This "missing link" should be kept in mind by religious teachers endeavouring to teach Islamic sex-ed.

This is not to say, however, that all participants accepted these rules or viewed Islam in such a manner. What it does mean is that much of their critical thinking and navigation of these rules was largely done individually, and was often not connected to

[1] See sections 5.1-5.

similar debates or knowledge of differences of opinion within Islamic traditions. Participants displayed a variety of techniques of navigating Islamic sex-ed teachings, including accepting or rejecting them outright, reconciling them to their personal belief by seeking alternative interpretations, and seeking more flexibility through objectives-oriented and spiritual approaches to Islamic sex-ed.

Researchers, Muslim sex-ed advocates, and Muslim parents have suggested religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed as a solution to the objections that some Muslim youth and parents have with school-based sex-ed, and they have made a variety of suggestions on how to implement it. Participants agreed with some, disagreed with others, and did not come to a consensus on many of these suggestions. Participants generally disagreed with each other regarding recommendations that would significantly change or lead to the omission of sex-ed content that other Canadian youth would access in public schools. Some broad issues upon which participants generally agreed was that religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should include the same content as other school-based sex-ed, while emphasizing that Islamic guidelines are normal options for some people. In fact, participants went even further, believing that sex-ed in general, and especially in public schools, should be sensitive to multiple religious and cultural perspectives. Given participants' complaints about the inadequacies of school-based sex-ed, however, it should be noted that they did not want sensitive sex-ed to be an alternative, watered down form of sex-ed, but rather a comprehensive program inclusive of religious beliefs.

Notably, this inclusivity did not preclude the inclusion of LGBTQ+ content. In a rare instance of consensus, even participants who did not believe that gender and sexual

diversity are Islamically permissible agreed that Muslim youth in Canada should still learn about them. These findings are significant, showing the extent to which some young Muslims in Canada have truly "approved and sought to further the ideas of equality and diversity that is officially and popularly enshrined in Canadian notions of a multicultural society."[2] Participants were open to learning about issues and perspectives with which some did not personally agree, just as they desired to have their own perspectives reflected within sex-ed as well.

This study has also shown that, although their reported numbers are small, there are indeed transgender and LGBTQ+ Muslims in Canada. As such, it should not be assumed that heteronormative sex-ed is uniformly appropriate for Muslim students. This highlights the challenge of religious and cultural sensitivity, and suggests that attempts to design a program that is meant to be uniformly sensitive for "Muslims in general" will not adequately meet the needs of all Muslim youth.

8.2 Discussion

Critical thinking emerged as being important to many participants, especially regarding Islamic sex-ed. They demonstrated a desire to understand where Islamic teachings come from, what their underlying objectives are, and how they connect to spirituality or to some "greater meaning". Participants largely adopted cerebral and individualist approaches to following Islamic teachings; they sought to understand them in order to discern whether and how to practice. They also felt that teachings that appealed to reason would foster self-confidence in their Muslim identities. Even in the

[2] Beyer and Ramji, *Growing Up Canadian*, 296.

absence of explicit teachings from religious authorities, participants were still implicitly impacted by Islamic sex-ed obtained through inference, the values and silences of their parents and Muslim communities; and by informal Islamic sex-ed obtained online and from friends and peers. Participants valued and navigated Islamic sex-ed in a variety of creative ways. This demonstrates that some young Muslims in Canada are indeed internalizing Canadian social and educational values such as critical thinking and individual autonomy, and that they are integrating them into their understandings and practices of Islam.

Participants often perceived their critical and individually autonomous approaches to Islam to be at odds with the ways in which their parents, communities, and religious teachers approached Islam, which they described as more implicit, rigid, and as appealing to negative emotions such as fear and guilt. Interestingly, survey respondents reported that their understandings of sex and sexual health were as unlikely to be shaped by pornography as they were to be shaped by religious teachers. Although interview participants did not consider the two sources to provide similar information, some of their critiques of these sources were similar: they believed that both pornography and religious teachers portray sex in ways that require critical thought to discern, and that they did not think that either should be accepted at face value. Notably, one religious teacher was considered to be trustworthy regarding Islamic sex-ed by one participant because he framed navigating human sexuality as part of *tasawwuf*, or following the path of Sufism.

The discussion of religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed has shown that some Muslim youth have also adopted ideas of equality and diversity enshrined in Canadian

conceptions of multiculturalism, and that they are willing to act towards others according to these ideas. However, they do not see these ideas being applied to them in mainstream Canadian society or in public school classrooms. This experience may contribute to parents' and students' decisions to opt out of school-based sex-ed, and should be noted by Canadian educational policy makers, especially given the recent Ontario sex-ed controversies.[3]

Participants indicated that greater clarity on how to navigate various sources of sex-ed, such as parents, "Islam", Muslim communities, school, and mainstream Canadian society, would have especially benefited them during their school years by mitigating confusion and increasing a sense of security and confidence in their Muslim identities. Three strategies that could help achieve this goal arose from the data. The first strategy was a more holistic, comprehensive, and multiculturally competent school-based sex-ed, which would include the recognition that following religious teachings is a normal choice for some. The second strategy was more openness towards speaking about and allowing youth to learn about Islamic and non-Islamic sex-ed from parents, religious teachers, and Muslim communities in general. The third strategy was a greater degree of connection between "rule book" Islam and the reasons, ethical objectives, and spiritual meaning behind Islamic teachings around sex, gender and sexuality. Taken together, participants indicated that these three strategies would help them bridge potentially conflicting sources of information more confidently. Further educational changes,

[3] See chapter 1.

programming and research would be needed to assess the impact of these strategies on Muslim youth.

At this point, it is important to recall some potentially salient details of the interview participant demographics (see table 6). Although information concerning their economic status was not gathered, all interview participants were university students, and almost all had spent their entire lives in Canada. This suggests that many had likely experienced some upwards social mobility and economic prosperity compared to newcomers and non-university students and graduates. It also contextualizes some participants' proclivity for critique and critical thinking, skills which are often honed in universities. Furthermore, this study did not draw upon a representative sample of Muslims in Canada, but a convenience sample, wherein individuals who are interested and invested in the research topic are the most likely to respond. As such, it is imperative to reiterate that the views of these interview participants should not be generalized to all Muslims, but rather considered within their demographic context. Indeed, it is likely that many Muslims in Canada would not see all of their own views and experiences reflected in those of the present study's interview participants.

8.3 Contribution to the Literature

In addition to adding qualitative and quantitative data regarding an under-researched and often stereotyped group of minority youth to the literature, this study both challenges and supports the existing literature regarding the sex-education of young Muslims in Canada and other Euro-western countries. In this section, the findings of the present study will be discussed in relation to two important studies in the field. The first

is Mark Halstead's 1997 article "Muslims and Sex Education", which was written in the context of British Muslim leaders urging Muslim parents to withdraw their children from school-based sex-ed in the early 1990s. The present study challenges some key points in Halstead's article, suggesting that they do not necessarily reflect the views and experiences of some Muslim youth in Canada. The second study that will be addressed is Wong et al.'s 2017 scoping review of the literature regarding the sexuality and sexual health of young Muslims in Canada and other Euro-western countries. The findings of the present study support many of the recommendations made by Wong et al.

In the 1997 article "Muslims and Sex Education", Halstead outlines three main concerns of British Muslim parents with regard to the sex-ed their children were receiving through the public school system. These concerns were that

1) "some of the materials used in sex education offend against the Islamic principle of modesty and decency",
2) That "contemporary sex education tends to present certain behaviour as normal or acceptable which Muslims believe is sinful",
3) and that "sex education is perceived as tending to undermine the Islamic concept of family life."[4]

These three points continue to be drawn upon by sex-ed researchers working with Muslim communities. The present study, however, troubles their general applicability by showing that the Muslim youth in Canada who participated in this study do not consider all of these issues to be problematic.

[4] Halstead, 'Muslims and Sex Education', 319.

Regarding the first and second points, as discussed in section 7.2.a, participants generally agreed that even religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should not omit any information that would otherwise be taught in school-based sex-ed. Most participants were personally comfortable with the use of explicit teaching aids (ie. condom demonstrations, anatomical diagrams). They did not find explicit teaching aids to be immodest when used for the sake of seeking knowledge within a formal educational setting, and viewed seeking knowledge as being encouraged in Islam. Participants did note, however, that it may be necessary to eliminate explicit teaching aids in order to appease more conservative Muslim parents.

Participants seemed to have two responses to Halstead's second point, as discussed in section 7.2.b and 7.3.b. The observation that school-based sex-ed tends to operate on the belief that dating and premarital sexual activity are normal and expected behaviour for young people did upset some participants. This was not, however, because "sinful" behaviour was being presented as normal, but rather because participants desired some Islamic teachings, such as abstinence until marriage, to also be presented as a normal options for some. Participants were not at all offended by the prospect of including LGBTQ+ material in sex-ed. Quite the opposite. Even participants who believed that engaging in same-sex relationships was sinful still believed that student should learn about these issues in school as part of becoming equipped to live in Canadian society.

