

**Arabic- Background Muslim Students in State Schools:
An Inclusive Multicultural Education Perspective**

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Leila A. Mouhanna, certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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27th March, 2014

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Abstract

The study investigates the education of Australian Arabic speaking background (ASB) Muslim females. While there has been considerable (usually negative) focus in recent years on the social experiences of young ASB and/or Muslim males, there has been relatively little focus on females – and on their more positive educational story. The study thus addresses an under-researched area. It also provides an insider perspective into the education of students whose voices have been under-represented in educational debates.

The purposes of the study are two-fold:

- to learn more of the educational experiences of ASB Muslim females who attend Australian state secular schools – from the perspective of the students who are currently attending school, from their teachers, and also from the perspective of young women who have now completed school and have taken up various post-school pathways;
- to investigate the extent to which secular schools that are attended by ASB Muslim female students can and do address their educational, language, cultural and religious needs.

Data for this investigation are drawn from two Sydney state secondary schools. They include questionnaires and interviews with school students; interviews with school executives and teachers; and analysis of school and education department policy documents. They also include interviews with a group of young, Australian ASB Muslim women regarding their post-school experiences.

To pursue the purposes of the research, the study proposes an inclusive multicultural framework for the analysis of the data. This framework enables factors to be identified

within the research sites that contribute positively to educational outcomes for ASB Muslim female students, and those that do not.

Outcomes from the study enable implications to be drawn for schools, for students and their parents and, more generally, for the education and social inclusion of ASB Muslim females in secular societies such as Australia. The outcomes also contribute to broader questions about the nature of inclusive and multicultural education; about the benefits and limitations of such notions for the education of Muslim ASB females; and more generally, about ways of enhancing ASB Muslim women's participation in a cohesive and inclusive society.

Table of Contents

Certificate of Original Authorship	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	v
List of Diagrams.....	xii
Acronyms and Abbreviations	xiii
Chapter One Introduction to the Thesis	1
1.1 Background and rationale for the thesis.....	1
1.2 The Context of the Research	5
1.3 A Framework of Inclusive Multicultural Education	9
1.4 Research Questions	11
1.5 Research Design.....	13
1.6 Contributions of the Thesis	16
1.7 Organisation of the Thesis.....	17
Chapter Two Contextual Background.....	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Academic, Further Education and Employment Profiles.....	19
2.2.1 Academic Profiles	19
2.2.2 Australian ASB Muslims	25
2.2.3 Employment Profiles.....	26
2.2.4 ASB Muslim Females' Education and Employment	28
2.3 Social and Political Context	33
2.3.1 The Australian Context	33
2.3.2 Racism and Islamophobia	37
2.4 Issues of Identity for Australian ASB Muslims	41
2.4.1 Muslim Identity	42
2.4.2 Australian ASB Muslim Women & Community	48
2.4.3 Tensions in the Third Space	51
2.5 Conclusion.....	55
Chapter Three Educational Context	56
3.1 Introduction	56

3.2 Inclusive Education.....	57
3.3 Islamic Versus State Secular Schools	61
3.4 Multicultural Education	72
3.5 An Inclusive Multicultural Framework for Analysis of Data	84
3.6 Conclusion	98
Chapter Four Research Design and Methodology	100
4.1 Introduction.....	100
4.2 Approach to Research- Qualitative Theoretical Framework and Methodology	101
4.3 Conducting the research.....	104
4.4 Data Analysis	115
4.5 Challenges in the research	117
4.6 The Case Studies.....	122
4.6.1 Swanson Girls High School	123
4.6.2 Macliffe Girls’ High School	129
4.6.3 Summary	134
4.7 Conclusion	135
Chapter Five Perspectives of the Schools.....	137
5.1 Introduction.....	137
5.2 Language and Literacy Education	139
5.2.1 Introduction to Section.....	139
5.2.2 Perceptions of the Schools’ Academic Profiles	139
5.2.3 English Language and Literacy Development	142
5.2.4 Students’ ‘Ethnolect’ and access to broader Society	150
5.2.5 Conclusion to Section	153
5.3 Culture and Religion: Schools’ responses to students’ cultural and religious backgrounds	155
5.3.1 Introduction to Section.....	155
5.3.2 Schools’ Approaches to Multicultural Education, Antiracism and Community Harmony	156
5.3.3 Religious Inclusion in Secular Schools.....	164
5.3.4 Conclusion to Section	170

5.4 Culture and Religion: the interface between school and community.....	171
5.4.1 Introduction to Section	171
5.4.2 School –Family/ Community Relations	172
5.4.3 Gender Roles and Future Aspirations	181
5.4.4 Conclusion to the Section.....	185
5.5 Culture and Religion: The Interface between School and Society	187
5.5.1 Introduction to Section	187
5.5.2 Teachers’ and schools’ Interface with Socio-political Context	188
5.5.3 Schools’ responses to the Socio-political Context and to Crisis Events	193
5.5.4 Conclusion to Section.....	198
5.6 Conclusion: Summary of Findings.....	199
Chapter Six The Students’ Perspective	205
6.1 Introduction	205
6.2 Language and Literacy Education.....	207
6.2.1 Introduction to Section	207
6.2.2 Students’ Perceptions of their Academic Profiles.....	208
6.2.3. Language and Literacy Development	212
6.2.4 Conclusion to the Section.....	216
6.3 Culture and Religion: Students’ Perceptions of Schools’ Responses	217
6.3.1 Introduction to Section	217
6.3.2 School’s Approaches to Multicultural Education, Anti-racism and Community Harmony.....	218
6.3.3 Students’ perceptions of schools’ responses to their religious needs.....	229
6.3.4 Conclusion to Section.....	240
6.4 Culture and Religion: Students’ Perceptions of the Interface between School, Local Community and Society	241
6.4.1 Introduction to Section	241
6.4.2 Students’ Interface with Society	242
6.4.3 Students’ Post-School Aspirations	250

6.4.4 Culture and Religion: Students' perceptions of inclusive education	257
6.4.5 Conclusion to Section	262
6.5 Conclusion: Summary of Findings	264
Chapter Seven Perspectives of Women in the Years Following School	269
7.1 Introduction.....	269
7.2 The women's experiences since school: Education, careers and family	272
7.2.1 Introduction to Section.....	272
7.2.2 Education and Career Pathways since school	272
7.2.3 Interface with Society: negotiating their own space	278
7.2.4 Conclusion to Section	288
7.3 Women's Recollection of their Schooling: Inclusion and Exclusionary Pressures	290
7.3.1 Introduction to Section.....	290
7.3.2 Language and Literacy: English and Arabic.....	291
7.3.3 Schools' responses to Multiculturalism Racism and Community Harmony	296
7.3.4 Inclusion and Secular Schooling.....	306
7.3.5 Conclusion to Section	312
7.4 Conclusion: Summary of Findings	315
Chapter Eight Discussion and Conclusions.....	319
8.1 Introduction.....	319
8.2 How well do Australian secular state schools meet the needs of young ASB females?	324
8.2.1 Introduction to Section.....	324
8.2.2 Implementation of multicultural and inclusive education	325
8.2.3 Academic achievement of students.....	331
8.2.4 Schools' interface with Community and Broader Socio-political Contexts.....	336
8.2.5 Conclusion to the Section.....	340
8.3 What are the experiences of ASB Muslim females of Australian secular schools?	342
8.3.1 Introduction to Section.....	342
8.3.2 Overall experiences at school	343

8.3.3 Post-school study and careers	344
8.3.4 Students' Belonging and Identities: National, Cultural and Religious	346
8.3.5 Students' interactions with the broader community.....	349
8.4 Implications and Recommendations	355
8.4.1 Addressing Language and Literacy Education.....	356
8.4.2 Addressing Cultural and Religious Inclusion	357
8.4.3 Educational and Social Policies	361
8.5 Contributions and Limitations of the Thesis	362
8.6 Directions for Future Research	365
8.7 Conclusion to chapter and thesis.....	365
References.....	368
Appendices.....	397
Appendix A. Interview Schedule- Teachers and Executives	398
Appendix B. Students' Questionnaire.....	402
Appendix C. Focus Group Schedule-Students.....	414
Appendix D. Interview Schedule-Young Women	416

List of Diagrams

Figure 1 Inclusive Multicultural Education Framework.....	87
Table 1 Participating teachers and executives from Swanson.....	106
Table 2 Participating teachers and executives from Macliffe.....	106
Table 3 Summary of data from students.....	109
Table 4 Profile of young women interviewed in Phase 3.....	114
Table 5 'I get good grades in my subjects at school'.....	208
Table 6 Students' intended education and employment pathways.....	250

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASB	Arabic-speaking background
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DEC	Department of Education and Communities
EAL/D	English Additional Language/Dialect
Eid	Muslim holidays Eidul Adha festival of the Sacrifice, Eidul Fitr (festival of the feasting)
HSC	Higher School Certificate
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission
LBOTE	Language Backgrounds other than English
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
NESB	Non-English speaking backgrounds
NSW	New South Wales
PDHPE	Personal Development, Health, Physical Education
TAFE	Technical and Further Education Institutes (State funded Vocational Education provider)

Chapter One

Introduction to the Thesis

1.1 Background and rationale for the thesis

The impetus for this thesis is both personal and professional. As an educator, I believe in the potential role of education in establishing social justice. I am also an Australian Muslim woman of Lebanese descent. As a new teacher graduate, I began my teaching career in Sydney's socially disadvantaged suburbs and in schools with high concentrations of students from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds, many of whom were second generation Muslim, Arab speaking background (ASB) students. I was concerned by the relatively low levels of educational achievement of many ASB Muslim students in these schools and decided that the most viable approach to better address my students' learning needs was through developing more expertise in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) education. During the completion of a Masters degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL), I conducted a study exploring the literacy practices of Arabic speaking background families. This study not only provided rich data regarding bilingualism and literacy in the home domain, but more significantly heightened my awareness of the multiple factors that influenced students' learning experiences.

In addition to the obvious factors of low socio-economic background, and limited proficiency in English, my Masters research made me more aware of the ways in which the intersection of ethnicity, religion, gender and class affected students' educational experiences, especially in the post-September 11th world. Social issues related to

belonging, marginalization and identity appeared to have compounded the effects of socio-economic disadvantage and limited English language proficiency in schooling of Australian Muslim ASB students. These issues appeared to be particularly pertinent in secondary schools, where these caused significant, additional pressures on the academic performance of these students. For me, in addition to addressing the language and literacy needs of ASB students, it became imperative also to explore ways in which these students were navigating national, religious and ethnic identities in their schools and how such issues were influencing their educational and employment aspirations in Australian society.

Furthermore, it became increasingly evident from my own teaching experience that female Australian Arabic-speaking background (ASB) students were following similar national trends by outperforming their male counterparts (Considine & Zappala, 2002). Their educational and social experiences were broadly different from the experiences of young males. Within the Australian ASB Muslim community anecdotal evidence, as well as my own personal experience, indicated that young women are increasingly pursuing tertiary education and careers in a diversity of fields ranging from education and medicine to engineering amongst others. The 2006 Australian Bureau of statistics (ABS) Census shows that 17.5% of Australian Muslim females held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the national figure of 18% (in McCue, 2008, p.44). This figure underscores the value of education in the lives of many Muslim women. Despite this positive picture, the academic profile of Australian Muslims, who represent several diverse ethnic groups, is heavily polarised with research on academic profiles of Australian Muslims of ASB/ Middle Eastern and/or Lebanese-background indicating that they do not seem to be performing on a par with Australian standards of academic

achievement (Kalantzis, Cope & Slade, 1989; Suliman, 2001; Cresswell, 2004; Suliman & McInerney, 2006). Overall, the educational performance data based on religious, ethnic and language categories provide contradictory accounts of the performance of ASB Muslim students as a group, though combined, these various data sets would suggest a polarised academic profile for young Australian ASB Muslim women. However, in the Australian context, narratives of educational underachievement and concomitant ASB Muslim male youth crime rates have often overshadowed the experiences of Muslim females and to some extent ASB Muslim females in educational research and the mainstream media. Thus, the more positive narrative of, at least, some measure of educational success by Muslim females has received comparatively little attention.

My purpose in this thesis is to investigate the educational experiences of female Arabic speaking background (ASB) Muslims. More specifically my purpose is to:

- learn more of the educational experiences of ASB Muslim females who attend Australian schools – from the perspective of students currently attending school; from their teachers, and to also explore the experience and attitudes of young women who have now completed school and taken up various post-school positions;
- investigate the extent to which Australian secular schools, that are attended by female ASB Muslim students, can and do address their educational, cultural and religious needs.

My own identity brings with it a personal interest and an inside perspective to the research topic; however, it also brings a perspective that is shaped by a broader concern for social justice and with equality of opportunity for all students in an inclusive society. This perspective includes the view that participation in broader Australian society is a right of all citizens, and that schools should actively work to promote a socially equitable society. By exploring young Australian ASB Muslim women's school experiences and post-school educational and career aspirations and pathways, the study aims to go beyond the discourse of educational underachievement concerning ASB youth, and to challenge stereotypes of what it means to be an Australian ASB Muslim woman. The study also aims to provide insights into the lived experiences and narratives of those whose voices are not often heard in the context of educational research.

By exploring these concerns, the study seeks to provide a more localized and current contribution to the body of literature concerning young Australian Muslim women's educational experiences in Australia. The body of Australian-based educational research concerned with Arabic-speaking background and/or Muslim Australian women's secondary education experiences, and their post-school transitions is limited (see chapter 2). Though valuable studies have focused on young Australian Muslim females, these have been either concerned with their social experiences in Australia (Yasmeen, 2008; Ho & Dreher, 2009), identity formation and schooling of pre-teen female students (El-Biza, 2010), experiences of discrimination (Imtoul, 2005, 2010), or of employment trends (Foroutan, 2006, 2008, 2009). Recent valuable work by Fethi Mansouri and colleagues has examined the education of Arab-Australian students, though has not focused specifically on the dimension of gender and its intersections with cultural and

religious identity in school and in broader society. This study contributes to the literature by providing a qualitative account of female ASB Muslim students' experiences of secondary education, particularly in the context of secular state schools.

1.2 The Context of the Research

Schools are social sites that play a crucial role in preparing students for participation in society. In my view, these social institutions should ideally foster principles of equality of educational opportunity and full access to a socially cohesive society. That is, they should foster principles where “participation and success are (supported) irrespective of ‘race’, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, age and disability so that disadvantage is not reproduced” (Nunan, Rigmore & McCausland, 2000, p.64). In practice, however, the task of achieving educational equality is a complex and challenging one, particularly as student populations in Australian state schools become more diverse.

The general educational attainment of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students in Australia has been broadly depicted in educational research and international assessments as successful (see PISA results, Thomson, De Bortoli, Nicholas, Hillman, & Buckley, 2012; 2013). However, not all groups of students perform equally well. Though it has often been subsumed under broader and more general categories such as CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) or LBOTE (language backgrounds other than English) (Mansouri, 2008, p.45), there is persistent evidence of the educational underachievement of students of Arabic-speaking Lebanese-background students in Australian schools (Cahill, 1996; Gillborn & Gipps, 1996; Sturman, 1997; Marginson, 2004; Windle, 2004, 2006). However, the link between ethnicity and academic performance is not one of simple cause and effect, but one which involves the complex

interaction of numerous factors, including “class, gender, religion, migration history, parents’ level of education, individual family experiences” (Watkins, 2011, p.845).

As indicated earlier, there is some evidence that ASB girls outperform boys, and at least some girls achieve high levels of educational success, but there is also evidence that members of the Arabic-speaking Lebanese-background community experience factors that contribute to social exclusion including relatively high levels of unemployment, and poverty (Tufyal, Bunglawal, Halstead, Malik & Spalek, 2005; Yasmineen, 2008). These factors clearly impact on young Australian ASB Muslim men. They also influence young, ASB Muslim women, but here, the additional factors of gender, and gendered role expectations within the community, add a further dimension of complexity and pose unique challenges for young women at school and in their post-school pathways.

In addition, there is the effect of the socio-political climate. In the years since September 11th 2001, and with the ensuing ‘Global War on Terror’, some Muslim and ASB Australians have experienced hostile attitudes from certain members of the Australian community. The national identity and allegiance of Muslim and Arab-Australians has often been scrutinized and challenged. Australian Muslims and those of Arab-background have, at times, been portrayed as the ‘other’ in Australian society (Dunn, 2003; Dunn, Burnley & McDonald, 2004; Mason, 2004; Humphrey, 2005) -a phenomenon that has also occurred in other countries with Muslim minorities such as England, and the US (Ramadan, 1999; Modood, 2005). There has been a reported increase in Islamophobic and anti-Arab sentiment in Australia (Deen, 2003; Dunn 2003; HREOC, 2004; Lygo, 2004; Manning, 2004). Muslim women in particular have

reported experiences of discrimination, violence, or verbal abuse (Dunn, 200; Dunn, Burnley & McDonald, 2004; HREOC, 2004; Mason, 2004). These factors, as well as socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by the Australian Muslim and ASB community (Hassan, 2008) have generated concern about the perceived social exclusion, and even the radicalisation of Arabic-background and Muslim youth (Tufyal, et al, 2005; Yasmeen, 2008). The socio-political climate has also fed broader debates about the current status of the policy of multiculturalism, and multicultural education as well as concerns about social cohesion and the integration of migrants into Australian society (Jakubowicz, 2008).

In this context, debates about the relative merits of state versus separate Islamic schools have arisen. Some within the Muslim community, the majority of whom are ASB have argued in favour of education for ASB Muslim students in separate Islamic schools. Their arguments, in many ways, parallel those of others who have addressed the relative merits of separate private schools as opposed to secular state schools. Those in favour of Islamic schools point to the value of an educational institution where to be Muslim is the norm. They argue that students can develop their own, strong Muslim identities without continuously having to justify their beliefs and values, thereby allowing them to concentrate on their studies. They point to the value of students of being educated in a school with an Islamic oriented curriculum that is supportive of their cultural and religious practices, and where Islamic students are not considered as the 'other'. For female students there is the additional advantage that these schools would support Islamic codes of dress and female modesty. Others take the view that these students are part of the Australian community and that there is an advantage to mixing with other students in secular schools. Others take little or no part in debates about Islamic versus

state schools. Their financial resources or physical locations are such that their children have no option but to attend local state schools.

Regardless of these debates, in Australia, the vast majority of Muslim students (around 85%) are educated in secular state schools (Donohue-Clyne, 2010). For the families of these students, their major concern is the extent to which schools can, and do, accommodate the needs of ASB Muslim students and provide support for their educational success. My own position reflects the concerns of such families. Given the fact that the majority of Muslim students in Australia attend secular schools, my concern is with the nature of the experiences of Muslim students within state schools and with the capacity of such schools to acknowledge and meet the needs of Muslim students. My concern in particular is with the kind of educational context that will best support female ASB Muslim students to achieve educational success, and what will best position these girls to achieve their professional and personal goals in the years to come. That is, I am concerned with the extent to which secular schools are equitable and inclusive of female ASB Muslim students. However, it must also be acknowledged that equitable and inclusive education entails a great degree of complexity for state, secular schools, and we should also recognize that an investigation into the educational experiences of female ASB Muslim students raises questions about the role and responsibilities not only of schools, but also of students, their families, of the minority community, and also broader society in contributing to educational contexts that can be equitable and inclusive for all students, including those from Arabic speaking Muslim backgrounds.

1.3 A Framework of Inclusive Multicultural Education

To pursue the purposes of the research, this thesis proposes a framework of Inclusive Multicultural Education. The terms *inclusive* and *multicultural* have long been part of the literature that addresses the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The term *inclusive* has long been used in the context of special education where it is justified on the grounds of social justice, equity and democracy, where all students to have access to an *inclusive* mainstream education (Barton, 1997 p. 233; Thomas & Loxley, 2001; Grayling, 2003). The term *inclusive* has also been used more broadly to refer to the rights of all students to have equal access to educational systems. For example, Leeman and Volman (2001, p. 368) define inclusive education as applying to “situations in which differences related to social class, gender, ethnicity, and mental and physical ability between students are taken into consideration.”

The term *multicultural* has a robust history in the Australian educational context. While it has been defined in various ways throughout its history, common understandings of the term include, “an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs and that affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world” (Benett, 2003, cited in Mansouri & Kamp, 2007, p. 89). Such understandings have been central to policy initiatives designed to meet the needs, since the 1970s, of diverse student populations in Australian schools (introduced by the Fraser government in 1978). Indeed, Australia’s initial Multicultural Education Policy (Lo Bianco, 1987) and the policy of multiculturalism in general, have been regarded as

world leaders (Kalantzis, 1990; Inglis, 1995). Although at times the implementation of multiculturalism in educational contexts has been criticised as being superficial (e.g. Kalantzis and Cope, 1990), various interpretations of the term have continued to inform Australian educational policy responses to diversity (e.g. the Galbally Report, the Multicultural Education Policy Statement, 1983; Multicultural Education Policy NSW, 2005). In a more recent statement, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2008) has reaffirmed this as an educational goal, with “the need to nurture an appreciation for and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity and a sense of global citizenship” (MCEETYA, 2008, p.4). Today, multicultural education remains the ‘operating assumption of education practice’ in schools with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Lo Bianco, 2010, p.22).

The term *multicultural* is, however, politically charged. In recent years, at a national level, there have been intense debates in Australia regarding the place of multiculturalism as a social value. Such debates have coincided with the arrival by boat of refugees and asylum seekers and with concerns over ‘border protection’. One outcome of these debates has been a systematic federal devaluing of the term multicultural, and its educational derivative, multicultural education (Lo Bianco, 2010). Possibly because it has fewer overt political consequences, the term *inclusive* has been appropriated in recent years by many who work with students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Currently in Australia, the term *inclusive* is often used in conjunction with the term *multicultural* in relation to educational responses to diversity (see Multicultural Education Policy, NSW DEC, 2005).

In the process of developing a framework of inclusive multicultural education in order to inform this thesis, definitions of both these terms have been clarified, and their implications addressed in light of the educational needs of a diversity of students, most especially those female students from ASB Muslim backgrounds (see chapter 2). The framework itself includes the core categories of language, culture and religion: categories which have characterised the focus of multicultural education policy in Australia (Byrnes, 2009). Such categories provide a framework that enables the incorporation of factors that promote inclusion, as well as those that work to minimise the exclusion of students from diverse backgrounds. Through the process of developing the framework, I have sought to reassert the importance of *inclusion* and *multiculturalism* as ideals and goals for schools that should also be reflected in broader society. The process of developing the framework has also enabled me to address, in more detail, the implications of secular versus specialist Islamic schools for female ASB Muslim students.

1.4 Research Questions

The research presented in the thesis is guided by three major research questions, and a number of sub-questions. These are:

1. How well do Australian secular state schools meet the needs of young ASB females?
 - To what extent are notions of inclusivity and multiculturalism part of the ethos of the schools?
 - How are such notions evident in the daily experiences of the schools as experienced by ASB Muslim female students?

- What, if any factors within the schools work to support inclusivity and to work against exclusion of ASB Muslim female students?
 - What effect if any do notions of inclusivity and multiculturalism have on the lived experiences and identities of ASB Muslim girls in Australian schools?
2. What are the experiences of ASB Muslim female students in Australian secular schools, and of young ASB Muslim women in their post-school activities?
- How do students perceive their lived experiences as Muslims in a secular school, and in Australian society?
 - What are the students' and young women's educational and career aspirations and post-school activities?
3. What implications and recommendations can be drawn from this research for the education of ASB Muslim female students in secular societies such as Australia?
- For schools?
 - For students, parents, community?
 - For broader Australian society?

The first question addresses the context of the secondary education of female Australian ASB Muslim students, and the extent to which schools incorporate values of inclusion and multiculturalism, as well as some of the core strengths and limitations of inclusive and multicultural educational policies and practices in two case study schools. The second question focuses on the perspective of the girls and young women who participated in the study; and investigates the students' past and present experiences in their secular schools, as well as their post-school aspirations and pathways. For the young women who were previously students, the question addresses the extent to which their educational experiences supported their post-school transitions. The final question

focuses on the implications of the study for different stakeholders, namely policy makers, schools, students, parents and the wider community.

1.5 Research Design

The research presented in this thesis is based on two case studies undertaken in schools in Sydney, Australia. These schools were both all-girl schools, and were ethnically diverse with high proportions of ASB Muslim students. They were selected on the basis that they were typical of schools that are attended by the majority of Sydney's female ASB Muslim students.

Given the exploratory nature of the research questions, and my own theoretical perspective, the study is located within an interpretative paradigm. This paradigm is based on the belief that capturing and portraying an 'objective reality' is illusive, the possible alternative of which is to "know a thing only through its representation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). The study sought to portray the research participants' multiple, constructed realities, the world from the participants' points of view and/or their "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). My aim in the study was to conduct this research in the participants' natural setting: the schools, and to gain insights into underlying beliefs and practices amongst the participants through descriptions of their social world. Young ASB Muslim women who were interviewed were also graduates from one of these schools. This qualitative theoretical perspective facilitated the process of accessing participants' interpretations of their experiences. The thesis explored the research questions from the perspectives of the multiple participants: from school executives and teachers, from female ASB Muslim students who attend the schools, and from young

ASB Muslim women who had graduated and were engaged in study, work, and/or raising young families.

The study is predominantly qualitative in its methodology, and includes multiple data sources. A preliminary, small-scale questionnaire was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative information on students' perspectives from a larger number of participants, than is conveniently afforded through qualitative means. An analysis of questionnaire responses then informed the development of further, more in-depth student interview questions. Follow up focus group interviews with a smaller number of students provided opportunities to pursue specific issues in more detail. Interviews were conducted with school executives and with teachers within the case study schools. Interviews were also conducted with young ASB Muslim women who had completed school and were involved in various post-school activities.

The evaluation of data primarily consisted of qualitative content analysis, where underlying themes in the materials were analysed (Bryman, 2004, p.392). The interpretation of the questionnaire data involved some quantitative analysis of responses as well as content analysis to identify major issues. Interviews were transcribed and then investigated to identify major recurring themes. A key factor in the analysis of this data has been the foundation provided by the framework of inclusive multicultural education. The opportunity to interpret findings in light of this framework has enabled a more systematic analysis of outcomes than would have been otherwise possible.

A number of factors impacted on the research design. Just as my own philosophical stance as a researcher has shaped the areas of inquiry and methodological decisions

within the thesis, my identity and life history has influenced the nature and direction of the study. As previously indicated, as a first-generation Australian, a Muslim of Lebanese-background and an English language teacher with experience in Sydney's culturally diverse schools, my identity and life history were factors that shaped the choice of research topic. On the one hand, as an insider-researcher, I was able to work 'at the margins' (Imtoul, 2009, p. 167) because of my knowledge of the minority community, and was also able to gain a level of acceptance, trust and openness which was attributable to my shared experiences and identification with the young women who participated in the study. My researcher identity, as a fellow teacher, and an ASB Muslim woman may have also defined my relationship and interaction with school staff who participated in the study.

However, being an insider-researcher also raised some methodological issues. There was the potential to be 'clouded' by my own experiences, particularly in the analysis phase of the research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). To avoid this in the course of any study, an essential element of qualitative research is researcher reflexivity. This process is crucial as it means as researchers, we must "come to terms not only with our choice of research problem and with those with whom we engage in the research process, but with ourselves and with our multiple identities that represent the fluid self in a research setting" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 210). Throughout the study, I made consistent efforts to reflect on how my identity may impact on my interpretation of events, and data in the study. This process assisted me in identifying subjective expectations that I may have had, and to return to the actual findings from the data. A key factor here has also been the role of the framework of Inclusive Multicultural Education in supporting a systematic approach to the analysis of the raw data.

At a more practical level, there were a number of factors which affected the scope and direction of the research. Factors such as gaining access to schools for the study, working within the constraints of timetabling and the daily demands of the school were important considerations. To add to this, I had time constraints in conducting the research within the commitments of working overseas myself. These factors influenced the case studies chosen, and had an impact on the scale of time allowed for the collection of data at the two schools.

1.6 Contributions of the Thesis

The thesis contributes to the furthering of our knowledge in two major ways. First, through the understandings and insights it provides into the educational experiences of ASB Muslim girls and young women in Australian secular society. Secondly, it contributes through the development of a framework for inclusive, multicultural education that has enabled a more systematic approach to analysis and interpretation of research findings than would otherwise have been possible. This has wider implications for use in regard to the education of linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Despite the inevitable limitations in the scope and scale of this research, the study does provide some important insights into inclusive and multicultural education practices in Australian state, secular schools, and the accompanying challenges and successes of this in the case of female ASB Muslim students. It also offers insightful snapshots into the lived experiences of the students and young women who are portrayed in the study.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter of the thesis provides the contextual background for the research. The chapter draws on relevant literature and demographic data to locate the experiences of Australian Muslim ASB Australian females in relation to the broader context of Australian society. It examines the minority community's demographic and socioeconomic profile, and their experiences in relation to the national context. It also examines the literature pertaining to female ASB Muslim students' identity formation, schooling and also post-schooling experiences. The third chapter addresses the key notions of inclusive education and multicultural education. It reviews relevant literature to define and contextually analyse these concepts in Australia. This chapter concludes by proposing an alternative framework for inclusive multicultural education.

Chapter 4 presents details of the research design. It elaborates the approach to the research, the research methodology, and procedures for analysing the data. It also addresses the place of the inclusive multicultural education framework in the analysis of the data. The chapter concludes with a contextual account of the two schools in which the case studies were located.

Following this, chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the major findings of the study. Chapter 5, the first of the results chapters, addresses the perspective of school executives and teachers, while chapter 6 examines the responses of female ASB Muslim students attending the school. The chapters detail these students' experiences of schooling, their teachers' and the students' own perceptions of educational success or failure; students' interactions with teachers and peers, their developing identities, and the

interrelationship of gender, culture, and nationalism in shaping identities within a state, secular school. These chapters address ways in which the two schools have approached the education of their female ASB Muslim students, and the extent to which notions of inclusion and multiculturalism were evident in the two schools' respective practices. These chapters also address students' experiences within the overlapping contexts of their schools, communities, and broader Australian society.

Chapter 7 presents the perspectives of young ASB Muslim women who have completed their secondary schooling and have moved on to a range of post-school activities. The chapter thus takes a slightly different orientation from that of chapters 5 and 6, in that it narrates these young women's transition to further education, family formation and to the Australian workforce, and their reflections on the effectiveness of state schooling in preparing them for their post-school life.

Chapter 8, the final chapter, revisits salient findings and themes of the study and addresses their educational implications. It draws on the Inclusive Multicultural Education Framework to address the significance of findings and to inform conclusions and recommendations for key stakeholders in regard to ways of better supporting the education of ASB Muslim girls in Australian schools. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the contributions and limitations of this thesis, and with recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two

Contextual Background

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize Australian ASB Muslim females' educational experiences within the broader social context. It provides a demographic profile of Australia's Muslim and ASB community and the broader social, economic, and political situation which affects them. Additionally, this chapter concentrates on the factors which influence the identity formation, and post-school experiences of young ASB Muslim women. It also draws on educational research which has concentrated on the various intersections of these factors.

2.2 Academic, Further Education and Employment

Profiles

2.2.1 Academic Profiles

International examination results place Australian students' overall performance highly when compared to OECD nations worldwide, although the most recent results (2012) indicate that there has been a decline in the Australia's mathematical and reading literacy performance since 2003 (Thomson, et al, 2013, p. 23-24). Based on their performance in the OECD Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), however, Australian students continue to perform better than average compared to sixty-five OECD countries (Thomson, 2013). Although PISA results show that overall non-English speaking background (NESB) students' proficiency was on a par with native English-speaking students, it also highlighted significant differences in outcome

between the different NESB groups. A breakdown of the data for NESB students in the *European, Chinese, Other Asian* and *Middle Eastern* categories for an earlier exam demonstrates clear differences in the relative performance of these four groups, with students of Middle Eastern background having comparatively the lowest scores for the three components of the exam (Cresswell, 2004, p.11). Hence, broadly speaking, research points to general patterns of academic achievement of migrant-background students on a par with English-speaking background students; however, a breakdown of the data according to migrant background shows that different ethnic groups demonstrate different patterns of academic proficiency. This reflects broader research which has pointed to the diverse performance patterns of students based on different language and/or ethnic backgrounds (Gillborn & Gipp, 1996; Cahill, 1996), and is in contrast with recently adopted categories, which would suggest that all students of migrant background are also emulating and even outperforming Anglo-Celtic Australian students.

Clearly, adopting broad categories to represent cultural diversity in educational research such as *Australian-born, overseas born in English-speaking countries*, and *overseas born in non-English speaking countries* (Windle, 2006), does not take into account the range of performance patterns across ethnic or cultural groups (Sturman, 1997; Windle, 2006). Disaggregating the PISA performance data of students of individual language backgrounds other than English or from individual countries of origin, instead of broad categories of immigrant status and length of residence, renders the picture more complex. There have been concerns raised about examining students' academic performance based on categories such as ethnicity, language background, or religion as it may negatively affect vulnerable groups due to the potential for broad-based

labelling, or stereotyping such groups as underachievers. However, examining this data provides valuable insight into the needs of particular ethnic groups, and allows more targeted support to ensure the provision of inclusive education for all students. For this purpose, and to gain a broader academic profile, it is pertinent to examine some of the social and educational data concerning Australian Muslim Arabic-speaking background students.

As this study is based on the educational experiences of Australian Muslim ASB girls, their educational and social profiles are represented by data based across a number of categories such as religion, ethnicity and language background; namely Muslim, Middle-Eastern background, Middle East and North African-background (MENA), and Lebanese-background. When examining data based on these diverse categories, the data is often contradictory as can be seen below.

The data concerning Muslim students' performance is somewhat positive. Census data (2006) on Muslim Australians indicate that Muslims are generally well-qualified. A greater percentage of Muslim men (4.5% compared to 1.9% of the Australian population as a whole) and women (1.8% compared to 0.9%) have higher degrees than the average of the overall Australian population and there is little difference between Muslim males and females compared to the general Australian population in the proportion holding Bachelor's degrees and associate diplomas (Hassan, 2008, p.7). Both Muslim men and women are also more likely to remain at school when compared to the overall population (Bouma, et al, 2003).

As for Muslim women, Australian Bureau of Statistics data (2000) points to a higher percentage of Muslim women attending university in comparison to the national average for all females (Asmar, Proude & Lici, 2004). Although this figure includes international Muslim female students, it underscores the value of education for Muslim women. Studies which have considered gender as a variable, have found that Middle-Eastern /African background female students, like other NESB groups had significantly higher results compared to their male counterparts (Considine & Zappala, 2002). This reflects general Australian education performance patterns, which show Australian females recording better school outcomes than males. On average, women have higher school retention rates (80.1% for girls compared to 68.8% for males) and slightly higher enrolment ratios in tertiary study with 54.8% of all higher education students being women (Department of Families, 2009). These figures reflect the generally more positive educational achievement of Muslim Australians, and Muslim women in particular, and go against the grain of the broader theme of educational underachievement by Arabic-speaking background and Muslim students in general.

However, educational performance data for Muslim Australians, who represent diverse ethnic groups, is also heavily polarized (Welch, 2011). For instance, while some Lebanese-background students have accessed higher education for professional and managerial employment, others have experienced significant disadvantages (Welch, 2011, p. 107). Apart from the PISA results previously discussed above, a body of research into the academic profiles of Australian Muslims of ASB/ Middle Eastern/ and or Lebanese-background indicates that they do not seem to be performing on a par with Australian standards of academic achievement (Kalantzis, Cope & Slade, 1989; Suliman, 2001; Cresswell, 2004; Suliman & McInerney, 2006). These studies point to

patterns of academic underachievement in the Australian education system in comparison to other NESB groups (Cahill 1996, p.61). To illustrate this point, in one study, students from the Middle-Eastern/African background category were found to be less likely than other students to achieve outstanding results in their schooling, compared to other NESB groups (Considine & Zappala, 2002, p.99).

Additionally, Suliman (2001) and Suliman and McInerney (2006) concentrated on students with a Lebanese-background, and undertook a comparative analysis of the performance in the Grade 10 School Certificate Examinations by Lebanese-background and non-Lebanese background students. Though Lebanese-background students reported high levels of motivation, the researchers suggested that this did not translate into better educational outcomes for all students in the study. It was found that the Lebanese-background students underperformed in three areas, and were less concentrated in the top two grades compared to non-Lebanese background groups. Similarly, studies that have looked at the Arabic speaking category, found that this group is underrepresented in higher education, where despite comprising of 1.57% of all 20-24 year olds, they only represented 0.88% of students in higher education (Marginson, 2004, p.4).

Studies have also examined the factors contributing to these patterns of academic underachievement amongst ASB and Lebanese-background students. Suliman (2001) and Suliman and McInerney (2006) attribute this to students' limited motivation, discipline problems, little parental support or interest in students' schooling based on teacher feedback (p. 2). In a study conducted by Mansouri and Kamp (2007), teachers identified challenges to students' academic performance arising from parental and

community attitudes. For instance, teachers attributed the lack of parental involvement in students' academic lives, students' educational disengagement, as a contributing factor to lower academic attainment. In terms of parental involvement in schooling, McCue's (2008) report also indicated a relatively low level of parental participation in children's school activities amongst Muslim parents.

In short, the educational performance data based on religious, ethnic and language categories provide contradictory accounts of the performance of ASB Muslim students as a group, though combined these various sets of data would suggest a polarized academic profile for young ASB Muslim women. This is also supported by anecdotal evidence based on personal interaction with the community as both an educator and insider-researcher. As a result of intergenerational changes, young ASB Muslim women are increasingly performing better academically, and are pursuing further education and career pathways. Referring to accomplished Australian Muslim women in the academic, literary and business fields, El-Biza (2010) draws attention to the significant successes of Australian Muslim women "actively taking part in society" (p.74). At the other end of the spectrum however, a significant proportion of young ASB Muslim females are not achieving their full academic potential or accessing further education and employment opportunities in their post-school transitions. While educational studies have broadly depicted Muslim and ASB students as underachieving, these narratives do not reflect the complexities of the experience of young ASB Muslim women, who represent a wide spectrum of abilities, aspirations and achievements.

To further contextualize the educational experiences of ASB Muslim female students and young female graduates' post-school transition, a contextual analysis of the ASB

Muslim Australian community, has been provided (see below). The demographic, socioeconomic, and socio-political context of the ASB Muslim Australian community is shown as it relates to ASB Muslim girls' schooling, post-school education, and participation in the workforce and civic life.

2.2.2 Australian-ASB Muslims

According to the 2011 Census, 476,300 Australians identified themselves as Muslim, and accounted for 2.2% of Australia's population (ABS, 2012). Half of all Australian-Muslims have settled in the state of New South Wales, with Muslims representing 3.9% of Sydney's population. The majority of Australian Muslims are Australian born (38%), while the second highest proportion is Lebanon born (9%) (Hassan, 2008, p. 5). Just under a third of all Australian Muslims have Lebanese ancestry (HREOC, 2004), followed by Turkish, Afghan and Bosnian (HREOC, 2004). Significantly, the Australian Muslim population has a comparatively younger age profile than the mainstream population with 40% under the age of 20 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2006).

While there are 476,300 Australian Muslims, only 264,400 Australians or 1.4% of the Australian population are of Arabic-speaking background (ABS, 2012). It would be somewhat inaccurate to describe Arab-Australians as a community, because of their diversity of country of origin, religious, sectarian, and political affiliations. Not all Arabs are Muslims, and not all Muslims are of Arabic background with 53% of Lebanon-born Australians, for instance, identifying themselves as Christians (ABS, 2009). The largest proportion of Arabic-speaking Australians are of Lebanese-background, which is the ethnic background of almost all of the students who participated in the research, the majority of whom are second-generation Australians,

with at least one Lebanon-born parent. The majority of Lebanese (61%) arrived in Australia prior to 1986, while just under a quarter arrived between 1986 and 1995 (HREOC, 2004, p. 210). Lebanese settlement in Australia has tended to occur through chain-migration based on kinship (Humphrey, 2005). The majority of Lebanese and Middle-Eastern migrants settled in Sydney, which hosts seven of every ten (107,405 or 72.2%) of Australia's Lebanese immigrants (Collins, 2005, pp. 190–192).

2.2.3 Employment Profiles

Statistical data suggest social and economic disadvantage amongst both Muslim and Arabic-speaking background Australians, contributing to social exclusion (Hassan, 2008). Social exclusion has traditionally meant exclusion in the economic sense, though it is multi-dimensional, and encompasses a combination of interrelated conditions, including cultural and sociological factors (Burchardt, Le Grand & Piachaud, 2002). However, a significant condition of social inclusion remains labour force participation (Masterman-Smith, 2010). As for Muslim migrants and their children, studies have indicated that they experience labour market disadvantages (Cook, 2011) with higher rates of unemployment and lower earnings, as a result of which they are more likely to experience poverty (Hassan, 2008, p. 1). Despite some reduction in these unemployment levels, there remains a significant gap between Muslims and the general population (Adibi, 2008). Muslims in general have a 26% unemployment rate compared to the national unemployment level of 5% (Hassan, 2008, p.11).

Data on Lebanese background Australians indicated that unemployment is around twice the national figure (Collins, Reid, Fabiasson & Healey, 2009). Betts and Healy's (2006) research point to higher unemployment rates for Australian Muslim-Lebanese than for

the Christian-Lebanese. This was attributed to changing job structures in the Australian workforce, and the decreased demand for low-skilled workers, resulting from the decline in the Australian manufacturing industry in the 1970s (Betts & Healy, 2006, p. 28) where Muslim Lebanese-Australians predominantly worked.

ABS data (2006) indicates differences between income for Muslim and non-Muslim Australians, with Muslim households overrepresented in lower-income and underrepresented in higher income categories (Hassan, 2008, p.8). 43% of Muslim Australians earned less than \$200 a day compared to the national average of 27%, while 5% of Muslim Australians earned a weekly wage above \$1000, compared to 11% nationally (Phillips, 2007, p.4). An obvious outcome of high unemployment and lower income levels is higher levels of poverty, disadvantage and a more marginal position in Australian society.

Although 22% of employed Muslim Australians have earned bachelor degrees or higher, Muslim men continue to be underrepresented in the areas of management, as administrators or professionals, and overrepresented in employment as production and transport workers or labourers as compared to national figures (HREOC, 2004, p. 214). Parental occupational background was found to have a strong impact on students' academic performance levels, with children from professional and managerial occupational backgrounds exhibiting higher tertiary entry scores than parents from other occupational backgrounds (Marks, McMillan & Hillman, 2001, p. vii).

The link between socio-economic background and students' academic performance is not new and has been discussed extensively in the literature (Ainley, Graetz, Long &

Batten, 1995; Peck, 2001; Mullis, Rathge & Mullis, 2003). Researchers have identified socio-economic background as the factor that has the most far-reaching impact on achievement when compared to race, religion, and language background (Zappala & Considine, 2001, p.13; Burney & Beilke, 2008, p.295). Lower socio-economic status correlates with lower higher education participation rates, behavioural issues at school, decreased tendency to specialise in maths and science, increased tendency to develop negative attitudes to school, and to have a less effective transition from school to the labour market (Zappala & Considine, 2001, p. 92). In the context of the home, high socioeconomic status usually means increased parental attention towards children's education (Hanson, 1994; Gutmann & Eccles, 1999), while parents with higher educational attainment improved children's educational prospects (Zappala & Considine, 2001; James, 2002), perhaps in their capacity to instil in children positive attitudes towards education (Watson & Considine, 2003). The consequence for young Muslim Australians who experience socio-economic disadvantage is often manifested negatively in school. For Muslim Australians, socio-economic disadvantage also "creates barriers to achieving aspirational social and cultural goals"; further restricting their social inclusion in Australia (Hassan, 2008, p. 13).

2.2.4 ASB Muslim Females' Education and Employment

The gender dimension adds further complexity to ASB Muslim women's experiences of schooling and post-school transition into the workforce and civic life. Research on the impact of socio-economic factors on the academic performance of both males and females suggests that it has a lesser effect on females (Collins, Kenway & McLeod, 2000, p. 71-78). This may be another contributory factor to the comparatively better academic performance of ASB Muslim females as compared to their male counterparts. However, for ASB Muslim women in particular, there appears to be a discrepancy

between education and employment statistics. Data on workforce participation of ASB Muslim women indicates that they have lower workforce participation rates than the national figures, which compounds economic disadvantage for their families, and excludes women from accessing opportunities and participating in the wider society.

Muslim females' experiences of education and post-school transitions are influenced by interrelated factors which differ from males. Although Muslim women are well-represented in the tertiary education sector, this does not translate into high workforce participation. In the Australian context, labour force participation amongst Australian Muslim women, according to the 2001 Census, is quite low at only 39% compared to the national average (67%) (Foroutan, 2006). Of the 90,964 Muslim-Australian women aged 15 and over in Australia, 25,935 are employed, whilst 57,684 are not in the labour force at all (Abdel-Halim, 2008, p. 131). Of the 25,935 women employed, over a half are employed in semi-skilled or unskilled work, while 6,752 are professionals or associate professionals. Muslim women are twice as likely (21.6% compared to 10.1%) to be employed part-time. A higher proportion (62.9% compared to 46.2%) of Muslim women compared with non-Muslim women are not in the labour force (Bouma, et al, 2003, p. 59).

Studies have reported this paradoxical trend amongst Muslim and Arabic-background women who have high levels of further education attainment accompanied by comparatively low levels of employment (Read, 2004). These low workforce participation patterns are also evident in the MENA region despite some improvement in previous decades (Laframboise & Trumbic, 2005, p.19). Female labour force participation in the MENA region remains the lowest in the world at approximately

28% of the labour force, with MENA women less likely to be employed in the formal labour market, and more likely to be engaged in low wage activities (Laframboise & Trumbic, 2005, p. 32). Reflecting these trends, educational participation is the same for both genders in Lebanon (Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development 2005, p. 145), while female labour force participation rates are significantly lower. Lebanon's female labour force participation rate is 30% with the majority of women workers concentrated in the service sector (p. 158). As a result of these trends, women in the Arab world are considered to be "marginalised and under-utilised in all areas, notably in terms of their economic, intellectual and leadership abilities" (UN Development Program, 2002, p.98).

Though Muslim women's limited workforce participation is traditionally attributed to religious beliefs, in theory Islam has not prohibited women from seeking employment (Ramadan, 2004; Sidani, 2005). Muslim feminists have cited patriarchal Islamic interpretations to explain Muslim and Arab women's low workforce participation patterns (Mernissi, 1991). Studies have also attributed this to traditional roles assigned to women, pointing to the importance that Muslim and Arab communities place on motherhood, and caretaking roles (Kazemi, 2000; Jamali, Sidani & Safieddine, 2005; Foroutan, 2006), which translates as women's commitment to childrearing or taking care of elderly family members needing to be fulfilled before they can access education and work (Aston, Hooker, Page & Willison, 2007; Tyrer & Ahmed, 2008). Brah and Shaw's (1992) study on South Asian British women highlighted domestic responsibilities and family and community pressures that discourage women's employment, allied to limited English language proficiency, racism and discrimination (p.48-49). In the Australian context, Foroutan (2009) found:

female migrants from the MENA region mainly prefer to remain committed to the cultural characteristics of their own origin society where the dominant culture associated with gender roles (such as women's traditional roles in the household, patriarchy, and male breadwinner pattern) result in a markedly low rate of women's paid work. (p. 987)

Other studies describe predominantly first-generation Muslim migrants with traditional perceptions of women's roles, which limit workforce participation (Read, 2004; Read & Cohen, 2007). In addition to traditional patriarchal structures which limit women's participation, Australian-based and studies from other non-Muslim majority nations have cited discrimination as a contributory factor to Australian Muslim women's low employment (Scott & Franzmann, 2007; Imtoul, 2005, 2010; Booth, Leigh & Varganova, 2010; Nilan, 2012). In a study on young British Muslim women of South Asian descent, Parker- Jenkins, Haw, Irving and Khan (1999) concluded that these women faced "double discrimination" based on gender and religious affiliation. However, discrimination and social disadvantage are discounted by Foroutan (2009) as the main contributors to MENA females low workforce participation in an Australian context, as it was found that Muslim women are 'almost as likely as the comparison groups to work in the professional and managerial occupations' (p.986-987).

While the above-mentioned research discusses broad cultural, religious, and social factors that contribute to Muslim and Arabic-speaking women and their participation in further education and the workplace, relatively few Australian-based studies have qualitatively examined their relevance to young Australian Muslim ASB women's lives. Studies either propose that pressures experienced by migrants in their new environment,

with its opportunities, can affect change in migrant women's further education and workforce transitions (Foroutan, 2009, p. 975); or that migration does little to contribute to change in women's role (Foroutan, 2009, p.300). However, while Foroutan's statistical analysis concludes there is little change in Muslim women's workforce participation patterns; this would not reflect the experiences of all Australian Muslim women. While Foroutan's Australia-based quantitative research is invaluable for gaining insight into Australian Muslim women's overall workforce participation patterns, the research does not draw on qualitative data to examine Muslim women's perceptions of the factors contributing to their workforce participation or lack thereof. Anecdotal evidence in Sydney suggests that young Australian Muslim ASB women in particular, are increasingly more likely to participate in post-secondary education and in the workforce. In general terms, the current body of Australia-based research concerning Australian Muslim women does not include significant in-depth research on their education and career pathways.

Furthermore, while research has described how cultural practices can promote traditional gender roles amongst young women in Muslim communities, fewer studies examine how these factors are affected by girls' experiences of Australian secular state schooling. Schools play a crucial role in expanding students' further education and career opportunities, which improves prospects for future social inclusion in Australian society. A limited number of studies have examined how these beliefs and practices are negotiated in the education of girls in secular state schools through a multicultural and inclusive educational framework. There is relatively little Australia-based research focused on the extent to which secondary state schools work to deliver an inclusive education for Muslim ASB girls, providing an education that can maximize their

opportunities, and promote long-term social inclusion. A qualitative analysis of schooling and post-school transition would contribute to a more in-depth account of the factors influencing Muslim ASB women's education and workforce participation, and the extent to which schools can aid this process.

In order to better understand the broader context influencing Australian Muslim ASB students and their schools, a contextual analysis is provided below of the contemporary socio-political situation as it effects this group of Australians.

2.3 Social and Political Context

2.3.1 The Australian Context

Schools do not exist in isolation from their socio-political context. Studies have examined how Muslims and/or ASB-Australian students' academic performance and their experiences of schooling have been influenced by socio-economic factors and the contemporary socio-political climate. Mansouri and Kamp's (2007) study in particular, draws a causal link between the current socio-political climate and both the manner in which Arab- Australian students' identities are constructed and their educational performance (p.100).

Studies of Muslim diaspora communities and Muslim youth had explored the positioning of Muslims as the outsider or 'other' prior to September 11th (Saniotis, 2009), though in the post-September 11th world, and with the ensuing global war on terror, this phenomenon has been heightened. In the Australian context, regional, border, and local incidents concerning Muslims have affected the public perception of Islam and Muslims. In particular, the 2002 Bali terrorist bombings in Indonesia were

acutely traumatic because of the many Australian casualties. Government and politicians did not voice any significant public denunciation of the anti-Muslim sentiment which resulted (Mason, 2004, p. 237), and were perceived to be doing little to counteract the possible marginalisation experienced by Muslim and Arab Australians (Poynting & Perry, 2007). This was also evidenced in the increased domestic security clampdowns by ASIO aimed at the perceived threat of terrorism (Jakubowicz, 2008, p.5), and the taking of a 'harder approach', with little or no partnership with the Muslim community (Spalek & Imtoul, 2007; Yasmeen, 2008). Border control policies have also been the subject of much media attention with studies suggesting the government's harsh treatment and the media's negative depiction of asylum seekers was related to their Muslim backgrounds (Saeed, 2005).

In Australia, incidents involving mainly Australian Muslim males of Lebanese-background have also negatively affected societal perceptions of Australian Muslims and the ASB community. In the late 1990s until mid-2000s, there was nationwide outrage over ethnic Lebanese gangs in Sydney's South Western suburbs (Collins, Kenway & McLeod, 2000; Collins & Reid, 2009), and by the gang rapes committed in 2000 by young men of Lebanese-background against Anglo-Celtic Australian victims. These crimes also inevitably invoked perceived public scrutiny and suspicion of Australian Muslims and the Arabic-background community. Subsequent studies of the media reporting and other depictions of these crimes attempted to demonstrate how the coverage of young Muslim Lebanese-Australian's crimes and media reportage lead to an ethnicisation of crime and the demonization of the Lebanese-Australian community (Collins, 2000, Poynting, Noble & Collins, 2004, Manning, 2003, 2004; Mason, 2004; Humphrey, 2005; Saniatos, 2009). These incidents also contributed to broader debates

about Arab-Australians' and Muslims' capacities for integration into Australian society, and the Australian way of life, as Islam was sometimes portrayed as a misogynistic religion and antithetical to the nation's egalitarian nature (Aly, 2007; Ho, 2007).

In Sydney, anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiment was evident during racially- motivated riots in the Sydney suburb of Cronulla in 2006 that primarily targeted Muslims and Arab-Australians. The incident occurred after a conflict between young Australian men of Lebanese-background, and local life-savers at Cronulla Beach, and resulted in significant media saturation, particularly on talk-back radio, which was subsequently also partly blamed for inciting the Cronulla riots (Poynting, 2006). Later, young men of Lebanese-background were involved in retaliatory attacks.

Muslim and Arab-Australian women have also experienced this negative focus concerning narratives about oppression, and have been depicted as a potential terrorist threat. However, particular focus has concentrated on the practice of wearing the hijab. In Australia, the debate about the hijab has been framed by broader debates about multiculturalism, and in some cases multicultural education, which was perceived by some, to have failed in integrating certain cultural and religious groups. In 2005, media discussion about the veil in Australian state schools arose when a secondary school girl protested against her school's decision to ban the 'mantoo' a long traditional Iraqi dress (Norrie & Pearlman, 2005), while two Australian female liberal politicians, Bishop and Panopoulos, called for a hijab ban in schools (Aly & Walker, 2007). These calls made similar arguments of the French government's decision to ban religious symbols in schools, including the veil (2004). The hijab has become associated with Islamic patriarchy, Muslim women's oppression and misogyny (Khan, 1998; Aly & Walker,

2007; Ahmed, 2011), as Muslim women have become central to cultural debates about Islam's compatibility with a secular society. This has often resulted in associating the unveiling of Muslim women with their liberation (Abu-Lughod, 2002), despite many Muslim women's assertions that the hijab may be a symbol of "morality" and "cultural authenticity" (Stowasser, 1994, p.131).

Such incidences have raised questions about the perceived place of Australian Muslims and ASB communities in Australian society. These have also come at a time when government rhetoric and policies reflect a distancing from multiculturalism as a national policy, an official policy since the 1970s. The liberal government of Australia, led by John Howard (1996-2007) expressed clear distrust and opposition to multiculturalism, and it was argued that he had exploited mainstream Australians' anxieties about migration (Marginson, 1997) to gradually undermine this as official policy. For Muslims in particular, the Howard years ushered in tougher immigration policies, greater onus placed on the minority community to integrate into Australian society and increased scrutiny, criticism and surveillance (Poynting & Mason, 2008).

Young Australian Muslim ASB people have raised questions about the nature and extent of religious and cultural inclusion in schools within a broader discussion about multiculturalism and national cohesion. For state schools, they raise questions about the extent to which a multicultural educational policy can, indeed should, be inclusive of cultural and religious diversity, and the need to address issues of social inclusion and cohesion. One result of the Cronulla riots was increased introspection by schools of their role in promoting intercultural communication for wider societal harmony. Reid (2010) described the role of schools in the aftermath of the Cronulla riots in initiating

intercultural contact between state schools with different student ethnic profiles to promote inter-ethnic harmony and increased understanding. However, in the context of school 'choice', and the wider anxieties about social cohesion and cultural values, which emerged after the Cronulla riots, the Liberal government response was the implementation of general Values and Civics Education, instead of a renewed investment in antiracism and multiculturalism (Leeman & Reid, 2006).

2.3.2 Racism and Islamophobia

Australian multicultural policy has been remarkably successful in maintaining inter-ethnic harmony and social cohesion (Kalantzis et al, 1990; Inglis, 1995; Poynting & Mason, 2008), although this has not been achieved without tensions and challenges. As recently settled migrants, and due to current social and political tensions, Muslim and ASB Australians have often been perceived as the “pre-eminent folk devil” in contemporary Australia (Poynting, et al, 2004). A number of narratives have influenced Australian society's perceptions of Muslims. According to the Centre for Muslim Minorities and Policy Studies (2009, p.6), these have been associated with Australia's military involvement in Muslim-majority nations; international Islamic terrorism; views of Muslims as incompatible with secular society, and a lack of acknowledgement of the history of Muslims in Australia.

These factors have contributed to an increase in reports of racism, and/or Islamophobia by Australian Muslims and Australians of Arabic-speaking backgrounds. Anti-Muslim prejudice seems to be more prevalent in comparison to prejudice against other ethnic/religious groups, according to a number of international studies (Nielson & Allen, 2002; Muir & Smith, 2004; Sheridan, 2004). Australian-based studies have also pointed to an increase in discriminative attitudes towards Muslims (Deen, 2003; Dunn,

2003; Lygo, 2004; Manning, 2004). One study found that Muslims and Arab-Australians were often perceived to constitute "out-groups"; or cultural or ethnic groups that did not fit into mainstream Australia (Dunn, et al, 2004, p. 414). The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (2004) described Muslim and Arab-Australians' reports of experiences of discrimination, vilification and abuse; particularly against Muslim and Arab-Australian women in public spaces (HREOC, 2004, P.18). Imtoul (2010), who proposed the term 'religious racism' to refer to religious discrimination and abuse targeting Muslims, found that the Muslim women's experiences of racism were often:

a series of low-level but persistent incidents which, when assessed individually, were often considered too minor or insignificant to warrant formal complaint, but which had significant and negative impact on the individuals' sense of emotional well-being, and which can be located in a broader structure of religious racism. (p.58)

Studies have also critiqued stereotypes, often perpetuated by the media of Muslim and Arab women as oppressed and passive, and of the depiction of Islam as a misogynistic religion (Imtoul, 2005; Posetti, 2010), while other stereotypes of Muslim women have been those which have limited them to domestic roles of housewife and mother (Kazemi, 2000; Jamali, Sidani & Safieddine, 2005; Sidani, 2005). In an analysis of two Australian print media sources, Imtoul (2005, p.2-3) found that the depictions of Muslim women "were either the familiar stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman (i.e. dressed in black, often with face veils, subordinated to Muslim men, concerned only with domestic issues such as house and family), or a representation of them as violent and threatening". Such negative media representations of Muslims have been

criticised for contributing to an increase in the sense of social exclusion felt by Muslims in Australian society (Yasmeen, 2008, p.50-52).

