Hybridization, Youth Subculture, and the Self-making of Senior Muslim Students in a Philippine Public High School

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Public schools are spaces for producing self-disciplined "pedagogized" bodies. But they are also a niche for students to create various subcultures that are different from the official school culture. When Muslim students enroll in public schools they are positioned within these heterogeneous spaces, yet as the present study shows, following the Foucauldian approach that ties culture to power and resistance, Muslim students are also able to create their own "techniques" of self-making that allow them to avoid the panoptic surveillance of the school while also blending, though not completely, with the mainstream culture of the students. This study, by focusing on senior Muslim students, maps out the various subcultural styles within the *Makabayan* school by relying exclusively on the emic categories of the students.

Keywords: Muslim youth, Muslim subculture, Muslim education

Cultural Assimilation and the Education of Filipino Muslim Youth

Majul (1999), Tan (1993), and Madale (1980, 1987) show that historically, public education in the Philippines has always been seen by the Filipino Muslim as a subtle way to Christianize them. The Muslim population, especially among intellectuals and the educated, see in nationalism a disguised form of Islamophobia that seeks to assimilate Muslims into mainstream Christian culture. The state, in return, perceives the recalcitrance of the Muslim population on the project of nationhood as a misguided effort for cessation. Hence the state, since the colonial period, has deployed education hand-in-hand with military campaigns to pacify and assimilate the Muslim population (McKenna, 2005; Angeles, 1987). This mutual hostile suspicion takes the greatest toll on the education of the Muslim population (Arquiza, 2006).

The situation, however, is different for Muslims who migrate to urban centers. Afflicted with the poverty bequeathed by colonialism and feudal landlordism and caught in the crossfire between government troops and

Muslim rebels, many Muslims migrate to the National Capital Region (Manila, Quezon City, Taguig, Baseco, Pasig). They settle in "Muslim communities" or "Muslim enclaves" (Watanabe, 2007). Because these enclaves or communities do not have their own formal *madrasa*, parents do not have much choice but to send their children to public schools.

In 2009, there were 2,817 Muslims in public schools in the National Capital Region (NCR). In Manila public high schools there were 685 Muslims enrolled that same year, while in Quezon City public high schools, there were 603 Muslims enrolled. Consequently, when Muslim students enroll in a public high school they unavoidably negotiate with the mainstream cultural practices of the school. This is an unfortunate situation due to the over-centralized character of Philippine public education (Bautista, Bernardo, and Ocampo, 2008). This is also compounded by teachers' lack of cultural sensitivity and the lack of multicultural orientation in their education and training (Abuso, Vicencio, and Balonso, 2003). While it is true that the Department of Education (DepEd) through its *The Teacher Education and Development Program: Teacher Performance and Development Framework Preservice Sector* (2002) document already mentions the "multicultural background" of the students in one of its domains, there is still much to be desired in implementing this framework beyond tokenism. It is in this context that there is a need to address the issue of how Muslim culture is "hybridized" when confronted with the mainstream culture of the public school and, nesting within that, the complex process of the self-making of Muslim students as they engage with the various youth subcultures.

The study is based on my one-and-a-half years of ethnography in a public school located in Manila, which I refer to as the *"Makabayan"* school in this study. My study, however, is limited to senior Muslim high school students. I chose Makabayan because of the high enrolment of Muslim students during my fieldwork. Aside from my field observations I also relied on the life stories collected from ten senior Muslim students; interviews with school teachers and officials, *madrasa* teachers and coordinators; a survey among the senior Muslim students; and, most importantly, my friendship with senior Muslim students that went beyond the confines of the school. The data for the present paper, however, is derived mostly from fieldwork and interviews.

Theoretical Framework

As a result of globalization, cultures today are hybridized (e.g., Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1992). The culture of the young is not an exception (Chaney, 2004; Pilkington, 2004). Numerous scholars have explained the process of hybridization as a cultural by-product of globalization: as a result

of the accelerated flow of people, capital, and information, young people's "ideoscape" today, including that of Filipino Muslims, is de-territorialized and fragmented. Youth culture becomes the intersection of varying cultural flows and traffic of signs.

