THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this thesis was to study how different institutions play different roles to develop identity of human beings, in a given society. In this thesis I have studied the impact of schools on the identity formation of students in Bangladesh. I have mainly focused on the different role played by different types of institutions – Madrasa, School following national curriculum and School following international curriculum. The impact of these institutions on three main aspects of identity, which are, religion, class and gender were used as a focus of this research. This thesis argued that the school context played an important role in the student's identity development, and at the same time, they underlined the role of the school experience as a personal resource in the development of identity.

Keywords: Identity; Education; Educational Institutions; Class; Religion; Gender

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, a number education commissions have been introduced in Bangladesh to reform and restructure the education system in Bangladesh. As per (Banglapedia, 2015), in 1972 the first education commission named National Education commission which later came to be known as Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission was formed - after the eminent educationist and scientist Dr Qudrat-i-Khuda, who had acted as the chairman of this commission. On 1987, the Bangladesh National Education Commission was introduced which was headed by Mafizuddin Ahmed, who was then the vice-chancellor of Dhaka University. Moving on to 1997, in this year the Shamsul Haque Education Commission was introduced; this was headed by Professor M Shamsul Haque, who was the VC of Dhaka University at that time. In 2001 and 2003, MA Bari Education Commission and Bangladesh Education Commission were introduced consecutively – the former being headed by Dr. M. Abdul Bari, and the latter headed by Professor Mohammad Moniruzzaman Miah. Finally, in the year 2009 the Kabir Chowdhury Education Commission was introduced which was headed by the national professor Kabir Chowdhury. It appears that since 1972, multiple studies and recommendations have been made by different governments of independent Bangladesh (Prodhan 2016).

Despite investments and various efforts from the government of Bangladesh – the level of success has been subtle. The continuous change of commission led to the formation of different cultures in the education system. From the above information it could be seen that in spite of various reformations and debate on the education system – the intrinsic culture of institutions to create ideologies, belief system and identities is not present. Thus, in this research I have tried to study the formation of identities of students present in different institutions having different cultures.

In this research, I tried to understand if educational institutions have the ability to construct the identity of individuals and at the same time to find out whether educational institutions create inter-cultural conflicts. In this research, I will focus on three aspects of cultural markers; class, gender and religion, to get an understanding if educational institutions create inter-cultural conflicts or not. Hence, this paper will focus on understanding educational institutions as mediums of creating other socio-cultural identities, rather than just mediums of distributing knowledge.

The importance or relevance of this topic is to create an understanding that educational institutions cannot solely be looked as a medium for education and distributing knowledge, as educational institutions should be widely credited for disseminating culture. Sideris (2012) stated in his paper that comparative cross-cultural studies of various cultures and their interactions make it easier for us to understand the boundaries and similarities between different groups of people. He stated that education is not a 'pure' and separate force from society's knowledge transmission; it is equally a cultural transmission. In my opinion, as per what Sideris (2012), had mentioned, education cannot solely be seen as a pure and separate instrument which has no connection with the spreading of culture. If that is the case, then, inter-cultural conflict and identity construction must also be related with educational institutions.

In this thesis, the means through which culture is transmitted into human beings by educational institutions are a core matter of study. This transmission allows students to negotiate their sense of identity at certain times. In addition, when the family and educational institutions of an individual have different viewpoints in respect to certain cultural beliefs – an individual would have to weigh in all the options to choose an identity of their choice. It should be mentioned that identity in itself is not something which is fixed. Individuals may choose to identify with different things at different phases of their lives. However, I believe that considering how individuals enroll into educational institutions at an early age and remain in contact with this institution for a significant number of years, it is highly unlikely that individuals' thoughts, beliefs, understanding and socio-cultural knowledge are not shaped to some extent by their educational institutions.

1.1 Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to try and find out whether educational institutions play a role into creating identities and inter-cultural conflicts. Hence the research questions are:

i) How do educational institutions contribute to the construction of 'identity' of individuals?

ii) Do educational institutions create inter-cultural conflicts based on class, gender and religion?

1.2 Objectives

From the literature reviews, I found that there is a distinct connection between educational institutions and identity formation. However, mainstream cultural anthropologists tend to overlook the importance of schools in the lives of individuals to form their identity. Hence, my objectives are:

a) To identify the relationship between identity construction and educational systems

b) To understand conflict from inter-cultural variations based on class, gender and religion

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Research Design:

The research was conducted among 34 female students from three institutions situated in Dhaka city. In addition, from each institution 2 teachers were also interviewed separately. I used my personal connections to recruit participants for this research and the institutions were hence chosen through these connections. Initially, I had no intention to choose female students only for this research; however, the three institutions had this one aspect in common and hence I chose to keep this the constant factor in my research.

The students were given a survey with semi-structured questions at first. After completion of the survey, a focused group discussion was held in groups of 8-10. In order to conduct these interviews, I had to seek permission from the authority of each institution and had to submit a letter from both myself and my advisor to allow this research to take place.

The sample made 40 people in total from three different institutions; the students were from 9th and 10th grade. My interlocutors were all female. The 34 students were between ages 14-17. The 6 teachers were in their 30s and 40s. The respondents were selected by the institutions and I had little control over the selection of my participants.

The study is qualitative in nature and three methods were used in order to conduct my research. They are Survey, Focused Group Discussions and Key Person Interview.

1.3.2 Survey:

The survey was done to get the basic information of the participants. In order to get an accurate idea of the background of my participants, the survey was conducted. The female students from each institution filled up this survey. Index 1 contains the survey used in this research.

1.3.3 Focused Group Discussion:

The focused group discussion was done to discuss the main themes of my research. The survey could only provide me with basic information of the participants; the FGD on the other hand was helpful to get in depth information. In addition, the focused discussion was helpful as multiple views regarding

each topic could be debated. Since, the discussion was recorded and then transcribed; it allowed me to analyze the information accordingly.

1.3.4 Key Person Interview:

The Key Person Interview was conducted after the focus group discussions were done. 2 teachers from each institution were participants of the KPI. However, not all interviews could be done on a face-to-face basis; hence they were conducted over the phone. These teachers gave an overall idea about their students, the philosophy of the school, and their take on teaching students from different class and social backgrounds, the importance of religion and their take on female students. Hence a total of 6 teachers were interviewed.

1.3.5 Data Collection Procedure:

Data was collected through the survey form at first, which consisted of semi-structured questions. During the focused group discussion, a recorder was used to record the discussion which was later transcribed. I took notes simultaneously whilst the discussion took place. The KPI took place at a face-to-face basis in 2 institutions. In School 3 the interviews of teachers were conducted over the phone. Data was collected approximately over a period of one and a half months.

1.3.6 Data Analysis:

After data collection was complete, data cleaning was done to get a consistent result. The data was analyzed critically, and by focusing on the in depth answers of the respondents. The recording of the discussion was extremely beneficial when it came to analyzing the data. The theories of identity and intercultural-conflicts were used to analyze the data.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In this research, I will be using theoretical frameworks from both education and social sciences. The idea for this research stemmed after coming across Erikson's theory of identity formation in adolescent years. His psychosocial theory established the 8 stages of development that men go through. In the 5th stage he described the formation of identity in adolescents, he stated an individual between the ages of 12-18 must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role confusion. Role confusion is said to take place when individuals fail to establish their

self-identity and are pressured into or conform to adult's views of the future. Although, Erikson's idea of identity is used in several different ways it inspired a great number of ethnographers in the field of Educational Anthropology. Diane Hoffman is one such ethnographer who made use of Erikson's theory of identity.

Hence, I will use Diane Hoffman's theory of identity, where she stated that 'identity' reflects the self-situated ness in social roles, and it dictates the person's position in social structure. In addition, Hoffman claims that the ways identities are defined from outside, manipulated or otherwise – whilst being situated in social structures – are how identity construction in schooling takes place. This construction occurs in response to social or academic pressures, or through situated practices in classrooms, schools or communities.

Similarly, some terms have been used multiple times in this research. The terms gender, religion and class has been some of the most important aspects of my research. Since, these terms have been debated upon and disputed over by many social scientists, it is important to outline the theories I have decided to make use of in respect to these terms.

The term religion has been described by Durkheim as a derivative of the social circumstances that create the enabling environment of involuntary acceptance of way of life, especially as a consequence of way of life. In addition, Durkheim (1912) described the concept of religion and other associated concepts of religious belief and identity as a collection of cultural belief systems or worldviews that manifest themselves in a collective identity. This collective role of religion was also seen in my participants who used it as a means of uniting themselves to their peers.

In addition, the term gender was used in my research. Gender as a social construction and the institutions role in creating gender stereotypes was also discovered in this research. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Foley, Levinson & Hurtig (2000) mentioned in their article, that feminist ethnographers view formal education and the schools as key sites in production, reproduction and potential contestation of gender inequalities – in this research I wanted to test this claim.