Halstead notes that although British Muslim parents could opt to allow their children to attend school-based sex-ed, the burden of instilling Islamic sex-ed lessons

within their children falls upon them.[5] From the perspective of Canadian Muslim youth, this study supports the alternative view that schools could take on some of that responsibility by recognizing that religious ways of thinking and acting upon sex and sexuality are normal for some people, and by implementing some measures of religious and cultural sensitivity within sex-ed classes. This is linked to a wider conversation related to religious literacy in the public sphere, including the place of religion in public school.

Regarding the third point, Halstead elaborates that "In its very attempt to be open and inclusive, sex education may in face be in danger of undermining Muslim children's acceptance of the Islamic concept of family life" by implying to Muslim children that they are "free to determine their own sexual values and choose their own patterns of sexual behaviour".[6] In exploring the views and practices of Muslim youth themselves, however, this study supports the view that some Muslim youth are already navigating "Islamic" sex-ed teachings in such ways as to determine their own values and patterns of behaviour. They were especially doing this by seeking to understand the underlying logic and meaning behind Islamic teachings, rather than always accepting them at face value. This was the case even for participants who did not attend sex-ed courses in Canadian public schools. Furthermore, this study has show that obtaining non-Islamic and Islamic sex-ed are not mutually exclusive, and Muslim youth who receive both can still value and adhere to Islamic teachings around sex and sexuality. Participants displayed the ability to accept and navigate "Islamic" sex-ed teachings, especially when explicitly

[5] Halstead, 324.
[6] Halstead, 320–21.

taught, while simultaneously desiring to learn about other perspectives of sex and sexuality, even if they do not agree that those perspectives are Islamically correct.

This study has also shown that Muslim youth do not necessarily believe in or adhere to a singular or monolithic Islamic teaching regarding sex and sexuality, which could be extended to trouble the notion that Muslim youth are likely to accept a singular notion of Islamic family life. Smerecnik et al.'s 2010 study based on the forum conversations of Dutch immigrant and non-immigrant Muslim youth on an Islamic sex education website, found that participants interpreted Quranic verses related to sex and sexuality in different ways, and that they were willing to disagree with religious authority figures. These participants "sometimes reported two or more different interpretations of the same passage" and sometimes "the same passage was used as an argument for two opposing views."[7] Furthermore, the study found that some "Muslim adolescents are more likely to denounce the religious authority of a liberal Imam than change their views on sexuality", as some participants "denounced the Imam on the forum as unknowledgeable when he contradicted the participants' world views".[8] In the context of a government sponsored sex-ed website aimed at educating Muslim youth through "promoting liberal interpretations of the Qur'an permitting contraceptive use and protective measures" via a trained Imam, it may not be surprising that some Muslim youth were suspicious of the information with which they were presented.[9] Participants in both Smerecnik's study and the present study demonstrated the ability to dismiss the

[7] Smerecnik et al., 'An Exploratory Study of Muslim Adolescents' Views on Sexuality: Implications for Sex Education and Prevention', 5.

[8] Smerecnik et al., 6.

[9] Smerecnik et al., 6.

teachings of religious authority figures whose intention or reasoning they do not trust or agree with, whether that was because they considered their opinions to be too sexually permissive, restrictive, or illogical. Based on the findings of the present study, rather than subversively promoting a single perspective, a more productive model of educating Muslim youth about sexuality in Islam would be more transparent and cater to youth's capacity for critical thought.

This could be done by providing a wider range of Islamic legal opinions and Quranic interpretations, accompanied by the reasoning behind them, for youth to look at and judge for themselves. Admittedly, this approach may not be suitable for organizations or individuals whose goal is to promote a specific agenda, such as abstinence and contraception use, as many differences of opinion exist in Islamic legal traditions. Including a wide range of Islamic opinions and interpretations, however, may speak to a larger Muslim audience by both including views with which they agree, and thus not alienating them, while simultaneously exposing them to the existence of alternative opinions. Though catering to young people's capacity for critical thought and personal autonomy may be considered as undermining the authority parents and the family, this method would still be couched in an Islamic framework.

Overall, when considered within the framework of the present study, though Halstead's points are likely valid in many Muslim communities and among Muslim parents, this study shows that they should not be uniformly applied to all Muslims, as some young Muslims do not agree with them or find them to be problematic.

A second key piece of research this study seeks to address is Wong et al.'s 2017 scoping review of research literature concerning the sexuality and sexual health of

Muslim young people in Canada and other Euro-western countries. The present study supports several of the recommendations and observations made by Wong et al. Participants in this study have clearly indicated their agreement that there is a "need for culturally inclusive and socially just sex education at school, and empowering parent-youth dialogue about sexuality at home and in the community" and that mainstream sex-ed is not meeting Muslim youth's need for inclusive and comprehensive education.[10] Participants also communicated and agreed with the recommendation that "providing community programs that support parents and community leaders to talk openly with young people about sexuality would contribute to improved parent-youth communication about sexuality and sexual health at home".[11]

This study supports the finding that Muslim youth in Canada, similar to other Muslim youth living in Euro-western contexts, demonstrate "resilience and agency in the strategies they used to straddle multiple cultures and often conflicting and competing demands from their families, peers, communities, and mainstream society."[12] While resilience and agency are positive reactions to these challenges, this study also supports the finding that navigating multiple sources of information can "create conditions of increased vulnerability to mental health distress,"[13] and that there is therefore "a need for accessible, inclusive and nonjudgmental sexual health services for Muslim young people".[14]

---

[10] Wong et al., 'Understanding the Sexuality and Sexual Health of Muslim Young People in Canada and Other Western Countries: A Scoping Review of Research Literature', 56.

[11] Wong et al., 56.

[12] Wong et al., 57.

[13] Wong et al., 57.

[14] Wong et al., 57.

Overall, the findings of this study support the importance of Wong et al.'s call to "pilot and evaluate culturally empowering models for sexual health promotion (e.g., youth-centred; peer-to-peer; intergenerational mentorship) among Muslim young people and communities."[15] The potential for abuse and institutional violence when implementing religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should be seriously considered during the design, piloting, and evaluation of any program. This is because "'Cultural sensitivity' can only go so far when its sole mandate is to transport a singular message in a pre-designed curriculum" based on the experiences and needs of a majority white Euro-western population, the agenda of the state, or the academic interests of researchers.[16] This is a legitimate concern with regard to potential religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed programing for young Muslims in Canada; Wong et al. found that literature regarding Canadian and Euro-western Muslim youth's sexual health and sexuality demonstrated "Pre-existing monolithic perceptions about 'Muslim'" which seemed to "have shaped some of the study designs and research questions to produce a particular kind of knowledge or evidence that perpetuates the dominant discourses of difference and Othering."[17] It is my hope that the design and content of this study, which attended to the multiple and intersectional identities of Muslim and privileged their voices and experiences, will contribute to dismantling the Othering and monolithic perceptions of Muslims and sex-ed in Muslim communities.

[15] Wong et al., 57.
[16] Mills, 'I Should Get Married Early', 17.
[17] Wong et al., 'Understanding the Sexuality and Sexual Health of Muslim Young People in Canada and Other Western Countries: A Scoping Review of Research Literature', 56.

8.4 Conclusion

Overall, this study has shown that, similar to young people from other backgrounds in Canada, young Muslims in Canada also demonstrate a wide variety of opinions and experiences regarding sex-education. It has also shown that some Muslim youth demonstrate the adoption and integration of the Canadian educational and social values of multiculturalism, critical thinking, and individual autonomy into their beliefs and practices of Islam and sex-ed. Though participants' navigation of various sources of sex-ed has at times been turbulent and confusing, many were hopeful for the future. As Kawthar explained,

> I'm grateful for those [negative] experiences as well, because they have shown me where we can improve in the future. I think realistically, if our generation does push forward to try and have this dialogue, especially with the opportunities that we've had education-wise, this can be something that can happen.

It is imperative to keep in mind that many Muslims in Canada will not see their perceptions or experiences reflected in the findings of this study. This study's survey respondents and interview participants, however, though not representative of all Muslims in Canada, do represent a population of future Canadian educators, parents, religious teachers, and multiple professionals who could become stakeholders in subsequent discussions regarding sex-education in Canada. Their voices, perceptions, and experiences of sex-ed, as recorded in this study, can be built upon and used to improve sex-education in schools, at home, and in Muslim communities.

Glossary of Non-English Terms

fiqh - Islamic law or jurisprudence.

hadith - Orally transmitted reports of the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, compiled in written form after his death.

halal - Something permissible within the context of Islamic law.

halaqat - (sing. *halaqa)* A religious study/discussion group. Members often sit in a circle.

haram - Something forbidden within the context of Islamic law.

ijtihad - The practice of autonomous critical reasoning in the context of Islamic law.

jamatkhana - "House of congregation," a term that describe a place of worship and learning often used by Ismaili Muslims.

junnah – Heaven, paradise.

khulifah al-rashidun - Translated as "the rightly guided caliphs," Sunnis use this term to describe the first four leaders/successors of the Muslim community after the prophet Muhammad.

liwat - Anal sex in the context of Islamic law.

madahib – (sing. *madhab*) Schools of though within Islamic law.

maqasid al-shariah - The objectives of Islam, or an objectives-oriented approach to Islamic law.

sallalahu alayhi wasallam - This Arabic phrase is often translated as "peace be upon him," and is used by Muslims after mentioning the prophet Muhammad as a sign of respect.

sunnah - The prophetic tradition, which is based upon what Prophet Muhammad said, did, allowed or prohibited. These teachings were recorded in *hadith.*

tasawwuf - Becoming Sufi" through self-purification and realizing of ethical and spiritual ideals.

usul al-fiqh – the processes and methodology through which Islamic law is derived.

zina – Unlawful sexual activity in the context of Islamic law.