To investigate the hybridization of Muslim culture and the process of self-making that comes .with it within the space of public school culture, this study employs Michel Foucault's notion of discipline and the "art of governmentality" (Foucault, 1979; 1995). Scholars who work within the Foucauldian paradigm deploy the fruitful concepts of governmentality and discipline to highlight the complex process by which individuals are turned into subjects as well as the "technologies of self" employed by individuals for self-making (Simons and Masschelein, 2008). The production of subjects involves regulating them through "technologies of self" and biopolitics (or the techniques for producing docile bodies). The production of subculture therefore is seen from a Foucauldian perspective as a contradictory process of symbolic production that creates resistance through "counter-memory" that defies the dominant "regime of truth." In this sense, subculture is defined not so much as collection of symbols and rules but as a contested terrain for defining subjectivities and corporeal identities. As Jenks says, "The field of culture, within Foucault's vision, is constituted through a symbolic system" or "as a play of signifiers, [which] is a construction of meaning through the exercise of power" (Jenks, 1993: 144).

In this study, I will show that when Muslim students are interpellated or turned into "subjects" within the mainstream culture of the school – whose primary goal is to produce self-regulating "pedagogized" bodies – while simultaneously engaging in the different non-official mainstream youth subcultures, senior Muslim students also develop certain forms of "technologies of self" that create a different kind of Muslim subjectivity. This "hybridized" identity, however, is both a site for governing subjectivities and a space for creative self-making.

Findings and Discussion

In the next section I will describe how senior Muslim students are regulated and governed within the space of a public school, while at the same time engaging actively with existing youth subcultures and creating their own subcultural identities. According to W. K. Hoy (2007), school culture "is a general term that refers to the feel, atmosphere, tone, ideology, or milieu of a school. Just as individuals have personalities, so too do schools; a school climate may be thought of as the personality of a school" (p. 2121). School culture usually has two dimensions, namely, the "official" and the "non-official." The non-official

culture of the school develops as a particular response of "schooled subjects" to the regime of regulation of the school. They serve as "informal spaces" (Goffman, 1961) where students can practice their own self-making with minimal panoptic surveillance from school authorities. .

Disciplining the Accessorized Bodies

Because students are only visible through their mobile bodies, they become easy targets for surveillance (O'Donaghue, 2005; Deacon, 2005). Adolescence inevitably brings increased attention to the body, and self-consciousness is heightened when students enter high school. Peer acceptance is one of the central concerns of adolescents (Bukowski et. al., 1993). Most of the research linking appearance to perceived peer acceptance has particularly investigated girls' body image. At this time appearance becomes a matter of conscious concern and decision (see Chickering and Reisser, 1993:183). The materiality of the body is embedded in social processes, with such processes certain to change over time. Meanwhile masculinities in school setting, as Connell (2000: 12) argues, "come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using resources and strategies available in a given social setting." On the one hand, the physical bodies of students serve as physical capital. Physical attractiveness of the body serves as leverage in attracting the opposite sex. On the other hand, knowledge and skills are extensions of bodily powers that serve as leverage for accumulating favorable access to limited academic rewards and social capital (Sanders and Vail, 2008).

At *Makabayan*, the official culture of the school is primarily used to regulate students' potentially unruly bodies including those of the minoritized Muslims. This is made doubly complex by the rituals of accessorizing the body common among *Makabayan* students. Among senior students, body accessories vary with class, religion, and gender, although some accessories are shared across the students. These accessories are "cool signs" of reversible fashion that express the youthful identities of the students.

Common to both boys and girls: bracelets (either rubber, metal, plastic, beads, or nylon), wristbands (plain or printed), ID and cell phone holders (some with pockets) with pictures of their favorite pop icons at the back, earrings, extra-earrings, polished nails (black for both boys and girls, red or green for kikays), colored rings, silver rings, necklaces (silver, plastic, nylon), hats, makeup, cologne, face powder, perfume, alcohol, eyeliners, mascara, headbands, ribbons, scarves, audio headsets. Some students have tattoos, both boys and girls, although these are usually hidden. The tattoos found at their readily visible body parts are usually made of henna, and some are drawn by

their classmates using inexpensive sign pens (imported from China and sold by vendors around the school).

"Publicly labeled" and self-confessed gays also have their own style: colorful headbands (red, pink, polka dots), makeup, mascara, wigs, breast pads and lipstick.