Finally, in the aspect of 'class', I will make use of Bourdieu's concept of cultural and social capital and his idea that social inequality were reproduced through the education system, and the education institutions favored individuals having reach cultural and social capital and deemed them as ready for 'school' and otherised, working class individuals.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that this research on Anthropology of Education in the context of different institutions following different curriculums, which is resulting into the creation of identities, is a topic which had not been discussed, in the context of Bangladesh. This research was inspired from my own experiences, which led into creating this idea to study 'identity formation' in educational institutions. This research may be a benchmark for researchers studying both in the field of Education and Anthropology in the context of Bangladesh.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The research has been organized in the following way. In Chapter 1 the background context, the research questions, theoretical framework and the methodology can be found. Then in Chapter 2, the literature review section is positioned, where various articles, essays and papers which have been helpful in regard to this research is discussed. Chapter 3 deals with the findings discovered during fieldwork. Moving on to Chapter 4 which consists of the discussion section, here the theoretical framework will be used to discuss the findings. Finally, Chapter 5 will consist of the conclusion section, which consists of the summary of the research, the recommendations section, the limitations section and the further research section.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the relevant literature which had helped in writing this thesis has been mentioned below. The literature covers all aspects of my thought process, starting from why I chose to do my research on Educational Anthropology, why school ethnography is important, and some literature focuses on how identity is described in the fields of Education and Anthropology. Finally, some literature focuses on the formation of religion, gender and class identity, and what different anthropologists had to say about the formation of these identities.

2.1 Anthropology of Education

George and Louise Spindler (1992) mentioned in their work the importance of cultural process in ethnography. They said the importance of school in cultural transmission and its major role in culture survival. To them learning of culture, the school and social structure, the exercise of power, the effects of cultural based values in teacher perception, the informal transmission of values and the role of teachers and administrators are also relevant to this topic. Spindler (1992) mentioned "Anthropology of Education" had started with Edward Hewett in 1904 and how his article in *American Anthropologist* laid the foundation for this field. The Spindlers had written about making their use of "cultural therapy" in trying to understand teacher's position in the educational system. While conducting fieldwork in schools they found how teachers at times unconsciously viewed students from their own socio-cultural understanding and due to their cultural bias they viewed students in a way which clouded their judgments. Hence they had suggested "cultural therapy" to teachers to understand their culture better than anything else as to avoid viewing others from their perspective, so as to create better understanding in a multicultural environment of a classroom. They emphasized the role of teachers in their work as they consider teachers to be witnesses of the ever transformative youth culture. They witness student's adaptation or rejection of dominant culture and student's processes of creating a distinct youth culture of their own.

In the article, *Beyond the Classroom: The Impact of Culture on the Classroom* published on the Miami Herald website, Futterman (2015) described culture mentioned how parents and educators are aware of the disparities that exist under their own school house roofs, in the form of achievement

and funding and readiness. But there is a cultural gap between students and teachers that are hardly spoken about. Many times, culture is perceived as celebrated holidays and recipes or religious traditions. But the root of all culture is unique experience according to Futterman. She emphasizes the impact of schools and children's participation in education which leads to cultural tendencies. Futterman (2015) suggested that in order to engage students effectively in the learning process, the teachers must know their students and their academic abilities individually.

Futterman (2015) stated that teachers are said to be advocates for learning but once the dismissed bell has been rung, they show no interest to understand what they deal with. In this section she makes it a point to emphasize the fact that teachers need to have an idea of the personal lives of students to a certain extent to understand them better. She further states that teachers need reminding that their teaching styles reflect their cultural background. Much of what they say and their relationship with students, colleagues and parents are influenced by the way they have been socialized.

2.2 School Ethnography

Erickson (1973) described the importance of school ethnography and what makes school ethnography ethnographic. Erickson stated that ethnography is an enquiry process guided by a point of view. In order to do ethnology the ethnographer combines firsthand experience with an awareness of forms of social life besides his own.

He stated that just how in a village the political authority and exchange relations are heavily influenced by the kinship statuses and rules. While in school special treatment is forbidden by a bureaucratic and meritocratic rule system. Although, we cannot transfer the particular methods of standard ethnographic field research to study of schools. Similarly, in school ethnography we can see which aspect of village ethnography applies and what does not.

Erickson stated that school ethnography is ethnographic since it is a partial community whose members hold achieved statuses ideally. In this community individuals with rights and obligations can be found, however, these rights and obligations are not reciprocal. Here goods and services are prominently different, and knowledge is non-traditional which is rapidly changing.

Erickson mentioned how Malinowski viewed society as divisible for analytic purposes in categories of activity which fulfilled the most basic human needs, social organizations (kinship,

marriage and descent rules), economics, technology, language and belief system. Similarly, school can be viewed according to Malinowski's categories.

2.3 Identity Formation in the field of Education and Anthropology

2.3.1 Identity in Education:

According to renowned psychologist Erik Erickson, between the ages 12-18, people start to build up their sense of identity through an intense exploration of personal beliefs, goals and values. Hence, this is why I had interviewed people from grades 9-10 who are approximately between 14-17 years of age.

Abbasi (2016) mentioned in her paper about Erickson's theory of 'identity'- where he had said how 'identity' is never fulfilled at one stage of an individual's life rather it is "constantly lost and regained" and is a lifelong development. Furthermore, she mentioned how 'identity formation' is a 'normative crisis' of adolescence due to development of "the prerequisites in physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility to experience and pass through the crisis of identity". Erickson's focus on social and cultural aspect in the creation of identity is of utmost importance to my research. Abbasi also brings in the importance of "relational context" and how identity amongst adolescents is formed by comparing oneself to others in the community. She further stated that a supportive school environment along with peers, teachers and other trusted adults who provide adolescents with support for exploration of identity alternatives and confirm adolescents' commitments are examples of creating successful identities. According to Abbasi, a significant portion of an adolescent's interpersonal relationships and social interactions are formed through the relationships found in schools. Thus this makes one see how institutions are arenas where youngsters can experiment with different roles, friendships, beliefs, and relationships to create an idea of 'self'. Finally, Abbasi mentioned in her paper the importance of teacher's role into building compassionate and caring attitude towards students and an "identity building" curriculum to be beneficial for students. Abbasi referred to Kroger (2007) who had argued that general school structure, climate of the school, interactions with peers and teachers all provide social and emotional experiences with possible long-term formation of identity.

2.3.2 Identity in Anthropology:

In the article, *A Therapeutic Moment? Identity, Self, and Culture in the Anthropology of Education* by Hoffman (1998), the writer states that the anthropologist's dominant perspective of identity stresses on understanding, respecting and celebrating it rather holding it up for critical interrogation. In this paper, the writer wanted to inquire the kind of 'selves' which support the construction of identities in social contexts and how such 'selves' affect the kinds of identities produced in educational context. Here, she described 'self' as a culturally patterned way of relating to others, to the material, natural and spiritual worlds and to time and space. This 'self' can also relate to notions of agency, mind, person, being and spirit. She continues by stating 'identity' reflects the self-situated ness in social roles, and it dictates the person's position in social structure. In addition, Hoffman claims that the ways identities are defined from outside, manipulated or otherwise – whilst being situated in social structures – are how identity construction in schooling takes place. This construction occurs in response to social or academic pressures, or through situated practices in classrooms, schools or communities. She ends her paper by stating that describing identity in forms of resistance or conformity fails to capture the true complexity of 'identity formation'.

2.3.3 Class Identity:

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed and discussed the concepts of 'habitus', cultural capital and social capital to explain the ways in which relationships of social inequality were reproduced through the education system. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu can exist in three forms, embodied as a disposition of the mind and body; objectified as cultural goods, and in its institutionalized state as, for example, educational qualifications. Nash (2008) mentioned in their article "*The relevance of this for the sociology of education is obvious: in modern societies the school has become the most important agency for the reproduction of almost all social classes. This insight early on enabled Bourdieu (1974) to challenge the optimistic liberal perception of the school as an instrument of social reform and equality, and it has taken him to ever more refined analyses of the creation and recreation*". According to Nash – Bourdieu had stated that the school is an instrument for creating the dominant cultural code of society and according to Bourdieu schooling has a power over student's consciousness which is above and beyond the capability of families. According to Bourdieu, the education institutions fail to understand its problems and choose to focus on students who possess dominant social and cultural classes and classify them as "ready" for school

and do not take into account the limitations which students from working class possess. Hence the habitus of the "non-dominant" classes are ignored, which in return would create resistance towards the institution.

2.3.4 Religious Identity in the Field of Education:

Oppong (2013), mentioned in his paper "Religion and Identity", identified the link between religion and identity in three viewpoints. They were, to view religion as an expression of deep sense of unity and its linkage with identity formation especially in the context of Durkheim's insight, secondly the link between religion and ethnicity in terms of forging identity formation and the link between religion and identity formation with reference to youth's religiousness and search for unity. In his work the writer had referred to Durkheim's work on religion noted that religion was a derivative of social circumstance that create the enabling environment for involuntary acceptance of life, especially as a consequence of group membership. He stated that rituals, ceremonies and belief systems and the behavior towards symbols created a sense of unity and belonging. The writer stated in his paper, that the influence of religion on individuals may rise from community influence as most people adhere to the norms and beliefs of their community.

