

Agency and Governmentality: The Regulation and Resistance of Muslim Students in a Public High School

Gerry M. Lanuza

University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
glanuza@gmail.com

This paper is an attempt to show how Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality can be used to illustrate the regulation of Muslim students while engaging in self-making in the context of the disciplinary field of a public high school. Using ethnographic data, this paper argues that Muslim students are not just passive subjects; rather, they are active agents in constituting their identities while simultaneously subjected to the power relations in the school. Towards the end of the paper, I propose certain policy recommendations that could address the problems generated by current specific form of rationality of government that normalizes Muslim students in public schools.

Keywords: governmentality, identity, Muslim, Foucault, reproduction

Education is usually defined as the ideological state apparatus, taking over the traditional role of religion that is responsible for producing citizen-workers (Althusser, 1971). Popularly known as "social reproduction", this theory explains the role of education in legitimizing social inequalities (Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1987; Morrow & Torres, 1995). However, recent works by sociologists have documented the inadequacies of the social reproductionist paradigm (Willis, 1977; MacLeod, 1987; Giroux & Aronowitz, 1985; Weiler, 1988; Kanpol, 1997). As a result, subsequent studies had moved away from the mechanistic view of schooling as a simple form of social reproduction (Bessett & Gualtieri, 2002; Dolby & Dimitriadis,

2004). Other studies pushed further the analysis to include the axes of gender and race beyond the exclusive focus on class (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Connell, 1987).

Taking off from this debate, my current study asserts that social reproduction theory cannot provide an adequate theoretical framework to link the process of schooling with an agency. I strongly believe that by turning to Foucault's notion of governmentality, the problem of agency could be addressed. This paper therefore employs Foucault's notion of governmentality to explain the modes of subject-making and subject-formation among Muslim senior high school students in a public school setting.

Historically, public education in the Philippines had always been seen by the Filipino Muslims as a subtle way to Christianize them. Muslim population, especially the intellectuals and the educated, see in nationalism a disguised form of Islamophobia that seeks to civilize the otherwise “barbaric tribes” of Muslim Filipinos (Majul, 1966a; 1966b; 1974; Tan and Wadi, 1995; Bauzon, 1991; Gowing, 1977; Madale, 1981). The state, in return, perceived the recalcitrance of Muslim population to the project of nationhood as a misguided effort for cessation. Hence the state, beginning in its colonial days, had deployed education hand-in-hand with military campaigns to pacify and assimilate the Muslim population (McKenna, 1998; Angeles, 1986). This mutual hostile suspicion on both sides took the greatest toll on the education of the Muslim population (Arquiza, 2006).

The situation, however, is different for Muslims who are forced to migrate to urban centers.¹ Stricken with poverty and caught in the crossfire between the government troops and Muslim rebels, many Muslims migrate to the National Capital Region (Manila, Quezon City, Taguig, Baseco, and Pasig). They settle in “Muslim communities” or “Muslim enclaves” (Angeles, 1986; Watanabe, 2007). Because these enclaves or communities do not have their own formal *madrassa* (Islamic school), parents do not have much choice but to send their children to public schools.

Consequently, when Muslim students enroll in a public high school they, like everyone else, have to embrace the policies and practices of the school. This is an unfortunate situation owing to the overcentralized character of Philippine public education (Bautista, Bernardo, & Ocampo, 2008). This is also compounded by the lack cultural sensitivity of the teachers and the insufficient multicultural orientation in teachers’ education and training (Abuso, & Vicencio, 2002).² It is in this context that there is a need to address the issue of Muslim education in urban centers, where they are the minority. Because most studies address the Islamization of public education in

Muslim-dominated regions, there is a need to study Muslim education in urban centers, where Muslims are the minority.

FROM REPRODUCTION TO GOVERNMENTALITY

All societies have to replenish their material resources, human resources, and institutions in order to stretch continuously their practices across spatio-temporal dimension (Althusser, 1971; Bhaskar, 1992). This general process is called social reproduction (Apple, 1982). Hence one can define society as “reproducible social structures” (Marrow & Torres, 1995, p. 7). The metaphor of social reproduction has its roots in organicism analogy wherein societies are likened to organic systems that grow, adapt to environment, and self-regulate (Rothstein, 1991). It was the most dominant metaphor in the sociology of education (Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1987; Morrow & Torres, 1995). It easily explains the role of education in lending legitimacy to social inequalities. For structural functionalists, the vocabulary of social reproduction allowed them to elaborate on the role of education in allocating social roles within industrial capitalism. It provided sociologists the way to explain the transmission of culture and the legitimation of economic inequalities within the capitalist social order (Parsons, 1961; Hargreaves, 1967; Murdock & Phelps, 1973; Halsey & Karabel, 1977).

It fell, however, into disrepute following the neo-Marxist and feminist criticisms of education as a social process and the ascendancy of the “new sociology of education” (Carnoy, 1982; Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Apple, 1982; 1978). Neo-Marxist studies focused on “the role of the educational apparatus in roughly reproducing a labor force stratified by sex and class. It requires a concomitant investigation of the way education functions in the process of class formation and struggle, capital accumulation and legitimation of the privilege of the dominant groups” (Apple,

1982, p. 3). The neo-Marxists criticized the functionalist theory of social reproduction for several reasons. First, it failed to address the problems of power and the role of ideology in legitimizing social and economic inequalities. Second, it fell short in providing an adequate model to account the process in which individuals resist the dominant ideologies in the school. Third, it did not take into account the role of sexism and racial discrimination in the educational process (Carnoy, 1982; Dale, 1982).