The girls have distinctive accessories: large earrings, hair pins, makeup, foundation, mascara, eyeliner, shoulder bags and button pins. Some have patches on their skirts. Many girls at *Makabayan* wear makeup when they come to school. I was so intrigued by this phenomenon during the first few weeks of my fieldwork that I went to the senior coordinator, a Filipino teacher, and asked his opinion. He said, "They are not allowed to wear makeup. But they are tolerated because they are so persistent. We have grown tired of reproaching the students." I also asked a female Filipino teacher, and she said defensively, "Sir, makeup is not allowed. But we can't help it. Perhaps it's good. It only shows they are now self-conscious of their appearance."

The boys have *bling-bling*, large silver rings, hats, towels, scarves, handkerchiefs and clutch bags. Some have pictures of their favorite heavy metal bands hanging from their bags. Their bags are also decorated with key chains and button pins (with Pokemon characters, anime and known American celebrities).

When it is raining and during colder days, there are very few students who wear sweatshirts and jackets. Some of them simply put on wrinkled long-sleeved shirts instead of jackets. It is rare to find boys using umbrellas when raining.

Most students from the higher sections have regular school bags. They bring books and other school materials. Students from lower sections have smaller bags. The boys usually use clutch bags while girls have small shoulder bags. The girls' bags contain gadgets such as cell phones and MP3 players as well as *kikay* paraphernalia such as, makeup kit, face powder, perfume, cologne and towels. Most students also put pins on their uniforms and bags. One of the pins I saw read: "If you're rich, I am single." A female Filipino teacher, the class adviser, saw this and said: "You seem to be selling yourself with that pin on your sleeve." The Muslim girl shyly replied, "Ma'am, no." She smiled and continued writing her notes.

I also observed that during vacant time, some students from the lower sections draw tattoos on the bodies of their classmates. Many girls tattoo their arms, especially the forehand, with their names. This is more common, however, among Muslim boys. Others color the fingernails of their classmates with black ink using permanent markers.

The *kikay* girls accessorize their bodies differently from those already mentioned. Their distinctive way of accessorizing makes use of the accessories as a way to emphasize their fashion statement. This practice is an expression of the intensification of gender differences during high school especially among girls (Crouter, Manke, and Hale, 1995). Dressing is an important means of expressing the identities of young high school students (Blackman, 1998).

The results of my survey show that Muslim students, like any other *Makabayan* student, use body accessories such as perfume, earrings, lotion, bracelets, face powder and others. Most of these accessories are often used by Muslim girls. However, the boys are not far behind. Based on my observations both Muslim and non-Muslim boys and girls use face powder and perfume inside the classroom. But girls usually bring more *kikay* kits than the boys and the boys usually borrow accessories from the girls.

Based on my interviews with senior Muslim students, they learn how to accessorize their bodies from their non-Muslim friends and classmates and most of them started accessorizing in high school. They are also heavily influenced by mass media, especially television. But the Muslim girls admit that their parents did not allow them to wear cosmetics to school. Neither were they allowed to wear immodest outfits for school activities. Muslim girls from the higher sections only apply baby powder to their faces before leaving their homes. Those from lower sections leave home unadorned, but bring cosmetics to school. They usually apply it during breaks and before going home. Noticeable, too, is the fact that Muslim boys do not have earrings.

The Subcultural Styles in *Makabayan* School

Based on my interviews and observations I have come up with an itemization of the various "cultural scenes" of students in the school. Studies on youth culture show that it dominates the areas seminal to peer relations and appearance (Blackman, 1995). *Makabayan* students are no different. The following is a general characterization of these "cultural scenes" based on the emic or local language of the *Makabayan* students. The following itemization is not exhaustive, however. It deals more with the symbolic character of the lifestyles of *Makabayan* students. It is more impressionistic in the sense that I minimize comparing these youthful styles with their Western counterparts.

a.   The Gays

The gays can be classified into several groups. There are the *badidays* – the out-and-out gay. This is the term suggested by a gay teacher of social studies whom I befriended during my fieldwork. The term itself is current among the

badidays of *Makabayan* who usually flaunt their homosexual tendencies. They are also the "fashionistas" of the school because of the way they dress. They wear makeup and false eyelashes and tight and fitted uniforms; some wear lipstick; arrange their uniforms in an orderly way; and they usually talk in an effeminate manner with their own lingo. They congregate with other gays in the class and with gays from other sections during break time. The gays are usually faddish and fashion-conscious. They wear neon-colored sweatshirts: in one class, a gay with fair complexion wore a hanging, slim-fit neon green sweatshirt. Most of them excel in their classes.