Wang (2012) stated in his work that religious secondary schools may contribute to the process of religious identity formation in these three ways; community of religious peers, the presence of religious adults and an exposure to religious instruction.

2.3.5 Gender Terrain of Education, Student Culture and Peer Dynamics:

Foley, Levinson & Hurtig (2000) mentioned in their article, that feminist ethnographers view formal education and the schools as key sites in production, reproduction and potential contestation of gender inequalities. Feminist anthropologists in the field of anthropology of education have made important contributions to research in education. They have made the documentation and critical analysis of girls' and women's school experience as distinct from those of boys and men, they have stressed in their work that 'gender matters' as a category of analysis and a dimension of social life, finally they have also stressed upon the idea that patriarchy is a system structuring and reproducing social relations of inequality that is semi-autonomous from, but linked to capitalism and racism.

They further mentioned how feminist anthropologists are concerned with the lack of representations of women and girls in ethnographic literature and the failure to account to consider, women's and girl's unique distinct school experiences.

The writers also mentioned how some feminist ethnographers worked extensively on the experience of girls or young women in the student of scent culture and peer dynamics. These ethnographers view schools or university as sites for production of culturally patterned gender relations. These gender relations have important sources in family socialization, popular culture and other spheres of society. These feminists believe that schools as institutional settings provide an important social space, along with some rich cultural and ideological resources for peer culture to produce and enact gender relations; in addition such activities of cultural production in turn create or affect students' identities and aspirations.

Furthermore, the writers mentioned Nancy Lesko's 1988 book named *Symbolizing Society,* where the writer had highlighted the ways schools and peer cultures construct and 'discipline' student bodies. Lesko's work at a Catholic high school examined the body as a site of identity construction. In her work, she emphasized on the ways officially constructs and controls the female bodies and how young women respond to such attempts of control. In her findings, Lesko stated that female student must learn to navigate the contradictory norms and expectations of official school discourse and peer culture.

Foley, Levinson & Hurtig (2000) also mentioned how many works focused less on peer cultural dynamics and more on the process of identity construction. For example they mentioned the work by Eisenhart, Finkel and colleagues in their 1998 book *Women's Science*, where they studied multiple institutional sites where they draw upon anthropological concepts od situated learning to take their analysis of education beyond schools.

2.3.6 Youth Identity:

Borsheim-Black (2015), mentioned how the age "16" has been shaped by social institutions such as school. The age has also been shaped by social class and culture, for example sweet sixteen parties and bar mitzvahs have been mentioned by Black as markers which are used to let the teenagers know of their 'coming-of age' period. Furthermore, the writer believes that 'adolescence' is a social construction and nothing more. People usually associate various negative labels such as 'irresponsible' 'out of control', 'materialistic', 'technology obsessed' and 'entertainment' to describe

adolescents – but this labeling is problematic according to Black as per scholarship of youth studies. In addition, Black mentioned how people usually resist the idea of adolescence as a social construct. She believes it is problematic to generalize adolescence for all individuals and state that all young people experience adolescence in predictable or universal ways.

2.4 Inter-cultural Differences

Ladson-Billings (2006) had mentioned teacher education programs are dominated with psychology; where 'culture' is used to explain various things, without trying to understand what this term means. Demerath and Mattheis (2012) mentioned how anthropologists have historically assumed that culture is made up of learned patterns of behavior which allow them to perceive the world and act in it according to this learned behavior. This "blueprint" as stated by Demerath and Mattheis (2012) consists of systems of meanings, ways of being, ways of feeling and even how one should move one's body. Historically, anthropologists have often tried to understand these ways of being through notions of holism and relativity. As Mead (1964) had stated "Cultural relativity demands that every item of cultural behavior be seen as relative to the culture of which it is a part, and in that systematic setting every item has positive or negative meaning and value…"

Hence, using this reasoning generations of anthropologists have tried to get at the emic or the insider point of view. Demerath and Mattheis (2012) further mentioned how this would allow people to make sense of certain things. They further mentioned how in recent years, people have tried to make sense of their own cultures and local practices by "problematizing" them. In addition, by bringing specific beliefs or actions into view people can make use of comparative perspective to make changes. It is in this way that anthropologists frequently use comparison to "make the familiar strange and interesting again" as per Erickson (1986). Gonzalez (2004) had stated that anthropologists and other social scientists have come to acknowledge the increasing importance of hybridity in one's own so-called cultural groups and the intercultural relations between them.

The articles mentioned above, were of utmost importance in creating the thought process of this research. Each and every article stated above consists of aspects which have been discussed in this research. Hence, these articles contributed the most in the formation of this research topic. The first article by George and Louise Spindler gave us an idea as to how educational institutions contributed to cultural transmission and played a major role in culture survival. They relevant topics such as school and social structure, the exercise of power, the effects of culture based values in

teacher perception, the informal transmission of values and roles of teachers as relevant topics of study in educational anthropology. Similarly, Futterman (2015) mentioned in her article the importance of teacher's role in education. Moving on to the article by Erickson (1973), the writer had stated, why school ethnography is important and he stated that school ethnography is ethnographic because schools are partial communities whose members hold achieved statuses ideally, where rights and obligations are found, and goods and services are prominently different. In addition Abbasi (2016) mentioned in their paper Erickson's theory of identity formation and stated how Erickson's focus on social and cultural aspect in the creation of identity, and how adolescents formed their identity by comparing themselves to other members in a community. She stated that supportive school environment, with supportive peers, and teachers who provide adolescents with support for exploration of identity alternatives help create successful identities. Similarly, Hoffman (1998) stated how 'identity' of a person reflects the self-situated position of a person in social roles. She believes this self-situated ness reflects the person's position in social structure – she even mentioned how being situated in social structures like schools lead to identity formation due to academic pressures, through situated practices in classrooms, schools and communities. Finally, in the article by Demerath and Mattheis (2012), it was stated that people are now trying to understand their own cultures by 'problematizing' them and Gonzalez (2004) had stated how it was necessary to acknowledge the increasing hybridity in one's own culture and the inter-cultural relations between them.

CHAPTER 3
FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings from my fieldwork have been discussed. The chapter consists of a separate section for School 1, School 2 and School 3. Each section deals with the findings discovered in that specific school – where the main focus is on religion, class and gender. Moreover, other information such as peer relationship, problems with curriculum, and student-teacher relationship were also found in my fieldwork.

The table below shows the basic demography of the 40 participants involved in this research. All the participants were female. These participants were all Muslims. In School 1 there are 16 participants, in School 2 there are 10 participants and School 3 there are 8 participants. From each school 2 teachers were also interviewed. Moreover, the participants from School 1 belonged to the lower income group; the participants from School 2 belonged to the middle class, and finally the participants from School 3 belonged to middle and the upper middle class group.

		School 1	School 2	School 3	Total
No. of participants (total 40)		18	12	10	40
No. of students		16	10	8	34
No. of teachers		2	2	2	6
Average Age of Students		15	14.5	16	
Sex		female	female	female	
Income level (BDT per month)	**Below 25,000**	16			
	25,000-50,000		1		
	50,000-100,000		8	6	
	Above 100,000		1	2	

3.1 Madrasa – School 1

The first institution that I had gone to was a Madrasa consisting of only female students. After conversing with the teachers and principal there, I had found out that this particular Madrasa followed the Alia madrasa education system. The Alia madrasah education system is more modernized than the Qawmi madrasah education system, as the syllabus has been formed under government supervision and teaches non-religious subjects such as social sciences, ICT, science and arts subjects as well. However, their main focus is still on Quran and hadith teachings. This madrasah provides education till the Kamil level which is equivalent to Masters.

This institution houses several girls from lower class families, who are either orphanages or have only one parent alive. Some students have come from villages and live in the madrasah as food and housing is free for those who live there. While some other students attend this madrasah for classes alone.

The largest number of participants for my research was from this madrasah. A total of 16 students and 2 teachers participated in this research.

Class Identity

- The discussion began with the 9th graders first and then the 10th graders joined when the former group left. The first question which was asked revolved around the importance of education; most of these students replied how both their family members and teachers encourage them to gain knowledge. Since, most of these students have parents working as maids, farmers, driver, tailor and day laborers – and they all earn less than 25,000 taka per month – these children have been made conscious about the fact that their parents work extremely hard to pay for their education. A student had summarized this topic in the following way;

> *"Our families and teachers both give importance to education. If our families didn't give importance to education then we wouldn't have been able to attend classes here. Similarly, our teachers encourage us to study harder and remind us daily how hard our parents work to send us to school"* (fieldwork 2019)

- In addition, the students mentioned how their teachers asked them to learn certain skills such as sewing to earn extra money, whilst others encourage them to teach or give tuitions to children, so that they can earn an extra income.