Discrimination and stereotyping can impede social inclusion, and exacerbate socio-economic disadvantage for minority groups, particularly in their access to the workforce. A British survey to determine the prevalence of discrimination in the job recruitment process, found that fictitious job applicants' success was found to correlate with their names, with 25% of applicants with English sounding names successful in procuring an interview. This was compared to only 13% and 9% respectively for applications with African and Muslim sounding names (BBC, 2004 cited in Abdel-Hady, 2007, p.501). Similarly, an Australian audit discrimination study found that Middle-Eastern and Chinese applicants had to lodge at least 50% more applications to access employment than applicants with Anglo-Saxon sounding names (Booth, et al, 2010, p.15). Another study found that Muslim job applicants were often "treated with suspicion because of their Muslim background, ethnicity, accent and/or appearance" (Nilan, 2012, p. 57) by employers who were concerned about the effects of religious observance on employees' job performance.

For Muslim women, the hijab may result in discrimination from some Australian employers, who are uncomfortable with "visual indicators of a Muslim identity" or fear offending clients or colleagues (McCue, 2008). Scott and Franzmann (2007) who surveyed 50 Sydney-based, predominantly state school educated Muslim women about their workplace experiences in Sydney, found that "respondents employed in the workplace often experience discomfort, insecurity, and some discrimination related to their Muslim identities" (p.281). They also reported on the issues associated with the

religious identities of Muslim women which were difficult to negotiate in a secular workplace (e.g. alcohol-associated socializing, dress-codes, prayer times and facilities), where there tended to be limited inter-faith awareness (p.284).

From an educational perspective, Mansouri and Kamp (2007), who investigated ASB students' attitudes towards racism, educational attainment and inter-ethnic perceptions pointed to students' concerns about discrimination experienced by their communities, and their own "ambivalence about being Australian" (p.92). This resulted in a sense of exclusion from Australia's national space. Students surveyed were highly conscious of public perceptions of Muslim women, particularly of the hijab, the criminalisation of Arabs and Muslims, and the perceived sensationalised media portrayal of Australian ASB and/or Muslims (p.93). In their discussions about their experiences of racism in a broader societal context:

Students moved fluidly from discussing abstract processes of racialisation to relating personal narratives of racism. This pattern of conversation indicates a complexity in how the students made sense of their social experiences. They appeared able to see and make connections between their personal experiences of racism on the one hand, and structural exclusions and institutional exercises of power on the other. They seemed aware of and disturbed by the tendency to use political events to construct stereotypical representations of Arabs and Muslims in Australia as a homogeneous, racialised, threatening 'Other', an image that the media perpetuated powerfully in its coverage of national and global political crises. (p.93)

It is important to consider racial and religious discrimination and vilification in the context of inclusive and multicultural education for future social inclusion, as these erode social cohesion, and are contributing factors to social exclusion of minority

groups. Stereotyping and societal discrimination, have contributed to limiting Muslim women's access to safe spaces, as anxiety about safety has restricted their movement in the public space. Studies have found that these issues have been identified as causing extreme isolation for refugee women (Northcote, Hancock & Casimiro, 2006). For young Australian ASB Muslim females, parental restrictions on their movements, partly due to concerns for their safety, have created inter-generational tensions (HREOC 2008) and can limit their opportunities for participation in the wider society. More broadly, stereotypes impact young Australian ASB Muslim women by making many Muslim and Arab women "feel threatened, degraded and angered" (Imtoul, 2005, p. 13), as they may undermine their sense of self-worth and confidence in their religious and cultural identities (HREOC, 2004, p.2). These stereotypes may influence young school-aged ASB Muslim girls' identity formation, and their capacity to feel included in Australian society. It is therefore important for schools with ASB Muslim female students to consider and address these factors, and also in Australian schools where promoting intercultural and inter-religious awareness amongst students for effective interaction in Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society is vital.

2.4 Issues of Identity for Australian ASB Muslims

Broader socio-economic and socio-political concerns are among the factors that contribute to ASB and Muslim students' performance patterns, and post-school aspirations and transitions, and have affected these students' capacity for inclusion in wider Australian society. These factors also contribute to the formation of young Australian Muslim ASB people's identities. Some of the broader themes concerning Muslim and ASB youths' identity formation, and sense of national belonging in Australia, are mentioned below.

2.4.1 Muslim Identity

‘Muslim identity’ has often historically been conceptualised as monolithic and homogeneous, which fails to account for the diversity within this religious tradition (Winter, 2009, p.205). Identity is a socially constructed process that develops through the interplay of culture, history and power (Hall, 1993, p.394); hence it is neither static nor comprised of an innate set of objective criteria. Social theorists have emphasized its multi-dimensional, dynamic, pluralist, fluid nature, within a process of change (Giddens, 1991; Hall, 1993; Friedman, 1994). This is also the case of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim majority Western nations.

In using the broad, somewhat imprecise term ‘West’, I acknowledge the lack of consensus in the literature in defining this broad term, and recognise the significant diversity (including cultural, religious, linguistic, and historical) of these countries which this term encompasses. However, for the purposes of the thesis, I take Western societies to mean those countries which have a Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian historical outlook, though they may be secular (nations of Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand), and which have recently attracted significant migration from around the world, many of whom are Muslims. Muslim communities in the West, as with other migrant communities have developed hybrid identities, and their views on various issues have become increasingly diverse (Humphrey, 2005; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Yasmeen, 2008). It has been argued that these processes of globalization and technological advancement have contributed to a "de-ethnicizing" of Islam amongst second and third generation Muslim youth in the West (Schmidt, 2004; Humphrey, 2005), as many Muslims highlight faith as a unifying identity as opposed to nationality, often in reaction to perceived marginalisation within their societies (Afshar,

et al, 2005, p. 264). This redefinition of what it means to be Muslim has also increasingly involved women, particularly after the anxieties and turmoil experienced by Muslim minorities after September 11th (Yasmeen, 2007; Ahmed, 2011).

As diaspora communities, first generation migrant identities are closely aligned to that of their country of origin (Kucukcan, 1998). Amongst young second or third generation Muslims in the West, Islam is often used as a marker of identity (Humphrey, 1990; Cesari, 1998; Samad, 1998; Ramadan, 1999; Schmidt, 2004). There is confidence in Muslim identity, which has grown in communities comprised of second and third generation children of original migrants and in what has been described as the development of a “transnational Muslim identity” in the context of a borderless Ummah, or Muslim community/ nation (Schmidt, 2004, p. 41). Younger generations have grown up in the West and have been described as gaining textual knowledge of the faith (Akbarzadeh, 2010, p.4), while “distancing themselves from their cultures of origin” (Ramadan, 2004, p.215).

There is diversity amongst Muslims in the West, as young second and third generation Muslim migrants develop a hybrid identity based on their countries of origin and host countries, which is also informed by their religious faith. Studies on migrant identity draw on the notion of hybridity to explain the complex process of its development. Hybridity is defined as, “an interstitial passage between fixed identifications [which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). Hybridity might initially be disorienting; however it is not negative but is “privileged as a kind of superior intelligence owing to the advantage of in- between-ness, the straddling of two cultures

and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (Hoogvelt, 1997, p. 158). This ambivalent in-between-ness is described by Bhabha as ‘the third space’. The adoption of an Islamic identity is not displacing a sense of national belonging or allegiance, as young people become increasingly comfortable with their hybrid and hyphenated identities. Studies point out that though first generation migrants affiliate closely with their home cultures, this is not clearly the case for the young second and third generation migrants, as they negotiate between their home and host cultures and develop a hybrid, bicultural identity (Vertovec, 1998; Ramadan, 2002; Butcher & Thomas, 2003; Kucukcan, 2004; Sirin & Fine, 2007; Collins & Reid, 2009; Kabir, 2007, 2009; Poynting, 2009).

Numerous studies have examined how Muslim women in Western societies have negotiated their cultural and religious identities within the mainstream culture (Khan, 2000; Dwyer, 2000; Afshar, et al, 2005) in a diaspora context. Studies on Muslim women in diaspora, particularly of second and third generation migrants demonstrate that they are developing hybrid identities like other migrant groups (Dwyer, 2000; Khan, 2000; Afshar, Aitken & Franks, 2005; Zaal, Salah & Fine 2007). Muslim women’s hybridized identities have challenged more ‘essentialized notions’ of Muslims and Arabs (Saliba, 2000, p. 1091). Studies describe how Muslim women in various Western societies develop hybridity and find a ‘third space’ in order to “negotiate their identity with their families, communities, and in other arenas as a cultural and religious practice” (Khan, 2000, p.11). In one study of young Muslim women’s identities in New York, Zaal, et al (2007) described their identities as:

...elaborate maps and rich narratives [where] the women did not confine themselves to cultural, religious and ethnic labels. Rather, the descriptors they used fall along multiple spectra-liberal/ Moderate/traditional, apolitical/political, sister/ Daughter/ friend, diplomatic/ rebel/warrior, morbid/ proud, sad/optimistic, mysterious/private, women's studies major/engaged, searching/centred. Refusing to be pigeon holed as either "oppressed" or "liberated. (p.167)

Afshar, et al, (2005, p. 266) describe the comparatively more complex and fluid process of identity formation that women undergo in comparison to men in terms of life process, physical and emotional changes, and multiple role definitions.

Poynting's (2009) research on the identities of Muslim women concluded that far from being lost, Muslim women deployed strategic hybridity, to negotiate two seemingly binary oppositions in being an Australian/ Lebanese-background Muslim. Such theories of identity formation are pertinent to this study of young Muslim ASB girls' experiences and identity formation. Like other young people, they "are the most culturally competent of all demographics", and are adept at dealing with "multiple cultural frameworks" and spaces (Butcher & Thomas, 2003, p. 15). The extent and manner in which students learn to deal with multiple cultural frameworks, through studying in culturally diverse state secular schools, is an important consideration for young Muslim ASB women who must navigate participation in a culturally and religiously diverse society. The presence of 'hybrid identities' among minority youth in Sydney, and evident in all multicultural societies, is according to Collins, et al (2009) in their study of youth culture in Sydney's West and South West:

an expression of the dual or multiple multicultural and national backgrounds of first and second generation youth in Sydney today. It is not so much a threat to Australian national identity but a reminder of the complexity, plurality and dynamic nature of Australian national identity that accompanies the changes to the ethnic composition of Australian society that a non-racial immigration policy delivers. It could be argued that minority youth in Australia today have a cosmopolitan outlook that suggests they are happy and comfortable with multiple identities. (p.34)

Rather than being depicted as a threat to national identity and social cohesion, developing a bicultural identity has been described as an asset. Kabir's (2008) research on Australian Muslim students' articulations of their national identity indicated that the majority had a strong 'bicultural stance', where the term *Australian* represented "tolerance, helping people, freedom of speech, integration and citizenship". These values were developed parallel to their Muslim and ethnic identities (p.67). Other Australia-based studies concerning young Muslim and Arab-Australian's identities pointed to the perception of the compatibility of their Muslim identity and a constructive Australian citizenship (Centre for Muslim Minorities & Islam Policy Studies, 2009, p.40). For instance, Muslim Australians surveyed by Rane, Nathie, Isakhan, and Abdalla (2011) valued the social and political institutions of Australia; its democracy, judiciary, education and health-care (p. 139).

On the other hand, studies have also examined how negotiating multiple, contrasting cultures is a particular challenge for young Muslims in the current social and political climate. Vahed (2008) explored young Australian Muslims' experiences in Brisbane and found that differences between the cultures of their communities, and wider society, created significant pressures as they were:

questioning their identities, employment opportunities, adjustment at school, and questions about their beliefs and practices. Many feel trapped between cultures as their parents often come from a different environment and expect them to conduct themselves in ways similar to how they may have behaved. (p.49)

Other studies have described how Muslim youth who identify with their Australian identities can still feel excluded from mainstream society. Yasmineen (2008) found Australian-Muslims felt they were able to be both Australian and Muslim, although they believed wider society was less accepting of this compatibility. Similarly, though Akbarzadeh, Bouma & Woodlock (2009) found Muslim Australians to be positive about their lives in Australia, there was evidence of unfulfilled expectations, or a sense of 'blocked process' which contributed to a sense of alienation associated with experiences of discrimination and prejudice in Australian society (Akbarzadeh, et al, 2009, p. 29).

Furthermore, other studies have researched young people's opposition, or resistance identities, that have resulted from these particular challenges. Studies have examined how oppositional identities have been adopted by Lebanese-background youth, particularly by males as a defence mechanism in response to racism and social marginalisation (Noble, Poynting & Tabar, 1999). Whilst this practice helps to construct a source of identity in the short term (Noble, et al, 1999, p.43), Turner (2003) asserts that it inevitably "reproduces the conditions of that exclusion: [as] negative cultural stereotypes are rebroadcast" (p.416). However, these studies have largely been associated with the experiences of young male Muslim ASB men, and fewer studies have examined oppositional identity formation amongst the young women.

Other studies have highlighted the experience of not interacting enough with the wider community, with many minority Muslim communities having been described as living in self-imposed seclusion (Ramadan, 2004; Yasmineen, 2008), or of being an ‘island in an island’ (Foroutan, 2008, p.233). This insular nature or quasi-seclusion of the Muslim community has been attributed by Ramadan (2004) to fears of “confrontation with the other”, whether it is concerns about religious and cultural maintenance, or fear of discrimination or vilification from the wider society. Ramadan (2004) warns that this is not feasible in the long run, as the second and third generations become more involved in the wider society (p. 217-218), and do not always have the support of their communities in this process. This process of self-exclusion in the face of threats of discrimination, and /or threats to the preservation of religious and cultural identity is one which compounds the social exclusion of Muslim and ASB Australians in the long term.

2.4.2 Australian ASB Muslim Women & Community

Numerous studies have concentrated on how Muslim and Arab women’s identities are shaped by gender. Studies have also examined the role of the religious interpretation of Arab and Muslim women’s role in society. Muslim and Arab feminist scholarship in particular, has concentrated on gender equality in Arab and Muslim societies, though their writings represent a diversity of perspectives concerning women's liberation (Sidani, 2005, p. 205). Generally, the majority do not take an anti-Islamic stance but work within the framework of Islamic discourse to attain gender equality, asserting patriarchal structures and women’s exclusion are not directly attributable to Islam (Mernissi, 1991; Esposito, 1998; Zine, 2004; Badran, 2006), but produced by a male elite.

Studies have discussed the patriarchal nature of Muslim culture, which specifically disadvantages women (Yasmeen, 2004; Badran, 2006), resulting from patriarchal interpretations of religious scripture (Sidani, 2005, p. 205). Sidani (2005) refers to two prominent views held by the Ulama or religious scholars, in Islam concerning the position of women: a traditionalist view, and the modernist view, which is more liberal (Sidani, 2005, p.503). The modernist view is critical of current beliefs and practices in Islamic societies that inhibit women's development (Sidani, 2005, p. 504-505), while traditionalists discourage women's participation in the public space, including limiting career opportunities. Modernists challenge current beliefs and practices in Muslim societies that discourage women's employment and participation in the public space, by drawing attention to the active and autonomous role of women in early Islamic societies (Sidani, 2005, p.499).

Generally, in Muslim and Arab communities the family institution is of high importance as Muslim identity is often defined by the guidance offered for family and personal issues (Shaheed, 1994, p. 1002). This reflects the Islamic scriptural focus upon the family as a fundamental social institution, particularly for cultural reproduction. Studies of identity and social construction in Lebanese culture, (the ethnic background of the majority of the young women in the study) tend to be based on a collectivistic orientation as with many other non-Western cultures (Bierbrauer, 1994, p.259). This social structure defines the individual as one who is connected and interdependent upon others and, as such, family has a central role in the socialization of children.

The emphasis upon negotiating identity in relation to family and community signifies the importance assigned to traditional roles of motherhood, domesticity and caretaking for women (Kazemi, 2000; Jamali, et al, 2005). Muslim parents often adopt, to a great extent, the role typically undertaken by peers, with children spending significant time with family members (Haddad & Smith, 1996), and for migrant youth, this means family is the main frame of reference (Butcher & Thomas, 2003, p. 33). In the context of migration, the processes of ‘dissolution’ and ‘reaffirmation’ of cultural heritage occurs (Humphrey, 2002, p. 208). However, Lebanese-Australian migrants’ dependence, to a significant degree, upon chain migration and family migration sponsorships has meant, “The connection with the past remains an important social conduit through which to enter into the new society” (Humphrey, 2002, p. 209).

Humphrey’s (2002) analysis of the Lebanese-Australian household highlights its role in the reproduction of culture, which is diluted and symbolic:

The household is the principal site in which cultural knowledge - language, religious practices, ritual, cultural history - is reproduced. Consequently what is constituted as tradition through social reciprocity is very reduced. And what comes to signify traditions are those selectively resumed symbolic practices by which difference is readily recognized in that particular environment. (p. 215)

The possibility of reaffirming home culture or ‘references to it’ is more easily facilitated by this pattern of migration. For Lebanese-Australian youth, home culture is a salient frame of reference, while religious identity reproduced through the family is often heavily cultural, rather than scriptural. These studies emphasise the potent role of family in young Lebanese-Australian women’s identity formation and the role of motherhood and family formation in their lives. However, these studies do not sufficiently examine

the possible shifts occurring in young Muslim ASB Australian women's identity formation, and future social participation in a society that does not share these gender constructions. Additionally fewer studies have examined the role of multicultural education in addressing these differences in the cultural understandings of the role of women in society.

2.4.3 Tensions in the Third Space

A growing body of research has portrayed the challenges experienced by Muslim women in their societies, whether in relation to processes of identity formation (Afshar, 1994; Haddad & Smith, 1996; Khan, 1998, 2000; Dwyer, 2000), the challenges of education and employment (Haw, Shah & Hanifa, 1998; Parker-Jenkins, et al, 1998, 1999; Asmar, et al, 2004; Ahmad, 2009) or of social exclusion, and/or racial and religious discrimination experienced in their host societies (Yasmeen, 2008; Dreher & Ho, 2009; Imtoul, 2010). Despite the significant role of family and community in the identity development of Muslim ASB youth, tensions are evident in the adoption and implementation of beliefs and practices in a Western, secular society. In the Australian context, El-Biza's (2010) study of the identity formation and self-efficacy of Australian and Saudi Muslim primary school girls supported theories of multiple identities, hybridity and positive Islamic identity. However, the study also pointed to Muslim girls' experiences of separateness and stereotypical views of Muslim girls as the 'other'. Other studies have addressed processes by which young Muslim ASB Australians must learn to negotiate the tensions that arise from the conflicting social norms of the host society, which is individualistic in orientation, and their collectivist minority community.

There is a dynamic tension between release and restraint that affects every young person, regardless of cultural background. Release from tradition and the restraints of former social norms is made available by changes in the conditions of possibility. There are therefore inevitable tensions between the individual and the collective for young people who want to adopt values and a lifestyle that are different from their family's expectations. (Butcher & Thomas, 2003, p. 34)

This tension occurs as second and third generation youth attempt to negotiate their cultural and religious identity, and locate a 'third space' where hybridity is the outcome. Tensions, between females and their families and communities, often arise as a result of challenges to the patriarchal cultural practices of the home culture (Ali, 1992; Khan, 2000; Kucukcan, 2004). Talbani and Hasanali (2000) for instance, found three key elements to the socialization of South Asian-background Canadian youth, reflective of patriarchal structures, namely; differing treatment of boys and girls at home; less decision-making power for girls; and more control over the intermingling with the opposite sex (p.625), though the degree of parental control varied depending on parents' levels of "conservatism and fear" (p. 625). More extreme issues, including forced marriages in the Lebanese community, despite being isolated incidents, have been reported by young Lebanese-background women in Beirut who sought assistance from the Australian embassy in Beirut to avoid forced marriages (Harris, 2006, p.1, cited in Kabir, 2009, p. 61).

Studies however, suggest the difficulty of affecting change in gender equality as "there is a high cost associated with being vocal or to express dissenting voices in the community"; as a result of which many young women attempt to affect a gradual improvement within the community and family (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000, p. 625-626). However, Ali (1992) described the process of de-ethnicisation which assists young

women, particularly of the second and third generations, in seeking gender equality by resisting traditional culture without entirely rejecting the more positive elements of community membership (p. 119).

Other recent studies (HREOC, 2008) point to significant tensions between parents and younger generations of Muslim and Arab-Australians because of restrictions placed on their movements, particularly between mothers and daughters. As a result of potential conflict, many Muslim women work within the restrictions imposed by prevailing patriarchal structures to improve their situations from an internal position. This practice, termed the 'patriarchal bargain' (Kandiyoti, 1988), provides women with the opportunity to affect much-needed change, but to avoid conflict with their families and communities. These studies point to the role that Islamic identity plays in the lives of young Muslim women in predominantly non-Muslim societies such as England and Australia,

A number of studies on educational research and post-school transitions for Muslim and/or Arabic-speaking background females have been conducted in overseas-based studies from England and North America. A substantial body of educational research on the education, post-education and employment experiences of young British Muslim South-Asian background women has contributed to the present study (Haw, 1995, 1998; Parker-Jenkins, et al, 1997, 1999; Ahmad, 2001; Archer, 2002; Brah & Shaw, 2002; Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006; Haw, 2010). These studies broadly depict the value of education for women in British Muslim South Asian-background communities, and report on perceived barriers to employment. Studies of post-school educational experiences of young British South Asian Muslim women, found that their representation in tertiary education is increasing, a process which was encouraged by the changing, more positive

attitudes of parents toward education (Brah & Shaw, 1992; Parker-Jenkins, et al, 1997; Ahmad, 2001). This is based on the perceived advantages associated with the 'commodification' of higher education,...[for] status, social mobility, and a career are not viewed as being inimical to cultural or religious ideals (Ahmad, 2001, p.149).

These studies have also examined the manner in which patriarchal structures affected women inside the household, in their education and employment and its influence on post-school choices (Archer, 2002, p. 373). Archer's (2002) study on young Muslim women highlighted that "societal changes have enabled them to experience a wider range of post-16 choices, [and] Muslim girls asserted the centrality of their 'personal choice' within educational decision-making" (p.371). This have resulted from Asian cultural changes and reduced racism in white/ British society (p.372).

Other studies based in England have also concentrated on Muslim women's post-school transitions, particularly those in the higher education sector (Parker-Jenkins, et al, 1999; Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006). Tyrer & Ahmad's (2006) study is particularly relevant to this study as it critiqued the "reductionist discourses" surrounding the representation of Muslim women's education and employment experiences, and lower levels of higher education participation that have reduced their choices solely to cultural and religious factors (p.6). These discourses have been described as simplistic and inadequate, with Tyrer & Ahmad's (2006) analysis moving beyond simplistic notions of 'modern' and 'traditional'. Instead, they acknowledge that post-secondary education and employment choices are "located within the production and reproduction of gendered inequalities that is inextricably linked to gendered and racialised Muslim identities" (p.10). These studies however, do not provide a localised account of Australian ASB females.

Additionally, due to their focus on higher education, the role of school policy and practice in these trends is not explicitly addressed.

2.5 Conclusion

This contextual analysis has provided a broad profile of the educational performance of Muslim and/or ASB students in an Australian context. Furthermore, it has given a demographic account of Muslim and ASB Australians, with a particular focus on women, their educational and employment profiles and the effects of the contemporary socio-political context on their settlement experiences in Australia. It has also examined a number of dominant themes in the literature concerning identity formation, particularly amongst Muslim youth, and Muslim women in the West. In particular, the notions of hybridity and the development of a ‘third space’ are valuable concepts when describing Australian ASB Muslim young women’s identities, schooling and post-school experiences. It also examined role definitions of Muslim women in Muslim communities and families which are generally have a collectivist orientation. The chapter also pointed to some of the tensions that women negotiate in reconciling community and broader societal perceptions of their societal roles. These key themes will be revisited in the discussion section of the thesis.

The following chapter examines multicultural education and inclusive education in Australia, and reviews relevant models in the literature that have been developed with diversity management in schools in mind. It concludes by proposing a framework for inclusive multicultural education which has informed the analysis and presentation of the findings in this study.

Chapter Three Educational Context

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 introduced the contextual background of the research by addressing demographic, socioeconomic and educational factors within the broader Australian society that influence the lives and education of young Australian Muslim ASB females. Chapter 3 also addresses the contextual background of the research, but from a different perspective. While chapter 2 focused on factors that impact on young Muslim females, chapter 3 focuses on the constructs of **inclusion** and **multiculturalism** as key educational concepts that are relevant to the education of Australian Muslim ASB female students in secular, state schools. These constructs are relevant as they facilitate analysis of the extent to which education systems and schools can, and do, address the educational, cultural and religious needs of ASB female students.

However, the constructs themselves are complex in that they reflect ‘facts’ about education systems in Australia. Thus, education systems can be described as inclusive where students, regardless of ethnicity, gender or disability, are included in the same classes and as multicultural where their student populations are drawn from diverse cultural, social or linguistic backgrounds. But, in addition, the constructs of inclusion and multiculturalism reflect values, and education systems and individual schools with diverse student populations may differ in the extent to which they embrace the values that are inherent in these concepts. In this chapter, the focus is primarily on the values of inclusion and multiculturalism and implications of these values for the education of Australian ASB Muslim females.

The chapter begins by defining inclusive education and by asking how this concept can contribute to an understanding of education in the Australian context. It addresses the strengths and limits of 'inclusive' education in state schools, as alternatives to Islamic schooling, for Australian ASB Muslim females. Following this, the chapter turns to multiculturalism. This concept is defined in relation to major policies that have recently shaped responses to diverse student populations in Australian education. The chapter then draws on understandings of inclusion and multiculturalism to propose a framework of inclusive multicultural education as a way of addressing the specific needs of young ASB Muslim female students within the context of state schools in Australia. This framework underpins the analysis of data in later chapters of the thesis.

3.2 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an organisational paradigm that has its origins in the field of special needs education. Its current usage, however, has become much broader and it is now frequently, and at times loosely, appropriated to refer to the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students within the one school or class (Carrington, 1999). In the Australian context, the term 'culturally inclusive education' is often used to describe the inclusion of culturally diverse students under the broader agenda of cultural diversity management through multicultural educational policies (Wyatt-Smith & Dooley, 1997, p.270).

Despite its common usage in the context of multicultural education, there appears to have been only limited focus on what 'inclusive education' actually means, or on how the notion of 'inclusion' can inform multicultural educational policies and practice. The

discussion in this chapter, therefore begins by defining what is meant by the term 'inclusive education'.

UNESCO (2009) defines inclusive education as:

a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centres of learning to cater for all children - including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and to provide learning opportunities for all youth and adults as well. Its aim is to eliminate exclusion that is a consequence of negative attitudes and a lack of response to diversity in race, economic status, social class, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation and ability. (p.4)

The salient benefit of an inclusive education system is its core objective of bringing together diverse groups of students and providing an educational environment conducive to learning for all. Ballard's (1997) definition highlights four conditions through which this objective can be achieved:

- a non-discriminatory environment;
- the capacity to embrace all students of the community without exception;
- equal access to a culturally and developmentally appropriate curriculum; and
- emphasis upon diversity as opposed to assimilation.

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), though developed for special needs students, is also relevant to other forms of diversity including ethnicity and religion. It calls for education models that recognize the uniqueness of individual students and their particular needs, and that facilitate educational experiences that reflect this diversity.

More importantly it highlights the role of inclusive education in “...combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (p.3).

Definitions of inclusion also address the importance of social inclusion. As Leeman and Volman (2001) argue:

Education is thus inclusive when it contributes to pupils’ opportunities and skills to function in a just and pluriform society which, ideally, is characterized by social cohesion and room for different perspectives on the world. (p.368)

As this brief discussion shows, most definitions are characterised by the argument that access to an inclusive mainstream education is a human right for all students, and this right is justified on the grounds of social justice, equity and democracy (Barton, 1997; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). *The UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* (2009) argues for a model in schools, which involves “flexible teaching and learning methods”, “reorienting teacher education”, a “flexible curriculum”, “welcoming of diversity”, “involvement of parents and community”, and “early identification and remediation of children at risk of failure” (p.15).

Other scholars approach inclusion via an emphasis on its antithesis: the exclusion of groups of students, and the manner in which inclusive education targets exclusionary pressures that limit students’ capacities to access the curriculum, or limit their future full participation in society. That is, some proponents of inclusive education emphasise the process of targeting and addressing exclusionary pressures (Barton, 1997; Leeman & Volman, 2001); and aim for a system of education that “becomes a transformative

and positive experience for all as opposed to an exclusionary process, where commitments to equality and diversity are not just respected ideas but enacted practices” (Gibson & Haynes, 2009, p.12). In defining inclusive education, Booth (1996) proposes that inclusive education involves a two-fold process where one process without the other would be ineffective:

The first process is one of increasing the participation of pupils within the cultures and curricula of mainstream schools and the second process involves decreasing exclusionary pressures. Described simply, inclusive education is about responding to diversity and being open to new ideas, empowering all members of a community and celebrating difference in a dignified way. (p.34)

Leeman and Volman (2001) also make the point that effective inclusive education policies can assist in reducing social exclusion of minority groups, which in the long term may assist in achieving a cohesive, socially just society that is embrative of multiple worldviews. Despite general support within educational contexts for the principle of inclusion, debates exist regarding the practical realities of implementing these principles in actual educational programs (Lindsay, 2003, p. 3). This tension is explored extensively in the context of special needs education, where the practical challenges of including students with disabilities within mainstream classes are addressed (Lindsay, 2003), but it is also evident in debates about the schooling of ethnic or religious minorities in faith-based versus state secular schools (Short, 2002).

The tension between support for principles of inclusion and concern about practical realities of its implementation is evident in debates about the relative merits of Islamic versus secular state schools. While state schools can claim to provide an inclusive

education which caters to the needs of diverse groups of students, as indicated in chapter 1, Islamic schools, like other faith-based schools, are premised on the belief that they are better equipped to meet the educational needs of young Muslim students, and to promote a strong Muslim identity (Short, 2002). This tension is explored further below.

3.3 Islamic Versus State Secular Schools

Islamic Schools

Despite some public opposition in Australia to Islamic school development applications, increased government funding of the private schools sector has seen more Islamic schools being established (Al-Natour, 2010). Islamic schools in Australia receive state financial funding, are categorised as Independent schools, and abide by governmental curriculum guidelines. More than thirty schools have been established nationwide since 1983.

The academic profiles of Islamic schools have generally been of less concern to parents and Muslim communities than the identity, values and beliefs that Islamic schools promote. As indicated in chapter 1, Islamic schools are typically chosen by parents due to their capacity to promote a positive, personal, Muslim identity in an environment with “higher standards of discipline and sexual propriety, an academic curriculum infused with Islamic values and will teach their children respect for traditional Islamic culture” (Donohoue-Clyne, 2006, p. 287).

Tufyal et al (2005) identify the strengths of Islamic schools as having the capacity to ‘nurture faith’ in an ‘appropriate spiritual environment’, where students are sheltered

from 'Islamophobic bullying' (p.131). They also argue that such schools have the capacity to address concerns about low levels of motivation and academic achievement and to foster a strong, positive Muslim identity (p. 132). Thus, despite debates about the value of Islamic versus state schools, Islamic schools are seen to have the capacity to promote a sense of positive identity and belonging to an alienated and vulnerable community in the current tense political and social political climate.

A further factor influencing parents' choices is the perceived irreconcilability of a curriculum that is secular in orientation with an Islamic education. In the Australian context, Donohue-Clyne (1997, 2002, 2006, 2010) who has examined the secular curriculum and its capacity to accommodate Muslim students, questions the extent to which Australian schools, which have traditionally been based on a Christian, and subsequently a secular philosophy, can be genuinely inclusive of Muslim students. She asserts (2006):

it is impossible to create an Islamic ethos with an Islamically based curriculum in a government school, no matter how culturally sensitive and informed are the staff, because the multicultural reality of Australian schools incorporates over a hundred different cultures and all world religions. For Muslims, religion permeates all aspects of life, including education, and a basically secular education system does not accommodate religious values well, even though it is clear that education in Australia, for reasons of history, is underpinned by Judeo-Christian values. What this education system offers to Muslim parents is the right to communicate their concerns about education and to participate in decision making via school councils and parents' organisations, but it also allows parents to choose a school for their children outside the school system, funded by the government. (p.287)

Although not always of first concern, academic achievement of students remains an important factor in debates about Islamic versus state schools. In the Australian context, to my knowledge, there are no studies that compare the academic performance of Muslim students in Islamic and state schools. However in England, patterns of academic underachievement in the state system amongst Muslim youth have prompted an increase in demand for Islamic schools (Shah, 2012). Patterns of underachievement in state schools however appear to be uneven, with some studies based in England pointing to higher academic performance in state schools where there is a large cohort of Muslim students (Hewer, 2001; Meer, 2007).

Other England-based studies have directly compared the overall effectiveness of Islamic and state schools. The most relevant of these comes from work conducted by Haw (1995) who compared the schooling of Muslim girls in state schools and state funded Islamic schools (Haw, 1995; Haw, et al, 1998). Haw's (2009) more recent research revisited the interviewees 15 years later, and highlighted how younger Muslims were "being positioned outside of British multicultural society and positioning themselves outside of it ...due to reactions to recent and violent events combined with new senses of pluralism and a re-construction of notions of tolerance" (p.375). Nevertheless, in her earlier work which was a case-study of two British schools, Haw (1995) concluded that the Islamic school was more effective than the state school despite often being poorly resourced. She concluded that the multicultural state school's challenges involved the difficulties of putting the concept of equality in difference into practice where Muslim students were:

marginalized because of the multicultural nature of the school. Here [in the state school] the staff felt confident in their abilities to deal with the common issue of

being female, but not confident in their abilities to deal with the complexities of difference because they felt they had no deeper understanding of their Muslim students and certainly no understanding of their parents or their context of origin as an immigrant community. (p.165-166)

Haw (1995) found her Islamic case-study school faced limitations related “superficially with physical environment, resources and width of curriculum” as well as issues of separatism; and more importantly, and on a deeper level, faced “tensions within the community between the Islamic spirit of justice and equality and cultural/ patriarchal practices” (p. 181-183). However, she found that the academic achievements of students in the Islamic school were higher than those in the state school. This important work has parallels with the research reported in this thesis in terms of its focus on Muslim girls’ schooling, and its examination of the role of the school in accommodating students’ cultural and religious identities. However, it differs in its specific comparison of types of schooling, in its participant sample (of Asian Muslim girls); and its location (in England). Further, as Shah (2012) points out, educational underachievement patterns amongst British Muslim students in the state system are associated with a number of interrelated factors namely, the interplay of gender, race and ethnicity which have not been sufficiently addressed. He argues:

In the face of state schools’ lack of preparedness or willingness to handle serious issues of inclusion, achievement and engagement of Muslim learners, the Muslim community and scholars have been voicing concern and apprehension for the schooling and educational achievement of Muslim students (Shah, 2008). The initiatives and strategies adopted over the last few decades to achieve inclusion in educational institutions have lacked full cognisance of the ethnic cultures and their value systems, paving the way for the need for Muslim schools. (Shah, 2012, p.59)

His arguments point to the significance of ways in which schools embrace the concept of inclusion when addressing the needs of Muslim students.

In sum, the core rationale for Islamic schooling and indeed for other ethnic or religious minorities has been the perceived capacity to promote a positive personal religious identity amongst its students, through the provision of an Islamic environment and the teaching of Islamic values, beliefs and practices. If private Islamic schools achieve these objectives for their Muslim students, then they would arguably contribute to these students' eventual inclusion in mainstream society as active citizens. This, it has been argued, cannot be feasibly achieved in a secular comprehensive school.

However, while faith-based schools have been commended for their potential to assist students in fostering a positive cultural and religious identity particularly for disadvantaged minority groups such as Muslim ASB youth, they have also been criticised, primarily for their divisive potential, in culturally and religiously diverse nations like Australia and England. Judge (2001, p.400) asserts that, "there are powerful and potentially dangerous tensions between the (publicly funded) nurturing of distinct cultural identities within a heterogeneous society, and an orderly process of integration". It has been argued that increased funding for private schools may diminish "values of social harmony, religious tolerance and multiculturalism", and that it "privileges the social mobility purposes of school education and diminishes the democratic equality purposes" (Cranston, et al, 2010, p.188). Opposition to private schools has often been based on the argument that that they undermine social cohesion as they are considered

socially and ethnically divisive, because they are not inclusive schools that serve the wider community. Even if they are willing in principle to accept non-Muslim pupils, this does not happen in practice. The effect is to isolate Muslims from the broader society and to hinder attempts at integration. (Tufyal et al, 2005, p.129)

More generally, criticisms levelled at faith-based schools in contemporary societies have been based on strong beliefs in the principles of democracy and secularism. Arguments that have characterised opposition to faith-based schools have been based on concerns that these

limit the personal autonomy of pupils; erode social cohesion through separating young people of different religious and non-religious backgrounds; impose on pupils a restricted view of their religion; use state finance to fund proselytization or mission; and disadvantage other schools through selection procedures that cream off the most able students. (Jackson, 2003, p.89)

These often legitimate concerns regarding faith-based schooling have also characterised opposition to Islamic schools in Australia.

State Secular Schools

As indicated in chapter 1, the New South Wales schooling system has a very diverse student population. This is especially the case in Sydney schools. However, Ho's (2011a) analysis of data from the My School 2.0 Website for Sydney schools highlights differences between student populations in public/ state schools in comparison to private schools. As she points out, students of language backgrounds other than English made up over 50% of students from public schools; 37% in Catholic schools, and 22% in Independent/ private schools. ASB students make up the second largest language background group at 27,235 students, constituting 12.8% of all students of language backgrounds other than English enrolled in NSW public secondary schools (DEC NSW,

2008 cited in Ho, 2011a). It is significant that Australian state schools continue to educate to the majority of Australian Muslim students, despite the recent growth of the Islamic schools sector (Donohoue- Clyne, 2010, p.7) and debates about their efficacy. Of the 12,939 Muslim students (including ASB students) enrolled in schools nationally, a minority is enrolled in the non-government sector. Only 5% are enrolled in Catholic schools and 9% in the independent schools, including, but not limited to, Islamic schools (Sherington & Campbell, 2006, p. 140). Whether this is due to lack of capacity of this relatively small sector to cater to all Muslim students, due to socio-economic disadvantage, or due to parents' ideological commitment to public schooling, the vast majority of Australian Muslim students, most of whom are Arabic-speaking and of Lebanese background, are continuing to attend public schools. For Australian ASB Muslim females in particular, parents continue to exhibit a strong preference for single sex girls' state schools (Donohoue-Clyne, 2006, p.286).

Kalantzis, et al (1990) highlight the role of education as “the place where the state, as a nation builder and maker of national identity, can play its most deliberate, systematic and sustained socializing role”, and a place to create “peaceful social change rather than reactively patching up popular resistance to change” (p.3). In support of the capacity for state schools to maintain cohesive societies, Gravrielatos (2006) describes them as “the crucible within which democracy was formed and upon which a vibrant, socially cohesive future is dependent”. Ho (2011b) used the term ‘micropublic’ (Amin, 2002) to describe state schools as everyday sites of “regular and continual cross-cultural exchange” (2011, p. 616) and considers such schools to be the

most significant social institution(s) shaping the formation of identities, worldviews and capacities. Alongside neighbourhoods, workplaces, and other spaces of association, they are key sites for their development of micro-publics, and probably the institutions most amenable to regulation by governments. (p.616)

With their high levels of diversity and ethnic compositions, Australian state schools continue to be one of the key social institutions with potential to promote intercultural awareness and contact. State schools, particularly those with diverse cohorts of students, can play an important role in contributing to the broad ideals of a democratic society. Through inclusive education practices they can also assist in promoting social inclusion and a socially cohesive society. The question then is to what extent do state schools actually embrace inclusive values and practices?

Some international and Australian research which has focused on Muslim students' experiences of state education has addressed teachers' roles in the process. Cummins (2007) highlights how teachers' interactions with their culturally diverse students reflect their role definitions, as they bring "expectations, assumptions and goals" to their role. In particular, teachers hold "an image of the society into which pupils will graduate and to which they are being prepared to contribute" (Cummins, 2000, p.48). Hence, teachers play a crucial role in the provision of an inclusive education in state schooling. A number of Western-based educational studies have reported teachers' positive commitment to their Muslim students (Abbas, 2002; Sarroub, 2005) Niyozov and Pluim (2009) and Niyozov (2010) criticised the negative views in the literature of public school teachers' work and interactions with Muslim students, and supported the incorporation of teachers' accounts in discussions about Muslim students' schooling, and a more constructive and positive analysis of their work (p.640). In a study based in

England, Abbas (2002) examined teachers' perceptions of Muslim South Asian-background students, describing teachers' awareness of this ethno-religious group's 'double disadvantage' (p.461), including socio-economic disadvantage and the patriarchal tendencies of South Asian culture. The study found that teachers were "on the whole positive and were committed to their pupils and students" (p.469).

However, outcomes regarding teachers' attitudes are not always positive. A number of England-based studies have raised the issue of teachers' and career-advisors' stereotyped attitudes to and/or lack of support for Muslim female students (Brah & Shaw, 1992; Parker-Jenkins, 1999), while equivalent US-based studies have cited racism and Islamophobia amongst teachers (Allen & Neilsen, 2002; Sheridan, 2004).

Some research has focused on students' perceptions of teachers' attitudes. In the Australian context, Mansouri and Kamp (2007) documented Australian Muslim and ASB students' perspectives of teacher racism, lack of teachers' interest and low teacher expectations of student achievement, as affecting their performance and motivation (p. 95). In another Australian study, McCue (2008) documented students' identification of teachers' lack of interest and low expectations as a barrier in the educational process. In contrast, Asmar, Proude and Inge's (2004) study on Muslim Australian students' tertiary education experiences found that over three quarters of students surveyed, and two thirds of female Muslim students surveyed stated that they were treated the same as other students (p.6), though a number of female students reported the occasional 'spotlighting' episodes by teaching staff, or being given attention based on their Islamic identity (p.6).

A third group of studies have addressed inclusivity through analysis of the curriculum, and of the place (or not) of Arab and Muslim perspectives within it. For example, Ata's (2007) analysis of representation of Arabs and Muslims in the media and social science textbooks concluded that these were "predominantly negative, involving overstatements, baseless charges and evaluative perceptions" (p.1). Earlier research into the presence of Islam in the Australian curriculum found that opportunities for teachers to discuss Islam were often 'incidental and tangential' where "beyond multiculturalism as an approach, there appear to be few places in the curriculum where students are taught about Muslims and Islam" (Ata & Batrouney, 1989, p.162). However, Donohue- Clyne (1998) identifies not just a lack of representation of Islam but a recollection of an antagonistic history between Muslims and the West evident, particularly within the history curriculum, based on a European perspective on culture, where a 'pluralist dilemma' exists between this dominant culture and Islamic culture:

those Australian students who study world history are more likely to read the Eurocentric and biased stories of the heroic Crusaders who fought the Infidels in the Holy Land, rather than their own history of interaction with the Muslim world. Contributions made by Muslim scientists, mathematicians and physicians are routinely ignored, as though the Islamic world does not exist. (p.282)

Within the Australian context, there have been few studies that have focused specifically on the educational experiences of Muslim ASB females, or have examined their experiences in light of concerns about inclusive education. While Mansouri and Kamp (2007) explored the experiences of Muslim students in secular state schools from a multicultural perspective, their study did not focus specifically on Muslim girls. A more recent study conducted by Najah El-Biza (2012) explored Muslim female

students' self-efficacy and identities in the Australian and Saudi-Arabian context, though this study focused specifically on preteens.

In a related study, McCue (2008) reported on Australian Muslim women's civil and social participation, addressing schooling as one of a number of social contexts. The study pointed out that the majority of participants supported government schooling, which aided the process of "Muslim women's integration into and participation in Australian non-Muslim society" (p. 38). It also noted the importance of individual schools' commitment to integration: "In some cases this commitment to integration and participation was greatly assisted by the school, including the schools' commitment to multiculturalism, religious tolerance and social integration" (p. 39). Notwithstanding the strengths of state schooling, McCue (2008) outlined three main barriers for Muslim students in state schools, namely discrimination on the basis of dress, teacher prejudice and the mainstream non-Muslim youth culture (p.41). The study found these were prevalent issues particularly in schools that did not have large populations of Muslim students.

Research into Muslim women's experiences in tertiary education has raised a number of other concerns relevant to notions of inclusion. The 'centrality of alcohol to Western student culture' (Asmar, et al, 2004; McCue, 2008) was raised as a concern by young Muslim women in the tertiary education settings. Muslim female tertiary students reported experiencing more 'cultural discomfort' than Muslim males (Asmar, 2004, p.59). Asmar (1999; 2004) also highlighted the need for prayer facilities, while emphasising that "a sense of religious dissonance can affect Muslims' sense of

belonging, and limit their opportunities to interact” – this was particularly the case for the women (p.60).

To conclude this section, given that the vast majority of Australian Muslim ASB students are being educated in the secular state school system, this is a pertinent context in which to study Muslim ASB students’ experiences of education. Although several overseas-based studies have examined Muslim female students’ schooling in state schools, a smaller proportion have been conducted in Australia and these have focused exclusively on the experiences and perceptions of the students. It is also pertinent to address teachers’ perceptions of their interactions with Muslim female students in the context of state, secular schools, and broader concerns about inclusivity. Given the pressures experienced by those who must address the increasing complexities of accommodating difference in schools that are becoming more ethnically and religiously diverse, their views are crucial for a better understanding of the implications of inclusive education for Muslim students. The current study therefore adds to the body of literature conducted in the Australian context by investigating Muslim ASB girls’ educational experiences in state secular schools from the perspective of both students and their teachers, and also by investigating girls’ post-school transitions.

3.4 Multicultural Education

As argued earlier, the construct of multiculturalism, like that of inclusion, is complex in that it represents both fact and value. Demographically, Australia can be described as a multicultural society – one that has generally been remarkably successful in accommodating large numbers of people from very diverse cultural and linguistic

backgrounds (Kalantzis & Cope, 1990; Inglis, 1995; Poynting & Mason, 2008). Multicultural policies that have been developed in recognition of the demographic fact have primarily incorporated values of maintaining inter-ethnic harmony and working towards equitable access to society for all citizens. Common understandings of the term multiculturalism include: “an ethic of acceptance of, and respect for, cultural diversity, community harmony and inclusion” (Henry & Kurzak, 2012, p.1).

As indicated in chapter 1, multiculturalism has a substantial history in Australia. The term itself was introduced in government policy during the 1970s and has featured significantly in Australia’s responses to its increasingly diverse population via immigration and education policies since that time. A milestone in the history of multiculturalism was the publication of the Galbally report (Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales, 1978), which identified the following core principles:

- all members of society are to have equal opportunity to realise their potential and have equal access to programs and services;
- every person to be able to retain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage and be encouraged to embrace and understand other cultures;
- migrants’ needs are to be met by mainstream services, but special services and programs are to be in place at first; and
- there be full consultation with clients in design and operation of services with a focus on migrants becoming self-reliant quickly.

These principles remain central to multicultural policy in Australia, and they have been re-endorsed as recently as 2013 (Inquiry into Immigration and Multiculturalism in Australia, 2013).

In its early years, policies of multiculturalism received bi-partisan support in Australia. This was evident especially in the important *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco, 1987). However, since then, the concept has become increasingly politically charged, with the result that successive governments have differed in the extent to which they actively support it. Although the term was initially introduced by the Liberal Fraser government, the overall pattern has been one of relatively strong support from successive Labor governments and considerably less support from conservative Liberal governments. As indicated in chapter 1, fluctuating support for multiculturalism as a social value has often coincided with fluctuating concerns about ‘border protection’ and with an emphasis on Australia values and citizenship (Reid, 2010).

Attitudes in Australia towards multiculturalism as a social value are reflected in multicultural education policy responses to diverse student populations in schools. As indicated in chapter 1, common understandings of multicultural education include “an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs and that affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world” (Benett, 2003, p.14, cited in Mansouri & Kamp, 2007, p. 89). Nieto’s (1996) definition of multicultural education reflects similar values and beliefs:

(multicultural education involves) a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers represent. Multicultural education (should) permeate(s) the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and parents, and

the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning.
(p.307)

In New South Wales, as in other Australian states, the Multicultural Education Policy underscores the role of schools in maintaining an inclusive teaching environment that “recognises and values the background and culture of all students”, and one that “advocates a strong antiracism stance” (DEC NSW, 2005).

In line with these definitions, core categories of multicultural education in Australia since its inception have been (Lo Bianco, 1990, p.8):

- the facilitation of ESL programs for immigrants and Indigenous children and adults;
- community and Indigenous language maintenance through their incorporation into the educational curriculum;
- the incorporation of ‘culturally diverse perspectives’ across the school curriculum;
- parental and community participation in schools; and
- antiracism initiatives.

Today, multicultural education is embedded, to varying degrees, in all Australian states, and covers a range of programs. For example, in NSW, the state in which my research took place, The NSW *Multicultural Education Policy* (DEC NSW, 2005) “commits school to providing opportunities that allow all students to achieve equitable educational and social outcomes”. It outlines the role of schools in promoting community harmony by fostering understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity amongst students to combat racism and intolerance; it requires schools to

provide programs that develop students' knowledge, skills and values for participation as active citizens; it requires inclusive teaching practices which recognise and value the backgrounds and cultures of all students and promote an open and tolerant attitude towards different cultures, religions and world views; it requires schools to support students to develop their English language and literacy skills so that they are able to fully participate in schooling and achieve equitable educational outcomes; and to support the particular learning needs of targeted students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It also requires schools to promote positive community relations through effective communication with parents and community members from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds by encouraging their participation in the life of the school (NSW Multicultural Education Policy, 2005). Other Australian state policy documents typically also include programs that address English as a second language (ESL); multicultural perspectives in the curriculum; antiracism initiatives, community languages, and community relations (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Melbourne, 2009).

Challenges for multicultural education

Although Australia's multicultural education movement is generally regarded as successful with many of its policies and programs demonstrating Australia's leadership in "innovative educational responses to diversity" (Lo Bianco, 2010, p. 20), these successes have been accompanied by a number of challenges and criticisms. These include the conceptual clarity of the term; the, at times, superficial nature of its implementation; and the extent to which the policy has actually impacted all schools.

Conceptual confusion and ambiguity surrounds the terms multiculturalism and multicultural education, with a multiplicity of meanings existing within both the

literature and policies (Grant & Sachs, 1995, p.93). Some have claimed that multicultural education is “ill-defined, lacking substance and just another educational fad”, and that programs which have conflicting goals and priorities are often supported (Suzuki, 1984, p.294 cited in Sleeter, 1999, p. 9). In some cases, primarily due to the manner in which government policies have described key aspects of multicultural education, multicultural approaches have been assessed as vague, complex and conceptually contested (Lo Bianco, 2010, p.20). Conceptual ambiguity is also evident in the use of ‘inclusive teaching’ in multicultural educational policy documents, with more explanation needed as to what this entails for multicultural educational policies and practices (see for instance, the Multicultural Education Policy, DEC NSW, 2005).

Criticism has also been directed at the superficial manner in which multicultural education has sometimes been adopted. Kalantzis, Cope and their colleagues (Kalantzis & Cope, 1981; 1999; Cope & Poynting, 1989) argue that, to a significant degree, early versions of multicultural education took the form of a celebratory approach, with a simple ‘pluralist model’, and that they were no more than a tokenistic “spaghetti and Polka” approach to diversity (Kalantzis & Cope, 1981). They criticised such approaches as representing “a very narrow understanding of culture, viewing it as just those folk traditions, these symbols of difference which we can comfortably celebrate in Australia” (Cope & Poynting, 1989). They pointed out that where “colourful cultural differences” are celebrated, little is expected of schools, which ought to be the social institutions where “...unequal relations of social and economic power ... need to be changed, not celebrated, if Australia is to become a fair, let alone equal society” (Cope & Poynting, 1989, p. 234).

More recently, Sefa Dei, James, Karumanchery, James & Zine (2000, p. 15) make similar criticisms in relation to inclusive education. They argue *inclusive* often means an “add and stir” approach, and a conceptualisation of diversity based on a “bland pluralism that does not move beyond celebrating superficial aspects of culture”. Although such an approach seeks to recognize different cultural groups within a pluralistic society (p.15), and to teach students to “appreciate” and “celebrate” cultural difference, these learning experiences often “romanticize” these groups as the “Exotic Other” (p.14), leaving their experiences in the periphery, without genuinely addressing issues of equity or attempting to “challenge power, identity or representational issues in education” (Sefa Dei et al, 2000, p.14). Thus, like multicultural education, inclusive education has been criticized for taking on a pluralist approach that does not move beyond a “more than a ‘live and let live pluralism’ which satisfies itself with affirming diversity” (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999, p.270). Interpreting and implementing inclusive education in this manner implies comparatively less effort is expended on tackling structural inequities, power imbalances in the school system, challenging the status quo, or sufficiently emphasising diversity in the curriculum. These deficiencies often continue to perpetuate exclusion as:

Marginalized groups and their histories and experiences remain peripheral to dominant educational discourses and practice. This approach to inclusion does not lead to equity, nor does it challenge power, identity or representational issues in education (Sefa Dei, et al, 2000, p. 14).

In contrast, a more transformative, critical approach to multicultural and inclusive education is advocated, which are neither apolitical nor neutral (Cope & Poynting, 1989; Sefa Dei, et al, 2000). Banks (1993) describes a *transformative approach* to

multicultural education that changes the curriculum's basic assumptions, and allows students to perceive concepts, issues, themes and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view. Banks (1993) calls for a *social action approach* where, ideally, students adopt active roles in interrogating social systems and structures, with the goal of social change and empowerment of oppressed groups in society. This approach like critical multiculturalism, sets out to transform the school curriculum, with diversity as a "core issue in the curriculum, education for equitable access, and cultural difference being seen as a resource for social access" (Burrige & Chodkiewicz, 2008, p. 23).

Criticism in Australia has also been directed at the extent to which policies have actually affected schools. The ethnic composition of schools tends to vary, with some schools characterized by a significant proportion of indigenous students; others with a diverse mix of students from different ethnic backgrounds, whilst others are predominantly students of British, Irish or European descent (Hickling-Hudson, 2003, p.3). Regardless of a school's ethnic composition, it remains an official requirement for schools to ensure that multicultural education informs the curriculum, to prepare students for living in increasingly globalised, ethnically and religiously diverse societies.

As some researchers have pointed out, not all school have embraced this policy. McInerney and McInerney (2003) found that there are varying levels of commitment to multicultural education depending on the school, and individual teachers, many of whom had "given lukewarm reception to multicultural curriculum initiatives which have been perceived by some as unnecessary political social engineering" (p.198).

Burridge and Chodkiewicz (2008) found when schools were located in less culturally diverse areas “at the regional and school level there has been little evidence of a sustained effort to follow through the broader implications of this relatively new [cultural diversity and community relations] policy” (p.45). Three levels of school commitment to multicultural education, namely *pro-active*, *reactive*, and *inactive* or *disinterested* were also identified by Burridge and Chodkiewicz (2010). These depended on factors including school context (e.g. the degree of cultural diversity in the schools), interest in this issue by school executives, external events such as conflicts which may have affected the schools, and departmental support (p.290). In follow up work, Burridge, Buchanan and Chodkiewicz (2009) draw attention to the ethnic composition of Australian teachers (predominantly of English-speaking backgrounds), highlighting the need for more professional development and focus in teacher training on multicultural education.

Implementation of Multicultural Education Policies

Discussion of multicultural education highlights the challenges that its implementation undoubtedly poses for education systems and for schools. As a number of researchers in the Australian context have pointed out, implementation requires schools to recognize and address the needs of students from diverse ethnicities; to develop appropriate classroom management strategies and to design and teach an intercultural curriculum (Hickling-Hudson, 2003). In response to such challenges, Hickling-Hudson (2003, p. 5) suggests that for schools to be termed “interculturally proactive”, the educational environment must be one where teachers play an active role in the design and implementation of multicultural education programmes, where teachers have intercultural teaching skills and maintain professional development in order to enhance

these; and where there is a focus on mother tongue maintenance, as well as the acquisition of English. To achieve such an educational environment, she proposes strategies of community liaison, critical socio-cultural study within the curriculum and education in home languages.

Like other Australian researchers, Epstein (1995) recognises the interdependent roles of schools, families and communities in children's education. Epstein (1995) proposes an "overlapping spheres of influence model" that outlines a holistic framework of school/family/community partnerships. This framework highlights the importance of school communication and interaction with families and communities in order to coordinate efforts to improve student outcomes. Riehl (2000) also emphasises the importance of communication and the contributions of the different stakeholders in educating minority students, including the educational professionals, the students, parents, and the broader public, as well as educational professionals themselves.

An emphasis on community liaison, and on the nature of curriculum, is also evident in international work that addresses the needs of minority students, and most particularly in the influential work of Jim Cummins. Cummin's (1995, 2000) framework of empowerment points to four areas for promoting the inclusion of minority students: these are cultural and linguistic incorporation; community and parent involvement; assessment; and pedagogy. His work underscores the inter-relationship between the contexts of classroom, community and society; and calls for an "additive" cultural linguistic approach that promotes more holistic identity development that acknowledges students' home cultures. In order to maintain communication and develop partnerships between home and school, he proposes a "collaborative", as opposed to "exclusionary", community participation with the school. He also encourages "reciprocal interaction-

oriented” as opposed to “transmission oriented” learning, where students are encouraged to work with language for self-expression and critical reflection. Additionally, he emphasises the need for assessment practices to be “advocacy-oriented”, or used as a basis from which students can gain feedback about their learning, as opposed to exclusionary “legitimacy-oriented” assessments that are designed to identify student weaknesses.

In his later work, Cummins (2000) points to three key predictors of academic success for language minority students:

- English language support via subject areas combined with support in the first language;
- the use of current approaches to teaching the curriculum through two languages; and
- a socio-cultural climate where the school curriculum is inclusive of ESL students and of their language and cultural background, and where the teachers’ expectations of their students are high.

Thus while Cummins’ work addresses similar arguments to those of many Australian researchers, it includes a stronger emphasis on language and literacy development.

The place of Muslim students in Multicultural Education

While most research into the implementation of multicultural education has focused on characteristics that address the needs of diverse groups of minority students in mainstream education, some have focused more specifically on the needs of Muslim students. For example, in order to facilitate inclusion of Muslim students, Sabri and Bruna (2007) propose a conceptual model of the inter-relationship between curriculum,

instruction and home-school relations. They also propose the inclusion of specific events throughout the school that are of relevance to Muslim students. These include: Islamic Awareness Week, a Ramadan dinner, and an Islamic Centre open house; as well as reviewing curriculum design, evaluation and revision and appropriate teacher in-service training.

In comprehensive research, Mansouri and colleagues (Mansouri, 2004; Mansouri & Trembath, 2005; Mansouri & Kamp, 2007; Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010; Kamp & Mansouri, 2010) investigated the educational experiences of Arab-Australian youth in schools in Melbourne, the impact of recent world events, and the perception of racial and religious discrimination experienced by Arab-Australians. In these series of publications, they explored the social, cultural and attitudinal factors which impinged on the educational attainment of ASB and Muslim students, and developed a broad multi-dimensional model of multicultural education to support groups such as Australian ASB and Muslim students. The researchers' primary concern was "the risk that if the current societal pattern of exclusion of Arab and Muslim Australians from full Australian citizenship is allowed to penetrate the educational system, this will engender long-term marginalisation and exclusion for future generations" (Mansouri & Kamp, 2007, p.88). They argued that the school is a "complex social system" that needs to adopt "cultural responsiveness" at the levels of "school management, teachers, curriculum and instruction, parents and community, and student development and support services" (Mansouri, 2004, p.96). In response, they proposed a multi-dimensional model of multicultural education incorporating six dimensions to support multicultural educational practices in schools, namely; the school environment and policy, curriculum change, staff training and resourcing, extra-curricular activities, and parental and community involvement (Mansouri & Kamp, 2007, p. 97).

