

American Muslim Schools and the Single-Sex Approach to Education

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Abstract

Introduction

In May of 2002 the news media brought attention to a provision of Bush's "No Child Left Behind" legislation favoring the use of federal funds to establish single-sex classrooms and schools, (All Things Considered, 2002), (CBS News, 2002). Controversy stirred, of course, over whether such programs would violate women's rights, while reports of initial public school successes in "at-risk" settings demonstrated the promise of the single-sex approach, (Conan, 2002), (Smiley, 2002).

The Zaki Badr Foundation (www.zakibadr.org), a non-profit organization that promotes public awareness of the positive contributions of Muslims, contacted me to find out how Muslim educators in America could add to this discussion since Muslim schools have been operating from their inception over the past two decades using some degree of gender segregation. My concern was that the implementation of a single-sex approach in Islamic schools has been haphazard and mainly based on cultural rather than pedagogical motives.

Over a year later in August of 2003, I discovered a new organization championing the single-sex approach called the National Association for Single Sex Public Education [NASSPE] (www.SingleSexSchools.org), which was holding its first annual conference. At this point I decided to undertake the question proposed by the Zaki Badr Foundation for this course project: to determine to what extent Muslim schools may be able to complement the national discussion over the efficacy of single-sex schooling. To this end, I utilized the NASSPE conference as a beginning reference point on single-sex education. Along with a host of resources, I also discovered my most pressing challenge, innocently framed by one of the conference's other guests: Even if Muslim schools do have a legacy of single-sex education, would not the negative stereotypes regarding Muslim gender relations prove more of a detriment to the cause of single-sex schooling?

This question can be generalized further: What contributions can American Muslims hope to make in general when so many negative stereotypes abound, and to what degree are such stereotypes justified? To this end I have drawn upon my own previous studies of and personal familiarity with Muslim schools in America. I have also complimented this with an investigation into the academic literature on the subject of gender relations in Islam.

The following pages will address the potential of and important considerations to be made regarding single-sex schooling. We will also challenge common stereotypes and assumptions for both the general public and the Muslim community regarding gender relations, while exploring the extent to which Muslim schools can contribute toward the national discussion.

The Challenge of Equity in Single-Sex Schooling

“Well, yes, of course boys are different from girls. Yet in the world of schools, this is no small assertion; it is a political as well as a biological statement...”, (Melvoin, 1998).

The term “single-sex schooling” that is used in this paper describes any of a number of approaches used to educate students in a manner wherein they are separated by gender. This could be through separate schools, or it could be through separate classes within the same school. It could also mean having two separate gender-based schools located on the same or adjacent facilities. Perhaps it is only as effectual as having girls and boys situated in separate groups within the same classroom.

The purposes of such arrangements are varied. Historically, males and females have lived in a segregated society, living in gender-based spheres. This carried over into education as well. Elite men were educated in the classics and women were educated to the extent that it might make them suitable companions for men and competent wives and mothers, (Tolley, 2003). The history of women’s education though, is not clear-cut. It is blurred by the efforts of women’s rights groups who have not always agreed upon their aims, (Salomone, 2003). It is also blurred by the history of education in this country and its extension toward the common man, (and eventually woman), and further by the civil rights movement to include all ethnic groups as well.

In this context, it is understandable why many would initially view single-sex schooling as suspect. A legacy of discrimination should keep us wary about offering opportunities for inequalities to reappear. However, it is interesting to point out that the historically single-sex schools supported by public funding that have survived the legislation and court cases of the 1980s and 90s are girls schools, (Salomone, 2003). Opponents of single-sex schools have effectively opened the doors of all-male public schools to females, making this choice, until recently, unavailable to boys.

Concerns about equity are, no doubt, the biggest driver for controversy behind single-sex schooling. Just the mention of *separating* the sexes elicits the images of racial inequalities in public schooling that were finally struck down in the 1950s by the landmark Supreme Court decision that “separate is inherently unequal”. Just the mention of treating the *sexes* differently recalls another hard fought struggle for equal rights for women. Both the legacies of racism and sexism extend further into human history than our nation can take credit for alone. But the ongoing struggle to rectify such injustices is arguably the real legacy that makes America such a great nation. So it is understandable that such concerns accompany the movement to revive single-sex schooling. Indeed they should, for it is not the intent of single-sex school advocates to revive inequities in education at all. Rather, as this paper will show, single-sex schooling has merits that actually help to enrich the lives of all students by transcending gender stereotypes, reducing social distractions, and improving academic achievement for both boys and girls. This approach has proven especially successful in improving schools with lower socio-economic populations, though it carries benefits for students of all classes. In fact, single-sex schools have only been widely accessible thus far to those students whose families can afford a private education.

In separating boys and girls for schooling, we are offered the opportunity to cater to gender specific needs in both curriculum and pedagogy. At the same time we must be careful that such gender specific designs do not destroy single-sex education’s benefits. In fact, Salomone (2003) cautions that such gender specific modifications can

actually lead backwards toward the kind differentiation that the women's rights movement has fought so long against.

The purpose of education for all students today is the same. Historically this was not the case. Historically, girls' education was seen to be good insofar as it prepared them for being an engaging wife and competent mother. As adults, men and women had separate spheres in society and thus, educating women for any roles beyond her traditional place in the home with her family would have been seen as superfluous. Further, it was considered damaging to women's delicate nature to be exposed to the academic rigor of men's subjects, (Tolley, 2003).

Ironically, these "male" or "female" subjects did not always remain the same as the modern curriculum evolved. In spite of our progress, even today it is generally believed that males are predisposed to do better in math and science while females excel in language arts and communications. Yet if one examines the substance of male education in the mid-1800s, there was clearly an emphasis on literature and language. For girls, the emphasis was on science. Tolley states, "...While the sciences maintained a marginal presence in boys' academies, they were highly visible in girls' schools".

At the turn of the 20th century, in a move to improve female access to colleges and universities, girls' schools increased their attention on the classics and de-emphasized science. It was not until the cold war that science got its impetus in the great race for arms and space technology and thus became a "male" subject. Though required for both boys and girls in public schools, the cultural perception of science seems to have deterred girls. So, as Tolley puts it:

"Today educators seeking to advance the sciences and mathematics among girls attempt an array of interventions. Among these are curricula and instructional methods believed to address inherent or culturally developed differences between men and women... Such efforts may be laudable, but this study suggests that the assumptions on which they are founded are misplaced. Girls' interest and achievement in science and mathematics appear to have been historically mediated by economic, social, and cultural forces rather than determined by inherent biological traits or abilities."

Tolley also notes that many of the instructional methods purported to be more engaging to females such as cooperative learning were also not employed during the nineteenth century when girls excelled at science. Instead recitation, lecture, and demonstration were the main modes of instruction in both female and male academies. Thus differentiated instruction is not necessarily what need be sought through single-sex schools. What is desirable is to create learning environments that are free from gender stereotypes so that each student may develop his/her own full potential without limitations imposed by fleeting social constructs.

The Debate Over Essentialism

Datnow and Hubbard (2002) point out an important distinction that can be made between sex and gender. While the terms may be used interchangeably, they illustrate with a quote from Pamela Haag that "Schools with all girls are not necessarily single 'gender' because they may include students with both 'masculine' and 'feminine' identities". While we may be able to easily distinguish between boys and girls, there is an ongoing debate about what is essentially masculine or feminine nature and whether such identity types are inherent in all or even most males and females respectively.

Opponents of the essentialist argument claim that culture and socialization determine to what extent children adopt male and female personalities.

Murad (2004) refutes the idea of socialization by pointing out the 20th century attempt to re-socialize babies on *kibbutzim*. He says,

“The results, after ninety years of consistent and conscientious social engineering, have been disconcerting. The children, to the anger of their supervisors, unerringly choose gender-specific toys. Three year-old boys pull guns and cars out of the baskets; the girls prefer dolls and tea-sets. Games organised by the children are competitive - among boys - and cooperative – among the girls.

“In the kibbutz administration, quotas imposed to enforce female participation in leadership positions are rarely met. Dress codes which attempt to create uniformity are consistently flouted. In Israel today, the *kibbutzim* harbour sex-distinctions which are famous for being sharper than those observable in Israeli society at large. The experiment has not only failed, it seems to have backfired.”

Murad goes on to offer biologist Robert Trivers’ reproductive explanation. Biological differences are obvious inherent sex differences linked with reproduction. The woman’s “parental investment” in her offspring is far greater than the man’s, beginning with pregnancy and breastfeeding. This limits her reproductive capabilities in comparison with the male who may compensate for his lower “parental investment” through numerous sex partners. Both sexes instinctively seek, in their own ways, biological success through propagation. Both sexes produce the hormones that enhance their disposition. Female production of estrogen and oxytocin generates strong nurturing instincts and even impels them to choose mates who are assertive and powerful, while male production of androgens, testosterone, and adrenaline encourage competition and aggression – useful for competing for mates, hunting for food, and defending their young. Androgens also ensure that men choose mates for their apparent childbearing abilities, (Murad, 2004). It is interesting to consider here too, the assertions about male “quantitativeness” and female “qualitativeness”, since they seem to correlate nicely with these biological functions of the two sexes. For example, Zahra Al Zeera (2001) postulates a feminine theory of education rooted in transformative learning.