- The next question asked them to elaborate as to why they think education is important they mentioned how education will help them become part of 'society'. In order to become someone respectful they would need education. Education hence makes them aware, and helps them understand the world around them. Some students said how education will allow them get a job in the future and they believed, they all will get a job because of being educated in the future.

- The students were asked about the profession they aspire to have in the future. Amongst the 16 participants, 15 of them said both their families and them themselves wanted to become teachers. Only one student aspired to be a lawyer, but her family wanted her to become an Islamic teacher. Another student had mentioned, how she wanted to become a policewoman, but the uniform for policewomen goes against her idea of purdah – hence she has decided to become a teacher instead.

- They also mentioned competition is present in their institution; it is always good competition which leads them to get inspiration from one another. At the same time when speaking about class differences and them coming from different family backgrounds, the students said how they don't pay attention to these 'differences'. When one of them does not have books or materials they end up sharing with them. They all stated that since most of them lived together, they have learned to take care of each other.

- During the teacher interview the teacher mentioned that since this is a madrasah education system, they need to be extra hard working, in order to prosper in the future and in order to become 'good' human beings and improve their way of life their education is vital.

- The teachers were also asked if the difference in family backgrounds and social standing ever in the way, one of the teacher replied by saying;

> *"We have all kinds of children here. Since this is an orphanage, mostly the students have domestic workers as their mothers. There are students from good households as well. Here they learn to understand one another and it isn't so that they are looking down on one another. In this environment, they are gaining knowledge and learning together, here they are able to learn about 'love' and understanding. They know what benefits they will have if they mix with good students." "We have a student who gets angry easily and doesn't do well; I asked her why she did not study. She said I asked for the book but they didn't give it to me. I asked the others why they didn't give her any book. They said that she gets mad at the smallest things and doesn't take our words easily. I told them that it is not right for Muslims to stay mad at each*

other for too long, and not speaking to your Muslim sister for more than 3 days is an absolute NO. Now shake hands, say your salaam and make-up. Since you live in the same Madrasa, you must learn to co-exist, if fights don't exist then love won't exist, but they must learn to understand one another." (Fieldwork 2019)

- The teachers were asked if the family members of these students encourage these girls in matter of studies and work. One teacher said that some families did while others didn't. They tried their best to provide for student who didn't have much to begin with. Whenever a student did not possess enough money to buy her books, the teachers or relatives of the teachers collected money for these students; she also gave them dates or bought them eggs and even paid for their transport at times. This teacher said that she encouraged all students who came from struggling families by telling them how their mom's job as a maid is nothing to be ashamed of – it is a job just like hers is to teach. She mentioned how students get happy when she tells them these things.

Religious Identity
- Participants were asked, whether their families encourage them to perform their religion or the teachers in their madrasah encourage them more. Some mentioned how their parents were more religious and stricter than the institution. Whilst others mentioned how they would often explain hadiths or the correct teachings of Islam to those parents who have little knowledge about religion.
- They went onto say how prayers, and the performing the daily salat at the rights times and recitation of Quran are some of the things which they are always encouraged to do. A student had mentioned;

> *"Our teachers always tells us, "don't pray by being scared of us, pray for Allah and fear Allah, don't fear me" – when they explain in this manner, we feel encouraged to pray."* (Fieldwork 2019)

- Similarly, another student went onto describe how peers help each other to maintain their 'imaan', she said;

"Sometimes, the environment around us encourages us to pray when we feel lazy, or delay our prayers. When we see others pray we also feel like praying." (Fieldwork 2019)

- In addition, whenever a new student enrolls, with little knowledge of how to perform salat – the teachers encourage the existing students to teach them.

- The students were asked about the kind of events that took place in their institution. They all mentioned how religious events, Quran 'Tilawat' or 'Qiraat' are common practices; they also have events where senior students recite 'Hamd Na'ats' or poetry recited to praise the Prophet Mohammad. Furthermore, when asked if they celebrated other events, one student clarified;

"Our institution focuses on religious events. Pohela Boishakh is not celebrated here; it is a Christian culture, why should we celebrate that? The program that takes place here teaches us about new hadiths. Although, at times we might find it boring, the hadiths are so nicely presented and are so beautiful, that we end up enjoying it" (Fieldwork 2019)

- When it came to discussing about their peers, the participants said that their friendships were formed because of having similar interest, when one of them watches a good movie or listens to music they like they come to class and share with the rest. Similarly, they admitted that fights were inevitable as well. However, they make-up every time they end up fighting. One student had mentioned;

"When we fight, we always remember that we'll end up being 'kafirs' if we don't make up with our friends after not speaking for 3 days. Hence, we try our best to make up quickly." (Fieldwork 2019)

Gender Identity:

- The next questions revolved around their identity as girls. They were asked if teachers or the institution teaches them something which are specifically for girls. The first thing that they mentioned was 'purdah' or the covering of their bodies so as to conceal their skin and their forms. It should be noted that all of the participants in this group were wearing 'niqab'.

- A teacher mentioned how girls these days are fearless and how she encourages them through her own experiences;

> *"I tell them from experience that when I moved from 1st year of intermediate to 2nd, I was married off. Then I did honors, and then Bachelors in Education, Masters of Education, how was it possible? I studied systematically and very hard. They get encouraged when they hear my story, and they want to learn. Now girls know how to fight, raise their voice, they don't look behind them; they don't depend on each other. When I tell them they get encouraged. I encourage them to teach student even if you get 500 taka, it will help. Some students are married; I encouraged them from my story. There was one novel in literature that we had studied, in the novel we read "You cannot be good to everyone; we have to stay focused on ourselves, and continue with the focus on our studies to achieve greatness". In order to beat a better student we have to be consistent, we have to learn to balance both house work and education. The have to be hard working. If they have aim then they can move forward."* (Fieldwork 2019)

Other information:

Teacher Relationship

-The participants were asked about their relationship with their teachers. The students all said how the teachers were friendly and helpful. Although the teachers do show a little favoritism to better students – they do not discourage the rest; rather tell them to take inspiration from the better students, and work harder. Furthermore, they mentioned how teachers always listened to them when they felt pressured. Class tests were always scheduled after consulting with the students. In addition, they mentioned how their teachers always made them aware of the dangers of using technology or

the internet. Students mentioned, how teachers tell them often that the internet has the power to make them forget about their aims and can dangerous for them. In order to not get distracted by the world, they must learn to use technology safely and with responsibility.

<u>Teacher's opinion on youth trends</u>

- The teachers were asked if they noticed the new youth trends that arise before anyone else as they deal with teenagers. Both the teachers answered in the affirmative and said how they both see the students being fascinated with cellphones and technology in general. However, although they understand how the world cannot go on without cellphones these days, as it helps people keep connected, however the students living in the madrasah shouldn't use it as much as it is not a necessity for them. They always make it a point to create awareness amongst the students about the negative aspects of internet. One of the teachers mentioned how people of this age are always curious about both good and not so good things; hence she makes it a point to let them know to use technology responsibly. On the other hand, both the teachers mentioned how students of these ages are creative and very thoughtful, one teacher mentioned,

> *"For example, we have Hamd Na'at recitations here or and other competitions here. Through these competitions we can see their creativity. During recitations we see them bringing in new ways of reciting through their creativity. If a new Hamd comes, they can recite it in a new way. An MP came recently; they shared a Hamd in a new way in front of him. In the multimedia class, when we teach something new, they are always curious about everything. They want to know. We will be taking them to a study tour in a few days, they keep on asking about the place. They are very eager to know. They stay in a closed place; they get excited to go to an open place."* (Fieldwork 2019)

3.2 Institution Following National Curriculum – School 2

In this institution which is also specialized for female students, the focused group discussion of a total of 10 ninth graders took place during their tiffin period. However, 30 minutes wasn't enough, hence I had to take up some extra time from the class which followed their break time. In addition, to the focused group discussion, 2 teachers were also interviewed. Initially, the students

were annoyed for being called to participate in this discussion during their free time, which was understandable. However once the discussion started and they understood what the research was about, all of them participated with eagerness.

From the survey itself, it could be said that these students were from middle class families based on the income level of their families.

Class Identity

- They were asked if they believed class differences and having different social backgrounds ever made them have conflicts. All of them said how they mix with each other, although some people tend to think they are superior to others. Some people who act arrogant are left alone and most are not friends with them

- The teacher was asked about class differences and students coming from different social backgrounds, and how they dealt with students coming from different phases of life, one teacher said,

> *"Some are from affluent middle class families, and some students have simple businessmen for fathers. The curriculum has been created by keeping all classes in mind. Class does not matter, the curriculum is for all. If we see a lacking in a student they try to understand them. For example, a student used to fall behind in everything, she was not attentive, not properly dressed – I asked her what her problems were, I found out her mother is dead and that she belongs to a family of good financial condition – I told her father that she needs support". As a teacher I tried my best to help her mentally. It is not possible to help everyone, we have 44 students to 51 students in one class – but some students are special cases."* (Fieldwork, 2019)

Religious Identity

- The students had mentioned how students from faiths were free to perform their religion and no such discrimination or conflict took place between the students of different faiths.