There are also the *sila* (short for *silahis*) – the gays who usually do not want to openly flaunt their gayness. Teachers and students at *Makabayan* know who among the male teachers are *silas*, but they do not openly acknowledge it. It is repressed as an informal knowledge beyond public discussion.

The lesbians are distinguished from other girls by their hair, which is usually short. They sit beside other girls and, in the senior class, are fewer in number compared with the gays. Unlike the popularity of the gay boys, however, the lesbians are almost unnoticeable in school.

In relation to Muslim students, there are no self-identified gay Muslims, at least in the senior batch with whom I worked, although according to some teachers there were also gay Muslim students in previous batches. All senior Muslim students I spoke to informally or through interviews strictly adhere to the Islamic teaching against homosexuality. But they learn to tolerate gays in the schools as classmates and even the gay teachers.

b.   The "Gangsta"

The gangstas are students who imitate the "gangsta" or hip hop culture. They usually wear extra-large uniforms, have earrings, wear *bling-bling*, large round hats and large rubber shoes (fake Converse, Nike, Adidas). In one of the classes I observed, the gangsta wannabes wore red corduroy jackets during one rainy morning. Unlike their American counterpart, the *Makabayan* gangsta emphasized physical appearance and clothing than the sexually-loaded subculture of the gangsta subculture.

The Muslim girls who associate with the gangstas do not dress in gangsta fashion. But they listen to gangsta music through their MP3 players (songs such as "Buhay ng Gangsta" by Hukbalahap). Based on my interviews, most Muslim students do not prefer and do not associate with gangsta fashion. For them, it is only fashion for the *papansin* (students who would like get attention). Most of them prefer "emo" classmates over the gangsta because they consider the latter as *mayabang* (cavalier).

During the semestral break, some Muslim students joined the school dance contest. I was able to observe their group practice at the school grounds. One, Ara, a Tausug who now lives in Taguig, Pasig City, wore a miniskirt during one of their practices. Rai, a Maranao, wore a casual dress, as did Jessayn, another Tausug Muslim girl from section five. Some Muslim girls like Ara say wearing sexy dresses is not against Islamic values, although their parents do not allow them to wear these even inside the house. Ara said she is simply engaging in the school's extracurricular activities. Moreover, Muslim girls have to earn higher grades even if it meant dressing like the other girls. Later that night, Ara wore a hip hop costume as she danced their all-girl group's hip hop number. They only landed third place overall in the competition. That night, she told me she was very proud she was hip hop and not emo or gangsta.

c.   The "Emos"

The emos are recognizable by their fashion style: they wear *baston* jeans, have one-sided hair styles (hair combed to one side of the face), use gel, do not have earrings, wear body-fit uniform and slender black shoes. Some of them wear headbands as well. They are the most popular group in *Makabayan*. A student who shows affectionate behavior is often labeled as "emo." Among the many fads and lifestyles in the school, the emos are the most visible. Many students tailor their uniforms according to the emo style. For boys, this is visible in their hair style and the cut of their pants, while it is heavy eyeliner for girls. They prefer tight-fitting black shirts outside school. They also have distinctive bags and clutches.

Many senior Muslim girls claim they are emos. A Muslim girl in a higher section wore thick and very pronounced eyeliner. In one occasion, while waiting for a teacher to be interviewed, I observed an emo Muslim girl from a lower section sitting on a chair in front of the comfort room applying eyeliner and, later, using an eyelash curler. She was not bothered when she saw me observing her intently. Among Muslim boys from higher sections, the emo is not very popular. But among Muslim senior students from lower sections, the emos are very popular and accepted. But in general, emos among *Makabayan* students are often ridiculed both inside and outside the classroom. They are considered excessively expressive about their emotions. This is a "big no" for many *Makabayan* students. But generally they are tolerated especially if they happen to be Muslims.

d.   The "Kikays"