It is however the path-breaking ethnography of Paul Willis (1977), dramatically documenting the life of the “lads” of Hammertown, that provided a departure for succeeding sociologists to explore an alternative theory beyond the social reproductionist model (Dolby & Dimitriadis, 2004). This book analyzed the deep cultural processes, which make marginality, discrimination, and humiliation acceptable, even normal, to working-class youth from one generation to the next. Willis’ (1977) work has inspired many succeeding sociologists to underscore the notion of “resistance” in schooling process. It highlights the way the invariant structural constraints generated by capitalism are mediated through the lived culture of the school. Later, there arose a cottage industry working within the resistance theory (Arnot, 1983; Macleod, 1987; McLaren, 1994). These studies incorporated the notion of resistance in analyzing gender and schooling and addressed the seemingly class reductionist account of Willis (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990). Faced with theoretical problems, sociologists then turned to the poststructuralist theory of Michel Foucault.

According to French philosopher Michel Foucault (1991, 2003), since the turn of modern period, societies no longer rely on force and violence to govern its population. He maintained that there was a shift from juridical notion of sovereignty to governmentality. He defined governmentality as the techniques of regulating the living. Governance refers to administrative discourse concerned with optimizing population and the disposition of things according to the principles of their own immanent ordering

(Singer & Weir, 2008). With governmentality, the focus shifts towards investigating how “thought operates within our organized way of doing things, our regimes of practice, and with its ambitions and effects” (Dean, 2002, p. 123). Importantly, this proposes a line of inquiry in which the ethical conduct of people at work is not limited to formal regulatory regimes, but is also governed by particular knowledge structures, which seek to define moral character and conduct in particular ways. Thus, it is through governmentality that one can analyze the politico-cultural relations woven by individuals, groups, organizations, systems of organizations, and institutions in order to produce these spaces of practices and mentalities under certain modes of rationality (Foucault, 2003).

Governmentality, or the “conduct of conduct”, ties together the technologies of self with the imperatives of institutional action, linking reflective self-regard with specific rationalities of behavior oriented to goals established by institutions. In terms of this current study, this shift from juridical to governmentality entails the individualization of control and discipline with regard to the identity formation of Muslim students inculcated by agents of governmental rationality: teachers, educational psychologists, health researchers, coupled with the practical advice of therapists, consultants, legal advisors, and interested investment bankers. The individualization of control and discipline is a process which poses a set of strategies meant to mobilize individuals against certain risks in the interest of safeguarding their own futures by cultivating in them a reflexive awareness of their own agency within an extended time consciousness, and accommodating them within a set of calculative practices relative to the future and its risks.

In short, governmentality ties together two poles. First, there are questions that may be posed regarding the tactics, strategies, and regimes of truth, knowledge, and practice that are functioning to provide the conditions of possibility through which our conduct is managed; by ourselves and by others (Rose, 1996; 1999; Dean, 2002). This is

often called technology of domination (Foucault, 1977). Second, there are questions that may be asked about the everyday mundane actions of our daily lives, and the ways in which we govern our own daily behaviors and that of those around us. This aspect of governmentality is also understood as technologies of the self (Foucault, 1997).

The value of the concept of governmentality lies in the possibilities it offers for examining the connections between power and identity, which enable a connection between a political component (the technologies of domination) and a subjective component (the technologies of self). Governmentality concerns “the government of the self by oneself in its articulation with relations to others” (Foucault, 1980, p. 88). Applied to educational setting, governmentality redirects the attention of researchers from the question of juridical definition of power to the more nuanced notion of regulation and discipline.

It is on this light that my study was conceptualized. What I want to do is to investigate the technologies of self being developed by Muslim students in managing their identity in a public high school, and not just the ways in which they are being shaped to become “normal” subjects. The metaphor of social reproduction cannot capture the complexity of the technologies in the regulation of Muslim identities. By using Michel Foucault’s problematization of governmentality, I hope I will be able to connect two things: first is the technology of domination used in educational institution to produce “normal” Muslim subjects, and the technologies of self employed by Muslims students in order to transform themselves into ethical subjects with certain identities and subject-positions.

METHODS

My study is based on critical ethnographic study of a public high school in Manila, which lasted for almost 13 months. Critical ethnography does not merely provide “thick description” of what transpired in the field, but more important,

it highlights the power relations that define and shape the interactions among the participants. My choice for my fieldwork site is based on the theoretical orientation of my study. The school, which I would call Makabayan High School, was chosen because it has a considerable number of Muslim students enrolled during my fieldwork. My study however concentrated mainly on senior Muslim students. My data were obtained through systematic observation in the 14 sections of senior students, individual interviews with Muslim students, in-depth interviews with teachers, focused group discussions with students, and joining students in their “gimmicks” (group outings).

At the end of my fieldwork, I collected a 12-inch thick field notes written in six by nine inches note pads. I also accumulated a vast number of personal entries in my diary which I recorded in my notebook computer. These notes were accompanied by short memos that I wrote mostly during my fieldwork. I also was able to collect a large number of pictures documenting the lives of the Makabayan High School senior students. To make sense out of these welter of empirical data, I used discourse-centered analysis. A central proposition of discourse-centered analysis is that culture is localized in a concrete publicly accessible signs, the most important of which are actually occurring instances of discourse (Farnell & Graham, 1998, p. 412). The field notes were treated as discourses that embody the lived experience of the actors in the field (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In making a holistic pattern out of this chaotic information and revising them in the light of further data I encountered, I was always guided by my theoretical assumptions. I had no pretention of constructing these welter of information out of nowhere. My way of organizing them into a coherent and seamless web of narrative proved that I was constructing these data from a definite theoretical standpoint.

My study focuses mainly on 60 senior Muslim students from 16 sections in a public high school. Almost all of these students have lower class background, except those from the higher

sections. The senior Muslim students for my study are minority group. Hence my study does not necessarily extend to cases when Muslims are the majority or for Muslims coming from middle class families. Moreover, I did not include in my ethnographic study the community and families of the senior Muslim students. It is the intention of this study that the results will stimulate further discussions and studies on other related issues.