- They were asked different types of cultural programs should be celebrated within their schools,

most of them thought it is necessary to be part of other faiths practices since it promotes unity. One student said,

> *'We are culture based country. We are not extremists, they can have their faith and we can have ours.' (Fieldwork 2019)*

Gender Identity

-When asked to describe their school they said: It is has a competitive environment, it is friendly as well. Another student mentioned that it has its positive and negatives as well, since there is a lot of pressure from their school in terms of assignments, practical and CT exams. Furthermore, a student mentioned that since it is an all-girls school, competition is part of the institution, since in her opinion girls tended to be less friendly and more competitive with one another.

- On the topic of gender construction and if they thought stereotypes existed in their school, they mentioned how tomboys are told to act like girls and grow their hair out. Students think the teachers should have no say in this matter as it is the individual's choice as to how they want to present themselves.

- The teachers were asked about gender construction and whether gender stereotypes existed in their institution in their opinion. One teacher said;

> *"We don't discriminate against our girls. We never tell them that they cannot do something just because they are girls. They are participating just as boys are. Equality is encouraged in this institution. The girls are more encouraged in sports even, they are gaining multiple awards and we are encouraging them."*
> (Fieldwork 2019)

Other information:

Opinions about their institution

- The topic soon changed into the quality of education which was being provided in their institution. When asked about the education they were provided with. Most weren't satisfied with the system

and quality of education they were provided with. They even mentioned how the teachers couldn't cope with the syllabus and they would have to complete their syllabuses by themselves. One particular student had stated;

> *"An education should be such which helps us gain knowledge, but in their school they are learning to complete their syllabus, and learning to get a passing grade, that is not how a school should be run."*

> Another student mentioned;
> *"The education system in our country is such which just pushes us to gain a pass grade and it isn't one which is helping us think. We are being judged by our marks. I don't think marks are everything, knowledge is everything. We got textbooks with outdated data, but we have to write these wrong data on our answer script"*
> (Fieldwork 2019)

Teacher relationship

- The students were then asked about the teachers in their school. They said, favoritism exists like they do in all schools. In addition, they also mentioned how some teachers took tuition classes outside of the institution if they don't attend they don't get the marks as others who do.

- While discussing their relationship with their teachers they mentioned how there is a generation gap between them and teachers and they think most teachers don't understand their perspective.

- When asked about the kinds of clubs which were available to them. They mentioned that there was a total of 8 clubs; and starting from this year all the clubs have become active. Some mentioned how some clubs of their choices aren't available. One student mentioned how teachers often accused the students of bunking classes when participating in club activities. Furthermore, they spoke they mentioned how they don't have clubs which teach basic life skills as their institution only cares to help them enter an university but they don't think beyond that.

<u>Youth Identity</u>

- They were all between the ages of 14-15 hence were asked how they described people of this age. Hence they used the terms, 'impulsive', 'confused', 'want to be independent', 'emotional'. Also they mentioned how there is a gap between parents and children, and how teenagers lack tolerance. One student stated,

"We are not open to different opinions, the extroverts dominate the introverts. This age group wants to force their opinions over others, and the gap between parents start to exist from this age." (Fieldwork 2019)

- The teachers were asked they noticed the changing trends of these teenagers and what kind of changes do they usually see in them. One teacher mentioned;

"Their behavior, attitude, changes – we see them, of course their parents notice first. We can notice these changes and observe them, since they have been with us for a long time; we recognize the changes when they take place. We recognize new trends, since this is a natural process, and we try to understand them. We even notice the good and bad sides of these trends. In all of the sections the teachers are informed about the adolescent period and taught how to guide these students. This is part of our job and teachers training also deal with this. Since we deal with girls, we prepare them about the changes they will face." (Fieldwork 2019)

- The teachers were asked to explain the philosophy of the school, one teacher mentioned;

"This generation is advanced. We want our students to be capable enough to face this fast paced world. Wherever our students go they are proving themselves to be capable, with skill with result. The head of certain college came to us with a cake, 1-20 students from our school took position in this college, they wanted to meet their teachers and see who these teachers who are preparing these students are. They are doing well in tournaments, as captains, as club members and sports they are proving themselves. We want them to be capable citizens and want them to be successful in all

aspects of life" (Fieldwork 2019)

- The teachers were asked how they would describe an 'ideal student', one teacher mentioned,

> *"Morality, socialization, being able to do well for others is necessary qualities to have and getting good grades are not everything. Human beings cannot possess all good elements but we try our best to create a "good human being."*(Fieldwork, 2019)

3.3 Institution Following International Curriculum – School 3

This round of interviews was the most difficult to arrange. All the participants belonged to an institution which followed international curriculum, in this case British curriculum. This institution follows the Cambridge board system – and students can study here till A' Levels or till higher secondary level. The unique feature of this school is that this particular institution emphasizes "moral teachings and etiquette more than textbook knowledge. This particular institution encourages its students to learn Arabic from a very young age. It also stresses Islamic teachings and inspires students to strengthen their 'imaan'". The male and female students have different sections and they are separated from grade 3.

The institution was contacted multiple times, however each time they had insisted that the necessary letters and documents submitted could not be found. Hence, I had to arrange a meeting outside of the institution. All of the respondents, a total of 8 female students, gathered at a classroom in a coaching center, where their focused group discussion had taken place. The interviews of the 2 teachers were done over the phone.

The focused group discussion began with their description of their school and its environment.

Gender Identity
- The students discussed;
> *"It is open, airy, lively, sexism exists, events which are organized the boys are allowed freedom but not the girls. For example we can't play football because the boys stare at us and the male staff walks around; hence the authorities try to restrict*

us from playing sports." (Fieldwork 2019)

Another student interjected by saying;

"The main authorities aren't really religious but they have an idea that this is how religion works, sports such as cricket is allowed – they don't allow sports which has a lot of movement involved in it. Positive aspects, we have a debate club, which is given the funds required, even 20,000 taka is sometimes given out with no problem. Our school is improving at a slow pace. We have tournaments now for badminton. Interschool tournaments take place for sports" *"We aren't allowed to go to tournaments out outside of our campus the boys are; progressiveness is a slow process here."* (Fieldwork 2019)

- They also spoke about their attitude toward boys, one student mentioned,

"We have been separated from boys by grade 3 – we can't act normal around boys now, when we see them in coaching centers we get scared." (Fieldwork 2019)

Religious Identity

- They mentioned how most students came from religious backgrounds. The school wants them to focus on prayers, purdah, to be honest human beings. In addition, they have marks for praying the 'Zuhr' prayers, however they all felt like the institution really taught them the importance of Islam in depth.

They mentioned that their school was initially established in contrast to other missionary schools that were present then. This institution wanted to create an English medium school which abided by Islamic rules. However, they mentioned that although they had Arabic classes, but they weren't taught properly, they memorized certain parts which would get them that passing grade.

- The students spoke about a lack of students from different cultures or religious background, one student mentioned;

"We are affected, we don't get to relate with people from other cultures. If the school doesn't involve other cultures then it becomes problematic for us – since their life basically consists of school and home, the lack of diversity will take a toll on them as they grow up they won't be able to adjust to new environments." (Fieldwork 2019)

- They were asked about the number of clubs that were present in their institution. They said there was only 1 official club, which was the Debate Club. Sports teams for boys existed only, such as the football team. Girls don't have sports teams, they can assign up every year and they have tournaments inside the campus. One student relayed a story as mentioned below;

"When we were in 4th-5th grade we went for a competition but the tournament was stopped because 2 girls in the team didn't meet the principal's standards of "purdah". We go to Olympiads for Mathematics and Bangla events, but not for sports events." (Fieldwork 2019)

- The discussion moved onto the kind of events which took place in their institution. They mentioned – religious event and national ones took place. Furthermore, they mentioned how a senior student who was a Christian had left because she was the only person who did not wear the hijab, and felt uncomfortable for standing out, and not having similar principles as the others.

Class Identity

- The participants were asked about their feelings on the importance of education and if it guaranteed success. They discussed,

"It doesn't guarantee our success" ,*" it helps us to get introduced to a new world of knowledge"*, *"by having an education we are giving identity to ourselves, we are improving as individuals"* and *"Whether education will guarantee success or not will depend on the individual."* (Fieldwork 2019)

- When asked about their parent's opinion on their school, they mentioned;

"The parents think it is better than other schools that are found in Dhaka. The parents don't see why tournaments are important, they just want us to bring A*s, they think it is better compared to other schools because morality is a concern of the school." (Fieldwork 2019)

- In their opinion, it doesn't matter if people belong to different class backgrounds. They even bully anyone who acts like they are above others.

