Multicultural Education and Immigrant Children: The Case of Muslim Children in Canadian Schools

by

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Abstract

This study investigated Muslim elementary school students' classroom experiences in Alberta. The central question of the study was: How do Muslim children experience schooling in Canada? Although existing studies have examined the experiences of Muslim high school, college, and university students, no research has focused specifically on Muslim elementary school children's classroom experiences in Alberta prior to this study. I expect that my study will fill this gap in the literature.

The study used an interpretive inquiry approach in which the interpretation of dialogues from interviews with children about their lived experiences of schooling served as a foundation for critical analysis of school culture. Upon completion of my candidacy and ethics approval, I sought consent to interview Muslim immigrant children and youth who were born outside of Canada and were currently attending mainstream Canadian schools. I interviewed seven participants—three males and four females aged 11 to 18 years. All my participants self-identified as Muslims. All were from the Sunni sect of Islam and from middle-class families from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. I conducted two to three interviews with each participant over the course of one year. The interviews used pre-interview activities and mainly open-ended questions (Ellis, 2006; Ellis, Hetherington, Lovell, McConaghy, & Viczko, 2013). To analyze the data, I used "narrative analysis" (Polkinghorne, 1995) to first create individual narrative portraits followed by what Polkinghorne (1995) describes as "analysis of narratives" to examine selected experiences across all participants.

The study results provide important insights into the lives of Muslim immigrant children who are trying to adapt to their host country while maintaining their family and community

religious beliefs and practices. According to my findings, there are clear signs of the presence of Islamophobia (a form of discrimination rooted in negative stereotypes that affect the behaviours and beliefs of non-Muslims about Muslims [Abu-Laban & Dhamoon, 2009; Fekete, 2001]) in Canadian schools. Through analysis of the data I reconcile the conclusion that although the Muslim children who participated in my study liked the flexibility of the Canadian education system and found it better than their previous school experiences, these children were marginalized in their schools in various ways, either through biased curricula, discriminatory school cultures, or negative and unfair attitudes on the part of their peers, teachers, and school administrators. Some of the children shared their positive experiences of developing a few good relationships with their peers after periods of loneliness and isolation; however, most of the experiences they shared with me were coloured with discrimination. Four main themes emerged from the data: relationships with peers; teachers' attitudes; neighbouring community behaviour; and the role of the media. Within each theme are several subthemes.

One unanticipated outcome of my study was my participants' suggestions to the "next generation" of Muslim children who will attend schools in Alberta, as well as to their teachers and administrators. I present a few recommendations for policy and practice based on these suggestions. Lastly, based on my own understanding of issues related to Muslim children's schooling from my personal experiences and those of my participants, I introduce additional recommendations for policy makers, administrators, teachers, and future research.

Key words: multiculturalism, acculturation, multicultural education, racism, Muslims

Dedication

I dedicate my study to my supportive parents, Maqsuda and Sufi Nisar (late),

to my loving husband, Amjad,

and

to my two lovely daughters, Aleena and Aleesha.

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Looking Back At My Journey As a New Canadian

"There is no better point of entry into critique or reflection than one's own experience."

(Bannerji, 1995, p. 55)

My immigration journey started with my two daughters in 2005. My interest in my research topic was developed through the experiences of my daughters being Muslim students in Canadian schools after immigration. Our immigration to Canada was a significant change in our lives. Like many other immigrants we were faced with a completely different culture, language, and religious ideologies. In Pakistan we were citizens who were born and raised there, while in Canada we were outsiders. Our status changed from "us" to "Others" (Said, 2003). Despite the different and unfamiliar environment we found ourselves in, I had hopes for a better life and a better future for myself and my two daughters. Since immigrating to Canada, I have been caught up in a constant struggle to make a place for myself and my daughters in our new homeland.