To conclude, this brief review highlights a number of factors that are central to the effective implementation of multicultural education. First is the need for communication – between schools, families and communities, and opportunities for active engagement of families and communities in the education of their children. Also of importance is the need for schools to be ‘interculturally proactive’, with teachers actively engaged in the design and implementation of programs and assessment practices that are culturally inclusive. Thus, multicultural education must be substantially more than just an add-on program. As Sefa Dei et al (2000) argue, to genuinely address issues of equity, inclusive and multicultural education must also address issues of power and identity. This highlights the powerful role that teachers play in the education of their students (Cummins, 2000; BurrIDGE et al, 2009; Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010), and implies that teachers must have the necessary high level of skills and knowledge, and/or access to relevant professional support, to enable them to develop appropriate skills and knowledge. Cummin’s work (1995, 2000) in particular, highlights the need to provide high levels of support for students’ language development, ideally in both mother tongue and in English. In addition, if students are to have access to an equitable education, this must occur within a context where teachers’ expectation for their students’ academic success are high.

3.5 An Inclusive Multicultural Framework for Analysis of

Data

A range of factors necessary for the effective implementation of multicultural and inclusive education have shaped my approach to analysis of data in this research. I turn

now to a discussion of this, and of the “framework for analysis” that is proposed in the thesis.

In developing this framework I have drawn on constructs of *inclusion* and of *multicultural education*. As earlier discussion of *inclusion* has indicated, central characteristics of the construct include an emphasis on social justice, and equitable access to full education as a human right for all students. Literature on inclusion also emphasizes the need for teaching approaches that are flexible and relevant to students; that are welcoming of diversity; and that support the involvement of families and communities in the education of children. But in addition, a number of researchers have argued that inclusive education must necessarily also target exclusionary pressures that limit students’ capacities to access the curriculum, or limit their future full participation in society.

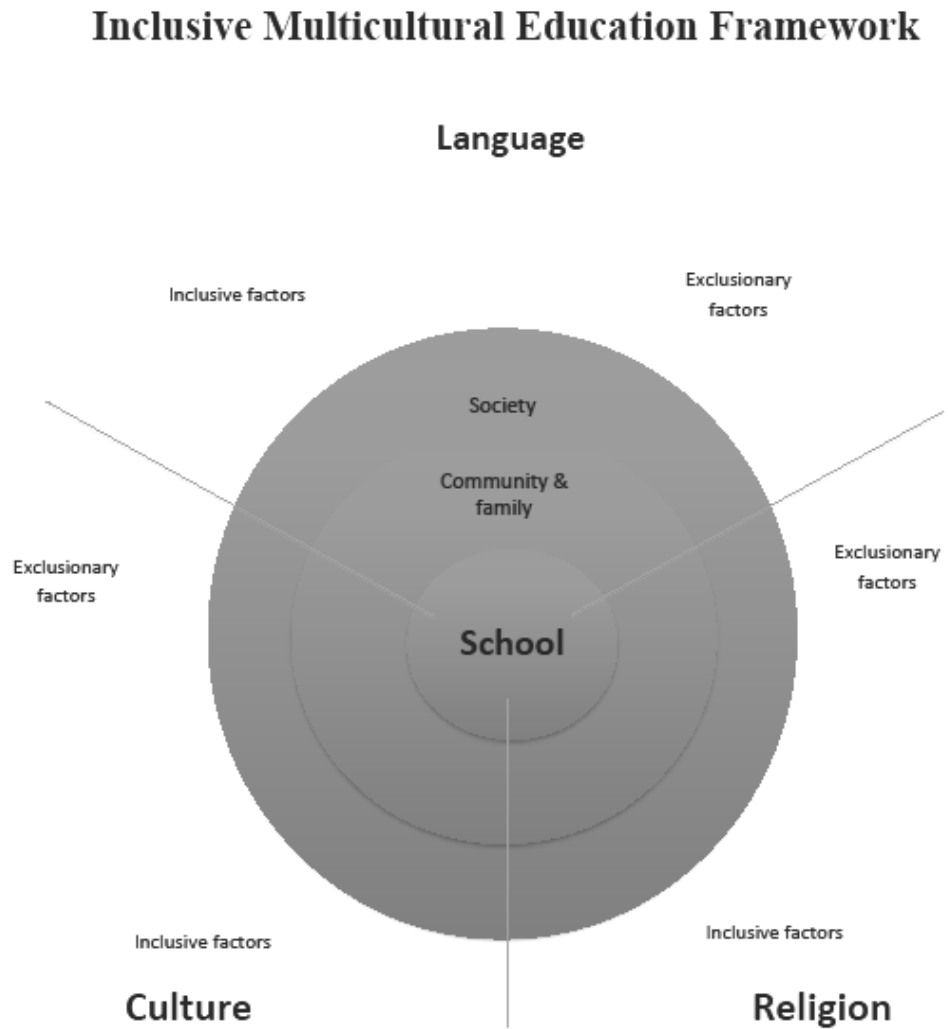
The construct of multicultural education is in many ways similar to that of inclusion. The literature on multicultural education includes a similar emphasis on the active involvement of school, families and communities in students’ education, and on the need for a flexible curriculum with teaching practices that address the specific needs of diverse students. However, this literature also addresses, more explicitly, questions of power and equality. Some of the literature also includes an explicit emphasis on the importance of students’ language and literacy development.

The Framework for Analysis of data includes an emphasis on active involvement of *school, families and community* in the education of students. It also recognizes the need to increase *inclusive participation* of students in education, while at the same time

working to minimize *exclusionary pressures*. These factors are addressed in relation to three major categories of language/literacy, culture and religion. While, in much of the literature on multicultural education, religion is considered to be sub-category of the broader notion of culture, because of its importance to the Australian ASB Muslim girls who are the focus of this thesis, religion is included as a distinct category in the framework.

The framework is designed to enable a systematic approach to investigation of the nature of experiences of Australian ASB Muslim girls in secular schools, and the extent to which those schools can and do address their educational, cultural and religious needs. In later chapters of the thesis, the framework is drawn on to investigate school policies and practices as well as teachers' and students' perceptions of the education of ASB Muslim girls in Australian state schools. The framework itself is summarized in figure 1 below:

Figure 1 Inclusive Multicultural Education Framework



The nature of the three major components and justification for their inclusion in the Framework are elaborated in following sections.

Language and Literacy Education

As many have acknowledged, for students beyond the initial stage of learning English, ongoing support in their development of academic language and literacy in English is vital. Such support is necessary to ensure students are able to participate equitably in education, and reach their academic potential (Cummins, 1995, 2000; Gibbons, 2006). As many have also acknowledged, development of academic language and literacy is demanding. Gibbons (2006), for example, argues that students need to develop an understanding of “academic registers” or the “specific technical language and grammatical patterns – and generic structures particular to that subject” (p.4). She describes these academic registers as “abstract, more lexically dense, and more structured than the face-to-face everyday language with which students are likely to be familiar” (Gibbons, 2006, p.6). Support for academic English development must address oral language development including the academic registers that are relevant to specific curriculum disciplines. It must address literacy requirements within disciplines: including teaching about key genres, and their organizational structures; about cohesion and paragraph organization, about vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. It must also include teaching about methods of conducting research: including ways of finding relevant information; strategies for reading; internet searching, and strategies for summarizing and note-taking notes.

Given the complexity of the task, it is clear that while specialist ESL teachers play an important role, students’ language and literacy development must be the responsibility of all teachers, and must take place across all curriculum areas. Recent initiatives to develop a national Australian curriculum have acknowledged this responsibility and

included a strong and systematic focus on language and literacy development (ACARA English, 2011; Hammond, 2012).

In addition to a strong language and literacy focus, a key element in ensuring an equitable education for minority students is the academic environment of the school itself and the expectations of teachers regarding their students' potential for academic success. As Cummins (2000) argues, in addition to English language support (ideally with a bilingual focus) a key predictor of students' academic success is the nature of teacher expectations – high expectations lead to high student achievement. Hammond and colleagues (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Hammond, 2008; Gibbons, 2008) have drawn on outcomes of their research with EAL students to argue for the value of programs that are characterized by high intellectual challenge as well as high levels of language, literacy and learning support. When such support is available, they argue, EAL/D students can, and do, engage successfully with high challenge programs, which, in turn raises overall standards of educational outcomes.

As earlier discussion suggests, much of the literature on multicultural education in the Australian context has focused particularly on issues of cultural inclusion and of power and equity. While recognising the importance of such issues, this study also explicitly highlights the importance of academic language and literacy development within an academic context of support for high educational achievement. The argument here is that without a strong school focus on goals of high academic achievement for minority students, their education will not be truly inclusive and multicultural. Unless students are supported to become literate in the dominant code of English (Rodby, 1992) and to achieve English-medium mediated academic success, they will be restricted in their

capacity to access higher education and employment. The inclusion of the element of Language and Literacy within the Framework thus highlights the importance within school programs of support for academic language and literacy development for minority students' educational success; and it also highlights the importance of a broader focus on high expectations and high academic challenge.

Languages education

In addition to ESL programs, Australian multicultural policies have, to varying degrees, addressed the place of mother tongue maintenance in the education of EAL minority students. For example, the *Participation: report to the Premier* (Ethnic Affairs Commission NSW, 1978) recommended that in addition to ESL support, community language education should be available for students. In 1987, *The National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco, 1987) while recognizing the central place occupied by English as Australia's national language also played a major role in supporting the establishment of community languages programs. Successive policies have argued the benefits of first language maintenance for developing the cultural identities of young Australians of diverse cultural and linguistic background, and for providing a strong foundation for learning additional languages, including English. For example, the NSW document *The Principles of Multiculturalism* (2000), recognizes linguistic diversity as a key component in a policy, which "values the different linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds of the people of New South Wales"; and regards "linguistic and cultural assets...as a valuable resource". Other policy statements have highlighted the economic benefits of languages for the nation (e.g. *Australia's language: The Australian Language and literacy Policy* (ALLP) (DEET, 1991)).

In reality, languages education in Australia has struggled. A recent government review of languages education, *the National Statement for Languages Education in Australian schools* (2005-2008) identified the main challenges in the delivery of the some sixty-nine languages taught across Australia as:

the need for appropriately qualified and trained teachers; continuity in languages learning with schools, and from primary to secondary levels and beyond; adequate time allocations; supportive timetabling practices; resourcing; and whole school commitment. (MCEETYA, 2005, p.5)

One of the key community languages is Arabic (Ingram, 2002, p.15). For ASB Muslim students, Arabic language maintenance has both cultural and religious significance as the language of the Quran and Islamic liturgy (Clyne, 2003, p.65). However, with a trend of diminished funding of languages education in Australia (Ingram, 2002, p.15), and challenges associated with language program delivery, Arabic programs are usually only offered outside of mainstream schools. For some students who participated in this research, access to Arabic programs has not been available in schools. For this reason, data analysis in the following chapters focuses primarily on the nature English language and literacy support, with relatively smaller focus on Arabic language learning outside school based on students' perspectives.

Culture

Concerns with culture and intercultural understanding along with the related issues of tolerance and anti-racism, have been major components of Australian multicultural educational policies since their inceptions. In NSW, for example, the Multicultural

Education Policy outlines as one of its core objectives “the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in its schools and worksites” (DEC NSW, 2005).

Within the component of culture, the issue of racism has come into sharper focus since the events of September 11, 2001. Research conducted in Australia since that time has pointed to an increase in the prevalence of "racist" or inter-cultural tensions occurring in schools (Mansouri & Trembath, 2005; Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010; Reid, 2010). Researchers have found this tension is particularly evident in schools where student populations are relatively mono-cultural (Burrige & Chodkiewicz, 2008, Burrige, et al, 2009). Mansouri and Jenkins (2007) found that schools demonstrated differing responses to racism. Some schools demonstrated a “positive preventative approach” or “ongoing policies in place to deal with issues with intercultural relations as they arose”. Here, preventative measures involved parents learning about racial and cultural diversity, and disciplinary measures for racist behaviour, which were explicitly communicated to students (p.103). Other schools, however, were found to be “turning a blind eye” to school inter-ethnic tensions (p.103), which failed to protect students or communicate strong signals about acceptable patterns of interaction.

As indicated previously, Australian governments have fluctuated in their level of support for multiculturalism and in their emphasis on intercultural understanding. In recent years, Liberal governments in particular have distanced themselves from multicultural education policy agendas. Government schools were blamed for the “undermining of traditional Australian identity” or in not shaping ideal Australian citizens (Marginson, 1997, p.4). There has been a gradual “retreat from the democratic equality (public) purposes of education to a much greater prominence on social

efficiency (economic) and social mobility (private) purposes” (Cranston, Kimber, Mulford, Reid & Keating, 2010, p.192). Events of September 11th and of the racially motivated riots that took place in Cronulla, Sydney in 2005, have contributed in major ways to this shift in attitude and an increased emphasis on “Australian values and citizenship education” (Leeman & Reid, 2006; Reid, 2010). As Shaw (2007) points out:

Needless to say multiculturalism has been brought into sharper focus in a post-Cronulla Australia. Questions of national identity, patriotism and citizenship have percolated alongside a values discourse that has become increasingly impressed on our collective psyche. Values have been traditionally linked to patriotism and national identity. (p.2)

The *National Framework for Values Education* (2004) was one of these policy responses. Its nine values – care and compassion, doing your best, fair go, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility, and understanding, tolerance and inclusion reflect concerns about identifying core values and what constitutes an Australian identity in a culturally diverse society (Shaw, 2007). While such responses are valuable in that they “reject(s) violence, harassment and negative forms of discrimination” (Refshauge, 2004), they have been criticised for replacing antiracism and multicultural education with civics and values focus. Such a focus is not perceived sufficiently to address racial inequality, and inter-cultural harmony (Leeman & Reid, 2006, p.50).

Despite the reduced emphasis on multiculturalism and multicultural education, cross cultural skills are recognised as essential in an increasingly globalised world (Jakubowicz, 2009, p. 14). The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for*

Young Australians of 2008 recognises under the objective of being “active and informed citizens” the need for students to “appreciate Australia’s social, linguistic and religious diversity, and have an understanding of Australia’s system of government, history and culture” and “are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia” (Jakubowicz, 2009, p.9). It remains to be seen how the shift to an increasing focus on values and civics education will affect multicultural education policy focus in schools, particularly those with cultural and religious diversity.

For the ASB Muslim females who participated in this research, questions of intercultural understanding, tolerance and antiracism remain highly relevant. As Muslims girls in a post-September 11 Western world, they are especially vulnerable as targets of racism – both because of their cultural background and because they are more visible and easily identifiable as Muslims than males. Thus, questions in this research about how schools respond to cultural diversity, the values they place on intercultural understandings and tolerance, and how they address issues of racism are highly relevant to ways in which they are able to support and address the needs of ASB Muslim girls.

Religion

Of the three major elements in my Framework for Analysis of Data, religion has received the least attention in multicultural education policies (Cahill, Bouma, Dellal, & Leahy, 2004, p.11). Despite Australian state schools’ secular orientation, the history of the nation’s education is tied to religion, as Australia’s colonial beginnings saw the responsibility for education taken up by faith communities. However, to meet the needs of the increasingly multi-faith society, 19th century governmental reforms established

comprehensive public schools which were “free, secular, and compulsory” for all Australian children.

Despite the growth of secularism, religion and spirituality are not on the decline. In Australia, the most common religions after Christianity (62.1%) are Buddhism (2.5%), Islam (2.2%), and Hinduism (1.3%) (Cahill, et al, 2004). These figures, in addition to the growth in the prominence of the role of religion in world events, call for a re-assessment of the place of religious education in schools, and for religious diversity management and social cohesion (Bouma, Ling & Halafoff, 2010). There has also been a call for a curriculum focus on inter-religious education to counter ethnic and religious prejudice (Erebus International, 2006; HREOC, 2007; Bouma & Halafoff, 2009; Bouma, et al, 2010). However, as discussed above, government education policy approaches to addressing intolerance have more recently concentrated on a values and citizenship curriculum, and have largely under-utilised intercultural and interfaith education as a tool for anti-discrimination and social cohesion initiatives (Byrne, 2009). In 2007, the Australian national government proposed the *National School Chaplaincy Program* that funded schools to employ chaplains. As a result of the controversy generated by this proposal, there has been a shift in government response to a broader focus and the inclusion of funding for school secular welfare workers (DEC, 2011).

Although Australian state schools are secular in orientation, NSW Multicultural Education Policy (DEC NSW, 2005) requires that schools promote “an open and tolerant attitude towards different cultures, religions and world views”. This Policy acknowledges religious diversity, and the need to address it in state schools both in terms of curricular inclusion and in accommodating individual religious needs.

Byrne (2010) describes two approaches to religious education, the first of which is the faith-forming approach or *Special Religious Education (SRE)*, where students learn about a specific religion by faith volunteers. The second, which receives comparatively less class time and only minimal curricular attention, is the multi-tradition education or the *General Religious Education (GRE)*. Byrne (2010) argues that GRE should be the approach that receives increased focus (p.50). Bouma, et al (2010) also support calls for a curriculum that explores religious traditions with an appreciative, rather than disparaging perspective. Studies however, also highlight the need to maintain a critical orientation towards knowledge about religions to avoid “the dangers of romantization and over-mythicization as we speak and write about the colonized ‘other/encounter’ in order to counter the negativity and untruths of the past” (Sefa Dei, 2002, p.9). US-based studies (Niyozov, 2009) in particular, have called for a balanced, critical approach to the depiction of faith traditions such as Islam, cautioning against replacing simplistic Eurocentric depictions of Islamic history and culture, with “idealized depictions” (Niyozov, 2009, p. 650).

Religious education and specific responses to religious difference can be complex and fraught in secular schools, and are often seen as ‘hot potatoes’ by public educators who have exhibited restraint in addressing these issues (Byrnes, 2009). Byrnes (2010) points out that:

Australian public school parents and professional educators support a more inclusive approach to religion than is currently delivered but that government bodies distance themselves from religion education and its social implications, leaving teachers in uncertain territory. (p.50)

This trend means schools must exercise discretion when addressing the inclusion of religious beliefs and practices. It also means missed opportunities for better equipping students with knowledge of the “other”, and the knowledge and skills to interact in a globalised, multi-faith world. These challenges necessitate an exploration of how state schools are responding to religious diversity, and maintaining secular neutrality, particularly given that there has been limited policy guidance concerning this facet of multicultural education. For Australian ASB Muslim youth who are of a minority faith community, there is a need to examine how Muslim students’ experience Australian state schooling in light of the curriculum’s secular neutrality and the limited presence of religion. As indicated above, a number of studies have emerged concerning Muslim students in Australia (see Donohoue-Clyne, 1997, 2002, 2006; Mansouri, 2004; El-Biza, 2010), though fewer have examined both the religious and gender dimension from a multicultural and inclusive educational perspective.

As argued earlier, for Muslims, religion permeates all aspects of life. It is a key factor in debates regarding the merits of faith-based Islamic schools. For Muslim students, as for other many others, in many ways *religion* overlaps with *culture*. However, in the framework, primarily because multicultural education policies do not provide clear guidance for teachers on how religious diversity should be addressed, religion is included as a separate element. For the Muslim girls who participated in this research, religion is important in defining their identities, and shaping their experiences of schooling. Thus questions about how schools address religious diversity, as well as culture, are of central concern to how these girls experience their education, and to how schools recognize and address students’ educational, cultural and religious needs. As

will be seen in later chapters, findings in regard to both religion and culture are at times addressed together. However, the inclusion of religion as a separate heading in the framework enables a focus on ways in which religion is both similar to, and different from, culture in the educational experiences of the girls who participated in this research.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on **inclusion** and **multiculturalism** as key educational constructs that are relevant to the education of Australian Muslim ASB female students in secular, state schools. While both constructs can be understood as fact and/or as value, the focus in the chapter has been primarily on the values, and implications of these values for the education of the Muslim girls who participated in this research. The chapter began by defining inclusive education and by asking how this concept contributes to an understanding of education in the Australian context. It also defined multiculturalism, and addressed the impact of multicultural education policies in shaping responses to diverse student populations in recent history in the Australian education context.

These constructs of *inclusion* and *multiculturalism* have informed the development of a framework for analysis of data to be used in subsequent chapters for analysis of data. Key factors that shaped the development of the Framework include: an emphasis on social justice, and equitable access to full education as a human right for all students; teaching approaches and curricula that are flexible and relevant to students; that are welcoming of diversity, and that support the involvement of families and communities in the education of children; and the need to target exclusionary pressures that limit

students' capacities to access the curriculum, or limit their future full participation in society. Key factors also include the need for an explicit emphasis on students' language and literacy development. The framework is presented in the chapter, along with explanation and justification of key elements of Language/Literacy, Culture and Religion.

This framework for analysis of data is utilised in the subsequent results chapters to examine inclusivity and multicultural educational practices in schools. It provides an organizational structure for presenting the findings of the research. Before presenting the findings, however, the following chapter outlines the design and methodology of the research.

Chapter Four Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study explores the schooling experiences of Australian Arabic Speaking Background (ASB) Muslim female students in two secondary schools in Sydney, Australia. It also explores the schools' responses to this cohort of students, and the extent to which the schools were able to address their students' linguistic, cultural, and religious needs. In order to examine the longer-term consequences of schooling for the broader Australian community, the study also investigates the schooling and post-school transition of a group of young ASB Muslim women in the years immediately following school.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research design and methodologies of the research, to explain the nature of data collected for the research, and the approach to data analysis that was used in the thesis. As explained in the previous chapter, a feature of the thesis is the framework for analysis of data that has been developed as a way of enabling a systematic approach to analysis and discussion of outcomes. The chapter begins by outlining the overall approach to research and the research methodology, before providing details of data collection and analysis. It addresses ethical concerns, and other challenges faced in the research. The final section of the chapter provides a detailed account of the two schools in which the research was conducted.

4.2 Approach to Research- Qualitative Theoretical Framework and Methodology

A researcher's philosophical stance and worldview shape choices regarding area of research, and the resulting methodological approaches adopted. In this research, my purpose was to develop insights and understandings into the educational experiences of ASB Muslim girls from the perspectives of the students themselves, but also from the perspectives of teachers and schools. Thus, the principal aim was to gain insights into the participants' multiple, constructed realities; the world from participants' respective points of view, or their "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Hence, the research is located within a qualitative, interpretative paradigm, characterised by the view that capturing and portraying an 'objective reality' is illusive, and that the only possible alternative is to "know a thing only through its representation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). The study reflects an interpretative and qualitative theoretical view of the world where:

There are multiple realities - that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. Research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends. (Merriam, 1988, p.17)

In line with this theoretical orientation, the research was conducted primarily through two case studies. These enabled access to educational contexts in which it was possible to study young ASB Muslim women's experiences of schooling and post-school transitions in the participants' natural setting of schools (in the case of girls attending

school), and home (in the case of young women who had completed their schooling). They also enabled the research to address the multiple perspectives of school executives, teachers, and students.

Case study research is very common in qualitative research and is defined as “a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time; of phenomena, within their context,” in order “to provide an analysis of the context and processes which illuminate the theoretical issues being studied” (Hartley, 2004, p.323). Meanwhile, Yin’s (1989) definition of case studies is as

an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. (p. 23)

Case studies provide the researcher with the capacity to explore the “causal links in real-life interventions”, which are often too multifaceted to capture via quantitative research such as surveys or experimental studies (Yin, 1989, 25). Case study methodology was also chosen because of its capacity to give the participants a voice, or “to amplify the unique voices of those whose experience in, and perspective on the world are unknown, neglected, or suppressed” (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000, p.5). This is particularly salient for the young women whose voices are heard in this study, and who might otherwise lack the opportunity to voice their experiences or concerns.

The adoption of case study methodology also fulfils a heuristic purpose, or facilitates opportunities for building, testing and extending existing theory (Merriam, 1988; Walton, 1992). Merriam (1988) points out that qualitative case studies have been

extensively utilised in theory construction where; “(i)t becomes necessary to build theory when there is none available to explain a particular phenomenon or when existing theory does not provide an adequate or appropriate explanation” (p. 59). This process was integral to this study, as it evolved from a series of overarching questions, and followed a process of data collection and analysis, combined with reviewing pre-existing conceptual models of multicultural, language, and inclusive education. This process helped to develop a framework for exploring analysis and interpretation of data which is theoretically grounded and systematic.

One of the criticisms of case study research is the concern with the transferability and generalizability of the findings (Gomm, et al, 2000). However, proponents of case study research argue that generalizability of results is not the overriding goal or goal of case study research, nor an essential endpoint (Bassey, 1999; Gomm, et al, 2000). Rather, case studies are “oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social work being studied”, and aim to “reveal a diversity and richness of human behaviour that is simply not accessible through any other method” (Salkind, 2000, p. 195). This rich account facilitates for others, the process of forming judgments about the transferability of findings to another milieu (Guba & Lincoln, 1994 cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 275). Stake (1997) proposes as an alternative to the traditional quantitative notion of generalizability the adoption of ‘naturalistic generalization’ where findings are taken from a study and applied in order to gain a better understanding of any given phenomena in a similar situation.

4.3 Conducting the research

The case studies in this research were located in two state secondary girls' schools in Sydney's south-west and south-east. These schools are identified in the thesis as Swanson School and Macliffe School. The schools were invited to participate in the research on the basis of their ethnically diverse student populations, and their high ASB student cohorts.

Although the case studies undertaken in this research were qualitative in their overall research design, data collection included both qualitative and quantitative components. The inclusion of some quantitative data enabled analysis of students' perspectives from a larger sample of participants than is usually possible through qualitative means alone.

While the nature of case studies encourages collections of extensive and varied sources of data, practical realities may restrict what is possible. For this research, qualitative data included: school and Department of Education policy documents, school reports and other documents deemed by the school to be relevant to the education of Muslim ASB students, interviews with school executives and teachers, and focus group interviews with students. Quantitative data consisted of questionnaire responses from students. While recordings of actual lessons would have added insights into the experiences of all participants, it was not possible within the constraints of the research to collect such data. For this reason, questionnaires were developed for distribution to larger groups of students than would otherwise have been possible to include. Interviews were also conducted with the young women who had completed their schooling.

The range of sources of data enabled multiple perspectives of school executives and teachers, students and school graduates to be represented in the research. They also increased the validity by enabling triangulation of data which in turn contributed to a more evenly balanced narrative when reporting outcomes from the research. Details of recruitment process for participants, stages in the research and data collection for each stage are outlined below.

Phase 1: School Executives and Teachers

Although this thesis focuses primarily on the educational experiences of the young ASB Muslim girls and women who participated in the research, it begins by drawing on the perspectives of school executives and teachers in the two schools.

Procedures for undertaking research in each school were as follows. The purpose of the research was outlined at a staff meeting and teachers were given information sheets about the research. They were then invited to participate. Those who volunteered were subsequently contacted and arrangements made to conduct the interviews in the school libraries at the two schools. Interviews began with a reassurance that interviewees' responses would remain confidential, and both researcher and participants signed an agreement regarding the conduct of the research. The majority of teachers and school executives agreed to audio-recordings of the interviews.

From Swanson School, eleven teachers and management staff out of a total staff of 55 volunteered to participate in the study. The teachers' length of experience at the school ranged from one year to 25 years. This diversity in period of employment provided both a historical perspective of the school, and the views of relative newcomers who would be able to contribute fresh insights. The table 1 below gives pseudonyms for the

participating teachers, the subjects they taught and their period of employment at Swanson.

Table 1 Participating teachers and executives from Swanson

Name	Position	Period of employment at Swanson
Anne	Principal	2 years
Mariah	Deputy Principal	4 years
Susanne	Head teacher (Welfare)	25 years
Jacob	Head teacher (Social Science)	24 years
Michael	Science teacher	1 year
Michelle	English and Drama teacher	12 years
Kate	TAS (Technology & Applied Science) teacher	9 years
Hadi	Social Studies teacher	5 years
Sandra	Art teacher & Transition Advisor	15 years
Jane	Student Teacher Learning Assistance (STLA)	10 years
Nada	Community Liaison Officer	23 years

At Macliffe School, 10 teachers and executives out of 51 staff participated in the study. Class teachers teaching in Human Society and its Environment (HSIE), Science, Personal Development Health Physical Education (PDHPE), Maths, TAS, ESL, and English departments participated in the interviews. The teachers' duration of employment in the school ranged from one year to 25 years. The school principal and the deputy principal were also interviewed. Table 2 below gives pseudonyms for the participating teachers, their positions at Macliffe, and their period of employment.

Table 2 Participating teachers and executives from Macliffe

Teacher name	Position	Period of employment at Macliffe
Mary	Principal	2 years
Angela	Deputy Principal	6 years

Amy	English	21 years
George	Head teacher of English & Drama	6 years
Melissa	Languages Other Than English (LOTE) teacher	1 year
Gabrielle	Physical Education teacher	13 years
Simon	Computer Studies teacher	6 years
Barbara	Science teacher	25 years
Byron	Social Studies teacher	18 years
Hannah	ESL Literacy support teacher	1 year

In this phase of the research, school staff participated in individual, qualitative, semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule for teachers sought information about their general experiences at the school, and their experiences in teaching Muslim ASB students in particular. For the latter, teachers were asked to reflect on students' general strengths and weaknesses, students' academic and literacy profiles, the impact of the students' cultural and religious background on their educational experiences, and the challenges that they expected students to confront in their post-school transitions. Teachers were also asked to discuss notions of 'inclusion' and 'multicultural education' both in the context of their classrooms and school-wide. A copy of the interview schedule is found in Appendix A.

Phase 2: Students

The second phase of the study explored the research questions from the students' perspectives. This stage involved two major methods of data collection, namely an initial quantitative questionnaire, followed by focus group interviews. The questionnaire sought responses on a number of salient themes from a representative sample of a 104 students across the two schools. It also provided an overview and access to a broad range of opinions concerning the study's central issues.

To recruit participants, students were informed about the research and invited to participate during grade meetings. All the Muslim ASB students in Grades 8, 10 and 12 from both schools were invited to participate in the research on the condition that written parental/guardian approval was provided. Students were given information sheets, and permission slips to be signed by their guardians. All students who volunteered to take part and returned their permission slips participated in the study. Focus groups were conducted during lunch breaks, or outside of class in the school libraries. Table 3 below provides details about the number of focus groups conducted with different grades in the two schools. It provides a summary of the number of students involved in both the student questionnaires, and the focus groups, from the two schools.

Table 3 Summary of data from students

Data Sources	Macliffé	No. of students	Swanson	No. of students
Student Questionnaires	Grade 8	18	Grade 8	17
	Grade 10	18	Grade 10	11
	Grade 12	14	Grade 11	26
Total	50		54	
High School students focus groups	Grade 9	3 focus groups (9 students)	Grade 9	4 Focus groups (14 students)
	Grade 11	5 focus groups (15 students)	Grade 12	5 Focus groups (12 students)
Total:	24		24	

The students who participated in the study represented different age-groups at secondary school level, ranging from 13 to 17 years of age (Grades 8 to 12). Students from grades 8, 10 and 12 who completed the questionnaire, were invited to participate in focus groups during the following year (hence the differences in grades for focus group participants). Due to time constraints that I had for conducting data collection due to work commitments, it was not feasible to conduct the focus groups directly after the questionnaires. The only group which was not interviewed subsequently was the cohort of Swanson students in grade 10, as they were completing exams during the period when I was conducting focus groups in the following year. The majority of respondents were Australian-born. Of the 104 students surveyed 15 students identified themselves as born overseas with 8 of these students being born in Lebanon, and the remaining students born in other Middle East and North African (MENA) countries (Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Somalia, Palestine, Syria, Jordan). The majority of the students' parents were overseas born, mainly in Lebanon: 84 of the students indicated that their mothers were Lebanon-born, while 12 others indicated their mothers were born in other MENA

countries (as above). A smaller group (8 students) indicated that their mothers were Australian-born. The figure for overseas-born fathers was higher, with the majority (88 students), indicating that their fathers were Lebanon-born, while 14 others identified other MENA countries as their fathers' birthplaces (Iraq, Egypt, Somalia, Kuwait, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Algeria). Similarly, only a minority (2 students) identified their fathers as Australian-born.

The questionnaire began with a series of questions seeking general demographic data from the students. It then asked students to answer questions relating to the broad themes of language and literacy, culture and religion as identified in the framework for analysis of data (see chapter 3):

- Literacy and academic performance;
- The schools' multicultural education policies, and schools' inclusive practices aimed at addressing cultural and religious differences;
- The role of culture and religion in their schooling;
- Experiences of being Muslim within the local community and Australia more generally;
- Educational and employment aspirations;
- Perceived post-school challenges in the workforce and society.

The format of the questionnaire items was varied (for instance, four-point attitudinal rating scale and open-ended response opportunities). Many of the questions required students to rate their attitude towards the different statements on a Likert scale ranging from: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) disagree, and (4) strongly disagree. All of the

attitudinal response questions in the questionnaire were given this forced-choice response scale with the deliberate elimination of the traditional undecided/ neutral in order to elicit decisive responses from participants. Many items were also open-ended to allow students to identify other issues not covered in the questions. This data subsequently informed the nature of the questions asked in the student focus groups. A copy of the questionnaire is to be found in Appendix B.

104 students completed questionnaires from Grades 8, 10 and 12 at the two schools in question, during lunch breaks, and were invited to participate in focus groups. 48 students from Grades 9, 11, and 12 subsequently participated in follow-up focus groups. The focus group schedule is to be found in Appendix C. These sessions explored, in more depth, the major issues that emerged from the questionnaire items. The following themes guided discussion during the focus group sessions:

- Perceptions of how culture and religion influenced educational experience;
- Interactions with teachers, peers and the curriculum;
- Factors affecting academic performance;
- Future educational and employment aspirations and factors shaping these;
- Perceptions of belonging in Australian society and expected challenges.

Phase 3: School Graduates

The study also sought the perceptions of young ASB Muslim women who had graduated from Macliffe School. This phase not only addressed a retrospective viewpoint of the themes of schooling, but also of the young women's post-school experiences. The women involved in this phase of the study participated in semi-structured interviews or focus groups, depending on their preference. These focused on

themes of education, employment, family, membership in minority communities and Australian society in general. 7 young women, who had initially participated in the study in their final year of secondary school, participated in follow-up focus group sessions. A further 7 women who had completed their secondary schooling at Macliffe School up to 10 years earlier were also interviewed. The interviews and focus groups concentrated on the themes of the women's experiences of schooling, their academic and language (both Arabic and English) profiles, their perceptions of community and parental expectations and the expectations of young Muslim ASB women in general. The interviews also explored the women's sense of religious and national identities, and experiences with further education, career, family formation, and other interactions in Australian society. The interview schedule is to be found in Appendix D.

The young women were invited to participate in the research primarily on practical grounds of access. Macliffe School graduates generally lived in close geographical proximity, and I had community contact with other young women in the area. I was aware this 'convenience sampling' could have raised the possibility of participants responding in a manner that reflected researcher expectations. However, I attempted to overcome this methodological limitation by ensuring that my contributions to the discussions were minimal, and that my questions remained open-ended and did not lead interviewees to certain responses. As far as practical, I interviewed women who represented as broad a spectrum of educational and professional contexts as possible. In addition, this phase of the study concentrated more broadly on the post-schooling experience of being an Australian ASB Muslim woman as opposed to secondary schooling in particular.

The post-school interviewees were all Australian Muslims of Lebanese background. Of the 15 women who participated, 6 were born in Lebanon while 9 had either one or both parents who were Lebanon-born. Ages ranged from 18 to 30 years, with 9 of these women having completed school a year or 2 before the interviews, while the remaining six had completed school up to ten years prior. Table 4 below provides an overview of the participants in this phase of the study. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities and to allow for an uncomplicated and free exchange of opinion.

Table 4 Profile of young women interviewed in Phase 3

Name	Age & Birthplace	Qualifications	Employment Status	Family status
Younger Women (18-20 years)				
Layal	18 Australia	Enrolled in Bachelor of Arts (Journalism/ Languages)	University student Part-time worker Pharmacy assistant	Engaged
Halima	18 Australia	Enrolled in Bachelor of Business	University student Part-time cashier	Single
Amani	18 Australia	Enrolled in Bachelor of Social Work	Full-time University student	Single
Faye	18 Australia	Enrolled in Diploma of Interior Decorating	Full-time TAFE student Part-time waitress	Single
Rabab	19 Australia	Diploma in Beauty Therapy at TAFE	TAFE student Full-time beautician apprentice	Single
Faye	19 Australia	Enrolled in Diploma in Early Childhood Education	TAFE student Part-time childcare worker	Single
Jehanne	19 Lebanon	Enrolled in Bachelor of Arts in Education	Full-time University student	Single
Sarah	19 Australia	Enrolled in Bachelor of Secondary Education (English)	University student Part-time cashier	Single
<i>Mona</i>	20 Lebanon	Enrolled in Bachelor of Arts in Education	Full-time University student	Single
Older Women (24 to 30 years)				
Rana	24 Australia	Completed Diploma in Beauty Therapy	Not seeking employment (childrearing commitments)	Married 2 children (3 & 6 years)
Zara	26 Lebanon	Completed Diploma in Hairdressing	Full-time hairdresser	Married 2 children (3 & 4 years)
Amal	26 Lebanon	Completed Bachelor of Education (Primary)	Previously primary school teacher; not seeking employment (childrearing commitments)	Married 3 children (8 months, 6 & 4 years)
Marwa	28 Lebanon	Completed Cert IV Community Welfare Services Diploma in Teacher's Aid in progress	Part time teacher's aide Childrearing commitments	Married 3 children (6 months, 5 & 10 years)
Yasmine	29 Lebanon	Completed Bachelor of Nursing (Graduate Diploma) Midwifery	Part-time midwife Childrearing commitments	Married 3 children (3, 4 & 8 years)
Maryam	29 Australia	Completed Bachelor of Science/ Marketing/ Masters in Education	Previously in marketing Currently full-time secondary Science teacher	Married 1 child (4 years)

Nadine	30 Australia	Completed Diploma in Accounting	Previously accountant for a law company Not seeking employment (childrearing commitments)	Married 2 children (6 months & 3years)
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Additional Data Sources

In all three phases of the research school documents, including annual reports, school websites and newsletters constituted additional sources of data. These documents provided information regarding literacy and language programs, multicultural education initiatives and staffing profiles of the two schools. Information about the respective schools' performance in standardized national exams such as National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was also available via the My School website (DEC, 2010). Information was also available from the local municipality about the socioeconomic and ethnic profiles of the two communities in which the schools are located. In order to contextualize the multicultural practices of the schools, I have referred to policy documents from the Department of Education NSW, namely the Multicultural Education Policy (2005), and the Antiracism policy (2005), in chapter 4. These documents supplement and contextualise the data mentioned above.

4.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the interviews, focus groups and open-ended questionnaire responses were primarily analysed using Content Analysis. Content Analysis is described as a process of “searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed” (Bryman, 2004, p.392).

Content analysis in the thesis involved a process of coding the interviews and focus groups to identify key themes that emerged from the data, and then revisiting the data to confirm these themes. Summaries of key themes were developed for each focus group

and interview. To increase the rigour and validity of the findings and to avoid anecdotalism (Seale & Silverman, 1997), a number of strategies were adopted. The use of audio-recording ensured that data was recorded and transcribed accurately. Use was made of counting, or “quasi-statistics” (p.380) to ensure that the more common responses are emphasised in the findings, and to account for instances when responses were contrary to these dominant responses (Seale & Silverman, 1997, p.380).

Analysis of closed-ended items in the questionnaire (numeric, single answer, Likert-type questions) involved basic counting of responses. The decision not to utilize statistical analysis was due to the relatively small number of participants. However, this analysis of quantitative data also supported the overall qualitative nature of the study.

The summaries produced from the interviews and focus groups with students, graduates and teachers, in addition to the data from the student questionnaires, enabled findings to be synthesized across these multiple data sources. At this point, the inclusive multicultural framework (chapter 3) enabled further categorization of themes in relation to the three major elements of Language /Literacy, Culture and Religion. The Framework provided broad categories for further analysing and categorizing key themes that emerged from the data in the three phases of the study. As will be seen in the following chapters, findings were then addressed, as relevant, in relation to school, family/community, and society, and in relation to inclusive or exclusionary pressures.

4.5 Challenges in the research

Ethical Concerns

In line with ethical requirements from the University of Technology, Sydney, and the Department of Education NSW, ethical issues were addressed systematically and conscientiously in the research.

Following ethical clearance from the university and the Department of Education, suitable research schools were invited to participate in the research. Contact was made with individuals from whom permission could be attained, particularly from school principals and teaching staff. Despite some challenges in negotiating school participation, two highly suitable schools (Macliffe and Swanson High Schools) agreed to participate in the research.

Conducting research in schools has its own set of constraints for the researcher. Flick (2009) points out “a research project is an intrusion into the life of the institution to be studied... a disturbance, and it disrupts routines, with no perceptible immediate or long term payoff for the institution and its members” (p.109). As a result, the researcher must work within the school’s timetabling constraints and its daily demands. In addition, as Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) argue, key ethical rules for school-based research must be based on professional integrity and the interests of the subjects, and the researcher must ensure that the proposed research and its design are feasible, that potential participants are adequately informed about the research, and that their confidentiality is maintained (p.201).

Initially, information about the purposes and methodology of the research was provided at a staff meeting and information sheets were provided for school staff. Students were provided with information about the research during class or lunch time meetings. All potential participants were asked to sign consent letters. To preserve/ ensure the interests of the subjects in the study, recruiting procedures ensuring potential participants' genuine consent, or the right to refuse to participate in the research were implemented in the research design. Instead of approaching potential participants individually, students and teachers were collectively invited to participate in the research – thereby allowing them to refuse in a face-saving manner. Students were asked to volunteer for focus groups by identifying themselves in the questionnaires, again providing a face-saving way of not participating. In the third phase of the study, participants who had been at school were invited to record their contact details to conduct a follow-up interview a year after they completed school.

Processes of data collection involved some challenges. Appointments to conduct interviews with teachers and students were made at times that were suitable and least disruptive to the participants' work schedules. Additionally, I had time constraints to deal with in conducting the research while working overseas. Another challenge was gaining signed parental approval from students to conduct the research, which though necessary, was a time consuming process, and required constant reminders to students to bring back signed permission forms.

As a researcher, I was conscious of my responsibilities towards maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. In order to achieve this, pseudonyms have been used for the names of individuals, schools and organizations. Identifying features were

either omitted or altered in order to reduce the risk of identifying the participants. Measures were taken to limit the use of identifying information about the schools, staff and students who participated in the research. Pseudonyms have also been used for the suburbs and localities of the schools. In addition, students who participated in the focus groups did so, on condition that they signed and adhered to a confidentiality agreement. Furthermore, the data gathered from the participants was filed and stored in a secure location. Audio-files and transcripts were labelled with the participants' pseudonyms, plus the data was de-identified and codes stored separately.

Insider Researcher Concerns

Just as the researcher's philosophical stance shapes the areas of inquiry and the methodological decisions, the identity of the researcher also forms the impetus for the nature and direction of any research. As indicated in chapter 1, my own identity was central to this research, and incorporated the belief that insider-researchers can make important, positive contributions to the body of knowledge about matters pertinent to their communities. My identity as a Muslim woman was also significant. Although a feminist theoretical perspective has not been a major perspective in this study, gender equality concerns were implicit in the study's focus on female experiences. I am also very conscious of Arab and/or Muslim feminist scholarship that has addressed some of the contemporary challenges to Muslim and Arab women in modern society (See Afshar, 1994; Khan, 2000; Zine, 2004; Imtoul, 2005, 2010; Ahmed, 2011). Such scholarship based predominantly in the 'West' and in Muslim-majority states, has sought to address gender equity through reference to Islam (Saliba, 2000; Ramadan, 2004).

As indicated earlier, my identity and my personal life history have been the impetus for conducting this research, and have placed me in a unique position to undertake the study. Being an 'insider'-researcher with the capacity to access community networks, at a practical level, equipped me with better access to the female participants. In addition, membership of the community meant that there was an element of trust and honesty between researcher and participants that afforded access into groups that might otherwise be closed to "outsiders" (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.58). As a member of the community, an insider researcher is able to work 'at the margins' (Imtoul, 2009, p. 167), and is perhaps better equipped to portray the realities and to challenge the potential social inequalities facing the research group. An insider-researcher is conscious of the nuances of the community, and has in-depth and intuitive knowledge of the workings of that community.

However, as Dwyer and Buckle (2009) point out, there are very few situations where the researcher is either a complete insider or outsider. My researcher identity was significant not only in relationship to the students and the young women, but also to the teachers and principals. Perhaps, due to the sensitive nature of the study in the contemporary socio-political climate combined with my ethno-religious identity and the difficulty of accessing schools for the study, it was challenging to approach schools and to encourage teachers to participate. Teachers were conscious of my ethno-religious identity when discussing various issues during the interview. A number of teachers used the interview session to reflect on the issues of students' ethno-religious identities, the wider socio-political climate, and its impact on their interactions with the students, and they asked for advice and feedback about dealing with Muslim ASB students. Thus, as a researcher in this study I was positioned as an insider in relation to the students as a

Muslim and of ASB background, but as an outsider due to my age, and profession as teacher. I was also considered both an insider by school executives and teachers, who participated in the study, due to my teacher-status, with experience teaching ASB Muslim students, and an outsider during data-collection due to my ethno-religious background. Hence, the boundaries between “with us” and “with them” were somewhat blurred.

There are also constraints to being an insider-researcher. Studies caution against the potential pitfalls of the researcher’s greater familiarity with the community, participants or culture (Mercer, 2007; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). While familiarity can be an advantage, it can also present problems if researchers begin to “take information for granted, develop myopia, and assume their own perspective is far more widespread than it actually is” (Mercer, 2007, p.6). Kanuha (2000) points out the possible effects of the researcher’s insider-status on the perceived objectivity of the study:

For each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a non-native scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied. (p. 444)

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) also describe some potential problems in the analysis phases of the research, arguing that a researcher’s perceptions may become “clouded” by personal experience that may be difficult to separate from the participants’ experiences. A consequence of this would be “an emphasis on shared factors between the researcher

and the participants and a de-emphasis on factors that are discrepant, or vice versa” (p.58).

I attempted to address these issues as follows. As the researcher, I explicitly located myself in relation to the study by underscoring my Australian-Lebanese ASB identity, my status as a woman who is also a first generation migrant in Australia, and as an ESL teacher with experience in Sydney’s culturally diverse schools. I also routinely reflected on how my identity impacted on the research (Mercer, 2007). In line with McMillan’s and Schumacher’s (1997) suggestions regarding the value of “peer de-briefers” (p.410) for minimizing possible researcher bias, I adopted a strategy of discussing results of the data with colleagues and friends. In particular, discussions with the principal supervisor of the research proved particularly insightful in ensuring that interpretations were made in response to the findings evident from the data.

4.6 The Case Studies

The research reported in this thesis was conducted in two single-sex state schools in Sydney, Australia. Macliffe Girls High School is located in Sydney's south-east, and Swanson Girls High School is located in the city's south-west. Both schools are characterized by ethnically diverse student populations, and by communities that are regarded as socio-economically disadvantaged. Both schools are located in areas of Sydney where there is a high proportion of non-English speakers from Arabic language backgrounds and of predominantly Muslim faith.

The two schools, Swanson and Macliffe Girls’ High Schools, were invited to participate in the research because of their large Muslim ASB student populations, and because

they represent the kind of school attended by the majority of ASB Muslim girls of Lebanese background in Australia.

4.6.1 Swanson Girls High School

Community

Swanson High School is a girls' secondary government school in the south-western Sydney suburb of Swanson. The suburb is a constituent of Huxley municipality and has been described as having a low Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) ratings for disadvantage in Sydney (ABS, 2011). This low rating for the Huxley municipality indicates a relatively greater degree of disadvantage for the people of this region than in other parts of Sydney, including lower average household incomes, low levels of educational attainment, higher levels of unemployment, and a higher concentration of employment in unskilled labour.

Due to densely packed low-cost apartments Swanson and its neighbouring suburbs have historically attracted waves of recently arrived immigrants. When subsequent new arrivals settled into the area, more established and upwardly mobile residents have, in turn, been able to afford to resettle in more affluent suburbs. As a result, compared to the figures for Sydney's overall statistical divisions, the Huxley municipality is also one of the most ethnically diverse municipalities of Sydney. The area has a significant proportion of Chinese, Lebanese, Pacific Islander, Greek, Vietnamese, Italian and South Korean born residents, with more recent migrant settlement patterns characterized by a higher proportion of migrants of South Asian and African backgrounds.

Currently, the Huxley municipality is home to one of the commercial and religious centres for Muslims in Sydney. The Arabic Speaking Background Muslim community continues to have quite a visible presence and is a well-established community in the area with numerous small businesses and Middle Eastern and other Muslim halal food outlets, local mosques, Islamic centres, community organizations and Islamic schools in the neighbouring suburbs. Much of south-western Sydney's Arabic speaking background population, most of whom are Lebanese, settled in the area as a result of the humanitarian resettlement program of the 1980s when Lebanese were displaced by the Lebanese civil war, and Israeli-Lebanese conflicts. The Lebanese background community in Huxley municipality comprises around 6% of all residents, which is considerably higher than Sydney's total population of Lebanese-background Australians who make up only 1.3% of the city's population. Arabic is the most commonly spoken language at home, at around 15%, in comparison to Sydney's statistical division of 3.9%.

Students

Swanson School has witnessed dramatic demographic changes in the last three decades in particular, which have reflected the shifts in ethnic makeup through waves of migration and settlement patterns into the south-western Sydney region. In 2011, of the 97% of school students from language backgrounds other than English, the ASB population accounted for 65% of the total student body of 565 students. The second most sizeable ethnic group in the school was the Pacific Islander cohort; another ethnic group that is significantly represented in the Huxley municipality.

Significantly, the My School website's Index of Community Socio-Economic Educational Advantage (ICSEA), an index which measures the respective schools'

community socio-economic profile, shows that over a half of the students at Swanson were in the bottom quarter of relative disadvantage, while only 14% were represented in the top quarter of relative advantage (ACARA, 2010)

Staffing

At the time of the study, Swanson School employed a total of 55 staff members. In addition to a principal and two deputy principals, the school had thirty-three teachers and nine additional teachers with head of department roles. These nine also had teaching roles in the school. Due to the focused literacy and educational support needs of the students, the school also employed four special needs teachers, two learning support assistants and two ESL teachers.

As is typical in Australian schools (Santoro, et al., 2001 in Allard & Santoro, 2006), teachers of Anglo-Celtic Australian backgrounds are well-represented, with the principal, deputy principals and head teacher of welfare all of Anglo-Celtic Australian backgrounds. Teachers employed at the school however, also represented some language backgrounds other than English including Lebanese, Greek, Macedonian, Chinese and Indian. In addition to teaching and administrative staff, the school has a Community Liaison Officer who apportions her time between several other schools in the district; and a school transition advisor, whose role is to assist at-risk students, and to assist students in school to employment transitions. Both of these staff members are of Lebanese-background and have contributed significantly in encouraging more effective parental involvement in the school, particularly amongst the ASB parents. However, a decline in the school's student population in the last few years has meant the nominated transfers of teachers to other schools.

Academic Profile

As indicated previously, there is evidence of uneven academic achievement between Australian students from different ethnic groups and from different socio-economic backgrounds (Thomson, et al, 2012). PISA results indicate that academic performance of groups such as those from Chinese backgrounds is on a par with their English-speaking peers. However, they also indicate that academic performance of students from Middle-Eastern backgrounds is lower than that of the mainstream group across all three components of the examination (Cresswell, 2004, p.11). More recent PISA exams have not provided breakdowns of performance data across ethnic groups.

The two trends evident in the PISA results are significant as they are illustrative of the performance levels of students at Swanson. Swanson High school on the whole, is not perceived to be an academically strong school. This perception is based on both students' performances in a major national assessment; the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2010). Though the NAPLAN is only one aspect of the school's academic profile, it is a publicly accessible record of school performances and provides a measure of the comparative performances of secondary schools nationally. In 2008 and 2009, the school's average for both literacy and numeracy were below, or substantially below, statistically similar schools' averages in three of the four domains of literacy (reading, writing, grammar and punctuation), and numeracy. Teachers' comments concerning the academic profile of the school also indicated that it was not perceived to be academically strong compared to other schools in the local area. The following statement from Jacob, a head teacher at the school, is typical of teachers' descriptions of the schools' academic profile.

We are a comprehensive school, and if you look at our HSC results we still get the full range of results, so I think we're still achieving academic excellence but just not such a high proportion in the top bands. There has been a drop, but I don't think that anyone is saddened by that. We are teaching who we've got, and we are privileged by that. (Jacob)

In terms of post-school transition pathways, around a half of the students in the two previous years (2009, 2010) reported pursuing post-secondary education. According to the school's annual report, of the 64 school leavers in 2008, 43 reported pursuing either full time tertiary or vocational study, while eight were employed on a full-time or part-time basis. In 2010, of the 92 school leavers, 34 students went onto university, 22 continued with vocational study, while the remaining began full-time, part-time employment or were actively seeking work.

Similar to other government schools, Swanson has experienced a process of residualisation of its student population. The school has not only witnessed a decline in its student population but has also seen significant ethnic concentrations in the school. Swanson has gradually been losing enrolments from academically gifted students to the private, independent and Catholic schools in the catchment area. In particular, the establishment of Islamic schools in neighbouring suburbs, some of whom have acquired reputations for academic excellence, has meant that Muslim students whose families can afford the school fees, have increasingly been leaving the public school system.

Residualisation has also occurred due to the perception of the school as placing emphasis on a policy of student welfare, as opposed to academic excellence. This was attributed to the school's tendency to accept 'troubled' students, a policy which was

adopted and endorsed by the school's previous principal. These combined factors have in effect exerted additional pressures on students, staff and school resources at Swanson as academic standards have declined.

As a disadvantaged school with a high concentration of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds where almost all of the students come from language backgrounds other than English, Swanson continues to grapple with lower levels of academic performance compared to the national average. Teachers discussed students' educational underachievement and drew on the contributing factors of socioeconomic disadvantage and their status as students with language backgrounds other than English. Though teachers acknowledged the academic challenges that students faced, they highlighted the strength of the school's literacy and numeracy initiatives, its welfare policies and programs which have been implemented to assist students to achieve their full potential. Jacob, a teacher at the school, asserted that though students' educational experiences at the school might not overcome the initial degree of disadvantage so as to lead to transformational success for all students, it would still lead to long-term change, such as inter-generational improvements in educational attainment for communities with language backgrounds other than English.

Academically, they start off at a disadvantaged position and we've got every resource that we can try to improve that. It might be the next generation that will benefit from that. (Jacob, Head Teacher)

Moreover, teachers report that while students at Swanson are not at the top of the state in terms of academic performance, the school generally succeeds in adding value to its students' overall learning and its primary strength is its strong welfare policy. The

school's emphasis upon welfare and inclusion, with a particular focus on multicultural ethos, is a strong focus of the school's welfare system.

As a girls' school, Swanson makes an effort to widen students' horizons about post-school possibilities, particularly amongst parents and students who do not have specific career goals:

We have girls and parents who have high aspirations who wish to pursue learning and careers through university etc. we have also the part of the spectrum where the girls themselves do not have a huge emphasis on career goals and where we are working with them to develop a sense of the importance of having career goals and being able to support themselves in future in an appropriate way. (Mariah, Deputy Principal)

In her discussion of girls' schooling, the deputy principal identifies the school's central role in diversifying the girls' experiences with the outside world to overcome socio-economic and cultural restraints which limit the students' exposure to experiences in mainstream society.

4.6.2 Macliffe Girls' High School

Community

Macliffe High School, is a girls' secondary government school located in the suburb of Macliffe in Sydney's south-east, and is a part of the Devlin city council. Devlin is a dense residential suburb with both high-rise apartment blocks and single housing. Being close in proximity to the city and well-connected through its prominent railway station, it is also a commercial and industrial centre. The municipality also houses a number of well-attended primary, secondary and vocational educational institutions as well as

medical facilities which serve the region. Like the Huxley municipality, this area is also very ethnically diverse, with the highest percentage of overseas born residents predominantly from China, Greece, England, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Lebanon. However, though diverse, Devlin has a comparatively lower proportion of overseas-born residents (39%) than in Huxley (48%). However, the figure remains higher than Sydney's total percentage of overseas-born residents (31.8%).

The Devlin area's Lebanese background population accounted for approximately 2.5% which, while higher than the Sydney average (1.3%), was proportionally lower in comparison to Huxley. Arabic language was the third most common non-English language spoken by 6.5% of the population in this area, which was also much higher in comparison to Sydney's total (3.9%). Islam is the fourth most practiced religion in the municipality, with around 6.5% of the population, which is higher than the overall Sydney figure (3.9%). In comparison to Huxley however, the proportion of residents of Lebanese background and those identifying Islam as their religion is significantly lower in the suburb of Devlin and its surrounding localities.

In addition to lower numbers of recently arrived immigrants, the Devlin municipality is not experiencing the same degree of economic and social disadvantage as that of the Huxley municipality. There is a significantly higher SEIFA Index rating of Disadvantage in Sydney 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), 2011). These figures, while realistically portraying the general socio-economic situation of Devlin Council, do not, however, accurately represent all of Macliffe's students and their socio-economic status. This is because secondary schools in Devlin draw significant numbers of students from outside the Devlin Municipality,

with many coming from the adjoining areas that have a lower SEIFA index of disadvantage though still doing comparatively better than the Huxley community.

Though Devlin does not have the same degree of socio-economic disadvantage as Huxley, the combined effects of a high concentration of overseas-born residents with recent settlement patterns have had varying effects on both these schools. For the girls at both these schools, but more acutely for the girls at Swanson, economic disadvantage intersects with issues of ethnicity, religion and gender.

Students

Macliffe Girls High School's student population is ethnically diverse with 85% of students coming from language backgrounds other than English. During data collection for this research, ASB Muslim students at Macliffe School accounted for 45% of the 560 students, with the majority being second-generation Australians. Other prominent ethnic groups in the school included students of Pacific Islander, Chinese and Macedonian backgrounds, with a small number of international fee-paying students predominantly from South-East Asia. There are various reasons for the high proportion of Arabic-speaking background girls in Macliffe School, one of which is the existence of an established Lebanese-background community in the Ashbury and Devlin municipalities. Another more salient factor is that Macliffe School continues to be the most viable option for many ASB Muslim parents in the area who prefer their daughters to be schooled in a single-sex school. Apart from the local girls' selective and Catholic schools Macliffe is the closest in proximity for most parents in the Devlin and Ashbury municipalities.