Sax (2004) also discusses biological sex differences in the context of brain differences between males and females. According to the variety of studies he cites male and female brains can be distinguished on sight, given thin slices of cadaver brain tissue as well as MRI scans. Male brains are also asymmetrical compared with the symmetry of female brains; males have more white matter than gray matter – the opposite of females; and a smaller or even absent (!) *massa intermedia* of the thalamus, which in women is 53% larger on average, while the male brain is 8% larger on average overall than the female. MRI’s have also allowed scientists to map which sections of the brain are active during different problem solving situations or while experiencing emotions. Males are shown to use less of and only specific areas of the brain while females tend to use both hemispheres for the same task. When women reach adulthood they are able to express their emotions due to a connection between the cerebral cortex and the amygdala, while for most males emotions remain in the amygdala, leading Sax to conclude that, “Asking a 17-year-old boy to talk about his

feelings is about as productive as asking a 6-year-old boy to talk about his feelings,” (Sax, 2004).

Both Murad (2004) and Sax (2004) cite evidence that the male fetal brain is bathed in hormones and undergoes physiological brain development before birth that irreversibly makes him a “male” even if he is castrated. Sax discusses the unusual case of Brian/Brenda Reimer whose penis was damaged in infancy due to a surgical error. His parents were advised to give him a sex change and raise him as a girl, which they attempted to no avail. His boyish behavior was so pervasive that he grew up as a social misfit in school until his parents finally told him the truth and he was finally allowed to assume a male identity, (Sax, 2004).

Sax (2003) also cites studies demonstrating that areas of the brain involved in language and fine motor skills mature about six years earlier in girls than in boys, the areas of the brain involved in targeting and spatial memory mature about four years earlier in boys than in girls. Girls have two to four times better hearing than boys, (interestingly he recommends accommodating this problem in coed settings by putting all the boys in the front and the girls in the back).

If we come to accept this biological data as determinants of the masculine and feminine, then what concerns us is the extent to which male competitiveness and female nurturing affect intellect and learning abilities.

Sax (2003) says,

“Educational psychologists have consistently found that girls tend to have higher standards in the classroom, and evaluate their own performance more critically. Girls also outperform boys in school (as measured by students' grades), in all subjects and in all age groups... Paradoxically, girls are more likely to be excessively critical in evaluating their own academic performance. Conversely, boys tend to have unrealistically high estimates of their own academic abilities and accomplishments... Girls are more concerned than boys are with pleasing adults, such as parents and teachers... (because) most boys will (only) be motivated to study if the material itself interests them.”

Other studies cited by Murad (2004) show that males are more rule-oriented, more attracted to risky activities and sports, have less sexual inhibitions, and are more susceptible to boredom. Sax (2003) says confrontation and stress are both shown to motivate and improve male performance while they will have the opposite effect on girls. Other factors, especially taking brain research into account, should also be considered when designing lessons for boys and girls by taking into account what part of the brain the lesson appeals to.

Again, Murad (2004) offers the insight of another biologist, Camilla Benbow, whose studies show that “boys are much more likely to choose careers in math and science even though girls are fully aware of their own abilities in these areas”. The issue here then is not intelligence, but in the choices made by the sexes in how to exercise their abilities. This would explain why, Murad says, “in general females show themselves much more articulate – (yet) more than seventy percent of first-class degrees at Oxford are obtained by male students”. He goes on to point out universities

like Harvard and Oxford that have sought to eliminate male bias in the exam system with encouraging results.

Finally, Sax (2003) cites Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae showing cross-cultural studies over the past 30 years have only reinforced the essentialist argument:

“A recent report from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that gender differences in personality were remarkably robust across all cultures studied, including China, sub-Saharan Africa, Malaysia, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Peru, the United States, and Europe (including specific studies in Croatia, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Yugoslavia and western Russia). ‘Contrary to predictions from the social role model, gender differences were most pronounced in European and American cultures in which traditional sex roles are minimized,’ the authors concluded.”

Despite such convincing evidence, exceptions to the general rule are probably what keep the nature/nurture debate alive. There are always girls who are labeled “tom-boys” for their allegedly masculine inclinations, while there are also boys who have no interest in sports. Also, as because of long-term gender discrimination in human history, it has been difficult to ascertain just what constitutes a legitimate gender distinction from false stereotypes. Further, the same biological studies indicated above also explain that varying levels of hormones affecting the fetus and/or an additional X chromosome found in some males, may also account for exceptions to the rule, (Murad, 2004).

Significantly, it must be noted that what we are putting forth has nothing to do with sexual preference or orientation. Sax (2003) emphasizes that homophobia is a major inhibitor among boys preventing them from reaching full educational fulfillment. According to Sax, boys are afraid to explore interests such as literature, writing, music, arts, drama, etc. because they are perceived as feminine subjects in coeducational settings. However, this is not an issue in boys’ schools where this perception does not exist. The absence of girls in all boys’ schools allows boys to transcend sex stereotypes because there is no homophobic pressure to avoid “female” course offerings and activities. All such activities that are offered in boys’ schools are perceived as “male” by default because there are only males present.

The Women’s Rights Movement

The implications of these studies may cause feminists to cringe. But even feminism has evolved into disagreeing camps over this issue. During the formative years of American feminism conflicting assumptions were at work. The women at Seneca Falls in 1848 issued a “Declaration of Sentiments” that stated, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal”, (Salomone, 2003).

While basing their agenda for equality on the premise that males and females were the same, one popular argument for women’s suffrage was that:

“Women merited the vote because they were ‘virtuous, sober, devout, respectable, and maternal.’ Men, on the other hand, were ‘competitive, aggrandizing, belligerent, and self-interested.’ Women would cleanse government of corruption and vice and make the nation safe for children,” (Salomone, 2003).

The modern women's movement that took form in the 1970s had come to emphasize the sameness of men and women and focused its efforts on equal rights. Salomone (2003) refers to this as "Liberal Equality" saying,

"Feminists of that era defined their goals by what was valued and possessed by white, middle-class men... By proving that women were the same as men on whatever the relevant criteria happened to be, they hoped to break down the sex-based distinctions that denied women the same benefits or rights."

Rather than try to engage in the essentialist debate about the source of sex differences, (biological or social),

"...the immediate aim was ...to gain for each woman equal access, independence, and autonomy... Integration was their ultimate goal, and social androgyny was their underlying principle," (Salomone, 2003).

Understanding proponents of liberal equality is not as important to the debate over essentialism as it is in understanding the position of the opposition to single-sex schooling. Key individuals, like Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who have personally overcome inequalities through the women's rights struggle, along with powerful civil rights defenders such as the ACLU, were formatively influenced by the philosophy of liberal equality that successfully overcame the age-old separate spheres ideology shaping American society up until then, (Salomone, 2003).

The injustices that accompanied "separate spheres" prompted the advocacy of social androgyny more than actual science. But the lingering taste of that hard fought battle for equality remains in the mouths of those who championed it. Any move that is reminiscent of "separate spheres" will have the same old resolve of liberal equality proponents to contend with.

In the mean time, a new school of feminist thought emerged which Salomone (2003) calls "Difference Equality". In some ways, a response to the limitations of sameness ideology in bringing justice to women, these feminists

"...redefined... 'difference' in the hope of developing a more robust theory of gender equality that would... recognize the concrete ways in which women's lives differed from those of men."

Also known as "relational feminism", it gained legitimacy through the work of educational psychologist Carol Gilligan. While her work is based on social science, it finds agreement with what we presented from biologists above. The central criticisms against her work have not been based on scientific research inasmuch as they revolve around concerns about the potential abuses of her concession that women are different than men. For women who celebrate these differences, there is no implication that recognition of differences implies inferiority or that women are any less deserving of equal rights. Rather, it means that true equality comes when achieving "maleness" is no longer the ideal goal for women who should aspire to reaching their full feminine potential.

The notion of gender differences has met with popular appeal. Psychologist John Gray (1992) based his best-selling book for improving relationships between couples on

understanding these differences, placing the problem-solving male in a cave and the relational female seeking empathy through discourse. Linguist Deborah Tannen (1990) focused her second major book on improving communication entirely on common misunderstandings between men and women based on the ways males and females interpret hidden cues in conversation. Tannen asserts,

“Pretending that women and men are the same hurts women, because the ways they are treated are based on the norms for men. It also hurts men who, with good intentions, speak to women as they would to men, and are nonplussed when their words don’t work as they expected, or even spark resentment and anger.”

As boys’ school English teacher Tim Blankenhorn (1999) points out,

“This topic of differences is fascinating to people; it appeals to their common sense and to their daily reality. In part, it is a reaction to denials of differences that were expressed early on by feminists. It is grist for jokes, advertising gimmicks, TV shows, etc... but there are problems with it.”

Blankenhorn goes on to list these problems including drawing attention to gender differences and subtly affirming traditional order, being based on “poor science” while appearing to be scientifically solid, distracting or de-emphasizing the more serious issues, such as the similarities between the sexes and considerations of purpose or self, or his main concern in this particular essay, confronting the problem of *male* violence and cruelty. He points out that while the dialogue around sex-differences has reshaped the way we think about the world that should be open to females, it has done little to eradicate irrational and undesirable notions about manhood. After all he says, “Men are from Earth, Women are from Earth, too.”

Salomone (2003) brings us back to a third group of modern feminists who also view the essentialist debate as a distraction:

“...the struggle to reconcile equality and difference merely obscures the one difference that really counts: that women are politically, socially, and economically subordinate to men.”