Works Cited

Abdessalem, Yahyaoui, Mohamed El Methni, Sydney Gaultier, and Dhouha Lakhdar-Yahyaoui. 'Acculturative Processes and Adolescent Sexuality: A Comparative Study of 115 Immigrant Adolescents from Cultures Influenced by Islam and 115 French Adolescents from Cultures Influenced by Christianity'. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 37 (2013): 28–47.

'About'. Heart Women and Girls, 2015. http://heartwomenandgirls.org/about/.

Ahmed, Ghazala. 'Muslim Parents at Crossroads: Choosing the Right School for Their Children'. *Comparative and International Education / Éducation Comparée et Internationale* 42, no. 2 (13 December 2013). https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol42/iss2/4.

Ahmed, Rumee. *Sharia Compliant: A User's Guide to Hacking Islamic Law*. Encountering Traditions. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018.

Ajzenstat, Janet, and Ian Gentles. 'Sex Education in Canada: A Survey of Policies and Programs'. Human Life Research Institute Reports. Toronto: Human Life Research Institute, 1988.

Alami, Nader. 'Je Regarde Du Porno Toute La Nuit!' In *19 Thèmes Sur La Sexualité Des Musulmans: Questions/Réponses de Musulmans Du 21ième Siècle Sur Leur Sexualité*, 49–52. Paris: Bayane, 2015.

Al-Dien, Muhammad M. 'Perceptions of Sex Education among Muslim Adolescents in Canada'. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 3 (2010): 391–407.

Ali, Kecia. 'Introduction'. In *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith and Jurisprudence*, xii–xxviii. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006.

Ali-Faisal, Sobia. 'Crossing Sexual Barriers: The Influence of Background Factors and Personal Attitudes on Sexual Guilt and Sexual Anxiety among Canadian and American Muslim Women and Men'. *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, 1 January 2014. https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/5051.

———. 'What's Sex Got to Do with It? The Role of Sexual Experience in the Sexual Attitudes, and Sexual Guilt and Anxiety of Young Muslim Adults in Canada and the United States'. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 10, no. 2 (2016): 27–41.

Allison, Derek J., Sazid Hasan, and Deani Neven Van Pelt. 'A Diverse Landscape: Independent Schools in Canada'. Fraser Institute, June 2016. https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/a-diverse-landscape-independent-schools-in-canada.pdf.

Alphonso, Caroline. 'Ford Government Scraps Controversial Ontario Sex-Ed Curriculum'. *The Globe and Mail*, 12 July 2018. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-doug-ford-government-scraps-controversial-ontario-sex-ed-curriculum/.

Athar, Shahid. 'Sex Education: An Islamic Perspective'. *IslamiCity* (blog), March 2018. https://www.islamicity.org/2191/sex-education-an-islamic-perspective/.

Atighetchi, Dariusch. 'The Position of Islamic Tradition on Contraception Medicine'. *Medicine and Law* 13 (1994): 717–28.

Auda, Jasser. *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach*. London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008.

Barlas, Asma. *'Believing Women' in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

Barman, Sarah. 'What Consent Means in the Age of #MeToo'. *The Walrus*, 18 January 2018. https://thewalrus.ca/what-consent-means-in-the-age-of-metoo/.

Belhaj, Abdessamad. 'Legal Knowledge by Application: Sufism as Islamic Legal Hermeneutics in the 10th/12th Centuries'. *Studia Islamica* 108, no. 1 (2013): 82–107.

Beyer, Peter. 'Growing Up in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe'. In *Growing Up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists*, edited by Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji, 290–306. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013.

Beyer, Peter, and Rubina Ramji, eds. *Growing Up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013.

Bialystok, Lauren. '"My Child, My Choice"? Mandatory Curriculum, Sex, and the Conscience of Parents'. *Educational Theory* 68, no. 1 (2018): 11–29.

Birch, Paul James, Joseph M. White, and Kaylene Fellows. 'The Broad Effectiveness of Seventy-Four Field Instances of Abstinence-Based Programming'. *Sex Education* 17, no. 1 (January 2017): 14–25.

Bleakley, Amy, Michael Hennessy, Martin Fishbein, and Amy Jordan. 'How Sources of Sexual Information Relate to Adolescents' Beliefs About Sex'. *American Journal of Health Behavior; Star City* 33, no. 1 (February 2009): 37–48.

Brough, Keith. 'Sex Education Left at the Threshold of the School Door: Stricter Requirements for Parental Opt-Out Provisions'. *Family Court Review* 46, no. 2 (2008): 409–24.

Brubaker, Rogers. 'Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013): 1–8.

Chaudhry, Ayesha. *Domestic Violence and the Islamic Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

———. 'Producing Gender-Egalitarian Islamic Law: A Case Study of Guardianship (Wilayah) in Prophetic Practice'. In *Men in Charge?: Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition*, edited by Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Mulki Al-Sharmani, and Jana Rumminger, 88–105. London: Oneworld Publications, 2015.

Clemens, Jason, Milagros Palacios, Jane Loyer, and Frazier Fathers. 'Measuring Choice and Competition in Canadian Education: An Update on School Choice in Canada'. Fraser Institute, February 2014. https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/measuring-choice-and-competition-in-canadian-education.pdf.

CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada). 'Responsibility for Education'. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Accessed 1 February 2019. https://www.cmec.ca/299/education-in-canada-an-overview/index.html.

Cohen, Jacqueline N., E. Sandra Byers, and Heather A. Sears. 'Factors Affecting Canadian Teachers' Willingness to Teach Sexual Health Education'. *Sex Education* 12, no. 3 (July 2012): 299–316.

Crichton, Joanna, Latifat Ibisomi, and Stephen Obeng Gyimah. 'Mother–Daughter Communication about Sexual Maturation, Abstinence and Unintended Pregnancy: Experiences from an Informal Settlement in Nairobi, Kenya'. *Journal of Adolescence* 35, no. 1 (February 2012): 21–30.

Csanady, Ashley. 'Law Allows Parents to Opt out Their Children from Controversial Ontario Sex-Education Curriculum'. *National Post*, 23 February 2015. https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/law-allows-parents-to-opt-out-their-children-from-controversial-ontario-sex-education-curriculum.

'Curriculum'. Calgary Catholic District School Board. Accessed 6 February 2019. https://www.cssd.ab.ca/Programs/Curriculum/Pages/default.aspx.

DeVore, Elise, and Kenneth Ginsburg. 'The Protective Effects of Good Parenting on Adolescents'. *Current Opinion in Pediatrics* 17, no. 4 (August 2005): 460–65.

Eisner, Elliot W. *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan, c1994.

Ernst, Carl W. 'Tasawwuf'. In *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, edited by Richard C. Martin, 2:684–90. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004.

Geaves, Ron. 'A Reassessment of Identity Strategies Amongst British South Asian Muslims'. In *Religious Reconstruction in the South Asian Diasporas: From One Generation to Another*, edited by John R. Hinnells, 13–28. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967.

Government of Canada. Constitution Act, § 93 (1867). https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-4.html#h-21.

Guilamo-Ramos, Vincent, Alida Bouris, Jane Lee, Katharine McCarthy, Shannon L. Michael, Seraphine Pitt-Barnes, and Patricia Dittus. 'Paternal Influences on Adolescent Sexual Risk Behaviors: A Structured Literature Review'. *Pediatrics* 130, no. 5 (November 2012): e1313–25.

Hald, Gert Martin, and Teguh Wijaya Mulya. 'Pornography Consumption and Non-Marital Sexual Behaviour in a Sample of Young Indonesian University Students'. *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 15, no. 8 (September 2013): 981–96.

Hall, David D., ed. *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Halstead, J. Mark. 'Muslims and Sex Education'. *Journal of Moral Education* 26, no. 3 (1997): 317–30.

Hamdani, Amani. *Muslim Women Speak: A Tapestry of Lives and Dreams*. Toronto: Women's Press, 2009.

Hammer, Kate. 'Muslim Students Enrolling in Catholic Schools'. *The Globe and Mail*, 5 September 2011. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/muslim-students-enrolling-in-catholic-schools/article4180638/.

Hansman, Glen. 'The Past, Present, and Future of Sexual Health Education in BC'. *British Columbia Teachers' Federation Magazine*, December 2015. https://www.bctf.ca/publications/TeacherArticle.aspx?id=38521.

Hardy, Sam A., Michael A. Steelman, Sarah M. Coyne, and Robert D. Ridge. 'Adolescent Religiousness as a Protective Factor against Pornography Use'. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 34, no. 3 (May 2013): 131–39.

Hawkesworth, Mary. 'Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 31 (1989): 533–57.

HEART Women & Girls. 'Let's Talk About Sex (Education): A Guide to Effective Programming for Muslim Youth'. Chicago: HEART Women & Girls, 2014. http://heartwomenandgirls.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/HEART_Guide_sexed_programming.pdf.