- One teacher thinks parents and students have a gap between them and they don't share as much with them. She stated;

Family bonding is less, gadgets taking up their time, focused on technology. These things are creating gaps as well. I encourage them to share with their parents for example their problems and issues regarding bullying. But some students hesitate sharing and say, "I don't talk to my parents" "they don't understand me." (Fieldwork 2019)

- The teachers were asked about students coming from different social and class positions, and how they dealt with that. One of the teachers stated;

"The students coming from less conservative background try to understand why they are told to pray, their families don't put as much pressure on them but they try to perform as much as possible. They may not want to pray but they do not discourage others or harm others. They are not aggressive. They are taught to serve others, society, do for others. These are the symbols of an educated person." (Fieldwork 2019)

Furthermore, the teachers know from students' attitude about the background of these students. In addition, both of them agree that the personal lives of individuals should be learned to

some extent by teachers. They think in order to understand them, teachers should learn about students' personal lives. One of the teachers stated,

> *"I keep in touch with their parents and tell them to not compare between their children. We provide counseling to our students and always ask them to feel free to talk to us about the stress. I encourage students to be more positive in aspects to everything."* (Fieldwork 2019)

Other Information:

Peer Relationship

- They were asked to describe their peer relationships and how they made friends. The answers ranged from being close for years, similarity in mentality, similar interests, growing up with one another, as the reasons behind friendship.

- Similarly, competition is found in their institution like anywhere else. They are competitive amongst each other. In their opinion it has positive and negative aspects. One girl mentioned;

> *"A girl stole all of my notes once when I did better than her! People do strange things because of competition".* (Fieldwork 2019)

Teacher Relationship

- The participants were asked to discuss about their teachers. They said only 2-3 teachers would want to listen to their personal problems. The younger teachers listen and pay attention. The students don't trust them enough. They mentioned how favoritism existed, as many teachers favored the students who attended their coaching classes outside of the institution. Similarly, good students, students who are more religious are favored. When some students don't dress according to Islamic standards outside of their school they are questioned by their teachers, as to why they don't. The entire group admitted that the authorities pretty much forced hijab on them. In their opinion both families and authorities have never allowed them to question anything but had forced upon their ideas on them.

- They also mentioned how they weren't completely innocent either. The students admitted that they don't bother going to school in grade 9. The culture in their school has been such that from grade 9 most of them started to attend coaching classes more and avoided school. They think it is due to the fact that only few teachers cared to teach properly. Furthermore, they mentioned the students who do attend school don't get the quality education they deserve. One student confessed that,

> *"I feel like the authorities/teachers want us to fail these days since we don't attend classes as much. For example they teach us 'abc' in class but give us 'xyz' during exams."* (Fieldwork 2019)

Youth Identity

- The students were asked to describe people of their age, they used the words or phrases such as, 'narrow-minded', 'introverted', 'not open to things', 'differs from person to person', "searching for happiness" , "going with the flow", "they have different versions of themselves", "very busy", "worried", "technology" as the main words of choice. One student said;

> *"I care about what somebody else thinks about me, a part of me exists in somebody else I realize that. If someone doesn't like me I think I have some flaws. I also want to see myself from somebody else's perspective"* (Fieldwork, 2019)

- The teachers were asked during the interviews started with them asked to describe people between the ages of 16-17 as were the ages of the participants, the teacher said;

> *"The students of this age are mostly not serious about many things. They are not responsible in many cases. They are not serious about their responsibilities. The parents at times perhaps don't give them enough time. Although we try to not control our students but we recognize that kids this age lack mature behavior."* (Fieldwork 2019)

Opinion on Institution:

- Morals, basic morals, are emphasized upon. If they weren't in this school they think they would

have been completely different individuals. Since, most of their parents are busy with themselves a lot of the influences came from their school. Some students have atheist parents who want their children to have basic morals and their school promotes that. They think that, if they had studied in more liberal schools where drugs and drinking is common amongst most of the students, then they would have been different individuals. One student summed up it all in one sentence stating,

> *"Our school despite its problems truly teaches you to be good human beings at least."* (Fieldwork 2019)

- The teachers were asked about the philosophy of the school. One of the teachers stated,

> *"Academic Excellence. It offers British Curriculum from play-group to advanced level, offering GCE O-Level and GCE A-Level examinations, held under the University of Cambridge. However, this school puts an emphasis on Islamic teachings and tries to instill the Islamic ideology amongst the students. But the main focus of the institution is to create good human beings, who are honest and who depend on Allah. Till grade 8 they are taught to write and read Arabic and they even have mark for performing salats. We also encourage them to pray 5 times a day."*

From the above findings it could be stated that each school had different atmospheres and focuses as to how they want to build up their students. In each school, the aspects of class identity and gender were of key focus. However, it could be seen that in each school the level of importance regarding each aspect was different. School 1 and School 3 both had numerous elements which pointed towards their religious identity, whereas in School 2 all three aspects were less defined. Thus each school was unique features of its own, which in turn helped create the student's identity.

Chapter 4
DISCUSSIONS

In Chapter 4, the discussions are arranged in a way which would allow readers to recognize that in each school the questions were posed to three specific agents of the educational institution. They are the institution/administration, the teachers, and peers. How these agents reacted to the 'self' or individual and in return how an individual interacted with the agents allowed me to get an insight on the three important aspects of identity I have focused on. Hence, from the discussion itself, we will be able to realize how the different identities of an individual are formed. Since the focus is on class, religion and gender identities, the questions also revolved around these specific components.

- School 1: Madrasa

This particular madrasa can be called 'modern' by some since the curriculum consists of arts and social science subjects apart from just a focus on religious texts. Although, it might not seem interesting to many about the formation of their 'religious identity' as people might state it as something obvious. However, it was interesting to analyze as to how these identities are formed. Starting from the institution, to their curriculum, their peers and even their families – the environment that they live in is such that it is difficult for them to not have this specific identity, and we can see the 'religious identity' overriding other identities.

The institution was described by most individuals in the discussion to be encouraging of their education and the most beneficial part of this very institution was that it provided free food and housing for those living at the institution. The tuition fees for each individual varied, depending on their family's income level or lack of. Most of the students acknowledged how the institution could be more encouraging when it came to practice their religion, compared to their families. In their opinion, the institution knows better hence they make it their job to spread their knowledge about religion to their families. Here, we can see how the institution itself has more of a hold on these individuals than their parents when it came to their beliefs. The interesting aspect of this is that – religion itself plays the biggest role into shaping their identities as individuals amongst the students of this institution. The events were mainly religion centered in this institution. The students partook in various 'Hamd Na'ats' (poetry recitations) and 'Qirats' or 'Quran Tilawats' (recitation of the

Quran) were common aspects of these events. The students would find creative ways to share the *na'ats* in order to show their creativity. In an institution which has 'religion' in the center of all things – the students are able to show various creative skills by partaking in these events or by even arranging them. They are completely against 'cultural events' as they are taught to believe they are practices of the 'disbelievers'. At the same time, they condition themselves or the institution with their daily religious events conditions them at times to feel interested in these 'religious events'. The students mentioned how at often times they are bored or they are at times tired of the regular programs where Hadith is shared – however, after attending these events they come to learn new things and end up enjoying them. As the institution is solely for female students and is one which is designed around Islamic education and culture, it can be said certain specific gender norms can be found here. The students had mentioned how 'purdah' or covering of their bodies to conceal their forms and skin was the most obvious norm that they abide by and is imposed by the institution. They had mentioned how maintaining 'purdah' is the most important feature for a Muslim woman. Although some students come from non-religious families, the syllabus, the events and the rules and regulations will automatically create an idea amongst students as to how an 'ideal' Muslim female student should act or behave.

From the findings it can be seen that peers and teachers play a huge role in creating their identities as 'religious', 'studious' and 'ideal' students. The teachers are agents of the institution who have the most influence over the students. The findings reflect, how teachers tell students to fear God and not to fear the teachers, when they delay performing prayers or look down upon peers with less financial means than them. In this case religion is the trope using which, they maintain their religious identity. Although favoring the better student is a common occurrence in schools, in this institution the teachers use the 'ideal student' as a standard for the others, not as a form of competition but simply as a standard for them to achieve. In addition the students just like any other person belonging to this global world is enthusiastic about technology – the teachers do not discourage their use but also yet again tell them not to get 'lost in the world' by paying too much heed to the internet or modern technology. Here, the role of teachers is of extreme importance, as they teach students to navigate the world by placing religion at their core and then creating an identity which is influenced by religion primarily.