At *Makabayan* the definition of the right version of masculinities and femininities is contested. The most conspicuous version of femininity is *pampam*. *Pampam* is short for *papansin* – the obsession with calling the attention of others. *Pampam* girls are *kikays* who represent the young adolescent girls who are very conscious about their appearance (Crouter, Manke, and Hale, 1995). They usually have long hair, which they fix at the end of every period. I noticed that most *Makabayan* girls had long hair, which they styled in different ways: they braided it from right to left, formed ponytails, pigtails, and updos. Their hair was so important for them. They also applied face powder at every opportunity they had, narcissistically looking at the mirror during breaks and even lulls in group activities. The *kikays* wore their uniforms in a sexy way that accentuated their bodily curves. To be a *kikay* was to wear tight-fitting uniforms. They walked with backs straight and chests jutting out. They did not wear rubber shoes except with their PE uniforms. They wore high-heeled shoes and some of them even wore shoes with multiple straps. If they were not in PE uniforms they usually wore tight-fitting shirts and blouses to accentuate the curves of their bodies. Initially I supposed they were wearing the uniforms they had when they were still in first year. Some of them chewed gum even during class discussions. *Kikays* also wore silver rings around their fingers. They also wore bracelets made from native materials, rubber, plastic and beads. All of them had their nails painted and their favorite colors were black and red. Each class period they would put on face powder and they came to school with makeup. There were no students at *Makabayan* with braces.

Kikays usually looked more mature and taller than the rest of the senior girls. They had their cell phones at all times and were constantly conferring with their *kikay* cliques about their textmates or boyfriends. During vacant time *kikay* girls sat with their *kikay* friends texting their boyfriends, who were usually from the other sections. *Kikay* girls usually had fellow *kikays* in their cliques.

During my field observations, I noticed two *kikay* cliques that included at least one Muslim girl in each group. One was Saima and the other one was Waidalin. They were both from the lower sections. During rainy days they wore fitted sweatshirts. But they did not perform very well in the class. One of the Muslim *kikays* I got acquainted with had a back subject in Math. When they failed to answer in the class, they simply smiled to assuage their embarrassment. Female teachers tended to be congenial with them. One teacher even said to a *kikay* who could not solve a Math problem, "In fairness, you're pretty this morning!"

Among Muslim girls from the lower sections, cosmetics have become a daily necessity. A Muslim girl in one of the lower sections, Monisa, was popular among Muslim seniors as the most obsessed with cosmetics. Even her Muslim friends acknowledged her excessive use of makeup. Some Muslim girls from higher sections did not approve of her habit. During my observations in her class, I noticed she applied makeup thrice in one full class day. She did not mind me observing her. She even spent ten to 12 minutes applying makeup on her face. Other Muslim girls also used makeup but limited it to face powder.

There were two types of *kikay*:

(1) The model type: They wear heavy makeup. Their cheeks are usually reddish from the makeup and they wear lipstick to accentuate her lips. They use other props such as ribbons, headbands, hairpins, face powder, cologne, perfume and other accessories. They do not have tattoos. They walk with finesse and wear tight-fitting uniforms to accentuate the curves of their body. They also wear stiletto shoes and sometimes even boots. Some of them wear fashionable multi-colored eyeglasses.

(2) The flirtatious type: This *kikay*, aside from fulfilling the physical description above, tends to be very friendly with boys. They love to flirt with the boys either inside or outside the classroom. They speak in an exceptionally feminine manner, often saying "Ouch!" They can also be aggressive – such as chase boys – and intimidate them. In terms of intelligence, the *kikays* were average. Intelligent girls at *Makabayan* tended to sport simple and down-to-earth fashion.

The male version of the *kikays* is the Mr. *Pogis* (Handsome). They usually wear clean and neat uniforms and use gel on their hair. Compared with the other boys, their polos were whiter and tidier. They were usually good dancers. Gay teachers often have crushes on these Mr. *Pogis*.

In the study of Holland and Eisenhart (1990:106), late adolescent girls' attempts to make themselves attractive are a route towards having boyfriends. Holland and Eisenhart further argue that attractiveness serves as a form of symbolic capital for girls to be treated differently. Among *Makabayan* senior girls, attractiveness had an added dimension: it was a way to be noticed by the boys. So students at *Makabayan* call these *kikay* girls *pampam* (short for *papansin* or attention-seekers). For average-looking girls, wearing makeup and body accessories are creative ways of hiding their inferiority, while for attractive girls it accentuates their physical attractiveness.