In order to upgrade my credentials to adhere to the requirements of the Canadian labour market, I undertook studies in the area in which I already had education from Pakistan. I completed a diploma and a master's degree in early childhood studies. For my master's research paper, I did a project on Pakistani immigrant children referred for special education classes in Toronto District School Board (TDSB). As part of this study, I explored and documented Pakistani immigrant parents' perspectives regarding their children's referrals. According to the parents' perceptions, cultural and linguistic differences and teachers', peers', and schools' attitudes toward these differences were the main reasons behind these referrals. Some teachers

referred newcomer Pakistani children for special needs classes because of their own biases or lack of awareness about the cultural and religious norms and language of these young children. It was also evident from the data that the problems associated with culture and languages were dependent on the degree of similarity or difference between the culture and language of these children's home environments and those in their educational settings. The challenges these children faced depended on whether these differences were accepted or not in the new culture. Instead of increasing immigrant children's learning abilities, cultural, religious, and linguistic differences can negatively affect their performance in school. These problems were more dependent on external circumstances than on internal conditions (Amjad, 2009, 2012a, 2012b). The findings of my master's research clearly demonstrate that the Muslim community in general and Muslim children in particular face many challenges in Canada because of their differences. My research findings were consistent with other studies which also found that Muslim children face biased attitudes from their teachers and peers and that these children often feel isolated and lose their ability to perform well in school (Zine, 2004).

As a doctoral student at the University of Alberta, I also had a chance while completing a class assignment to review literature on the loneliness of immigrant children. The research (Kirova, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007; Kirova & Wu, 2002; Kirova-Petrova, 1996, 2000) showed that social isolation and loneliness are common experiences among immigrant children, regardless of their racial, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds, because the children were not accepted as members of their peer group. This lack of acceptance leads to children's experiences of loneliness: as a result of exclusion they feel unwanted and disliked. Feeling lonely and isolated from their peers is a common experience among immigrant children. This loneliness could result in a number of complications among these children and can affect not only their

quality of life but also their personalities. Studies on immigrant children's educational performance and social, cultural, and psychological adjustment clearly show that lower self-esteem in immigrant children is linked to poorer school performance (Zine, 2006). It also affects their teachers' perceptions about them and can lead to failure in school.

For another course as part of my doctoral studies, I was given a chance to interview my own daughter on her experiences as an immigrant child in Canadian public schools. While conducting this interview with my daughter, I became aware of the very shocking story of her experience as a child whose religion, culture, and language differed from those of the mainstream. I found out that children and teachers had rejected her due to her accent and way of behaving, which was culturally acceptable in Pakistan. The teachers underestimated her abilities and provided her with no support to adjust to her new life. The most hurtful moments were when other children excluded her and mocked her for her religious beliefs and physical appearance, because these were things she had no power over. Below are some quotes from the data I gathered through my daughter's interview:

> Teachers always thought I am not a good student even though I have my long list of honour roll from back home and I showed it to one of my teachers but she still underestimates me by putting me in an ESL class. My English was very good. I had accent but it doesn't mean I have language problem. Other friends in class made fun of my accent and tried to copy it. I felt embarrassed, lonely, without any friends. I sat in my lunch alone and I couldn't forget how many times I throw my lunch in the garbage as I didn't want to eat it, my hunger died.

My dream of bringing my children to one of the most prosperous multicultural societies in the world was shattered by these revelations. For the first time since our immigration, I felt

ashamed of my decision to immigrate. I had brought my children from a supposedly unsafe place to a place that I hoped to be better for them, but in fact it was a place where they were strangers, where they were not welcomed, and where they were discriminated against because of their religious identities. My daughters attended from elementary to high school in Canada, but my need to upgrade my professional credentials to pursue a career made it difficult for me to find time to have a conversation with them about their experiences in their new schools. I was unaware of their experiences of alienation and rejection. Although immigration had provided us with many opportunities, it also created space between the members of our family. In Pakistan, I was a stay-at-home mother; I had many opportunities to interact with my children and help them cope with their problems. In Canada, I was a struggling immigrant trying to find a way of life and acceptance within an alien society. This is my reflection on the story my daughter told me:

> I always thought I knew a lot about my daughter because I am her mother and thought nothing could be hidden from a mother. I am always there when she is in need. I always thought I was a perfect mother who brought her children to Canada and provided them with everything they wanted, both physically and emotionally. I never thought that my little girl was so alone when she came here. I never thought about how she coped with all these things and how deep her understanding is. I read so many articles on this issue, but never felt like I felt when my own daughter was in front of me with tears in her eyes telling me her journey of immigration. (Amjad, 2011, cited in Ellis, Amjad, & Deng, 2011)

My Research Questions

When I first started my doctoral studies, I wanted to expand my master's research into my doctoral research, but the interview with my daughter changed the direction of my research

and I decided to focus specifically on Muslim children's Canadian classroom experiences. In my doctoral study, I investigated Muslim elementary school students' classroom experiences. The central question of the study was, How do Muslim children attending public elementary schools in Canada experience their schools?