Salomone notes that the women’s movement has mistakenly claimed to speak for all women without proper regard for race, age, religion, class, and other factors that might influence the way they experience womanhood. “It simply has failed to recognize that different social groups ‘live’ gender differently.” For those who recognize these distinctions, essentialism is an oversimplification.

Coeducation and the Boy Crisis

In addition to Blankenhorn (1999), others are also critical of how the emphasis on girls has affected boys. In light of the biological research cited above, it would seem that boys are in more dire need of gender specific attention than girls. In the past, “separate spheres” ideology protected boys from being encroached upon by girls, albeit unjustly because it was discriminatory. In fact, while elementary public schools in the United States were historically coed due to economic concerns, secondary public schools only existed for boys until girls were integrated at the turn of the 20th century. Immediately educators became alarmed at the sudden “boy problem” of rising dropout rates and

academic disinterest among working-class boys and ascribed it to what they called “woman peril”. Among the fathers of public education, G. Stanley Hall of Clark University and Dr. Edward Clarke of Harvard warned that coeducation emasculated boys due to the daily influence of keeping company with female students and teachers. Further, that rigorous academic activity would redirect blood flow from the ovaries of female students to the brain and leave women with “monstrous brains and puny bodies ...flowing thought and constipated bowels.” (Salomone, 2003), (Sadker, 2000). The ridiculousness of this last idea kept it from gaining widespread influence, but concerns persisted and experiments with single-sex schools (as a remedy for male drop-outs) were not sustained. Instead, a gender specific curriculum was implemented in coed schools that reinforced men’s and women’s separate spheres.

After the women’s rights movement helped to correct these curricular inequalities during the latter part of the 1900s, major challenges to coed schools efficacy for girls came again in the 1980s and 1990s. David and Myra Sadker focused on social interaction in the classroom and found girls again to be suffering from unequal treatment. As David Sadker (2000) puts it,

“Teachers praised boys more, punished them more, helped them more. Although girls continued to get better report card grades (partially, we suspected as a reward for their more docile, less threatening behavior), boys received a more intense educational experience, as well as better scores on high stakes tests like the SATs and the GREs.”

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) promoted the Sadkers and similar studies demonstrating sex bias against girls in public schools. While such research was aimed at promoting changes in public coed schools, it was (is) also cited as evidence for the need for single-sex schooling options for girls, (Salomone, 2003), (Datnow & Hubbard, 2002). Thus a common sentiment is that single-sex schools may be better for girls, but coed schools are necessary for boys. This is (supposedly) because boys need the “civilizing influence” of girls and that boys schools discriminate against females, (Hulse, 1997).

Yet reports are now emerging about the “boy crisis” again. Jen Horsey (2004) notes the phenomenon in Canada, while Michelle Conlin’s (2003) story of the New Gender Gap in America was the cover story of Business Week magazine last May. Perhaps due to political correctness, few people are ready to address the issue. Conlin points out that though the problem has also emerged in the UK, over the past decade, but has been successfully countered with special programs that cater to the learning needs of boys. Meanwhile, this new gender discrepancy is not subtle and should not be going unnoticed. While successful programs have been introduced to close the acknowledged gender gap in math and science for girls, virtually nothing has been done to provide similar programs to boys in their commonly acknowledged weak areas of reading and writing. Meanwhile, as boys have come to lose their edge in science and math as well, they have also opted out of other avenues of school achievement. As Conlin points out, “Boys are missing from nearly every leadership position, academic honors slot, and student-activity post...”

Equal rights for women have worked. Girls outnumber boys in every extra curricular activity except sports. Females account for nearly 60% of all BA and MA degrees. More women vote now than men. But Conlin (2003) goes on to cite some

startling statistics. The percentage of boys entering college, or pursuing advanced degrees has “stalled out”, except in engineering and computer science. Colleges are countering a lopsided female to male enrollment ratio with a kind of “stealth affirmative action for boys” because the quality of the boys’ applications lags. Meanwhile, boys constitute 70% of special education students, are four times as likely to be diagnosed with ADHD and medicated with Ritalin, 30% more likely to drop out, and four to six times as likely to commit suicide. Suicide rates for boys have tripled since 1970. While this generation has not yet upset the earnings gap between adult males and females, they have already begun dropping out of the labor force, walking out on fatherhood, and disconnecting from civic life. The voting rate in presidential elections among men has declined twice as much as women since 1964, from 72% to 53%. While we have yet to fully feel the brunt of these trends, it is instructive to note that among African Americans, 30% of 40-44 year old women have never married, compared with 9% for white women of the same age, due “to the lack of men with the same academic credentials and earning potential.” Again, our failure to effectively combat the same widely acknowledged symptoms of male disenchantment amongst minorities has proved neglectful now that these symptoms have become more widespread.

It must be clear that in no way should we interpret these gains for women negatively. Rather, what we advocate is an approach to education that allows both sexes equal access, but in contexts in which they will also both flourish. In fact, there shouldn’t be any comparison at all. Yet the trends cited above cannot be denied. Interpreted properly, girls are not succeeding at the expense of boys or because of they are winning a competition with boys. Girls are succeeding because over the past 30 years they have been granted access to an unprecedented level of social equality that had previously only been available to men. Meanwhile, it has been argued that public school has become feminized because standards have been set by girls for achievement and behavior that are at odds with the biological differences in males – differences that due to political correctness, neither cannot nor will not be acknowledged in most public schools. In fact, the alleged cooperative nature of females would allow them to excel in spite of male complacency, while “competitive maleness” would only make it naturally for them to opt out of any program that compares them to females in an environment that is stacked against them.

Sax (2004) cites several studies from Britain and the United States that illustrate the efficacy of single-sex education in reviving boys interest in learning while maintaining or continuing to increase achievement in girls. The results are quite dramatic. In a British school failing 2/3 of its male students in German and French, 100% of males are now passing after the second year of gender separation (Henry, 2003).

According to a study that compared four different standardized tests measuring attitudinal differences between two similar upper-middle class Manhattan private middle schools, one coed, the other all boys, results showed that boys who attend a boys school

- are less defensive and less susceptible to social pressures than the boys who attend coed school...;
- may feel that they have more options available to them as they define their own masculinity;
- have a higher sense of control over their performance;

- are less in conflict about their environment with regard to appropriate expression of the aggression (i.e. emotions) and their physical attractiveness;
- feel more comfortable about their relationships with girls;
- have more egalitarian attitudes towards women's and men's societal roles.

The author of this study admits initial surprise and skepticism over her own results, but after correlating her studies with the existing literature on single-sex schools, she found "significant support" for her data, (Hulse, 1997).

James and Richards (2003) have also responded to the recent boy crisis with a study comparing attitudes of male graduates of boys' schools and coed schools. They also found that men who had graduated from single-sex schools reported that in comparison with coed graduates, they majored in the humanities in greater numbers; used communication and writing in their careers more; and actually returned more surveys, which the researchers feel may indicate a higher level of affiliation with their all-boys alma maters.

This research that illustrates the transcending of sex-stereotypes in single-sex schools is the most compelling argument for why they are important for both girls and boys. For with the absence of the opposite sex, is also the absence from the pressure to conform to stereotypes about one's own gender. In separate essays, Bednall (1995) and Melvoin (1998) both discuss the unique opportunity that boys' schools present for boys to learn educated "male" values. They discuss how those inherently male traits can be identified, harnessed, appropriately modeled and productively used to grow character and even teach boys what Bednall calls, "gender bi-linguality". He says,

"The term 'gender bi-linguality' is useful because it invites us to think about the elemental differences between the world of being male and the world of being female and the language which is manifest in that difference... Empathy between males and females is one way of ensuring that all expressions of sexuality are not confined by definitions of what is socially acceptable in gender behaviours... (rather) they should only feel the need to ask whether how they propose to express their sexuality is ethical. Their school is obliged to help them come to that decision with dignity and integrity."

Neither Bednall nor Melvoin make any apologies for their value-laden approaches. In fact, it is definitely something else our public schools have lost sight of, being secular and needing to avoid any meaningful assertions that might violate the prevailing political correctness of the day. Pollack (1996) discusses the role of sports as a special medium for teaching boys, providing discipline, values, mentoring/coaching, even a means for allowing positive cooperation, appealing at once to a boy's need for rules and order and channeling his aggressive energies in positive ways. While we cannot spend all our time on the field, Sax (2003), Conlin (2003), and Horsey (2004) all suggest other ways to appeal to boys' intellectual needs, such as designing lessons that cater to boys' brain differences, encouraging literary selections and offering writing prompts with more masculine themes, and providing alternative outlets for learning that foster independence and counter boredom.

Though I have focused on the so-called "boy crisis", it is not intended to undermine the need and desirability of providing single-sex educational opportunities to both genders. I hope I have shown thus far that while the reforms that empowered

women's education were definitely needed to correct gross inequalities in the system, they have also resulted in new equalities. The predicament we find ourselves in of having concentrated on the inequities for females has resulted in disaffected males. Challenging the assumptions that both males and females are the same and learn in the same ways have brought some reasonable solutions to light. The challenges that remain are to cultivate favorable public opinion toward the promises of single-sex schools by illuminating existing examples of success and also the legal challenges that at best, will serve to keep this endeavor true to its egalitarian intent.