RESULTS

Because my fieldwork casts a wide net that covers a lot of dimensions of the school culture, I will just focus on the significant areas that are relevant to the regulation of Muslim students. Hence the following presentation is not an exhaustive itemization of Muslim culture within the school and their individual expressions, but merely presents some slices of this culture as they are relevant to the present research problem.

Technologies of Domination, Bodily Regulation of Everyday Life

Schools are institutions that create student subjectivities (Mac an Ghail, 1994, p. 4). If we follow Foucault's theory of subjectivity, it must be acknowledged that the art of government follows two modes or expressions, namely, the modes of being-with-one-self (self-regulation) and modes of being-with-others (conducting the conduct of others). Self-regulation is akin to technologies of self, while the government of the conduct of others clusters around the concept of technologies of domination (Foucault, 1977). To understand the constitution of the identities of Muslim students, it is necessary to discuss it in relation to the technologies of self-making and technologies of normalization. The senior Muslim students at Makabayan are regulated like any other students. The apparatus that is used to regulate the identities of Muslim students come in various forms.

There are the **rituals of consolidation**. These rituals include the Monday morning flag

ceremony. These rituals inculcate among students a sense of loyalty to the school, to the community, and to the nation. The following is the verbatim account of my first day in school that happened on a Monday:

Arriving to the school at 5:35 in the morning, I noticed that security was rather lax. There were no guards when I entered the school gate. I went directly to the office of the 4th year coordinator. She was in her school uniform looking five-foot tall and chubby. She wore eyes glasses and had thick eyebrows. I already saw her when I entered the gate but then I just waited for her in her office and greeted her warmly when she entered. She had to leave again to coordinate the flag ceremony. While waiting, I decided to reconnoiter around the campus. I paused and stood by the coordinator's office to observe the flag ceremony. All students were ordered to come down and close their rooms' doors. The flag ceremony did not begin until all students from different buildings were present. The ceremony was rather long made up of a public prayer that might qualify as an ecumenical prayer as it lacked the bodily rituals such as the sign of the cross. Still, some students made the sign of the cross after the prayer. This was followed by the singing of the national anthem and, subsequently, by the oath of allegiance to the flag, and the singing of the Manila hymn. Among the young faces, I spotted a Muslim student as she was wearing a veil (from field notes).

The Monday morning rituals serve as a synchronizer of the activities of the students and the school. These rituals of governance effectively conceal the differences in the habitus of the students. At first glance, one could not even distinguish the Muslims from the non-Muslims during school assemblies. The school uniforms—including the PE uniform—conceal the enormous religious and cultural differences among the students. As far as the public school's mission to inculcate citizenship and civic values to the students is concerned, the school is superficially successful. Indeed, the school

uniform homogenizes the cultural and social differences among the student population.

However, the veil worn by Muslim girls tend to strike a chord among the students that there are culturally different groups and individuals in the campus. This was a commonplace perception among the non-Muslim students that I interviewed including the teachers. This is also the main reason why majority of senior Muslim students prefer not to wear veil inside the school. They do not want to be singled-out as belonging to a different group.

Second there is **classroom management**. Simply defined classroom management refers to “all the means of getting the teacher’s definition of the situation accepted and the teacher’s wishes carried out without a direct clash of wills between teacher and student” (Waller, 1932, p. 203). In Makabayan High School, this includes the sitting arrangement of the students, the categorization of students according to group ability and competence, and handling the time in segmented forms. By subjecting all students to standardized measurement of abilities and competence, the school effectively stripped the Muslim students of their ethnic and religious identification. They are reduced to “bare bodies” that have to compete with others in the field for scarce academic resources and capital.

No technique or professional skill, Foucault insisted, “can be acquired without exercise,” without an *askesis*, a “training of oneself by oneself,” the work one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself, which in Greek antiquity included abstinences, memorizations, self-examinations, meditations, silence, and listening to others (Foucault, 1980). At Makabayan, Muslim students learn docility through constant pedagogic exercises: both formal and informal. And one of the rituals that discipline students, Muslims or otherwise, is the prayer at the beginning of the class. The following verbatim account from my field notes dramatizes this ritual:

Towards the end of Ramadan many Muslim students were absent. Some of the teacher were not even aware of this holiday among the

Muslims. During a Physics class, a Muslim girl asked the teacher to be excused for Wednesday because of the end of Ramadan. The teacher was surprised. So she asked the class, “Who are the Muslims in this class?” Surprisingly, there were ten students who raised their hands. So the teacher angrily said, “Yong mga nagpapanggap na Muslim dyan ibaba nyo nga ang kamay nyo.” [Those who are pretending to be Muslims, please don’t raise your hands.] Only two Muslim girls remained raising their hands. The other one, Jessalyn [not her real name], was absent.

Rai [not her real name] even had to explain to the Physics teacher why she was asking to be excused the following day: “Mam, pupunta po kami ng mosque ng 6 to 7 ng umaga.” [Mam, we’re going to the mosque at 6 to 7 in the morning.]

...After the Physics class was dismissed the Values teacher came in. Then she asked Ara [not her real name], a Muslim girl to recite the Lord’s Prayer! I was so surprised that I thought to myself: “Was she even aware that Ara is a Muslim and that today is the eve of the end of Ramadan?” But Ara recited the Lord’s Prayer.

In this particular ritual of classroom management, the Muslim students learn how to be docile by safely playing along with the “role expectation” of the school. This is compounded by the teachers’ ignorance of the Muslim students in the class and the insufficient knowledge of teachers about the Ramadan and Muslim culture.