The subquestions that framed my research were as follows:

1. What are Muslim elementary school students' perceptions of their mainstream classroom peers' and teachers' attitudes toward them?
2. How do these perceptions impact children's experiences in a mainstream school?
3. What kind of classroom or school experiences have either supported or diminished these students' sense of belonging?

Due to the current widespread negative feelings about the Muslim community around the world, the study of Muslim immigrant children's school experiences is not possible without understanding the global factors affecting Muslims' image. The next section of this chapter will highlight some global and Canadian context that affects the Muslim community at large.

Global and Canadian Context of the Research

Immigration and Globalization

The contemporary world has turned into a global village due to globalization. Immigration and globalization are interconnected. Migration cannot be credited to globalization alone; in the past, people did migrate from one place to another, but migration was somewhat limited due to available means of transportation. Historically, global migration resulted in the mixing of people around the world, which increased population diversity in different parts of the world. Migration is typically a result of "(negative) push and (positive) pull factors" (Robertson,

2010, p. 39). Due to the current increase in poverty and in the incidents of terrorism and wars, global immigration has reached a peak.

The globalization process has given rise to a new kind of immigration and also to issues related to identity and citizenship (Robertson, 2010). Globalization is the most commonly used and most controversial term in the first decade of the 21st century (D. G. Smith, 2009). Globalization is considered responsible for everything happening around the globe, from environmental crises to religious and International economic conflicts. Globalization is considered a macro social condition that affects people's lives. Some critics attribute the increase in inequality and poverty to globalization. The rise of religious tensions is also seen as a result of globalization. Globalization produces new prospects, but it also creates new problems (D. G. Smith, 2009). Although globalization has introduced cultural and ethnic differences to the people around the world, it has increasingly promoted a Western worldview. As Ghosh and Abdi (2004) argue, "the assertion of ethnicities and cultural identities on a global scale has challenged cultural boundaries and produced tensions in the democratic system" (p. 1).

Immigration in the Canadian Context

Global immigration has its effects on Canada and there has been a rapid increase in the immigrant and refugee populations in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2010). This also results in a subsequent increase in the population of visible minorities in Canada. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011), one out of every six people in Canada was born outside of the country. Canada has the most diverse immigrant population in the world and Statistics Canada (2011) predicts that by 2031 the diversity of Canada's population will increase significantly. These immigrants have come from different parts of the world, where different languages are spoken and different cultures and beliefs are practiced. In order to fulfill its labour market

demands, Canada continues to receive immigrants from all around the world (Dolin & Young, 2004). Traditionally, the majority of the new immigrants to Canada choose to settle in one of the major urban centres like Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. More recently there has been an increase in the diverse population of Alberta because it has become a land of opportunity due to the available jobs and stable economic conditions of the province (Statistics Canada, 2011). This influx of immigrants will bring an increase in the diversity of Alberta's population as well.

Multiculturalism in the Canadian Context

Multiculturalism means "many cultures" and the term speaks about and advances the right to difference (Ghosh, 2002). Multiculturalism refers to an ideology according to which different cultural groups are encouraged to retain their cultural identity. The aim of multiculturalism is to create a culture of commonality across differences; it is a "unity within diversity" (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004, p. 73). Multiculturalism should not only be an acknowledgement of differences and collectivity, but also a declaration of the interconnectedness of various ethno cultural groups. In a multicultural society, individuals from all cultural backgrounds should be equal, no matter how different they are in terms of language, religious beliefs, political and social views, or national origins. However, according to Robertson (2010), "the politics of ethnic identity are further complicated by the growth of multiculturalism and multinational societies" (p. 80).

Multiculturalism and immigration are two connected concepts; we cannot separate them, especially when we talk about integration or acculturation of immigrants in Canada. The influx of new immigrants into Canada results in a highly multicultural society, which increases the importance of having a proper system of addressing the needs of such a multicultural society. To cope with the demands of its growing multicultural population, Canada first proposed a

multiculturalism policy in 1971, making it the first country in the world with this kind of policy at the government level (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). The concept of multiculturalism in Canada is different than in other countries because it is about creating new spaces and a new group within which people from different cultures can live comfortably together; it is a "fusion of horizons" (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004, p. 36). The appeal of the Canadian concept of multiculturalism is that it is intended to develop a common culture, including all differences. Its main goal is the integration of immigrants within an already diverse society and an acceptance of differences among groups. Ghosh and Abdi (2004) describe the four objectives of multiculturalism in Canada as follows:

> First, to assist all cultural groups to develop the capability to grow and contribute to the progress of Canada; second, to assist minority groups in overcoming cultural barriers so as to enjoy full participation in Canadian society; third, to promote intergroup relations; and fourth, to provide facilities to minority groups for language learning (p. 105).

