



# SUPPORTING MUSLIM YOUTH IN ‘FINDING THEIR WAY’

Mental Health and Muslim Youth



# About Me...

- Personal Experience
- Education
- Profession





# My research of study

Research Question:

How does a public school system support Muslim students?

- (1) How do schools understand issues-related to Muslim students?
- (2) What challenges do schools face in trying to support Muslim students?
- (3) What strategies do schools employ to support Muslim students?



# Muslims Population in Canada

- The National Household Survey (2011) shows that the Muslim population has exceeded the one million mark, meaning the population has doubled for the third consecutive decade.
- Islam is the largest growing religion in Canada, with a 72.53% increase, followed by Hinduism, spiking at 67.68%, and then those reported to have no religious affiliations, at 63.68% (Census, 2011).
- Muslims also have the lowest median age (28.9 years old) of all people with religious affiliations, followed by those with no religious affiliation (32.7 years old), then Sikhs (32.8 years old), and lastly Hindus (34.2 years old) (Census, 2011).



# Muslim Population in Canada Continued

- The increase in Muslim population is largely attributed to immigration, with the largest newcomers over the past five years coming from Pakistan (Census, 2011).
- The majority of Canadian Muslims live in Ontario, with the Greater Toronto Area having the highest concentration of Muslims in North America, at about 5% (Pew Research Centre, 2010).



# What are Muslims saying?

## National Survey (EnviroNics Institute, 2006)

- representative samples were asked whether they believed that Muslims in Canada wished to integrate into the Canadian way of life, 57% of them reported that they thought Muslims wanted to remain distinct. While the same percentage of Muslims (57%) said that they wanted to adopt a Canadian lifestyle.
- Thirteen percent of them said that they wanted to both adopt a Canadian lifestyle and maintain their distinct identity.
- The survey found that most Canadians, nine in ten, were born outside Canada.



# I am Canadian...

- When asked, “how strong is your attachment to Canada?”
- 94% said they were proud to be Canadian, versus the national average of 93%.
- Other recent polling also showed that “Canadian Muslims are proud to be Canadian, more so than the average Canadian, and Canadian Muslims very much want to integrate and be part and parcel of the society” (Press, 2013, para.15)
- Over 70% reported to be very proud. When asked what characteristics of Canada they were most proud of, their responses matched the rest of the population.



# Discrimination exists...

- Incidents of discrimination are prevalent and “its existence should be treated as a social fact” (Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009, p.7).
- There has been documented increase in recent years in discriminatory incidents of anti-black racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia in Canada.



- This demonstrates the need for intercultural knowledge and understanding and “the need for schools to ensure educational equity and access for Muslim students” (Chan & Schlein, 2010, p.253).



# Discrimination against Muslims in Canada.

- Many Muslims in Canada have reported that they felt discrimination against them after 9/11 (Helly, 2004; CAIR-CAN, 2002; Adams, 2007).
- A commissioned poll conducted by Environics Research Group (2010) showed that one in three Canadians reported that Aboriginal people and Muslims are considered as “frequent targets of discrimination”.
- A poll by Ipsos Reid suggested that 60% of those surveyed felt that there was an increase in discrimination against Muslims compared to 10 years ago (Chung, 2011).
- Muslim youth growing up in this climate vary in their responses to negative images, stereotypes, fear and marginalization; therefore their level of need for support may vary.



# Younger versus Older Muslims

- Younger Muslims reported to have been more often discriminated against than older Muslims. “Generally, adults who decide to immigrate to a new country expect to put up with a certain degree of hardship and prejudice ... but their children, raised, educated or even born in Canada are less likely to suffer discrimination without feeling considerable disappointment” (Adams, 2007, p.100).



# Special needs of Muslim Youth

- Both Muslim students and their non-Muslim counterparts share the cognitive, emotional, and physical challenges of schooling.
- However, Muslim students in public school systems, wherever they are on the continuum of practice, secular to orthodox, have additional concerns.
- These often include performing their religious practices; maintaining a certain dress code; adhering to certain values misunderstood by secular culture; and dispelling stereotypes, misconceptions and negative appraisals of their religious group (Kahf, 2006; Beshir, 2004, Zine, 2001).



# What about other minorities?

- While ethnic or racial minorities also have to defend themselves and their groups; and assert their identity, Muslim youth “face qualitatively different identity tasks than do many of their peers” largely due to feelings of “being under attack or scrutiny because of their religion” (Stonebanks & Sensoy 2009, p.5).



# Muslim Newcomers

- Muslims, whether indigenous, immigrant, or refugees seem to have similar trajectories of integration, and similar affinities towards Canada as other indigenous, immigrant, and refugee groups.
- Saunders (2007) writes “once we get past the hysteria and look at the facts ... something becomes apparent about Muslims: They’re just like any group of immigrants, except for the stories we tell about them” (para. 20).
- He further elaborates that they are following the usual “patterns of integration” of religious minorities.



# Favourite Quotes

“Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a **new space**, a **better space** for everyone”