Third, students are also subjected to **the surveillance of teachers**. Teachers’ surveillance depends on the occasion and place. In a classroom setting, the surveillance of the teachers is usually restricted within the four corners of the classroom. Advisers however extend this gaze to their advisory class even outside their designated class period. They are responsible for their students. There is a tacit agreement among teachers that they should minimize their interference with other sections other than their advisory class (except when the class or students are unruly and they interfere with other classes). A good example of this surveillance is my experience of the First

Friday (of the month) Roman Catholic Mass sponsored by the school:

It's my first time to hear a mass at Makabayan. The priest is young and good looking and escorted by some *manangs* (old ladies of the church). But noticeably the students do not show any interest in his looks. This is probably due to his attitude towards the students... He is obviously annoyed by the noise of the Makabayan students. He had to remind the students to keep quiet at least five times during the mass. Noticing for the first time, during the first reading, that the students are capable of too much noise the priest tells them:

“Wag na kayong umupo. Tama na yang nakatayo kayo.” (Don't take your seats. Remain standing.)

After the Gospel, when they were supposed to stand up, the priest again, said:

“Wag nang tumayo. Nakatayo na kayo. Wag na kayong tatayo dahil wala na kayong itatayo.” (Don't stand up. You're already standing.)

The sermon was unusually short as the priest must have sense the unruliness of the students. The presence of Muslim students was apparent during the mass. The most prominent was the Muslim girl with blue scarf (who I later knew as Yasminah) who was standing at the benches right of the quadrangle. I also guess that there are many Iglesia ni Kristo among the students. A teacher, who used to be in-charge of the *Madrasa*, told me that the previous principal segregated the non-Christian students from the rest of the students during mass. I guess it is better to put all non-Catholics in one place, preferably the library so they will not be forced to attend the Catholic mass.

My realization here is that many of fourth year students simply anticipate the mass because it will excuse them from some of their classes. I also noticed that only first year high school students were receiving the Holy Communion. Many senior students simply remained in their places. They treat the mass as just another school activity. The solemnity and sacred character of the mass is not felt among the general population. This is buttressed by the fact that teachers have to position themselves

like guards in front of the students' lines to contain the tendency of students to be unruly. The guidance counselor was in front of the students to remind them to keep quiet. The principal was at the back simply watching the mass. I did not notice any teachers taking Holy Communion (from field notes).

During the mass, the teachers would scatter themselves all over the place like “wardens” to quash the students' noise. A teacher would be present for each column of students. Because both Catholics and non-Catholics are required to attend the first Friday mass, the Muslim students are forcibly made to mingle and perform the rituals of the Catholic mass. Unsurprisingly, such practice encourages disrespectful attitude among several Muslim students during the mass. Case in point is the Muslim girl seated next to me who kept making fun of the whole ritual. And teachers are unable to help in containing such behaviors.

Fourth, students are also subjected to the **art of time management**. Management of time is carried through timetable. It has three great methods: establish rhythm, impose particular occupations, and regulate the cycles of repetition. Discipline as a technology of domination demands rigorous control of time (Foucault, 1977). It divides time into segments and it allocates these segments to activities, to functions. At Makabayan, to ensure that the students are always preoccupied, the timetable leaves no room for idleness. Break is only allotted 15 minutes. Each period is announced and ended by an electric school bell. The bell is located conveniently near the library, beside the Principal's office. It is the Guidance councilor who supervises the school bell. The time table is also posted either on the walls or doors of each section so as to remind the students of the schedule. The overall effect is to teach students how to do things, do things well, enjoy doing things, and do them with speed. This is efficiency that is the ultimate end of time management. When students are late, teachers either ignore them or they simply say, “You are too early for tomorrow's class.”

The rationalizing effects of time management on Muslim students' identity are expressed in the way teachers subject the students, regardless of religious affiliation, to the same temporal sequencing of school activities. I was therefore surprised when a teacher reprimanded a female Muslim student for being late, not knowing it was Ramadan.

Teacher: (Looking at her watch...) Wena (not her real name)! Ang aga mo anak! [My, child you're too early.]

Wena: (Went straight to her chair.)

Teacher: Baka gusto mong magalmusal muna? [You may want to have breakfast first?]

Female seatmate: Mam, Muslim si Wena. [Mam, Wena is a Muslim.]

Teacher: (A bit surprised.) Muslim ka pala? Di ka mukhang Muslim. [So, you're a Muslim? You don't look like one.]

Wena: (Just smiled.)

The class continued.

In this incident in an English class, the second subject for the section I observed, the teacher was completely unaware of the Muslim identity of Wena. This is not uncommon among some teachers of Makabayan. The large class they handle, the westernized names of the students, and the way the Muslim girls dress and behave effectively conceal their religious and ethnic identity. Wena later confided to me that she was late because she fell asleep after going to the mosque with her family early in the morning.

Pastoral Power and Confession

For senior Muslim students who get into school troubles, they are also subjected to pastoral power. During my fieldwork, a male senior Muslim student was involved in a fist-fight due to her Christian girlfriend. He was immediately summoned to the Guidance Office to avoid further escalation of the

conflict. According to the Guidance Counselor I interviewed, the incident had to be addressed immediately because Muslim students tend to enlist the help of other Muslim students including their relatives when they are involved in such conflicts. In this case, the pastoral power serves as a remedial measure to avoid rendering to students stiffer penalties like expulsion. Based on my classroom observation, pastoral power works most effectively, not in exceptional and serious cases, but in the daily practice of classroom management. That is, when teachers tease out from the students their desires through active participation in class discussion. This draws out the "interior" of students into the open. By subjecting students to "ethical truth-telling" the teachers mold the ethical subjectivity of the latter by inculcating them a peculiar mode of subjectivity.

A case in point is a Filipino class discussing a chapter of *El Filibusterismo*, in which the topic on censorship was diverted towards the stereotype of Muslims selling pirated CDs/DVDs. In this classroom situation, the class discussion turned into an informal interrogation where the Muslim girl had to assert her own identity against the conventional definition of her classmates.

Teacher: Bakit wala ng masyadong nanunuod ng pelikula ngayon? (Why are there less people going to theaters today?)