Peers play an active role in this institution to maintain the importance of religion and abide by religious rituals. Students had mentioned how they inspire one another to pray on time or recite

Quran when they least feel like it often. The importance of peer relation can be found here. Similarly, students realize they come from different family backgrounds. Even though they hesitate at times to befriend certain individuals who come from a lower class position than them – they learn to coexist together and befriend each other. When arguments happen – they bring religion into the center once again and make up, as they believe they will become 'disbelievers' if they do not make up with their fellow Muslim sister within three days. The teachers actively encourage this habit and even tell students to help new students to learn the ways of the institution, starting from learning how to pray, or act. Here, students and teachers play the most active role into maintaining the religious identity of each other.

From the teacher's point of view, or the interview – the teachers are aware of the class positions of each student. They understand that the students from this background have to suffer more and educate themselves more and study more in order to become successful individuals. These teachers inspire students from their life stories and their experiences, in order to encourage them to study hard. Cultural transmission and enculturation hence both are found to be taking place in this institution. At the same time teachers play a big role into reducing any form of conflict between peer groups, such as the conflict because of class position and family background.

- School 2: Institution following national curriculum

In School 2 – the students repeatedly mentioned the immense pressure they faced from their institution. The conflict between students and the institution and even the teachers to some aspect was noticeable from their response. The students had mentioned how their institution consisted of a very competitive environment. Interestingly enough, they had revealed how them being from an all-girls school contributed to this competition, since they believed girls tended to be more competitive and less friendly. The idea that girls are generally more competitive was missing from the School 1. The students mentioned how clubs are present in their institution and the teachers while being interviewed mentioned how their students were doing well in every field and participated in various clubs. However the most contradictory part is when the students said how teachers had a negative idea of 'clubs' in general – they mentioned how teachers accused them of bunking classes when they partook in club activities. Here, the conflict between students and teachers can be detected. In addition, this school follows the national curriculum; hence the books and materials are supplied by government owned enterprises. According to students they have to memorize material from books

which has outdated information, in order to get the required marks. This is a classic example of institutions being enterprises which are controlled by the state, which creates citizens who the state considers to be 'ideal' as they memorize the state provided material, regardless of it being outdated. Similarly, when it came to talking about the events that are celebrated in their institution, they mentioned how they celebrated all the national and cultural programs, as one student mentioned they are not 'extremists' and they realize they should be more inclusive of all cultures as it would promote unity between different groups of people. Although, they say that – when the minority students such as the Hindus have their specialized programs in school, none of the Muslim majority students attend nor do they participate in them. Hence, if we compare School 1 and School 2 – the difference between non-secular schools such as the Madrasa creates a certain kind of religious identity, whereas the secular school is focused in creating a 'national identity' or a 'secular identity'.

The conflict between students and teachers are very noticeable in this school. They mentioned how favoritism existed as teachers' preferred students who attended their coaching classes. Here, the teacher's moral codes can be questioned. Similarly, teachers are active agents of the institute who promote certain gender stereotypes, where female students with short hair or 'tomboys' are seen as outcasts and are often told to act like girls and grow their hair out. When teachers were asked if the institution partook in creating stereotypes, they strongly condemned such acts, but these stereotypes are so intrinsic in our society that they could not detect or label it as stereotypes.

The students did not have much to say about their peers apart from the fact that they were competitive, and girls being 'unfriendly'. However, when it came to talking about class positions they said how some tended to act superior but they were usually left out, and they mostly didn't care about class differences. Here the middle-class majority had the benefits and students from the upper-middle class were the minority, whereas in the School 1 class differences were more noticeable. It makes one wonder, whether institutions in general curtails who they accept based on class, considering how students from similar class background are found in each institution.

The students described their age as 'emotional', 'confused', 'impulsive', 'dominating' and as having a 'gap' with adults. This age according to them is at a state of being in conflict with many things. As mentioned in the literature review section, the narrative of the society when it comes to explaining the 'adolescent stage' of having mostly negative connotations, have seeped into the psyche of individual students. However, when I spoke to their teachers they had more positive

connotations to present, such as 'curious', 'eager', 'advanced'. The teachers credited the institution for creating 'ideal' students who are prospering everywhere they go. The interesting contrast between the students' opinion and the teacher's opinion is found when the teacher stated how they are trying to create 'good human beings' through their teachings of morality and socialization – and the students stated how they were trying to create students who get good enough grades to get into a good university or to 'pass a grade'.

- School 3: Institution following international curriculum

This third school has certain common aspects from School 1 and School 2. However, interestingly enough each institution has their unique features. This institution has both male and female students but they study in different sections, and they have been segregated in grade 3. According to the students, the institution itself follows Islamic principles; however, they stated that the main authorities themselves aren't religious. They also stated gender discrimination can easily be detected in this institution, as female students are not allowed freedom in various aspects. They have no freedom to arrange events and they have to 'fight' at times to play certain sports, as their authorities want them to play sports which require less movement. Here, religion becomes a trope by which sexist ideologies and gender inequality is established. Even though the boys stare from their classrooms, these boys are not controlled, the female body is a site which is needed to be covered and controlled but not the 'male gaze'. Similarly, they think they are missing out in trying to understand people from different cultures as religious-oriented families tend to send their children to this institution. In their opinion, the institution lacks diversity which might be problematic for them in the future if they move somewhere with more diverse community. Although the school was created to instill Islamic rule within the students, the students admitted that apart from telling them to cover, Arabic classes were also held till grade 8 – however they were only taught the basics of Islam, and the curriculum hardly went into details about Islamic history or lacked in depth teachings. Here, we can see how this institution wanted to keep in touch with religion and create a religious identity amongst the students through dress code, and certain segregation practices – but at the same time this teachings just were taught at a surface level and not in depth. However, students believed that the institution had the greatest influence in creating their identities. According to t students he 'gap' between students and parents were filled up by the institution which taught them to have basic

'morals' – which they believe would have not been established if they had been in a more liberal school. The quest to make 'good human beings' with 'good morals' continue to be part of the school's ideology in this institution as well. However, the students believed that 'hijab' was forced upon them by their institution, and were treated as a uniform to fulfill the institution's criteria of how the Muslim woman should dress like – without acknowledging the opinions of individual students.

In respect to their peers – they admitted class is not a problem for these individuals. From the survey in itself - I could see how the participants had similar family backgrounds and their family members had similar income level. Majority of these students' fathers are businessman. Hence they could be put in the upper middle class category. The privilege of studying at a school which catered to a certain class was yet again found in this establishment. Hence, class differences were not an issue they considered to be a problem of the institution.

They described their peers as competitive but not in a negative context. The unity among the female students are said to be strong and it makes one wonder if this unity was birthed from their shared experience of fighting discriminatory behavior from the school institution or whether it is formed through their religious identity or from belonging to similar social and family backgrounds. If an assumption was to be made, then all three of these features made a contribution their united stance.

The teachers here yet again are agents of the institution to maintain the moral codes of the institution. The students had claimed how students are usually questioned by teachers when they do not maintain 'proper hijab' outside of the institution. In their eyes, only 2-3 teachers cared for them and were ready to help them out with personal issues, but the rest did not care for them. The issue of 'distrust' towards the teachers and the institution were mostly found their answers; here conflict between ideologies and a generation gap could be detected.

When the teachers were interviewed they described the adolescent years as 'irresponsible' and 'lack mature behavior' to describe them. The teachers admitted during the interview that the students belonged to families with good financial backgrounds and hence were privileged and were provided with everything once could ask for – hence they didn't think it was necessary to work hard as much. Here the issue of class privilege can be raised. In addition, the teachers had mentioned the 'gap' between parents and students – and how they tried to create a space for students to share their sorrows with. Here, we can find a contrast between what the students believe and the teacher's believe in. The teacher admitted that by using Islamic teachings they are trying to create 'good

human beings', who are honest and serve everyone (people, country society) around them. Here one of the teachers had brought out examples of students coming from less religious or conservative backgrounds, who did not abide by certain dress codes or prayed when they should have, as individuals who lacked the standards needed for the institution, however the teacher elaborated how these students still maintained the qualities of an 'good educated person' as they were not aggressive. In the teachers' opinion they were successful in creating 'ideal students' since their students were both 'good students' along with 'good human beings'.

Hence, from the above discussion, we found how individuals negotiated their position continuously in the educational 'community' they were a part of, they also participated in various ways to resist or assist the ideologies that the institution presented them with according to their own views and understanding. The conflict and resistance, the peer engagements, the teacher's transmission of culture/knowledge, the institutions impositions of rules and regulations all contributed to creating identities of individuals where each and every student negotiated their position and chose what they agreed with and what they disagreed with.

4.1 Summary of Findings and Discussion

The research paper intends to focus on the three specific forms of identities, which are; religious identity, gender identity and class identity. Hence keeping these three focuses in mind the findings were thus analyzed.