Hicks, Meredith S., Annie-Laurie McRee, and Marla E. Eisenberg. 'Teens Talking with Their Partners about Sex: The Role of Parent Communication'. *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 8, no. 1–2 (January 2013): 1–17.

Hidayatullah, Aysha A. *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

'History of the SCBSA'. Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association. Accessed 6 February 2019. https://www.scsba.ca/about-us/history-of-the-scbsa/.

Idil, Raidah Shah. 'I Am a Young Woman Addicted to Pornography. What Should I Do?' Q&A Forum. *SeekersHub* (blog), 14 March 2018. http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2018/03/14/young-woman-addicted-pornography/.

———. 'I Am Addicted to Pornography. What Do I Do?' Q&A Forum. *SeekersHub* (blog), 20 March 2017. http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2017/03/20/pornography-3/.

———. 'Telling Future Wife about Pornography Addiction'. *SeekersHub* (blog), 2 January 2019. http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2019/01/02/telling-future-wife-about-pornography-addiction/.

Jahangir, Junaid, and Hussein Abdullatif. *Islamic Law and Muslim Same-Sex Unions*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016.

Jaspal, Rusi, and Marco Cinnirella. 'Identity Processes, Threat, and Interpersonal Relations: Accounts From British Muslim Gay Men'. *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, no. 2 (2012): 215–40.

Kamali, Mohammad Hashim. 'Goals and Purposes (Maqasid) of Shari'ah: History and Methodology'. In *Shari'ah Law: An Introduction*, 122–40. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008.

———. *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2003.

Kazemipur, Abdolmohammad. *The Muslim Question in Canada: A Story of Segmented Integration*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014.

Khan, Shahnaz. *Aversion and Desire: Negotiating Muslim Female Identity in the Diaspora*. Toronto: Women's Press, 2002.

Khurana, Atika, and Amy Bleakley. 'Young Adults' Sources of Contraceptive Information: Variations Based on Demographic Characteristics and Sexual Risk Behaviors'. *Contraception* 91, no. 2 (February 2015): 157–63.

Knight, Michael Muhammad. *The Taqwacores*. Autonomedia, 2004.

Kugle, Scott Siraj al-Haqq. *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2010.

———. *Living Out Islam: Voices of Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Kumar, Maya M., Rodrick Lim, Cindy Langford, Jamie A. Seabrook, Kathy N. Speechley, and Timothy Lynch. 'Sexual Knowledge of Canadian Adolescents after Completion of High School Sexual Education Requirements'. *Paediatrics & Child Health* 18, no. 2 (February 2013): 74–80.

Lessard, Claude. 'La "gouvernance" de l'éducation au Canada : tendances et significations'. *Education et societes* 18, no. 2 (December 2006): 181–201.

Liebl, Vernie. 'The Caliphate'. *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (May 2009): 373–91.

Luker, Kristin. 'The Birth of Sex Education'. In *When Sex Goes to School: Warring Views on Sex - and Sex Education - Since the Sixties*, 35–62. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.

Maddock, James W. 'Sexuality Education'. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality* 9, no. 3–4 (July 1997): 1–22.

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Maticka-Tyndale, Eleanor, Jelani Kerr, Robert Mihan, and ACBY Team. 'A Profile of the Sexual Experiences of African, Caribbean and Black Canadian Youth in the Context of Canadian Youth Sexuality'. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 25, no. 1 (2016): 41–52.

Mawani, Sharmina. 'Sanctuary for the Soul: The Centrality of the Jamatkhana in Religious Identity Formation'. In *Perspectives of Female Researchers: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Gujarati Identities*, edited by

Sharmina Mawani and Anjoom A. Mukadam, 75–98. Berlin: Logos Verlag Berlin, 2016.

Maynard, Mary. 'Beyond the "Big Three": The Development of Feminist Theory into the 1990s'. *Women's History Review* 4 (1995): 259–81.

McGuire, Meredith B. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Meldrum, Rebecca, Pranee Liamputtong, and Dennis Wollersheim. 'Caught Between Two Worlds: Sexuality and Young Muslim Women in Melbourne, Australia'. *Sexuality & Culture* 18 (2014): 166–79.

Mesch, Gustavo S. 'Social Bonds and Internet Pornographic Exposure among Adolescents'. *Journal of Adolescence* 32, no. 3 (June 2009): 601–18.

Mills, Jesse. 'I Should Get Married Early: Culturally Appropriate Comprehensive Sex Education and the Racialization of Somali Masculinity'. *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* 1, no. 1 (2012): 5–30.

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba, Jana Rumminger, and Amina Wadud, eds. 'The Ethics of Tawhid over the Ethics of Qiwamah'. In *Men in Charge?: Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition*, 256–74. London: Oneworld Publications, 2015.

Montemurro, Beth, Jennifer Bartasavich, and Leann Wintermute. 'Let's (Not) Talk about Sex: The Gender of Sexual Discourse'. *Sexuality & Culture* 19 (2015): 19–156.

'Musawah: A Global Movement for Eqality and Justice in the Muslim Family Framework for Action'. Musawah: For Equity in the Family, 2009. http://www.musawah.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MusawahFrameworkforAction_En.pdf.

Nawaz, Zarqa. *Me and the Mosque*. Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 2005.

Neuman, Keith. 'Survey of Muslims in Canada 2016'. The Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2016. http://nsiip.ca/wp-content/uploads/survey_of_muslims_in_canada_2016_final_report.pdf.

Ninomiya, Melody Morton. 'Sexual Health Education in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools: Junior High School Teachers' Experiences, Coverage of Topics, Comfort Levels and Views about Professional Practice'. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 19, no. 1–2 (2010): 15–26.

Nyhagen, Line, and Beatrice Halsaa. *Religion, Gender and Citizenship: Women of Faith, Gender Equality and Feminism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Orgocka, Aida. 'Perceptions of Communication and Education about Sexuality among Muslim Immigrant Girls in the US'. *Sex Education* 4, no. 3 (2004): 255–71.

Orsi, Robert. 'Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion'. In *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, edited by David D. Hall, 3–21. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Paul VI. 'Encyclical Letter Humanae Vitae on the Regulation of Birth'. Vatican website, n.d. http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

Peter, Jochen, and Patti M. Valkenburg. 'Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research'. *The Journal of Sex Research* 53, no. 4–5 (May 2016): 509–31.

Plaskow, Judith. 'Decentering Sex: Rethinking Jewish Sexual Ethics'. In *God Forbid: Religion and Sex in American Public Life*, edited by Kathleen M. Sands, 23–41. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Pole, Jason D., Sarah Flicker, and Toronto Teen Survey Team. 'Sexual Behaviour Profile of a Diverse Group of Urban Youth: An Analysis of the Toronto Teen Survey'. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 19, no. 4 (2010): 145–56.

Public Health Agency of Canada. 'Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education', 2008. http://sieccan.org/pdf/guidelines-eng.pdf.

Ramadan, Tariq. *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Raysuni, Ahmad al-. *Imam Al-Shatibi's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law*. Translated by Nancy Roberts. London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005.

Resnick, Michael D., Peter S. Bearman, Robert Blum, Karl E. Bauman, Kathleen M. Harris, Jo Jones, Joyce Tabor, et al. 'Protecting Adolescents From Harm: Findings From the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health'. *JAMA* 278, no. 10 (September 1997): 823–32.

Robinson, Kerry H., Elizabeth Smith, and Cristyn Davies. 'Responsibilities, Tensions and Ways Forward: Parents' Perspectives on Children's Sexuality Education'. *Sex Education* 17, no. 3 (2017): 333–347.

Rockoff, Jonah E. 'The Impact of Individual Teachers on Student Achievement: Evidence from Panel Data'. *The American Economic Review* 94, no. 2 (2004): 247–52.

Rogers, Adam A., Thao Ha, Elizabeth A. Stormshak, and Thomas J. Dishion. 'Quality of Parent–Adolescent Conversations About Sex and Adolescent Sexual Behavior: An Observational Study'. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 57, no. 2 (August 2015): 174–78.

Roy, Olivier. *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. 'Preface'. In *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*, xi–xiv. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.

Sabia, Joseph J. 'Does Sex Education Affect Adolescent Sexual Behaviours and Health?' *The Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management* 25, no. 4 (2006): 783–802.

Sanjakdar, Fida. *Living West, Facing East: The (De)Construction of Muslim Youth Sexual Identities*. Vol. 364. Counterpoints: Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education. New York: Peter Lang, 2011.

———. '"Teacher Talk": The Problems, Perspectives and Possibilities of Developing a Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Curriculum for Australian Muslim Students'. *Sex Education* 9, no. 3 (2009): 261–75.

Selby, Jennifer. '"'Muslimness'" and Multiplicity in Qualitative Research and in Government Reports in Canada'. *Critical Research on Religion, Special Issue: The Muslim Question* 4, no. 1 (2016): 72–89.

Shipley, Heather. 'Teaching Sexuality, Teaching Religion: Sexuality Education and Religion in Canada'. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Sexuality Education*, edited by Louisa Allen and Mary Lou Rasmussen, 157–76. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017.

Simon, Laura, and Kristian Daneback. 'Adolescents' Use of the Internet for Sex Education: A Thematic and Critical Review of the Literature'. *International Journal of Sexual Health* 25, no. 4 (October 2013): 305–19.