Boy4: May pirated na kasi, sir. (Because of pirated movies.)

Boy 1: Mahal ang ticket. (Movies are expensive.)

Teacher: Tumpak! 120 o 180 na ang sine. (Right. A movie costs around 120 to 180 pesos.)

Girl 4: [imitating a Muslim selling DVD-CD] DVD...DVD!

Teacher: Oo nga. Mura na may 12-in-1 pa sa isang DVD. (Yeah! It's cheap and you have 12-in-1 DVDs.)

Boy 3: [Looked at Saima, a Muslim girl, sitting on the fourth row] Sir, si Saima maraming DVD. (Sir, Saima has a lot of DVDs.)

Saima: [feeling embarrassed, she looked at me and then glanced at the boy] Hoy, wala a. Parati mo kong tinitira ha! (Hey, you're always picking on me.)

Girl 5: Sir, si Daut [another Muslim boy in the class] meron. (Sir, Daut has DVDs, too.)

Teacher: [addressing at Daut] Meron ba kayo? (Do you have?)

Daut: [in a discomfited tone] Meron sir. Tinutulungan ko lang kuya ko sa pwesto. (Yes, sir. But I am only helping my brother in selling DVDs.)

Teacher: [half-joking] Dapat bigyan mo na lang kami para di na kami maghahanap pa. (May be you should just give us so we won't buy anymore.)

Boy 6 [sitting next to Daut]: Sir, puro bold daw. (Sir, they're all x-rated DVDs.)

Teacher: [Speechless...laughing]

Girl 6 [seatmate of Daut] : Wag na raw... Ha ha ha! (Don't bother...Ha ha ha!)

Boy 6: Ayaw mo pa ha? Talo ka pa sa lagay na yan? (You don't like it? Common, it's for free.)

In this narrative, it is quite clear that the teacher and the class typecast Muslims as vendors of CDs/DVDs and other pirated items. The teacher even took part in the humorous banter. At Makabayan, the students know that some of their Muslim classmates help their families sell CDs/DVDs and other items in the neighboring markets. Saima (not her real name) vehemently refused the stereotype. In fact, she was not engaged in such trade. She belonged to a lower middle class Muslim family. But she was not upset. It is also a common knowledge among teachers that Muslim students vend in the market. They even get discounts when they buy from their Muslim students.

Another routine but effective means of letting student "confess" is self-writing through formal essay. Essays and compositions serve many things

for the teacher. Scholastically, they reveal the writing ability of the students. At the same time, they disclose the temperament of the students. For the teachers, the essays serve as gauge for grading the ability of the students to write formal themes. Next, these compositions are also used by the teachers to peer into the inner world of the students, which otherwise they could not tease out during oral discussion. From my conversation with a Filipino teacher, she said that these essays are very important because it allows her to understand the background of the students. At the same time, students would not be bored writing the essay because it is something personal to them. She also told me that through these essays she was able to know why some students behave the way they do in the class.

Seducing Muslim Subjects through Middle Class Fantasy

The effectiveness of regulating Muslim students is mostly contingent on the rewards and punishment, or the institutionalized merit system of the school. Power works most efficiently by enticing students to be productive by means of investing their energies in prescribed modes of subjection. It involves learning how to be a normal student through self-regulation.

One of the hidden curricula of the school is the middle class belief that success is available for everyone if only they study and work hard (see Hassrick & Scheiner, 2009; Lareau, 2003). Muslim students do not question this ideology. Because the scholastic rewards are scarce and difficult to attain, Muslim students compete among themselves and other students for accessing these scarce academic rewards and capital. These include grades, academic recognition, getting personal favors from the teachers, or simply avoiding the panoptic gaze of the teachers and other gatekeepers. For senior Muslim students from the higher sections, the most priced reward is academic distinction. This is expressed in my interview with an honor Muslim student from Section One, Shawie (not her real name):

GL: So mahirap maging Section One? Ano ba ang expectations sa Section One? [So it's difficult to belong to Section One? What are the expectation for Section One?]

S: Mataas po. Sobrang taas. Every contest, kapag natalo kami ng ibang section, parang down na po kami. [High. Very high. Every contest, whenever we lost to other sections, we felt depressed.]

GL: Talaga? [Really?]

S: Pero masaya po kapag nananalo po kami. Lalo na po kapag champion. [But we are happy if we won. If we are the champions.]

In this regard the school is successful in inculcating even to the Muslim students that the school is impartial with regard to academic competition, regardless of class and religious affiliation. In short, the school is able to inculcate the ideology of meritocracy on the Muslim students. By allowing them to compete, it wittingly fosters the belief that rewards are based solely on merits and efforts of the students.

But for the Muslim students from the lower sections, academic competition centers on non-academic rewards. They compensate for their low level academic achievements by excelling in extra-curricular activities. During my fieldwork, some Muslim students were actively involved in extra-curricular activities. They joined school competition like *Sabayang Bigkas*, within and outside the school. At least 12 Muslim senior students joined these competitions. There were eight girls and four boys. Only two Muslim students joined the high school musical. A Muslim girl, Shawie (not her real name), was the representative of *Makabayan* to the Filipino Quiz District Competition. Four Muslim students, two boys and two girls, were members of the editorial board of the school paper. Two of them landed in the honor roll during the graduation recognition. Three Muslim students were in the Student Council of *Makabayan*. Among these Muslims students, it was Amet (not his real name) who was very active in the school activities. He was

the regular host of school programs: *Sabayaang Bigkas*, the Teachers Day Celebration, including the high school musical. Amet also joined the Mr. and Ms. Makabayan Pageant when he was a junior. He placed second. Overall, Muslim students are willing to sacrifice the demands of their religious identity for the sake of these rewards and social recognition.