Single-Sex Schools and the Law

In turning to both issues of single-sex examples and the law, we see once again where the liberal equality ideal in early feminism served to disfavor males in public schools and even at-risk minorities. First though it is important to point out that private schools have a long-standing legacy of successful and prestigious single-sex schools. The International Coalition of Boys' Schools (<http://www.boysschoolscoalition.org>) and The National Coalition of Girls' Schools (<http://www.ncgs.org/>) can point to many excellent examples of successful single-sex schools in the United States and abroad. Schools wishing consider implementing single-sex approaching should take advantage of such a vital network of schools that already have a proven legacy to learn from. However, it goes without saying that private schools are not accessible to everyone. Examples of private schools that are more accessible to lower socio-economic groups are religious schools that have implemented a single-sex approach. Valerie Lee (1997) has done extensive research on Catholic schools that provide valuable insights in this regard. Later in this paper we will also examine the more recently available American Muslim schools who also offer a single-sex approach in varying degrees.

Obviously, the fact that private schools are not accessible to all students underscores the importance of single-sex offerings in public schools. There are some examples that we shall point to here, while examining the legal reasons for their small number. Salomone (2003) allows a virtual visit to three different single-sex girls' schools that have survived these legal tests thus far and prove inspiring to other advocates.

Philadelphia Girls' High (<http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/schools/girlshigh/>) opened in 1848 as Pennsylvania's first secondary school for girls and the first publicly funded normal school in the country. Over the years it has undergone many changes, including changing in curricular focus, a move in 1958, legal challenges in the 1970s and 1980s that it managed to withstand while its all-male counter part was forced to go coed, and demographic changes in the surrounding neighborhood. Today, the school serves an ethnically diverse population that is 21% white. About half of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. However, because it is a magnet school it draws students from all across the city providing an all-girl alternative to students throughout the district who qualify in the 85th percentile on citywide tests. The school operates on a college preparatory program requiring an academic standard of no more than one C and excellent attendance and behavior. AP and Honors courses are also offered. The school can boast many diverse course offerings and achievements, among which it has a zero dropout rate across all grades while citywide the rate is 55% among ninth graders. More than 98% of its graduates go on to college, Salomone (2003).

Baltimore Western High School (<http://www.westernhighschool.org/>) offers a similar legacy, having opened in 1844 as Western Female High School serving the daughters of white merchants. After being forced to integrate in 1954, the school now engages an 85% African American population, 40% being eligible for free or reduced lunch. Its male counterpart, Polytechnic Institute, went coed in the 1970s under pressure from female students. It also operates on a college preparatory program with 80% eighth grade average for admission standards and performance at or above grade level on national standardized tests. It enjoys the third highest rank in test scores among Baltimore's high schools. It has a 1.88% dropout rate and 82% of its students go on to college, which are competitive with Polytechnic, (Salomone, 2003).

Interestingly, neither of the previous examples are officially single-sex schools. Rather, anytime a male student has applied, he has been referred to another college preparatory school within the system, and this strategy has proven effective. But the last girls' school example Salomone shares is another story. The Young Women's Leadership School of Harlem, New York (<http://www.tywls.org/>) was founded by Ann Tisch in 1996. A former NBC News Correspondent, Tisch sought to combat the high minority dropout and pregnancy rates by offering poor and working class girls the same educational opportunity to be "valued for their intelligence and not their sex appeal," as New York's privileged elite who had access to private schools. While the story of this school is inspiring, it did face formidable legal challenges from the NYCLU, the New York chapter of National Organization for Women (NOW), and the New York Civil Rights Coalition who jointly filed a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights that the school violated Title IX. They had already succeeded a decade earlier in forcing the conversion of the last all-girls school in New York, and had also effectively blocked the opening in 1991 of an all-male school aimed at at-risk minorities. But Tisch was careful to make important political alliances in favor of the school to gain district support and the civil rights groups could not find a single boy who wanted to challenge their admission policy.

Meanwhile the school serves students in grades 7-12, 59% of which is Hispanic and 40% African-American. 67% fall below the poverty line. 100% of the students passed the state exams, and has proven competitive, second only to Manhattan's Stuyvesant High, known for its own rigorous academic program. Every graduate was accepted into college, (compared with 50% city wide). 90% of these students are the first in their families to go to college. The school is funded like any other public school, but also receives additional funds from the Young Women's Leadership Foundation which has gone on to begin establishing a network of similar schools in other cities, (Salomone, 2003).

Opponents were still not convinced, but at least realized the political position they were in and decided to consider the school as an affirmative action remedy and thus an exception to Title IX. Meanwhile, the school has gained the attention of such supporters as Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and talk show billionaire Oprah Winfrey, (Salomone, 2003).

Inferring the positive potential from the above three examples we can see the pure tragedy of the civil rights organizations' legalism. While these schools survived, they are exceptions. Clearly, one cannot argue that in these cases, separate is inherently unequal. For one, it is incongruous to make an analogy between race and gender. Race is a social construct while there are clear biological sex-differences.

Further, to evaluate the success of forced integration schemes, however righteous their intent is beyond the scope of this paper. But what we have demonstrated above is that by ignoring inherent sex-differences, we have neglected to address gender-specific pedagogical concerns, (Sax, 2004).

It can be argued that the role of our legal system is sometimes to uphold justice by determining when the spirit of the law in question is being subverted by the letter. It was on these grounds that the Supreme Court could no longer buy the logic of “separate but equal” in the landmark decision of *Brown v. the Board of Education* when it was well established by nearly 90 years of neglect that white society had no intention of ensuring the “equal” aspect of separation. Similarly, I would expect that when a school is founded on the premise of aiming to better serve the specific gender needs of its constituency, that laws intended to ensure gender equity would not be evoked for the sake of striking the effort down. Yet, in their blind allegiance to sameness ideology, civil rights groups have actually been instrumental in blocking public school reforms that would have allowed the educational crises peculiar to black males and other at-risk populations from being enacted. In each of the above three cases we mentioned male contemporaries of the girls’ schools that were forced to integrate. Other single-sex proposals to target the needs of minority males met with ensuing controversies in places such as Detroit, Dade County, Baltimore, and Milwaukee, eventually compromising and becoming coed schools, (Salomone, 2003).

Things are now finally changing. In 2002, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and others teamed up in a bipartisan alliance to propose an amendment that would legalize single-sex public schools. The amendment passed unanimously and is became one of the controversial aspects of President Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” legislation. It not only legalized single-sex schooling, but also made such programs eligible to compete for up to \$450 million in federal funds. Guidelines for implementation have been eagerly awaited ever since, (NASSPE, 2004).

According to NASSPE, ten years ago there were only 3 single-sex public schools. As of the 2003-2004 school year, there are now 88 public schools offering some form of single-sex program. At least 25 public schools now operate with at least one single-sex grade level. The successes of these new efforts in single-sex schooling have been encouraging.

More Examples from the First Annual NASSPE Conference

The first annual conference of the National Association for single-sex public education (NASSPE) took place in August of 2003. The following section is based on both my notes and impressions from the conference bolstered by details published on the organization’s website. Three public school principals presenting at this conference contributed intriguing cases of recent successes in single-sex programs. Their stories offer great insights. All three schools cater to low-income student populations facing major academic and disciplinary challenges. It is interesting to note that two of these schools are actually *elementary* schools in the United States – interesting because elementary students are prepubescent. Both schools received a good deal of press upon the announcement of Bush’s No Child Left Behind Legislation, (All Things Considered, 2002), (CBS News, 2002), (Conan, 2002), (Smiley, 2002). The third is a high school in Canada. All three schools continued to serve both male and female students, separating boys and girls into single-sex classes.

The first presenter was principal Ben Wright of Thurgood Marshall Elementary in Seattle, Washington (<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/main/ShowSchool?sid=212>). His school began experimenting with a pilot program in August 2000, separating boys and girls in the third grade. The initial success of the program was so dramatic that the following year the approach was expanded throughout the school. In this short time, test scores improved for both boys and girls. In fact, boys' reading scores went from a 10% passing rate to 66%! Discipline referrals also dropped sharply from about thirty per day to one or two. Such improvements caught the attention of the press who then discovered and publicized the school's unique approach. Controversy ensued, but the Principal persevered. According to him, the school was failing so badly that the district was desperate to try anything that might work. Wright went on to become the first Seattle Public Schools principal to be named the State's Principal of the Year since the award's inception nineteen years ago. The school continues using a single-sex approach under the leadership of Wright's successor, (NASSPE, 2004).

The next presenter was principal George Smitherman of Lucy Moten Elementary School in Washington, D.C. This 4-6 grade school catered to primarily African-American students with parents averaging 7.5 years of education. The median annual household income was \$12,000 with 98% qualified for free or reduced lunch. Smitherman explained that his initial experiment with a single-sex class took place in 1997 with a group of twenty-five failing boys who were constantly in trouble. The program hinged around the efforts of a new male teacher, who after focusing almost solely on discipline at first, eventually saw his charges churning out poetry. Smitherman said there were other noticeable results as well, but the experiment ended when the teacher moved on to pursue a degree in law.

A few years later in 2001, Smitherman met with parents and community members to gain support for separating all students by gender. The results, again, were dramatic. Discipline problems decreased by 99%. Spring 2002 test scores (SAT 9) increased from around 35% reading proficiency to almost 65%. In math, students went from around 40% proficiency (about half of these scoring at the advanced level) to almost 90% - 60% of which scored at the advanced level. This placed Moten on par with Washington D.C.'s most prestigious private schools, with the second highest scores in the city, (NASSPE, 2004).