As with Swanson, Macliffe's demography has been shaped by immigration trends in New South Wales, and more specifically by those in the local area. There have been dramatic demographic changes at the school, as well as a general decline in student population. This concern, which Macliffe shares with Swanson, is an important theme that re-emerges in the teachers' interviews.

Staffing

Similarities in student numbers at Swanson and Macliffe Schools are reflected in the similarities in staffing profiles. Macliffe School has a principal, a deputy principal and 8 head teachers for the different faculties in the school, with thirty-four teachers. Like Swanson, Macliffe's principal was also recently appointed (at the time of data collection, the principal had been at the school for one year). In comparison to Swanson however, Macliffe placed less emphasis on learning support and English as a Second Language education, with only two teachers assigned for learning support and ESL, and two specialized teachers for addressing students of special needs. This may be accounted for by a slightly lower proportion of students from language backgrounds other than English in Macliffe as compared to Swanson. The school also has a careers advisor, counsellor and librarian. A student liaison officer was also recently employed by the Department of Education's regional office to collaborate with Macliffe School and a number of other schools in the region.

While the majority of teachers were of Anglo-Celtic Australian background, quite a few were from language backgrounds other than English. The principal and the deputy principal were from Spanish and Greek backgrounds respectively, and were second-generation Australians. Staff members also represented a range of ethnic backgrounds including Italian, Greek, Macedonian, Chinese, and Lebanese.

Academic Profile

While Swanson's academic profile is below the national average for the NAPLAN results, Macliffe's academic profile differs considerably. Although the reputation of the school does not fairly reflect the academic performance of its students, NAPLAN and overall HSC results indicate that it is an academically oriented school. In the excerpt below, Macliffe school's principal points out that despite the school's satisfactory academic record, it is misrepresented by the local community as a welfare school:

There are some perceptions of the school that are widespread in the community, that it is seen as a welfare school and not as an academic school even though we make the top 200 schools list of New South Wales. There are 7932 schools in New South Wales, which include government and private. Macliffe School is academically oriented – if you look at further research, you would see that 85% of the students who applied for university got their first choice. (Mary, Principal)

Macliffe school's NAPLAN results for 2010 (ACARA) indicate that students' performance in all but one domain of literacy was above, or substantially above, statistically similar schools' averages, although the performance in numeracy was below the statistically similar schools' average. Assessment results indicated that the school contributed to a significant adding of value to their students' overall performance (as assessed by looking at the differences in proficiency between Grades 10 to 12). In comparison to Swanson's results, Macliffe's performance on the NAPLAN is better in all areas of literacy, but is only slightly higher in numeracy (ACARA, 2010). According to 2009 data, the school was recognized for its quality teaching and the high results of its Grade 12 students in the Higher School Certificate. In terms of post-school destinations, in 2008 half of the school-leavers leaving at Grade 12 achieved entrance to

university, while the remaining half either pursued vocational studies at the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institutes, were conducting traineeships or were in full-time employment.

According to a community-based study the student retention is above the state average, but slightly below the regional retention rates. A minority of the ASB girls drop out of school in year 10, some leave in year 11, whilst the vast majority completes year 12 to gain their Higher School Certificates.

Macliffe School has a strong leadership and core feminist philosophy, with one of the school's central aims being "Inspiring Young Women". This was evidenced in frequent references to gender equality and empowerment of students during discussions with school staff. Despite the school's solid academic profile, and its emphasis upon girls' education, its enrolment figures, like Swanson, have also witnessed a gradual decline in recent years. This has been attributed to numerous factors, one of which has been the shifts in enrolments of students from middle class homes to private schools resulting from government subsidization of the private education sector. Boundary areas have also shifted with the de-zoning of schools, which has equipped parents with more flexibility concerning school choices. However, another recent concern voiced by numerous members of staff at Macliffe has been the local community's more recent labelling of the school as "Islamic" due to its visibly large Muslim student population, a concern which is also shared by Swanson.

4.6.3 Summary

Swanson and Macliffe schools share similar student ethnic profiles; both schools are girls' schools that are of similar size in terms of student populations, with a sizeable

proportion of ASB Muslim girls. However, the two schools differ in the degrees of socio-economic disadvantage with which their communities struggle and the degree of ethnic diversity amongst their student populations. While Macliffe School is located in the Devlin municipality, which has a moderately high SEIFA index, Swanson School is located in one of the more socio-economically disadvantaged municipalities in the city of Sydney. The two schools also differ in terms of their academic profiles. An examination of Macliffe School's NAPLAN and HSC results indicate a strong academic orientation, while Swanson's academic performance, based on these two assessment frameworks and responses from teachers, is not as strong. Both schools' student populations have become heavily residualised, and have seen significant reductions in student numbers over the last few years.

Macliffe students' comparatively better overall academic performance may be a reflection of the school's strong feminist ethos that is instilled in its students, amongst other factors outlined above. Whereas Swanson had stronger, more well-established policies to include its Muslim students, Macliffe was able to instil as strong commitment to academic achievement and a desire to achieve beyond school. This was also certainly aided by the fact that Macliffe was located in a more socio-economically developed area of Sydney in comparison to Swanson.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design and methodology employed in the study of in-school and post-school experiences of Arabic Speaking Background (ASB) Muslim girls' in Sydney, Australia. The chapter has outlined and explained the qualitative approach to research, the nature of data that was collected, and the approach

to analysis of data undertaken in the research. It has also addressed major challenges that were posed by the research design, and in particular by my status as both an insider and an outsider in relation to the Muslim girls who were the major focus of the study.

As indicated in chapter 3, a feature of the thesis has been the development of an inclusive, multicultural framework for analysis of data. In this chapter, I have argued that categories within the framework, especially of the major elements of Language /Literacy, Culture and Religion enable more systematic categorization of themes emerging from the three phases of the study (teachers' perspectives, students' perspectives, and perspectives of students who have completed their schooling), than would otherwise be possible. Thus, the framework provided broad categories for further analysing and categorising key themes that emerged from initial Content Analysis of data. As the following chapters show, the Framework also provides a structure for discussion of outcomes.

Finally, this chapter has introduced the two schools that constituted the sites for the two case studies undertaken in the research.

Chapter Five Perspectives of the Schools

5.1 Introduction

This chapter, the first of three documenting the results of the study, represents Phase 1 of the research. As indicated in chapter 4, although the study focuses primarily on the educational experiences of the students, in order to provide further details of the educational contexts in which they are educated, this first results chapter addresses the perspective of school executives and teachers in the two schools. It uses the inclusive multicultural framework, outlined in chapter 3, to tease out the nature of policies and practices at both Swanson and Macliffe, and to facilitate examination of the extent to which notions of inclusivity and multicultural education are part of the ethos of the two schools.

The findings reported in the chapter are based on interviews with twenty-one staff members at the two schools. As indicated in chapter 4, eleven teachers from Swanson, and ten teachers from Macliffe schools, participated in the interviews. Also as indicated in chapter 4, these interviews were semi-structured and addressed teachers' general experiences at the school, as well as their experiences in working with ASB Muslim students. In regard to their Muslim students, teachers were asked their perceptions of students' academic strengths and weaknesses, their views on students' English language and literacy abilities, and possible support needs. They were also asked their views on the influence of the students' cultural and religious background on their educational experiences, and the challenges that they expected students to face in their post-school

transitions. School executives were also asked about school policies and the extent to which they addressed student equity, racism and community involvement. In addition to teacher interviews, the chapter draws on information from NSW Multicultural Education policy documents, the schools' policies as set out in their homepages, newsletters, and annual published reports.

This section is organised as follows. After this introduction to the chapter (Section 1) the issues of language and literacy through teachers' perceptions of their Muslim students' academic profiles are addressed; the schools' approaches to literacy, language education and ESL support; and teachers' perceptions of the particular challenges experienced by their ASB Muslim students. The following three sections then all examine schools' responses to students' cultural and religious backgrounds, but they reflect different orientations to these elements, first within the school itself; second, between school and local community; and third, between school and broader society. The chapter concludes with a review of findings. While the purpose for choosing two largely similar schools as sites for the research was to enable richer data collection, differences between the two schools were evident. Hence, data from the two schools have been presented separately in the chapter both to enable a more logical sequence of presentation of findings, and to enable comparisons where relevant.

Section headings within the chapter are as follows:

1. Introduction to the chapter; (the present section)
2. Language and Literacy Education

3. Culture and Religion: schools' responses to students' cultural and religious backgrounds
4. Culture and Religion: the schools' interface with families and local community;
5. Culture and Religion: Interface between Schools and Society
6. Conclusion to Chapter: Summary of Findings

5.2 Language and Literacy Education

5.2.1 Introduction to Section

As indicated in chapter 3, students' language and literacy development is acknowledged by many as vital to EAL/D students' academic success (Cummins, 2000; Gibbons, 2006). However, while English language and literacy development is prioritised in Multicultural Education policy objectives (DEC NSW, 2005), schools differ in the manner and the degree to which they implement such objectives, and in the extent to which they are prioritised across the curriculum. This first section of the chapter focuses on teachers' and school executives' responses to questions about their students' overall academic performance and about their students' language and literacy development. It also focuses on teachers' responses to questions about language and literacy policy and ESL programs at their schools.

5.2.2 Perceptions of the Schools' Academic Profiles

Swanson

The overall academic profile of Swanson School was regarded as somewhat weak. Teachers' comments to this effect were confirmed by the school profile on the My School website as discussed in chapter 4. As far as ASB Muslim students' patterns of academic performance were concerned, teachers' comments indicated their students were a heavily polarised group, representing a range of abilities. While they described

some students as high achievers, they regarded the academic profile of students as 'bottom heavy', with a greater proportion of students achieving low levels of academic success. However, a number of teachers were also reluctant to make binary judgements and generalisations about students' performances. Teachers identified low levels of literacy, lack of parental expectations, plans for early marriage, and a subculture amongst students which undervalued education, as key contributions to students' lower levels of academic achievement, although they highlighted low parental expectations as the most significant of these. Teachers argued that where parental expectations were higher, students tended to overcome limited literacy proficiency to achieve academically:

I think that expectations are low for them (Muslim girls) educationally overall, and that is a shame because they are then open to being taken advantage of in their lives...if they worked well and had the motivation and the family backing, they can do well despite the difficulties with literacy. (Michelle)

Two Swanson teachers also described a student subculture that undervalued education. They argued that this subculture limited their students' academic potential and was difficult to address.

The Arabic girls represent a range of abilities-some are highly driven and there are girls who are highly disengaged. But, because the school is more mono-cultural, or because this cultural group is the majority, they fall into a pattern of way of behaviour, they've developed a subculture, where there is a prevalent set of behaviours and attitudes. (Hadi)

A number of teachers attributed this subculture of underachievement to lack of career and education goals beyond marriage and family formation.

There have been some success stories, girls who have gone on to law, engineering, business, some really positive things, that are going to eventually impact possibly on the community, and again I also encounter students who have done nothing with their lives. (Hadi)

Macliffe School

Despite the undeservedly negative academic reputation of the school (chapter 4), in their interviews, teachers argued that Macliffe is an academically oriented school with a strong academic profile. This perception was confirmed by information available from the My School website. However, in discussing ASB Muslim students' performance, the Macliffe teachers' perceptions in many ways paralleled those of Swanson teachers. Like Swanson teachers, they described their Muslim students as being polarised, with the larger proportion achieving below average academic success. Long-term teachers at the school, however, reported a general improvement in recent years.

They have a broad range of ability, you're looking at second and third generation, very broad like other ethnic groups, more towards the middle, we have some brilliant girls, but six years ago, I would have said that they were skewed more towards the bottom end. What I'm seeing, in my particular subject area, it's sort of getting better and there's more at the top end as well. (George)

Teachers attributed instances of higher academic performance to students' higher levels of motivation and commitment to their work, coupled with strong parental encouragement and support.

The high achievers have gone on to university. I think the high achievers had a family with expectations that they are going to do well. They had literacy issues but they were well read and they worked hard. (Amy)

Teachers identified the main barriers to learning as limited language proficiency and literacy skills, although they also identified parents' limited English, and pressures brought about by lack of parental encouragement or involvement in schooling.

In sum, Macliffe teachers generally described their ASB students' academic performance more positively than Swanson teachers, reflecting general differences in the schools' overall academic profiles. However, teachers from both schools identified similar exclusionary pressures that worked against these students' overall academic achievement. These pressures included: limited parental support or expectations of education; and traditional expectations of early marriage amongst underperforming students. At both schools, the majority of teachers identified limited English language and literacy proficiency as a barrier to students' achievement. This issue is addressed in more detail in the following sub-section.

5.2.3 English Language and Literacy Development

Swanson

As indicated in chapter 4, 97% of Swanson's student cohort is from non-English speaking backgrounds with the result that English language and literacy development is an ongoing challenge for many students. In their interviews, Swanson teachers identified language and literacy development as key issues that affected the educational achievement of their ASB students, and they regarded a lack of engagement in reading, and limited exposure to English at home as contributing factors.

Literacy is a big problem for the girls. These girls go home and only hear Arabic, they don't often read and they don't value reading...Even in year 11 and 12 there are many words that students come across that they do not understand. (Sandra)

They have problems with commonly used colloquial expressions; there are whole gaps in what certain words mean in certain contexts...and you can be very surprised at the lack of depth in their language structure. (Mariah)

Teachers also described students' difficulties in academic writing, even those in the senior years.

Literacy is a problem for many kids. The senior kids, there are very few of them that write really well, the structure is really poor, even if you do proper scaffolds they'll have problems with paragraphs and sentences, with the argument. (Kate)

As school websites show, and interviews confirm, the school recognises the significance of students' language and literacy development and has put in place a number of intensive programs to support students in this area. In addition to its emphasis on welfare (Chapter 4), the school provides ESL programs, with two specialist ESL teachers. ESL programs are delivered via the various modes outlined in the *English as a Second Language: Guidelines for Schools* (NSW, DEC, 2004). Parallel classes are conducted in the English subject classes, where ESL teachers provide individualised support to ESL students. ESL teachers also participate in team-teaching with teachers across key learning areas. The school also provides specialist literacy support, and employs two Support Teacher Learning Assistants (STLD). Thus, students have access to specialist language and literacy support. Interviews provided evidence of teachers' strong support for these initiatives.

Literacy is actually an ongoing problem. The school withdraws the students for individual tuition, we target classes. We have ELLA¹, Snap² and we can identify which area is of concern. We have ESL teachers. We have to pay for additional staff to tutor kids. We fund Reading Recovery programs for students who are behind on their reading skills. (Mary)

Swanson School executives also described school policies promoting explicit integration of literacy skills across the curriculum's key learning areas. The principal and deputy principal made use of the expertise of external consultants, and professional development for teachers to achieve effective literacy integration.

We do a range of things at the same time. We've given staff professional learning time to work on their programs to ensure that they are implementing literacy strategies, and alongside that, there has been the recognition for the need for numeracy. So (looking at) official learning time, crunching the figures, looking at the sorts of things that the students need to build in terms of literacy, and getting faculty to map where the students are explicitly to their programs and teaching literacy skills where they can do so. (Anne)

We are encouraging every teacher in the classroom to engage with the sort of learning that will build literacy. To do that we have had to do a lot of professional learning that we've undertaken with teachers and get professionals from outside the school, from the DET to run programs in anything from grammar, through to the sort of breaking down results in the ELLA tests, where we can see which are areas where our students are most needy. And then,

¹ The ELLA (English Language and LITERACY Assessment) assesses Grade 7 students' writing, reading and general language (spelling, pronunciation, grammar) in government schools (compulsory).

²SNAP (Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program) assesses knowledge and skills in numeracy drawn the Mathematics K-6 syllabus.

working with faculties to implement and deliberately teach those areas of literacy. (Mariah)

Classroom teachers' attitudes towards the school's literacy initiatives were generally positive and supportive.

We're constantly working on projects and we put a lot of money on literacy schemes that aim at getting some very tangible outcomes from the school. It is explicitly embedded in all key learning areas even mathematics. It's always been in our programs but now we are learning a lot more explicit and finding better ways to do it. (Jacob)

The support for language and literacy initiatives evident in teachers' interviews was consistent with the school's 2010 annual report which asserted that teachers "Overwhelmingly... understand the specific literacy demands of their KLA (Key Learning Area), feel confident to teach the literacy of their KLA, feel responsible for their student's literacy development and have high expectations that all their students will succeed in literacy". However, one teacher, while recognising the important ESL initiatives of the school, questioned the efficacy of his course's literacy component, and his capacity to improve students' overall literacy proficiency:

The ESL (support) does a good job. There are literacy components in social studies but they're very limited. I don't think I can make a huge difference. (Hadi)

Macliffe

Like Swanson, Macliffe has a diverse student profile, with 85% of students from non-English speaking backgrounds (chapter 4). In their interviews, the majority of Macliffe teachers identified students' language and literacy development as a continuing

challenge for the school, and as constituting a significant barrier to their ASB students' academic performance. Like Swanson teachers, they identified the use of Arabic at home, and limited exposure to English as contributing to their Muslim students' literacy and language difficulties.

Speaking there's very little difficulty, writing, difficulties sometimes with expression more so when you know that they are speaking another language at home, you can see it in their writing, their phrasing, and expressing is nowhere near as clear as their speaking. (Angela)

Approximately half of Macliffe teachers identified Muslim students' limited engagement in reading as a major contributing factor to problems with their literacy:

I would say the high degree of literacy problems with the Arabic speaking girls (is an issue)...massive problems with encouraging them to read. (Amy)

In some ways, literacy is an issue for students because I see a lot of the girls struggling with the year eleven course because of literacy issues. A lot of the top classes have bright girls in them with a mixture of cultures; a lot of the Arabic girls that I have taught are really bright. But then we you get some of the low ability students in other class, I don't think that they are encouraged to read. (Gabrielle)

Macliffe teachers also discussed students' limited oral communication skills and the subsequent negative effects on their academic writing skills.

My Year 8s are a literacy challenged group, and most of the students are of Arabic background. Because they speak badly, it's hard on their writing. They don't write well either, because the English they speak is not good, so that

translates into their writing, and because they are such poor readers, they are not seeing good English being modelled. (Amy)

School websites, policy documents and interviews with Macliffe staff school indicate that, in comparison to Swanson, the school had relatively fewer programs and initiatives targeting literacy and language support. During the period of data collection, the school employed one teacher who was trained in ESL, and two general learning support teachers who provided curriculum support across a range of key learning areas and taught specialised ESL classes for newly-arrived students. An ESL teacher at Macliffe described the priority of ESL and literacy for student support, and the allocation of ESL support in the school as follows:

ESL and literacy are perceived as integral to the school's priorities as the current cohort of ESL students are struggling with the demanding content and inferential and applied knowledge that is expected of them in a high school curriculum. Consequently the school uses its ESL allocation on predominantly English classes as well as mathematics classes. As the current data indicates, these are the areas where the ESL students have made limited value added growth. (Hannah)

The organisation of Macliffe's ESL support program was closely aligned with the provision of support for students in lower ability classes. Students were streamed according to ability, and those students in the lower ability English classes were given additional support by an ESL teacher.

We work with our classes, we have top classes, and all the rest are mixed ability. In Grades 9 and 10, we put all the girls with ESL needs in one class, and we put the ESL teachers with them every period. (Angela)

The limited resource allocation for ESL support was mentioned by two teachers. This situation was attributed to the reduction in student enrolment at the school, and the status of ESL background students who did not neatly fit the required category for ESL support:

That's one of the problems of falling numbers, because funding will be cut back and that's a vicious circle. We have ESL assistance in classes but we need more. Most of the Arabic girls can speak very well; have been in the country for more than five years so they don't get put into that category. If they are low ability or low achievers, we put them in the ESL classes so that they can get a little bit more help. (George)

Teachers' interview responses indicated similar problems with regard to literacy support. As one teacher explained, literacy was seen as important but often not as a priority within the content driven syllabus:

Mainstream teachers are expected to program accordingly to meet the diverse learning needs and make adjustments and accommodations to the content and work. This is generally not a priority in the school as classroom teachers are content driven and are expected and pressured to cover the required content per term. (Hannah)

However, when discussing literacy development, the majority of teachers referred to the value of literacy support that was facilitated by ESL and Support Teacher Learning Assistance (STLA) staff. This perhaps, reflected the general perception of subject teachers that literacy development was not their domain, or area of expertise, and the

pressures of a subject-driven syllabus, which left little time for a non-subject matter focus.

In addition to general school initiatives, Macliffe participated in external programs initiated by the regional office of the Department of Education. According to one of the school's annual reports, two short-term literacy-specific programs were operating within the school and targeted ASB students. The first program, named the *Youth Partnership with Arabic Speaking Communities Sydney Region Pedagogy Project*, concentrated on developing and implementing inclusive units of work with a literacy focus. The second, *Youth Leadership Project* was supported by a community-based youth worker who helped to develop students' literacy and leadership skills. As teachers pointed out, although these useful programs presented significant learning opportunities for the ASB students, their short-term funding and small-scale nature did not have the capacity to support all the ASB students who needed this support.

In sum, interviews provide evidence that teachers in both case study schools recognise the importance of language and literacy development to their students' overall academic achievement. Teachers in both schools identified limited engagement in reading, lack of exposure to English and resulting limited vocabulary knowledge as exclusionary pressures that contributed to ASB Muslim students' problems with academic English, including their writing skills, and oral communication. Though these pressures were not limited to ASB students, they were described by teachers at both schools as posing particular challenges to this group's academic performance. Relevant school documents and teachers interviews indicated that both schools had responded to the language/literacy challenge by implementing ESL and literacy support programs.

However, perhaps because of greater levels of need, these programs appeared to be more firmly embedded in Swanson than Macliffe. An issue that emerged in both schools was that some teachers appeared to lack confidence in their own abilities to teach language and literacy across key learning areas. There was also evidence that some regarded language and literacy support as the responsibility of specialist ESL or learning teachers, rather than as the responsibility of all teachers.

5.2.4 Students' 'Ethnolect' and access to broader Society

Swanson

Language fluency, particularly oral communication is essential for any given individual's effective participation and inclusion in society. In their interviews, teachers expressed concern about their ASB Muslim students' limited fluency in English, their limited knowledge of vocabulary, and their equally limited discourse strategies. Teachers attributed this to students' lack of exposure to different English registers in different contexts, or to people and experiences outside their minority communities, and they expressed concern regarding the likely negative effect on students' transition into the workforce and civic life.

The students have a Huxley way of speaking, which will not be as acceptable outside the Huxley cocoon particularly in the workplace. They haven't been exposed to the outside world. When they do work placement, the vast majority do their work placement outside the Huxley district. And the girls that do, they come back and it awakens them. (Hadi)

Teachers' concerns about students' limited control of English registers were exacerbated by students' use of ethnolect, or Arabic-heritage-Australian English

(Rieschild, 2007). Ethnic dialects or ethnolects have been common features of second generation Australian migrants' language use, and their usage reflects non-mainstream Australian identity by differing from the standard Australian variety of English used by the majority (Warren, 1999). Teachers associated students' oral communication patterns with their working-class and ethnic backgrounds. While not in itself a problem, the fact that students had very limited control of registers appropriate for contexts beyond informal peer interactions was perceived by teachers as becoming one when they needed to interact with others beyond their own immediate community. Teachers described students as inexperienced in ability to modify their spoken language to suit different contexts outside their own communities.

They (ASB students) are definitely disadvantaged in their speaking. Sometimes I take girls out on debates. For example, I took my year eights to Beechford Girls' High School. It was obvious half the girls from Beechford came from the Anglo professional families, they got up and were eloquent (imitates) 'and for my first point I shall be addressing blah blah'... it was all the tone, all the vocab. Then our girls got up 'and have youse heard...' it was the working class coming through, but it was also the limited vocab, and the Lebanese vocab, etc. (Michelle)

Macliffe

Teachers at Macliffe also discussed ASB Muslim students' limited oral communication skills, their use of ethnolect, and the effect on their post-school transitions.

I'm concerned about their way of talking. It's not a very prestigious, formal way of talking. (Mary)

Macliffe teachers were also concerned about students' limited capacity to adapt language to context, which can affect their ability to interact positively in the workplace and in mainstream society.

The way the girls talk, they lack an awareness of the fact that there are different ways to speak in different situations. Girls need to learn that we speak differently to our friends than the way we speak to our teachers and bosses for example. (Mary)

Teachers identified the students who had more advanced oral communication skills, including a wider range of vocabulary and discourse strategies, as those who interacted more widely beyond their own communities or those who were more habitual readers.

Their presentation can be off-putting. But you get the more educated ones, the brighter ones you find that their tone and their language has changed because perhaps they're mixing with other groups of girls, because they're reading more because they're speaking at a higher level. (Amy)

In sum, both Swanson and Macliffe staff regard student use of 'ethnolect' as problematic. Ethnolect was seen to result from the insular nature of the Australian ASB Muslim community, with limited experiences outside the immediate community, and equally limited exposure to more dominant codes of English. Teachers regarded factors associated with ethnolect, including restricted oral communication skills, and limited awareness of appropriate register and vocabulary knowledge, as representing challenges for students' post-school transitions. These factors were perceived by teachers to be serious impediments to successful future access to employment, and effective interactions in the workplace.

5.2.5. Conclusion to Section

This section of chapter 5 has presented teachers' perceptions of their young ASB Muslim students' academic and English language and literacy profiles and needs, and has identified the schools' responses to these needs via their ESL and literacy support programs. Outcomes reveal some differences between schools in terms of teachers' perceptions of their ASB students' academic performance, with Macliffe School described as having a stronger overall academic profile than Swanson. Teachers from both schools, described the academic performance of their ASB Muslim students as polarised, and as including both the 'best and worst' of students. Teachers identified similar exclusionary pressures affecting academic achievement. These pressures included limited parental support and low expectations of education; limited student aspirations for further education or career pathways due to expectations of early marriage, and a student sub-culture wherein education was undervalued.

At both schools, teachers recognised the importance of language and literacy development for academic achievement of ASB Muslim students, and the majority identified limited English language and literacy proficiency as a barrier to students' achievement. In their interviews, teachers highlighted academic English and especially academic writing and formal oral language as challenges for their ASB Muslim students. They also commented on students' limited control of oral language registers, and their inability to move beyond the local 'ethnolect' in their interactions beyond the immediate community. These factors were identified as significant exclusionary pressures, both in regard to students' academic achievement, to future employment opportunities, and to effective interactions in the workplace.

Relevant school documents and teacher interviews showed that both schools offer substantial ESL and literacy support programs. However, these programs appeared to be more embedded at Swanson than Macliffe. At Swanson, literacy and ESL support were viewed and treated as integral priorities for the school. This was evident in the significant resource allocation for ESL and STLA support staffing, curriculum design, professional development, and specialist consultations. Though literacy and ESL support at Macliffe were also viewed as a priority, a minority of teachers described the available resources (particularly ESL support) as insufficient to meet the needs of students' from language backgrounds other than English. In addition, at least some teachers were struggling to balance the competing demands of a subject driven syllabus with the need to provide across the curriculum literacy support.

Overall, evidence from both schools confirms recognition of the importance of language and literacy development for academic achievement of ASB Muslim students. However, there was also evidence that some teachers appeared to lack confidence in their own abilities to teach language and literacy across key learning areas. As a number of researchers have shown, this is not an uncommon phenomenon (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001; Hammond, 2008; 2012; Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011). There was also evidence that some regarded language and literacy support as the responsibility of specialist ESL or learning teachers, rather than as the responsibility of all teachers.

5.3 Culture and Religion: Schools' responses to students' cultural and religious backgrounds

5.3.1 Introduction to Section

As indicated in chapter 3, the NSW Multicultural Education policy (DEC NSW, 2005) underlines the role played by schools in promoting recognition and tolerance of the cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs of Australia's increasingly diverse population:

Schools will ensure inclusive teaching practices, which recognise and value the backgrounds and cultures of all students and promote an open and tolerant attitude towards different cultures, religions and world views. (DEC NSW, 2005)

As also indicated in chapter 3, culture and religion represent key elements within the inclusive multicultural framework developed for analysis of data in this thesis. This section addresses ways in which schools responded to their students' cultural and religious backgrounds. In their interviews, teachers from both case study schools were asked their views on how ASB Muslim girls' cultural and religious backgrounds had affected their education. In addition, school executives were asked about their school's responses to racism and community harmony within the school. Teachers' responses to these questions are addressed below in relation, first, to the schools' overall response to matters relating to the element of culture and cultural diversity: specifically, multicultural education, racism and community harmony; and then to the nature of religious inclusion in their secular schools.

5.3.2 Schools' Approaches to Multicultural Education, Antiracism and Community Harmony

Swanson

In their interviews, Swanson teachers described Multicultural Education as a focal point of the school's policy. They described a proactive school approach that fostered a climate in which cultural and religious diversity was both acknowledged and celebrated, and where efforts were made to minimise incidences of racial tension and conflict. As indicated in chapter 4, the school prioritised programs and initiatives, which celebrated students' cultural and religious diversity, while religious and cultural harmony was described as being 'second nature' in the school.

What we do is that we take the position that it's better to be more proactive. We have a harmony day; we have a multicultural day and a Swanson Idol (a talent quest) to celebrate who they are. And through our values education, we don't call it racism, we call it respecting people and living in harmony. (Suzanne)

It is (ethnic diversity management) almost second nature to the school; it's ingrained in all of us, those sensitivities. (Jacob)

Swanson School had a strong antiracism policy based on the DEC NSW (2005) Antiracism Policy. This was documented on the school's website, where codes of behaviour were outlined for staff and students. When discussing antiracism policy, teachers at Swanson indicated that the school took a preventative or proactive approach, with the result that the school had very few incidents of cultural or religious tension or violence.

I think the school is moving in a good direction... we seldom have violence or anything like that. We don't have too many nasty incidences. (Jacob)

If incidents of racism occurred, Swanson school addressed them in the context of its welfare-based anti-bullying policy. The school had an active antiracism committee which met and dealt with referrals of racist vilification or discrimination.

We've had a zero tolerance to racism. We have a committee, so if there's an issue which is deemed to be racist and that's really hard to determine whether it's racist or just bullying, or whether I just don't like that person. We've had only two incidences of racism and that's not to say that there isn't racism. (Suzanne)

A key factor in promoting community harmony was ensuring positive student-student, and teacher-student interactions. While overt incidents of racism were rare at Swanson, a small number of teachers pointed to subtle racial and religious tensions between students, although teachers highlighted the difficulty of differentiating between racist behaviour and general bullying. Teachers also highlighted the difficulty of managing subtle forms of bullying between different ethnic groups, which was often unreported by students, and undetected by teachers.

I think there's definitely racism here, and I'll use my Year 12s again as an example, especially the Asian girls were miserable and had a really hard time ... A lot of verbal, passing comment, even grabbing their lunch off them and chucking it back at them and saying that stinks. Mocking, like being nice to them, touching their hair, and saying that's so nice then laughing amongst themselves. So it was very subtle and constant. (Kate)

There were few reports of significant conflict between teachers and ASB students, with teachers noting that it was uncommon for students to make complaints about racial or religious vilification or discrimination by teachers.

Not a lot (of complaints about teacher racism), but now and again, we do take it seriously, but usually it's because they've (the students) done the wrong thing in class. And it's the easy way out, the student can say the teacher is being racist and is picking on me because I'm Arabic. (Suzanne)

Community harmony was also promoted at Swanson by developing teachers' awareness of students' backgrounds. For instance, evidence from one annual report showed that a staff cultural immersion day as professional development was held to promote teachers' cultural and religious awareness, and school and community partnerships. This proactive approach to community harmony appeared to contribute to the low level of conflict between teachers and students concerning racial or religious vilification or discrimination at the school.

Macliffe

As its website shows, Macliffe has historically demonstrated a strong commitment to multicultural education, and has previously received awards for its initiatives. In their interviews, Macliffe teachers described the schools' multicultural education initiatives and programs as recognising cultural difference through a celebratory approach, and with a focus on intercultural harmony.

We have multicultural days, through performing arts, dance, music and art. Michael is in charge of the multicultural performance in the Sydney region multicultural performance and education week...The girls applaud that. I

haven't addressed it because it's (cultural diversity) not an issue but it's reinforced in assembly. (Mary)

Like Swanson, Macliffe teachers described school events that were held to promote cultural and religious harmony, such as Harmony Day, World Storytelling Day, and regional multicultural education creative arts competitions aimed at promoting cultural diversity and harmony. However, these initiatives appeared to be less embedded in school policy than at Swanson. At Macliffe, they appeared to rely on individual teacher commitment, without which these events would not take place.

It depends on the energies of the teachers willing to run them (multicultural programs). We had one event last year. (Byron)

Although a celebratory approach to multicultural education was described as important to the school, long-term teachers at the school also described a shift to a stronger emphasis upon integration, citizenship and a shared Australian identity. One teacher attributed this to the Australian-born status of the majority of students enrolled at Macliffe, which had not been the case with the previous generation of students.

In the beginning, it was good because we had a lot of emphasis on multiculturalism and we had special events like anti-discrimination day... and I think it was good. They don't seem to do that anymore, I think there has been a shift from sort of celebrating multiculturalism into now making people realize that most of these people who are here now were actually born in Australia and I think they're trying to develop a patriotism towards Australia now, and not so much the multicultural aspect. (Barbara)

Macliffe based its approach to antiracism on the Department of Education's Antiracism policy. According to the school's website, the school has actively addressed antiracism education and worked to minimise discrimination. In line with NSW Multicultural policy, the school also had an antiracism contact officer. During interviews, teachers referred to the school's strong antiracist stance, the culturally and religiously inclusive environment of the school, and the resulting lack of overt racism or racial tension between students. Teachers generally did not consider racism or ethnic or religious tensions as an issue for the school, or for ASB Muslim students in their interactions with non-Muslim peers:

I see Macliffe as a happy school, I always say everyone is racist to a certain extent, but as a general rule I rarely hear things that worry me at the school.
(Byron)

However, one teacher at Macliffe questioned the extent to which values espoused by multicultural education were actually internalised by students.

I think the genuine day to day running of the place, we push tolerance, we push listening to other people, there will be exceptions but a lot of the girls won't take responsibility for their actions, (they believe that) they are not in trouble because of their actions, it's because of what they are. (George)

As with Swanson, teachers at Macliffe reported that incidents of interreligious/intercultural tensions were rare. However, as with some Swanson teachers, one teacher raised the difficulty of distinguishing racism from general bullying or bad behaviour.

I did have an incident in the classroom, in one week I had two fights in the classroom, they were racially based, the same girls with severe learning difficulties with a sad family background, is that racism or is that social? That would be the rare event in my teaching career thank God. (Byron)

There were, however, some concerns about teacher-student interactions. Interviews indicated that some Macliffe teachers struggled with issues relating to their own racial identities and beliefs about how they were perceived by students.

But I think, being very Australian and being sometimes, blonde and blue eyed at this school, I have often felt a little discriminated against myself and it's difficult in that situation because you don't want to be perceived as discriminatory, which I'm not, I mean I've been teaching long enough to not accept bad behaviour from anyone...I have had issues with people intimating that I am racist or I discriminate. And I can honestly say that I don't. It's difficult being an Australian teacher being in largely multicultural school I think. (Gabrielle)

Some teachers also reported being concerned with the effects of the broader socio-political climate, and crisis events, and their potential to create barriers between them and their students. Teachers also spoke of the extent to which these events were contributing to students' victim mentality and the perceived 'chip on the shoulder' responses during interactions with teachers.

If there is a barrier there (between me and my students) then that is a worry, because I don't want any barriers...And I wonder if it has to do with all the stuff that happened over the years, I mean what happened in Cronulla was quite ugly. Made kids go back a bit, hide in their shells a bit more, I mean, that to me is a worry if that is happening. (Simon)

Two of the teachers, both Anglo-Celtic Australians, reported being labelled as racists when they reprimanded students for class discipline issues.

A lot of girls don't want to accept responsibility for their behaviour and I think it's a lot easier to blame some other factor (teacher racism) for their behaviour. I think because I am so obviously Australian that I get that a lot. When I do reprimand people, but basically I do think that I am a firm teacher and that I will not accept bad behaviour from anyone. (Gabrielle)

I've had a girl who has called me a racist, and I said to her well I don't know how you can say that, I pick on everyone in the class equally. I don't just pick on only Arabic girls. (Barbara)

In their interviews, teachers commented on discipline issues with students. Some described poor student behaviour, and reflected on the extent to which such behaviour could be attributed to families and upbringings.

I've taught a lot of rude ones, a lot of people who have no respect, and I don't know if they have that respect at home. I've actually had an argument with a parent one day because I mean being a Muslim girl (referring to me as the researcher) you would understand as soon as you reflect your community, you're a symbol and the mere fact that you wear a scarf whatever thing you do reflects to people certain values and things to your community. (Gabrielle)

A minority of the teachers' appeared to hold some negative perceptions of the ASB Muslims girls as a group, though for some, it seemed that their impressions had been modified as they got to know the girls better. One teacher said that she began by negatively stereotyping ASB Muslim students, but changed her views as she got to know students individually.

I often feel that the Arabic girls do not appear positively because of the way they speak, their foul language, their aggression. They're very self-righteous, quick to defend themselves. It gets a lot of teachers offside even though the teachers know that this is what they are like... And like everybody else initially, I was very put out by them I found them amazingly rude ...They always argue because it is their way of life, but as a teacher, once you get beside the individuals, you really start to like them. They are just ordinary kids. (Amy)

One teacher suggested that the Muslim students' majority status in the school gave them confidence and perhaps contributed to the loud, aggressive behaviour of some students:

It would happen anywhere where there is large numbers, the strength in numbers in being a majority group and therefore can afford to be loud. ... and I think that stems from that confidence that you get from being the majority group. So if I had to say if I see anything that particularly pertains to the Arabic background, I would say no. (Melissa)

One relatively new teacher at Macliffe raised the need for teacher in-service to develop staff intercultural and interreligious awareness. She referred to an incident during a parent teacher interview when a Muslim father had apologetically refused to shake her hand based on religious observance.

I consider myself worldly, and I was caught out during the parent teacher night and I had no idea. I put out my hand to shake hands with one of the fathers. He was almost horrified, that's what I mean about cultures, many people take the viewpoint here that everyone knows what is going on, but they forget that there is a lot of new staff here. And as new staff, I feel that a lot of us haven't been taken through some of the cultural awareness stuff. (Melissa)

In sum, evidence from teacher interviews, confirmed by school documents and websites, indicates that both case study schools take issues of multiculturalism and inclusion seriously. Both schools had proactive approaches towards the celebration of cultural and religious difference and both schools have strong antiracism policies. There appeared to be some differences between the two schools in the extent to which specific celebratory events were embedded in school systems, with teachers from Macliffe saying that events often depended on the energy and enthusiasm of individual teachers.

Teachers from both schools said there were few instances of overt racism between students or between teachers and students. However, in both schools some teachers raised the complicated issue of distinguishing racism from bullying or bad behaviour, and they pointed to instances between students of what they thought was subtle covert racism. In addition, some teachers from Macliffe raised issues that affected their interactions with their ASB Muslim students, including the impact of wider socio-political context, local crisis events, and teachers' Anglo-Celtic Australian identities.

5.3.3 Religious Inclusion in Secular Schools

Swanson

In interviews, Swanson teachers described a range of policies and strategies adopted within their school to accommodate the religious practices of ethnically diverse students, including their ASB Muslim student cohort. For Muslim students, at the 'informal curriculum level' (Haw, 1999), inclusive strategies included access to a prayer room and facilitating halal dietary requirements. In developing the school uniform, the school had sought advice from a local women's community organisation, to ensure the policy accommodated female Muslim dress codes, incorporating the

provision of long shirts, skirts and headscarves in the school uniform colours. The school's academic calendar was organised flexibly to account for dates on the Islamic calendar, (e.g., Ramadan, Eidul Fitr and Eidul Adha) and to avoid overlap between these dates and academic or extra-curricular events scheduled in the school year.

While many of these non-curricular policies and provisions were relatively straightforward to implement, teachers were more concerned about adopting religious and cultural inclusivity in the secular curriculum. As indicated in chapter 3, secular schools face a real dilemma, in attempting to ensure religious inclusion in secular curriculum (Donohoue- Clyne, 2006). Swanson's teachers argued that there were limits to the capacity of schools to be inclusive of religious diversity within a secular curriculum. A number of teachers pointed to tensions between their delivery of a secular curriculum, and their attempts to accommodate the religious and cultural needs of their ASB Muslim students. This was particularly evident in the creative arts subjects where music and sexual content were factors. For example, a drama teacher at Swanson recalled having to edit a play script because its sexual innuendo was considered inappropriate by Muslim parents:

As a drama teacher, we've had performances and some parents complained because it had sexual innuendo in it, but it was a syllabus text and sex is one of the issues that we explore and one of the driving forces and motivational factors that affect the way that we behave. It needs to be discussed in the classroom. There was a complaint to the principal and I was told in no uncertain terms that if I couldn't censor my students' work then he would. I believe that it is a two way street, but they also need to learn that this is Australian culture and that we are liberal and it's alright to talk about sex. It's in the syllabus, it's okay, it's two way. (Michelle)

Teachers also noted the music component of the curriculum created tensions. A minority of Muslim students had asked to be excluded from music lessons because of their belief that music is prohibited by Islam. However, this also meant that they were unable to attend presentations or assemblies containing music. School executives explained that when this particular issue initially arose, the Department of Education was contacted and asked to intervene, after which a compromise was reached.

In previous years, we've had girls who have refused to go to school assemblies because music is played. Now that's a challenge for the school, how do you support their view, but does that then help them to become a part of the Australian community? Our solution is they sat in the back row, and when music was played they'd leave. (Suzanne)

Other teachers raised a further complexity in regard to this particular issue. Not all Muslim students were equally concerned about music. In describing her response to one Muslim's students' request to be excluded from any music, one teacher said:

I had to analyse my own response, I thought you are an extremely intelligent girl, she got in her 90s (her examination score) and you are choosing not to come to the ceremony, because of music...I found that difficult to grasp intellectually because the reading that I had done on the Quran, my understanding was that you could participate. And, meanwhile all the Muslim girls are listening to their iPods, listening to American rappers. It's bizarre...What I've learned is that every single person will have a different view, just like other religions, different slant, interpretation, different degrees of how much they practice. (Suzanne)

While teachers were sympathetic to students' strong religious beliefs, they also expressed concern about inconsistencies in students' religious practices, which they attributed to the students' lack of religious knowledge and maturity.

I've noticed their beliefs are so strong, but it should not hinder their studies. Sometimes, the girls use religion as an excuse. Sometimes they're inconsistent in their religion. They have an understanding of certain aspects of their religion, and not of all of it. (Michael)

The complexity of attempting to accommodate students' religious practices was further illustrated in other situations, where despite the curriculum content being of potential concern for Muslim parents and students, no concerns by either were raised. For example, as a visual arts teacher explained:

In visual arts, most kids are fine with everything. I often have to forewarn the girls about images, especially about nude paintings, and I explain to them that artists painted these nudes because they felt that they were the ideal images of what beautiful bodies looked like...I also remind them that it's a government school, and so it's a curriculum that is non-religious. (Sandra)

Teachers reported that students had sometimes raised concerns about the science curriculum. A science teacher highlighted Muslim students' responses to certain scientific theories, such as evolution, which conflicted with Islamic belief, also disputed by some Christian students. As with the previous teacher, this teachers' approach was to argue that these theories are a part and parcel of the secular education syllabus, which does not reflect religious belief.

I deal with that by saying that ‘science doesn’t test God, but you have to know this for the exams’. (Michael)

A number of Swanson teachers reported approaching potential conflict due to curriculum content by forewarning students. They reminded students of the school curriculum's secular orientation, and often took a pragmatic approach by pointing out to students that they needed to learn about certain topics for their academic success. In cases where difficult issues were raised by parents and/or students, arrangements were generally made to address these through consultations with external bodies.

Macliffe

Like Swanson teachers, Macliffe teachers also discussed the challenge for schools in accommodating diverse religious beliefs and practices within a secular education system. While they were prepared to accommodate of Muslim parents’ and students’ needs and concerns, the underlying perception of a number of teachers was that Muslim students, like other ethnic or religious groups, had enrolled in a comprehensive school, and should accept the school’s secular orientation. Some teachers perceived requests for modification of the curriculum to be potentially undermining to the integrity of the curriculum, and limiting students’ exposure to mainstream secular culture.

Like Swanson, the main areas of contention involved the creative arts syllabus, particularly music, and the health curriculum particularly, sex education, and in the case of the latter, it often resulted from parents' lack of insight concerning its actual content.

We’ve had a few students in Year 7, like we send a letter home telling parents about the program and some parents say that they don’t want their child to participate... I don’t know what they think we are teaching them. (Gabrielle)

At Macliffe a number of concerns, raised by parents and community members, were described by teachers as unreasonable or difficult to accommodate, particularly with exemption from music. Macliffe teachers perceived parents' expectations as unreasonable, and undermining the secular curriculum's integrity.

Anything to do with where music is involved; this kid has to remove themselves from nine periods of music per week and they sit up in the library on her own. To me that's a waste of time. I understand and respect everyone's culture, and that is what we promote, tolerance. But you've come here now. (Angela)

In recalling a discussion with a Muslim parent who wished to withdraw his Grade 8 daughter from music, a year advisor also highlighted the heterogeneity of students' beliefs and practices. Though she agreed with the parent that current music was heavily sexual, she could not understand why some girls were listening to music in the playground. She also pointed out that students used religion as an excuse for exemption from school activities.

The dance component has music some girls don't participate because of music, one was very devout, others use that excuse and you see them in the playground with their iPods. (Amy)

In sum, teachers' interviews in both schools highlighted challenges in their schools' attempts to accommodate students' religious practices and beliefs, while also implementing a secular curriculum. Teachers in both schools pointed to specific areas where tensions were likely to arise: in music and art, in science, and in PDHPD. While teachers, especially in Swanson, generally reported being sympathetic and supportive of

attempts to provide inclusive religious environments at schools, they also raised concerns that accommodating all Muslim students' and parents' concerns could potentially undermine the secular curriculum. Teachers at Macliffe, in particular, pointed out that some students were prepared to use their religious beliefs as an excuse to absent themselves from activities if they did not feel like participating, and noted the fine line between respect for religious difference and ensuring the students 'toed the line' in terms of school participation.

5.3.4 Conclusion to Section

This section has addressed the ways in which the schools have responded to students' cultural and religious backgrounds. It focused first on schools', as well as individual teachers' responses to multiculturalism, antiracism and community harmony. It then addressed both schools and teachers' responses to students' Muslim background.

Outcomes from teacher interviews provide evidence that there was a genuine attempt in both schools to implement multicultural policy, to ensure antiracism strategies were effective, and to promote community harmony. This is confirmed by school documents and websites. While there appeared to be some differences between the two schools in the extent to which multicultural policy was embedded in the school systems, both schools had proactive approaches towards celebration of cultural and religious difference and both schools had strong antiracism policies which directly addressed racism. Teachers from both schools reported that there were few instances of overt racism between students or between teachers and students, although they pointed to difficulties at times of distinguishing racism from bullying between students.

Teachers' interviews also provided evidence of genuine attempts to accommodate the religious needs of their Muslim students, such as food provision and uniform policy. The greatest challenge lay in accommodating students' religious practices and beliefs within a secular curriculum (see chapter 4). Teachers in both schools pointed to specific areas where tensions were likely to arise (music, art, science, and PDHPD). While teachers, especially in Swanson, generally reported being sympathetic and supportive of attempts to provide inclusive religious environments at schools, they also raised concerns that attempts to accommodate all Muslim students' and parents' concerns could potentially undermine the secular curriculum. Teachers were also aware that some students were prepared to 'use' their religious background as an excuse to absent themselves from unpopular activities, and noted the fine line between school discipline and respect for religious difference.

Overall, within the two case study schools, both on a whole school level, and at the level of individual teachers, there appeared to be genuine attempts to provide an equitable and inclusive education for all their students, including ASB Muslim students. There was little evidence from teachers' responses of systemic exclusionary pressures on the students.

5.4 Culture and Religion: the interface between school and community

5.4.1 Introduction to Section

The previous section addressed school policies' and teachers' responses within the schools to the cultural background and religion of its ASB Muslim students. This

section also addresses responses to students' culture and religion, but the focus here is on the school – family/ community interface. The emphasis in this section reflects a priority within the Multicultural Education Policy NSW (2005) that identifies 'positive community relations' as a key objective. In addressing the schools' interface with the community, the section focuses on attempts by schools to reach out to and interact with students' families and with the local community. It also addresses teachers' views on the impact of gender in the lives of Muslim girls: the ways in which girls in the case study schools negotiate the potentially conflicting priorities of school and home; their own and their and parents' aspirations for the girls' futures.

In chapter 2, it was argued that the school – community interface involves a reciprocal relationship, where the responsibility for this relationship rests with schools and with the families and community. Teachers' responses to questions about this relationship are addressed in regard to the schools' relationships with students' families and local communities, and the schools' interaction with the broader society in which students live, including key incidents and how they have affected schools and students. They are also addressed in terms of family/ community responsibility.

5.4.2 School –Family/ Community Relations

Swanson

Community involvement appeared to be accorded a high priority at Swanson. It was significant that the school employed a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) whose responsibility it was to encourage interactions between the community, the home and the school, and to liaise between them. It was also her responsibility to foster better two-way cultural and religious awareness amongst school staff, and awareness about the

education system and school curriculum amongst migrant-background parents. During the period of data collection, it was clear that community organisations were actively involved in the school.

Teachers generally reported positive interactions with local Muslim organisations. Teachers reported strong liaison with local Muslim women's groups, especially in addressing issues related to religious practice, such as adapting uniform policy and specific curricular concerns. As school executives explained, the CLO within the school was available on a weekly basis to assist the school by attending and translating at the Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) meetings, and by facilitating various extra-curricular activities for students. Parental participation at Swanson was high. In their interviews, teachers consistently commented on the unusually high level of parental involvement at the School. This involvement was credited to the strategic efforts of the previous principal to initiate community and parental interaction.

This school has many more parents coming into the school for a variety of reasons, than any of the other schools that I have been in. And, I put that down to a deliberate goal that the previous principal had, to involve the community and the parents. (Mariah)

Parental involvement was also encouraged through a number of other initiatives in the school. Most notably, the traditional structure of the P&C had been overhauled to better facilitate the needs of the school community.

We have a P&C that's not the structure of the (traditional) P&C ... ours is a parents' group that is held on Monday a number of times during the term because most parents can come. (Suzanne)

As teachers explained, within this structure, the P&C committee collaborated with the school to facilitate informal yet regular sessions for parents on a range of topics (e.g. health services, domestic violence, child protection, children's learning, subject selection for students). These sessions ensured that parents became more informed about the affairs of the school, and encouraged parents to contact teachers about their children's progress. The CLO was actively involved with the P&C, and she explained that the model has been effective in attracting more parents from a range of ethnic backgrounds to attend.

We have nearly 30 parents in the meeting, in the P & C. The principal comes and gives a report and parents discuss issues, and parents come and get progress reports and I contact their teachers to get feedback and later meet up with their parents. (Nada)

The school also provided educational courses for parents, such as English language classes and sewing classes, and the local Muslim women's group ran an Arabic course and provided religious instructors for the Muslim students. Despite the school's efforts, some teachers noted that some parents still declined requests to attend meetings concerning their children's progress. They interpreted parents' lack of responsiveness as either a general lack of interest in their daughters' schooling, or as an unwillingness to reconcile their perceptions of their daughters' behaviour at home, with their (at times unacceptable) behaviour at school.

They (the parents) are fluent in English, but they are too busy to come up and speak about it. And there is a different response, 'You are not to discipline my child', and that's pretty frequent in terms of what I am telling them is not true, because they see their daughter in a different light. (Angela)

The teachers however, also acknowledged that pressure of work and a lack of time were also possible reasons for some parents not participating in their students' schooling.

The majority of teachers regarded parents as strict, and often as overly protective of their daughters. They said that at times this led to some conflict between the school's objectives and both students' and parents' expectations. They voiced concern about the restrictions students experienced at home. While recognising that these restrictions reflected concerns about their daughters' security and reputations, teachers felt the restrictions tended to limit students' experiences in wider society, and possibly limit access to educational and employment opportunities in Australian society.

They (parents and families) do limit the girls' travel. They don't let them travel for work, they worry about them. You can't do this, you've got to let them mix a little bit... Let them go, let them explore, let them get jobs in areas where they will mix with different people; they will learn. (Nada)

Teachers were also concerned that overly strict parenting would result in rebellion where girls would go out without their parents' consent or knowledge, and subsequently run the risk of further parental restrictions, and strained family relationships.

Their parents are very protective of them... It does limit their experiences though, and what the girls do is they crave their experience in another way, and they truant and get into a lot of trouble. (Suzanne)

Teachers' immediate concerns were that parents' level of protectiveness would restrict girls' experiences in wider society, and the school's ability to organise and deliver educational and training programs, including work-placements. As school executives explained, the school tried to address parental concerns. The school ensured work-placements were safe and closely supervised, that interaction with males occurred only in an open workplace environment, that workplaces were alcohol free, and that they were within geographic proximity to the local area. The school also organised fieldtrips for parents and students to work-placement sites, and they informed parents of work-placement requirements prior to course enrolment.

All of the work placements that we choose are very carefully selected and well supervised, but some of those parents have been very reticent about letting their daughters go into areas of hospitality except those which are strictly supervised...in keeping with the course requirements, but also in keeping with their expectations and concerns as parents. (Mariah)

This proactive approach to meeting parents' concerns was facilitated by the level of community engagement at the school, and the parents' confidence in being able to approach the school.

Macliffe

Like Swanson, Macliffe employed a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) to facilitate communication and relations with the local community. Like Swanson, Macliffe teachers reported positive interactions with local Muslim organisations, including the local Muslim women's groups.

Any time we have huge issues, we get the Arabic women's group to come to talk to us. They were fantastic. (Angela)

Despite the generally positive account of school – community relations, one member of staff reported an incident that she and others perceived as counter-productive. The incident reflected the delicate nature of managing religious difference, and community liaisons with the school.

We have a few Arabic girls who belong to certain sects or elements and they've got, I don't know what you'd call them, not priests but men who run little elements of the religion, ringing up saying these people come to my services, or whatever you call them, and they are not to listen to any music. (Angela)

In this teacher's view, a more reciprocal effort was required on the part of the community (or Imam of a particular mosque or Islamic Centre) to reach a compromise. The incident however, also reflected the teacher's limited awareness of appropriate terminology for describing students' religious practice, further reinforcing the need for intercultural awareness training at the school, as well as the need for more school-community interaction.

Parental involvement at Macliffe was regarded as important. However, there appeared to be a less systematic school wide approach to supporting parent and family involvement than at Swanson, and a number of teachers raised concerns about ASB parents' limited involvement in Macliffe school life.

Compared to other schools we have very poor turn-out on parent teacher nights.
... We're happy to see a lot of parents, but compared to other schools, or we get

brother or sisters which is good but not as good as the parents, because of language barrier or for work. (Amy)

Teachers noted that while parents would respond to the school about issues related to their daughters' behaviour or academic performance, they rarely initiated contact with the school.

Other than parents that I have seen who come over discipline issues; as a parental request issued for an interview and generally over a behaviour issue. And, that's one of the things that astound me... I'm a little surprised that there aren't stronger ties with the community, and that is my perception. (Melissa)

Some teachers at Macliffe attributed this lack of family involvement to language barriers. In the excerpt below, a teacher recalls the frustrating process of communicating with parents via translators:

Some of the Arabic parents are very, very good. I guess it's the same with most cultures. Obviously we sometimes have a quite a large language barrier. When I first came here we always had interpreters during parent teacher nights, which was quite frustrating. Worst was when the girls themselves would come in and do the translating. (Amy)

Unlike Swanson, Macliffe had not attempted to restructure its P&C to accommodate the needs of its community, and there was little parental involvement in this organisation. A consequence was that Macliffe teachers' knowledge about the community was not as evident as at Swanson. The more limited teacher awareness was reflected in a minority of teachers' interviews, with one teacher using the terms "Muslims" and "Arabic" interchangeably.

Like Swanson teachers, most Macliffe teachers believed that ASB Muslim parents were strict, and that they often limited their children's participation in extra-curricular activities. They noted that while some girls had the ability and potential to participate in competitive sports, their parents did not always encourage or permit their involvement.

I took some girls to the Oz Tag gala day yesterday Two of them were fantastic and I told them there is a competition here every Thursday afternoon in summer, 'Oh my mum won't let me play'. And that's sad because they have the ability and the potential but they can't get better because they don't have that encouragement from the family. And, yet some of them do. (Gabrielle)

Teachers were also concerned that the students tended to be less independent and had fewer opportunities for social development.

They are socially immature, not streetwise, and wouldn't cope socially if they left home, they seem to be naïve. (Mary)

A number of teachers expressed concern that parental restrictions caused girls to rebel or act out, resulting in disciplinary issues that the school then needed to address.

We do have some families who are very strict, so the girls either just blend in with things and they don't really have a choice, and there's the other extreme where they come here and see it as a way of breaking out. So, where at home, they can't speak they can't have a voice, here they're very rude, obnoxious...so they swing from being dominated at home to being domineering at school and they need to find that in-between. (Angela)

In sum, what emerged here are similarities and differences between the two case study schools in terms of their understandings, insights and engagement with the culture and religion of their ASB Muslim students. Teacher interviews provide evidence that both schools were highly aware of the importance of community relations; they had both employed CLOs with specific responsibilities for liaison and translation with families and communities; and both schools reported positive relations with local community organisations.

However, the schools differed in the extent to which they had put in place structures within the school to facilitate community involvement. Swanson, with its use of the CLO, P&C structure, provision of information sessions and its flexibility with work placements, had arrangements that promoted active community participation. This had resulted in a high level of community involvement and a strong reciprocal relationship between school and community that made it easier to resolve any tensions that arose between students and school. Macliffe had fewer structures in place, with the result that community engagement and participation was lower and less reciprocal.

Teachers' from both schools regarded parents as overly strict with their daughters and pointed to instances of tension that had arisen between school and families. They expressed concern that parents' restrictions could impede their students' future access to educational and employment opportunities. This issue is addressed further below.

5.4.3 Gender Roles and Future Aspirations

Swanson

Teachers at Swanson noted that parents' attitudes to their daughters' futures tended to be diverse, with some parents having high aspirations for their daughters' educational and employment pathways, and others encouraging their daughters to aim for the traditional pathway of marriage and family life. Long-term teachers noted some shifts in attitudes in recent years, and said that parental expectations and attitudes now more closely aligned with the schools' expectations. The issue that most frequently arose in teachers' interviews was the value that families attached to marriage and family formation. They noted that even parents who had high expectations for their daughters' education still expected them to marry either straight after their secondary schooling, or in their early twenties.