In relation to the formation of religious identity, each school had unique features to portray. For example, in the case of School 1 or the Madrasa, students were heavily influenced by their institution, teachers and peers in order to develop their religious identity. The focus on religious texts, from regular activities of Quranic recitations and even the environment of this institution allowed the formation of this identity. It can be said that their religious identity is the dominant identity which was influenced by their surroundings. To a certain extent, the class inequality which is present amongst the students could also be resolved by keeping their religious beliefs in mind. The influence of teachers to maintain their 'purdah' and to remind them of God's command to treat one another equally despite their family backgrounds allows them to nurture both their religious identity and their thought process. Moving on to School 2, or school following national curriculum – participants had stated that there is religious freedom in their school. All participants present in the discussion were Muslims, hence it was difficult to get an idea of what the students from other faiths

thought about their institution in this context. However, the participants stated that students from different faiths were allowed to have their individual programs, where students of other faiths rarely participated. Similarly, School 3, or school following international curriculum, this particular institution followed a unique structure. The participants stated that the school followed Islamic principles; however, they maintained certain culturally influenced religious norms and did not teach Islam in depth. The participants had stated that the main authorities and founders of this school were not 'religious', but was using religion as a business model in order to appeal to people who desire a 'modern' education for their children and belong to religious families. This business model hence was beneficial in a Muslim majority country like Bangladesh. However, this bias towards Islamic principles and teachings at times 'otherizes' students of different faiths, who are not able to remain in this school because of certain dress codes and limitations placed on them. Moreover, at times the participants are frustrated with the forceful implementation of 'hijab' as a school uniform on them without any in depth teaching of why it should be done. In each of the three schools the ways by which religious identity is formed is unique. In School 1 the students make use of religion to understand their life and live by these principles, here we can state that Erikson's theory of identity formation is applicable as these participants could successfully form their identities by internalizing what they had learnt from their surroundings. In the case of School 3 for example – we can find elements of resistance from the students as they are pressured to a certain degree by their school to wear 'hijab' as part of their school uniform. Some participants admitted to taking off their hijab outside of the school as they feel they had been 'forced' to put on hijab in school. Hence, we can say that participants from School 3 have been pressured to a certain degree by adults to conform to certain views which had created 'role confusion' amongst them as asserted by Erikson. Finally, in each of the three cases Durkheim's concept of religious belief and identity as a collection of cultural belief systems or worldviews can be used here. For example in School 1 the collective role of religion was also found in the participants, who used it as means of creating unity amongst themselves by using religion.

Secondly, in the context of gender identity – Foley, Levinson and Hurtig's (2000) article was used to understand how gender inequality, gender stereotype, gender roles and gender discrimination is created by educational institutions. Along with that, it was mentioned in the article that feminist ethnographers view formal education and schools as key sites in production, reproduction and potential contestation of gender inequalities. Similarly, the authors of this article had mentioned how

feminist ethnographers who had conducted ethnographies in schools had stated that girls' and women's school experience differ from that of boys. School 1 for example catered to female students belonging to families from lower income groups, and the school in itself being a Madrasa, influenced these students to dress in a modest manner and maintain 'purdah' since it was the most important aspect of a Muslim woman. In addition, the teachers and the teachings of the institution encourage students to enter 'women friendly' jobs such as sewing, tailoring, teaching and others. From the discussion held with participants – it had been discovered that other occupations such as being a police woman or being a lawyer are interests that these girls had, but they assumed with all the restrictions that women face, being a teacher was the safest occupation to have. Secondly, in School 2 it was found that participants believed that girls are naturally a little less friendly and more competitive with one another. They had also mentioned how the institution tried to instill certain gender norms, such as forcing students to maintain long hair and repeatedly telling students with shorter hair and students who prefer to be 'tomboys' to behave more like girls. Lastly, in School 3, the participants had mentioned how 'religion' was used to discriminate against female students. They mentioned how the authorities' restricted female students from playing certain sports as male staff were usually around and male students usually looked outside of the windows when they played. The surprising factor was how female students were told to maintain and restrict their bodies, but male students were not asked to look away. Here, we can see how religion or the idea of religion is used to manipulate and control the female body.

Finally, in the context of class identity Bourdieu's contribution to the sociology of education was discussed in Nash (2008) article. Nash (2008) had mentioned how Bourdieu had previously challenged the education system in his work and had stated how the school was an instrument which created the dominant cultural code of society. According to Bourdieu, the education system failed to understand its problems and catered to the students who already possessed or had a rich cultural and social capital and did not take into the limitations which students from working class possessed. However, this theory was difficult to implement entirely in the institutions here in Bangladesh. But if certain aspects of this theory were to be used – we could see how schools in Bangladesh catered to a certain class of people. School 1 catered to students from lower income groups, School 2 catered to students from middle income group, and School 3 catered to students the middle and upper middle class. In addition, in the context of School 1 -religion was used to fix class conflict amongst students.

Participants from School 2 mentioned how class differences were not an issue to them. Similarly, School 3 participants had also mentioned how class differences were not a factor to them.

The conflict present between teachers and students, institution and students, and between peers could be tested and analyzed through socio-cultural concepts such as religion, gender and class. Demereth and Mattheis (2012) mentioned in their article how in recent years people have tried to make sense of their own cultures and local practices by 'problematizing' them. Hence through this research, we could study the hybridity of some of the institutions present in our own society and the inter-cultural relations between them.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Recommendations

The research allowed me get an insight on how identity formation takes place within an educational institution and how each actor within that institution react to one another. Firstly, I would like to recommend future ethnographers to embark on school ethnography as institutions possess rich information which can be studied through the anthropological lens. Secondly, I would recommend institutions and educators to be more open to the idea of research, as the findings will benefit overall education system. Thirdly, I would like to recommend policy makers, to include student's opinions and teacher's opinions in their policies. From the research it was pleasing to see the positive response I received from the students, who believed they could finally share what they wanted to regarding their institutions through the discussions done for this research.

5.2 Limitations

The limitations I have faced in this research are ones which deeply impacted the result of my findings. School ethnography gets time consuming as institutions are very strict about the idea of research. Multiple institutions were contacted; only three responded favorably and allowed me to conduct research there. The institutions which did allow me to interview their students had certain limitations. The Madrasa students had participated in the discussion after a long day of classes, and had been in a hurry to get the interviews done with; hence the discussions had only taken place for 30 minutes only. The students following the national-curriculum had given their interviews during their tiffin period, to the dismay of many. Finally, the students from English-medium had given their interviews in a coaching center which they attend, as the authorities had not responded to my request letter to conduct interview in the institution itself.

Conducting the focused group discussion having 10 members in each group was challenging. It would have been better if I had an assistant with me to record in writing the details of the discussion. While doing the focused group discussion, I realized it was a very challenging process. In a group of 8 or 10, many don't take part in the discussion, the quiet respondents respond less, and

have to be encouraged multiple times to speak their mind. At the same time, recording the discussion was helpful; however, at times the recorder was not able to catch all of the discussions because of all respondents speaking at once. Similarly, taking notes, while acting as the moderator was a difficult task for me.

Due to time constraints and limited time allowed in these institutions, FGD was perhaps the best option. However, it was quite challenging to affectively implement this method as I had done the discussions in a bigger group than one which is fit for FGDs. In addition, there were multiple silent participants in these groups, who rarely spoke out; hence this made my findings biased in some aspects.

5.3 Further Research

Since the research was done under certain time constraints, it would be better if future research using school as a field of study was allowed significant time to conduct research. Although, it can be now stated that educational institutions are key players in transmitting culture and creating identities. However, the importance of 'school' in regards to Anthropology is an undiscovered field in the context of Bangladesh. Much research is needed to be done not only on identity formation, but the importance of teacher relationship, peer relationship, youth identity, etc.

In addition, in this research I had intended focus on class identity, religious identity and gender identity in all three institutes, but given the nature of each institute I found how not all aspects were found in the institutions. For example, 'class identity' being a broad category and one which is difficult to define in the context of Bangladesh, needs further analysis and could be an interesting topic for research.

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APPENDIX 1

Exploring Identity, Self and Culture in Educational Institutions

Researcher: Afrida Faiza (afaiza95@gmail.com)

BRAC UNIVERSITY

Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

   ……………………………………………………

2. What is your gender?

   ☐ Female

   ☐ Male

   ☐ Other

3. Which school are you from?

   ……………………………………………………

4. Which class do you study in?

   ☐ Grade 8

   ☐ Grade 9

   ☐ Grade 10

5. What is the profession of your guardian?

   ……………………………………………………

6. Income level of guardian
   - ☐ Below 25,000 taka
   - ☐ 25,000-50,000 taka
   - ☐ 50,000- 100,000 taka
   - ☐ 100,000 and above

7. What kind of transport does your family use?

   ……………………………………………………

8. What kind of sports does your school encourage you to play?

   ……………………………………………………

9. What profession do you aspire to have in the future?

   ……………………………………………………

10. What career does your family or teachers want you to have?

   ……………………………………………………

11. Is religion important to you?

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

    ☐ Maybe

    Any comment: ……………………………………………………

12. Is Education important to you?

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

    ☐ Maybe

    Any comment: ……………………………………………………

13. What are the criteria/conditions used for the acceptance of students in your

    school?

    Answer…………………………………………………………