The key objectives of multiculturalism policy are to help immigrants in retaining their ethnic identities and to facilitate ethnic groups to fully participate in Canadian society. The Canadian concept of multiculturalism is based on integration rather than assimilation. It can be viewed as "a two way street" (Dorais, 2002, p. 4) in which newcomers have a responsibility to integrate while the host society has a duty to accommodate, welcome, and respect the new immigrants (Anderson & Black, 2008). Recently, it has been suggested that the two-way street model of integration be replaced by a model of "common places" (Dib, Donaldson, & Turcotte, 2008). Dib, Donaldson, and Turcotte (2008) define common places "as locations in time and space where visible and religious minorities and other Canadians meet and interact" (p. 162);

they suggest that "such spaces are the foundation for creating and enhancing a strong Canadian identity" (p. 162).

Islam and Muslim Immigrants in North America

According to Canada's official statistics on religion (Statistics Canada, 2011), it is estimated that by the year 2017, Islam will become the second largest religion in both Canada and the United States. Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world. It is the youngest of the three monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all of which originated in the Middle East. The simple meaning of the Arabic word Islam is self-surrender or submission to the will of Allah (Ali, 2003). Followers of Islam are called Muslims. According to the teachings of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH) was the last prophet of Allah (God) before judgement day. There are two main pillars of Islam: the Qur'an (the word of God) and Sunnah (examples set by the Prophet's acts during his lifetime). The angel Gabriel revealed the content of the Qur'an to prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and he, through his actions and sayings, demonstrated God's will, which is called Sunnah. The Qur'an is considered the principal legal and moral guide for Muslims, and Sunnah is considered an example of how to act on this guide. Hadith is the most important part of Sunnah; it is a collection of statements and actions of Muhammad (PBUH) that complement the Qur'an. Both the Qur'an and Sunnah instruct Muslims to establish a universal brotherhood, or *ummah*. Islam is more than just a religion for Muslims: it is a way of life. In addition to Muhammad (PBUH), Islam also recognizes Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus as divine prophets because all of them affirmed the oneness of God (Qur'an).

There are two major sects in Islam: Sunnis and Shi'ites. After the death of prophet Muhammad (PBUH), a dispute about who should govern the Muslim community resulted in the two sects. The Sunnis, who are in the majority as more than 80 percent of the Muslim

community, are those who accepted Hazrat Abu-Bakr who was a close friend of prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as their leader (Hedayat-Diba, 1999). On the other hand, the Shi'ites were those who accepted Hazrat Ali, who was the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet (PBUH), as their leader. The Sunnis and Shi'ites divided when Abu Bakr was announced as the leader of Muslim Uma, that is, the global Muslim community (Hedayat-Diba, 1999). The Shi'ites are very small in number as compared to the Sunnis. They are only 10 percent of the whole Muslim population around the world. Most of the world's Shi'ites live in Iran and Iraq. Both Sunnis and Shi'ites follow the teaching of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Hedayat-Diba, 1999). There is a misconception that most Muslims reside in Middle Eastern countries, but in reality, Muslims live in almost all parts of the world.

Intersectionality in Muslim Identities

There is a wide demographic range among the Muslim population in the world. There is a common misconception that all Muslims are Arab or that everyone who is coming from an Arab country is Muslim. We cannot use a homogenous definition to describe Muslim identities. Muslims are from many different races, ethnic backgrounds, and cultures, with varying histories, languages, and interpretations of the Quran, and some are in conflict with others. There are several intersections within the Muslim community because of individuals' different social locations, power within the larger society, and unique experiences. Acknowledging and assessing this intersectionality is very important in understanding differences within Muslim identities, which are shaped by Muslims' different social positions (e.g., race, gender, class, geographical locations, age, and migration status). These interactions arise within a milieu of interconnected structures and constructions of power (e.g., laws, policies, or media). Social positions of privilege and oppression are further shaped by colonialism and racism. Multilevel analyses,

which relate individual experiences to bigger structures and systems, are central in studying Muslim identities and in examining how power relationships are formed and personally experienced by Muslims (Hankivsky, 2014). Intersectionality helps in understanding how certain identities are related to certain inequalities in different eras of history and in different geographic places (McKittrick, 2006). According to Brah and Phoenix (2004),