A lot of families have girls who get married but still go on with their studies. Some mums of the girls even attended high school here, and they really regret not taking advantage of the chance to get a good education. ... But, it seems a consistent pathway that the girls take, which is to get married within a few years of leaving school and having children. But a lot of girls still go to University, and have support from their husbands. (Sandra)

Despite some evidence of generational changes in cultural attitudes, a number of teachers noted continuing disparity between the expectations of the school and parents concerning post-school pathways. They argued that cultural and academic expectations for a minority of the girls were shaped by restrictive, patriarchal interpretations of the role of women in society, and they criticised restrictive cultural practices, which they

perceived to be sexist, contradictory to their understanding of Islam, and contrary to their own liberal values.

I had this student who was very bright in the arts, and she was accepted at a prominent art college but her parents didn't want her to go...and because her brother spoke up for her, the family let her go. I was shocked, she got into this place on the strength of her creative ability and her intellect and they were going to say no to her ... from what I've heard, it (Islam) is meant to be equal among the sexes and a fair and caring religion. But when I see how families out here implement it, it appears to be a very repressive, sexist and judgmental religion. (Michelle)

Such incidents could have resulted from restrictive patriarchal cultural practices, or from general parental concerns for their daughters' security in areas outside their immediate localities, or due to lack of information. Apart from these, teachers described a minority of students becoming engaged while still at school, and subsequently married upon completing Grade 12. Some teachers associated poor educational attainment or lack of motivation to these expectations.

It's hard to generalise. For some girls, there is a perception where 'I don't have to worry; my family will look after me'. ... They (students) think that school is a good place to be until the next stage, which they foresee to be marriage. But, from the four years here, I perceive there are fewer of them now in that category. (Mariah)

At least half of teachers described talking to their students about marriage, and attempting to dispel 'fairy-tale', idealistic perceptions of marriage.

I try to dispel this myth for them, especially when I've got a very low motivated class in Year 10. ... And I give them the scenario that they get married...and well, he's out there and he's got his job, he's working and she's doing nothing because she didn't work hard at school and create opportunities for herself. (Michelle)

Most teachers were sensitive about contradicting traditional cultural views or undermining parents' or students' beliefs, and consequently addressed such issues indirectly. However, some responded that, though this was a concern, their sense of duty towards maximising students' life opportunities, and addressing exclusionary pressures, were more important, and they saw it as a duty to widen their students' horizons.

I often speak to them and tell them that they should at least travel and work before they get married, but I am very careful with what I tell them...because I'm a teacher, I don't want to tell them what to do, I don't want to offend their beliefs or their parents. (Sandra)

Macliffe

Like Swanson, Macliffe teachers noted the diversity of parent views regarding their daughters' futures, with some having high educational and employment aspirations and others focusing primarily on marriage. Like Swanson, teachers noted generational shifts in attitudes amongst parents regarding women's roles, and some pointed out that an emphasis on the traditional gender roles was not specifically 'an Arabic thing', but a cultural attitude that was common with previous generations from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Earlier we used to hear, “why do I need to know this? I’m going to get married and have children”. But, that wasn’t an Arabic thing that was a Macedonian and a Greek thing. (Byron)

However, some teachers also believed attitudes within the Lebanese community regarding the role of women contrasted with the school's strong feminist ethos of empowering and maximizing the life opportunities of its female students.

When I first came to Macliffe, I was horrified because all the Greek girls and Macedonian girls would sit in the library and read bridal magazines ... and tell each other that this is what I’m going to wear. And, Macliffe has tried to empower girls... I have got some very high achieving students who are looking toward tertiary education and will achieve very well. But, I think that there is a very general consensus among the Arabic girls that they will be married. I think, like most cultures it is in a state of change. (Amy)

Teachers pointed out that some parents also have very high expectations for their children, and they place high priority on educational success. Perhaps not surprisingly, these children tend to be high achieving students. They noted that the higher achieving students had parents who expected more than traditional roles for their daughters, and they also attributed low parental academic expectations and low student academic performance to expectations of early marriage.

Their (higher achieving students) parents are a little bit different to the parents of the other students, not in terms of money because we are not looking at families who are excessively rich. It’s that their parents want more for them, and their parents actually say this is why we came to the country...Some families want their girls to break that mould (of early marriage), to get that tertiary education. (Angela)

In sum, discussions amongst teachers in both schools regarding gender and future aspirations were similar. Teachers in both schools noted the value that students' families attached to marriage and family formation, although they also noted that parents' attitudes towards their daughters' futures were diverse. Some parents, although prioritising marriage and family, also wanted their daughters to pursue further study and employment, while others placed pressure on daughters to marry soon after school. Teachers noted, however, that families' attitudes towards traditional roles for women were shifting.

Teachers pointed out that students' own aspirations were diverse. While some students saw their futures in terms of further education and employment, other students' aspirations did not go beyond marriage. Such attitudes highlighted differences in values and priorities between students and teachers, with some teachers trying to dispel this "fairy tale myth".

5.4.4 Conclusion to the Section

This section has continued the focus on students' culture and religion by addressing the interface between schools and their local communities – first by focusing on the nature of schools and community relations and then by addressing perceptions of the impact of gender on family and students aspirations for life beyond school.

The section provides evidence of similarities and differences between schools in terms of their community engagement, and in terms of their understandings, insights into the culture and religion of their ASB Muslim girls. Both schools were clearly aware of the importance of community relations, and had made efforts to link with local

organisations and to encourage community involvement. However, they differed in the extent to which school structures had supported such engagement. At Swanson, the P&C was restructured, and information sessions were organised to promote community and parental involvement in the school. Swanson teachers' interviews indicated that such strategies had been successful, with a high level of community engagement, and with developing a reciprocal relationship between school and community. Macliffe had fewer systems in place, with the consequence that community involvement at the school was lower.

Teachers from both schools regarded parents as overly strict with their daughters, and pointed to instances of tensions that had arisen, between school and families. They expressed concern that parents' restrictions could impede their students' future access to educational and employment opportunities. In both schools, discussion of parents' and students' aspiration incorporated the role of marriage in the girls' lives. However, teachers also noted that parents' attitudes towards their daughters' futures tended to be diverse, with some parents wanting their daughters to pursue further study and career, while others wanted their daughters to marry soon after leaving school. Although marriage and family remained important for parents and the girls, teachers in both schools noted attitudes towards traditional roles of women tended to be changing. The value attached to marriage tended to be a point of disagreement between teachers and their students, with some teachers reporting their attempts to dispel this "fairy tale myth".

Differences between schools in their levels of community engagement appeared to influence teachers' overall knowledge and insights into the ASB Muslim community.

While Swanson's staff were able to comment at length about the minority community's parenting practices and aspirations, teachers at Macliffe School tended to focus on more practical concerns, and there was less evidence of mediation by the school to address parents and students concerns. It would appear that Swanson's involvement with the community contributed to a more inclusive educational environment in ways that were less evident at Macliffe. It also reduced exclusionary pressures through its ability to mediate and negotiate with the community as necessary.

5.5 Culture and Religion: The Interface between School and Society

5.5.1 Introduction to Section

This sub-section continues the emphasis on students' culture and religion, this time through an emphasis on the interface between the school and the broader society. As indicated in chapter 2, a major issue in recent years in Australia, as in other developed countries, has been the effect of terrorism, especially the events of 9/11. The girls who are the focus of this thesis, their families and local communities have been affected by broader community reactions and attitudes to such events. This sub-section focuses on ways in which schools have addressed such issues within the broader socio-political context of Australian society. It focuses first on the schools' interface with the socio-political context, and then on the schools' responses to specific crisis events.

5.5.2 Teachers' and schools' Interface with Socio-political Context

Swanson and Macliffe

For many teachers at both Swanson and Macliffe, teaching appointments at the schools provided their initial points of contact with the Australian ASB Muslim community. Thus, interactions between teachers and students provided opportunities for 'people mixing' and 'everyday multiculturalism' (Noble, 2009, p. 48) within schools, and also provided teachers with access to real-life awareness of the impact of broader socio-political realities on their students. Interviews at both schools revealed teachers had a strong sense of identification with their students, and an awareness of the effect of the current socio-political climate on this ethno-religious group. As one of the Swanson teachers explained:

It (working at the school) has been a wonderful opportunity to get to know another cultural group that we don't normally associate with, Muslims tend to live out Fairfield way or here; they tend not to live where I live, not yet.
(Suzanne)

Teachers at both schools reported that their experiences with students also influenced their interactions beyond school with broader Australian society. In some situations, teachers had adopted mediatory or 'counter-hegemonic' roles, or resisting broader oppressive structures (Gorski, 2008, p.313) in their own communities, where they challenged prevalent beliefs and the prejudices.

I live in the Shire where there aren't many people from Middle Eastern backgrounds and they're really good people. But, people haven't been exposed to different culture and at times don't realise that they're ignorant and there's a lot of different misconceptions about things, and there's the stuff in the media.

And when people say things I sort of bite my lip and don't respond and at other times I try to set the record straight. (Jacob)

Teachers at both schools expressed concern about the diminishing levels of understanding across Australian society that had resulted from specific crisis events, and they were aware of the resulting impact on the ASB Muslim community.

If you listen to talk back radio, it's horrible. I remember Alan Jones (a prominent talk-back Sydney radio host) saying, 'I have nothing against Lebanese people, I've met some very nice Lebanese people but they happen to be Christians. It's the Lebanese Muslims that I have a problem with'. I thought that was just vilification. (Jacob)

We want to let the girls know that not all police target Muslims, but then you hear stories. During the raids two years ago, some of the kids' homes were raided...how can you tell someone when you've had your house raided and subsequently no charges are laid, but just for whatever reason that there was some suspicion that that's okay. (Suzanne)

Opportunities to work with Muslim students had clearly influenced teachers' own views, and a number reported that perceptions of male-female dynamics in Muslim communities had been challenged by their interaction with the students.

One of the things that came out was how much Dads helped out around the house. They cook and do all sorts of things; I thought a lot of them were macho. But, traditionally, we have seen Arab women as downtrodden and the appearance of women as being something of submission and oppression. (Amy)

Working at the school allowed me to reassess my previous understanding of Muslim women...the girls are loud and confident and they know what they want to do with their lives (Mary)

Teachers expressed concern about gender discrimination and stereotyping of Muslim women in the broader Australian community, and the effects this may have on students' post-school lives.

I think a lot of people find the hijab intimidating because it covers the person, so it creates a sinister mystery about them, and I know I was talking to somebody last week. (Amy)

Teachers at both schools also referred to incidents where their students had experienced racial abuse in public spaces, and were sympathetic to parents' increased concerns regarding the safety of their daughters in public spaces.

I know the girls suffered quite a bit as well. For goodness sake these are kids. Yes, they have their beliefs but they have nothing to do with some idiot behaviour happening somewhere else. Some of the girls had things thrown at them, and that's the great thing about teaching in a place like this as well that you are looking at it from the perspective of the kids. (George)

I remember after September 11 and during those years, we had so many girls in tears and crying in the corridors because coming from the station from here, which is a 10-minute walk, they would be attacked so many times, both verbally and physically, because they were wearing the hijab. Some of them were spat on. (Angela)

In their interviews, teachers were asked to reflect on some of the potential challenges that students would face in their post-school transitions. Teachers in both schools anticipated students would face a number of challenges as a result of community attitudes toward Muslim minorities.

Obstacles, I just think, unfortunately I think they will face problems because of society's intolerance, as much as I hate to say it I don't like the way the world is, but people have always been like that. (Gabrielle)

The image, the current affairs and ignorant perceptions of other cultures, in any cultures but in this particular case, all the Muslims are being put in the hot seat. (Mary)

Teachers also commented in the perceived insular nature of the ASB Muslim community itself. Although they were aware of pressures posed by broader society, they were concerned that this insularity would impede students' access to further education and employment opportunities.

Economically and socially disadvantaged, and one of the barriers is that insularity, because out there the Australian society is scary, I'd be apprehensive about being out of the community, so I will go shop up in Swanson, rather than go to Bondi, you'd be a brave person to go up to Bondi alone. (Suzanne)

Teachers stressed the importance of students' and their families' exposure to experiences beyond their own local communities and in broader society. At Macliffe, teachers were concerned about students' lack of recognition of their Australian identities, citing several possible factors including racial tensions, and national and global events. While the majority of teachers did not report discussing this with students, a minority

emphasised the importance of teaching students to 'claim their space' in Australian society in order to gain the resilience to counteract the exclusionary effects of racial and religious discrimination.

Ask students about their nationality, and you get mixed results. Some of the girls of Lebanese background would say I'm Lebanese, I'm not Australian. Sometimes I move on, and other times I tell them, 'You really need to claim your space in the Australian culture. Say, I'm here, I belong here, and I'm not going to let anyone say that I'm not Australian.' Or, you might discuss why they might not feel accepted, that it's not necessarily that they don't want to be included, but that they feel excluded. (Byron)

Although the majority of teachers cited wider societal discrimination as a potential future exclusionary pressure, a minority of the teachers interviewed were optimistic about the girls' and the community's capacity for inclusion in Australian society.

Their gender, but being particularly Muslims (will be a challenge for students). They will have issues around poverty, issues around aspirations, generally though. We need to give them more experience going to places where they would not normally go, and where they have every right to go to; to universities that they would not normally consider. (Suzanne)

In sum, it was clear that the experience of working with ASB Muslim students had affected teachers at both schools. Teachers were concerned that broader socio-political tensions were causing the students to be defensive, and distrustful of wider Australian society. Teachers were aware of the fear and distrust of ASB and Muslim communities that existed in mainstream Australian society, which they witnessed examples of in their own lives outside the school. They were also concerned that negative social attitudes

were contributing to the insularity of Muslim minorities, and that this insularity would impede students' future educational and employment opportunities.

5.5.3 Schools' responses to the Socio-political Context and to Crisis

Events

Swanson

School documents and teacher interviews provide evidence that Swanson had a proactive policy that attempted to address the contemporary socio-political climate. This policy also recognised the adverse effects of crisis incidents (such as September 11, the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War, and the Cronulla riots) upon students' learning, identity formation, and in maintaining inter-ethnic harmony within the school.

The school's policy has been to promote open forums, and assemblies, where constructive, balanced discussions of events and their fall-out were possible for staff, students and parents.

It (specific crisis) affects people's learning because you can't focus on the chemistry formula if you're angry about what has happened. For example, with 9/11, it was really quite confronting for us as the staff and really quite difficult it came from out of the blue. We held forums and invited parents and people from the mosque to come. Some of the girls were really, really angry and were quite volatile, and we let the girls vent. (Suzanne)

Teachers reported that these forums provided opportunities to support student resilience and citizenship; and to provide a platform to discuss effective responses to societal

racism and prejudice. Teachers were also aware of their responsibility as educators to ensure students were given opportunities to explore global and national events in a supportive learning environment, where they were encouraged to develop more balanced views of broader socio-political realities:

As educators, I think we have the responsibility not to tell the students how to think, but to open up possibilities: that it's not black and white, that it's not that America is evil because not every American is evil and it's not that every Muslim is perfect. And to allow them the opportunity to articulate their own view and to hear someone else respond...So, we try to moderate extreme views, and it was probably what was happening when they were talking about it at home. But, it wasn't healthy to allow them to be so incensed. But, they are powerless, and we have people in the community who, and we have girls here who were spat upon. We've had to talk to them and let them know that it wasn't every white person in Australia who hated them, and that it wasn't hatred of them as an individual person, because how could it be if they didn't know you as a person. (Suzanne)

As part of the school's proactive promotion of cultural and religious harmony, it encouraged interaction with other schools in the local area. This initiative was identified as a crucial step after September 11th, when the welfare team raised the need for inter-faith dialogue between the predominantly Muslim students at Swanson, and students from other faith-based schools in Sydney. Students also participated in the NSW cultural exchange program, where Swanson students have met annually with Catholic school students from more affluent areas of Sydney.

I took a group of girls over to a private college and it was really good for the girls to hear very privileged boys not denigrate them, be really interested in them and want to find out more about them and their faith, and for the boys to say

that, “No we don’t hate Muslims, we don’t interpret it that way, we know it’s the media. We think it’s dreadful”. (Suzanne)

An issue that arose in interviews with teachers in both schools was that of residualisation (where falling enrolments mean the ‘residual’ student population is predominantly of one ethnic group). Despite differences in demographic and academic profiles, teachers reported that their large Muslim and/or Lebanese background student cohort had resulted in both schools being labelled as “Islamic” or “Arabic”. A consequence was that students who were not of this ethnic background were enrolling in other schools. While other factors were also relevant (schools’ academic standing; discipline policies, bullying), the net result was that in both schools enrolments were declining. Swanson had responded to this issue by emphasising the inclusive multicultural nature of the school.

We have for the past few years have been trying to get a message out to the community that we are a school for all different backgrounds and abilities, and it’s not specifically for any one group. But, I think that the sheer fact of numbers of Arabic background people in the school is something that people see and comment on. However, I must say that we have the power through the things we do in the community to show that we are multifaceted and we do that. (Mariah)

Macliffe

Though not as proactive as Swanson, school policy and teacher interviews indicated that Macliffe was highly aware of the possible impact of racial tensions and socio-political turmoil on individual students’ well-being and on the school’s intercultural harmony. The school’s reactions to specific crises (such as September 11th and Cronulla riots) had involved acknowledgment of the events by the principal during school

assemblies, where students were reminded to embrace the school's commitment to multiculturalism and unity. A teacher described the school's response as follows:

Anytime there have been outbreaks of hysteria, there would be an assembly, and the principal, she'd talk to the girls. ... Go to a staff member at any time you don't feel safe, you feel like you've been discriminated against, a very caring attitude and stress the fact that you're not going to get along with everybody, but you have to tolerate. (George)

However, other teachers reported that they were discouraged from discussing events in the classroom and raised concerns about the school's tightened response to events that were occurring in the outside world.

As a history teacher, after September 11th our principal said 'Byron, yours is the only classroom where I'm going to let people talk about it because I can do it from a historical perspective. But other than that, the school put a blanket ban on it till the emotional side of it came out'...Like, the principal would say this has happened and you've got to be aware that the students might be sensitive about these things, there might be relatives. (Byron)

Like Swanson, Macliffe was facing the issue of residualisation and falling student enrolments. Most teachers at Macliffe regarded this issue as highly significant. Despite extensive efforts, teachers reported limited success in redressing community misperceptions. The principal, in particular, was concerned that despite records of its relatively high academic profile, the school had a problem with its image both as a 'welfare' school, and as having low academic standards.

The community perceives the school to be an Islamic school because the Arabic student population has increased, and the numbers of students from other cultures have decreased, furthermore, the Muslim girls are all the more visible because of the hijab. ... We need to change the school's image - the only thing that closes schools is the numbers. (Mary)

A number of teachers were also concerned that racism was a factor in community perceptions of the school and in declining student numbers.

To be totally honest I think there's a large racial element that's happening, we are decreasing in numbers, significantly...And, what we're getting from the community feedback and primary school feedback is that we're perceived as an Islamic school, which is why I say there's that racial element there...And, overall, 95% of our girls, I don't care what culture they come from are fantastic kids who achieve some wonderful thing. (Angela)

In sum, both schools were clearly aware of the impact of the socio-political climate on students' learning. Swanson had responded proactively by attempting to provide a secure environment in which to discuss key events, to use these incidents as opportunities to encourage balanced perspectives on national and international events and to support students to develop a resilience that would help them deal with the broader Australian community. Overall, Macliffe appeared to have a less proactive policy than Swanson in regard to socio-political climate. While also aware of the impact of broader social issues, teacher interviews indicated that beyond public acknowledgement and reinforcement of the importance of maintaining ethnic harmony, few school-wide initiatives dealt with the emotional and disruptive effects of these events on students' learning and lives in general. Teachers in both schools were concerned about community perceptions of residualisation in their schools and resulting

falling student enrolments. Swanson responded by emphasising its inclusive nature, while Macliffe made attempts to highlight its strong academic record.

5.5.4 Conclusion to Section

This section continued the discussion of school' responses to their students' cultural and religious backgrounds by focusing on the schools' interface with the broader Australian society and with attitudes towards Muslim minorities. The section addressed ways in which student - teacher interactions have influenced teachers' attitudes to their students and on their interface with the broader Australian society. It also addressed ways in which the two case study schools responded to the socio-political climate in which the students live.

Interviews in both schools provided evidence that the experience of working with ASB Muslim students had positively affected teachers. They were sympathetic to their students and concerned that broader socio-political tensions were causing the students to be defensive, and distrustful of wider Australian society. Teachers were aware of the fear and distrust of ASB and Muslim communities that existed in mainstream Australian society, having witnessed examples of this in their own lives outside the school. They were also concerned that negative social attitudes were contributing to the insularity of Muslim minorities, and that this insularity would possibly affect students' future educational and employment opportunities.

The two schools had responded differently to this situation. Swanson had responded proactively by attempting to provide a secure environment in which to discuss key events, to use these incidents as opportunities to encourage balanced perspectives on national and international events, and to support students to develop a resilience that

would help them deal with the broader Australian community. Macliffe had a less proactive policy than Swanson, beyond public acknowledgement and reinforcement of school commitment to harmony. Teachers in both schools were concerned about community perceptions of residualisation in their schools and resulting falling student enrolments, although they appeared to have responded somewhat differently. Swanson responded by emphasising its inclusive nature, while Macliffe made attempts to emphasise its strong academic record.

5.6 Conclusion: Summary of Findings

This chapter has presented Phase 1 of the research outcomes. The purpose of the chapter has been to provide details of the educational contexts in two case study schools in which significant number of ASB Muslim girls are educated. While, as indicated earlier, the major focus of the thesis is on the perspectives of the ASB Muslim female students on their educational experiences, this first phase presents results of the schools' perspectives. In doing so, it has drawn primarily from interviews with school executives and teachers, but, as well, has drawn on relevant school policies and documents.

The organisation of the chapter is based on the inclusive multicultural framework, outlined in chapter 3. Thus, outcomes are discussed under major headings of language and literacy and culture and religion. For elements of culture and religion, schools' responses are addressed in relation to what happens within the school, in the schools' interface with families and the local community and in the schools' interface with the broader Australian society.

Major findings within the chapter are as follows:

Literacy and Language Education

- Teachers identified a polarity in female ASB Muslim students’ academic performance patterns: though there was evidence of improvement as described by long-term teachers. However, students’ performance profiles were also described by teachers at both schools as ‘bottom heavy’. Teachers discussed exclusionary pressures perceived to be contributing to underachievement. These were limited language and literacy proficiency, a student subculture that undervalued education, and lack of parental support or interest in students’ education. Low academic performance was also attributed to low expectations of young women’s future transitions to work and employment due to aspirations for traditional cultural gender roles.
- Literacy and language proficiency were identified as key exclusionary pressures for students, namely in academic writing and formal oral communication. Limited language proficiency was attributed to students’ non-English speaking backgrounds, lack of reading and limited exposure to English. Oral communication was thought to be impeded by limited overall language proficiency, restricted awareness of register and the use of ethnolect.
- Literacy, and ESL support were described as priorities at both schools, though was more pronounced at Swanson with significant funding allocated to programs and teacher development. Literacy at Swanson was dealt with explicitly across the curriculum, with the assistance of in-service support, specialist consultations and faculty collaboration. At Macliffe, a need for more literacy and ESL focus was discussed, with comparatively fewer initiatives targeting students’ language proficiency. Those programs implemented during

the data collection period were short-term, and small-scale. Literacy support was viewed by a minority of Macliffe content teachers as important but which competed, often unsuccessfully, with the demands of a content driven syllabus.

Culture and Religion

- Multicultural education was described as a priority and, as ‘second nature’ to Swanson given its ethnic diversity. At Macliffe, which was almost as ethnically diverse as Swanson, multicultural education was described as receiving less focus than in the past. Australian identity or patriotism was emphasised, which was attributed to the second-generation migrant status of the majority of students.
- Interactions were mediated by the two schools’ focus on antiracism policy and community harmony. At both schools, teachers described intercultural or interreligious tensions between students as uncommon, due to the schools’ antiracism ethos. Two teachers from both schools described subtle forms of discrimination and bullying as exclusionary pressures for students which were often unreported, and which needed to be better addressed.
- Macliffe teachers’ discussions about interactions with Muslim ASB students were based on disciplinary issues, teachers’ own racial identities in relation to students, and how broader socio-political aspects were perceived to be contributing to these tensions. The need for in-services to develop teachers’ intercultural/interreligious awareness was raised at Macliffe. Conversely, at Swanson, positive teacher-student interaction was promoted through developing teachers’ intercultural and interreligious awareness, via professional development, such as cultural immersion days.

- Inclusivity of students’ religious beliefs at non-curricular level was discussed, with reference to the schools’ provisions of prayer facilities, halal food, flexible uniform policy, and accommodating academic calendars. More challenging for schools were efforts to implement inclusive teaching practices, which “promote an open and tolerant attitude towards different cultures, religions” (DEC NSW, 2005). Tensions were identified between this objective and the practical complexities and perceived limits of reconciling religious beliefs with the curriculum’s secular orientation. ‘Inclusive’ teaching practices within a secular curriculum were viewed as counterproductive by teachers if it meant excluding Muslim students from aspects of the mainstream secular curriculum (e.g. elements of the creative arts and PDHPE syllabuses).
- Community relations and parental participation differed at the two schools. Swanson adopted strategies to increase parental involvement; including modifying the traditional P&C structure, to make it more accessible and relevant to parents’ needs and circumstances. Conversely, Macliffe reported minimal ASB Muslim parental involvement. This factor may have contributed to more obvious teacher- student tensions discussed earlier, as well as other difficulties associated with addressing the concerns of the ASB Muslim community and parents. Both schools reported local community religious organisations (e.g. Muslim women’s organisations) as useful points of contact.
- Teachers discussed parents’ differing attitudes to gender roles, which often defined post-school aspirations for their daughters. Though a minority of parents were perceived to hold traditional cultural views defining gender roles for their daughters, teachers also described generational shifts in parents’ attitudes. Teachers regarded these issues as gender equality issues, and teachers

reported encouraging students to broaden future aspirations. Teachers were also concerned about parental limits placed on female ASB Muslim students due to concerns about their safety, but which inevitably limited students' capacities to participate in extra-curricular activities and to gain experience in broader society. Swanson addressed such issues more directly with parents through providing information sessions for parents, parental visits to work placement sites, and potential future universities.

- Challenges brought on by broader socio-political realities and crisis events were addressed differently at the two schools. Swanson's measures were more proactive, for instance by organising forums during these situations to ensure that students gained more balanced views of broader socio-political realities, had a platform to discuss effective responses to societal racism and prejudice to promote interreligious and intercultural harmony, and student resilience and citizenship. Swanson was also involved in promoting broader social interaction by involving students in a cultural exchange program. Teachers perceived wider societal discrimination and the minority community's insularity as two exclusionary pressures on students' post school transitions. For the schools themselves, the broader socio-political situation has contributed to the ethnic residualisation and reduction in the overall student population.

The following chapter reports on findings from students to explore how notions of inclusivity and multicultural education affect ASB Muslim students' lived experiences in schools. It examines how students' linguistic, cultural, and religious identities influence, and are influenced, by their experiences of state schooling, and the overlapping contexts of family, community and broader society. The chapter also

focuses on students' post-school aspirations and the factors, which have contributed to their shaping.

Chapter Six The Students' Perspective

6.1 Introduction

This chapter represents Phase 2 of the research and is the second of three chapters that present outcomes based on the data analysis. The previous chapter addressed policies and educational practices at the two case study schools, Swanson and Macliffe, from the perspectives of the school management and teachers. It focused on the successes and challenges of the two schools' respective policies and practices in supporting the inclusivity of ASB Muslim students. To a degree, this chapter runs parallel to the previous one; however it addresses the perspectives of the female ASB Muslim students. Once again, an inclusive multicultural educational framework underpins the structure of this chapter and the presentation of the outcomes. Thus these outcomes are presented under the broad categories of language and literacy education, as well as culture and religion. As in chapter 5, the outcomes within these categories have been organised with regard to the overlapping contexts of schools, families and community, and wider society.

While in chapter 5, the outcomes in each section and sub-section were presented first from Swanson and then from Macliffe schools, in this chapter, students' responses from both schools are presented under the same headings. Due to the similarity in student responses at both schools the differences between them have not been highlighted as they were in chapter 5. Any differences in students' responses between the schools have been addressed within the categories and sub-headings.

As indicated in chapter 4, the findings in this chapter are based on student responses to questionnaires, and on follow up focus group interviews (see table 3, p.115).

In questionnaires (see Appendix B), students were asked about their language abilities in both English and Arabic, and whether they needed support with academic English. They were also asked their perception of their own learning abilities at school; about their post-school aspirations and about their Muslim identities. Preliminary analysis of the questionnaires shaped the questions that were asked in follow up focus group interviews (see Appendix C). These interviews addressed the same broad areas as the questionnaires, but asked more probing questions in order to provide more depth to the original questionnaire responses.

The chapter is organised as follows. Following this introductory section, (Section 1), students' perceptions of their academic profile and their abilities in both English and Arabic are presented (Section 2). Section 3 then addresses students' opinions regarding their schools responses to their cultural and religious backgrounds. Here, students' views of school approaches to multiculturalism, anti-racism and community harmony are addressed. Thus far, the organisation of the chapter largely mirrors that of chapter 5. However, in Section 4, the organisation differs from the previous chapter. An analysis of the questionnaires and interviews found that students' perceptions of their own relationships with families and local communities were interwoven with views of their relationships to broader Australian society and the effect of national and international crisis events on their lives. To try to separate these issues in order to reflect the discussion of teachers' views in chapter 5 would have distorted the findings. As a result, students' thoughts regarding the interface with their school, their family and local

community, as well as with broader society are addressed in one section. The section ends by addressing students' perceptions of the value of attending a secular school. The chapter then concludes with a summary of the findings.

Section headings within the chapter are as follows:

1. Introduction to Chapter
2. Language and Literacy Education
3. Culture and Religion: Students' Perceptions of School Responses
4. Culture and Religion: Students' Perceptions of the Interface between School, Local
5. Community and Society
6. Conclusion to Chapter: Summary of Findings

6.2 Language and Literacy Education

6.2.1 Introduction to Section

Multicultural education policy developments in Australia emphasise ESL support and mother tongue maintenance as integral to the promotion of educational equality for culturally and linguistically diverse students. While English language proficiency enables students to gain access to the curriculum and potential educational success, the maintenance of their first language aids the preservation of their bicultural and religious identities. The previous chapter addressed teachers' perceptions of their ASB Muslim students' academic and language abilities. This chapter deals with students' thoughts on their academic profiles and English language abilities. In addition, because of the importance of Arabic to Muslim students' culture and religion, their perceptions of their abilities in Arabic are also addressed. Outcomes from both questionnaires and interviews highlighted a number of key issues with regard to students' proficiency in both languages.

6.2.2 Students' Perceptions of their Academic Profiles

ASB Muslim students at both Swanson and Macliffe schools assessed their own academic performance in reasonably positive terms. The questionnaire required students to rate themselves on a scale of frequency (always - never) in relation to a number of statements about their learning and academic performance. While teachers described these students' academic profiles as polarised and 'bottom heavy' (chapter 5), questionnaire responses indicated that the majority of students in both schools described themselves as *sometimes* or *always* performing well. An indicator of this can be seen in responses to the question *I get good grades for most of my subjects*. Table 5 below summarises students' responses to this question in the three key learning areas of Maths, Science and English.

Table 5 'I get good grades in my subjects at school'

Swanson				Macliffe			
	Maths	Science	English		Maths	Science	English
Always	8	15	24	always	17	16	19
sometimes	27	20	20	sometimes	19	21	22
Rarely	13	11	7	Rarely	5	5	2
Never	3	5	0	Never	2	0	0

As Table 5 indicates, the majority of students in both schools rated their performance in the three subjects as *sometimes* or *always* achieving good grades. Relatively few students in either school indicated they *rarely* or *never* achieved good grades. At Swanson, the highest percentages of students stated that they *sometimes* got good grades for Maths (52%) and Science (39%), but they *always* (47%) got good grades for English. This difference may reflect the degree of English language support provided at

Swanson. The highest percentage of Macliffe students stated *sometimes* for the three subjects, Maths (44%), Science (48%) and English (51%). Despite broad similarities, there were some differences in overall patterns of perception between the schools, with Macliffe students overall rating their academic performance as higher than Swanson students (these differences could reflect the overall academic profiles of the schools – see chapter 5).

Questionnaire responses also indicated that most students in both schools believed that teachers had positive perceptions of their academic and Higher School Certificate (HSC) performance. When students were asked to respond to the statement *My teachers think that I am getting excellent grades*, the majority at Swanson and Macliffe *agreed* (70% and 64% respectively). Students' responses to their teachers' perceptions of their HSC performance were also positive. Macliffe respondents were more positive with 93% of students *strongly agreeing* or *agreeing* that their teachers believed they would perform well in the HSC. At Swanson, 82% of students *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with this statement. This difference again appears to reflect overall differences between the respective schools academic profiles.

Focus group interviews provided students with the opportunity to discuss their academic progress in general terms. As indicated in chapter 5, teachers identified a number of factors as contributing to student underperformance. One of these factors was a lack of parental interest or involvement. Perhaps not surprisingly, students had different ideas about their parents' involvement in their education. Although a number commented that their parents did not get involved, they saw this as allowing them to choose their own future direction.

Fahima: My parents let me choose. They don't really get involved.

Fairuz: My parents are the same, they don't get involved. But my dad tells me to get into Uni and do something instead of wasting my life and sitting at home.
(Grade 11 Macliffe)

Most regarded their parents and families as being highly concerned about their education, as having high expectations, and as being supportive of further study.

Shayma: My mother said that I can do whatever I want to do. Whatever I am good at.

Dana: My parents want me to finish school and go to uni, they don't want me to drop out. (Grade 9 Swanson)

However, students also identified factors that negatively affected their academic performance, and these reflected factors similar to those raised by teachers: namely a subculture that undervalues education, and peer pressure to underperform.

My cousin is teaching me because when she was at school her friends controlled her. Whatever her friends would say, she would do it...She wanted to do something but she didn't end up doing it. She wants me to do something with my life instead of sitting at home doing nothing. (Safa, Grade 9 Swanson)

In the focus groups, students were asked about the role gender played in their education and, more generally, in their lives. Most students in both schools described there being more pressure on females to pursue tertiary education than on males, in part due to the comparatively higher degree of difficulty for females in finding suitable employment.

It's hard for a girl to find a decent job if she drops out of high school, whereas for a boy they can drop out and do what they like, like a mechanic we can't do labouring jobs. (Rania, Grade 11 Macliffe)

Others described equal pressure to perform well academically and pursue tertiary education.

Same (level of pressure), my brother went to uni to study economics and I have sisters my 21 year old sister is at uni studying teaching. (Khadija, Grade 11 Macliffe)

Responses indicated the influence of gender on parents' expectations of school performance, tertiary education and career choices. Focus group responses indicated males had greater diversity and flexibility in work choices, and could more easily secure 'suitable' employment in trades or via vocational training. These considerations however, were perceived to limit employment options for female students, but conversely motivated them to complete school and perform well academically. This level of pressure on female students was one factor which motivated female students to try to access tertiary education, or to access a limited range of vocational education courses.

In sum, students were generally perceptive regarding their own academic performance. Although their questionnaire responses tended to reflect the somewhat higher academic profile of Macliffe when compared to Swanson, overall responses from students in the two schools reflected similar perceptions of their academic strengths and weaknesses. Students in both schools were aware of the impact of gender on their educational and life choices.

6.2.3. Language and Literacy Development

English Language and Literacy

Students were asked questions about their English language proficiency in both the questionnaires and focus group interviews. Their responses indicated mixed perceptions of their English language proficiency. Although, as indicated above, the majority of students in both schools expressed confidence in their performance in English as a subject, the majority (65%) also indicated they needed English language support, reflecting concerns expressed by the teachers.

Students were asked to rate their abilities in academic writing and reading in relation to specific statements. Here opinions were generally positive and there were no major differences between the schools. In response to the statement *My writing in English is very good*, the majority of students in both schools (76%) rated their writing as *always* good, and most of the remainder (15%) rated their writing as *sometimes* good. When asked to comment on their writing in content subjects, 83% either stated that poor writing *rarely* or *never* affected their grades. However, these generally positive responses were not reflected in their comments concerning English language proficiency in the open-ended sections of their questionnaires. To illustrate this, 64% and 61% of students at Macliffe and Swanson respectively described requiring additional support in writing, speaking and reading skills. A selection of the responses to these open-ended questions is given below.

I think in English the most area I need improving is writing because sometime I know what I am writing but I write too fast and make lots of mistakes. (Grade 8 Swanson)

(I need help in) English altogether, especially writing essays, and reading books as it frustrates me. (Grade 11 Swanson)

Focus group interviews also highlighted challenges in academic writing.

I don't feel that my English is as good as the other girls in my school. My essay writing is ok but I don't think that it's so good. I don't get extra support. (Sarah, Grade 11 Macliffe)

Students also identified reading as a significant challenge. When asked to indicate how often they read for leisure, 60% and 50% of students, respectively from Swanson and Macliffe, indicated either *rarely* or *never*. Just over a half of the students at Macliffe believed they *always* understood the information they read, while most of the remainder responded *sometimes*. Figures were slightly lower at Swanson, where around a third of respondents either *rarely* or *never* understood what they were reading. This echoed teachers' concerns in chapter 5. The students' responses to the open-ended questions also focused on challenges in reading and with comprehension.

Understanding information that I read for different subjects sometimes I don't understand things, which makes me feel stupid so I need to improve with that. (Grade 11 Swanson)

Significantly, only 7 of the 104 students in both schools indicated they had access to ESL support. This figure perhaps reflects the number of students who were born in Australia, but also indicates that students' needs in terms of academic English support were not being adequately met.

As indicated in chapter 5, teachers were concerned about students' use of ethnolect and their limited awareness of formal language registers. Student focus group interviews indicated that they were also aware of this issue, and were concerned about their oral communication abilities.

I'm finding difficulties in communications skills because I'm around people who speak slang language and I want to learn and speak in a more sophisticated way and know more mature words. (Meera, Grade 11 Macliffe)

Shaza: I use slang with my friends.

Dana: But not with your teachers, because they'll look at you and think you're dumb.

Shaza: They think they're being rude. (Grade 9 Swanson)

As these excerpts show, student perceptions of their own use of ethnolect were generally negative and they were aware of the need for more standard forms of Australian English, especially in academic contexts. Overall, despite some contradictory statements, student views of their own use of English language mirrored those of their teachers, particularly concerning limited proficiency in academic writing, a lack of engagement with reading and problems with proficiency in oral communication.

Arabic Language Learning and Use

Students were also asked about their abilities in Arabic. In both schools, the responses in questionnaires and focus group interviews were similar. Students emphasised the important role that Arabic plays in maintaining community membership, particularly in communicating with parents, family and other minority community members. Questionnaire responses indicated that Arabic was the dominant language used at home,

with more than 60% communicating solely in Arabic with their parents, while just over 20% used both languages. English was identified as the main language of communication with friends (87%) and siblings (84%). The majority of students (67%) reported assisting parents with translation for household administration, and in communication with doctors and school administrators. Arabic was also identified as important for cultural and recreational purposes with 43% of respondents from both schools viewing Arabic media (Arabic cable television channels), while 26% of students reported accessing Arabic language websites.

However, Arabic exists in a diglossic context where students' spoken vernacular Arabic differs from the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) used in formal settings. As a result, oral fluency in vernacular Arabic does not necessarily mean a similar fluency in Modern Standard Arabic. Of the questionnaire respondents, 50% mentioned the importance of Modern Standard Arabic for religious purposes (the Holy Qur'an or other Muslim religious texts, prayers, understanding religious sermons, etc.).

It is important because it helps with religion and reading the Qur'an. I would also like to keep my culture and pass it down when I have a family. (Grade 11 Swanson)

Though aware of the importance of Modern Standard Arabic, student responses indicated that while the majority studied Arabic at primary or middle school level (89%), fewer were currently studying the language at high school (23%). The highest percentage of students studying Arabic were those at Grade 8 level (38%) in both schools, and the figure declined progressively in the upper grades up to grade 12 (7%). Students cited various reasons for discontinuing their studies: for students in the upper

grades, pressure of Higher School Certificate studies was a contributory factor. Others reported dissatisfaction with the community school curriculum and traditional teaching approaches, while others viewed spoken vernacular Arabic as sufficient for their language needs.

A higher number of Swanson students reported studying Arabic than was the case at Macliffe. 3 Macliffe students reported currently studying Arabic, in comparison to 11 Swanson students (grade 11 and 12). These differences may partly be due to Swanson's provision of Arabic as a community language during school hours, while Macliffe students could only attend Arabic language courses at weekend community language schools. Though Arabic language proficiency may not contribute directly to improving ASB Muslim students' general academic performance, promoting proficiency in the first language emphasises the value of their cultural and religious identities (Fishman, 1996; Clyne, 2003).

6.2.4 Conclusion to the Section

This section has addressed students' perceptions of their academic performance and also their language and literacy proficiency in English. It has also focused to a lesser extent on their abilities in Arabic. The outcomes indicated that students were generally perceptive regarding their own academic performances, and they regarded these as reasonably positive. However, there was an indication that many students thought their teachers' views of their academic performance were generally positive – an outcome that did not reflect teachers' general descriptions of patterns of polarity, and 'bottom heavy' performance profiles (chapter 5).

Students were somewhat more ambivalent about their abilities in academic English. While many students indicated on their questionnaire responses that their abilities in English (as a subject in its own right) were generally high, their open-ended answers highlighted problems with academic reading and writing. Students were also aware of the negative consequences of their use of ethnolect. These views were similar to those of their teachers. Of concern was the fact that very few students were receiving ongoing ESL support, indicating the need for continued efforts to promote a whole-school literacy and language focus.

In terms of Arabic language learning, student responses indicated the prominent role of their mother tongue in communication, for maintaining community relationships, participating in cultural and religious activities and in maintaining cultural and religious identities. Students' responses indicated that the majority spoke vernacular Arabic with their parents. While students reported learning Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) earlier in primary and middle schooling, the number in the upper grades was much lower. The slightly higher proportion of older Swanson students learning Arabic may well correlate with the provision of Arabic as a subject in the school.

6.3 Culture and Religion: Students' Perceptions of Schools' Responses

6.3.1 Introduction to Section

As indicated in chapter 3, there has been considerable debate regarding the extent to which secular schools can genuinely address the cultural and religious needs of Muslim students. As argued in chapter 3, secular state schools are in some ways better

positioned than Muslim schools to support an inclusive multicultural education that is more likely to prepare students for a fuller participation in Australian society. However, there is a responsibility for schools, in accordance with official multicultural policies to provide an environment that recognises and supports students' cultural backgrounds and religious needs. While chapter 5 addressed teachers' perceptions, this section of chapter 6 addresses the extent to which students think their schools are providing such an environment.

6.3.2 School's Approaches to Multicultural Education, Anti-racism and Community Harmony

Community Harmony and Anti-Racism

Outcomes from Chapter 5 indicated that both Swanson and Macliffe (but especially Swanson) had made genuine efforts to build community harmony and to put in place effective antiracism policies. This sub-section addresses students' perspectives on these issues, specifically on the capacity of their schools to effectively address cultural and religious diversity, cross-cultural interaction and to promote a sense of security and belonging for students. To this end, questionnaire items asked about the respective schools' approaches to their Muslim students; about teachers' awareness of their cultural and religious backgrounds, and also about any experiences of racism at school. In follow up focus group interviews students were invited to reflect on what it meant to be a Muslim student at their school.

Overall, students responded positively. At both schools, students indicated that their schools had a strong commitment to multicultural and anti-racism initiatives. Questionnaires responses to *My school values multiculturalism* were almost unanimous,

with most students (96%) from both schools either *strongly agreeing* or *agreeing* with this statement. Students' perceptions of their schools' anti-racism measures were evident in their generally positive responses to questionnaire items concerned with cultural and religious harmony. At Macliffe, 86% of students *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that their school was *strict about racism*, while only 14% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement. Swanson students were somewhat less positive with 65% *agreeing* or *strongly agreeing*, whilst just over a third *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. However, the following comments were typical of the responses from students at both schools, and can be largely attributed to the large Muslim and ASB student cohorts at the schools.

They do not take racism lightly; they try to teach us about racism and how wrong it is. (Grade 11 Swanson).

It's normal. There's racial comments (sic) but hardly ever. Majority of the school is Lebanese you hardly ever cop anything. (Grade 10 Macliffe)

Such responses echoed their teachers' perceptions that racism was not a major issue in either school. These responses were more positive in focus group discussions, where students' described interactions with others in largely positive terms.

Hala: Our group is all Muslim, but we get along with our non-Muslim friends a lot too.

Fatima: Because we've known many of them from primary. I don't think that they mind that we're Muslim and wear a scarf and that, so we along well. (Grade 11 Macliffe)

In their questionnaires, students were asked to *Describe what it is like to be a Muslim girl at school*. In response, the majority of students in both schools emphasised their sense of normality and security. This was attributed to the significant ASB Muslim student cohorts, the ethnically diverse nature of the school population and the schools' inclusion of religious and cultural diversity. Typical comments included:

As a Muslim at a school that has a majority of students of my religion, I feel included and equal to others who don't share my religion. (Grade 11, Swanson)

Well to be a Muslim girl at school is nothing different because at my school, there are a lot of Muslims and it's a multicultural school. (Grade 8 Macliffe)

Students' sense of security was also attributed to the respective schools' supportive learning environments and inclusion of their religious identities. The majority of students in both schools (78%) stated that their schools were supportive of their religion. Comments showed students were aware of measures undertaken in their schools to accommodate their religious needs, and of the schools' general commitment to promoting community, intercultural and interreligious harmony. Students' typical responses included:

They (the schools) support us with our religion and respect us. (Grade 8 Macliffe)

Interactions between students and teachers

The nature of interaction in the schools reflected the effectiveness of their respective approaches to cultural and religious harmony. Chapter 5 addressed teachers' perceptions of their interactions and relationships with ASB Muslim students. This identified factors such as the effect of the broader socio-political climate and crisis events on these relationships; the impact of the teachers' own cultural identities on their relations with their students; disciplinary issues and how these, in turn affected interactions.

Students' questionnaire responses concerning interactions with teachers varied, although patterns in both schools emerged when compared across age groups. Typically, younger participants at both schools were more likely to describe tensions in interactions with teachers, whilst respondents in the upper grades at both schools gave more varied answers.

The majority of Swanson students indicated they had positive interactions with teachers, and they described their teachers as *accepting* and showing *respect*, and as *treating all students equally*.

Being a Muslim girl at 'Swanson' school is a good thing because some teachers respect us. (Grade 8)

The teachers treat all students equally no matter what nationality you are; treated fairly usually. (Grade 11)

However, some students at Swanson also described negative interactions with teachers.

Some teachers know about our beliefs and our religion, and some teachers are racist because they always pick on Muslim girls. (Grade 8)

Racist teachers, some teachers don't treat us fairly, some don't respect us. (Grade 11)

Macliffe students' responses broadly reflected those from Swanson, with the majority of students describing teachers as 'understanding', showing 'respect' and that they were 'aware'.

I have never had a teacher say anything negative about my religion. (Grade 10)

Teachers are very understanding of culture and differences; Teachers are aware of my religion and hardly do I ever hear negative comments, unless it's something that they don't understand. (Grade 12)

Similarly to Swanson, some Macliffe students also described negative interactions with their teachers, and they used phrases such as *critical*, *criticise us*, *do not understand* or *racist* to describe teachers. However, the general pattern was that more Grade 8 Macliffe students described their relations with teachers in negative terms. They perceived themselves to be judged by teachers as loud, rude and more likely to misbehave than students from other grades. A minority also viewed the hijab as a marker that targeted them for more disciplinary measures.

Some teachers expect you to behave badly when I put my scarf on I was treated differently, I wasn't trusted. (Grade 8)

If a group of Arab girls are speaking and a different background are screaming and laughing we get into trouble and not them. (Grade 8)

In their discussion of relationships with students (chapter 5), teacher raised the issue of (younger) students having difficulty in distinguishing racism and discipline. In focus group discussions, students at both schools showed they were aware of the blurred line evident here and they acknowledged that poor relations with teachers were at times due to their own misbehaviour.

But it's because with our friends we like to muck around...sometimes, teachers tell them (students) don't talk and they answer back. They don't know that they're being rude and then if the teacher kicks them out, they ask why are you picking on me? (Fatima, Grade 9 Macliffe)

These comments highlight student awareness of the negative effects of behaviour on interactions with teachers. On the other hand, not all of students' views about negative teacher interactions can be judged on this basis but require more careful teacher reflection to ensure that comments or responses are culturally sensitive and cannot be misconstrued by students. In a minority of cases, students talked about tensions with their teachers, perceiving themselves to be treated differently to students from other ethnic groups. They also related interactions with teachers to the wider socio-political tensions such as those discussed by teachers in chapter 5.

Naeema: Pacific Islander students, if they're talking, they'll tell them to be quiet, but when we are talking, they kick us out. Francis was actually swearing and the teacher told her, 'Now Francis, let's not use that language'.

Sayeeda: We're proud of being Muslims in Australia. It's much harder here, we don't care what anybody says, and because we are proud, they try to put us down, 'The Lebanese are rapists, terrorist'. Sometimes our behaviour is bad, it's like they're taking revenge on the Lebos at this school...They hate you and they're scared of you (in Australia). (Grade 9 Swanson)

At both schools, students from the upper grades tended to describe how their relationships with their teachers had improved as they had matured and described tensions between teachers and the younger girls that they attributed to a lack of maturity.

It depends on what year, from year 7 to 10 and we used to be like that. We used to find anything that the teachers said or did to us we'd say she was picking on us. But now, all our teachers are our friends. They treat us differently. (Grade 11 Macliffe)

While acknowledging some tensions resulted from student misbehaviour, three focus groups raised concerns that teachers generalised students' bad behaviour, and felt targeted by teachers. They discussed how, as a group, they were viewed by teachers to be loud, rude and disrespectful, and argued that they did not think of themselves as more or less badly behaved than other students:

Especially the teachers here, they'll look at us and say, she's just another one of those stupid girls and they think we're all like that. I had a substitute teacher, and she was surprised with my behaviour, and she said that she had another class and the girls who were wearing the hijab were very loud and rude. (Khadija, Grade 11 Macliffe)

In their questionnaires, students were asked about their teachers' knowledge of Islam. Their responses indicated there were clear differences between the schools. Swanson students were consistently more positive, especially in the upper grades. Just under 50% of Grade 10, and 75% of Grade 11 students either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with this statement (whereas just over 60% of Grade 8 respondents either *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*). The pattern at Macliffe was the opposite. In the upper grades, over 40% of

Grades 11 and 12 *disagreed* with this statement, compared to only 20% of Grade 8 respondents. These differences in levels of interreligious awareness may be due Swanson's in-service focus on community and cultural awareness, and the higher level of community and parent interactions (see chapter 5).

In sum, student responses regarding interactions with teachers reflected a number of themes. Questionnaire responses drew mixed responses regarding teacher interactions from students at both schools. On one hand, students from both schools acknowledged teachers' respect, empathy and support and their supportive roles in the wider community. There were, however, also critical responses associated with a perceived lack of awareness of, or respect for, students' religious identities, and also subtle, possibly subconscious stereotyping by teachers. Such responses were more frequently from younger, Year 8 students than from more senior students. There was also an acknowledgment, especially from older students that the lines between racism and discipline were often blurred.

Students' Interactions with Other Students

A major challenge for schools in implementing inclusive multicultural policies and practices lies in ensuring students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds are equally valued, respected and supported. An important component in providing a safe and supportive environment for all students is the kind of relationships that exist between different groups of students at school. In their discussions regarding these matters, (Chapter 5), teachers raised the issues of racism and bullying between students. This was described as more common amongst students from Grades 8 to 10, and declined as the girls matured.

In the focus group interviews in particular the ASB Muslim students were invited to discuss relations with other students: their friendship groups, and the nature of relations between Muslim and non-Muslim students. In these discussions, students from both schools indicated their day-to-day interaction with non-Muslim peers were generally positive. Students, mainly in the upper grades at both schools, described positive, mutually respectful relations with students of other ethnic and religious backgrounds, though the majority belonged to friendship groups with other ASB Muslim students. Students at both schools described having ethnically diverse friendship groups when they were younger, but said that patterns of interaction changed as they grew older. They ascribed this to shared cultural and religious identities and the shared norms of behaviours and lifestyle with other ASB Muslim students.

Sarah: My group, my friends, we're all Lebanese but we're friends with another group and they're mixed so we talk to them.

Mariam: We just get along and we're more comfortable with each other.

Mariam: Yeah, it's ok. We get along (with non-Muslim students), there's that respect. (Grade 9 Macliffe)

A minority of students had ethnically diverse friendship groups. These students described mutual acceptance between Muslim and non-Muslim friends, and a shared awareness of how religious beliefs and culture affected their day-to-day lives. Students described how non-Muslim friends accommodated cultural and religious practices when organising activities.

It's mixed. Fijian, New Guinea, New Zealand and Lebanese, and we get along very well. Sometimes they're mostly interested in why we fast and why we do certain things. So they'll come and tell us and they'll ask us certain questions.

They'll hear us out. Like there was this Pacific Islander girl, she fasted half of Ramadan with us. She wanted to try it. (Dianne, Grade 12 Swanson)

Questionnaires and focus group responses also identified some tensions with students of other cultural or religious backgrounds, though these were minimal, and primarily amongst younger students. A minority of respondents perceived themselves to be treated differently due to their religious beliefs and practices. At Swanson, some comments described tensions in peer interaction.

They give us dirty looks, they make bad comments about our religion (Grade 8 Swanson)

They make fun of the way we dress. (Grade 8 Swanson)

Macliffe respondents also described some tensions in encounters with non-Muslim students particularly in the lower grades. However, these were comparatively fewer than at Swanson.

There are some racist people but we don't care, and lift our heads. (Grade 8)

Silly comments thrown at you, silly comments about the scarf. (Grade 8)

Racism from some students because of what they hear about our culture. (Grade 10)

As was the case with their relationships with teachers, students reported less tension, and more mutually respectful interactions with non-Muslim peers as they matured. Younger students at Swanson were more likely than the older students to discuss tensions with their peers, with students in the upper grades describing minimal

arguments and disagreements. This can be seen in two focus groups' descriptions of issues with their Pacific Islander background peers.

Manal: They don't like us. They're just racist towards us. We hang out in separate groups. The Pacific Islanders don't like us. Our whole year, one of the girls in her group, her best friend went with them; then they started to hit her.

Wanda: They'll say hello and that but then they'll give you dirties and speak in Samoan about us. (Grade 9 Swanson)

Students also pointed out tensions were not always racially motivated in the lower grades.

Shayma: But it's not really racist, probably they did something to each other and they take it to lunch or in class.

Douha: Sometimes it doesn't matter what you are. If something happens they argue and then it comes to a fight. We used to have more fights when we were in Grade 8. We were less mature. (Grade 9 Swanson)

Students at Macliffe reported fewer conflicts with other students who tended to *respect* each other and were *friendly*, and were interested in their culture and religious backgrounds. Students attributed this to the substantial number of Muslim students at the school.

They'll ask do you wear your scarf at home? Questions like that, they're curious. Some people think that all Muslims are Lebanese, they don't know the difference between the two. They don't know much about Islam. Well we're a big group here. I don't think they find that much of an issue. (Maryam, Grade11 Macliffe)

As with Swanson, upper grade Macliffe students described how their ethnically diverse school experience, both at the primary and secondary levels had meant non-Muslim peers knew them well, and got along with them. Similarly Macliffe students reported fewer conflicts as they matured.

Fatima: Because we've known many of them from primary. I don't think that they mind that we're Muslim and we wear a scarf and that, so we get along well.

Hanna: We're in year 11 now, but maybe when we were younger we worried about every little thing that happened. We don't really care about stuff like that.

(Grade 11 Macliffe)

Overall, students at both schools reported interacting positively with non-Muslim peers. Students mentioned conflicts at Swanson, but suggested that these were not necessarily racially-motivated, and that they occurred less frequently in the upper grades as students matured, and developed better interpersonal skills. Thus there was a correlation between the grade level of students and the nature of their responses concerning tensions with non-Muslim students and teachers. The fact that issues were raised more frequently by younger than older students suggest maturity was relevant here and that as students matured their experiences with interracial and interreligious diversity enabled them to develop the skills to deal with such tensions as they arose.

6.3.3 Students' perceptions of schools' responses to their religious needs

Students' Religious Identities

As indicated in chapter 3, proponents of faith-based schools argue that religiously segregated educational environments can more strongly foster students' cultural and religious identities than can state secular schools. One of the challenges for students in

secular schools is to be able to develop a positive sense of their own religious and cultural identity. This sub-section addresses the extent to which students in the two case study schools were able to do this.

In the questionnaires students responded to statements pertaining to their religious beliefs and practices. When asked to respond to the statement, *I am a practicing Muslim*, the majority of students (76%) from both schools responded *always*, while nearly all of the remainder (21%) responded *sometimes*. Students were also asked about their participation in Islamic practices, including reading of the Holy Qur'an and attending mosques or Islamic centres. When asked if they read the Holy Qur'an a lot, the highest proportion at both schools indicated *sometimes* (62%), with smaller proportions stating *always* or *rarely* at 16% each. When asked to describe the frequency of their visits to the mosque or Islamic centre, 54% of students in both schools responded *sometimes*, while almost the same proportion of students stated *always* and *rarely* at 19% and 21% respectively.

Focus groups' responses indicated that the majority of students viewed their religious beliefs to be important aspects of their identities, and as shaping their day-to-day lived experiences. Student responses concerning their religious beliefs emphasised belief and practice, especially adherence to rituals, and to the norms defining social interactions. Students utilised terms such as *structure*, *boundaries*, *guidelines for life*, *a whole life* to describe their experiences of religion.

Rayan: It gives you boundaries; not culture-wise, religion-wise you know that there is someone out there higher than you and to think that there are consequences to the way you act.

Dana: It's praying, fasting, giving zakat and hajj. Being clean, being kind and respectful to others. (Grade 12 Swanson)

Many students who identified themselves as religious were gaining textual knowledge of their faith (Afshar, Aitken, & Franks, 2005, p.276), and accessed religious information, and experiences reinforcing religious identity outside the schools. Students described access to Islamic knowledge through the Internet, translated books and through attending congregations and lecturers in local mosques or Islamic Centres. Students also described the influence of Islam in defining behaviour and social interactions with family members, males, and the wider community. Students emphasised good behaviour as an essential aspect of their faith.

I think before being a good Muslim you must be a good person, to have good morals like don't lie, don't cheat, don't steal, don't backstab, stuff like that. Some people are hypocrites. (Aisha, Grade 12 Swanson)

Students used the term *respect*, particularly in describing behaviour in social interactions and in other contexts. Respect was used to describe how students had to represent their religion through appropriate behaviour in public spaces, particularly in a non-Muslim environment where individual encounters helped to improve or undermine Australian society's perceptions of the Muslim community.

They (some of the girls) give Muslims a bad name. Like behaviour, talking to boys, swearing, drawing attention to themselves. (Douha, Grade 9 Swanson).