Naturally, the improvements got attention, but the district did not endorse Smitherman's methodology. Instead the attention went toward fears about Title IX. The district did not oppose the program outright, but did force Smitherman to accept three new teachers who had performed poorly in other schools, an act that he interpreted as sabotage. Smitherman resigned, and the school is on its second principal now in the two years since. The district claims to have maintained the single-sex format, but 2003 test scores have returned to their previous lows, prompting allegations of cheating. An official inquiry could not substantiate any wrongdoing and Smitherman maintains the integrity of the test administration. Nonetheless, the aspersions can be interpreted as a means to cast doubt on the implementation of single-sex classes. Smitherman attributes the decline to the changes in administration and the same frustrations others must have also felt that caused him to resign, (Blum, 2004).

The last principal to speak at the conference was Wayne Commeford of James Lyng High School, Montreal, Canada. His school faced all the same general challenges attributed to schools in poverty as noted in the previous examples with the additional

burden of having older students who were even more directly involved with crime, drugs, and teenage pregnancy. Like the others, in 2001, desperation afforded him the liberty to experiment with the controversial idea as one ingredient in a potent mixture of school improvement strategies. This is important to note, especially in light of Moten's post-Smitherman decline. All of the Principals agreed that the single-sex approach was used in conjunction with other effective strategies, while noting that those strategies did not produce as dramatic effects when implemented previously. Conversely, this also means single-sex education is not guaranteed to produce results by itself, especially if poorly implemented.

The combination found at James Lyng High has also seen results. The school boasts of dropping absenteeism from 20% to 7%, increasing the passing rates on their final exams from 65% to 80%, and doubling the number of graduates going on to college, (Peritz, 2003). In 2003 over 80% of its senior class graduated, overcoming a more than 30% school-wide dropout rate reported in 2001, (Lampert, 2003). Commeford also reported a decline in pregnancies from between ten and twelve per year to two or three. Further, he stated that success rates were consistent across the curriculum for both boys and girls, defying typical gender biases in math or language. Both Commeford's anecdotes and Peritz's interviews with teachers demonstrate that such biases were overcome by allowing teachers to appeal to gender specific learning styles.

According to Commeford, the school board enjoyed the positive results and attention from James Lyng High's turnaround, but has not shown any interest in duplicating the program elsewhere. He says some individual schools have initiated interest in the model. In fact, on the school's website, [<http://www.emsb.qc.ca/jameslyng>], success is attributed to the school's "I Can/I Count" approach where no mention is made at all of single-sex classes. However, scans of press reports posted under the school's media link do not fail to mention it. Commeford stated that gender separation was the first aspect of the program implemented in year one, while core teachers, (almost a reversion to elementary school, where students keep the same teacher and classroom), were introduced in year two. Another feature is the school's cultural coordinator, also known as "The Good News Lady" and its emphasis on project learning. The Canadian government has also provided the school with additional funding, which Commeford considers an endorsement of their model. Commeford stressed though, that the most important indicator of success is the change in school spirit for students and even their parents who are more involved. He described teachers as resembling "Pied Pipers" with their students who had gone from skipping about twice a week to not wanting to leave. The school, he said looked like a "museum" of student work.

Hearing about such radical school successes is awe-inspiring and overwhelming and the trend is growing. Though still not widely available, up to eighty-eight from four in 1996, single-sex offerings in public schools have nearly doubled between the 2002 and 2003 school years. San Antonio public schools alone added 13 middle schools to the list in 2003, (NASSPE, 2004), (Davila, 2004).

Economic classes and Social/Sexual Pressures

Considering what is presented here, one might wonder what causes single-sex programs to be so successful among student in poverty and whether such programs would be beneficial for other socio-economic groups.

Payne (2003) provides some useful insights into the culture of poverty, especially with regard to gender roles and the role of sexuality. Families in poverty are typically matriarchal, placing the mother at the center of the family structure. She is also likely to have had multiple child-producing relationships. Her role is that of rescuer and caregiver – for her children and her man. She is also a martyr, putting her children and her man's needs ahead of her own. The transience of the man is what creates her central role. The male identity is that of a lover/fighter. As Payne says: "A real man is ruggedly good-looking, is a lover, can physically fight, works hard, takes no crap." As a lover, he enjoys an initial welcome, until stress sets in, which he fights and then leaves, shifting between his mother and the other women (wife, ex-wives, and girlfriends) serving as caregivers in his life. The male/female relationship described here hardly lives up to the companionship ideal sought in the middle & upper classes. In fact, socially men stay among men at work and at play while women stay home and depend on their female relatives as a support network. "When a man and woman are together, it is usually about a private relationship," says Payne.

Further, for lack of financial resources, in poverty culture the body becomes currency. The ideal for middle and upper class sexual relationships is based on financial security, and signs of wealth and status are used to attract mates. For lower classes money is a fleeting thing that extinguishes emergencies, of which there will be no end. When money comes, it is quickly spent, either on the prevailing disaster or on something fun before the next disaster strikes and consumes the chance. So an entertaining personality and/or a sexually attractive body become the poor person's most reliable resources. Using the body in this way is what Payne calls the "mating dance", (Payne, 2003).

Consider the implications for children growing up in the culture of poverty. Culture is not overt – it consists of hidden cues and subconscious assumptions. Children who carry these subconscious values into a coeducational classroom can only be expected to act accordingly. Boys and girls coming together in this context do not look at each other for an intellectual boost in their pursuit of knowledge. Bringing them together subliminally communicates something else entirely. So they dress out and entertain, obsess about boy/girl relations, and fulfill their gender roles, with male machismo at its worst for boys. While separating the sexes in this situation completely changes the dynamic. Once the "mating dance" is no longer relevant to the situation we may find that the math lesson on finding the lowest common denominator no longer has to compete against sex for attention.

In considering single-sex schooling for the middle and upper classes we must first be reminded that until recently, only people wealthy enough to afford private education had the option of single-sex institutions. The very terms "boys'" or "girls'" schools conjure up images of elite looking, ivy covered fortresses – either with girls in their plaid skirts, or boys in preppy sweaters bearing the school insignia. And it is still largely the case, that only the wealthy have access to single-sex schools. Meanwhile, the most prominent existing examples (as discussed above) of single-sex public school programs are aimed toward poor and minority scenarios. Yet the problems associated

with coed schools have not exempted middle-class white students. The boy-crisis discussed above applies to all schools in general. Middle class students are also not asexual beings, even if the ramifications are not as severe, teen sex and boy/girl relations are still a distraction from academics. Gender stereotypes still apply, as does the fear of homophobia inhibiting boys. Conflicting studies previously cited (Sadker, 2000), cry bias against girls, while conceding it is probably inappropriate boy behavior that causes it. It is ridiculous to assume that middle class students are not adversely affected in the ways poor students are, relative to their own class circumstances.

Assumptions about gender differences were at one time generally accepted amongst the mainstream middle classes, albeit accompanied by chauvinistic concepts of separate spheres. As discussed above, liberal equality feminism arose in this context to wage a hard fought war against these injustices. Now it seems generally accepted that women are not only as capable intellectually as men, but also have added value to society through their participation and contributions in the public sphere.

With a strong affirmative commitment to equal rights for both sexes, I think it now safe to acknowledge the fallacy of “sameness” mentality. It is time to move toward building on the strengths of the complimentary differences in gender that are vital to achieving a fuller experience of humanity. While girls and boys are in the formative years, they must be offered the best circumstances for full personal development to occur. This then applies to the masses as much as it does to target populations.

Meanwhile, studies dating back to the 1950s have called coeducation into question. Salomone (2003) cites Coleman’s classic “Adolescent Society” for the view it provides of the complex sociological relationships among teens within the subculture of their school, (Coleman, 1961).

Goodlad (1984) also alluded to a reconsideration of the coed paradigm in his 1980s sociological study of schools. He states,

“...The onset of puberty... during the middle school years, becomes the dominant force in their [students’] lives for years to come. Whether or not they perceive themselves to be good looking and popular overrides most other considerations both in and out of school... Satisfaction in school has to do with peer-group relations and personal perceptions of social relationships which no doubt make heavier demands in the first few years following puberty than later. Would segregation into all-girl or all-boy middle schools change the ambience of schooling at this level?”

Goodlad does not push the envelope much farther, but even just raising the question at all would have been courageous at the time.

The importance of both Coleman and Goodlad is that they show that academics should not be the only consideration for single-sex implementation. Social factors must also be weighed in, such as how boy-girl pressures and relationships adversely affect the school climate and mental focus of the student body. We also must consider how coeducation affects self-esteem and the development of emotional maturity.

Obviously, living in a mixed-gendered society, another logical question is how schools should prepare students for appropriate gender interaction. To answer this, we must define “appropriate interaction” and also determine when such interaction is age-appropriate as well. For example, at what age should boys and girls form romantic relationship and to what extent? If we concede that such relationships are inevitable in a

coed setting, then why allow the school to become the social grounds for facilitating these relationships when it will no doubt detract from the focus of the school's mission to educate? Coleman's research from four decades ago evidences this shift in student prerogatives. Social relationships should be the consequence of academic pursuits with other learners. For many, if not most students, school is merely the context for social life. Social goals, especially emotionally charged romantic ones, are the priority, (Goodlad, 1984), (Coleman, 1961).