Muslim students seemingly hold an instrumentalist view of their identity. When they are faced with the conflict in strictly following certain rules defining their identity in relation to academic rewards, they are also able to relax these norms. This is conveyed in the following interview with Sitti (not her real name):

GL: Pwede bang mag lagay ng makeup at lipstick ang mga babaeng Muslim sa school? [Can female Muslim students apply makeup and lipstick when they go to the school?]

S: Pag may okasyon. [If there are occasions.]

GL: Tulad ng? [Like what?]

S: Kungwari, sabayan [bigkas], wedding... [Like sabayan, wedding...]

GL: ...hindi ba bawal sa Muslim 'yung sumama ng sabayan na sexy ang costume? [Isn't it forbidden for for Muslim students to join the sabayan with sexy costumes?]

S: Hindi. Hindi naman maghuhubad eh. [No. It doesn't require taking off clothes.]

GL: Eh meron akong kilala sa ibang section na naka-backless... [I know someone from another section who wore backless t-shirt.]

S: Kaya nga po di ako pumayag na mag backless. Nag damit ako ng may takip sa likod. Yong si Haidalyn [not her real name]...Kasi iba-iba naman po ng tribo 'yan eh. Kasi sa mga Muslim, 'yung pinaka conservative sa mga Muslim, 'yung tribo namin. Mga Maranaw. [That's the reason why I did not wear backless shirt. I wore proper shirt. Haidalyn...She belongs to a

different tribe. Because among Muslim tribes, our tribe is the most conservative. The Maranaws.]

But when standing up as Muslim gives them an advantage they also activate their identity (cf. Larreau, 1987). Interestingly, the contradictions are felt stronger among the girls. Some girls for instance join *Sabayang Bigkas* to the extent of wearing sexy costumes like Heidalyn [not her real name]. While the Muslim girls are aware that Islam forbids them from engaging in such activities, nevertheless they justify their “transgressive” actions by using the academic norm of being competitive. This is made all the more glaring by the participation of Muslim students in Christian rituals such as prayer and first Friday mass.

DISCUSSION

From Subjection to Resistance

Muslim students as subjects do not exist prior to entering the school. They are made subjects through the regulatory mechanism of the school (Butler, 1997). This regulatory mechanism is embedded in formal discourse of the school. In turn, these norms define what is normal and what is not. The norms embedded in narratives do not simply regulate subjects. Discourse has the power to fuel the subject’s capacity and desire to contend against the forces that turn this freedom against itself by fostering shame, self-doubt, and moral self-justification premised on given congealment of identity. Unfortunately, Makabayan High School provides no formal mechanism through its curriculum to enable Muslims to develop a counter-discourse to affirm their own contingent identity. This is only made possible through the separate *Madrasah* classes every Sunday. Unfortunately, based on my observations and interviews with *Madrasah* teachers, only few Muslim students take seriously these classes. Neither do Muslim students contest this seemingly

monoculturalism that informs the official school narrative.³

Following Foucault, we can say that Muslim students’ identity at Makabayan High School does not precede the interpellation circuit within the school (Althusser, 1971). They are rather positioned within the existing conventional norms of the school. This positioning is mediated through the local gate-keepers such teachers, classmates, principal, and other local government officials. The subject-positioning of the Muslim students proceeds through discourse that “echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices” (Butler, 1997, p. 51). Muslim students are assimilated into the school’s cultural practices through various rituals of regulation. And these rituals of regulation do not discriminate between Muslims and non-Muslims. This governance of Muslim identity is carried out within the overall narrative of Filipino identity and national citizenship project. It thereby elides the difference between Muslim collective identity and the project of nationhood.

Having been positioned into the mainstream narrative of the school, Muslim students do not remain passive subjects, however. As shown above, Muslim students retain their own ethnic and religious habitus which they activate in appropriate circumstances. However, like any other Makabayan students, they are also able to subvert and defy the rules of the school (as in the case of extra-curricular activities discussed above). Inside the “panoptic” walls of the school, they re-signify their identity based on the demands of the specific situations. Nevertheless among Muslim students, regardless of gender, serious and overt oppositional behaviors to “official” positioning are very infrequent. They seemed to have absorbed the official expectation of the school about the goal of education as a ticket to success. The school has relatively succeeded in normalizing the identities of the Muslim students. Hence their oppositional behaviors, like ordinary high school students, are reduced to petty misdemeanors that do not undermine the

institutional goals of the school and education: cutting classes, not paying attention to teachers during class discussions, truancy, and rowdiness in the classroom. They are very careful not to transgress the limits of good behavior out of fear of being kicked out of the school.

Among the Muslim students I worked with, especially among the boys, solidarity against a common enemy is very strong. This is very true especially with the fist-fight a Muslim student got involved during my fieldwork. This is the main reason why some Muslim boys prefer Muslim cliques. This clique serves as a “gang” for Muslim students. But in general, Muslims students did not develop any oppositional subculture towards the school. Their underachievement is more a product of their class *habitus* rather than as opposition to school’s culture. They, like any other students, accept the rules and norms of the school. What they often perform in relation to their identity-work is “acting as normal student”. Acting as normal student means performing the demands of the school and going along with the mainstream activities of the school while engaging in activities of their non-Muslim peer.

As discussed above, most Muslim students are willing to “re-signify” the rules of being Muslim in order to accommodate the demands of the school. This explains, for instance, why Muslim students participated in first Friday masses; why two female Muslim students during my classroom observations willingly led their classmates in praying the Lord’s Prayer during a class in Music and Values; why another Muslim girl led the Values class in singing Amazing Grace (both in English and Tagalog version); why Amet joined the student council members in singing Garry Valenciano’s *Lead me Lord* during the Teacher’s Day; or why a Muslim girl had to run away from her family just to attend the prom night. In this light, it makes perfect sense why most Muslim students attend Christmas party and other school festivals. Also, it makes the actions of Muslims girls joining school competitions perfectly rational. When Muslim students perform “acting like normal students,” they do not relinquish their

identity as Muslims. They rather “re-iterate” the rules, to use Butler’s concept, so as to reconcile the moral obligations attached to their identity and the demands of the school.