Focus group responses also highlighted the role of respectful interactions, as defined by the Islamic faith, in particular with parents, family and community elders as well as members of broader society:

I think Islam for me... it's about God obviously but another dimension- you also have this understanding of what is right and wrong. Like when your grandmother yells at me, I stay silent because of the respect you're taught about from a young age. It helps you to be a better person. (Fadilla, Grade 12 Swanson)

Discussions about students' religious identity invariably included references to Islamic dress codes. Wearing the hijab was perceived to be a significant element of being a practicing Muslim. Of the girls who participated in the focus groups, just over a half wore the hijab (53%). While recognising the importance of the hijab, students also discussed its implications when attending a secular school, and living in a secular society.

Students highlighted their families' levels of religiosity, and varying attitudes towards the hijab, as with other aspects of the religion. Some students described how parents discouraged them, or they themselves did not wear it due to perceived social pressures, fear of potential religious discrimination or as a barrier to future employment and opportunities for social participation.

I know there's no excuse for me not wearing the scarf. It's a kind of pressure as well. I'm not worried about labelling myself; I'm worried about being identified.

I'm worried about being judged. It's just how people perceive you and that's the only thing that I'm worried about. (Maya, Grade 11 Macliffe)

While students were able to deal with the attendant social pressures at school, they speculated on how the hijab would affect their capacities for social inclusion, due to prejudice, which may limit employment and other opportunities for general participation in society. Students' articulation of religious identities emphasised the values, ethics, and beliefs that students identified with being Muslim and which students did not perceive to be obstacles to participation in the wider society. Their opinions about religious identities did not refer to any contradiction with their Australian identities, but instead with values that ideally facilitated better interaction in wider Australian society.

Despite the students' descriptions of a strong religious identity and the large population of ASB Muslims students at the school, students described pressure to conform to more 'Western' secular adolescent lifestyles, such as in terms of appearance or social behaviour. These pressures to conform in a secular school were also raised by teachers (chapter 5).

Focus group responses described pressures on Muslim students, particularly those wearing hijab to conform to their community's expectations, and yet to still fit in with mainstream popular culture. Students who had not worn the hijab at a younger age pointed out the difficulty of wearing it later as the pressure to fit in to mainstream images of female adolescents and conforming to fashion was more pronounced,

particularly in a state secular school. This could also partly explain why Islamic dress became a salient point of reference.

They (students not wearing hijab) just want to look around at everyone else and they want to fit in with them, like swearing, going out with guys, listening to music. (Khadija, Grade 9 Swanson)

Students also described differences in lifestyles and beliefs of mainstream adolescent culture, and their own Muslim Arab backgrounds. When ASB Muslim students described the codes of behaviour which they were required to adhere to (prohibition of alcohol, nightclubs, mixing with males, etc.), they described how their non-Muslim peers displayed pity for them.

Sometimes they act like they feel sorry for us, especially when we tell them we're not allowed, like we can't sleep with guys before we get married, like they find that weird. They get shocked. They make us feel like we're not normal, and they're the normal ones...and that hurts a bit. (Fadilla, Grade 12 Swanson)

However, students believed these influences were less pronounced than in other schools with fewer Muslim students.

They're normal. They don't say anything, but I think it's because of the school; there are a lot of us here. At my old school that used to be different, I was the only one with the scarf... it was weird; they'd come and ask, why do you wear it? Ask so many questions. It was so annoying.. People are more friendly here; they don't care about anything. (Amal, Grade 9 Macliffe)

Students described the effects of the pressure to conform to the norms of their peers, and to their parents' and community's values and expectations. They narrated experiences of other ASB Muslim students who had disregarded religious and cultural values and family expectations. Students understood the pressures of being a young Muslim female growing up in a secular, non-Muslim environment, attributing behaviour, dress, and their interactions with others to these very same pressures to conform.

Amina: They have boyfriends behind their parents' back they take off their scarves, like my friend, her parents are so religious and she's still doing these things behind her parents' back.

Farah: They know they're always taking risks and they're lying to their parents.
(Grade 9 Macliffe)

Students noted the difficulties of maintaining their religious and cultural identities in a secular state school, where the mainstream culture was sometimes at odds with their beliefs and practices, for instance with issues concerning modesty, marriage, interaction with the opposite gender amongst others. This was seen as the main challenge in the provision of inclusive education for ASB Muslim students in state secular schools.

Challenges of Muslim identity and a Secular Curriculum

The previous chapter documented teachers' concerns about ensuring inclusive teaching for their ASB Muslim students within a compulsory, secular curriculum. However, it appeared that students were far less concerned about their experiences as Muslims of studying a secular curriculum at school. Students were aware of how their schools were inclusive, particularly in terms the non-curricular policies adopted, and in the provision

of facilities for Muslim students. They appeared to be more concerned about perceptions of teachers' limited awareness of their religious and cultural backgrounds.

Students' responses to questionnaire items that addressed inclusivity were largely related to practical non-curricular policies, such as the provision of halal food, a flexible uniform policy, prayer rooms and Muslim scripture classes. Students described accommodation in academic calendars of religious events, such as avoiding scheduling sports carnivals or examinations during Ramadan; and leniency with absences on the two main religious festivals of Eidul Fitr, (Feast of breaking the fast).

The girls are allowed to wear the hijab. There is a prayer room for those Muslim girls who pray. There is halal food at the canteen. (Grade 8 Macliffe)

You're allowed to wear a scarf; Prayer rooms; The school is really good in that they work around our special occasions. (Grade 10 Macliffe)

Although there were relatively few occasions in the questionnaires when students raised the secular nature of the curriculum content, where they did, their comments mainly related to Personal Development Health Physical Education (PDHPE). Students recognised inclusive policies that the PDHPE department had implemented to minimise exclusionary pressures for Muslim students, such as the provision of alternative sports attire; long Lycra clothes or the *Burkini* (a long, loose-fitting swim suit for Muslim females). However, they also discussed challenges they faced in participating in sports, particularly difficulties in participating in physical activities during the month of Ramadan – a month of fasting. The majority of concerns were raised by Macliffe students, where some of their often conflicting responses about policies may also

indicate a lack of clear, consistent school guidelines. For instance, while some students commented that they were required to participate in physical exercise during fasting other students stated that they were excused from these activities.

Fasting and sport- you must still do sport on a 40 degree day when you are fasting. (Grade 10 Macliffe)

Some teachers understand where us Muslim girls come from, like when we are fasting they give us a bit of a break. (Grade 11 Swanson)

One focus group also raised concerns about the subject of music, or other school activities involving music (as indicated in chapter 5, this issue was also of concern to teachers). Different Muslim interpretations concerning music range from prohibiting any music or singing, to more liberal stances which allow classical music forms, or lyrics that are of a religious nature or those which do not contravene Islamic beliefs. In their focus group, students recalled an incident during Ramadan when they had not wanted to attend a concert, but their request was refused by the school because the school had received prior approval from a local religious authority for students to attend.

Sanaa: Once in Ramadan there was this concert and we didn't want to watch it, and they said that they had files from the sheikh that it's not haram.

Shaza: She made us watch it. (Grade 9 Swanson)

Apart from some few concerns regarding PDHDE and music, students' questionnaire and focus group responses identified teachers' limited interreligious awareness as an issue in secular schools. Questionnaire responses, particularly at Macliffe emphasised

the importance of teachers' knowledge and perceptions of the students' cultural and religious identities, particularly in the context of classroom learning.

Sometimes, they lack to understand [sic] why we believe certain things and why it is obliged on us to act on a way, just respect the differences. (Grade 12 Macliffe)

Teachers should be educated about religion and not hear it through people (i.e. not just rumour), they should get the facts. (Grade 8 Swanson)

This concern was also raised during focus group sessions, when students perceived their religion had been misrepresented or wrongly blamed during class discussions of cultural practices by specific Muslim communities. Students were also concerned about some teachers' comments which they perceived to reflect negative or critical stereotypes of Muslims or Arabs.

When learning about Islam in studies of religion, she puts down our religion and makes it seem like the scarf is bad, she is very negative towards Islam and Muslims. (Grade 11 Swanson)

Sometimes Muslims are spoken about badly in class when I'm around and not payed (sic) attention to, not cared the feelings, need more knowledge about religion. (Grade 12 Macliffe)

Students also described being perceived as a homogeneous ethno-religious group, where diversity, based for example on varying levels of spiritual commitment, and maturity, was not sufficiently recognised in their secular-oriented schools. Students' discussions on uniform policy, was one example that reflected this concern. In both

schools though more so at Swanson, the uniform policies were designed to be flexible in order to accommodate Muslim students. Swanson students did not raise concerns about the uniform policy, whereas Macliffe students, who identified with a more conservative interpretation of the dress code, thought it was not sufficiently accommodating of their needs.

Once I came to school with a top that went down to my knee. And one teacher...ran after me to tell me that it was out of uniform ... It was the actual top but longer...The principal goes this is not uniform. They think that we're just a big group and everyone does the same thing, but they don't really know that there are different sides to us. (Batoul, Grade 9 Macliffe)

Students were also aware of the difficulties schools faced in accommodating religious diversity. Older students recognised that some younger students used aspects of religious belief, such as fasting, and conservative interpretations of music to justify exemption from school activities. As indicated in chapter 5, for teachers this was a source of frustration.

In sum, articulations of their identities indicate that, in spite of pressures to conform to mainstream adolescent culture, ASB Muslim students have generally been able to develop positive religious and cultural identities within their secular schools, with access to religious knowledge coming from community interactions in the local mosque, Muslim women's groups, or Islamic Centres. However, concern was expressed about the pressures to conform to dominant mainstream youth culture in terms of dress codes and social behaviour, though the substantial number of Muslims at the schools tended to reduce this pressure somewhat. Students generally reported positive and

respectful relations with their non-Muslim peers, although in both schools their friendship groups were primarily with other Muslim students. Although teachers raised the issue of tensions between students' religious identities and the schools' secular curriculum, this issue did not appear to be of particular concern to students. What little discussion there was of this issue, primarily addressed concerns with the PDHPE and music syllabi.

6.3.4 Conclusion to Section

This section has focused on students' perceptions of the ways in which their schools responded to their cultural and religious backgrounds. Outcomes indicated that students at both schools appreciated their schools' attempts to address multiculturalism, to promote harmony and to reject racism, and that they generally regarded their experiences at school as positive. Students described interactions with teachers both in positive and negative terms. The majority described the supportive roles that teachers played in their learning, and felt they were treated fairly by teachers. However, a minority, primarily younger students, also criticised teachers for a perceived lack of understanding of, or respect for, students' religious identities. They attributed some tensions to subtle stereotyping or racism by teachers. However, like teachers, most of the older students were aware of the blurred line between perceptions of racism and discipline. Students reported few problems in interactions between Muslim and non-Muslim students, and most incidents appeared to have been primarily between younger students. This positive environment was supported by the two schools' effective responses to antiracism, and support of multiculturalism at school.

Students spoke at length about the pressures to conform to mainstream 'Western' lifestyle, which was sometimes at odds with Islamic beliefs and practices (e.g. dress

code, diet, alcohol consumption, dating, etc.). However, these pressures did not seem to be very pronounced perhaps due to the large number of Muslim girls at the school. Despite these pressures, students appeared to have a positive sense of their religious identity, with the majority describing themselves as practicing Muslims, and participating in associated activities. Although teachers raised the issue of tensions between students' religious identities and the schools' secular curriculum, this was not raised as an issue of particular concern to students.

6.4 Culture and Religion: Students' Perceptions of the Interface between School, Local Community and Society

6.4.1 Introduction to Section

To this point, the structure of chapter 6 has broadly mirrored that of chapter 5. Thus discussion in chapter 5 of teachers' perceptions of students' language and literacy abilities and of the respective schools' responses to students' cultural and religious backgrounds has been mirrored in chapter 6 by a discussion of the students' perceptions of these same issues. However, as indicated in the introduction to the chapter, in this final major section of chapter 6, the structure differs from that of chapter 5. This section addresses students' perceptions of their relationship with broader society, including the impact of crisis events; it deals with their aspirations for the future, and in doing so addresses some of the pressures they face in their interactions with families and local community; and finally it addresses students' perceptions of the value of attending a secular school. Although chapter 5 explored some of these issues from the school's perspectives, the discussion in this section is more wide ranging with an emphasis on

students' sense of belonging, their general societal experiences, their post-school aspirations and attendant exclusionary factors. Thus this section examines students' culture and religion, through a focus on the interface between students, the school, local community and society. In doing so, it addresses issues of inclusion – in education and in the broader society.

6.4.2 Students' Interface with Society

National Identity

As indicated, in both questionnaires and focus group interviews students were asked about their experiences of being a Muslim within Australian state schools, and more generally about their Muslim identities. Responses from students at both Swanson and Macliffe opened up broader issues regarding their perceptions of Australian society and their place within it. Students described their anxieties about being Australian ASB Muslim girls; tensions arising from global incidents involving Muslims; the effects of the global War on Terror; and local incidents such as the racially-motivated Cronulla riots. Amongst other issues, questions of national identity arose. The more open-ended nature of the focus group interviews in particular provided opportunities for students to address these issues – as this was clearly a topic of concern to them.

Students' interviews at both schools indicated that although the majority identified with being Australian, they also strongly identified with their predominantly Lebanese roots, and with their Muslim faith.

[Do you classify yourself as Lebanese or Australian?]

Zeenat: When I'm here, I'm Lebanese and when I'm in Lebanon I'm Australian. When you're here, everyone's Australian, and when someone asks you where

are you from, they're not really asking you where were you born, they're asking you about your background.

Katerine: It's like what are you raised as, I'm Australian.

Emany: I'm Australian. (Grade 11 Swanson)

Fahima: I say I'm Lebanese.

Fairuz: Yeah but obviously we're Australian because we were born in Australia. (Grade 11 Macliffe)

Many students were also comfortable with using hyphenated identities, emphasising both their Australian and Lebanese backgrounds.

Basma: Lebanese- Australian- Muslim.

Farah: Lebanese-Australian.

Amina: Australian-Lebanese.

Basma: Maybe more Lebanese. (Grade 9 Macliffe)

Students' strong identification with their predominantly Lebanese roots may partly relate to the local community's close-knit nature, and geographical concentration within specific Sydney suburbs. As teachers pointed out (chapter 5), students' tendency to interact mainly with families and members of their own local community was likely to reinforce this identification. Macliffe teachers, in particular, raised concerns about students' sense of belonging in Australia, and the need for students to 'claim a space' in Australian society.

However some students, in addition to their identification as Lebanese, felt a sense of exclusion from mainstream Australian society. Students attributed this sense of exclusion to the contemporary socio-political climate, to negative perceptions of the

ASB Muslim community within the broader Australian society, to their own experiences of racial and/or religious intolerance, and to negative media portrayal of Australian ASB Muslims. This sense of exclusion was evident in their responses about cultural and religious identity.

Targeted by the police, isolated by the government, what we do is always wrong. (Grade 8 Swanson)

Things have eased since the Cronulla riots. I used to be scared because my dad used to take us to Cronulla and we used to sit there. And my mother's got a scarf on and last year we stopped going there because of what happened. (Grade 11 Swanson)

It was also evident in student discussion of the media reporting of incidents involving Australian ASB and/or Muslims, and in the general stance of the Australian media towards Muslims, Arabs and Islam that they perceived as bias at work. Students believed this stance contributed to negative judgements about Muslims, and created a climate of suspicion and fear of Australian Muslims and the ASB community. Questionnaire responses indicated this was a serious concern for students.

Some people are racist, because they treat you really badly, like if one Leb (Lebanese) does something wrong, the media starts saying that all Lebs are the same and it makes people hate us for what we aren't, because we are not all like that. (Grade 8 Macliffe)

Due to the way that Muslims are portrayed in the media, it creates tension between people. (Grade 12 Macliffe)

Focus groups discussions also addressed the influential role of media in shaping public perceptions of Australian ASB Muslims.

I gotta admit that if I wasn't Lebanese and Muslim, and I saw what the media shows, it would have an impact on me. That's how powerful it is. (Maya, Grade 11 Macliffe).

They think that just because a group of our people are bad that all of us are bad, that we're terrorists and that. (Fawziya, Grade 9 Swanson)

In contrast, other students (although a minority) conveyed optimism about their sense of Australian belonging, and perceived Australian society as becoming increasingly more accepting of Australian Muslims and those of ASB.

Salwa: Most people are ok about Muslims.

Hannah: They see that it's normal and they accept it more. (Grade 11 Macliffe)

Australia is a country of rights. I feel safe. However, what I don't like is how if one Lebanese person is put on television they think everyone is like that; Stereotypes, people say all Muslims are terrorists. (Grade 8 Macliffe)

Racism and Islamophobia

In addition to issues of identity, questionnaire and interview responses highlighted students' concerns about possible racial and religious discrimination outside school. A number of students from both schools referred to experiences of racial/religious vilification that they, or people they knew, had experienced. Students who wore the hijab in particular more often reported experiencing religious abuse in public spaces, such as verbal attacks by members of the public, or incessant staring which made the girls feel insecure or fearful.

Once a guy told me, ‘where’s the bomb?’ (Grade 12 Macliffe)

When I was at Leichardt, an old man walked past me and my sister and told us to take our scarves off. I’m scared and uncomfortable in the city and in Aussie neighbourhoods. (Grade 10 Macliffe)

Some people stare at us because of what we wear, we are unable to act normally after the Cronulla riots happened. (Grade 11 Swanson)

A minority of interviewees did not wear the hijab. As a consequence these students were not easily identified by members of the broader community as Muslim. In their focus group interviews, these students said they had not experienced direct racial or religious discrimination or vilification, and they attributed this to not wearing the hijab. One of these student commented:

I have had only a few bad experiences concerning religion, when people find out about my heritage and my religion, I think they treat me differently. A lot of the times, I convince myself I’m being paranoid. (Grade 12 Macliffe)

In their focus group discussion, a larger number of students described being verbally abused, or stared at while on trains or buses, in shopping centres and on the street. Student responses to these incidents were either passive or defensive. Students also indicated that in some situations, they were left puzzling over whether or not rude or aggressive treatment by members of the public was racially-based. These experiences of being treated differently were what could be termed incidents of “everyday racism” or “subtle experiences of racism” where “racism is expressed in covert ways” (Essed, 2002, p.211).

Like even shopping, people chuck dirties (dirty looks) and you don't even know why. For sport, we went to Como for sport but the people there, they were nasty, they kept giving us filthy looks, especially for the scarfies (students wearing hijabs), this guy screamed at one of the girls to get out of his way even though she wasn't in his way. (Meera, Grade 11 Macliffe)

Students reported anxiety about having to face negative perceptions and stereotypes of Arab and/or Muslim women. In some instances, students used humour when discussing their experiences of how other members of society perceived them as aliens in areas with a less visible Muslim presence.

We went to Bondi last year in year 10 (all laugh). When we were at McDonalds.... They were too Aussie. We were at the shopping centre and people were saying, 'Who are they? Where did they come from?' they kept talking like that. (Rauda, Grade 12 Swanson)

Safe and Unsafe Spaces

A recurring theme raised in more than half the students' questionnaire responses was the demarcation of safe and unsafe spaces. The two case study schools are located in areas of Sydney with diverse ethnic communities, including visible ASB Muslim communities. Students' questionnaire and interview responses indicated that, because of the visible presence of Muslims, students felt safe in their local areas. They also felt safe in other areas in Sydney where there was a visible Australian Arab and/or Muslim presence. Students in both schools and across the grades differentiated between safe spaces in their wider community and the spaces where they perceived themselves to feel insecure or where there was a potential risk of racial or religious discrimination or fear for their physical safety.

When we are in our community, it doesn't feel weird because there are a lot of ladies wearing the hijab so you wouldn't get picked on. (Grade 10 Swanson)

It's normal being a Muslim in my local community because everyone around me is Lebanese, I feel safe because there are a lot of Lebanese in the area. (Grade 11 Swanson)

Secure spaces were contrasted with unsafe spaces in Sydney, such as Cronulla (the site of racially motivated riots in 2005), Bondi, and Central Sydney. Students said they did not feel comfortable in these areas, and identified them as places where there was a less visible Muslim presence, or as sites where they experienced racial or religious vilification.

I won't feel safe walking around Cronulla and other places like that because some Aussies are racist. (Grade 11 Swanson)

This demarcation of safe and unsafe spaces was also reflected in students' gender. Focus group interviews with students from both schools included considerable discussion of family expectations of their behaviour as girls. Much of this discussion centred around the importance of being at home and spending time with extended family members, or with other girls from ASB Muslim families.

They (parents) just want protection for the girls, so the girls should sit at home, because of the things that are happening around us. Like I know it's strict but if I had a daughter I would do the same thing. (Amina, Grade 9 Macliffe)

On the other hand, students contrasted their parents' and the community's general expectations of young women with their expectation of young males. Although parents

still feared for their sons, these fears were different, and typically concerned possible involvement with drugs, crime and violence. Many of the female students believed boys had more freedom of movement, and were less closely supervised in their community.

In sum, what emerges from these discussions of their interface with broader Australian society is a complex picture. Students' cultural and religious backgrounds clearly impact on their perceptions of national identity. While in itself this is not unusual, for ASB Muslim students, the current socio-political context means that they are negotiating their way between national Australian and cultural/religious identities in a climate they perceive, at least in part, to be hostile to them and to their families. The socio-political context has also had a broader effect on students and their families. Students reported that their families were fearful of interaction with Australian society beyond the confines of their local communities. These fears included the possibility of racial or religious vilification; fears for girls' physical safety; and concerns with ways in which Muslim minority groups are portrayed by the Australian media. These fears and concerns have shaped students' and their families' perceptions of what are safe and unsafe spaces.

Students' views of these fears raise broader questions about the insularity of their community. Teachers also raised this issue, and expressed concerns that levels of parental protectiveness meant students missed opportunities for other experiences, and opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and confidence when interacting beyond their immediate communities. Only one student directly addressed this issue. This student had been raised in a different Australian state in a community where there was little Muslim presence.

When you're in such a confined area like Swanson with all the Lebos and all Pacific Islanders, that's basically the majority, you're not exposed to all these cultures so they've only got one view. (Fadilla, Grade 12 Swanson)

Such comments are directly relevant to the role of the minority community in 'claiming a space' in Australian society. They are also relevant to questions regarding inclusion of minority students within secular schools, and within a multicultural society.

6.4.3 Students' Post-School Aspirations

Education and Career Aspirations

Students in both schools expressed intentions to pursue post-secondary education, and/or employment. Their questionnaire responses identified diverse educational and career pathways. As with findings from other studies of Muslim women as minorities in Western societies (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006), the responses contrasted with stereotyped notions of Muslim women as homemaker and mother. That said, however, they also talked about future marriage and family formation as key considerations influencing post-school education and career choice.

In the questionnaire responses, students from both schools reported planning to pursue vocational education, apprenticeships, university education or fulltime employment. Table 6 below presents a summary of intended future studies and/or employment pathways based on the questionnaire.

Table 5 Students' intended education and employment pathways

	Vocational Education/Apprenticeships	University Education	Work (no study)
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Grade 8 (Swanson)	hairdressing, sewing, travel & tourism, business, beauty (2), fashion design, police, business (8 students)	Interior design, midwifery, counselling, teaching (2), dentistry (9 students)	0
Grade 8 (MacLiffe)	beauty, hairdressing (3), childcare (6 students)	Nutrition, psychology, law (2), pharmacy (2), medicine (4), teaching, nursing, mathematics, interior design (2) (12 students)	0
Grade 10 (MacLiffe)	hairdressing (3), beauty (3), childcare, police (7 students)	Midwifery, science, teaching (3) nursing (2), journalism, something at uni (5) (13 students)	1 Secretary
Grade 11 (Swanson)	Childcare (2), pre-pharmacy, beautician, hairdressing (2), travel-agent (7 students)	Interior design (2), teaching (5), chemistry, social work, law (4), medical science, business (15 students)	2 Bank assistant Secretary
Grade 12 (MacLiffe)	Pathology Customs (2 students)	Interior design, architecture, teaching (2), pharmacy, business (3), psychology, nursing, IT (12 students)	0

As can be seen in Table 6, almost all students from both schools planned for further study after school. The majority of students in both schools (approximately 65%) wanted to pursue a university education while most of the remainder were interested in vocational education or apprenticeships. Three students planned to go directly to employment (secretaries and bank assistant). Traditionally female-dominated professions were highly represented in students' choices (e.g. teaching, nursing, midwifery, hairdressing, beauty, etc.), though there was also a diversity of career choices across the grades.

When asked about parental preferences, the majority of students (85%) described parental support for their career choices. A minority (4%) reported differences, and attributed these differing expectations to higher parental (possibly unrealistic) expectations of academic performance; a lack of motivation or ability on their part to attain the required grades; lack of parental awareness of how the school system works; and differing beliefs about gender-appropriate employment pathways. The following comments from the questionnaire were typical.

Teacher or other women-like jobs; parents don't understand the school system.
(Grade 12 Macliffe)

My parents want me to do something that I will never be able to do. (Grade 11,
Swanson)

Because I don't think I'm motivated. (Grade 11 Swanson)

Overall, student responses at both schools pointed to high aspirations for future study and career choices. It appeared that the majority of parents supported students in their post-school goals and choices.

Marriage, Family Formation

While student questionnaire responses identified clear post-school goals and career choices, their focus group discussions also cited future family and childrearing responsibilities as factors that would influence their future study or careers, and as challenges to future employment. Their concerns appeared to relate primarily to their perceived gender roles, rather than to their Muslim background, although their emphasis on the importance of family was consistent with values within the Muslim community.

My mum likes teaching. She says don't think of now, think of the long run. When you're older and you have kids, you will have holidays with your kids and it's not that stressful. I say I want to do childcare, but that's my last resort. I like the business and office. (Diana, Grade 12 Swanson)

Focus group discussions highlighted the importance of marriage and motherhood in students' future plans. These were important goals for students, and valued by parents and the community; this mirrored teachers' comments in the previous chapter.

[Is marriage important to you?]

All: Yeah

Dianne: It's a part of your religion.

Basila: It's half of your religion. (Grade 12 Swanson)

Focus group discussions in both schools also addressed the issue of a suitable age for marriage. Views on this issue appeared to reflect changing attitudes within the community, with students reporting different views from parents. Even in the case of students from more traditional families, where they were encouraged to marry in the late teens or early twenties, they were also expected to pursue post-secondary studies. The majority of students in both school reported parents expected academic success, tertiary study, but that marriage was also encouraged either during or after university.

Probably in my twenties, if I get into uni. It'll be like 22 and if not then maybe earlier. (Fairuz, Grade 11 Macliffe)

A small number of students also mentioned parents who valued traditional gender roles and early marriage after high school, and who had limited expectations of their studies and/ or work roles.

Mariam: My dad wants me to get married but my mum doesn't. My mum wants me to see to my future other than marriage.

Sarah: ...my mum sees it more as a religious thing, because she doesn't see it as right for a girl to... like she still wants me to go off to uni but she still doesn't think it's right for a girl to go to places by herself without getting married.
(Grade 9 Macliffe)

However, only a small minority (8%) of students reported plans to marry straight after school.

Workforce Participation

As the above discussion indicates, students reported clear post-school education and vocational goals. However, their fears about participation in the broader community meant future study and work choices were constrained. These possible constraints ranged from concerns about family commitments, the geographical proximity of work or educational opportunities to their local community, concerns for their physical safety, the gender-suitability of particular jobs and the possibility of racial/religious discrimination resulting in a lack of access to employment opportunities.

As above, students from both schools placed a high priority on marriage and family. Thus they reported considerations regarding family and childrearing commitments as one of the factors that would shape their decision making process about which post-school pathways to take. In focus group interviews students discussed balancing family responsibilities (childrearing) with work.

Fatima: I want to work when I get married.

Badria: I wouldn't work when I have children, then when they go to school, I'll be able to work. (Grade 9 Swanson)

While such concerns overlap with those of many other non-Muslim women, students also reported a range of other factors that were more directly related to their cultural and religious backgrounds. Students repeated parental concerns about the unsuitability for young women of certain workplaces where young males hung out or where they would have to leave their local area.

Shayma: They (parents) don't want us to work there (part-time sales-assistant) because all the guys meet up in places like that with their friends, it'll be a hang out joint.

Dana: My Dad would (let me work outside the local area). If it was something good, maybe, I could go by train. (Grade 9 Swanson)

With limited interaction and experiences with broader society, students themselves were apprehensive about finding work outside of their immediate local area – an attitude reflecting teachers' concerns about the insularity of the community.

Khadija: I'd travel for work but I prefer here.

Samira: I don't know what those places are like, I haven't been out much. (Grade 11 Macliffe)

The majority of students also reported concern about possible stereotyping, discrimination or vilification in workplaces beyond their local community, and because of this were apprehensive about seeking employment in areas outside of their comfort zones.

I want to do law and she's (mum) worried about racism and uni and there are people out there that don't like Muslims, and that I'd have trouble finding a job but I told her, that's my passion, I want to do it. (Maya, Grade 11 Macliffe)

It's not hard to find a job but for what you want, you might find it difficult to find a job in that area with the hijab. (Samar, Grade 9 Macliffe)

These concerns were often reactions to local socio-political realities, and crisis events involving Australian Muslims or those of Arabic backgrounds.

If we look around for work in this area we won't get much racism but if we look for work down in other areas, like Bondi or Cronulla, we'd probably get shot (laughs). (Dianne, Grade 12 Swanson)

A minority of students, however, expressed optimism in their focus group interviews about equal access to future work opportunities. Their optimism was based on seeing Muslim women who wear the hijab as role models, who had secured employment in their chosen fields, as well as protecting their sense of belonging as Australian Muslims, thanks to the nation's egalitarian 'fair go' ideals.

There are so many Muslims in this country that are successful and helped to make Australia what it is today; Not much (concerned) because I am not any different from anyone else and I am an Australian and should be treated fairly and equally like everyone else. (Grade 12 Macliffe)

I also look up to my sisters-in-law, because they all wear the scarf. One went to uni and one of them is a doctor, she's in uni and she's doing medicine and one is a teacher. (Badria, Grade 9 Macliffe)

In sum, students in both schools had high aspirations for future study and careers. Like their families, they placed a high value on marriage and family and most appeared comfortable with family expectations that they combine marriage and family responsibilities with the pursuit of their studies and career. They were aware of factors that could affect post-school career choices. Some of these factors reflected gender concerns about the need to balance family responsibilities and career. However, other factors were more directly related to cultural and religious backgrounds and included concerns about the possibilities of racial vilification and discrimination in workplaces that were beyond their own local communities.

Discussion in this sub-section and the previous section raised broader issues about the need for minority groups, including ASB Muslim groups to ‘claim a space’ within Australian society. It also raised questions about the inclusion of students within secular schools, and within a multicultural society. The final sub-section turns to students’ perceptions of the value of their participation in a secular school and its potential to facilitate the inclusion of minority groups such as ASB Muslims within the broader society.

6.4.4 Culture and Religion: Students’ perceptions of inclusive education

Chapter 3 included a discussion of the relative merits of faith-based and secular schooling for ASB Muslim students. Although the students who were the focus of this research were not in a position to compare different kinds of schooling (since they had only attended secular state schools), their comments, especially during focus group interviews, directly and indirectly, addressed this issue. This sub-section presents

students' views on issues relevant to their participation in a secular schooling, and also relevant to the notion of inclusive education. Rather than presenting students' responses to specific question, this sub-section draws from responses across a range of questions. It therefore overlaps with some of the previous sub-sections, especially sub-section 6.3.2 where students' experiences of interactions with their teachers and non-Muslim peers were addressed. However, the purpose here is to draw together students' perceptions that are especially relevant to the notion of inclusive education.

Students' interactions with their non-Muslim teachers

As indicated in sub-section 6.3.2, the majority of students valued interactions with their non-Muslim teachers. Some students in the lower grades in both schools were critical of their teachers and accused them of racism, however, most students, especially in higher grades, saw interaction with teachers as inter-cultural and inter-religious encounters that were particularly significant in light of recent socio-political realities. Most students described inter-religious interactions with teachers as characterised by mutual respect for different perspectives.

Rayan: They (teachers) want to understand the purposes of things in a certain way. We get into detail.

Aisha: We have a lot of discussions with Ms M because she's an atheist and we have discussions about religion. We don't argue, she's read the Qur'an. Our teachers are all cool. (Grade 12 Swanson)

In their focus group discussions, students indicated a willingness to discuss their religious identities with teachers. They distinguished what they regarded as teachers' genuine questions of interest from those they perceived to ridicule or criticise their beliefs.

Diana: We're closer to them now a lot more, they know a lot about us and we know a lot about them. Except one teacher...

Basila: Mrs N. She always questions the scarf, and she says 'why do you wear that if it's so hot?' but not in a nice way, she gets kind of annoying.

Diana: She's trying to be annoying; she's still the same in year 12. I don't think any of them are racist but it's just that one... she's racist. (Grade 12 Swanson)

In an echo of their teachers' responses (chapter 5), Swanson students, in particular, were also aware that teachers' contact with their Muslim students had allowed teachers to reassess their preconceptions about Muslim communities, and had given them the opportunity to see issues from a different perspective. Students regarded this as significant, especially for teachers who resided in areas of Sydney that did not have a visible Muslim population or migrant presence, and where prevailing views of Muslim communities were negative.

(Teachers treat us the) same as everyone else. They don't give us titles or anything. They crack jokes about it [the current political situation] because they know we have a sense of humour and many of our teachers live in areas where it's just Aussies. They use their knowledge to enlighten other people about who we are as a people so they go and tell people that 'they're not actually like that.... They're not all terrorists'. (Fadilla, Grade 12 Swanson)

In their focus group discussions, some of the students explained that teachers had taken on the role of mediating between the broader community and the students themselves. For example, as indicated above, some teachers had taken on the role of defending Muslim students and their communities in their interactions with others in their own

local communities; but they also encouraged students to modify their loud behaviour in public spaces in order not to reinforce stereotypes about Muslims in the broader society.

Lubna: Most people should understand that there are bad and good people here.

Anaya: And that's the majority of the staff here. But with the teachers and the students, they do, they're very good. I don't know about other schools. At our school, most of our girls are good; however, about 5% and that's where all the complaints come from... He understands that everyone stereotypes and things like that would fall back on all of us. (Grade 11 Macliffe)

Interactions between Muslim and non-Muslim students

As discussed in sub-section 6.3.2, students also valued their interactions with other non-Muslim students. In their focus group discussions, they underscored the value of being in a culturally diverse school because of the opportunities it afforded for the development of awareness and the skills for dealing with inter-cultural and inter-religious issues. They also valued opportunities for non-Muslim students to learn about ASB Muslim students' perspectives on their religious and cultural beliefs and practices. As with their interaction with teachers, they felt their interactions with non-Muslim students were all the more important in the current socio-political climate. Responses to the statement *My fellow non-Muslim students know about my religious beliefs and practices* were positive (50 and 40 students from Swanson and Macliffe respectively, *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with this statement). Students' focus group comments supported their questionnaire responses.

Sometimes we compare the religions. We talk about the similarities. We find that we are very alike. There are some things that are different but we respect that, we don't criticise each other over the differences. We just explain. They'll

ask things like, why do you fast, but you're not just religious. They find it interesting. (Meera, Grade 11 Macliffe)

A number of students were aware that, as with teachers, interactions between Muslim and non-Muslim peers allowed the non-Muslim students to challenge negative perceptions or stereotypes.

One girl said that when I first met you, I couldn't believe you were Muslim. She said to me, 'when I first saw you I didn't even want to know you; my father warned me from people like you. And then, when I found out you were Egyptian I thought I'd give you a chance...I even argue sometimes with my parents sometimes'. She's not even Anglo, she's Asian. (Meera, Grade 11 Macliffe)

Impact of the socio-political context

As the earlier discussion of students' study and career aspirations has shown, they were very much aware of the effect of broader societal events on their interactions within school and with broader Australian society. They were also conscious of stereotypes and negative perceptions of Muslims. Focus groups again and again reflected on this issue, and on the impact it had on their interactions in school and beyond. They were also very aware of the role of the media in constructing perceptions of ethnic and religious groups, and in reporting social events and crises.

I think their (non-Muslim peers) perceptions change a lot when they hear it from you. In the media, it's expressed as really negative, but when they hear it from us it's really different...There's nothing that gets serious that we argue about. (Meera, Grade 11 Macliffe)

Although generally students felt they could engage in constructive discussions about cultural and religious differences with their non-Muslim peers, some of the older students recalled how crisis events involving Australian ASB and/or Muslim people had in the past, caused tensions. Here the schools' multicultural and anti-racism policies were highly relevant. Some of the Grade 11 Macliffe students recalled how the racially-motivated Cronulla riots had affected interactions between ASB students and students of other ethnic/religious groups. They described the response of Macliffe school authorities to subsequent incidents in the school.

After the Cronulla riots, some people were very racist and there was graffiti all over the school about Muslim girls, like fuck Lebos and Aussie Pride, and they marched around the school saying Aussies Rule, Aussies Rule. The spoke on assembly and they said that we should all respect other cultures and that we were a multicultural school. And they repainted the toilets and got rid of the graffiti. (Mayada, Grade 11 Macliffe)

In sum, students' comments point to the overall value of inter-cultural and inter-religious interactions between Muslim students, their teachers and their non-Muslim peers. Although not without problems and tensions, the students were aware of the significance of these interactions in redressing stereotypes and ill-informed attitudes. Their comments are significant for the debate about the value of faith-based versus secular education for Muslim students in Australia, and more generally for an understanding of inclusive education.

6.4.5 Conclusion to Section

This section has addressed the broad themes of culture and religion through a focus on students' articulations of their religious and national identities, and their sense of

belonging and/ or exclusion in Australian society as ASB Muslim Australian women. What emerges here is a complex picture. Students' cultural and religious backgrounds clearly affect their perceptions of national identity. While, in itself, not unusual, for ASB Muslim students, the current socio-political context means that they are negotiating their way between national Australian and cultural/religious identities in a climate they perceive, at least in part, to be hostile to them and to their community. The socio-political context appeared to affect students and their families in other ways as well. Students reported that their families were fearful of their daughters' interaction with Australian society beyond their local communities. These fears included the possibility of racial or religious vilification; fears for girls' physical safety; and concerns with ways in which Muslim minority groups are portrayed in the Australian media. These fears and concerns have shaped students' and their families' perceptions of what are safe and unsafe spaces. Students' discussions of these fears raised a broader question about the community's insularity. Teachers had also raised this issue, and expressed concern that parents' levels of protectiveness meant students missed opportunities for experiences, and opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and confidence in interacting beyond their communities.

The section also addressed students' post-school education and employment aspirations. Outcomes from analysis of questionnaire responses and focus group interviews provided evidence that students in the two schools had high aspirations for their future studies and careers. Like their families, they placed a high value on marriage and family and most appeared comfortable with family expectations that they combine marriage and family responsibilities with the pursuit of their studies and careers. They were aware of a number of factors that would affect their choice of post-school career. Some

of these factors reflected gender concerns regarding the need to balance family responsibilities with career. However, other factors were more directly related to their cultural and religious backgrounds and included concerns about the possibilities of racial vilification and discrimination in workplaces that were beyond their own local communities.

Students were aware of the overall value of inter-cultural and inter-religious interactions between Muslim students, their teachers and their non-Muslim peers. Although they were aware of problems and tensions in some of their interactions, students were also aware of the significance of these interactions in redressing stereotypes and ill-informed attitudes. Outcomes from the section as a whole have implications for the debate about the value of faith-based versus secular education for Muslim students, and for the debate about the nature and value of inclusive education for ASB Muslim students in Australia. They point to the value of inclusive education for both Muslim and non-Muslim students and for their teachers. They also point to the value of inter-cultural and inter-religious interactions for a more tolerant multicultural society.

6.5 Conclusion: Summary of Findings

This chapter reported on student perceptions of their academic profile and their abilities in both English and Arabic; and their perceptions of their schools' responses to their cultural and religious backgrounds. It has also addressed students' perceptions of their interface with their school, their family and local community, and with the broader society, which included students' post-school goals, and factors that have shaped these goals. A summary of major findings from the chapter are presented below.

Literacy and Language Education

- The majority of students indicated positive perceptions of their current and future academic proficiency. This, to some extent contrasted with teachers' reports of the polarity of student academic profiles, and their overrepresentation at the bottom end of the scale as discussed in the previous chapter.
- Students' responses concerning English language and literacy proficiency indicated challenges in academic reading, writing and oral communication. This mirrored teachers' concerns about students' language and literacy proficiency, and further highlighted the need for sustained and intensive literacy and language support.
- Student reports on Arabic language use and proficiency emphasised its value in the maintenance of cultural and religious identity, community membership, and communication with family and community members. While the majority reported learning Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in the primary and early secondary years of schooling, the percentage had been significantly reduced by the upper grades. A slightly higher percentage of upper Grade Swanson students studying Arabic correlated with the provision of Arabic classes at the school. Normally the most common contexts for learning Arabic were community-run afternoon classes, and weekend state funded community language schools.

Culture and Religion

- Students described their schools multicultural education initiatives positively, particularly concerning approaches to anti-racism and community harmony. They described a sense of security and comfort at their respective schools, which they attributed to the high ASB Muslim student cohorts, and the schools' ethnically diverse student populations as well as their antiracism stances.

Though interracial/interreligious tensions occurred, these were reported as uncommon at both schools. Upper grade students at both schools, on the other hand, were consistently more positive in discussing interactions with both teachers and non-Muslim peers, while tensions with students and teachers were more commonly described by younger students (Grades 8 and 9). Fewer tensions amongst the older students was ascribed to their maturity, and to intercultural/ interreligious awareness gained through interactions in the course of their schooling.

- Student discussions about interactions with teachers drew mixed responses. Interactions were seen as cross-cultural encounters, characterised by mutual respect and acknowledgment of different viewpoints. Negative reports related to tensions, which students partly attributed to discipline issues, teachers’ limited intercultural/ interreligious awareness, or to student perceptions of teachers’ subtle stereotyping, criticism, or racism.
- While curricular issues were emphasised by teachers, more student discussions arose concerning issues of religious identity and the pressures to conform to mainstream popular culture. However, the substantial number of Muslim students at the schools reduced these pressures, as friendship groups consisted largely of other ASB Muslim students, with shared beliefs, and lifestyles. Students described a generally strong sense of Islamic identity, which was facilitated by participation in activities held in community-run centres and mosques.
- Students articulated a sense of Australian national belonging, and also a sense of belonging to their parents’ countries of origin. However, students’ sense of Australian national belonging was perceived to be undermined by experiences of

racial/ religious stereotyping, and discrimination. Students had clear demarcations for safe (visible Muslim or ethnically diverse population) and unsafe spaces (mono-cultural areas, sites of previous ethnic tensions) in Sydney, due to fears of racial/ religious vilification and for physical safety meant limiting opportunities in broader society.

- All questionnaire respondents expressed plans to pursue post-secondary studies, with a higher preference for university compared to vocational education, while direct employment was much less popular. Most students indicated parental support for post-school goals, with a perception of higher academic expectations for females than males. Career choices reflected a diverse range of fields, though professions in female-dominated fields were overrepresented.
- Post-school education and employment goals were influenced by factors such as the perceived flexibility of the field for accommodating family responsibilities, the suitability of career choices for females, perceptions of the degree of racial/ religious discrimination as barriers for accessing employment, and the geographic proximity of available work or education opportunities.
- Discussions about their increased interactions in wider society after secondary school indicated apprehension about being outside their own communities for employment or study. Students' perceptions of the prevalence of cultural and religious discrimination in wider society, the minority community's close-knit nature, and its tendency to settle in particular geographic areas, have partly contributed to fostering these anxieties.

The following chapter examines the experiences of young ASB Muslim women who have completed secondary school, and are involved in various post-school activities. It

examines these young women's recollections of some aspects of schooling experiences, as well as their reflections on the challenges they have experienced in their post-school activities.

Chapter Seven Perspectives of Women in the Years Following School

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is the third of three chapters that have presented outcomes from analysis of data, and it represents Phase 3 of the research. Whereas chapters 5 and 6 respectively have presented teachers' and students' perspectives on the educational experiences of ASB Muslim students in two case study schools, this chapter takes a different direction. It presents the perspective of young Muslim women who have completed their schooling and moved on to engage in various educational and career opportunities, and, in the case of some, who have also undertaken marriage and family responsibilities. The chapter presents these young women's current perspectives on education, work and family responsibilities. It addresses their experiences of life beyond school and their fears and hopes for the future. It also addresses the young women's recollections of school. The chapter therefore provides an opportunity to compare perceptions of young ASB Muslims females at school with those who have relatively recently completed school and moved into adulthood.

This third phase of the research draws on data from focus group interviews with young women, between 18 and 30 years of age. As indicated in chapter 4, the young women who participated were graduates from Macliffe School, and hence their recollections relate to only one of the two case study schools. They are necessarily a small group and there is no claim that this group is representative of young Australian Muslim women. While the size of the group is certainly a limitation, analysis of their interviews provides

some insights into the experiences of what it means to be an Australian Muslim woman in the years following school. In addition, the women's recollections of their schooling provide an additional and valuable perspective on the education of young Muslim females in Australian secular schools.

As also indicated in chapter 4, the focus group interviews addressed recollections of the women's experiences of schooling, their academic and language (both Arabic and English) profiles, their perceptions of community and parental expectations and the expectations of young Muslim ASB women in general. They also explored the women's religious and national identities, and their experiences with further education, career, family formation, and other interactions in Australian society (see Appendix D).

In reporting the data, I have categorised the participants into two age groups (refer to Table 4, p.114). The first group of women (9 participants) aged 18 to 20 years old, had completed their schooling within the three years prior to the research. In the chapter, they are referred to as the younger women. The second group of women (7 participants), were slightly older, aged 24 to 30 years. This group referred to as the older women in the chapter. The inclusion of these two groups provides perspectives from participants in the years soon after completion of schooling, as well as perspectives from those who have had more experience in post-school education, careers and family responsibilities.

Presentation of findings in this chapter is organised as follows. Following this first introductory section (section 1), the chapter begins (section 2) by explaining what the women are currently doing, their current education and employment status, and their

family responsibilities. This section also addresses their perceptions of living and working in, and beyond, their local community, and of their engagement with the broader Australian society. The following section (section 3) addresses their recollections of schooling and the extent to which they considered their schooling to have been inclusive. The chapter ends with a summary of findings (section 4).

As with chapters 5 and 6, the inclusive multicultural education framework (chapter 3) has shaped the organisation of this chapter. However, because of the wide-ranging nature of discussions in focus group interviews, the organisation of this chapter, especially of section 2, is more fluid. The discussion, in section 2, of the women's current situations ranges from details of their educational and work experiences to their attitudes and identities. Section 3, which focuses on their recollections of schooling, follows the framework more closely in that it addresses the women's recollections in response to elements of language and literacy, culture and religion. It includes the women's recollections of their abilities in English and Arabic; their recollections of their schools' responses to multiculturalism and community harmony; their school's interface with the socio-political context; and implications for inclusive secular schooling.

7.2 The women's experiences since school: Education, careers and family

7.2.1 Introduction to Section

This section of the chapter addresses the experiences of the two groups of women in the years since they have left school. It reports on the women's post-school experiences of further education, employment, and family formation, and it outlines their perceptions of ways in which their gender and cultural and religious backgrounds have influenced these pathways. It also addresses the women's perceptions of the balance between family and careers, and on evidence of change within their community.

7.2.2 Education and Career Pathways since school

At the time of their focus group interviews, the 16 post-school women participants were engaged in various roles and responsibilities. They were completing post-secondary studies, employed on a part-time or full-time basis, or committed to full-time household and childrearing responsibilities. Of the nine younger women, six had enrolled in bachelor's degree programs (in education, journalism, business, social work), while three were completing diploma courses at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institutes (in interior decorating, beauty therapy and early childhood education). All of the younger women were single, with one engaged to be married. Although all were actively pursuing study or career, a number of these younger women reported their current post-secondary education pathways did not match their earlier aspirations. The three younger women who had enrolled in TAFE courses, had initially planned to pursue university study, but had not achieved the required scores to enter their chosen courses.

I wanted to go to uni, but I kind of knew that I wasn't going to, because I didn't focus enough in class. I honestly did not want to do what I am doing now, beauty therapy. I wanted to do science, but the only reason I am doing this course now is because it is the only course, which when you finish you can transfer to uni and you can do a Bachelor in dermal therapy. (Rabab)

Others, however, were enrolled in their preferred university courses.

What I am doing now is what I was planning to do before I left school, psychology, I want to be a psychologist, open my own clinic. (Amani)

Of the older women, three of the seven had completed undergraduate studies, while four had completed vocational education courses. All were married with children. Four of the seven women were currently involved in full-time or part-time employment while raising young pre-school and school-aged children. Three (Rana, Amal, and Nadine) were full-time mothers, and, because of their family commitments, had postponed careers and were not pursuing employment, although they intended to do so as their children grew older.

I do intend to go back to work when my youngest is older more preschool age. I'm hoping to change my field of work, work closer to home to suit family needs, like school hours. (Nadine)

Of the women currently working, four (Maryam, Zara, Yasmine and Marwa) were employed in traditional female-dominated professions (secondary school teacher, hairdresser, midwife, teacher's aide). Not all these professions were initial career

preferences - the women reported either they had not gained access to their initial course preference, or they were influenced by parental preferences for more female-dominated careers.

I always wanted to be an architect, I'm a midwife, I didn't get the marks to get into architecture. Nursing was one of my last options but I guess it was my dad who encouraged me to do it. (Yasmine)

Family and community attitudes to women's careers

Like the students, the women were very conscious of prevailing family and local community attitudes to girls' education, gender appropriate careers, and family formation. Echoing students' responses, the younger women described the higher emphasis that their parents placed on girls attaining university education, than on boys. These women described concerns that their daughters may encounter difficulties in acquiring suitable employment as the basis for the parents' encouragement for girls to pursue tertiary education. They also said that parents regarded boys as capable of pursuing a broader range of professions in different working environments to fulfil their role as breadwinners.

Samar: I think that some parents think that we should be more strict (sic) on the girls than on the boys education-wise. It doesn't matter that they don't learn as much as the girls learn because the boys can go out and do anything, they can get to whatever they want to get to, but for the girls it's going to be a lot harder.

Rabab: I agree with Samar, like my mum always says that an education for a girl like a weapon for her.

The older women made similar comments. They agreed that it was a priority with their families for girls to pursue a 'respectable' career, which entailed a university education, or vocational training.

There was more pressure on the girls to do well at school. I reckon back then they didn't care about the boys' education as long as you got a good job. (Amal)

Balancing career with family responsibilities

Like the students, awareness of the need to juggle study, work and family was a significant issue for all the women participants. As indicated, the younger women were all unmarried and were currently employed or studying. They reported planning to delay marriage until their early or mid-twenties. However, their discussions about career aspirations indicated they were highly conscious of the need to be able to combine careers with future roles as spouse and mother, which were key considerations in career choices. Although this is possibly a more universal concern for women, the young women's discussions highlighted the high priority assigned to these roles, and the influence this had on their decision-making about the future.

As indicated, the older women were all married, and had children ranging in ages from six months to four years. For them, the need to balance career and family responsibilities was something they dealt with on a daily basis. Five of the seven women reported early marriage in their late teens or early twenties. The remaining two (Nadine and Mariam) had married in their late-twenties. Four of the women (Amal, Maryam, Marwa and Yasmine) reported completing their further education or working between childrearing responsibilities. Yasmine, who married at 19 years of age while

she was studying for her undergraduate degree, emphasised the common challenge for women, of studying or working, while forming a family.

The main challenge was juggling work, family and study. I was working as a nurse, studying to be a midwife and having babies all at the same time. I didn't expect these challenges but I think that's what led me to be where I am now, that I didn't know it was going to be so hard. (Yasmine)

Amal compared her life and the milestones she had achieved to other 'Western' women of similar age, who had not also had children.

I feel like everything was on fast forward with us. It was like quick, get married. Do the education. We had to do so much in so little time that by the time you hit thirty, you have achieved things in life, that the Westerners have just started off with... They step up in their professions, we hardly get to the first step and we are already having kids but we get there to the finish line but we do all the other stuff in between. (Amal)

Evidence of changing attitudes

Despite family and community pressure, both groups of women reported awareness of changing attitudes towards age of marriage and family formation for girls, and the expectation that girls would also have careers. The older women in particular were aware of these changes. Some reported that their parents retained traditional values, and traditional aspirations for their daughters to become a mother and homemaker.

Marriage was definitely the priority. She was against working, that's the man's job, she says. I think my mum still has the same mentality. She doesn't like the

fact that my sisters are working even though they are married and have kids.
(Marwa)

However, others reported evidence of change.

Most girls in my time or earlier got married in their late teens, whereas now it is mainly early to mid-20s. I think some parents are tolerant that their daughters will take longer to get married because they know how difficult it is to find the right partner and studying, and work and the financial difficulties of surviving in Sydney. (Nadine)

While the older women were more likely to report families' emphasis upon marriage, the younger women reported their families were less likely to expect daughters to marry until at least their mid-twenties. None, however, appeared to question the assumption that their future pathways would include marriage and that as women they would carry the major responsibility for child rearing. However, with the rise in divorce and associated challenge to the traditional security of marriage, families were increasingly concerned that daughters maximised their life opportunities and made the most of education and career pathways.

Our culture is that the male is the breadwinner; the wife is not expected to work, that's how it was like when we were growing up. Our parents were like that ten years ago, but there have been huge changes since then. They want her to secure herself, get settled in life. Back then, people didn't get divorces as much as they do now. (Amal)

In sum, in their post-school lives, both older and younger women's were engaged in various combinations of study, work and family responsibilities. Some of the older women had committed themselves solely to childrearing responsibilities, but planned to resume education and/or careers after their children reached school age. Both older and

younger women were very conscious of family and community pressures, and reported how these had shaped their study and work choices: most had pursued study and careers deemed appropriate for girls. They were also very conscious of their current or future need to undertake family responsibilities, especially with regard to caring for children, and this too had affected their choices of study and work. Despite pressures, both groups of women were aware of changing community attitudes towards women, and they reported more families assigning greater value to post-secondary education and career goals for their daughters. With higher expectations for educational attainment, there was a corresponding change in attitude regarding the appropriate age for girls to marry. This had the effect of delaying marriage age for many of these younger women, although, they were still expected to marry in their twenties.

7.2.3 Interface with Society: negotiating their own space

A major issue of concern for the girls in the two case study schools was their anxiety about interacting with others beyond their local community (chapter 6). Many were anxious about initially engaging with study or work that would require them to move outside their local community, and engage with the broader Australian society in what they perceived to be an environment hostile to Muslims. There was much talk between the girls of safe and unsafe spaces. In the light of this concern, this sub-section addresses the question of how young women in their post-school years were dealing with this issue. What were their experiences of engaging with the broader Australian society, and to what extent was there evidence that young women in their post-school years had been able to move beyond their local community and successfully negotiate a space for themselves in the broader society?

Stereotyping and Discrimination

As is evident from earlier discussion, many of the women interviewed for this study had chosen careers in female-dominated fields. This was consistent with school students' aspirations for careers in similar areas. Generally, both the younger and older groups of post-school women were reasonably confident about their opportunities for employment in these more traditional career pathways. They reported being able to access more work opportunities in the government sector, or through self-employment. However, the older women in particular were less positive about opportunities in fields that were more competitive and traditionally male-dominated, and expressed pessimism and anxiety over the potential for workplace discrimination in these fields.

Although the majority of women in both groups had not experienced overt discrimination, four of the 16 women reported encountering negative stereotypes in their day-to-day encounters, about Muslims and Arabs. These stereotypes portrayed Muslims as terrorists and Muslim women as oppressed or unintelligent.

They (non-Muslim work colleagues) don't see Muslims as being smart or successful. I feel like that'll affect me because they think that we are only housewives; that we don't get educated, it does affect you. (Mona)

Once this guy at work goes to me, 'I'm not saying that all Muslims are terrorists, I'm saying that all terrorists are Muslims'. (Amal)

Overall, the younger women who were mainly still at university, were more positive about employment possibilities and less concerned about discrimination than the older women. However, within the group of younger women, two who worked part time did

not wear hijab, and they described their work colleagues' negative reactions when they had learned they were Muslims. In addition, the issue of alcohol consumption arose frequently in discussions of interactions with non-Muslim colleagues. A number of the young women described being unable to participate in some mainstream social interactions at their place of study or work due to the religious prohibition on alcohol consumption.

At work, when I told one person (I'm Muslim), they said, 'Oh my God, I feel so sorry for you', and I said to her, 'why?' And she goes, 'No, no, I was only joking', and a few days ago, we had a dinner at work, and then we're like 'We'll go for dinner and get some drinks afterwards'. And I'm very honest. I tell them I don't drink. And they're like 'What's wrong with you? (Halima)

As one of the younger women studying at TAFE explained, pressure to partake in alcohol-related social interactions distanced her from non-Muslim peers.

I'd sit there at TAFE and have lunch with a couple of the Aussie friends and they'd spend the whole time talking about drinking and partying, and that's just not for me. That affected me while I was at TAFE and I wanted to leave because I felt weird. They knew I was Muslim and they'd still think that I could go drinking and stuff, and I'd tell them, like 'I can't. I don't drink'. (Mona)

Other younger women discussed challenges associated with adherence to religious beliefs and practices in the workplace. Layal described the dilemma she experienced at work in informing her employer that she was uncomfortable shaking his hand for religious reasons.

When I first started working there (manager), he used to always want to shake my hand and give me fives (all laugh) and I felt really uncomfortable...then one day in the morning, and he wanted to shake my hand and I told him. (Layal)

The older women, particularly the five who wore the hijab, reported instances of discrimination in the workplace. They had been in the workforce comparatively longer than the younger women and, perhaps, had had more exposure to prevailing attitudes and practices. Despite the fact that most had chosen 'female-appropriate' careers that had enabled them to work in the public sector (generally perceived to be less discriminatory), a number of the older women described their religious and cultural identities as factors that affected their ability to secure employment.

I was interested in psychology and pharmacology and I walked out into the workforce and I found that it wasn't very kind towards women so I went back to more traditional career. I had to retrain as a teacher because of all the discrimination I experienced, so I had doors closed because I was a woman, then I wore the hijab and then I had more doors closed because I wore the hijab. (Maryam)

As described by Maryam, a small number of the older women, who had pursued careers in less traditional corporate fields, such as marketing and accounting, reported double-discrimination based on gender, as well as racial and religious identities. However, even as a teacher, she argued that, in comparison to non-Muslim teachers, she had to work harder to prove her professionalism, and she pointed to the subtle stereotyping she encountered in interactions with colleagues.

I've generally had positive interactions with staff in the schools. You still have to prove your professionalism more than others and at times you do feel that

there are some undertones of prejudice towards you, in terms of negative perceptions of Muslims and that is so hard to change. (Maryam)

Nadine worked as an accountant, but after the birth of her first child, she resigned from her work and wore the hijab. However, she planned to return to the workforce when her children were older, though she predicted wearing the hijab would negatively affect her capacity to secure future employment. She also highlighted the need to find flexible work to meet family responsibilities.