Human nature has not changed, but social norms related to sexual expression have become more permissive. In a new book, Linda Perlstein examines what she terms "the hidden life of middle schoolers". Perlstein documents the alarming sexual nuances common to middle school students today evidenced by the way they think, speak, and interact. For example, what she calls "freak dancing" occurs where a boy approaches a girl from behind and grinds his groin against her. While Perlstein downplayed the possibility of middle schoolers engaging in actual sex, her book expresses concern about the sexual concepts embedded in the middle school psyche and what the ramifications are for their future adult relationships, (Hunter, 2003). From my own interactions with students while teaching and discussions with middle school colleagues, Perlstein's concerns are shared. And it is well known among teachers and administrators that some middle schoolers are in fact, already experimenting with sex.

Not to digress into a lamentation on modern society's moral failings, but it is pertinent to consider where our youth get their cues about sex. Blame it on television, music videos, or even increased access to pornography via the internet, the bottom line is that all of the preceding are generated and controlled (to whatever extent) by adults and reflect the fact that even our society's adult population has not come to a reasonable consensus on appropriate gender interaction. Meanwhile, as the transmission of pop-culture values bombards children everywhere else, the school cannot hope to bring boys and girls together and expect them to NOT act accordingly. Schools cannot control the media, but they do have the responsibility of establishing an environment conducive to learning. By minimizing the sexual climate within school, it is then reasonable to expect that students can become better equipped to deal with sexual pressures when they encounter situations outside. A focus on academic achievement rather than boy/girl relations translates to a more meaningful scholastic experience, which then leads to better quality of life decision making beyond the school. Implicit in this argument is that more appropriate gender interactions can be expected when such interaction does become age appropriate and tempered with the wisdom and restraint that comes with maturity.

Evaluating Conflicting Research

In evaluating the preceding, I must admit that I have relied heavily on pro single-sex sources while I do acknowledge a plethora of conflicting research on this subject abounds. However, the emphasis made in this paper is justified because the philosophical differences of the opposing sides undermine the light in which single-sex research is viewed. Single-sex education is a politically charged issue entrenched in the gender debate. Either side cites the research that bolsters its own underlying philosophical contentions about essentialism and gender. What is actually being debated is whether males and females are the same, and if so, then not requiring the risks of suffering potential inequalities through segregation. Or, on the other hand,

whether they are essentially different and thus better served separately. Single-sex studies are typically secondary to these underlying contentions. So, for example, the real argument against single-sex schooling typically goes: We should shun single-sex schools because research fails to consistently demonstrate their efficacy. While the subtext reads: We should shun them because they undermine the struggle to establish the “sameness” of the sexes.

Taken out of this polemical context, the debate over single-sex schooling should focus more on the legitimacy of essentialist differences. Discrepancies in research, (and I am assuming the scientific integrity of the research not being tainted by the same underlying assumptions in the policy debate), need to be examined for how and what factors enable single-sex approaches to work. While this was not the primary focus of this study, Salomone (2003) as well as Datnow and Hubbard (2002) do provide a balanced discourse on research results.

Further, I believe an untapped resource for more extensive studies on single-sex education lies in the relatively recent phenomenon of American Muslim schools. Muslim schools are largely the product of the past twenty years, (though the Clara Muhammad school system goes back nearer to fifty), and resemble Catholic schools in many respects. Most Catholic schools, having transitioned to coed formats, no longer provide the same potential for single-sex study. Muslim schools nearly all practice some form of gender separation, providing the variations needed to study differing formats. Demographically, Muslim schools across the country bear striking resemblance to one another, allowing for valid comparisons. Their students hail from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, though in general, students would be considered primarily middle class. The remainder of this study seeks to critically examine in more detail, the potential that such schools might offer to single-sex research.

Gender Separation in Muslim Society

Much of this paper examines differing assumptions about gender, and accordingly, it is warranted to consider the gender assumptions that shape Muslim schools. In fact, stereotypical notions about Muslims and gender would no doubt impede a fair consideration of contributions such schools could make if they are not addressed on a critical level first. As stated in the introduction, this point was made to me at the NASSPE conference. It was also a concern cited by Terry O’Neill, vice president of membership in the National Organization of Women [NOW], with regard to a recent single-sex effort in Atlanta Public Schools who said, “Segregation implies inferiority, bottom line. They separate men from women in fundamentalist Muslim cultures, too...”, (Donsky, 2003).

Muslim communities would then do well to consider their own assumptions pertaining to gender and consider how their schools socialize students’ attitudes while also adequately preparing them for a transition toward successful participation in the larger American society.

Western civilization has typically taken the stand that Islamic attitudes and practices pertaining to women are oppressive, (Okin, 1999). In recent years, as Muslims have become a more permanent fixture in American society – the most striking visual reminder being the Muslim woman’s headscarf, public discourse on the “liberation” of Muslim women abroad has simultaneously gained ground, especially due to the recent prominence in international politics of Muslim countries accused of gender oppression

like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. The marketplace has seen a flood of books chronicling the stories of Muslim women escaping oppression. These common media themes help to promote awareness on one level, while reinforcing negative stereotypes on the other. Meanwhile they assist liberal feminists with their agenda to “educate” American Muslim women about the fact that they need not wear their scarves here – the scarf, being the symbol of their oppression, (Bullock, 2002).

Okin (1999) captures several shades of this debate in her compilation of responses to an intriguing question she proffers: “Is multiculturalism bad for women?” The book is an eye opener for Muslims seeking to understand the extent of Western liberal convictions about ending cultural practices that are interpreted to be anti-woman. Okin points out that while many liberals may like to pride themselves on their commitment to minority rights and multiculturalism, a closer examination may expose a conflict of interest since these same individuals uphold a commitment to women’s rights as well. Which group’s rights take priority, women or minorities, when cultural practices are deemed oppressive to women? Some of these practices are objectionable, like clitoridectomy. Others are more hotly contested, like women’s dress and degree of segregation in society. To further complicate the matter, it is often women who impose such practices on themselves. We cannot help but note the *paternalistic* irony here.

This imposition of values is related to a heated debate currently underway in France, where headscarves are being banned in schools by law, purportedly to protect France’s secularism from religious symbols, (CNN, 2004). But the motives for the ban are also infused with gender values, though this is not being widely reported in the press. French Prime Minister Raffarin has publicly said the bill was designed to defend secularism and protect “all women from fundamentalist pressures...”, (CAIR, 2003). The problem is not foreign to the United States either where the issue also arises. In October 2003, an Oklahoma student was also suspended over her scarf because it was seen as a violation of the dress code, (Reuters, 2003). Though in general, U.S. laws appear to me more tolerant of such practices, as evidenced by President Bush in a post 9-11 visit to a D.C. mosque where he “made a speech praising Islam and arguing that Muslim women in America who wear hijab [the headscarf] must feel comfortable to do so and not to feel intimidated going outside”. Bullock observes that this public endorsement by the U.S.’s highest political leader is unprecedented. Paradoxically, the headscarf is already banned in some Muslim countries like Turkey, (Bullock, 2002).

The point here is that just as in the case with the debate over sex segregation in schooling, open-mindedness toward other cultures may also be overshadowed by value judgments pertaining to gender. The imposition of gender values on Muslim cultures goes even deeper historically, being interwoven with colonialism and ultimately the formulation of the modern Muslim psyche. Gender assumptions among Muslims are attributable as much to the effects of colonialism as they are to religion and the legacy of cross-cultural male dominance that is common to human history in general, (Bullock, 2002), (Ahmed, 1992).

American Muslim converts are often inducted into the Islamic worldview and its segregation of the sexes (among other topics) through revivalist literature translated from overseas. Three titles in particular are commonly distributed regarding gender:

1. Maulana Maududi’s *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*,
2. Jamal Badawi’s *Gender Equity in Islam* and more recently,
3. Darussalam Publishers’ *Islamic Fatawa Regarding Women*.

The conflicting ideas and attitudes toward gender reflected in these works demonstrate important cultural information about the immigrant communities who have promoted them in the United States and also as much about the cultural climate that is transplanted into American Muslim community centers, which include both mosques and schools. A more in-depth analysis of these works and their implications about American Muslim attitudes would no doubt offer important insights. For the scope of this paper, we will offer a brief synopsis of each.

Maududi's work represents the typical conservative position on women in Islam. Maududi was a 20th century Muslim scholar from the Indian subcontinent who saw the transition from British rule translate to a partitioned India and the civil wars that ensued. He argued vehemently for the establishment of Islamic Law in the newly formed state of Pakistan and was instrumental in the Islamic Party (Jamaati Islami), a major Islamic revivalist group. His book on women begins by detailing the scope of sexual degeneration across cultures and civilizations, shocking the reader by the accounts of moral decadence that have become prevalent in modern, especially Western, society. This section of the book serves to remind the reader what has happened in Western civilization due to *not* following Islamic guidance pertaining to proper gender interaction, and thus what will/is happen/ing to Muslim countries that seek to imitate the West. Significantly, he charges the West with making men the standard by which women are to be judged, and his argument, then, is opposed to sameness equality. He goes on to expound on the manifold ways that Islam has elevated the status of women by celebrating her feminine contributions and giving her certain rights to which she had not been entitled before. He then follows this celebration with the legal arguments justifying his position on women's appropriate role in the family as wife and mother, how her education should be aimed toward fulfilling this role, restrictions on traveling and moving about in general, importance of staying at home unless there is some necessity for going out and having to mix with men, and of course, the requirements for dress which include covering every part of her body including the face, (Maududi, 1987).