Smerecnik, Chris, Herman Schaalma, Kok Gerjo, Suzanne Meijer, and Jos Poelman. 'An Exploratory Study of Muslim Adolescents' Views on Sexuality: Implications for Sex Education and Prevention'. *BMC Public Health* 10, no. 533 (2010): 1–10.

'Understanding Ontario's Health & Physical Education (HPE) Curriculum, 2016'. Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2016. https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/BoardServices/ReligionFamilyLife/Documents/Health%20and%20Physical%20Education%20Curriculum%20brochure--FAQs.pdf.

Van Pelt, Deani Neven, Jason Clemens, Brianna Brown, and Milagros Palacios. 'Where Our Students Are Educated: Measuring Student Enrolment in Canada'. Fraser Institute, October 2015. https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/where-our-students-are-educated-measuring-student-enrolment-in-canada.pdf.

Vertovec, Steven, and Rogers, Alisdair. 'Introduction'. In *Muslim European Youth: Reproducing Ethnicity, Religion, Culture*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Alisdair Rogers, 1–24. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.

Vishanoff, David. 'A Reader's Guide to al-Shafi'i's Epistle on Legal Theory (al-Risala)'. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28, no. 3 (n.d.): 245–69.

Wadud, Amina. *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Warne, Randi R. '(En)Gendering Religious Studies'. *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 27, no. 4 (1998): 427–36.

Weeks, Michael F., and R. Paul Moore. 'Ethnicity-of-Interviewer Effects on Ethnic Respondents'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1981): 245.

Wong, Josephine Pui-Hing, Fraser Macpherson, Mandana Vahabi, and Alan Li. 'Understanding the Sexuality and Sexual Health of Muslim Young People in Canada and Other Western Countries: A Scoping Review of Research Literature'. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 26, no. 1 (2017): 48–59.

Wray, Anneke, Jane Ussher, and Janette Perz. 'Constructions and Experiences of Sexual Health among Young, Heterosexual, Unmarried Muslim Women Immigrants in Australia'. *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 16, no. 1 (2014): 76–89.

Wuest, Judith. 'Feminist Grounded Theory: An Exploration of the Congruency and Tensions Between Two Traditions in Knowledge Discovery'. *Qualitative Health Research* 5, no. 1 (1995): 125–37.

Young, Pamela Dickey. 'Examining Competing Claims in the Dialogue over Sex Education in Ontario: Women, Rights, and Religion'. *Religious Studies and Theology* 36, no. 2 (2017): 123–38.

Youssef, Alia. Photo Blog. The Sisters Project, n.d. www.thesistersproject.ca.

Zaidi, Arshia, Amanda Couture-Carron, Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale, and Mehek Arif. 'Ethnic Identity, Religion, and Gender: An Exploration of Intersecting Identities Creating Diverse Perceptions and Experiences with Intimate Cross-Gender Relationships Amongst South Asian Youth in Canada'. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 46, no. 2 (2014): 27–54.

Zimmerman, Jonathan. 'The Birds, The Bees, and the Globe: The Origins of Sex Education, 1898-1939'. In *Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education*, 14–48. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

———. *Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Zine, Jasmine. *Canadian Islamic Schools: Unravelling the Politics of Faith, Gender, Knowledge, and Identity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

———. 'Introduction: Muslim Cultural Politics in the Canadian Hinterlands'. In *Islam in the Hinterlands: Muslim Cultural Politics in Canada*, 1–37. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012.

Appendix 1: Recruitment Scripts

1.1: Email Recruitment Script

Email Subject line: Canadian Muslims & Sex-Education Study

Hello & salaam,

My name is Maysa Haque, and I'm a graduate student in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Regina. I am looking for participants for my masters research about young Canadian Muslim's opinions and experiences of sex-education. I have attached a poster and letter of information with full details about the study.

Survey Participation: Participation involves filling out an online survey, which will take about 15 minutes. The survey includes demographic questions and questions related to levels of knowledge and opinions about reproductive and sexual health education. Rest assured that your responses will be anonymous and confidential. At the end of the survey, participants will be invited to participate in an individual interview. Those who are interested will be provided with further information, although they can most certainly decline to participate.

Interview Participation: The first interview should take a total of 1.5-2.5 hours, and the follow-up should take about 1 hour. Please be aware that there are questions relating to reproductive and sexual health education, and that the interview conversation will be audio-recorded. Rest assured that your responses will be anonymous and confidential, and that if you do choose to participate you can stop anytime up to January 15th, 2019 and have your data removed from the study. Interview participants will be compensated for their time with gift cards of up to a total of $25.00.

Eligibility: To be eligible you should identify as a Muslim, be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, and be between the ages of 18 and 30 years old. If you are not eligible, or do not want to participate, I would ask you to forward this information to others who you think would be eligible and interested if you feel comfortable doing so.

Risks: There are minor risks involved with this study, such as feelings of embarrassment. Regarding individual interviews, there is also a slight concern about the confidentiality of Skype. Another video-conference tool called VSee with higher end-to-end encryption is also available to you.

Location: The survey is hosted online through Qualtrics. Interviews will take place at University of Regina, various public places in Regina, Saskatchewan, or through video-conferencing.

Contact: If you are interested in participating, please email me, Maysa Haque at **maysa.haque@uregina.ca**

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at **306-585-4775** or **research.ethics@uregina.ca**. Out of town participants may call collect.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Maysa Haque, Department of Religious Studies, University of Regina

1.2: Facebook Recruitment Script

Salaam!

I'm looking for participants for my Master's research about Canadian Muslim's knowledge and opinions of sex-education. Canadian citizens/PRs who identify as Muslim (all kinds are welcome) between the ages of 18 and 30 are eligible. I am conducting a short survey (link to survey), and optional individual interviews that will take a total of about 3 hours, electronically or in-person. Interviews will be compensated with gift cards of up to $25. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential, and my study has been reviewed by the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board. Feel free to share this information with others who are eligible. If you are interested, please email me, Maysa Haque, at maysa.haque@uregina.ca

Thanks!

1.3: Facebook Recruitment Script for Male Participants

Salaam!

I'm seeking Muslim men in Canada between the ages of 18 and 30 to participate in my master's research about Canadian Muslim's knowledge and opinions of sex-education.

I am conducting individual interviews that will take between 1-2.5 hours, electronically or in-person. Interviews will be compensated with gift cards of $15.00. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential, and my study has been reviewed by the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board. Feel free to share this information with others who are eligible. If you are interested, please email me, Maysa Haque, at maysa.haque@uregina.ca

Thanks!

Appendix 2: Interview Recruitment – Termination Survey

Note: If participants indicate that they would like more information regarding individual interviews, they will be directed automatically to this survey. The results of this survey will not be linked to the first survey, and the option of anonymizing responses has been selected in "Survey Options" so that no personal information will be recorded.

Salaam & hello,

Thanks for completing this survey!

I'm looking for **interview participants** who are willing to share their knowledge & opinions regarding sex-education.

- **Muslims** (all kinds are welcome) in Canada between the ages of **18 and 30** are eligible. Interviews that will take between **1-2.5 hours**, over video-call or in-person.
- There will also be an optional shorter follow-up interview.
- Interviews will be conducted between **October 2018 - February 2019**.
- Interviews will be compensated with **gift cards of up to $25.00 CAD**.
- All responses will be kept **anonymous** and **confidential**
- This study has been reviewed by the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board.

If you are interested or would like more information:

- Email me, Maysa Haque, at **maysa.haque@uregina.ca** with subject line "Canadian Muslims & Sex-ed".
- Or provide me with your contact information, and I will contact you shortly.

Your contact information will not be linked to your submitted survey responses.

- I have saved your email address, and will email you.
- Please email me at the following address:_____
- I'm not interested.

Appendix 3: Survey

Project: Canadian Muslims and Sexual Health Education

Principle Investigator	**Faculty Supervisors**	Dr. Franz Volker Greifenhagen
Maysa Haque, M.A. Student Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Regina (U of R) maysa.haque@uregina.ca	Dr. A. Brenda Anderson Dept. of Religious Studies & Women and Gender Studies Luther College, U of R, brenda.anderson@uregina.ca	Dept. of Religious Studies Luther College, U of R, franzvolker.greifenhagen@uregina.ca

Information Letter and Consent

Research Purpose:

- To explore young Canadian Muslims' general knowledge and religious views of sexual health education, or "sex-ed".
- To identify the sources of this knowledge and your opinions about it.
- To explore how this knowledge has influenced their experiences.
- To identify the barriers, if any, of attaining this knowledge.

Potential Benefits: Your participation will help to fill a knowledge gap regarding sex-education for Canadian Muslims.

Potential Harms, Risks, or Discomforts: You may feel uncomfortable about sharing. You may skip uncomfortable questions, and may exit the survey at any time.

Confidentiality: You will not be asked for your name, city of residence or specific age. Your IP address will not be recorded. No information that discloses your identity will be released or published in this study.

Protecting your Data: Communications to/from Qualtrics servers and data at rest are encrypted. Qualtrics servers are protected by Web Application Firewalls and Qualtrics monitors for unauthorized use. Qualtrics stores Canadian data in Ireland so that it is not subject to the US Patriot Act. Downloaded anonymous data will be encrypted and stored on a access-limited, password secure hard drive.