I don't think it would be easy to find a job while wearing hijab but I'm willing to do some retraining, I'm hoping to find work in the public sector as they can hire a number of multicultural people and do enforce anti-discrimination policies more than private firms. (Nadine)

Not all of the older women had experienced discrimination in the workforce. Yasmine, a 26 year-old mother of three, was employed as a midwife in a public hospital, in a suburb in New South Wales where the majority of patients were drawn from neighbouring rural areas. Although she wore the hijab, she described her experiences with many patients and colleagues in positive terms.

I wear a hijab so obviously I'm a Muslim. I haven't come across anyone who reacts to me differently because I am Muslim. I get a lot of questions about Islam, which is good. (Yasmine)

Safe and Unsafe Spaces

As with students in the previous chapter, the issue of safe and unsafe spaces was a significant one for the women who participated in this research. Many reported some

anxiety about travelling out of their immediate communities where there was not a visible ASB or Muslim presence, to other areas of Sydney. Those required to do so, for study or work purposes had found it a difficult transition. As indicated, the older women expressed more concern about this issue than the younger women. The older women described their concerns as related to racial discrimination and physical safety. Although not all wore the hijab, and so were not visibly Muslim, they still expressed initial discomfort and fear at having to venture out of their local communities for study.

I'm very attached to where I live; going outside of our area is something tough for me, even today. (Jehanne)

The older women were also anxious about the need to move beyond their local community for employment. Maryam, who wore the hijab, described how employment choices were restricted by concerns about safety. She had ruled out the possibility of employment in areas that were not multicultural, or which did not have a visible Muslim or Arab presence, for fear of encountering racism.

I'm always thinking about jobs based on the degree of discrimination that I might get. I wouldn't teach in Bondi or Cronulla because that might be a risk to my safety, or I might suffer more abuse than if I worked in more culturally diverse areas. (Maryam)

However, not all of the older women had had negative experiences. Some reported feeling comfortable working in 'Anglo' communities where there was no visible Lebanese-Australian or Muslim presence or even any ethnic diversity. Zara for instance, who owned her own business in a Western suburb of Sydney did not report any

negative experiences because of her religious or cultural identity. She attributed this, at least in part, to her appearance, and not wearing the hijab.

I've never copped anything. I don't look like a Leb. They might pick not pick out I'm a Leb, but I definitely look like a wog. Obviously not Anglo-Saxon...They're interested. I've never come across anybody who has changed their attitude towards me because I was Muslim. (Zara)

In addition to the contexts of study and work, both younger and older women also reported instances where they had felt threatened or uncomfortable simply when they ventured into 'non-Muslim' areas. Amal, Zara, and Mona did not wear the hijab, but they reported racist comments, or incessant staring from members of the public outside their immediate areas, when they were with friends or family members who were wearing the hijab.

I went once with my friend who wears a scarf to Bondi and I copped filthy looks just as much as her. (Amal)

I haven't experienced it but once when I was in year 12, we went on an excursion to Cronulla and some guy spat on my friend's scarf. I've also heard heaps of stories involving girls with scarves. (Mona)

As with the school students, the issue of resilience arose in discussions between the women. A number of the younger women highlighted the need for young ASB Muslim females to develop skills and strategies for dealing with racism and confronting negative stereotypes. They commented on the how inappropriate responses to racial or religious vilification in public spaces worsened the situation for Muslims.

A lot of the younger girls aren't educated. Let's say an Aussie was supposed to say 'get that cloth off your head', they would not know to say something smart back. They would automatically put up their defence shield and start swearing. (Zara)

Some of the older women also highlighted the need for Muslim women to develop resilience, and effective strategies to confront challenges and discrimination effectively.

I think that finding the right career where you don't have to sacrifice who you are is going to be a challenge. I don't know what those girls who study really hard will end up doing; unfortunately, I can't see them being lawyers after all that study... But their experiences might be different to mine. Some young people have much more resilience. Today's generation is more confident, they're strong characters. (Maryam)

Perceptions of Identity

In their discussions about identity (chapter 6), the high school students exhibited some ambivalence regarding their national identity. While many identified themselves as Australian, they were also very conscious of their Lebanese background. Some were comfortable with a hyphenated background (of Lebanese and Australian), and others identified as primarily Lebanese. Given their greater maturity, it was perhaps not surprising that the post-school women were more definite about this issue. Most of the women conveyed a strong sense of national belonging, although they were very comfortable with their bicultural identities and they identified strongly with their religious faith.

The younger women reported that as they had matured they identified more strongly as Australian, and they identified aspects of their identities, which were distinctly Australian. Their bi-cultural experiences, however, meant they were able to critique

elements of the 'Anglo-Australian', mainstream culture, as well as elements of their Lebanese culture, and felt they were in a position to take the best from both.

Well, in the early years of high school, it was Lebanese, but then you eventually grow out of it... I'm definitely Australian. (Halima)

I like to think I'm Muslim, whether I'm Lebanese or Australian, I'm Muslim. Well, I'm Australian but also Lebanese. I can be both. I can take the good elements from Australian culture and the good elements from Lebanese culture, and all of Islam. (Layal)

Questions of national identity however, also caused confusion for some of the younger women, who reported ambivalence about appropriate responses.

The way we dress, we dress like Aussies, casually...We're foreigners in Lebanon. We used to get asked a lot of questions by the teachers, like what's your nationality? Where do you come from? And they'd try to see what answer you'd give them...To me, it just seems like such a random question. (Jehanne)

The older women were slightly more ambivalent in the extent to which, as Muslims, they belonged in Australia. Perhaps because they were slightly older, they had clearer recollections of the impact of crisis events, and more experience of the challenges of interacting with non-Muslims within the workforce. The women talked about current tensions experienced by Muslims with the socio-political realities, and the effect of specific crisis events that had occurred nationally and internationally. A number of the older women did not believe these tensions would subside in the near future.

I don't think that the situation will ever change for Muslims. Racism doesn't go away. I see people wearing badges and T-shirts like Racism No Way, but I laugh at it because sometimes they could be the racist person. I think that whatever happens overseas will trickle down on us well, especially the wars. (Faye)

The older women also reiterated the practical daily demands of practicing their faith in a Western secular capitalist society, where the hectic daily routine did not easily accommodate religious ritualistic practices.

The environment (in Lebanon) helps you (to be a Muslim), whereas here, I go to out to Western Sydney sometimes I have these thoughts why are we doing all this while look at all these people, they're just living by the day. (Zara)

Notwithstanding the challenges of reconciling religious beliefs to living in a secular society, and the marginalising effect of discrimination in society, confidence in their religious identity was a key theme in interviews with all the women. Like the girls attending the two case study schools, all the women were very clear about the value they assigned to their Islamic identities. For the younger women, this was something that shaped their entire lives.

Being a Muslim shapes my entire life; what I eat, where I go, what I wear, (choosing) to work with women in my career (in midwifery), the music I listen to, the way I raise my children, everything. (Yasmine)

The younger women also emphasised the value of the collectivist orientation of both the Islamic religion and of Arab culture, which placed significant emphasis on community and family.

We are raised in a family that reinforces what's right and wrong. Everything revolves around family. It can be annoying sometimes, but it's really important. I think Islam is really about families. (Mona)

For the older women, although they had concerns about discrimination and media bias against Muslims and Arabs, the strength of their identity as Muslims meant that their aspirations for themselves, their families and their community were, on the whole upbeat and hopeful.

I think we (Muslims) hold a positive future. Academically, more Muslims are at uni studying, good jobs, although the media only portrays the negative aspects, I think Muslims have come a long way. (Marwa)

In sum, as was the case for school students, the women who participated in this study were concerned about interactions beyond their local community. However, there appeared to be some differences in perceptions of younger and older women. While older women were aware of exclusionary pressures related to their gender and religious background, the younger women appeared more positive about their opportunities for inclusion within the Australian society. They also appeared less concerned about discrimination and more confident about negotiating their own space in society. Key issues to emerge included the strength of the women's identities as Muslim women and the need for resilience when dealing with racism and negative stereotyping.

7.2.4 Conclusion to Section

Focus group interviews provided evidence that, since leaving school, both groups of women had engaged in various combinations of study, work and family responsibilities. While some of the older women were currently committed to raising young children they planned to resume education and/or careers after their children reached school age.

All the women had engaged in further study and/or careers were aware of expectations that, as women, they would take major responsibility for family and child rearing. This pressure from family and community had shaped their choices for 'female appropriate' study and careers. Despite such pressures, both groups of women were aware of changing community attitudes towards women, and they reported that families were increasingly placing priority on post-secondary education and career goals for their daughters. They also reported some corresponding changes in attitude towards marriage age, although young women are still expected to marry within their 20s.

Focus group discussions also addressed the women's experiences of interacting with the broader Australian society via their study and careers, and of negotiating their own space within that society. Discussions in the focus group interviews pointed to some differences in perceptions between the two groups of women. Although they raised some concerns, the younger women seemed more confident about their place in the broader society. Older women cited more instances of discrimination based on culture and religion, but also on gender. While the younger women described how they negotiated their religious and cultural identities in their study and work environments, the older women recalled encounters with stereotypes and discrimination, particularly in employment experiences in male-dominated fields, and in the private sector. Some differences were also evident between younger and older women with regard to their national identity. Younger women appeared to be more definite in their identification as Australian, with the older women more aware of the challenges of interacting with the broader Australian society. It is unclear whether these differences simply reflect the older women's greater experience in the workplace and in the Australian society, or whether they point to gradual changes in Australian society, which means that younger

women now experience less discrimination. Regardless of their experiences and attitudes, however, a key theme to emerge from all interviews was the strength of all the women's identification as Muslim women, and the value they attached to Islam. Both groups also identified the need to be resilient and to develop strategies to deal with instances of racism and discrimination.

7.3 Women's Recollection of their Schooling: Inclusion and Exclusionary Pressures

7.3.1 Introduction to Section

A key focus of this study is the extent to which Australian schools can, and do, provide an inclusive multicultural education for their ASB female Muslim students. While chapters 5 and 6 have addressed this question from the perspective of the schools and of students, in this section of chapter 7, the question is addressed from the perspective of women who have relatively recently completed schooling. Such women are able, with the benefit of hindsight, to reflect on the positives and negatives of their own schooling, and of their own contributions to their educational outcomes. The section draws on the inclusive multicultural framework to structure discussion. Thus, it begins with the women's discussion of their language and literacy development in both English and Arabic, before moving on to their recollections of the schools' responses to multiculturalism, racism and community harmony. The section finishes with a discussion of the women's perceptions of inclusion and secular schooling.

7.3.2 Language and Literacy: English and Arabic

English language and literacy

In comparison to discussion of themes associated with recollections of schools' responses to their cultural and religious backgrounds, the role of English language and literacy assumed only a minor focus in interviews with the two groups of women. However, to the extent that they did talk about the topic, they generally described their English communicative competence in positive terms, and they associated this with their overall sense of academic performance.

(My academic performance was) above average. Writing was really important, for every subject you had to learn how to write and if you didn't, you'd really stuff up. (Jehanne)

Some of the *older women*, particularly those who were born overseas, described their school provision of literacy and language support as limited. For example, Marwa, whose family migrated to Australia when she was ten, described considerable difficulties with English language proficiency, and recalled limited provision of English language support. Her experience of schooling was characterised by a sense of feeling largely unnoticed by teachers, a factor, which she believed, had contributed to her academic underperformance.

I did poorly. I came to high school with no English. I didn't get any ESL (support) either. I was very shy and quiet so that's also why I went unnoticed. My vocab is very limited, when I want to write I can't put proper sentences together... I can't remember getting any feedback. (Marwa)

A common thread amongst both older and younger women's discussions of English literacy and language learning was their teachers' role in the provision of this support. They described this both in terms of working to improve students' overall proficiency, and in terms of having high expectations of their performance. A number of both older and younger women referred specifically to the relationship between teachers' responsiveness to language and literacy needs, and the degree of improvement in their skills.

I struggled with literacy in year ten, but practiced and really got better by grade 12. By year 12, my English teacher, she made me write an essay eight times, she said well done, you've really improved. She appreciated me more than other students because she knew how hard I worked. (Maryam)

Some of the younger women compared their own English teachers' low expectations to other teachers in the school who had displayed more responsiveness to, and higher expectations of their students' language proficiency.

It (writing skills) wasn't up there; the teachers had lower expectations of us. Vocabulary, grammar, sentences were problems...Me and my friend we were at the same level, but she got into advanced, and her teacher pushed her and pushed her to practice the essays. And now, she's so good. Our teachers didn't push us and tell us to practise. (Amani)

These snapshots of women's experiences of literacy and language learning highlight the key role of high expectations and high support from teachers in students' academic English language development (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Gibbons, 2009). They also highlight the importance of ongoing ESL and literacy support for students who are studying in their second, or subsequent, language.

Ethnolect and access to broader society

An issue raised by both teachers and students in the case study schools (chapters 5 and 6) was that of students' use of Australian-Lebanese 'ethnolect'. Both teachers and students identified this as problematic. Teachers noted students' limited awareness of more formal registers of English and pointed to particular challenges that this presented for students' oral communication and for their future ability to interact with others beyond their local community. The post-school women also identified use of 'ethnolect' as problematic. Their interview discussions indicated they were aware of the value of oral communication skills in the workplace, and that the use of ethnolect limited their abilities to interact with others.

Loyal: The strong one (Lebanese-Australian ethnolect) is so bad. It sounds uneducated and stupid.

Halima: Even in the classroom, the teachers knew who were the mature girls in the classroom from the way they spoke, and they knew the girls who weren't serious enough.

On a positive note, both groups of women also discussed their own oral language development, and the expansion of their linguistic repertoires (Warren, 1999). Although they continued to use the Lebanese-Australian ethnolect to maintain solidarity with Lebanese-background friends, the women described the oral language development that had resulted from their day-to-day interactions in post-school activities in broader society, and which involved increased strategic use of other registers of English.

With my Lebanese friends at school, we were so close that we would actually mix Arabic and English together, but now at TAFE, you have to be more careful with your English. (Faye)

Such responses highlight the importance of oral language development within schools' language and literacy focus, but also point to the value of broader interactions in supporting young Muslim women's acquisition of more complex linguistic repertoires.

Arabic language development

While relatively little was said about English language development, the young women spoke at length about Arabic proficiency concerns. Despite all professing limited proficiency in Arabic, their focus group interviews indicated that, like the girls in the case study schools, all of the women recognised the cultural and religious significance of the Arabic language to their Muslim identities. They also valued proficiency in Arabic language for promoting their bicultural and religious identities, and for maintaining membership of their communities. The women emphasised in particular the importance of Arabic in their religion.

Arabic is extremely important to me. I'm doing it at university. I absolutely love Arabic. And to have only one language is very limiting, and Arabic, well it's the language of the Qur'an, it's a universal language. (Layal)

Both groups of women were concerned about their limited proficiency in Arabic, and, as is often the case when opportunities for bilingual development have been missed the majority expressed regret at not having worked harder at learning Arabic when they were children. They perceived themselves to be socially and culturally disadvantaged because of their limited oral proficiency in Arabic and in their understanding of religious texts because of their lack of proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic.

I studied it (Modern Standard Arabic) in high school for a bit, and in year eleven, but I never really felt that I needed it and I can't read or write fluently...I

wish I had gone to Arabic school when I was younger. I have to learn my own language. It's embarrassing that I don't know it, especially for the Quran. (Samar)

All but one of the women reported learning Arabic for several years in community Arabic schools, or state-funded Saturday community language schools. They attributed their lack of proficiency in Arabic primarily to the lack of motivation to learn Arabic at a younger age, or to lack of encouragement from parents.

I studied Arabic for about ten years. I studied it in year 12, our parents pushed us and I did not want to waste it, and because I'm not good, I feel depressed, and I regret not pursuing it further. (Maryam)

A small number of women also referred to the nature of teaching and discipline in community-run Arabic schools as factors that deterred them when they were younger. Notwithstanding this, they also valued these experiences.

I went to Arabic school for nine years, and for nine years, I cried because I had to go to Arabic school (laughs). It was just at our local primary school Hajj Ahmad. He was so focused and so passionate about teaching us. (Halima)

Although virtually all of the women said they would like to be proficient in Arabic, only two indicated planning to continue learning the language.

When I was at school, I always went to Arabic school. My parents pushed me a lot. But now I push myself to read more Arabic and learn it. It's very important; if you can't read Arabic, you can't read the Quran. That's what I tell my children. (Yasmine)

Overall, what emerges from interviews with the women is their strong emphasis on the value of Arabic as a language and their recognition of its key role in their religion.

In sum, while English language and literacy development did not feature as a major issue of concern in interviews with the women, they generally described their abilities in academic English in reasonably positive terms and associated this with academic success. A number highlighted the importance of their teachers' high expectations in their academic success. They also highlighted the importance of ESL and literacy support for students who are studying in a second, or subsequent, language. In the light of findings, in chapter 6, that relatively few ASB Muslim girls were receiving ESL support, outcomes here are especially relevant. Like the teachers and students in the case study schools, the women were aware of the negative connotations associated with use of the Lebanese 'ethnolect' beyond their immediate community. They highlighted the value of interactions with the broader society in assisting them to extend their range of linguistic repertoires.

With the school students, the women highlighted the significance of Arabic in their religious practices, as well as its importance in their local community. Most regretted not having made more of their opportunities to learn Arabic when younger and were keen that their own children have opportunities to do so. Thus, findings highlight the importance of sustained efforts predominantly from family and community language schools to ensure that young Muslim people have access to strong and effective programs in Modern Standard Arabic.

7.3.3 Schools' responses to Multiculturalism Racism and Community

Harmony

This sub-section addresses the women's recollections of ways in which their schools responded to notions of multiculturalism; how their schools addressed instances of

racism; and the extent to which their schools worked to promote community harmony. These issues were addressed in interviews with the school students in the case study schools and thus the sub-section enables some comparison between the perceptions of ASB Muslim female school students, and the perceptions of those who have now left school. However, the discussions amongst the post-school women were quite wide ranging, and a number of themes emerged from their interviews. The organisation of this sub-section reflects that discussion. Themes included the nature of interactions with teachers and with their non-Muslim peers; the schools' response to racism and to specific crisis events; and the school's interface with the broader socio-political climate of societal racial and religious prejudice.

Interactions with teachers and non-Muslim peers

As with students' responses in chapter 6, a major theme in the women's recollections of their schooling was the nature of interactions with their teachers and non-Muslim peers. With regard to their teachers, both younger and older women generally recalled positive interactions with their teachers and they emphasised their teachers' empathy, professionalism, and commitment to their students.

They (teachers) used to ask a lot of questions about the hijab, and they used to ask the girls who didn't wear it why they didn't wear it. If you were close with your teacher, she would ask those types of questions. (Mona)

I interacted well with my teachers. I wasn't one to make trouble so I think the teachers liked me. Some teachers were very encouraging but I think that just depended on how enthusiastic the teacher was to teaching. I think the expectations were the same for everyone. (Yasmine)

The women also recalled incidents in which teachers had adopted a ‘counter-hegemonic’ role (Gorski, 2008, p.313), where they challenged oppression in the broader society, such as stereotypes. They regarded such incidents as reflecting the degree of some teachers’ heightened awareness of social challenges facing ASB Muslim students, and their solidarity with them. Three of the younger women reported an example of this:

Halima: She (Ms. M) was at this conference with something like three hundred people, like teachers and stuff. And she said that there was this guy who was supposed to be educated. The speaker, he goes, ‘I’ve seen those girls with that thing on their head at Devlin’, and he started talking badly about the school.

Layal: And he addressed Ms. M and said, ‘How do you deal with those girls who have that thing on their heads?’ And Ms M told him off.

Halima: She goes to him, ‘What thing?’ And he goes to her, ‘You know, that thing that they wear on their heads’. She goes to him, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about, they don’t have anything on their head’, he goes to her ‘You know that material thing’, and she said to him, ‘Ah, you mean the hijab?’ And she said to him, ‘How can you judge in front of all these teachers and professionals? I thought you were educated, this is a waste of my time and this is bullshit. They’re a great bunch of girls and I’ve been teaching for many years. And I’m not going to sit here and listen to you...’ Anyway she told him off and she walked out and I think another teacher walked out with her.

However, some of the women from both groups reported that some teachers lacked awareness or respect for students’ religious beliefs and conveyed stereotypical assumptions. They recalled instances where teachers had made comments about students’ religious beliefs, which they considered inappropriate or offensive.

I don't remember ever being treated unfairly because of my religion or whatever, except Mrs H. She used to refer to the hijab as a tea towel. (Rabab)

One of teachers, Ms Roberts, I think once she said to a girl who was mucking up, 'why don't you just turn around and face Mecca' or something, but that was because the girls were rude, they were loud. (Amal)

As was the case with the school students, some of the women argued that some teachers expected or associated misbehaviour with their ASB Muslim students.

Nothing big happened, but like if anything happened straight away, they'd say it was the Lebanese girls or the Muslims who did it. Some incident happened on a bus once and straight away, they said it was a hijabed girl who did it. They didn't even know that it was, straight away they pinned it on them. (Jehanne)

Maryam, who is now herself a teacher, criticised one particular teacher's unrealistic expectations of Muslims students, and her tendency to stereotype them.

I know that my teacher had negative perceptions of Muslims and she did sometimes put that across...Don't assume that just because a girl wears a scarf that she is going to be a perfect representative of Islam because teenagers are teenagers, and they're all trying to shape their identities and work out who they are, and the scarf is a part of that experimentation, a part of who they are. Teachers need to put that into perspective that these girls are just like other teenagers. (Maryam)

Overall, while there were negative recollections from some teachers, most recollections of interactions with teachers were positive. Like the school students, the women had particularly appreciated the role that at least some teachers played in challenging discrimination in the broader society and in expressing solidarity with their community.

With regard to their interactions with non-Muslim students, the younger women generally had positive recollections. They were aware of their school effective anti-racism policy, which they said, meant there were few incidents of racially based conflict between students. As was the case with students (chapter 6), this did not entirely prevent racially- motivated bullying or general tensions particularly during their early years of secondary school. Like the students, the women attributed the reduction in tensions mainly to maturity.

As we got older, we got along more. I remember when we were in year seven and eight we used to have a lot of fights. I think they generally accepted us to our faces, but behind our backs, they didn't. (Amani)

Two of the younger women believed that their 'Lebanese networks' were significant, and that they were not bullied because the 'Lebanese' students were seen to defend each other.

There was always the stigma, I'm Lebanese, I've got cousins, I've got brothers. That was what it was about. We had connections. So if you weren't scared of me, you might be scared of who I know, honest, no one messed around with us. (Amal)

The older women, who had attended school at a time when Muslim students were a smaller cohort, had somewhat different experiences. Some described themselves as being on the periphery of the dominant school culture, while others reported stereotyping, as well as racist bullying.

Our group, we were kind of in a way forced to stick together because there was a lot of racism, a lot of stereotypes we had to deal with, the idea that we would

get married early and have lots of kids, which everyone got married before us.
(Nadine)

The majority of women in both groups reported having predominantly ASB Muslim friendship groups. As indicated in previous chapters, teachers and students both identified a student subculture that undervalued academic achievement as a significant exclusionary pressure for some students. Conversely, the women in this phase of the study pointed to the positive role of other ASB Muslim peers in promoting positive attitudes to academic success. A number of the younger women described their peer support network of like-minded ASB Muslim friends who supported each other's academic aspirations.

It's all about the friends. We had a nice little group and we were all very motivated and we cared about each other. We'd say today we have to do at least six hours of work, but with the other Lebanese girls, they didn't care. (Layal)

As indicated in chapter 5, teachers referred to their ASB Muslim students' achievements as being polarised. It is possible that the women in this study represent the higher achieving component of this polarised division and their peer sub-culture supported rather than excluded their educational achievement.

Some of the younger women, in particular, recalled ethnically mixed friendship groups. Like the school students (chapter 6), their interactions with non-Muslim peers often included discussion of aspects of culture and religion. They also appreciated the intercultural awareness and contact afforded in an ethnically diverse school. However, they reported conversations with ethnically/religiously mixed groups around sensitive

cultural and religious beliefs and practices as needing to be conducted with care, and with respect for diversity.

You'll get to a stage where everybody goes silent, because you have a point where you don't want to push the friendship; you're not sure how far you can go... That's what we notice, I mean we would do the same, we don't believe that about theirs and they don't believe that about ours, so we just stop. (Halima)

The younger women also felt that their non-Muslim peers had benefitted from interactions with Muslim peers, and had become sensitive to Muslim's religious beliefs. They reported general harmony between students while they were at school. They also reported that at times, in response to crisis events involving Muslims and Arabs, both the ASB Muslims and their non-Muslim peers attempted to make sense of what was happening.

I generally got along with the non-Muslims. Everyone respected everyone else. They didn't ask many questions (about Islam), because they had been attending school with Muslims for a while so they knew about us. Well, when something happened in the media, they would ask questions, and sometimes, we wouldn't even know what to explain to them because we don't even understand it ourselves, other than that there didn't seem to be any other problems. (Faye)

Overall, like the school students, the women recalled generally positive interactions with both teachers. While there were some reported incidents of teacher racism, generally the women appreciated the advocacy role that at least some of their teachers had taken on in support of their Muslim students. The younger women, who had attended school at a time when there was a significant Muslim cohort, were more positive than the older women about their interactions with their non-Muslim peers.

They reported generally harmonious and respectful interactions with peers. Both groups recalled their schools' anti-racism policy and low levels of school bullying because of this policy.

The schools' interface with the socio-political context

In addition to the nature of interactions with teachers and peers, major themes to emerge from focus group interviews with the post-school women were the schools' response to specific crisis events and the nature of the schools' interface with the broader socio-political climate. These themes featured more substantially in the *younger women's* responses. They had been at school during September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks, the so-called War on Terror, the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese conflict, and national incidents and crisis events involving Muslims (see chapter 2). Due to this, the school's inclusive practices and multicultural education were discussed in relation to the way these incidents had been addressed by the school, and how these affected the women's experiences at school.

Although, as indicated above, the school's anti-racism initiatives were largely described as effective, the women were more critical of the school's (lack of) policy and its approach to socio-political events or crises. This approach was described by Macliffe teachers (see chapter 5), as essentially, a 'blanket ban' on discussions of these events, and it generated considerable discussions amongst the women. They were critical of the school's perceived lack of proactive responsiveness to the impact of these events and crises on students, and more generally, they were critical of what they perceived to be the school's lack of responsiveness to students' experiences of anti-Arab and/or Muslim sentiment in society.

Two examples provided by the women, however, also highlight the complexity for schools in clarifying what constitutes appropriate responses. One of the women reported that her suggestion to initiate a campaign to raise money for the 2006 Lebanon war victims, an event that had emotionally affected students, was dismissed by the school because of concerns about its reputation.

While there was that war in Lebanon in 2006, I told Ms T that I wanted to organize a peace day. And I wanted to join the girls and raise money to send to Lebanon, and I was telling the teacher we can try our best to raise the money and the money we raise can help the people in Lebanon and I asked her please can you help me, and she was like, she tried to get away from me. She said, 'I don't think it would be good for the school's reputation'. We've helped other people before. (Sara)

The decision by the teacher was criticised by the young woman as a lack of awareness and responsiveness to how external factors were negatively affecting students. However, from the school's perspective, the issue of sending money for one side in the war raised further socio-political issues that could have put them at odds with the requirements of the Department of Education.

Another young woman recalled how a group of ASB Muslim girls were abused for wearing the hijab, while walking during an excursion. She reported being upset with the lack of response to the incident by the teachers supervising them. Here, the teachers' perceived lack of response, was clearly upsetting and compounded the offense caused by the incident itself.

I'll never forget when we were walking to sport and we were walking through Cronulla and all these girls were wearing their scarves, and this guy puts his head out of the window and screams 'take that thing off your head'. He was driving like he was going to run us over. The teachers did nothing. (Samar)

The women's criticisms of Macliffe broadly reflect those made by teachers and students (chapters 5 and 6). Both of the examples provided by the women would appear to highlight the need for stronger and more transparent school policies.

To summarise, like the school students, the women generally recalled positive interactions with their teachers. Although there were some reported incidents of teacher racism, most recalled their teachers as being empathetic, professional and committed to their students. With the school students, the women appreciated the advocacy role that at least some of their teachers had taken on in support of their Muslim students within the broader society. While most of the women recalled friendship groups that were primarily with other Muslim students, they also recalled generally positive relations with their non-Muslim peers. The younger women, who had attended school at a time when there was a significant Muslim cohort, were more positive than the older women about their interactions with their non-Muslim peers. They reported generally harmonious and respectful interactions with peers. Both groups recalled their schools' anti-racism policy and attributed low levels of school bullying to this policy.

In discussions of their school's response to crisis events and, more generally, to the prevailing socio-political climate, the post-school women were more critical. They recalled a lack of proactive response and lack of recognition of the impact of external events on students. In discussing this, they provided examples where they believed the

school had responded inadequately. However, the examples highlighted the complexity for school as to what constituted an appropriate response. Discussion of these examples appears to highlight the need for stronger and more transparent school policies (at Macliffe and other schools) that go beyond dealing with racism (important though this is); to provide clear guidelines for the schools', and individual teachers', responses to the broad socio-political context and to specific incidents that occur at a local, national or international level. Swanson School provided an example of what such policies might look like. While such policies can never be perfect, they would ensure, at least, that teachers and students had consistent guidelines, and that, even if they disagree with these guidelines, they were aware of the rationale behind them.

7.3.4 Inclusion and Secular Schooling

A further theme that generated considerable discussion amongst both groups of women was the extent to which secular schools could be genuinely inclusive of Muslim students. The women drew on recollections of their own experiences with regard to the nature of curriculum; pressure to conform to 'western' ways of behaviour, and the extent to which secular schools were accessible to Muslim parents. For the older group, in particular, these issues were of considerable relevance as they were making decisions about their own children's schooling.

The secular curriculum

While the secular nature of the curriculum was not of particular concern to the ASB Muslim students in the two case study schools (chapter 6), it was an issue raised by a number of the both younger and older women in their interviews. They saw the curriculum as a site in which tensions between their religious identities and the secular orientation of the school were played out. They were concerned about the lack of

visibility of Islam and Arab-Australians in the curriculum, and saw this as an area that needs addressing. They contrasted the invisibility of Muslims with attempts to include other minority groups in the curriculum.

In terms of the curriculum, I thought that the Muslim experience was not reflected, or ignored really. Not studied, therefore not validated like other minority groups' experiences are validated in the curriculum. You feel a little alienated when your experiences are not validated, because when you validate a person's experiences you humanise them...In history and English it could have worked because they're the main subjects that concentrate on people, how others see and feel the world, seeing things from a historical perspective and being able to piece events in history together. (Maryam)

When asked why inclusive practices need to be targeted specifically for ASB Muslims, rather than other minority groups, they pointed to the situation for Muslims in Australia given the socio-political realities.

In addition to lack of visibility of Muslims and Islam, the women were also concerned about specific subjects within the curriculum. Like the school students (chapter 6), they raised concerns about the science curriculum, and particularly about the theory of evolution. However, their concerns appeared to lie, not so much in the secular nature of the curriculum, but in the perceived lack of opportunity presented by the teachers to discuss alternative points of view in class.

Rabab: We got into a debate in biology once, between us students, they were about evolution...

Amani: I remember when we got into those debates the teacher would say, okay those are your personal beliefs but we're talking about the theories now, so she

didn't really give us the space to talk about, or to bring up our religion, she'd say keep that out.

As indicated in chapter 5, teachers in the two case study schools addressed the real dilemmas for schools in attempting to implement inclusive education practices while also delivering a secular curriculum. The women's concerns highlight the complexity of this issue.

Pressure to conform to 'Western' peer culture

Like the students in chapter 6, both groups of women described the pressures to conform to dominant 'Western' secular adolescent culture at school, which, they argued, contrasted with the values of their culture and religion. Perhaps because they had attended school when there were fewer Muslim students, the older women were particularly aware of this pressure, and they raised it more frequently in discussions. The older women believed conformity to the mainstream culture and values meant compromising their religious or cultural identity.

If you go out of your way to fit in with others, if you sell yourself I guess-who you are, your identity in order to fit in with your peers then yes. If you stick to what you thought was right you would have pretty much felt isolated as a result if you were in my year. The girls thought it was strange that you couldn't have a boyfriend and if you couldn't go to almost anywhere you want. And they would kind of make a big deal out of small things. (Nadine)

This pressure to conform appeared to be most acutely felt by the women in relation to the hijab.

In my year, there were maybe eleven Muslim girls. One girl wore the hijab. I think a lot of students did not have a positive image of the scarf, which discouraged a lot of girls from wearing it, because they were afraid that they weren't going to have any friends. (Nadine)

A lot of it is they think that your parents are forcing you (to wear the hijab), and that you don't have a say or freedom in what you say or do. Like I'm a Muslim but I didn't wear a scarf, and they'd say you're so lucky and then you don't know how to explain to them, why some people can so easily take it off and others can't. (Marwa)

Parents' access to secular schools

Parental lack of interaction with their children's schools was identified by teachers (chapter 5) as one of the factors that worked against the educational success of ASB Muslim students. The issue of parental interaction with schools was also raised, but to a lesser extent, by school students (chapter 6). Not surprisingly, students' perspectives on this issue differed from that of teachers'. Both groups of women in their focus group interviews also raised this issue. However, they perceived the issue to be one of access, and identified a range of factors that they believed discouraged interaction. These were primarily language barriers, and parents' lack of confidence in approaching the school. They averred that a lack of interaction between parents and school hindered coordination resulting in missed opportunities for mutually supporting the girls' education. They pointed out that many of the issues they had confronted while at school were unknown to their parents, and that with the language barrier, they had been able to manipulate school and family to avoid parents' responses.

I didn't do too well academically because I never applied myself; because we were too busy mucking around. I look back and wish I did work, because I want to study and learn, I'm happy with my job but there's nothing more important

than having an education, having a brain. We used to change our reports and our parents wouldn't even know. (Zara)

Zara did not perceive the school as being accessible to Muslim ASB parents, or those who were overseas-born, who experienced language barriers and who did not feel comfortable approaching the school. However, she did believe the situation was changing.

My dad is really strict. The teachers today have better communication with parents; our parents did not get involved in the school. We were able to change the letters and we could answer the phone instead of our parents. My parents didn't know what was happening at school with us. (Zara)

Although they felt their parents had had limited access to their schools, like the school students (chapter 6), both groups of women were aware of the value their parents attached to education, and their high expectations for their children. The majority of the women described their parents' expectations as a motivation for academic achievement.

My mum was like, 'when I came here, I worked in factories for how long just to give you everything that you want, I've put you through all these classes all these years so that you could be successful', and we're like, 'Please stop', and she'll keep on going- the emotional blackmail. (Halima)

A small number of women, however, reported low parental expectations of their academic performance.

They didn't expect me to do very well at school. Basically, as long as I went and didn't get in trouble, they were happy. With my younger sister, I think yes their attitude towards education has changed now. (Rana)

Secular or faith based schooling

As indicated, for the older women, questions about the extent to which Muslim students could be genuinely included in secular schools were highly significant, as they were making decisions about their own children's schooling – including the decision of whether to send them to secular or faith based schools.

For some of the women, their own experiences of being at school when ASB Muslim students were a small minority was significant. They described their own lack of confidence in their Muslim identities when they were at school, and expressed a desire for their children to develop a deep knowledge of their faith, and a positive sense of religious identity.

They believed that secular state schools were limited in their capacity to promote this positive sense of identity for Muslim students, and, as a result, had decided to enrol their own children in Islamic schools.

In Ramadan, we used to go to school fasting and we were the only ones, now all the kids (at my daughter's Islamic school) will be fasting at the school, so they won't feel left out. And they'll know why we fast, when I was a kid I fasted but I had no idea why, my daughter goes to the Islamic studies class and she learns about that stuff in class. The kids will understand what they need to know. (Zara)

One woman argued that Islamic schools better accommodated children who were more sensitive to pressures experienced in secular state schools, and whose self-confidence would be undermined if they were on the periphery of the mainstream secular adolescent culture of the school. At the same time, she acknowledged difficulties with availability of quality Muslim schools in her local area.

There's so much prejudice that it's difficult to build more schools even though we need them. I think Muslim schools can help because it can prevent these issues later. (Maryam)

As for others in the broader Australian community, the question of deciding which school is best for your children was not an easy one for Muslim mothers.

In summary, focus group interviews showed that both groups of women were very concerned about the extent to which secular schools could be genuinely inclusive of Muslim students. They identified the secular curriculum; pressure to conform to Western peer culture; and the (limited) level of parental access to secular schools as particular issues.

7.3.5 Conclusion to Section

This section of chapter 7 has addressed the post-school women's recollections of their schooling. It was organised around three sub-sections: recollections of language and literacy development (in English and Arabic); recollections of their schools' responses to multiculturalism, racism and community harmony; and discussion of inclusion and secular schooling.

In terms of English language and literacy development, the women, generally described their abilities in academic English in reasonably positive terms and associated this with their academic success. A number stressed the importance of their teachers' high expectations in their academic success. They also highlighted the importance of ESL and literacy support for students who were studying in a second or subsequent language. In light of the findings in chapter 6, that relatively few ASB Muslim girls were receiving ESL support, outcomes here were especially relevant. Along with the teachers and students in the case study schools, the women were aware of the negative connotations associated with use of the Lebanese 'ethnolect' beyond their immediate community. They highlighted the value of interactions with the broader society in assisting them to extend their range of linguistic repertoires.

Like the school students, the women highlighted the significance of the Arabic language in their religious practices, as well as its importance in their local community. Most regretted not having made more of their opportunities to learn Arabic when younger and were keen for their own children to have opportunities to do so. This highlights the importance of sustained efforts predominantly from family and community language schools to ensure that young Muslim people have access to strong and effective programs in Modern Standard Arabic.

Addressing the ways in which their schools had responded to multiculturalism, racism and community harmony generated wide-ranging discussions. Reflecting the school students, the women generally recalled positive interactions with their teachers. Although some reported incidents of teacher racism, most recalled their teachers as being empathetic, professional and committed to their students. Like the school

students, the women appreciated the advocacy role that at least some of their teachers had taken on in support of their Muslim students within the broader society. Although most of the women recalled friendship groups that were primarily with other Muslim students, they also recalled generally positive relations with their non-Muslim peers. The younger women, who had attended school at a time when there was a significant Muslim cohort, were more positive than the older women about their interactions with their non-Muslim peers. They reported generally harmonious and respectful interactions with peers. Both groups recalled their schools' anti-racism policy and attributed low levels of school bullying to this policy.

Some of the younger women were critical of their school's response to crisis events and, more generally, to the prevailing socio-political climate. They recalled a lack of proactive response and lack of recognition of the impact of external events on students. They provided examples where they believed the school had responded inadequately but these examples highlighted the complexity for schools as to what constituted an appropriate response. Discussion of these examples pointed to a need for all schools to have in place strong and transparent policies that go beyond simply dealing with incidents of school racism (important though this is). They must provide clear guidelines for the schools' and individual teachers' responses to the broad socio-political context, and to specific incidents that occur at a local, national or international level. Swanson School provided an example of what such policies might look like. While such policies can never be perfect, they would ensure, at least, that teachers and students had consistent guidelines, and that, even if they disagreed with these guidelines, they were aware of the rationale behind them.

Finally, although there was much that was positive regarding the lives and recollections of the women, their focus group interviews showed that both groups of women were concerned about the extent to which secular schools could be genuinely inclusive of Muslim students. They identified the secular curriculum; pressure to conform to Western peer culture; and the (limited) level of parental access to secular schools as particular issues. While some were positive about the opportunities provided by secular schools, for others their concerns meant they had decided to send their children to faith based Muslim schools.

7.4 Conclusion: Summary of Findings

The experiences of the women in this phase of the study provided a snapshot of young second-generation ASB Australian women's post-school pathways and their retrospective viewpoints on their school experiences. The chapter addressed two major areas: firstly, what the women are currently doing; and secondly, their recollections of their schooling.

Women's Post-school Experiences

The first area addressed their current education and employment status; family responsibilities; and their perceptions of living and working in and beyond their local community. This section found that:

- The women interviewed were involved in work, study and/or family commitments. The younger women who were interviewed were all completing post-secondary studies at university or TAFE. The older women were doing a range of activities. Some were fulltime mothers with preschool aged children, while others were balancing work with childcare commitments. Factors

influencing education and career pathways were: relatively early family formation commitments; family/community expectations of appropriate careers (female-dominated field tended to be more preferred), which were compatible with the women's religious beliefs and practices. The young women described parents' expectations that they pursue tertiary education, which was perceived to be more pronounced than for the boys. The women described changes in the community's expectations of women's roles beyond traditional definitions.

- The women described hybrid national identities involving both Australian and Lebanese/Arab culture, and a strong sense of Islamic identity. Their predictions about their lives and futures in Australia as Muslim ASB women were upbeat, as they viewed their community to be integrating in their society.
- The women however, also described challenges in their post-school transition. Key issues identified were those which affected the young women's inclusion and levels of participation in society. They described negotiating their religious and cultural identities within a secular workplace. The women also described encountering negative stereotypes, and discrimination in day-to-day interactions. A minority described how discrimination affected career pathways, particularly in the private sectors and in fields with less female representation, where women had to address double-discrimination (gender, and religious/racial).
- The women also identified safe and unsafe spaces, which limited their mobility. Unsafe spaces were associated experiences racial or religious vilification, and perhaps worsened by their community's perceived insularity (Foroutan, 2008). The women's concern about the wider community's reduced levels of acceptance of Australian Muslims and of Arab descent was raised as a significant issue.

The Women's School Experiences

The second area addressed their recollections of schooling and the extent to which they considered their schooling to have been inclusive of ASB Muslim girls. Major findings from the chapter are summarised below.

Language and Literacy

- There were some mixed responses regarding their English language and literacy development. Responses were generally positive and recognised literacy's link to academic success. Those who were less successful academically identified limited language and literacy, limited teacher support as key exclusionary factors. These findings reinforce the need for improved ESL, language support and higher teacher expectations.
- There was an emphasis on the value of Arabic and regret at not improving proficiency. These findings support the need for addressing improved access to language learning experiences, and improving incentives for students to pursue community language learning.

Schools' Response to Multiculturalism, Racism, Community Harmony

- The younger women described their experiences of state secular schooling as valuable sites for intercultural/interreligious interactions, which were generally mediated effectively by the school's anti-racism and community harmony strategies. Perhaps due to the smaller Muslim cohort at the school, indicated that pressure to conform to mainstream secular culture was very pronounced, as was their sense of being marginalised because of their Muslim identities. For this reason, a number of these women subsequently enrolled their own children in

Islamic schools. However, they were also aware that their children missed opportunities for developing intercultural awareness.

- There were some mixed recollections regarding how well the young women's school responded to socio-political issues. Although the school was perceived to deal effectively with antiracism and bullying, the young women's descriptions of the schools' responses to specific incidents, and to broader issues of racial vilifications were areas of concerns for the students.
- Interactions with teachers were described both in positive and negative terms. Students described the 'anti-hegemonic' role of teachers in challenging stereotypes, in supporting students' education. They also recalled negative encounters with teachers whom they believed had negatively stereotyped students, or who were subtly racist.
- Echoing teachers' responses concerning parents' limited involvement with the school, the young women attributed this to parents' language barriers and lack of confidence in approaching the school. The older women in particular, described the negative effects of limited parent-school interactions on their academic performances, and this was another deciding factor for those women who had enrolled their children in Islamic schools.

In the following chapter, I draw upon the schools', students' and women's perspectives to discuss the most salient themes in the results in relation to the literature. I then discuss the implications for schools, for the students, their parents, and, more generally, for the education of ASB Muslim girls in Australia.

Chapter Eight Discussion and Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study has been twofold. First it has attempted to learn more of the educational experiences of Arabic Speaking Background Muslim girls who attend Australian secular schools, from the perspective of student and their teachers, and from the perspective of young ASB Muslim women who have completed school. Second, with the long-term aim of enhancing ASB Muslim girls' participation in a cohesive and inclusive society, the study has examined questions about the nature of secular schools, and the extent to which they are able to provide an inclusive, multicultural education that addresses the educational, cultural and religious needs of these students.

As indicated in previous chapters, the study is situated in a social and educational context in Australia that has been characterised for some years by concerns about educational underachievement of Arabic-speaking background students (Kalantzis, Cope & Slade, 1989; Suliman, 2001; Cresswell, 2004; Suliman & McInerney, 2006). It is also situated within a context of broader concerns about young Australian Muslims' experiences of social exclusion (Erebus, 2006; Hassan, 2008; Yasmeeen, 2008) arising from the contemporary national and international socio-political context. Despite these concerns, there is relatively little research, in Australia, that addresses the secondary schooling experiences of Muslim females. As indicated previously, while there have been consistent narratives of underachievement of ASB Muslim males in Australia in recent years, there has been very little focus on the more positive educational

achievement of ASB Muslim females. This study thus addresses a topic that is timely and also under-researched.

As indicated in chapter 1, the study also addresses a topic that is relevant to me on both personal and professional levels. My own view is that an ideal society for Australian ASB Muslim young women, and indeed for all young Australians, is one that guarantees equitable access to education, employment, and other opportunities afforded to mainstream society. In line with these concerns for social justice and equity (Kamp & Mansouri, 2010, p.740), the study adopted notions of inclusive and multicultural education to examine the capacities of schools to address the educational needs of female ASB Muslim students. In addition, since the majority (86%) of Australian Muslim youth attend state secular schools (Donohue- Clyne, 2010, p.7); the study has focused on the experiences of female ASB Muslim students in state schools. While acknowledging broader debates about the efficacy of Islamic schooling and concerns about social cohesion, the view that shaped my approach to the research is that the provision of opportunities for participation in Australian society, particularly for more vulnerable minority groups such as young Australian Muslim ASB women, can best be supported through a genuine approach to inclusive and multicultural education in secular state schools.

In pursuing the purposes of the research, the study has addressed three major questions:

1. How well do Australian secular state schools meet the needs of young ASB females?
 - To what extent are notions of inclusivity and multiculturalism part of the ethos of the schools?

- How are such notions evident in the daily experiences of the schools as experienced by ASB Muslim female students?
 - What, if any factors within the schools work to support inclusivity and to work against exclusion of ASB Muslim female students?
 - What effect if any do notions of inclusivity and multiculturalism have on the lived experiences and identities of ASB Muslim girls in Australian schools?
2. What are the experiences of ASB Muslim female students in Australian secular schools, and of young ASB Muslim women in their post-school activities?
- How do students perceive their lived experiences as Muslims in a secular school, and in Australian society?
 - What are the students' and young women's educational and career aspirations and post-school activities?
3. What implications and recommendations can be drawn from this research for the education of ASB Muslim female students in secular societies such as Australia?
- For schools?
 - For students, parents, community?
 - For broader Australian society?

These questions have been addressed through case studies of two Australian secondary state schools that were attended by a significant number of ASB Muslim students. Data collected for the study has included interviews with school executives and teachers; questionnaire responses and follow up focus group interviews with students; focus group interviews with young women who were graduates from one of the case study schools; and relevant policy and other documentation from the two case study schools. Although necessarily limited in scope, the analysis of data from two case study schools provides insights into the extent to which state schools can, and do, address the needs of

ASB Muslim students. The analysis also provides insights into the educational experiences of young ASB Muslim females in Australian secondary state schools, and their post-school transitions into the Australian workforce and civic life.

The remainder of this chapter presents major outcomes and findings in relation to the three research questions. Thus Section 2 addresses evidence of the extent to which the case study schools were able to meet the needs of young ASB Muslim students; Section 3 addresses the experiences of the girls themselves – their perceptions of their schooling and their future aspirations; and Section 4 addresses implications and recommendations from the research. Each of these sections draws on findings from teachers, students, and the recollections of young women who were graduates from one of the case study schools. Before turning to major findings from the research, however, I briefly revisit the place of the inclusive multicultural framework in the research.

In chapter 3, following a review of literature, an inclusive multicultural education framework was proposed as a way of providing a tangible structure for analysis of the data, and for the organisation of research findings. As was argued in chapter 3, since the 1980s, policies of multiculturalism and multicultural education have been primary vehicles in Australia for supporting migrant communities and for addressing educational equality for children of cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia. In developing the framework, I drew on notions of both multiculturalism and inclusion. The concept of multiculturalism and various multicultural education policies provided the broad holistic structure of the framework and enabled identification of key elements to be addressed in any analysis of equitable education, namely language and literacy, culture and religion. They also provided overlapping spheres of influences of

school; family/community and broader society (Epstein, 1995). While the term inclusion has often been associated, albeit somewhat loosely, with multicultural education, in this thesis it has been defined in relation to its potential to identify and address inclusive practices as well as exclusionary pressures for student educational engagement and future social inclusion. Thus in the framework, the notion of inclusion complements multicultural education by highlighting factors that work to support students' inclusion in education as well as those that work to reduce exclusionary pressures. The framework itself is based on the argument that its various facets contribute to students' academic achievement, to their maintenance of strong bicultural identities, and to their abilities to develop the knowledge, skills and resilience necessary for full participation in an increasingly multicultural and multi-faith society. It is also based on the argument that an effective multicultural and inclusive educational process has the potential to promote social cohesion, and, subsequently, to promote participation in a democratic, increasingly globalizing, multicultural and multi-faith society (Bouma & Halafoff, 2009; Bouma, Ling & Halafoff, 2010)

The goal of achieving an ideal society and a state education system that can support these ideals is not without challenges. One of the questions that have been central to this thesis is the efficacy of schooling female ASB Muslim students in an 'inclusive' state secular education system. The framework that has been proposed in the thesis has facilitated analysis of the challenges and exclusionary pressures that arise within secular schools, as well as analysis of policies and practices which support ASB Muslim students' positive educational outcomes. I turn now to major findings from the thesis and their implications for the education of these ASB Muslim students.

8.2 How well do Australian secular state schools meet the needs of young ASB females?

8.2.1 Introduction to Section

The first research question and its corresponding sub-questions focused on the extent to which the two case study schools were able to meet the needs of their ASB Muslim female students. Findings in relation to this question are primarily based on analysis of interviews with executive staff and teachers, as well as analysis of school documents. However, students' perspectives on this question are also relevant here. This section of the chapter thus addresses key findings and implications relevant to the first research question from the multiple perspectives of the participants. It also addresses the significance of findings in relation to associated findings in the literature.

Key findings

A number of key findings in regard to the schools' abilities to meet the needs of their ASB Muslim students emerged from the analysis of data. In summary, these included:

- Implementation of inclusive multicultural education
 - genuine attempts on the part of both case study schools, and the NSW department of education, to provide schooling that is inclusive for ASB Muslim students;
 - serious attempts from both schools to implement multicultural policies (despite some differences between schools here);
 - no evidence of systemic racism within the schools (despite some possible incidents with specific teachers or specific students);
- Academic achievement of students

- reasonable levels of academic success of ASB Muslim girls (although students appear to be somewhat polarised in terms of their academic success);
- the need for more support in terms of students' academic language and literacy development;
- lost opportunities for learning of Arabic.
- Schools' interface with community and broader socio-political contexts
 - mixed levels of success in terms of community involvement in their daughters' education;
 - mixed levels of success in terms of schools' responses to specific critical incidents and their engagement with the broader socio-political context.

The nature and significance of these findings are elaborated in following sections.

8.2.2 Implementation of multicultural and inclusive education

A major finding from analysis of school documents, interviews with school executives and teachers and interviews with students was that both case study schools were making serious effort to provide an inclusive education for their ASB Muslim students. Document analysis indicated that notions of inclusivity and multiculturalism were intrinsic aspects of the ethos of both schools, and that both had historically demonstrated a commitment to multicultural education policy and practice. Teacher interviews confirmed this. However, there appeared to be some differences between the schools in their interpretation of multiculturalism. At Swanson, multicultural education was identified and described as a focal point in the school's welfare policy, or as 'second nature' to the school. In response to the its culturally and linguistically diverse student population, including recently-arrived migrants and refugees, the school' had adopted proactive approaches to multicultural education and inclusion through whole-school approaches to ESL, language and literacy support, first language maintenance;

antiracism and community harmony policies; minority family and community interaction; and through its approaches to dealing with socio-political context and crisis events.

Thus there was evidence that multicultural education at Swanson went beyond a 'celebratory' approach (Kalantzis, et al, 1990) (although it included celebration of difference) and incorporated an "integrative whole-school approach" that took on "a progressive, critical approach to cultural diversity" (Burrige et al, 2009). At Macliffe, multicultural education also included, but also went beyond a celebratory approach to diversity. However, Macliffe teachers indicated that, as a result of changing demographics where students were now likely to second or third generation Australians, there had been a shift in school focus to an emphasis on 'shared values and patriotism to Australia.' This shift reflected broader social and political developments that had placed greater emphasis on pragmatic multiculturalism 'and' core values of Australia's western liberal democracy (Reid, 2010, p. 50; Curriculum Corporation, 2003). This shift, reflecting the objectives of *Respect and Responsibility Program* (2006), has been characterised as a move from an emphasis on anti-racism and multicultural education to an emphasis on 'values and citizenship education' (Burrige, et al, 2009, p. 78).

Despite some differences, there was evidence that multiculturalism in both schools was being implemented in ways that aimed to promote respect and tolerance. Teachers and students at both Macliffe and Swanson identified efforts to promote the spirit of multiculturalism and harmony. They identified a number of specific positive inclusive practices, as well as exclusionary pressures in their schools. They also highlighted the

strengths and limits of secular state education for Muslim students. Some of those key features are summarised below.

Antiracism, Community Harmony and Students' Interactions

Significantly, both schools had substantial anti-racism policies that were acknowledged by teachers and students to be effective in addressing racism or bullying if it arose within the schools. Both teachers and students reported the schools played a decisive role in mediating positive cross-cultural /interreligious encounters via antiracism and community harmony initiatives. Policy document and teacher interviews confirmed both schools adhered to antiracism policy requirements (DEC, 2005), including policy implementation and monitoring, the provision of antiracism education, and appointment of antiracism contact officers at the respective schools. Although there were accounts of instances of racism from individual teachers or from specific students, there was no evidence in either school of systemic racism. Thus, at both schools antiracism, and community harmony initiatives were seen as broadly effective in fostering positive, learning environments where interethnic/interreligious tension was infrequent.

Both schools had created an environment in which their ASB Muslim students had a strong sense of security and belonging. In their interviews, students attributed this in part to the presence of large Muslim student cohorts, but in addition they were very conscious of their schools' strategies for promoting anti-racism and supporting cohesive harmony. Despite reporting some instances of conflict (especially amongst younger students), the students also described interactions with other culturally and religiously diverse students in positive terms. Student' interactions at schools could thus be described as mundane, day-to-day cross-cultural encounters, where participants gained mutual intercultural and interreligious learning (Ho, 2011b). Such descriptions reflect

the role of schools as sites of ‘everyday multiculturalism’, where young Australians interact together in a ‘genuine micro-public’ (Amin, in Ho, 2011b), or as sites of “regular and continual cross-cultural exchange”, and for ‘people mixing’ (Noble, 2009, p. 48). These findings confirm the capacity of ethnically diverse state schools to provide safe, positive environments that are conducive to learning for its students, including those of ASB and Muslim backgrounds.

Advantages of secular schools for ASB Muslim students

Analysis of data pointed to a number of benefits for students in attending secular schools. Both current and past students spoke positively about the intercultural/interreligious awareness that they gained through interactions with non-Muslim students. They described dealing with differences in beliefs and opinions in mostly peaceful and constructive ways. Although some of the younger students referred to negative exchanges, as they matured they reported developing the cross-cultural skills needed for negotiating religious and cultural difference. The past students who had graduated from school were particularly conscious of the benefits of such interactions, and the relevance of cross-cultural skills for engagement in the wider secular environment of study and work. Overall, outcomes from the study pointed to a lack of interreligious and intercultural conflict, and generally positive, mundane encounters associated with the “banal and ordinary lives of Australian Muslims” (Atie & Dunn, 2013, p.4). These findings are significant, especially in the light of Atie and Dunn’s (2013) argument that positive encounters of Muslims and non-Muslim Australians in schools and other public spaces are “under-researched and under-acknowledged”, while it is “poor relations that receive most public and policy attention” (p.4).

Teacher and student interactions, while at times complex, were also identified as a benefit of secular schools. For many of the teachers, working with Muslim students had been their first points of contact with Muslims. They reported the experience had contributed to a greater interreligious/intercultural awareness, a better understanding of the community's lived experiences, and, for some, a sense of identification with students. Both teachers and students reported incidents where teachers had 'stood up for their students' in the broader community by challenging stereotypes or discriminatory attitudes they encountered. Teachers however, especially at Macliffe, also described some tensions in their interactions with students. They attributed these to the effect of the broader socio-political context, their own cultural identities in relation to their students and, especially with younger students, the fine line between effective discipline and students' perceptions of bullying and racism.

Students' perceptions of interactions with teachers also pointed to a generally positive, although at times complex, relationship. Students from both schools acknowledged teachers' respect, empathy and support, and their intercultural and interreligious awareness, describing teachers as 'accepting', 'respectful', and 'treating all students equally'. These findings parallel those from other research (Haque, 2001; Abbas 2002; Niyozov, 2010), and suggest that teachers play a very positive role in building community harmony and in creating 'safe spaces' for students in their schools. Students also identified some tensions in their interactions with teachers. Some students accused some teachers of lack of understanding, or respect for students' religious identities, and also subtle, perhaps subconscious stereotyping by teachers. Students, particularly at Macliffe also reported being perceived and treated as a homogeneous group. These issues reflect those raised in other studies about Muslim students' interactions with

teachers (Neilsen & Allen, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Sheridan, 2004; Mansouri & Trembath, 2005; Mansouri & Kamp, 2007). Such findings suggest the need for more on-going professional support for teachers working with Muslim students – a point that was made by some of the teachers themselves.

Challenges for secular schools in meeting needs of ASB Muslim students

Challenges for the secular schools in meeting the needs of their Muslim students lay primarily in the tension between requirements to implement a secular curriculum while meeting students' religious needs. At both schools, students and teachers described inclusive practices that had been adopted to accommodate some of the religious requirements of Muslim students- halal food provision, prayer spaces, flexible uniform policies, and flexible timetabling to accommodate religious observances, and the provision of scripture classes. These “organisational changes at a school level” (Donohoue-Clyne, 2006, p. 288), within both schools were viewed as reasonable, and practicably feasible. The greater challenge lay in accommodating students' Muslim religious beliefs within specific subjects, and, inevitably for both teachers and students, there were points of tension – in the Creative Arts (Music, Dance, and Film), in Science, and in PDHPE, including the issue of sport during Ramadan.

As indicated in chapter 3, the challenge of integrating an Islamic ethos into a secular curriculum has been acknowledged by others (Donohoue-Clyne, 2002; 2006). Evidence in the study indicates that there were genuine efforts by both schools to negotiate with parents and reach a constructive compromise on issues as they arose. Where there was more parental contact with the schools, particularly resulting from proactive school measures as was the case with Swanson, this process was less contentious. However, teachers in both schools also argued the need for a more reciprocal community

approach to inclusive multicultural education. They felt that some of the demands of parents, which may require students' exemptions from aspects of the curriculum, or for curriculum modification, would undermine the secular curriculum.