The Invisibility of Muslim Subculture

What is noticeable about Muslims in *Makabayan* is their physical anonymity. Except for some Muslim girls who wear the veil (*hijab*), one cannot spot or discriminate the Muslims from the rest of the student population. Only Muslims from lower years wear veils. It is quite rare to see senior girls wearing the *hijab*. Outside the school, most Muslim girls are identified through their manner of dressing.

A girl from a lower section said: "*Kilos ko at pagsusuot ng mga damit na pang-Muslim.*" [In my behavior and wearing Muslim dress; Siti (not her real name), personal communication, September 8, 2009].

Another girl stated: "*Sa suot kong talukbong.*" [Because of my hijab; Siti (not her real name), personal communication, September 8, 2009].

But the girls are not secretive about their religion. A non-veil-wearing senior Muslim girl from the higher section said that she could not be recognized as a Muslim by the way she dresses: "*Kasi hindi po kasi ako naka belo kung may nagtatanong kung ano relihiyon ko walang alinlangang sinasabi ko na Muslim ako.*" [Because I don't wear veil and if they ask my identity I openly admit I'm a Muslim; Winda (not her real name), personal communication, September 21, 2012]

Another Muslim girl said, "*Kasi wala raw sa hitsura ko ang Muslim.*" [Because I don't look like a Muslim; Fatima (not her real name), personal communication, August 15, 2009].

Another one: "*Dahil nakikita nila sa akin na parang Kristyano ako. Mukha raw akong Kristyano.*" [(Because they mistake me for a Christian. I look like a Christian; Jonalyn (not her real name), personal communication, Augst 5, 2009].

Others link their Muslim identity to their language and diction. This is very true for Muslim students who grew up in the provinces before they migrated to Manila. They are easily recognized by others as Muslims. A senior Muslim boy from a lower section said: "*Dahil sa aking pagsasalita.*" (Because of my accent; Jamil, personal communication, December 12, 2010).

Others are identified through their nicknames and family names: "*Kasi po dahil sa apelyido ko at yong mga kaklase ko minsan sinasabi nila sa iba.*" (Because of my family name and my classmates reveal it to others; Khadafi, personal communication, August 24, 2010). In short, senior Muslim students prefer to be anonymous inside the school. Surprisingly, during my fieldwork I found out that many teachers and students do not even know they have Muslim classmates and students in their sections.

The invisibility of the Muslim students within the school has to do with the negative stereotypes that are often associated with Muslims. Muslim students whom I interviewed preferred not to publicly declare their religious identity, because being identified as Muslims make establishing friendship and intimate relationships with non-Muslims difficult. It also invites hostility. To ward off cultural stereotypes, Muslims students prefer to blend with their non-Muslim classmates and friends. Moreover the competition for scarce academic rewards compel the Muslim students to join school activities that are not allowed by their religion, such as dance contests, beauty pageants, praying Christian prayers, singing Christian songs during class and attending Christian masses. Meanwhile, to assuage the unstated fear among their peers they engage in drinking sessions with *barkadas*, joining gangs and belonging to a subculture (like emos, gangsta, and rock bands), and having relationships with non-Muslim students.

Summary of Findings

There is no doubt that, in general, capitalist consumerism and media-driven desires largely shaped the subcultural forms and styles of *Makabayan* students (emo, gangsta, rap, blood, metal, etc.). Students found creative ways to express their allegiance to a given subcultural style. This was also true for Muslim students. But as Paul Willis (2004) argues, young people do not only reproduce the commoditized symbolic culture outside the school, but they also "actively and creatively take up the objects and symbols around them for their own situated purposes of meaning-making" (p. 272).

For instance, the *kikay* girls' subculture, to which some Muslim girls belonged, was very similar to Peter McLaren's description of working class girls in his classroom ethnography:

> One way in which girls combat class-bound and oppressive features of school is to assert their "femaleness," to replace the officially sanctioned code of neatness, diligence, application, feminity, passivity, and so on, with one that is more womanly, even sexual, in nature. It is significant that dress and makeup for the girls in my classrooms constituted a struggle for social power within a male dominated culture and an oppressive economic system. The manifestly masculine, but tight-fitting "sexy" look was a refusal by the girls to be positioned as feminine subjects, as agents of patriarchal hegemony. The neat blouses, the print skirts, the "wholesome girl" look. The girls then

became "resisting subjects," exerting control in the cultural process of constructing meaning and social identity. They were transgressing the codes governing "good girlishness." Such acts of sartorial resistance inverted consensually-validated norms of appearance, symbolically violating the magazine-stand iconographies of women's publications... (p. 217)