Right to Withdraw: Because this survey is anonymous, it is not possible to withdraw your submitted responses.

Data Storage: Anonymous paper and electronic data will be securely stored at the U of R for a maximum period of 15 years. This is a safeguard in case my research needs to be reviewed for misconduct, and well as so that it can continue to be used for publication or future research.

Information about Study Results: I expect to have this study completed by May 2019. If you would like a summary of the results, please email me at maysa.haque@uregina.ca. This study has

been reviewed and cleared by the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at **306-585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca**. Out of town participants may call collect.
By completing and submitting the questionnaire, your free and informed consent is implied, and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study. This survey should take less than 9 minutes.

Inclusion Criteria

Q3 How old are you?

- o Under 18
- o 18-19
- o 20-21
- o 22-23
- o 24-25
- o 26-27
- o 28-29
- o 30 or older

Q4 Do you identify as Muslim?

- o Yes
- o No
- o It's complicated

Religiosity

Q5 Which of the following best describes your religious beliefs? *Choose all that apply.*

- o Ahmadiyya
- o Ismaili
- o Just Muslim
- o Shia
- o Sufi
- o Sunni
- o Don't know
- o Other _____

Q6 How religiously practicing do you consider yourself to be?

- o Very practicing
- o Moderately practicing
- o Rarely practicing
- o Not practicing
- o Other _____

Demographics

Q7 What best describes you?

- Canadian Citizen
- Canadian Permanent Resident
- Refugee in Canada
- International student studying in Canada
- None of the above

Q8 Were you born in Canada?

- Yes
- No
- Other _____

Q9 How long have you lived in Canada?

- 0 - 5 years
- 5 - 10 years
- 10 - 20 years
- 20 + years
- My entire life
- N/A

Q10 What is your ethnicity? ***Choose all that apply.***

- African-Canadian or African-American
- North African
- West African
- East African
- Central African
- Southern African
- Middle Eastern
- West Central Asian
- Southeast Asian
- South Asian
- Caucasian
- European
- North American – Indigenous
- Central American, Caribbean & Bermudan
- South American
- Other _____

Q11 What best describes your primary guardian(s)? ie. parents, adoptive parents, step-parents. ***Choose all that apply.***

	Guardian 1 *ex. mother*	Guardian 2 *ex. father*
Born Muslim		
Convert		
Non-Muslim		

Born/raised in Canada
Immigrated to Canada
N/A
Other

Gender & Sexuality

Q12 Do you identify as: ***Choose all that apply.***

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Questioning
- Other _____

Q13 Do you identify as: ***Choose all that apply.***

- Heterosexual *ie. "straight"*
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- Other _____

Relationship Status & Sexual Experience

Q14 What is your current relationship status?

- Single
- Dating
- Pre-engaged (discussed engagement with partner)
- Engaged
- Married
- Common-law
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Other _____

Display This Question:

If What is your current relationship status? = Single

Q15 Have you ever been in a relationship in the past?

- Yes
- No
- It's complicated

- Other _____

Q16 Do you consider yourself to be sexually experienced?

- Yes, very
- Moderately
- Somewhat
- Not really
- No, not at all
- Other _____

Education & Work

Q17 What best describes you? *Choose all that apply.*

- Student - High school
- Student - Undergraduate or college
- Student - Graduate or professional
- Graduate - Post-secondary
- Working - Full or part time
- Looking for work
- Parent or expecting a child
- Home-maker
- Other _____

Formal Education

Q18 What type of primary and secondary school(s) did you attend? ie. elementary school, middle school, high school. *Choose all that apply.*

- Canadian Public School
- Canadian Islamic School
- Canadian Catholic School
- Canadian Private School
- Home-schooled in Canada
- School outside of Canada
- Other _____

Q19 Where did you complete your primary and secondary education? *Choose all that apply.*

- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Manitoba
- New Brunswick
- Newfoundland and Labrador
- Northwest Territories
- Nova Scotia
- Nunavut

- Ontario
- Prince Edward Island
- Quebec
- Saskatchewan
- Yukon
- N/A
- Other _____

Sex-Ed Description

Q20 The next section is about sexual health education or "sex-ed".

Sexual health: a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. – *World Health Organization*
Sexual health education: equipping people with the information, motivation and behavioural skills needed to enhance sexual health and avoid negative outcomes. – *Public Health Agency of Canada*

Sex-education (Formal)

Q21 Were you taught formal sex-ed in school?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Canadian Public School			
Canadian Islamic School			
Canadian Catholic School			
Canadian Private School			
Home-schooled in Canada			
School outside of Canada			
Other			

Q22 Did you ever "opt-out" of sex-ed at school? ie. sex-ed was offered, but you were excused from participating.

	Yes	No	Not sure
Canadian Public School			
Canadian Islamic School			
Canadian Catholic School			
Canadian Private School			

Home-schooled in Canada
School outside of Canada
Other

Q23 If you did opt-out, whose choice was it to do so?

- Mine
- My parents'/guardians'
- Both mine and my parents'/guardians'
- Can't remember
- Other _____

Q24 How do you feel about the sex-ed you received at school <u>while under 18</u> years old?

- It was too much
- It was enough
- It was fine at the time, but I needed more as I got older
- It was not enough
- I did not receive any
- N/A

Q25 While under the age of 18, did you receive <u>formal</u> sex-ed other than from school from one of the following sources? *ie. education from trained individuals.*

- No
- Health practitioner *(doctor, nurse)*
- Planned Parenthood *(organization)*
- Non-profit or community-based organization
- Islamic organization
- Other _____

Islamic & Informal Education

Q26 How much has your understanding of sexual health been shaped by the following:

	Lots	Some	None/NA
Parents/guardians			
Spouse/partner			
Friends/peers			
Sibling(s)			
School			

Religious teachers ex) Imam, Quran teacher
Books
Internet
Pornography

Q27 Do you, or have you attended any of the following Islamic gatherings in North-America? *Choose all that apply.*

- Camps/retreats
- Conferences
- Halaqa/discussion groups
- Mosque
- Quran class
- Unity Mosque/Inclusive Jummah circle
- Week-end/after school Islamic school
- None
- Other_____

Q28 Did any of these gatherings provide you with sex-education?

	Lots	Some	None
Camps/retreats			
Conferences			
Halaqa/discussion groups			
Mosque			
Quran class			
Unity Mosque/Inclusive Jummah circle			
Week-end/after school Islamic school			
None			
Other			

Opinions: Islamic teachings re: sex & sexual health

Q29 Islamic teachings regarding sex & sexual health: *Choose all that apply.*

- Are important for me to follow
- Are something that I have not thought about
- Conflict with my personal values or lifestyle

- Are difficult to find information about
- Are unimportant to me
- Do not exist

Opinions – Agree/Disagree

Q30 What do you think about the following statements regarding Muslim youth in Canada?

Youth should receive some formal sex-ed	Strongly Agree … Strongly Disagree
Learning sex-ed goes against Islamic principles of modesty	Strongly Agree … Strongly Disagree
Sex-ed causes youth to become sexually active.	Strongly Agree … Strongly Disagree)

Q31 What do you think about the following statements regarding Muslim youth in Canada?

School based sex-ed should be religiously & culturally sensitive	Strongly Agree … Strongly Disagree
Sex-ed should only be provided by parents	Strongly Agree … Strongly Disagree
Sex-ed in public schools teaches un-Islamic content	Strongly Agree … Strongly Disagree

Q32 Is there anything else about the topics covered in this survey that you would like to add?

Appendix 4: Mixed Response Tables

Table 4.1: Mixed Religion Responses of Survey Respondents		
Demographic	**N = 5**	**% total (n=251)**
Ismaili, Just Muslim, Shia, Sufi	1	0.4
Just Muslim, Other	1	0.4
Just Muslim, Shia	1	0.4
Just Muslim, Sufi, Sunni	1	0.4
Sunni, Other	1	0.4

Table 4.2: Mixed Ethnicity Responses of Survey Respondents		
Demographic	**N = 26**	**% total (n=251)**
African-Canadian/American, East African	5	2.0
European & Caucasian	4	1.6
North African, Middle Eastern	3	1.2
African-Canadian/American, West African	1	0.4
Caucasian, European, Central American, Caribbean & Bermudan	1	0.4
Caucasian, Middle Eastern	1	0.4
Central American, Caribbean & Bermudan, South American, Other	1	0.4
East African, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian	1	0.4
European, Middle Eastern	1	0.4
Middle Eastern, Central American, Caribbean & Bermudan	1	0.4
Middle Eastern, South Asian	1	0.4
North African, East African	1	0.4
North African, Middle Eastern, European	1	0.4
South Asian, Caucasian	1	0.4
Southeast Asian, South Asian	1	0.4
Southern African, South Asian	1	0.4
West Central Asian, Other	1	0.4

Table 4.3: Mixed Orientation Responses of Survey Respondents		
Demographic	**N = 7**	**% total (n=251)**
Heterosexual, bisexual	3	1.2
Gay or lesbian, Queer	1	0.4
Heterosexual, Asexual, Questioning, Other	1	0.4
Heterosexual, Other	1	0.4
Heterosexual, Questioning	1	0.4