Jamal Badawi's book tackles the issue from a different perspective and likely borders on what Maududi chastised in his book for being apologetic. Badawi is an Egyptian scholar residing in Canada, associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, a revivalist group from Egypt, but even more so, part of the pioneer movement in North America of establishing Islamic organizations and activism over the past thirty years. His book also attempts to show how Islam has liberated women in a way distinct from the West, but with many challenges to what he alleges are cultural interpretations, including many of the restrictions endorsed by Maududi above, (Badawi, 1995).

Lastly, the collection of Fatawa, or legal rulings, pertaining to women emanates from prestigious Saudi Arabian scholars and resonates more closely with Maududi's views, (Al-Musnad, 1996). This book has become more prevalent with the spread of the Salafi movement in North America (also known as Wahhabis, though this was considered derisive and has been distorted by recent media usage). All three of these movements, the Islamic Party, Muslim Brotherhood, and the Salafis have their roots in 20th century reactions to colonialism within British mandates and their varying ideologies have spread and influenced Muslim populations throughout the Islamic world. Their common feature is their emphasis on Islamic revival via a return to the original pure teachings of Islam. Again this is not the place for the type of exposition on the sources and scope of these groups, but a good objective study is needed. Most of what is

currently available is riddled with partisan bias from within Muslim ranks or Western propaganda to expose so-called Islamic fundamentalism. The relevance here is in the extent that these groups have transplanted their ideologies to the United States and impart them in American Muslim schools.

Incidentally, it should be noted that the influence of these groups pertaining to women's practices do not necessarily coincide with the ethnic affiliation of the author or revivalist group. For example, Mediterranean Arabs may promote Jamal Badawi's views but act more in accordance with Maududi, while many Indo-Pakistanis seemingly act in accordance with Badawi. This could be due to socio-economic correlations, where many Indo-Pakistani women immigrants are medical professionals. Saudi rulings seem to have found a firm hold among many African-American converts, while their Gulf-state proponents mainly come to the U.S. as students only temporarily. None of these groups, each representing a large slice of what we can call a "first generation" of sorts, has matured enough to define what Islam should look like when it becomes distinctly infused with North American culture. In fact, revivalism by its nature is in many respects opposed to cultural infusion, as innovated practices are what it seeks to root out. This last point presents the challenge of American Muslim schools to define what kind of "Islamic identity" they wish to instill in their students.

Muslim communities and their adjacent schools all embody these conflicting views while there also exists an academic discourse on the subject of Muslim women that is even more intense. For at the heart of each revivalist group, lies the notion that orthodoxy arises from going back to the original sources and practices of the Prophet Muhammad and the first Muslim community. Equally important is the consensus among all of these groups that these sources define what Islam is, as opposed to what Muslims may actually do in practice. This distinction is very important. A closer look at the academic discussion on Muslims and gender challenges many of the revivalist notions of orthodoxy.

One of the most prominent Muslim feminists to begin the academic assault on Muslim practices is Fatima Mernissi. She attempts "a feminist interpretation of women's rights in Islam" by postulating that the Prophet Muhammad was indeed an advocate of women's liberation and reform, but that his ambitions were tempered by the unrelenting assertions of male patriarchy prevalent in his day, and especially through the influence of certain close associates, like his friend, father-in-law, and eventually second successor, Omar ibn Al-Khattab. She depicts a kind of battle of the wills between the Prophet's more outspoken wives like Aisha and Umm Salama against the male elite, represented by Omar, in which under certain pressures during his final years, he relented to Omar's persistence and instituted laws that would restrict women's public movement and visibility, (Mernissi, 1991).

Mernissi's ideas came to be representative in non-Muslim academic circles while inducing much irritation in the Muslim world. The most significant objection to her argument is her methodology, which while attempting to return to the original sources of Islamic knowledge, at the same time regarded the Qur'an as a document composed by the Prophet, rather than a book of revelation, (Bullock, 2002). She also took a critical stance against certain narrators of Prophetic sayings in a seemingly unorthodox way, casting aspirations against prominent companions of the Prophet whom Muslims revere, (Mernissi, 1991).

The extension of her argument is also important, and that is that with the Prophet's death, the influence of the male elite grew into an entrenched patriarchal tradition that fully suppressed the Prophet's intended emancipation of women. She likens this to the common Muslim argument against slavery – that though it was not prohibited outright during the Prophet's life, the mechanisms were put in place to see it extinguished in the coming years. Likewise, oppressive practices toward women were to be gradually phased out, but instead, legal determinations in favor of male interests toward women (and slaves) allowed pre-Islamic traditions of male dominance to survive (Mernissi, 1991).

What specific practices Mernissi sees as abuses can be fairly represented by Maududi's position above. One failing on Maududi's part (as is endemic to the other revivalists) is in not critically examining gender practices in their historical contexts within Muslim society, (Maududi, 1987). Ahmed (1992) points out several interesting features of the pre-Islamic Middle East. For one, women were not necessarily as powerless before the advent of Islam as many revivalist authors purport. The abuses, such as female infanticide and including women among inheritances, can be confirmed, though strong female personalities such as Hind bint 'Utba, the wife of Abu Sufyan, defy the archetype of pre-Islamic gender roles. Also the significance of the veil in pre-Islamic society was tied to social status, and had little or nothing to do with feminine modesty or protecting the society from sexual degeneration. Notably, closer analysis of early source material indicates that the veil imposed in Islam under this context, carried the same pre-Islamic meaning and not necessarily the ones ascribed to it today, (Ahmed, 1992), (Abou El Fadl, 2001).

This last point becomes especially important in light of gender segregation practices in Islamic society and their implications for education. In fact, the whole construction of Maududi's argument and its background emphasis on moral degeneration and sexuality is that the segregation of the sexes and their manifold rulings in Islam, from social mobility to dress, is hinged on the premise that the Islamic social system protects society from decadence through these means, (Maududi, 1987). Abou El Fadl's (2001) analysis is that the Saudi Scholars base their rulings pertaining to women on the same assumption. Yet, when we examine the practices of the Prophet's community more closely historically, we find that the extent of gender mixing is far different from the picture painted in subsequent years by the developing legal tradition and especially the revivalist scholars of today. Surprisingly, there was much more scholarly debate among the early jurists than one would imagine on matters typically considered closed to discussion today, (Abou El Fadl, 2001).

Abou El Fadl distinguishes between the arguments pertaining to 'awrah (what body parts must be covered) and fitnah (sexual tension), claiming that the earliest texts on dress pertained to what must be covered during prayer and the degree to which this extended to other times. Sexual tension then, was not the underlying issue behind dress. Most surprisingly, jurists were agreed that the dress requirements for slave women were not the same for free women, regardless of belief. In fact, 'awrah for slave women was the same as men, (from the navel to the knee!), and slave women were forbidden from covering their heads. The rationale was twofold, slave women had a more physically demanding life and required less restriction of movement, and their status must also be discernable from that of free women. Certainly, these early considerations have nothing to do with preventing sexual tension in the society, since a

slave woman can (and did) provide just as much sexual allure as any other. This, in my view, voids the bulk of modern discourse on the necessity of going to extremes to segregate the sexes for moral aims, (Abou El Fadl, 2001), (Ahmed, 1992).

The fact that the Qur'anic verses providing the basis for segregation of the sexes and female dress occurred in the final years of the Prophet's life have led credence to the view that the instances of intermingling up until then were all abrogated by these verses and the Islamic ideal was in fact, the degree of segregation that was to come, (Maududi, 1987). Yet, it seems rather untenable that such a social transformation was merely to be legalized during the Prophet's life without being demonstrated in practice, especially considering the profound social implications for women. Further, social practices that persisted during the last years of the Prophet's life and the immediate years following remain consistent with what went on before, (Abou El Fadl, 2001).

Like Mernissi, Abou El Fadl also engages the early textual sources to resolve discrepancies between those that favor or disfavor women. As a legal expert, he is better equipped to analyze and dissect the source material and critique the ways it has come into common usage today to uphold practices that impinge on women. He argues for a more rigorous scrutiny of the texts of Prophetic sayings as opposed to merely relying on the chain of transmission to determine authenticity. He points out the fact that the methodologies of contemporary Muslim groups do not always recognize this aspect of validation, though it has always been an important consideration among scholars of the past. Without doing so, scholars are left with conflicting texts, or texts that conflict with science or their moral conscience that they must then attempt to reconcile. This has left much source material in tact justifying oppressive practices toward women. However, the scrutiny of texts as a practice has not been abandoned altogether. One modern Salafi authority on Prophetic sayings, Nasirudeen Al-Albani, divested several racist statements attributed to the Prophet on the basis that in spite of the accurate chains, their contents were clearly at odds with the egalitarian message and theme of the Qur'an and other established Prophetic sayings, (Abou El Fadl, 2001).

Upon closer scrutiny of the early Muslim community and the source material that links us to it, we find that gender practices are not necessarily as exclusive or motivated for the same reasons as contemporary Islamic movements have taught. We must also acknowledge that as gender practices have evolved, so too have the symbolic meanings attributed to them. While Mernissi (1991) proffers one view of laws pertaining to women being hijacked by a male elite, it might also be suggested that the evolving role of women occurred as a sociological phenomenon. Islamic society was rapidly transformed after the Prophet's death by conquest, taking it from a relatively small egalitarian community to a far-flung expansive empire. Obviously the sociological dynamics of these differences would have consequences for women. Anthropological studies of small egalitarian societies show that while gender differentiation is typically present, women usually enjoy as much freedom and status as men. It is when society comes under external threats that women's freedoms are curtailed in the interest of safety. Most likely this did occur in the history of Islamic civilization during the transition from small tribal communities like the Prophet's Madina to a large sprawling empire rife with luxuries, wealth, and war, (Ahmed, 1992).