Despite the general acknowledgment of the difficulty of balancing a secular curriculum with the religious needs of Muslim students, the young women who had graduated from school, in particular, argued that schools had a responsibility to recognise Islamic culture in their curricula (see also Donohoue- Clyne, 2002, p. 125). They pointed out that Muslim and/or Arab experiences or culture were largely invisible in the secular curriculum; and, like Yasmeen (2008), they called for more visibility of Muslim and Arab representation within the curriculum. This issue remains the greatest challenge, both for schools and for students.

8.2.3 Academic achievement of students

Academic profile

There were differences in the academic profiles of the two case study schools. Macliffe traditionally was seen as having a stronger academic tradition than Swanson, and it was evident from school documents as well as interviews with school executive and teachers, that the school placed great emphasis on this tradition. While there was also concern at Swanson, about students' academic progress, with its higher proportion of more recently arrived migrant and refugee students, the schools tended to place more emphasis on community harmony and inclusion there, than academic achievement.

Although there were differences between the demographic and academic characteristics of the two schools, Swanson and Macliffe's responses shared common descriptions of

ASB Muslim students' academic performance profiles. ASB Muslim students were perceived by teachers in both schools to be a heterogeneous group with a polarity in their academic performance profiles; although also with a 'bottom-heavy', or with a higher proportion of students whose academic performance was below-average. Students' perceptions of their own academic performances in both schools tended to be more positive than their teachers' perceptions. Most of the current students, especially at Macliffe, felt they were achieving quite good levels of academic success. However, current students, as well as the young women who had graduated from school, highlighted the impact of teachers' high expectations and support on their educational success. While the issue of low teacher expectations had been raised as a concern in some previous research (Parker-Jenkins, et al, 1999; Mansouri, 2006), relatively few students in this study identified low expectations amongst their teachers as a contributing factor to academic issues.

Teachers at both schools identified a number of factors as contributing to high academic performance. These included: students' higher levels of motivation and commitment; better language proficiency; and stronger parental encouragement and support. They identified exclusionary pressures impeding some students' educational performance as: a student subculture (amongst some students) that undervalued education; expectations within some families that female students' would take on traditional roles of family formation at the expense of further education and career; and limited parental encouragement and support.

Students' views of factors impacting on their educational achievement broadly reflected those of their teachers. They identified limited language proficiency, and experiences of

educational disengagement and poor motivation as factors that impacted on educational achievement. However, although some students were aware of pressure to take on family roles, most reported that their parents and families placed high value on education (especially for girls) and had high expectations for their educational success. This was confirmed by the young women who had graduated from school, who also reported changes in attitudes within their local community towards girls' education and careers provided strong support. The issue of parental aspirations has arisen in other Australian-based research (Suliman, 2001; Suliman & McInerney, 2006; Mansouri & Kamp, 2007; McCue, 2008), and some have argued that beliefs about low aspirations on the part of Muslim parents have often been misguided (Crozier, 2009; Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006). Findings in this study appear to confirm this view.

More broadly, both teachers and students underscored the complexity of factors within and beyond school that impact on students' educational achievement. As Watkins (2011, p.845) has argued, there is no simplistic relationship between ethnicity and academic performance, rather there is a complex interplay between "class, gender, religion, migration history, parents' level of education, individual family experiences", all of which contribute to students' differential educational outcomes.

Academic language and literacy development

Although they acknowledged the complexity of factors impacting on students' educational outcomes, both teachers and students identified control of academic language and literacy as a particularly important factor in students' educational success. Teachers in particular highlighted the importance of language and literacy development for the academic achievement of ASB Muslim students' academic achievement. It is therefore of some concern that teachers and students at both case study schools

identified insufficient language and literacy support as an exclusionary pressure for ASB Muslim students.

Teachers and students were aware of challenges that students faced with their academic language and literacy development. Teachers identified factors contributing to these challenges as: students' non-English speaking backgrounds; their lack of routine reading; limited interactions with others outside their local community, and hence limited vocabulary and limited awareness of register and discourse strategies. Both teachers and students identified students' limited control of oral language registers, including their inability to move beyond the local 'ethnolect' as impeding their educational success. Use of Lebanese ethnolect, that is, Arabic-heritage-AusE or 'Lebspeak' (Rieschild, 2007, p. 44) was perceived negatively by students as well as teachers, and they were aware of negative connotations associated with use of ethnolect in broader society, particularly in the workforce.

While both schools offered ESL and literacy support programs, these appeared to be more embedded at Swanson, where they were regarded as integral priorities for the school, and where they received substantial resource allocation, curriculum attention, and professional development focus. Given the differences between schools in academic profile and student populations, this may seem appropriate. However, at least some of the Macliffe teachers argued that students needed more substantive and systematic support for their language and literacy development. In addition, there was evidence that at least some teachers saw language and literacy teaching as competing with the demands of a content-driven syllabus.

The findings here point to a more general issue of concern. The significance of academic language and literacy development for culturally and linguistically diverse students is underscored by its position as a key objective in multicultural education policies (e.g. DEC NSW, 2005). It is also underscored by outcomes from recent research by Watkins, Lean, Noble and Dunn (2013), who found that 90% of NSW public teachers identified more support for language and literacy proficiency as a key multicultural education priority (p.6). In related research, Watkins et al (2013) also found that most teachers identified ESL and literacy education as the area of multicultural education that required the most professional development attention (p.6). Yet despite consistent evidence that teachers are aware of the importance of language and literacy development, there is also consistent evidence that teachers lack confidence in their abilities to teach language and literacy effectively (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001; Hammond, 2008; 2012; Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011). In addition, as Watkins, et al (2013) point out, despite policy documents since the 1980s emphasising the role of “all teachers from kindergarten to year 12...to address the literacy needs of their students” many teachers of subject areas such as Science, History, Economics and so on, continue to regard support for students’ language and literacy development as largely “the responsibility of primary school and secondary school English teachers” (p.18). It appears that findings from this research confirm those from previous research – that many teachers’ lack confidence in their abilities to support students effectively in their academic language and literacy development; and that some still do not regard teaching language and literacy across the curriculum as their responsibility. Perhaps with the greater emphasis on systematic teaching of language and literacy that is evident in the national Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2012) this issue may be addressed, at least to some extent.

Lost opportunities for learning Arabic

While teachers had relatively little to say about the maintenance of Arabic language, for students and young women graduates this was a significant issue. For them, Arabic had “intertwined core values” (Clyne, 2003, p.65) in that it is significant for religious and cultural practices, and significant for communications within their communities in Australia and abroad. While most had engaged in some study of Modern Standard Arabic as children, few had continued with these studies. They expressed regret at lost opportunities for learning Arabic and concern that they were only able to interact in their Lebanese dialect - concerns also raised in other studies (Taft & Cahill, 2010). While Swanson provided some opportunities for students to learn Arabic, Macliffé did not. Swanson’s provision of Arabic language learning sent positive messages to students about their first language, and contributed to promoting an inclusive educational environment for these students; however, the majority of students had studied the language through community-run schools. Given the limited funding and practical constraints for state schools in providing community language support, it is likely the responsibility for language maintenance may continue to rest largely with community-run language schools.

8.2.4 Schools’ interface with Community and Broader Socio-political Contexts

While the schools faced considerable challenges in balancing requirements to implement a secular curriculum with the need to acknowledge and address students’ religious needs, they also faced challenges that resulted from the broader socio-political context. Thus the nature of the schools’ interface with their local community, including

parents and families of the Muslim girls who were the focus of this study, and their responses to issues that arose in the broader community were especially important.

Analysis of data indicated there were differences between schools in their interface with community and with the broader society. While both schools employed a Community Liaison officer, and liaised with their local Muslim Women's Organisations, the two schools differed in levels of parental interactions. At Macliffe there was limited parental interaction with the school. This meant that information was not relayed, and issues were at times left unresolved. At Swanson there was a deliberate policy to encourage and support community involvement at the schools. Specific strategies had been put in place to encourage this involvement, including modification of traditional P & C structures to those better suited to parents' needs; organising community classes on school grounds; organising information sessions, including with guest speakers about matters pertinent to the local community; and organising fieldtrips for parents and students to universities, work placement sites to better inform parents and expand students' opportunities. While these strategies resulted in a high level of community involvement, they did not remove all tensions. For example, in regard to work-placements, teachers regarded some parents as being overly protective of their daughter as impeding their daughters' post-school options. However, the policies and strategies in place at the school meant communication with parents could be maintained with the result that compromise solutions were more likely to be reached. Overall there was evidence of different levels of success between the two schools in terms of their engagement with the local communities. The kinds of policies and strategies in place at Swanson had led to far greater community involvement, and they provide a positive

model that could be adopted at other schools attempting to support their ASB Muslim students.

Teachers at both schools expressed concern about parents' and community's gendered role definitions, and the manner in which these limited the girls' educational experiences and future career aspirations. As indicated earlier, teachers at both school described their students' academic performance as polarised. Some students achieved high levels of academic success, and teachers generally regarded high parental aspirations as a contributing factor here. Conversely they regarded families' traditional role definitions for daughters as contributing to the low motivation and academic performance of some students. Teachers in both schools were concerned about low levels of parental involvement in their daughters' education. They generally interpreted this as lack of parental interest. Current and past students had quite different views on this issue, with the majority describing high parental aspirations for their academic and career activities. While they were aware of the emphasis on marriage and family formation, they also commented on changing attitudes within the community towards early marriage and towards careers for women. Such findings confirm outcomes from other research that has also noted generational changes in parents' expectations of their daughters (Parker-Jenkins et al, 1999). It would appear that interactions, such as those that occur between the schools and the local community, as well as broader economic imperatives, are contributing to changes in attitudes within local communities towards the place of women in society.

Regardless of the effectiveness of their policies in supporting community involvement and teachers' concerns about the impact of gender on their students' lives, both schools

faced a further challenge in their interactions with their local communities. Both schools were experiencing the phenomenon of 'residualisation'. The perception by local communities that the schools had become 'Islamic' had contributed to progressively declining enrolments. Macliffe in particular had attempted to overcome this issue, but there was acknowledgement that community attitudes and fears reflected broader societal attitudes, and anxieties about Muslims, and were difficult to overcome (Niyozov & Plum, 2006). As Ho (2011a) argues:

Mono-cultural schools, regardless of the brilliance of their teaching programs, cannot socialise students for the reality of a cosmopolitan Australian society and a globalised world. Nor do heavily migrant-dominated schools, bereft of Anglo-Australians provide a balanced microcosm of Australian society for socialising young people.

With continued residualisation of schools along ethnic or religious lines, the strength of state schools in their capacity to socialising Australia's youth for effectively interacting in this cosmopolitan society and globalised world is diminished.

Schools' interface with Socio-political context

In addition to differences between schools in the extent of their active engagement with their local communities, there were also differences in ways that they responded to the broader socio-political context. While Macliffe had a 'blanket ban' on discussing specific political issues and crisis events in the school, Swanson adopted a proactive approach to addressing these incidents with its students.

Swanson's policy aimed to ensure students were given opportunities to explore global and national events (such as September 11; the Israel-Lebanon War; and the Cronulla

riots) in a supportive learning environment, where they were encouraged to develop balanced views of broader socio-political realities. The school held open forums and assemblies, where discussion of events and their fall-out were open for staff, students and parents. Teachers and students reported that these discussions contributed to students' resilience, as well as their belonging and citizenship, and allowed for effective responses to societal racism and prejudice. The school also put in place strategies such as cultural exchange programs with other schools, to promote inter-ethnic understanding and harmony beyond the confines of the individual school. In comparison, Macliffe school's blanket ban on addressing these realities meant missed opportunities to support students to deal with issues that were of real concern to them. This issue is further elaborated in the following section.

8.2.5 Conclusion to the Section

In response to the first research question regarding the capacity of secular state schools to provide an inclusive, multicultural education that meets the needs of its female ASB Muslim students, a broadly positive picture emerges.

Though approaches and practices differed to some extent in the two case study schools, it was clear that both provided opportunities for an inclusive education for their ASB Muslim students. Positive features of these educational practices included: whole-school approaches to language learning; support of community language maintenance; development of mutually respectful intercultural and interreligious awareness and skills between Muslim students, non-Muslim students and teachers; policies to address some of the religious needs of Muslim students; promotion of community and family involvement and cooperation; partnering with parents to widen students' experiences; strategies to acknowledge and address the fall-out of socio-political realities and crisis

events; maintenance of a strong feminist ethos to challenge limiting cultural practices and attitudes; and encouragement of academic achievement and access to educational and career opportunities. These strengths, evident in varying degrees at the two schools, assisted in preparing ASB Muslim students with the skills and opportunities to participate effectively in Australian society.

However, to varying degrees within the two schools, some exclusionary pressures were also evident. These included: content teachers' perceptions of their limited role or capacity to enhance students' language and literacy skills; limited attention to language needs beyond the early ESL support; some tensions in some student-teacher interactions; limited intercultural and interreligious awareness amongst some teachers; lack of curricular visibility of Islamic and Arab experiences; limited school-parent interactions; some lack of attention to the socio-political realities in relation to the students. Such factors challenged the provision of an inclusive education for ASB Muslim students.

There were also clear limits in the extent to which it was possible for secular schools to provide an inclusive education for ASB Muslim students. These limits were primarily associated with the secular underpinning of the state education system, and its worldview, which was at odds with Islamic beliefs. Despite the challenges this tension posed for schools, active parental and community involvement in the school provided opportunities for compromise solutions to be negotiated.

8.3 What are the experiences of ASB Muslim females of Australian secular schools?

8.3.1 Introduction to Section

The second research question in this study and its corresponding sub-questions addressed the experiences of young ASB Muslim females in Australian secular schools, as well as their experiences more generally of living in Australian society. It also addressed the experiences of young women who had graduated from one of the case study schools. Findings in relation to this question draw on questionnaire responses and interviews with students attending the two case study schools; and on focus group interviews with young graduate women. This section of the chapter thus focuses on the perspectives of students which were both similar to and different from those of their teachers: their experiences and recollections of school; and their aspirations for their futures.

Key findings

A number of key findings in regard to students' experiences and recollections of school, as well as their experiences beyond school, emerged from the analysis of data. In summary, these included:

- generally positive experiences at school
 - recognition of safe and supportive learning environments
 - generally positive interactions with non-Muslim students and teachers
 - perceptions of overall academic achievement
 - awareness of need for further language development (and of need to move beyond ethnolect)
- active engagement in post-school study and careers
 - with awareness of constraints associated with gender and ethnicity

- development of identities
 - an overall sense of national belonging combined with
 - strong identity as Muslims
- concerns about interactions with the broader community;
 - perceptions of social exclusion
 - community insularity
 - concerns about safe and unsafe spaces
 - gendered discrimination and Islamophobia

These findings are elaborated in the following sub-sections.

8.3.2 Overall experiences at school

In many ways students' perceptions of their schooling reflected those of their teachers. Like the teachers, students generally reported very positive experiences of being at school. They were aware of the generally safe and supportive learning environment that was provided by their schools, and were appreciative of their teachers' efforts on their behalf. As indicated in the previous section, apart from isolated incidents, they described their interactions with teachers and non-Muslim students in generally favourable terms. They were conscious of their schools' anti-racism and anti-bullying policies and reported that these were effective. Like some of the teachers at Macliffe, students there were critical of the schools' policy of not addressing political events, but otherwise, like Swanson students, they were generally positive about their schooling.

There were some differences between teachers' and students' views however about the students' overall academic performances. Students tended to be more positive about their academic achievement than their teachers. While teachers, especially at Swanson pointed to a large group of underachievers, in both case study schools the students themselves reported they were doing quite well at school. They were aware however, of

the need for more support in their English language and literacy development and they were also aware of the impact of their teachers' expectations on their academic performance. Perhaps not surprisingly, with the benefit of hindsight, the young women who had graduated from school were especially articulate about such issues. Much of this has been addressed in the previous section so it is unnecessary to add more here. Suffice it to say, the students' perspective provides a broadly positive picture of their experiences of attending secular Australian schools. Students' perspectives, however, go well beyond those of their teachers when they discuss their post-school aspirations and their concerns regarding interactions with the broader community. The following sub-sections address such issues.

8.3.3 Post-school study and careers

In contrast to general (mis)perceptions of Muslim women as subservient and house bound, all students in the study described post-secondary school education and future employment as key post-school aspirations. The majority of students in both case study schools intended to pursue university education, while smaller numbers were planning vocational education or apprenticeships. In addition the young women graduates were actively engaged in completing post-secondary studies, employed on a part-time or full-time basis, and/or committed to full-time household and childrearing responsibilities. While some of the women with pre-school aged children were out of the workforce, they intended to pursue work when their children were older. Such findings parallel those of other research regarding Muslim women's aspirations beyond traditional gendered roles (Brah & Shaw, 1992; Kazemi, 2000; Handousa, 2005; Jamali, et al, 2005).

Despite overall career aspirations, both students and women graduates were conscious of community pressure regarding choice of careers considered appropriate for women. Students and women graduates described positive parental attitudes toward education and career goals for their daughters. However, they also reported that at least in part these attitudes reflected community perceptions of what constituted jobs that were suitable for women. While sons were regarded as having a range of possible career options (vocational education, apprenticeships, small businesses, etc.), daughters needed to be tertiary educated so they would have better access to a career that was 'appropriate' for women. It was significant that the majority of women graduates were in traditional women-dominated professions, or were planning to undertake work in these fields.

Students and women graduates were also very conscious of the need to balance marriage and childrearing responsibilities in their future career plans (Foroutan 2006, 2008, 2009). They reported a preference for professions that were more flexible, and that allowed them to commit to family responsibilities. However, the women graduates in particular, reported that they were aware of changes in community attitudes regarding expectations of marriageable age and the value of career. Perhaps the flipside of this was that some students described their parents' expectations for their daughters' futures as unrealistically high, and they attributed this to parents' lack of understanding of their daughters' academic abilities or to lack of information about possible career pathways. As Siann and Khalid (1992) argued, Muslim parents' limited access to information disempowers them from constructively assisting their children in future career decision-making. However, evidence that changes are underway is significant as such changes

are likely to result in a closer alignment between community attitudes towards the role of women in society and those advocated by the schools.

Overall, there was evidence that like other young Australian women, both students and women graduates were actively pursuing further study and careers. However, they remained conscious of family expectations regarded what constituted ‘appropriate’ careers for women, and the need to accommodate marriage and childrearing responsibilities with careers. Their post-school goals were thus influenced by the perceived suitability of the career for women; its potential flexibility to accommodate such family responsibilities; and if they wore the hijab, their capacity to find appropriate work in the field.

8.3.4 Students’ Belonging and Identities: National, Cultural and Religious

The issue of identity is a key factor in debates about the value of faith based versus secular schooling for Muslim students. Findings in this study regarding the development of students’ national, cultural and religious identities in secular schools are highly relevant to that debate.

Questionnaire and interview responses indicate that both students and women graduates had developed strong and confident senses of themselves and their places within their schools and communities. Both students and the women graduates were positive about their Australian identities, as well as their predominantly Lebanese roots, displaying a strong bi-cultural stance (Kabir, 2007, 2008). The young women’s responses reflected more cognisance of their Australian identities than the students, which may be

attributed to increased maturity and self-awareness. However, both groups of participants were articulate about different aspects of their identities that they identified as ethnic, national or religious. The majority of students indicated they were comfortable with hyphenated identities, although some identified more strongly with their Lebanese cultural roots - a finding shared by other studies on young Muslims' identity formation (Zaal, et al, 2007; Kabir, 2008).

Both students and women graduates identified very strongly as Muslims. Their descriptions of religious beliefs highlighted the importance of Islam in the structures and boundaries of their day-to-day lived experiences, and more generally in their identities. They emphasised the importance of the pillars of Islam, namely prayers, fasting, alms giving and pilgrimage and an Islamic value system, in their lives. Whereas students in an Islamic school acquired more knowledge and practice of Islamic faith, worship rituals, jurisprudence, and Islamic history within their school (Alghorani, 2008), many students and young women in the study also emphasised the role of local mosques, Islamic Centres, and the Muslim Women's Organisations in providing them with religious instruction and spiritual guidance.

Despite their strong sense of cultural and religious identities, as Muslims in secular schools and in a secular society, both students and women graduates were aware of pressures to conform to the secular norms (Zine, 2001; 2008; Sheikh, 2009). As a result they had a sense of social exclusion and an awareness of the need to be resilient. As Muslim girls and women there was particular pressure to conform in terms of appearance and behaviour – and there was much discussion of the implications of wearing the hijab. Students also described differences in lifestyles, and identified

pressures to conform to the dominant youth culture with its emphasis on drug and alcohol consumption, dating, and dress codes. These issues are similar to those identified in other research (Zine, 2001; 2008; Hodge, 2002; Sarroub, 2005).

Some differences were evident between the students' and the women graduates' accounts of pressure to conform. The women graduates had attended school at a time when the numbers of Muslim students were smaller. They recalled being on the periphery of the dominant school culture, and being very conscious of their difference. Their own experiences of schooling, as well as the desire to promote a strong Muslim identity, have been deciding factors for some to enrol their own children in Islamic schools. For students in the case study schools, who were attending school at a time when there was a significant Muslim presence, the pressure was different. While conscious of peer pressure it was not perceived in such negative terms. Both students and women graduates reported that their friendship groups tended to consist of other ASB Muslim students. This had enabled them to develop an Islamic subculture in the school, which worked as a support network (Zine, 2000; Sheikh, 2009), and helped them maintain a sense of belonging in their schools. Students also identified wearing the hijab as an expression of religious identity and as a "barrier or a shield to the strong peer pressure that exists in youth culture in and out of schools" (McCue, 2008, p.41).

The women graduates reported similar pressures to conform in their secular workplaces (Scott & Franzmann, 2007; Samani, 2013a, 2013b). They described being on the periphery of the workplace culture; and of needing to develop strategies to avoid social activities involving alcohol, a practice which was often "detrimental in workplace networking and negotiating business deals" (Samani, 2013a, p. 99). The wearing of the

hijab presented particular challenges. While some students and women wore the hijab despite being aware of the challenges that this decision entailed, others, like Samani's (2013) participants, had decided not to do so due to the associated challenges. For these women, "though their faith was of great importance, an Islamic identity was not necessary in the public sphere, and may hinder job prospects" (Samani, 2013b, p.7).

In sum, though the students and the young women articulated a strong sense of religious and cultural identities, there were challenges in adhering to the religious and cultural norms both at school and in the workplace, both of which were secular environments. Findings suggested that the pressures to conform were not very pronounced at the two schools, which may largely be attributed to the demographic nature and ethos of the schools (ethnically diverse, high Muslim cohort, strong multicultural ethos). The fact that the two schools had large Muslim cohorts meant that there was strong Muslim subculture at the two schools, functioning as a support network for these students. However, when examining the young women's experiences, it was clear that while the experiences of being in a secular state school prepared students for intercultural interactions in society, the secular workforce presented its own attendant challenges and dilemmas for cultural and religious identity maintenance. In the workplace, the young women described making difficult decisions to balance religious and cultural maintenance within a secular workplace culture.

8.3.5 Students' interactions with the broader community

While students' and young women's accounts of their secular schooling and of their emerging identities were largely positive, their accounts of their interactions beyond their schools and local communities are considerably less positive. One of the major findings from the research is the level of anxiety experienced by Muslim girls and

young women in regard to interactions with the broader community. Interview data in the study provides evidence of a sense of social exclusion, of concerns about safe and unsafe spaces, and of experiences of racial intolerance or abuse.

Both students and women graduates tended to be positive about their local communities, and to describe a strong sense of belonging and security when discussing their schools; however, this positive sense of belonging and security did not extend to their experiences in the broader society. As young Muslim girls and women they were very conscious of their difference from mainstream society. This sense of social exclusion is captured in the description provided by Erebus (2006) as

complex, deriving in part from differences between the traditions of the cultural groups from which they originate, intergenerational conflict, socio-economic hardship, and a sense of suspicion if not outright rejection from sections of the mainstream of Australian society. (p. xii)

In their interviews both students and women graduates referred to the impact of the contemporary socio-political climate, to negative perceptions of the ASB Muslim community within the broader Australian society, to their own experiences of racial and/or religious intolerance as factors that had contributed to their sense of social exclusion. They were also very conscious of negative media portrayal of Australian ASB Muslims.

Despite evidence of positive experiences and school and engagement in post-school study and careers, the students and women graduates identified stereotyping of Muslim women in the broader community as a significant exclusionary pressure in their lives.

The women described encountering stereotypes in their workplaces where Muslim women were assumed to be uneducated and backward (Imtoul, 2010; 2011). They also reported encountering expectations that they were oppressed, and that they would have limited English proficiency – stereotypes that Zine (2006) describes as subtle forms of ‘gendered Islamophobia’. As a result they felt they had to work harder to prove their professionalism – especially in workplaces that were male dominated. Some had attempted to overcome workforce discrimination through career changes, such as switching to the public sector, or to female-dominated fields where they believed racial/religious, and general gender discrimination were less prevalent.

Experiences of discrimination and stereotyping were amplified for those who wore the hijab. Interviews indicated that both students and women who wore the hijab believed discrimination either would, or had, affected their employment opportunities. Some students were more positive and expressed the belief that discrimination would not prevent them gaining employment, and they referred to examples of Muslim women as role models who, despite wearing the hijab, had secured employment. However, the majority expressed concern. Some women who wore the hijab reported reorienting their careers, and moving from private companies to work in the public sector where they felt they would be less discriminated against. Like participants in Imtoul’s (2006) research, they felt they did not fit “the corporate mould”. Apart from these stereotypes being exclusionary, they impacted negatively on the women’s self-esteem, and contributed to feelings of marginalisation and discrimination (HREOC, 2008, p.24; Imtoul, 2010).

From the interviews, two interrelated factors emerged as further complications in regard to the students’ and young women’s mobility and participation in society. The first was

the tendency, as a result of their anxiety about safety, for the local Muslim ASB community to be inward-looking and insular (Ramadan, 2004; Foroutan, 2008; Yasmeen, 2008). The second and related factor, also as a result of anxiety about safety, was parents' limitations on girls and young women's movements - which restricted their access to opportunities available to other Australians. In a study of the social exclusion experienced by many Muslims, Yasmeen's (2008) explains the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion as follows:

It is important to note that exclusion is not uni-directional and uni-dimensional phenomenon. It is not always so that the wider community and structures exclude the minority. The excluded minority are not immune to the phenomenon of excluding others: they may also relatively or absolutely exclude the majority or other members of the minority community. (p.3)

Yasmeen's point about mutual responsibility is relevant to the participants in this study. Students and the young women expressed apprehension about being in spaces considered unsafe particularly if they wore the hijab. Due to their visible Muslim presence, they demarcated their local areas as safe spaces. Unsafe spaces were those which were less ethnically diverse; that did not have a visible Muslim presence; or where they or other Muslims/ASB Australians had experienced racial or religious vilification. Both students and young women were fearful about experiences of racism and discrimination, and most recalled incidents where they, or someone they knew, had been targeted for racial or religious abuse in public spaces (public transport, the street, shopping centres, and beaches). While not all their experiences of racism were overt or abusive, they echoed those described by participants in Imtoul's (2010, p.171) research as experiences of "everyday racism", or of "subtle experiences of racism" where "racism is expressed in covert ways" (Essed, 2002, p.211), but which affected Muslim

women's identities, and sense of belonging in cumulative ways. The impact of consistent racism is summarised by Noble and Poynting (2010) as follows:

Effective citizenship requires access to and comfort in the multitude of spaces. The consequences of racist vilification are that certain groups lose the ability to act and learn in and through social spaces, they lose the opportunities to develop skills of wayfinding within and across spaces, retarding the capacities to negotiate within and across spaces, diminishing the opportunities to invest in local and national spaces. Their resources and opportunities for place-making in public space shrink along with their mobility. (p.503)

While the issue of racism was of great concern to both students and women graduates, there was also discussion of the need to be resilient and to develop strategies for dealing with racism. The women graduates, perhaps not surprisingly given their greater experiences in the workplace and broader community, were more vocal about the two-way process that interaction with the broader society entailed. As Yasmeeen (2008) pointed out in a discussion of her own research:

The dominant perception among the respondents remains one of not being accepted. Combined with ideas that Muslim and Western ways of life may not always be compatible, these perceptions appear to create parallel tendencies: Muslims can both be excluders and the excluded. While including others, they can experience perceived and/or real exclusion from members of the wider community. (p.72)

Both the insular nature of the ASB community and broader processes of discrimination and 'othering' of Australian Arabs- and of Australian Muslims were exclusionary pressures in students' day-to-day lives, and in the young women's post-school

transitions. While such experiences of broad discrimination and vilification can only partly be addressed by schools through anti-racism initiatives, they suggest the need for schools to focus on developing resilience and to promote more constructive responses to possible negative encounters. They also hold some implications for the minority community itself to ‘make a space’ for itself in the broader society.

8.3.6 Conclusion to Section

This section reinforces the findings presented in the previous section, and points to the positive lived experiences of the students at their schools. A major finding of the study is that students perceived their schools as safe, secure learning environments, where experiences of interreligious/ intercultural tensions tended to be minimal, and where their religious and cultural identities were generally positively affirmed. Additionally, though students identified pressures to conform to a secular school environment, and to accompanying secular social norms, unlike findings in other research, these were regarded as particularly problematic. This difference is perhaps due to the demographic nature of the two schools (ethnically diverse, large Muslim student cohort), and to the schools’ multicultural ethos.

Beyond school experiences, the women graduates reported pressures of maintaining their religious and cultural identities in secular workplaces, which was often less accommodating of diversity than school. Students’ and young women’s narratives of identity demonstrated a strong sense of cultural, religious and national identity, but also a sense exclusion from broader Australian society. The sense of exclusion was associated with the community’s insularity, designation of safe and unsafe spaces based on experiences of vilification, and experiences of workforce discrimination and

stereotyping. These experiences affected students' and women's sense of safety and security, and hence their mobility in broader society. They also inevitably reduced their capacities to access opportunities available to other Australians.

The implications of these issues are important for schools, and for Australian society. Although, as demonstrated in the two case studies, schools often succeed in providing havens for students from broader discrimination and vilification, the fact remains that beyond school, these negative experiences are often a reality for Muslim ASB women. Through provision of opportunities to promote civic education and through encouragement of strong antiracist stances amongst the general student population, schools have a role to play in instilling in students a sense of belonging in Australia. Beyond this, schools can also play a role in overcoming the community's insularity by developing interactions with ASB Muslim students in the broader community. The schools can also equip students with the skills and knowledge to effectively address encounters with discrimination or vilification. Through these opportunities, perhaps young people can develop resilience and maturity to effectively respond to negative incidents. However, the reality is that these experiences of racial and religious vilification in the broader society are alienating, confronting, and incite fear in many of these young women, and have broader implications for Australian society's approaches to promoting harmony and social belonging for all Australians.

8.4 Implications and Recommendations

This section addresses the third and final research question in the study namely, the implications which can be drawn from the research in relation to the education of ASB Muslim girls in secular societies such as Australia for schools and educational policy,

for students, parents, the minority community, and for broader Australian society. These implications and recommendations are based on the findings from the study, and from relevant literature.

8.4.1 Addressing Language and Literacy Education

A key implication of the findings was the need to reassess, and more proactively address ESL and literacy support provision for ASB Muslim students, and indeed other students of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Addressing issues of language proficiency are crucial in the provision of equitable education opportunities, for future access to employment and effective social inclusion. Key implications and recommendations regarding language and literacy education are:

- There is a need for whole-school, across the curriculum approaches to ESL and language and literacy support, which go beyond initial stages of language learning. Such approaches must address students' oral communication skills as well as academic literacy. They should include whole-school focused reading programs; academic writing; and should address students' limited proficiency with more formal spoken registers, including their use of ethnolect. Strategies to support these approaches could include: more opportunities for debating, public speaking, work experience outside their immediate communities, and in ensuring students' exposure to, and knowledge of more dominant codes of English (Rodby, 1992). Short-term projects targeting small groups of students (evidenced in one school) may achieve some results; however, the research findings point to a need for schools to ensure that language and literacy objectives were met through funding for more long-term, larger scale literacy and language oriented projects across the curriculum (Hammond, 2012).

- There needs to be more recognition, at the level of education system as well as schools, of the need for on-going language and literacy support across the curriculum. That is, responsibility for meeting students’ language and literacy needs must extend beyond specialist ESL or English teachers and must be shared by all teachers across the curriculum in secondary schools, (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001; Hammond, 2008; 2012; Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011; Watkins, et al, 2013). There also needs to be acknowledgement that many teachers lack confidence and skills in providing such support to students, with the result that they need professional development support to assist them to develop a ‘substantive knowledge about language’ (Hammond, 2012, p.226), and the skills to implement language and literacy support across the curriculum.
- There is a need for more concerted approaches to developing students’ Arabic language fluency. Findings of the study suggest that the provision of Arabic at Swanson correlated with a higher number of students studying the language in the upper grades. While schools face practical constraints in providing language programs, community language provision in schools would reinforce messages about the importance of fostering first language learning and maintenance.

8.4.2 Addressing Cultural and Religious Inclusion

The analysis of schools’ approaches to supporting the religious and cultural identities of ASB Muslim students underscored a number of important implications. With these implications in mind, I outline a number of key recommendations for the different stakeholders in the study.

Promoting Anti-racism, Community Harmony and intercultural Awareness in Schools

- Findings indicated that the ASB Muslim students lacked skills for dealing with racial and religious discrimination and vilification experienced in public spaces. HREOC (2008) pointed to the need to promote awareness about “anti-discrimination laws, human rights and complaints processes”, amongst ASB Muslim students, and students of other minority ethnic or religious backgrounds (p.21). The school can play an important role in teaching these processes, which in turn may reduce students’ perceptions of social alienation, and increase their confidence in a system that will uphold their equal rights as Australians.
- Findings in the study indicate a need for increasing teachers’ understanding of Islam and Muslims. It is important that teachers engage with definitions of culture, ethnicity and even religious identities, as dynamic and changing, rather than essentialised notions (Watkins, et al, 2013). By recognising diversity in cultural beliefs and attitudes within cultural and ethnic groups, and the intergenerational shifts in these beliefs and attitudes, teachers can avoid homogenising students’ identities. The study therefore recommends continued professional teacher education and training about antiracism, inclusive teaching practices and intercultural awareness. This recommendation is in line with those from previous studies (McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Kamp & Mansouri, 2010; Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010; Watkins, et al 2013). It is also in line with studies that have emphasised the importance of inter-faith components of intercultural awareness (Erebus, 2006; Gardner, Karakasoglu & Luchtenberg, 2008).
- There should be more representation of experiences of minorities groups, such as ASB Australian Muslims in the secular curriculum. Oubani and Oubani

(2014), in particular call for more inclusive History and English curriculums in New South Wales, especially for more vulnerable ethnic or religious minority groups, such as Muslim ASB students. Burrige et al. (2010) have also emphasised the need for the development of more current, updated curriculum resources, particularly those which focus on religious diversity (p.78). Notwithstanding this, recent Australian curriculum initiatives, such as *Learning from One Another: Bringing Muslim Perspectives into Australian Schools* (Hassim & Cole-Adams, 2010) are useful. Also, literature by Australian Muslim writers which focus on antiracism and multiculturalism can be valuable school resources (see Randa Abdel-Fattah, Nadia Jamal and Taghred Chandab).

Acknowledging the impact of the Socio-political context

The study has highlighted the need to address the effects of the socio-political climate on students' sense of belonging and general well-being. The following are recommendations for addressing these social realities with students.

- There is a need to acknowledge explicitly the impact of the socio-political context, and national and international crisis events on students. The exemplary practices that were evident at Swanson provide a possible model here. Such practices included: holding open forums, class discussions with students that promoted belonging and resilience, and which supported the development of balanced perspectives on events.
- There is a need for schools to prioritise programs for developing interfaith and intercultural understanding, and for promoting social cohesion and harmony, (Erebus, 2006), for example, through involvement in interschool cooperation, or exchange programs. Mono-cultural and multicultural secular schools, as well as faith-based schools need to participate in such programs.

Promoting the Interface between school and community

Community and parental interactions are key aspects of schooling, and are recognised in the Multicultural Education policy (DEC NSW, 2005). The study proposes the following recommendations:

- The need for schools to promote community involvement through strategies that are proactive and innovative. Swanson school provided a number of possible examples of such strategies. These included modification of the traditional P & C structure to ensure it is more community-centred; open forums on topics of relevance, community liaison and so on.
- While recognizing the proactive role needed from schools, it is important to acknowledge the two way relationship between schools and communities. While acknowledging possible constraints on parents (e.g. language barriers), the study therefore recommends a more concerted commitment from all key stakeholders including parents and community organisations to make school community partnerships more effective.
- A key finding was the need to widen students' horizons, by increasing interactions with the broader community, which can build resilience, and a sense of belonging. The study therefore encourages ASB Muslim students to increase their participation in community activities, including sports, arts or civic organisations (Erebus, 2006, p. xiii). As Kabir (2007) argues, "Australian-born Muslim students who have integrated into the wider community through sports, debates and work at mainstream stores are able to articulate a broader set of Australian values and behaviours" (p.77).

8.4.3 Educational and Social Policies

A number of concerns were raised in the study, which have implications for broader social and education policies. These are summarised below:

Educational Policy

- There needs to be more recognition at a system level of inherent tensions between a secular curriculum and Muslim beliefs. Although multicultural education policy requires schools to acknowledge and be inclusive of religious diversity, findings from the study suggest this is not enough. Furthermore, a deeper recognition and examination of the complexities and challenges of addressing students' religious needs within a secular curriculum, and the provision of guidance (professional development, policy support documents) for schools by policymakers would contribute to a more informed and less fraught process for secular state schools and their teachers.
- There needs to be more focus on addressing the issue of residualisation in some NSW state schools. The study pointed to evidence of schools becoming segregated across socio-economic lines, and ethnic/ religious lines (Ho, 2011a). While this is a complex issue, there need to be active measures to assist schools retain the mix of students across ethnic, religious, socio-economic boundaries that has characterised state comprehensive schools.

Social Policy

- There needs to be recognition by government and community organisation of the need for mediation of effective interactions between citizens, and adherence to anti-racism laws. A concerning outcome of the study was the extent to which societal hostility was viewed as a reality in the students' and women's lives.

Religious and/or racial discrimination and vilification affected the participants' sense of belonging, their mobility in broader society, and their perceptions of their abilities to access opportunities in the broader Australian society. While it is acknowledged that there needs to be a reciprocal role adopted by the community and individuals, the state has a crucial role to play in mediating effective interactions between its citizens, and in ensuring that laws governing interactions are adhered to. These are goals that go beyond the capacities of schools.

8. 5 Contributions and Limitations of the Thesis

As indicated in chapter 1, the study has sought to contribute to furthering of knowledge in two ways: through understandings and insights into the educational experiences of ASB Muslim girls and young women in Australian secular schools and society; and through the development of a framework of inclusive multicultural education.

As discussion in this chapter has shown, although limited in scope, the study has contributed insights into what it means to be a Muslim girl in secular Australian schools. It has also contributed to the body of literature about the education and post-education experiences of female Arabic-speaking background Muslim students in Sydney's state schools. While previous research has addressed Muslim students' schooling in Australia, by addressing the intersection of gender, ethnicity and religion in shaping students' experiences of schooling and post-schooling in the Australian context, this study has addressed a gap in the literature. The study also contributes to wider discussions about state secular schooling versus private faith-based education, based on the successes and challenges identified in the case study schools.

Rather than making binary judgement about secular schools, the study has highlighted the inherent complexities involved in educating female ASB Muslim students in the state education system, and has identified factors that promote inclusion and that work to enforce or reduce exclusion.

A contribution of the study has been its proposal for an inclusive, multicultural framework. While the terms inclusive and multicultural have long been associated, the framework used in this thesis has attempted to define the terms and their relationship more precisely than is usually the case. A summary of the rationale and element of the framework has been included at the beginning of this chapter. Suffice it here to say that it has a sound basis in the literature on multicultural and inclusive education and it has enabled a systematic approach to analysis and interpretation of data within the thesis.

The thesis also has limitations. One limitation is its narrow focus on two case study schools, and thus its perhaps limited scope for generalising from the data. As indicated, the study was based on female students' experiences in single-sex state secular schools, which were ethnically diverse, and had substantial numbers of ASB Muslim students. The research does not claim to reflect the experiences of students in other educational contexts that do not share the demographic profiles of the two case study schools. It is possible that findings would have been different if the case study schools were less ethnically diverse, or had small numbers of ASB Muslim students, or if the case study schools were co-educational. Furthermore, it does not account for the experiences of students in the Islamic school context. However, although the case study schools may not be representative of all Australian schools, they do provide insights into the

experiences of the many Muslim ASB girls. Given the concentration of Muslim communities in specific areas of Sydney and the preference for parents to send their daughters to single sex schools, the case study schools can be considered to provide educational experiences that are typical for many Muslim girls.

A further limitation of the study is its limited scope of data. The study relied primarily on interviews and questionnaire responses. It did not, for example, include lesson observations and analysis. Given the significant challenges in gaining approval and accessing schools as research sites, this limitation was unavoidable. In addition, the research relied on volunteers amongst both teachers and students. It also relied on convenience sampling especially in the third phase of research where I used my community contacts to identify participants. However, despite the limited scope of the research, themes and responses emerging from analysis of data began to recur in findings with both teachers and students, suggesting that further interviewing of larger numbers of participants would have likely elicited similar responses.

In spite of these limitations, the study provides insights into the participants' realities, and the challenges and successes of inclusive multicultural education for young Muslim ASB women and girls in Australian state schools. The participants offered a diversity of viewpoints, and this suggests that the objectives of exploring and describing a wide range of perspectives were achieved. The qualitative accounts of the young women's post-school experiences effectively provided insightful snapshots into these participants' post-school lives, and exclusionary pressures that they experience, and as such, these insights can inform work that moves towards further social cohesion.

8.6 Directions for Future Research

Outcomes from this study point to the need for further research in two major areas.

These are as follows:

- research into the educational experiences of ASB Muslim students in different educational contexts. This study has focused on students' experiences single sex schools with significant proportions of Muslim students. Further research is needed in other educational contexts, including co-educational schools, schools where Muslim students are in a minority, and the Islamic school context. Such research would enable further insights and recommendations for effective schooling for this group of students.
- research into the experiences of larger and more representative numbers of women in their years following school. The study has addressed the post-school experiences of only a small number of women. A more comprehensive study incorporating the experiences larger numbers of women would provide further insights into their post-school activities, including workforce participation and factors affecting social inclusion.

8.7 Conclusion to chapter and thesis

I conclude the thesis with a final summary statement about outcomes from the research.

The thesis sought to investigate the experiences of female ASB Muslim students' experiences of education in Sydney's secular state schools, and the ways that these schools responded to this particular group's religious, cultural and linguistic needs. Its analysis of the experiences of school executives, teachers, students and graduates from

two case study secondary schools, educational policy, and school documents, highlight a number of narratives.

The narratives that emerge from this thesis are largely positive with reference to ASB Muslim girls' experiences within their schools. Though some tensions were reported in student-teacher interactions, students' experiences of interactions in their secular state schools were reported to be positive intercultural and interreligious encounters. Students overwhelmingly reported a sense of security and belonging, and believed their schools positively affirmed their cultural and religious identities. Despite some of the pressures associated with being Muslim in a secular educational environment, there was student recognition of schools' measures to promote positive, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Participants reported positive community and parental changes to gender role definitions, with students reporting high parental aspirations for a tertiary education and career, coupled with marriage and family formation.

There is no doubt that all schools play a decisive role in fostering a cohesive and harmonious Australian society. However, this thesis highlights that beyond the school, there are factors that contribute to, or impede, the students' social inclusion and long-term goals of social cohesion. These factors are not within the power of the schools to control, but lie in government policy, and in the levels of tolerance in broader society.

The negative narratives were often associated with students' and young women's experiences beyond their schools and their local areas. While the schools tended to be safe spaces, where there were limited negative encounters with racism and intolerance, this was not the case in the broader society. The negatives as described by the students

and young women were the levels of hostility that the girls encountered in the broader society, in the form stereotyping or racial and religious discrimination or vilification. These experiences contributed to the minority community's own insularity, and consequently impeded the young women's mobility in the broader society, and their access to opportunities available for other Australians.

The narrative of the thesis continued with evidence of overall success of post-school participants, who juggled post-secondary studies, careers and family formation. However, they too described challenges in society including racial/religious as well as gender-based discrimination. However, the young women reported negotiating these challenges in different ways, and developing a strong sense of resilience in light of these challenges. Although a non-representative minority, they continue the narrative of what the experience of being young Muslim women in a western society such as Australia entails.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Interview Schedule- Teachers and Executives



An Exploration of the Educational Experiences of Arabic-Speaking Background Girls in Sydney's Secondary Schools

(Ref No. 2005 214A)

A PhD study by Leila A. Mouhanna, Supervised by Assoc Prof. Jenny Hammond (Principal supervisor) and Assoc. Prof. Pauline Gibbons (Co-supervisor) Faculty of Education, UTS.

Dear teacher,

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. The interview will take between 45 minutes to an hour. The interview contains six sections, each with 1 or 2 main questions. The sub- questions are probes and may or may not be used during the interview depending on their relevance to your experiences. Please take the time to read the consent letter prior to attending the interview.

1. Background- Teacher's Experiences

- a) What is your role and experience at the school?
- How long have you been at the school?
 - What subjects do you teach?
 - Have you taught at other schools?
 - Have you been teaching culturally diverse students for more than a year or two?
What were the ethnic backgrounds of students that you have taught?

2. Background- Questions about the school

- a) Has the school community changed during your time here? How?
- b) Has the school changed in response to its diverse student population? If so how?
- Is this a change from the previous student profile?

- Has the school implemented any special programs for its ethnically diverse student population? If so, how successful or otherwise do you think these have been? Why?

3. ASB Muslim Students

a) Can you tell me about your experiences with ASB Muslim students?

- How extensive?
- How do you interact with them, is your interaction with them different to your other students?

b) What are their academic strengths and weaknesses? Why?

- Is there a general academic profile?
- Are there any general trends in their literacy proficiency, what do you attribute these trends to?
- What occupational and educational pathways have your previous high ability Arabic Speaking Background Muslim students pursued?
- Which factors do you think helped them to succeed?
- Can you give me an example of a student who hasn't done so well? Why?

4. Specialist Teachers (including English teachers)

What is your assessment of the Arabic Speaking Background Muslim girls' overall language and literacy abilities in English?

- What do your students need in terms of literacy in order to succeed in your class?
- What do you think are the ASB girls' major strengths and weaknesses in literacy?
- Would you classify ASB students as being at risk? Why/ why not? Contributing factors?
- For what purposes do your students generally read?
- Do many of your students study Arabic? Do you think their study of Arabic has helped them with their study of English?

5. Questions for ESL teachers

Do you think many of the Arabic Speaking Background Muslim students need ESL support?

- Do students have access to ESL assistance or language support?
- Is racism an issue at your school? If so, how? (students to students, students to teachers, teachers to students, etc.) And how does the school respond to this?

6. Questions for principals/ deputy principals/ head teachers

What policies does the school have to ensure student equity?

- Do you feel that the school's anti-racism policy is effective in countering racial prejudice in the school?
- Have you been involved in any particular programs that have specifically targeted students at risk?
- Would you classify Arabic speaking background students as being at risk?
- How does your school interact with the community?
- What do you reckon hinders this interaction?
- Do you discuss issues related to gender equity with your Muslim students? Do you feel comfortable doing so?

7. ASB students' cultural and religious heritage and educational experiences and identity

Finally, can I ask your opinion about how the students' religion and culture has impacted on their schooling and more generally on their identity?

- How do you think their culture and religion shapes their experiences at school?
- Do you think that the students' cultural and religious backgrounds have been an inhibitor or a facilitator to Arabic Speaking Background Muslim girls' education?
- In practice, what role do you feel you play in counteracting racism in the school?
- Can you give me an example of a time when there was a culturally sensitive matter that you dealt with relating to Arabic speaking background Muslim students? What happened? How did you deal with it?
- Do you know much about their practices, do the students inform you about why Muslims do certain things in certain ways?

Appendix B. Students' Questionnaire



Exploring the Educational Experiences of Muslim girls of Arabic speaking backgrounds

What is this research about?

Hi, my name is Leila Ayoub- Mouhanna, and I'm a Ph.D student at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I'm doing a research study about Arabic Muslim girls' experiences at school. This study is important because it will help educators and other people in the community to better understand your experiences at school and it will give a more positive account of Muslims in your school and in your community.

In my study I want to find out about:

- your educational and employment goals,
- your use of English and Arabic
- how you think you are doing at school
- the influence of your home culture on your experiences at school.

What do I have to do?

Please take the time to answer each question in this survey thoughtfully and honestly. Your answers to this survey will be private and remember this is not a test, so while you are completing it you can ask questions or discuss the topics with your friends.

At a later time I am hoping to talk to some of you about these topics. If you would like to be a part of these groups fill out your details at the end of the survey if you would like to join the group discussion. Please ask me any questions that you may have about the research or about any of the questions in the survey.

Exploring the Educational Experiences of Muslim girls of Arabic speaking backgrounds

There are 4 sections to this survey:

Section 1: Some short background questions so that have some general information about you.

Section 2: Your experiences as a Muslim at School

Section 3: Use of Arabic and English.

Section 4: Your learning in general.

Section 5: This section is all about what you want to do in the future.

PART 1: About your background

The first part of the survey asks for some background information about you.

1.1 What grade are you in?

8 10 12

1.2 In which country were you born?

Australia

Other Name of country: _____

1.3 What is your mother's country of birth?

Australia

Other Name of country: _____

1.4 What is your father's country of birth?

Australia

Other Name of country: _____

PART 2: Being a Muslim

This part of the survey is about being a Muslim girl at your school and in your local community.

For the next three questions I want you to think about your experiences as a Muslim girl, and I want you to write about them. You can use individual adjectives, short points, or sentences. Divide the boxes in half and write positives and the negatives on either side.

2.1. Describe what it is like to be a Muslim girl at school.

E.g. you can write about some of your positive and negative experiences and how they made you feel.

2.2. Describe what it is like to be a Muslim girl in your local community or Australia. *E.g. you can write about some of your positive and negative experiences and how they made you feel.*

2.3. Do you think your school experiences are different to Muslim boys your age?

If so, how? Please give examples.

2.4 Read these statements about school and tick the appropriate box.

	Strongly agree	Agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
i. My school values multiculturalism				
ii. My school is strict about racism				
iii. My teachers know about my religious beliefs and practices				
iv. My fellow students know about my religious beliefs and practices				
Are there any other comments that you would like to add?				

2.5. Read the following statements about religious practice and tick the appropriate box.

	always	Sometimes	Rarely	never
i. I am a practicing Muslim				
ii. I read the Qur'an				
iii. I go to the mosque or Islamic centre				
iv. I attend a Muslim youth group				
v. I wear the Hijab				
VI. I use the prayer room at school				

2.6. Do you think your school supports you as a Muslim? If so, how?

2.7. Can you think of anything else that you would like your school to do to make it easier to be a Muslim student at the school?

PART 3: Your language use

This part of the survey asks questions about your use of English and Arabic

A- Reading and writing in Arabic

3.1 Which language do you **mainly** use with

	Arabic	English
i. your parents		
ii. your sisters and brothers		
iii. your friends		

3.2 Have you studied Arabic while living in Australia?

Yes

If so for how long?

6 months 1 year 2 years other: _____

No

3.3 Where did/ do you study Arabic? (For this question you can tick more than one answer).

Arabic school in the afternoon

At high school on Saturday

At high school during the school week

At Arabic school with the mosque

Other _____

3.4. For how many hours a week did you study? About _____ hours per week.

3.5. Are you studying Arabic now? Why/ why not?

.....

.....

.....

3.6. How important is it for you to study Arabic? Why?

3.7. When do you use the Arabic language? Please list as many situations as you can think of. For example, read the Qur'an, watch Arabic movies, talking to relatives, etc.

3.8. Do you help your family with translating anything? Yes No

If yes, please give examples

B- Reading and writing in English at school

3.9. Read these statements about reading and writing in English and tick the appropriate box.

	Always	sometimes	Rarely	never
i. My writing in English is very good.				
ii. I get low marks because of my writing in different subjects				
iii. I understand the information that I read for the different subjects that I study.				
iv. I do extra reading to help me with my work in class.				
v. I read for leisure in English in my spare time.				

3.10. Are there areas of English that you think you need to improve in? If so, which?

3.11. Do you get ESL help at school to improve your English? Yes No

If yes, how many hours a week and what do you learn? If no, do you think you would be useful for you?

3.12. Read the following statements about computer use and tick the appropriate box

	Always	sometimes	never
i. I have a computer at home that I can use			
ii. I have internet access at home			
iii. I use the internet to find information to help me with my studies			
iv. I use the internet to keep in touch with family and friends overseas			
v. I use the internet to find out the latest news			
vi. I use the internet to chat with my friends			
vii. I use the internet to download music, videos.			

3.13. Do you use the Internet in Arabic? Yes No

If yes, for what purposes?

3.14. Do your parents have any rules about computer use and internet use? If so, what?

PART 4: Your learning

This part of the survey asks questions about different areas of your learning.

4.1 Do you put a lot of time and energy into your school work? Why/ why not?

4.2 How well do you think you are doing at school? Can you give examples?

4.3 Read the following statements about your progress and tick the appropriate box.

		always	sometimes	rarely	never
i. I get good grades for:	Maths				
	Science				
	English				
	History/ geography				
	Sport				
	Other:				
	Other:				
	Other:				
ii. I have a tutor to help me with my studies					
iii. I use a study diary to keep track of homework					
iv. I have a study timetable that I follow during the week					
v. I ask my teachers for help whenever I need it					
vi. I see my teachers outside class if I am having problems with my work					
Are there any other comments that you would like to add?					

4.4 Read the following statements about teachers and tick the appropriate box.

My teachers think that...	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
i. I am a hard worker				
ii. That I am getting excellent grades				
iii. That I try my best				
iv. That I am well organised				
v. I concentrate in class and don't waste time				
vi. I do my assignments and homework				
vii. I will do well in my HSC				

4.5 What things would help you to get better grades? E.g. need to concentrate more, need to improve writing skills, spend more time studying, etc.

.....

.....

.....

PART 5: After finishing school

The fourth part of the survey asks questions about what you want to do when you finish school.

Complete the following sentences.

5.1 When I finish school I would love to do *(name of work or course)*

5.2 When I finish school I would probably do *(name of work or course)* Why?

5.3. When I finish school, my family would like me to do *(name of work or course)*

5.2. If your answers to questions 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 are different, why is this so?

5.3 What challenges do you think you will face after year 12 as a Muslim girl in Australian society?

That's the end of the survey.

Thank you for taking part in the study. I would love to talk to you some more about these topics. I would like to meet up with you in groups, and we could discuss these issues in more depth. If you would like to participate in these discussions, please write your name on the list with Leila.

Appendix C. Focus Group Schedule-Students

1. Background

- Place of birth, Parents' place of birth, Number of siblings

2. Being a Muslim at School

- Describe what it is like to a Muslim girl at school.
- Do you hang out a lot with your non- Muslim peers or do you mainly hang out with other Muslim students? Do you generally get along? Why/ not?
- How do you think the non- Muslim students feel about you?
- Do you spend a lot of time outside school with your friends?

3. Girls' and boys' Experiences

- Is there more pressure on girls or on boys to do better at school?
- Who do you think is doing better at school, boys or the girls? Why?
- Are boys' work choices different to those of the girls?
- What about responsibilities at home, in terms of reading, helping sisters and brothers with homework, translating, etc?

4. National and Religious Identity

- What is it about being a Muslim that is important to you?
- What do you do if you are a good Muslim?
- When did you decide to wear the hijab? Why?
- How would you describe yourself in terms of nationality?

5. Arabic

- Did you go to Arabic school in the past? And now?
- How important is being able to read Arabic, to being a good Muslim? Did your parents encourage you?
- A lot of you said that you had studied Arabic in the past, but were not studying it at the moment. Why?

6. English

- Let's start with the ways of talking, do you think you use too much slang in your talking?
- How is the Lebanese way of talking in English different to the way others around you talk?

- Do you think that ways of talking will affect how well you do at school or even in getting a job?
- How well are you doing at school generally? (Are you a high achiever, average, etc.?)
- What about writing? What feedback do you get about writing?
- What about reading? Do you read outside school?
- Do you have any difficulties understanding what you read, e.g. in text books?

7. After School

- What you would like to do when you finish school? What would you more likely do?
- What kinds of careers would your parents like you to have?
- What have previous year 12 students you know done?
- Who are your role models/ who do you admire?

8. Challenges after School

- Have your thoughts on this issue changed since the questionnaire?
- Do you think that the situation for Muslims has changed at all during this time?
If so, how and why?
- Where do you think you will be in five years' time?
- Is marriage important to you and your family? What would be a good marriage age?

Appendix D. Interview Schedule-Young Women

1. Being a Muslim at School

- What was your school like? Did you have a lot of Muslims in your time at school?
- Did schools accommodate the needs of Muslims? If so, how?
- What was your interaction with your teachers like? Did you get a lot of encouragement?
- I was also interested in your interactions with your non- Muslim peers. Did you hang out a lot with your non- Muslim peers? Did you generally get along? Why/ not?
- Did you spend a lot of time outside school with your friends?

2. Community/ Parental expectations

- What kinds of expectations did your parents have of you after school then and what are parental expectations like now? Have things changed?
- What about marriage? Did that feature strongly as a priority when you were growing up? Have attitudes towards marriage changed in any way in recent times?

3. Gender Differences

- Were the boys' experiences different to the girls' experiences and do you think that that has changed in any way now?
- Was there more pressure on girls or on boys to do better at school in your time?
- Who tended to do better then and now?
- What kinds of careers did the Muslim girls in your grade pursue?

4. Religious and national Identity

- What is it about Islam that is important to you?
- How has being a Muslim shaped your life in comparison to your non-Muslim peers/ work colleagues?
- How would you describe yourself in terms of nationality? Was this the same when you were at school? How have you negotiated your national identity?

5. Language, Academic Performance

- Did you go to Arabic school when you were younger? Why?
- How important is being able to read Arabic, to being a good Muslim?
- How well did you do at school generally?

- Did you experience any difficulty with your communication in English, whether in speaking, writing, reading comprehension?
- What kind of feedback did your teachers give you about your writing?
- Do you do a lot of reading now? Did you read a lot when you were at school?

6. Education and Career

- What did you plan to do before you left school?
- What did you end up doing? What factors shaped these decisions?
- Are you happy with the family and career decisions you've made generally? What would you change?
- What have been the major challenges you've faced after school? Did you expect these challenges? (Unemployment, workplace discrimination, juggling work and family, etc.)

7. Being a Part of the Australian community

- Do you think our post 9/11 situation has changed the situation for Muslim students in particular? If so, how?
- How do people react to you when they find out you are a Muslim?
- What challenges do you think Muslim girls will face after school, and what advice would you give?
- Where do you think things are heading for Muslims in Australia? Are your feelings positive or negative about what the future?