Table 4.4: Mixed School Systems Responses of Survey Respondents		
Demographic	**N=29**	**% total (n=251)**
Public, Islamic, Outside Can	4	1.6
Public, Islamic, Home	4	1.6
Public, Private	4	1.6
Public, Catholic	3	1.2
Catholic, Outside Can	3	1.2
Public, Islamic, Catholic	2	0.8
Islamic, Outside Can	2	0.8
Public, Private, Outside Can	2	0.8
Outside Can, Public	1	0.4
Public, Catholic, Private	1	0.4
Public, Home, Outside Can	1	0.4
Private, Home	1	0.4
Public, Private, Home	1	0.4

Table 4.5: Mixed School Location Responses of Survey Respondents		
Demographic	**N=26**	**% total (n=251)**
Alberta (AB), Other	3	1.2
AB, British Columbia (BC)	3	1.2
BC, Ontario (ON)	3	1.2
AB, Saskatchewan (SK)	2	0.8
ON, Quebec (QC)	2	0.8
ON, SK	2	0.8
SK, Other	2	0.8
New Brunswick, ON	2	0.8
AB, ON	2	0.8
Newfoundland & Labrador, ON, Other	1	0.4
MB, ON	1	0.4
AB, Nova Scotia	1	0.4
AB, MB, Other	1	0.4
AB, MB	1	0.4

Appendix 5: Information Letters (Interview and Member-Check)

* Each of the three research phases will have a separate Information Letter and Consent Form. Because much of the information each form contains is repeated on the other forms, it is all included together here. The research phases to which the information is relevant is indicated by bolded and italicized subheadings.

Date: _____

Project Title: Canadian Muslims and Sexuality Education

Principle Investigator	Faculty Supervisor	Faculty Supervisor
Maysa Haque M.A. Student Department of Religious Studies University of Regina maysa.haque@uregina.ca	Dr. A. Brenda Anderson Department of Religious Studies Women & Gender Studies Dept. Luther College, University of Regina 306-585-5170 brenda.anderson@uregina.ca	Dr. Franz Volker Greifenhagen Department of Religious Studies Luther College, University of Regina 306-585-4859 Franzvolker.greifenhagen@uregina.ca

Research Purpose and Objectives:

- To explore young Canadian Muslims' general knowledge about sex, sexuality and gender, as well as their religious knowledge of those topics.
- To identify the sources of this knowledge and your opinions about it.
- To explore how this knowledge has influenced their experiences and views.
- To identify the barriers, if any, of attainting this knowledge.

Procedures:

2.2 - Interview IL

- You are invited to take part in a one-on-one interview and follow-up interview that will take place in Regina, SK, over the phone, or through video-conferencing using Skype or VSee.
- During the interview, I will ask you to reflect on what you know about sex, sexuality and gender in Islam. For example:
    - *How have you learned about sex and sexuality? What have been your sources of knowledge? Do you feel like that education has been adequate?*
- The interview should take between 1.5 ~ 2.5 hours.
- The interview will be audio-recorded in order to preserve accuracy.
- You may choose to not answer the questions you feel uncomfortable answering.

- If you are uncomfortable participating in a one-on-one interview with a female interviewer, you may be accompanied by a chaperone of your choosing, or have one assigned to you.
- This data will be used for my master's thesis, academic presentation and publications, as well as educational community presentations and blog posts.
- In all these cases, your data will remain anonymous and you will never be identified.

Follow-Up Interview

- After the initial interview, your anonymized interview transcript will be provided to you with your permission, and you will be invited to take part in a shorter follow-up interview (~1 hour) to go over the transcript, my early analysis, and any questions you may have.
- This follow-up interview is optional and will be compensated.
- More information will be provided after the initial interview, or upon request.

2.3 – Member-Check IL

- Following your participation in an individual interview, you are invited to take part in a follow-up interview ("member-check") that will take place in Regina, SK, over the phone, or through video-conferencing using Skype or VSee.
- The purpose of this follow-up is the review the transcript of your original interview, add any additional information that you may have, and verify the accuracy of my analysis.
- The interview should take approximately 1 hour or less.
- The interview will be audio-recorded in order to preserve accuracy.
- You may choose to not answer the questions you feel uncomfortable answering.
- If you are uncomfortable participating in a one-on-one interview with a female interviewer, you may be accompanied by a chaperone of your choosing, or have one assigned to you.
- This interview will used to verify the accuracy of your previous interview data, which will be used for my master's thesis, academic presentation and publications, as well as educational community presentations and blog posts.
- In all these cases, your data will remain anonymous and you will never be identified.
- At the end of this interview, you will be asked for your consent for anonymous quotations of your interview to be used in my future publications and/or presentations. You have the right to decline your consent.

Things to consider before the follow-up interview:

- Is there any further information that you would like removed or altered from your transcript?
- Does this transcript accurately reflect what you said your initial interview?
- Do you still agree with what you said? Is there any information that you would like to add?
- Do you agree to allow your transcript to be anonymously quoted for the purpose of this study?

Potential Benefits:

2.2 – Interview IL

- This study will give you an opportunity to speak openly about sex, sexuality and gender in Islam and share your personal experiences in a safe environment.
- Your participation is valuable because it will help to fill a knowledge gap regarding sex-education for Canadian Muslims.

2.3 – Member-Check IL

- This follow-up helps me as a researcher to ensure that I have captured your words, thoughts and opinions accurately.
- Although I have anonymized your transcript, you can ensure that I have not kept any details that could be used to identify you.
- Your participation is valuable because it will help to fill a knowledge gap regarding sex-education for Canadian Muslims.

Potential Harms, Risks, or Discomforts:

2.2 – Interview IL & 2.3 Member-Check IL

- You may feel uncomfortable about sharing your personal knowledge regarding sex, sexuality, gender or religious.
- You do not have to answer questions that you are uncomfortable sharing and are free to withdraw at any point during the interview or before **January 15th, 2019**.
- Although Skype is free, user friendly and encrypted, it is not encrypted to the highest level required by U.S. regulations in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).
- If you are upset about the discussion or interview topics over the course of the interview, you may end your participation at any time. You may also debrief with me after the interview.
- I have provided a list of counselling and therapeutic resources that you may access after the consent form.

Compensation:

2.2 – Interview IL

- In recognition of your time, you will be compensated with a **$15.00 gift card** for your participation in this interview.
- Gift cards can be sent via email or mailed, depending on your preference.
- If you are only able to partially complete this interview, or if you withdraw your data from the study, you will still receive the gift card.

2.3 – Member-Check IL

- In recognition of your time, you will be compensated with a **$10.00 gift card** for your participation in this follow-up interview.

- Gift cards can be sent via email or mailed, depending on your preference.
- If you are only able to partially complete this interview, or if you withdraw your data from the study, you will still receive the gift card.

Confidentiality:

2.2 - Interview IL & 2.3 – Member-Check IL

- No information that discloses your identity will be released or published in this study.
- Pseudonyms or unidentified subject numbers will be assigned to preserve your anonymity. These will be kept separately from any paper work that includes your name or signature.
- During the member-check follow-up interview, you will be able to check that identifying information has been removed from your transcript.

Protecting your Data:

2.2 - Interview IL & 2.3 – Member-Check IL

- Electronic data will be recorded, encrypted and stored on a password secure hard drive, whereby only the I will have access.
- My supervisors will only have temporary access to anonymized transcripts, and I will only work with anonymized data for the purposes of publication.
- Signed forms and other paper data will be kept in locked storage only accessible to myself.
- All data interview audio-recordings will be destroyed after the completion of the follow-up member-check interview, or after **January 15th, 2019**.
- Skype-to-Skype calls are encrypted.
- Although the option of Skype-to-landline calls and phone calls in available to for the interview, you should be aware that these types of calls are not encrypted.
- VSee is an alternative video-conferencing tool to Skype that meets U.S. HIPAA requirements, with higher end-to-end encryption, and is available to you should you feel uncomfortable with using Skype.

Right to Withdraw:

2.2 - Interview IL & 2.3 – Member-Check IL

- Your participation in this study is voluntary.
- If you decide to be part of the study, you can still withdraw even after signing the consent form or part-way through an interview, up until **January 15th, 2019.**
- After this date, it is study results will likely have been analyzed, written up and/or presented, and it will not be possible to withdraw your data.
- If you decide to withdraw before the cut-off date, there will be no consequences to you, your data will be destroyed, and you will still receive compensation.
- You do not need to provide justification for your withdrawal from this study.

Data Storage and Usage:

2.2 Interview IL & 2.3 – Member-Check IL

- Paper and electronic data will be securely stored for a maximum period of 15 years.
- It is standard protocol to conserve research data for a period of 5 years or more at the University of Regina.
- This is a safeguard incase my research needs to be reviewed for misconduct, and well as so that it can continued to be used for publication or future research.

Information about the Study Results:

- I expect to have this study completed by approximately May 2019. If you would like a summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.
- If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact me, Maysa Haque: **maysa.haque@uregina.ca**

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at **306-585-4775** or **research.ethics@uregina.ca**. Out of town participants may call collect. Thank you!

Appendix 6: Consent Forms (Interview and Member-Check)

Note: Due to the similarities between the Interview Consent Form (CF) and the Member-Check CF, both are contained within this document under the relevant headings.