Governing Muslim Selves

At Makabayan, Muslim students are not formally set apart from the rest of the student population. The school normalizes heterogeneous identities by producing amorphous mass students with standardized goals. This biopolitical regulation of Muslim identities, following Foucault, aims to exploit bodies (actions and energy) in order to turn them into useful and productive work force, in this case, as useful students and productive citizens (Foucault, 2008). And this is carried through the formal activities of the school and extra-curricular activities such as Sabayang Bigkas and other school programs.

CONCLUSION

My study has shown that the technologies of subjection practiced at Makabayan High School to regulate Muslim students do not automatically create passive bodily subjects. Muslim students actively engage in self-making inside and outside the field of the school. They learn how to pragmatically employ their identities as Muslims to take advantage of certain situations (being excused during Ramadan, activating “fictive kinship” against enemies, wearing veils, etc.), while joining school activities to earn scholastic distinctions.

Another important point worth noting is the complex intersection between the narrative identity of the Muslim students, their class *habitus*, and gender. The interlacing of these variables provides a very interesting background in the governance of Muslim identities. My study however focused mainly on the ethnic and religious dimensions of self-making of Muslim students.

Second, Muslim and non-Muslim students at Makabayan are not clearly and distinctly categorized. The homogenizing culture of the school is not sensitive to the cultural diversity of the students. Teachers therefore do not address openly and directly the Muslim problem. As a result, the “stereotypes threats” that lurk within the official school narrative are not confronted directly. They remain concealed beneath the culture and daily routines of the school. Yet they are tacitly assumed by students and some teachers. As far as the school is concerned there is no “Muslim problem”. If there are troubles caused by Muslim students they are isolated cases. They are treated just like ordinary cases of student delinquency.

A multicultural education with assimilationist and integrationist approach will be futile in addressing the oppressive governance of Muslims in public high schools. Rather than allowing Muslims to have their own schools, it would be better to allow the teaching of Islamic culture together with other world religions within the regular formal curriculum. Such emancipatory multicultural approach should not only address the “other-ness” of Muslim culture and social identity but must address the downright neglect of ameliorating the economic situation of the Muslims as well as uplifting their political consciousness for civic responsibility and democratic participation. Such approach should also enable non-Muslim students and teachers to broaden their cultural imagination beyond the Christian-Tagalog-centric ideology that underpin the project of Filipino nationhood. Such broadening of cultural imagination should also strengthen the project of nationhood which does not have to sacrifice the cultural differences.

On the more specific level, I would suggest the creation of Muslim organization within the school that could serve as a mediating institution between the Muslim students and the school. It could function as empowering the Muslim students to effectively express their sentiments to school authorities. It could also be a way to bridge the continuous dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslim students. But such organization should

also be sensitive to the omnipresent possibility of being coopted by the ruling discourse to further its biopolitics of normalization.

My study would also point towards the creation of a more culturally responsive curriculum and teaching that is grounded on the idea of “non-assaultive classroom”. Moreover, the study warrants the creation of a more culturally sensitive guidance and counseling program in the school. This could very well serve the psychological needs of Muslim students. This is for the simple reason that non-Muslim Guidance and Counselors find it difficult to relate with Muslim practices and belief (Jafari, 1993; Carter, 1999).

Also, this study points to the need for teachers and school administrators to be sensitive to the cultural nuances of Muslim students. Neglect that leads to “pedagogy of invisibility” with regard to Muslim students merely perpetuates the “symbolic violence” arising from the mainstream *doux* of the school (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991). Teacher’s education should be geared towards emancipatory multiculturalism and culturally responsive teaching.

ENDNOTES

¹In 2009, when this study was conducted, there were 2,817 Muslim students in public schools in the NCR (National Capital Region). In Manila public high schools there are 685 Muslim students enrolled in the same year. Meanwhile there are 603 Muslim students enrolled in Quezon City public high schools. The public high schools with the largest enrollment are: Taguig National High School (370), Maria Asuncion Rodriguez Tinga High School (266), Culiati High School (381), and Ramon C. Avancena High School (371).

²While it is true that the **DepEd** through its *The Teacher Education and Development Program: Teacher Performance and Development Framework Preservice Sector (2002)* already puts premium on “multicultural background” of the students in one of its domains, there is still much to be desired in implementing this framework.

³In my observation of madrasah classes during Saturdays, and based on my interviews of the madrasah teachers, the common reason why many Muslim students do not attend the madrasah classes is because the students have a lot of assignments. Most of them also help their parents vending in the markets. And because the madrasah is not required for Muslim students, they do not take it seriously.