Similarly, the effects of colonialism on the Muslim world would logically have consequences for women as well. As the British and other European nations sought to control foreign lands, a peculiar obsession has been noted of their concern for one thing

they could not control – their inaccessibility to Muslim women. A facetious attempt to liberate the Muslim woman from their seclusion and the veil was then launched by officials who were known for their unwillingness to liberate their own women in Britain! Nonetheless, Muslim society eventually became torn in the 20th century by modernizers who sought to gain credibility with the Europeans by adopting Western modes of thought and custom, versus religion advocates who argued that becoming competent in the modern world could only be achieved by a return to religious purity rather than the imitation of non-Muslims. Women, being the object of Western liberation, and the veil being the symbol of their oppression, once again found their place in society in upheaval and the orthodoxy of gender practices on trial. The reaction on one hand was to abandon Islamic injunctions to satisfy the West while the reaction on the other was to revive and tighten Islamic injunctions in defiance of the West and to protect their women from the threat of Western men, (Bullock, 2002), (Ahmed, 1992).

Sex-Separation in Muslim Schools

This brings us back to the question now, of how the infusion of this legacy with American life will redefine Muslim women in 21st Century America. Further, it is necessary to understand this predicament fully, in order to explore the ramifications of gender segregation in Muslim schools. For to what extent does the underlying assumptions and attitudes with regard to gender impinge on gender equity at school?

A report dated from the mid 1970s on Islamic Education and Single Sex Education in the U.K. shows that this issue has been looked into before by another community of Muslims living as minorities in a non-Muslim country. This report establishes at the outset the ideal of gender equity in seeking knowledge by quoting an important saying of the Prophet Muhammad:

“Pursuit of learning is a duty for every Muslim man and women, without distinction between them, since learning is venerated in Islam and its pursuit obligatory,” [collected by Abu Dawud], (Iqbal, 1975).

The report also asserts the essentialist roles of the sexes and again quotes the Prophet’s disapproval of either sex imitating the other in dress and manners, (Iqbal, 1975). To these points, there is no objection. However, how they might be applied in an educational context is dubious. For distinctions in dress, manners, and even social function do not necessarily carry any implication regarding the seeking of knowledge, religious or scientific, unless we have reduced school to mere vocational training. Surely that is not what is implied by the Prophetic statement quoted above.

I have not witnessed similar implications in contemporary Muslim schools, (remember, the report quoted is over two decades old). But more subtle suppositions can be considered. An example of this might be seen in the common uniform requirements of American Muslim schools. We have already seen how the veil or headscarf has come to symbolize different things through time, and today embodies political resistance, as now feared in France, (CNN, 2004). This could explain why most American Muslim schools mandate headscarves for girls though they serve an elementary student populace not yet at the age requiring cover. Common defense of this policy has been that the school prepares female students gradually in this way for future covering while instilling an Islamic identity and respect for school. Yet even this

argument is not really at odds with the political symbolism of the headscarf considering the identity aspect.

It is also important to note that for many Muslim women, the headscarf and its accompanying garb are not a political symbol, but a social enabler in an America that they feel places too much emphasis on sexual attractiveness. From this view, Muslim women can be valued more for their intellect or skills rather than their physical appeal, (Bullock, 2002). This value may also be infused through role models in Muslim schools who believe accordingly.

On the other hand, this attitude would best be communicated through female staff that *willingly* chooses to wear Islamic dress. Most Muslim schools have policies mandating this dress in an attempt to ensure that appropriate modeling is achieved. But what subconscious lesson does it communicate to a young girl who is herself forced to wear the scarf at school, and then witnesses a teacher who chooses not to wear the scarf outside of school? Further, if the policy is meant to instill identity, what about the boys? Boys' uniforms are typically Western in style consisting of slacks and either a button down shirt and tie or a collared shirt that buttons down partially. One board member allegedly responded to this with the concern that the boys would see their fathers in Western dress and think it hypocritical. As just noted, the same concern does not exist for the women and obviously, the hidden messages latent in dress requirements at Muslim schools require more consistent thought.

In the mean time, such uniforms do provide the most minimal level of separation between the sexes. This refers back to the argument that Islamic dress for females stifles moral decay between the genders, which incidentally is the primary motive for implementing gender separation in American Muslim schools. While we have challenged the assumptions of this motive above, it is nonetheless a commonly held belief that Islamically mandated gender separation is meant to curb sexual distraction. (And I myself am not yet prepared to part with the idea totally). Further, many parents who choose Muslim schools are seeking a secure environment for their children that is free from the threat of sex, drugs, and other undesirable factors that plague public schools. This was also a strong consideration cited by the report from the U.K., (Iqbal, 1975). Considering the sexual distractions facing students in coed schools noted previously, such motives are not without merit regardless of their validity in Islamic law.

Yet, the important thing to note is that gender separation is being implemented mainly based on cultural assumptions in Muslim schools rather than pedagogy. For example, many Muslim schools still may not separate students by class due to perceived financial constraints. But they do separate within classes in most cases, by situating boys in front and the girls in the back of the classroom. This arrangement, is not meant to imply gender superiority of the boys, but rather, it is simply transferred from the prayer arrangements in the mosque, where men pray in rows in the front and women pray together similarly in the back. Yet, as has been noted above from Sax (2003), boys perhaps should be placed in front of girls due to their poorer hearing. From my own observations, placing the typically less disciplined boys in the front also keeps them in check directly in front of the teacher while the teacher engages the more aggressive female participation from the back.

The problem of note here is that when segregation occurs haphazardly, or according to cultural whims, the positive benefits from deliberately implementing pedagogical strategies may diminish. In fact, without examining the assumptions

underlying gender separation, negative consequences could even develop, such as communicating inferiority to one or even both sexes. This may explain why gender separation in the Muslim schools I have observed, even when implemented by class, has provided inconsistent results. Further, Muslim schools are not escaping the boys crisis facing the public schools. If boys' and girls' classes are constantly compared to one another, or are still held to the exact same standards, then nearly all of the advantages of single-sex education that allow for each gender to flourish according to its own strengths and developmental rate have been practically dissolved. The difficulty in avoiding the tendency to do this might prompt the need to open more completely separated Muslim schools, as there are only a handful at present. Doing so would also relax the need for strict dress requirements for girls within an all-girl school.

Nonetheless, because Muslim schools in the United States have been practicing some form of single-sex education, they present an important resource for further study into the details of successful implementation strategies. While gender separation has been instituted to a certain degree based on a presupposed religious ideal, the fact that it has not been deliberately utilized to improve school performance, nor has it been carefully studied so as to be implemented effectively, it is likely that these schools are overlooking a most valuable resource. The fact that Muslim schools have been using this approach for a number of years and have not seen the same progress discovered in the public school cases cited above attests to this. Muslim schools must undertake the responsibility of determining the efficacy of gender separation in their schools by giving more attention to this aspect of their educational character. They must also challenge cultural assumptions that underlie policies and seek pedagogical strategies that substantiate their approach and find consistency with their mission statements.

In spite of however Islamic practice manifests cultural behavior, there was absolutely no difference of opinion between Muslim scholars on the principle of gender equity in Islam. Among others, the most commonly cited justification for this stand is the Qur'anic verse 33:35, which means:

For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise – for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward, (TR. Badawi, 1995).

This clear standard of gender equity is what must guide Muslim schools in their policies and attitudes toward male and female students. This does not mean that Islam teaches that boys and girls are the same. To the contrary, another principle in agreement between all the scholars above is that "the male is not like the female..." and thus women should be valued for their unique feminine characteristics and contributions where those differences are eminent.

My observations of Muslim schools suggests that in spite of subtleties in the latent curriculum, (which also goes largely undetermined and thus unharnessed), the spirit embodied in the Qur'anic ideal is present. The fact that the boy crisis is present in Muslim schools may be indicative that they are not fully capitalizing on their single-sex format, but it also demonstrates that Muslim schools have provided environments

wherein female students have been able to flourish and prosper beyond the capabilities of their male cohorts. In fact, this shows that Muslim schools at present are in many ways congruent with public schools when it comes to the academic excellence of girls.

Conclusion

Muslim schools already operate free of the constraints on gender separation hindering public schools and also have an established tradition of single-sex education. In this paper I have shown how politics are at the heart of the single-sex public school debate, while biological and pedagogical justifications abound for utilizing single-sex approaches for the improvement of America's schools. We have explored the academic crisis facing boys and the increasing sexual pressures facing teens that further prompt us to take this approach more seriously. We looked at several case studies where single-sex education has been shown to make an improved difference and acknowledged its potential for inconsistent results when implemented poorly. Muslim schools' experiences with single-sex education are a largely unexplored resource, though with careful examination of their own gender assumptions and a realignment of pedagogy, they stand to turn their single-sex arrangement into the powerful catalyst for achievement that it has proven to be in other settings. Muslim schools should open their doors for such research, as the attention will merit their own improvement while offering something unique back to the society at large. Further, Muslim educators should seek to extend their practices to communities of at-risk students who would benefit from the moral and social structure that an Islamic educational environment can provide.

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