Interview CF & Member-Check CF

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Maysa Haque at the University of Regina.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and my questions have been answered.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until **February 15th, 2019**
- I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.
- I agree to allow Maysa Haque to send me a gift-card as compensation for my participation via the following: email address _____ OR mailing address _____
- ***[Interview CF only]*** I am interested in participating in a short follow-up interview and would like more information: Yes No
- ***[Interview CF only]*** I agree to allow Maysa Haque to email me the anonymized transcript of this interview: Yes No
    - *If yes, please specify the email address*: _____
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant (Print)	***Signature***	***Date***
Name of Interviewer (Print) Maysa Haque	***Signature***	***Date***
Name of Researcher (Print)	***Signature***	***Date***

I would like to receive a summary of the study's results: Yes No

Please send them to me at this email address: _____

Thank you for participating!

Appendix 7: Interview Guides

7.1: Main Interview Guide

Section 1: Demographics

1. How old are you?
2. How do you identify religiously? (Type of Muslim, sect, religiosity)
3. Is identifying with a sect, or school of thought important to you?
4. How religious, or practicing would you consider yourself to be? How does that play out in your life? (For example, does your level of practice mean that you pray everyday, or study Quran… etc).
5. How would you describe your ethnicity and your parent's ethnic backgrounds?
6. Can you briefly tell me about your parents and their occupations? If your parents are in Canada, how long they have been here?
7. Do you have any brothers or sisters? Are they older or younger than you?
8. Where were you born, and how long have you been in Canada? (Are you a citizen, PR, newcomer, etc…).
9. What types of primary and secondary schools have you attended – elementary school, middle school, high school? (What school systems – public, private, Catholic, Islamic? and where – what country/what province?)
10. Are you currently studying? If so, what is your field of study? Otherwise, what is your highest level of education and current occupation?
11. What is your current relationship status?
12. Have you been in relationships in the past?
13. Do you have any children?
14. How would you describe your gender and sexual orientation?

Section 2: General Experience and Opinions Regarding Sex-ed

1. Can you tell me about your formal experience of sex-education in the school system?
    a. *Rephrase: How have you learned about sex, sexuality, or reproductive and sexual health at school?*
2. What types of things did you learn? Do you remember when (age or grade) you learned them?
3. Do you remember if you already knew the things that were covered in class, or was some of the information new to you?
4. Did your parents talk about any of the information that was covered at school? Did anything that your parents teach you conflict with what you learned at school?
5. If you didn't receive any formal sex-ed at school, why do you think that is? Did you or your parents opt you out of sex-ed?
    a. If so, was there any discussion at home about the decision to opt out? Who made the decision?

   b. How did you feel about the decision? How did you feel at school? (left out, awkward, normal, etc)
   c. Did your friends/classmates still talk to you about what they covered at school?
   d. What did they talk about? Did any of that information surprise you?
6. Did you receive formal sex-ed from any other sources? (By formal, I mean people/organizations who have been trained to educate about these topics.)
7. Can you tell me about your informal experiences of sex-ed? (internet research, porn, TV, media, talking to friends, siblings, parents, etc)
   a. *Rephrase: How have you learned about sex, sexuality, or reproductive and sexual health outside of school? What have been your sources of knowledge?*
8. Overall, do you feel like the sex-education that you've received, both formal and informal, has been adequate?
   a. *Rephrase: Do you feel like you have enough knowledge about sex, sexuality and reproductive life to live the way that you want to live, and to make healthy decisions?*
9. Are there certain topics that you wish that you had learned more about or that you are still confused about?
10. Do you think that Muslim youth in Canada should receive formal sex-ed? Why or why not? (By formal I mean from school or people/organizations who have been trained to educate about these topics).
11. What do you think that the role of parents should be in providing sex-ed? Should it be the sole responsibility of parents? Why or why not?
12. (Based on the answer that they give) Thinking about your own life and experience, do you think that that (their answer) is realistic (for their parents or the Muslim parents in their community)?
13. Based on your own experience and involvement in Muslim communities, do you think that receiving sex-ed makes Muslim youth in Canada more likely to become sexually active? Why or why not?
14. Based on your own experience and involvement in Muslim communities, have you seen any positive or negative impacts that either receiving or not receiving sex-ed has had on Muslim youth?

Section 3: Islam & Sex-ed

1. Do you think that Islam has any teachings or lessons regarding sex, sexuality or gender? If so, what? What sources did you learn from?
   a. *Rephrase: Have you learned about sex, sexuality or gender from an Islamic perspective? What did you learn? Where did you learn this from? (From reading Quran/hadith, parents, Islamic school, mosque, halaqas, conferences, friends, family, general impressions).*
2. If so, how did you feel and what do you think about what you learned? Are those things that you learned important for you to follow?

3. Do any of those things that you learned conflict with your personal values, lifestyle, or the way that you want to live your life?
4. Do think that learning about sex, sexuality or gender from an Islamic perspective is important? Why or why not?
5. In your experience and opinion, do you think that sex-ed in schools teaches "unIslamic content"? If so, what content qualifies as "unIslamic"?
6. Do you think that learning sex-ed - or aspects of sex-ed - in school goes against Islamic principles of modesty? Why or what not?

Section 4: Religious & Culturally Sensitive Sex-ed

1. What do you think about the possibility of "religiously and culturally sensitive" sex—ed for Muslims? *(Policy and logistical details aside.)* Do you think that having something like would that be a good idea? Why or why not?
2. Is that something that you would have been interested in? Do you think that it would have interested your parents, or would you be interested in it for your own children?
3. (If the answer to the above question was that it's a bad idea, ask the following questions anyways, using the questions to explore why they thing that religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed would be a bad idea)
4. What topics do you think that type of sex-ed should include, and why?
5. Do you think that religiously and culturally sensitive sex-ed should be delivered/provided in a certain way? Or differently than it's being provided in schools currently?
6. What do you think that type of sex-ed would omit, and why?
7. In a perfect world, who would teach "religiously and culturally sensitive" sex-ed for Muslims, and where would this take place? (mosque, Islamic school, community center, non-religiously affiliated building).
8. Do you think that "controversial" topics like gender equality or feminism could be taught from an Islamic perspective?
9. If so, how, and what would the Islamic perspective be?
10. Do you think that those topics could be covered in religiously or culturally sensitive sex-ed?
11. Do you think that "controversial" topics like same-sex marriage, transgender issues, or other LGBTQ+ identities could be taught from an Islamic perspective?
12. If so, how, and what would the Islamic perspective be? Do you think that those topics could be covered in religiously or culturally sensitive sex-ed?
13. Do you think it's necessary or possible to present these issues from an Islamic point of view?

Section 5: Additional Information

1. Is there anything that I've forgotten to ask you about? Is there anything else that you'd like to add or reflect upon now?

7.2: Member-Check Guide

Information about these interview questions: This gives you an idea what we will talk about during your follow-up interview. The interviews will be one-to-one and will be mostly open ended. Because of this the exact wording of my questions may change a little. Sometimes I will use other short questions to make sure I understand what you have said, or to learn what you think or feel about something.

1. What do you think about your transcript? Does it reflect what you said during our initial interview?
2. Have any of your thoughts regarding what you said during your initial interview changed? If so, how?
3. Is there anything that you would like to add, alter or remove from your transcript?
4. What do you think about my initial analysis of your initial interview? Is there anything that you agree with, disagree with, or that you would like to clarify?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to add that I've forgotten to ask about?

Appendix 8: Transcript Release Form

I, _____,

(print name)

Please circle either [A] or [B]

[A]

- have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate.
- I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with **Maysa Haque**

OR

[B]

- have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate, but have **decided not to review** the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study,

---

AND,

- I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to **Maysa Haque** to be used in the manner
  described in the Interview Information & Consent Forms, which may include using direct quotations from my anonymized transcript for the purposes of publication.

- I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant (Print)	***Signature***	***Date***
Maysa Haque		
Name of Researcher (Print)	***Signature***	***Date***

Appendix 9: Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

University of Regina

Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	DEPARTMENT	REB#
Maysa Haque	Department of Religious Studies	2018-129

SUPERVISORS
Dr. Brenda Anderson & Dr. Franz Volker Greifenhagen

TITLE
Canadian Muslims and Sexuality Education

APPROVED ON	RENEWAL DATE
August 22, 2018	August 22, 2019

APPROVAL OF
Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review, Email Recruitment Script, Facebook Recruitment Script, Recruitment Poster, Information Letters (Survey, Interview, Member-Check), Consent Forms (Survey, Interview, Member-Check), Survey Questions, Interview Guide, Member-Check Guide, Transcript Release form, Confidentiality Study Code Key, Confidentiality Agreement, & Canadian Sex-Ed, Sexual Assault and Therapeutic Resources.

Full Board Meeting ☐ Delegated Review ☒

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, or related documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, procedures or related documents should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for the renewal and closure forms:
https://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/ethicsforms.html

[redacted]

Laurie Clune PhD
REB Chair

Please send all correspondence to:

Research Office
University of Regina
Research and Innovation Centre 109
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone: (306) 585-4775 Fax: (306) 585-4893
research.ethics@uregina.ca