Because subscription to a cultural style meant sporting its style, students found creative ways to "pose" and "pass" as their taste preferred and their peers demanded. Gangstas, for instance, wore "fake" silver *bling-bling* and cheap caps. The emos bought cheap makeup kits for their outfits. Yet the political character of the subculture of *Makabayan* was neither affirmation nor refusal:

The subcultural response: is neither simply affirmation nor refusal, neither: commercial exploitation" nor "genuine revolt". It is neither simply resistance against some external order nor straightforward conformity with the parent culture. It is both a declaration of independence of otherness, of alien intent, a refusal of anonymity, of subordinate status. It is an insubordination. And at the same time it is also a confirmation of the fact of powerlessness, a celebration of impotence. Subcultures are both a play for attention and a refusal, once attention has been granted, to be read according to the Book. (Willis, 1994, p. 35)

In general, the subcultural styles of *Makabayan* students were expressions of their self-making and subjectivation. For them it was better to be an emo or just be a normal or average student. This made them visible among *Makabayan* students. But this also invited the panoptic gaze of teachers. They became the visible targets of teachers in enforcing strict rules about school uniforms. For Muslim students, the acculturation process and the appropriation of Western style of tastes and styles were doubly complicated. First, it alienated them from the general population of the school. Second, it ran counter to their religious beliefs. The Muslim students of course knew these conflicts. They developed a selective form of appropriation, which produced hybrid forms of identity in relation to subcultural style. In general, however the students really were not knowledgeable about the meanings of these subcultural tastes and styles. They simply mimicked the styles – jargons, songs, and symbols —without knowing their real significance. They equated the meanings of these signs with mere

appearance. It was through this superficial consumption of subcultural styles that Muslim students created a space for their self-making.

Yet paradoxically, the anonymity of Muslim students was also expressed through this subcultural style. Most of them blended with the subcultural scene within the school. Based on my survey, almost half of Muslim students subscribed to some forms of cultural style or fashion discussed above. The largest of course were those who claimed they were emos. The next largest were the metals. These Muslim students, especially the boys, sported these fashion styles whether they were inside or outside school. By belonging to these subcultures they forged solidarity with the members of their peer subculture while eroding their cultural differences with non-Muslim students. Ultimately, it reduced the hostility between the Muslims and non-Muslim students.

Conclusion

At *Makabayan* school, the teachers and other school officials acted as the regulators of the bodies of students and as enforcers of discipline and the school's official rules. Yet the students, including the senior Muslim students, found ways of creating utopian spaces for their subjectivation. In general, senior Muslim students preferred to have anonymous identity within the school by melding well with the mainstream school culture. However, by belonging to a specific subcultural style, senior Muslim students can forge their own identities while establishing strong solidarity with non-Muslim students who belong to the same subculture. This process shows how schooling process is very powerful in deracinating Muslim students from their ethnic and religious affinities. How long Muslim students maintain their ethnic and religious identity is an open question.

Muslim students at *Makabayan* did not have an organization or club. The class character of schooling was no more evident than the fact that Muslim students from higher sections joined academic organizations, while those from the lower sections actively participated in extracurricular activities. Because they had to compete for scarce scholastic rewards, Muslim students preferred to be anonymous within the school. They had to blend with the mainstream culture of the school if they wanted to survive in the predominantly non-Muslim space of the school. Yet there were also boundaries, porous of course, that senior Muslim students established between this culture and their Muslim identity. This was very clear during *Ramadan* and in their dietary practices. This, of course, needs another paper for elaboration. My study has shown the contradictory process of self-making among senior Muslim students within the public school's heterotopian space.

As more and more Muslim students troop to the public schools, inevitably we will witness the dynamic and ever-changing hybridization of Muslim culture and the complex process of Muslim self-making in the educational setting. Unless educators and policy-makers address this issue with emancipatory intent, schools cannot begin to dismantle the reified biases against Muslims as well as the ongoing symbolic violence perpetrated against them that is rooted in a long history of colonialism, economic underdevelopment, and monoculturalism. Sadly, but with grains of historical truth, we have to recognize that the colonizers' failed project of assimilating the "uncivilized" is now being carried out, unwittingly or not, through the public school system with the same benevolent intent.

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