REFERENCES

- Abuso, J. E. & Vicencio, E. M. (2002). *Culture-responsive curriculum for indigenous peoples (CCIP)*. Third Elementary Education Project Report. Quezon City: University of the Philippines, Diliman.
- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and other essays*. London: New Left Review.
- Angeles, V. (1986). *Islam and politics: Philippine government policies and Muslim responses, 1946-1976*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Information Service.
- Apple, M. (1982). Reproduction and contradiction in education: An introduction. In M. Apple (Ed.), *Cultural reproduction in education* (pp. 1-30). London: Routledge.
- Arnot, M. (1983). "A cloud over co-education: an analysis of the forms of transmission of class and gender relations." In S. Walker and L. Barton (Eds.), *Gender, class and education* (pp. 69-92). New York: Falmer Press.
- Arquiza, M.-S. Q. (2006). Philippine ethnic and Muslim minorities: Educating children the traditional way. *Mountain Research and Development*, 26(1), 24-27.
- Bautista, C., Bernardo, A., & Ocampo, D. (2008). When reforms don't transform: Reflections on Philippine education. University of the Philippines Centennial Lecture.
- Bauzon, K. E. (1991). *Liberalism and the quest for Islamic identity in the Philippines*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 1991.
- Bessett, D., & Gualtieri, K. (2002). Paul Willis and the scientific imperative: An evaluation of learning to labour. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25(1), 67-83.
- Bhaskar, R. (1992). *The possibility of naturalism* (2nd ed.). London: Harvester.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society, and culture*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P., & Thompson, J. B. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity/Blackwell.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable speech: A politics of the performative*. New York: Routledge.
- Carnoy, M. (1982). Education, economy and the state. In M. Apple (Ed.), *Cultural and reproduction in education* (pp. 79-126). London: Routledge.
- Carter, R. (1999). Counselling Muslim children in school settings. *Professional School Counselling*, 2(3), 183-191.
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Dale, R. (1982). Education and the capitalist state: Contributions and contradictions. In M. Apple (Ed.), *Cultural and social reproduction in education* (pp. 127-160). London: Routledge.
- Dean, M. (2002). Powers of life and death beyond governmentality. *Cultural Values*, 6(1/2), 119-138.
- Dolby, N., & Dimitriadis, G. (Eds.). (2004). *Learning to labor in new times*. London: Routledge.
- Durkheim, É. (1956). *Education and sociology*. Glencoe, New York: Free Press.
- Farnell, B., & Graham, L. R. (1998). Discourse-centered methods. In H. R. Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (pp. 411-457). Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings: 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- . (1991). Governmentality. In Burchell, G. et al. (Eds.). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (pp. 87-104). London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- . (1997). Technologies of the self. In P. Rainbow (Ed.), *The essential works of Foucault 1954-1984: Ethics, subjectivity, and truth* (pp. 223-251). New York: The New Press.
- . (2003). "Society must be defended": *Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*. New York: Picador.
- . (2008). *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France: 1978-1979*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Giroux, H., & Aronowitz, S. (1985). *Education under siege: The conservative, liberal and*

- radical debate over schooling*. Granby, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey.
- Giroux, H. (1987). Ideologies about schooling: Rethinking the nature of educational reform. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 7(1), pp. 7-38.
- Gowing, P. G. (1977). *Mandate in Moroland: The American government of Muslim Filipinos, 1899-1920*. Diliman, Quezon City: Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, University of the Philippines System.
- Hargreaves, D. H. (1967). *Social relations in a secondary school*. London: Routledge & K. Paul.
- Hassrick, E. M., & Schneider, B. (2009). Parent surveillance in schools: A question of social class. *American Journal of Education*, 115(2), 195-225.
- Holland, D., & Eisenhart, M. (1990). *Educated in romance: Women, achievement, and college culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jafari, M. F. (1993). Counseling values and objectives: A comparison of Western and Islamic perspectives. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Studies*, 10, 326-339.
- Kanpol, B. (1997). *Issues and trends in critical pedagogy*. New Jersey: Hampton Press.
- Karabel, J., & Halsey, A. H. (Eds.). (1977). *Power and ideology in education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kelly, G. P. and Nihlen, A. S. (1982). Schooling and the reproduction of patriarchy: unequal workloads, unequal rewards. In Michael Apple (Ed.), *Cultural and social reproduction in education* (pp. 162-180). London: Routledge.
- Larreau, A. (1987). Social class differences in family-school relationships: The importance of cultural capital. *Sociology of Education*, 60 (2), pp. 73-85.
- Mac an Ghaill, M. (1994). *The making of men: Masculinities, sexualities and schooling*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- MacLeod, J. (1987). *Ain't no making it: aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood*. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Madale, A. T. (1981). Educating the Muslim child: The Philippine case. In N. T. Madale (Ed.), *The Muslim Filipinos: A book of readings* (pp. 256-272). Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix.
- Majul, C. (1966a). *Muslims in the Philippines: Past, present and the future prospects*. Quezon City: Converts to Islam Society of the Philippines.
- . (1966b). *Christianization is Filipinization. The role of Islam in the history of the Filipino people*. Quezon City: Converts to Islam Society in the Philippines.
- . (1974). The Muslims in the Philippines: A historical perspective. In P. G. Gowing & R. D. McAmis (Eds.), *The Muslim Filipinos* (pp. 1-12). Manila: Solidaridad.
- McLaren, P. (1994). *Life in schools*. New York: Longman.
- McKenna, T. M. (1998). *Muslim rulers and rebels: Everyday politics and armed separatism in the Southern Philippines*. California: University of California Press.
- Morrow, R. A., & Torres, C. A. (1995). *Social theory and education: A critique of theories of social and cultural reproduction*. New York: New York State University.
- Murdock, G., & Phelps, G. (1973). *Mass media and the secondary school*. London, Macmillan.
- Parsons, T. (1951). *The social system*. Glencoe, New York: Free Press.
- Rose, N. (1996). *Inventing ourselves: Psychology, power and personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . (1999). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rothstein, S. W. (1991). *Identity and ideology: Sociocultural theories of schooling*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Singer, B., & Weir, L. (2008). Sovereignty, governance and the political: The problematic of Foucault. *Thesis Eleven*, 94(1), 49-71.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *The practice of grounded theory* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Tan, Samuel. (1993). *Internalization of the Bangsa Moro struggle*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.
- Tan, Samuel & Wadi, Jukpili. (1995). *Islam in the Philippines*. Quezon City: University of

- the Philippines, Diliman Center for Integrative and Development Studies.
- Waller, W. (1932). *The Sociology of teaching*. New York: Wiley.
- Watanabe, A. (2007). The formation of migrant Muslim communities in Metro Manila. Kasarinlan. *Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, 22(2), 68-96.
- Weiler, K. (1988). *Women teaching for change: Gender, class & power*. Bergin and Garvey.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. Farnborough: Saxon House.