> the concept of intersectionality [signifies] the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation—economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential—intersect in historically specific contexts. (p. 76)

Intersectionality explains the ways in which identities are positioned. Identities are not static; rather, they are multidimensional and multilayered. Intersectionality can help in understanding the macro-level economic, political, and social discourses that construct inequities. The power and disempowerment within race and class are specifically very important if we are to understand how identities are experienced in the milieu of intense hegemonic racist discourses like Islamophobia in the Western world.

The Incident of 9/11 and Muslim Integration in Canada

On September 11, 2001, two hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Centre in New York City. Millions of television viewers saw the twin towers fall to the ground. The videos of this incident were played and replayed on various television stations. The planes were said to be hijacked by Muslim terrorists. The world watched in horror as thousands of people lost their lives in seconds. The events had lasting effects on the lives of Americans, especially Muslim Americans. Ever since this event, the perception of Muslims in the eyes of North American citizens has changed. Muslims are now viewed with fear and suspicion. People in all walks of

life hold these stereotypes about Muslims. The actions of a few supposed Muslims are blamed on Muslims as a whole (Said, 2003).

After the 9/11 attacks, a series of misunderstandings regarding the Muslim community have increased and created a negative image around the world of Muslims as "terrorists." This image makes the lives of the Muslim immigrant population in North America very difficult, and little has been done to focus on the positive aspects of Islam (Ahmed & Szapara, 2003). Through the media, Muslims are projected as terrorists. Karim (2008) explains that "there is a long tradition of journalistic reporting on Muslims involved in terrorism, which seems to generalize tendencies of violence to Muslim societies" (p. 69). Surveys conducted by the Canadian chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) in 2002 revealed that 60 percent of Canadian Muslim respondents reported having experienced "bias or discrimination since the 9/11 terrorist attacks" (cited in McCoy, Knight, & Kirova, 2011, p. 10). Giroux (2001) also mentioned that "in six weeks after 11 September, civil rights groups estimate that there were at least six murders and one thousand serious assaults committed against people perceived as 'Arab' or 'Muslim'" (p. 2).

Since 9/11, Islamophobia (a form of discrimination rooted in negative stereotypes which affects the behaviours and beliefs of non-Muslims about Muslims [Abu-Laban & Dhamoon, 2009; Fekete, 2001]) has spread into all areas of society (Zine, 2006). For example, pictures of terrorists are seen as representative of all Muslims. Fekete (2004) stated:

> What appears to have happened post-September 11 … is that the parameters of that institutionalized xeno-racism—anti-foreignness—have been expanded to include minority ethnic communities that have been settled in Europe for decades—simply because they are Muslim. (p. 4)

Since 9/11 there has been an increase in the number of incidents instigated by so-called Muslim terrorists and extremists all around the world. Recently there has been a notable increase in homegrown terrorism and extremism cases in Canada as well, for example, Martin Couture-Rouleau, who smashed two Canadian armed forces personnel with his vehicle in Quebec, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who shot and killed Canadian soldier Corporal Nathan Cirillo, and Momin Khawaja who was involved in the Toronto 18 plot. Since Islam has now become a symbol of a "threat" to Europe, Muslim residents of Europe are "caught up in the ever-expanding loop of xeno-racism" (McCoy et al., 2011, p. 3)—in spite of the fact that they may be European citizens or even European born.

The media's projection of Muslims as terrorists creates stereotypes about them. These stereotypes support the difference of the other and therefore increase the social distance between the host/dominant society and Muslims. Research in the United States on the impacts of stereotypes shows that prejudice and discrimination are the main reasons behind the lack of acceptance of some minority groups by the host culture, as compared to other groups. The greater the differences between the host culture and the immigrant culture, the lower the status of the immigrant group and the stronger the rejection of the group by the dominant society. These cultural differences are a very important factor in discrimination (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008). Kâgitçibasi (2009) clearly pointed out how stereotypes about a certain minority group increase the social distance between the host/dominant society and ethnic minorities. The kind of acculturation strategy demanded of the migrant group by the main society is also influenced by stereotypical attitudes. For favoured minorities, integration that maintains the cultural heritage of the group is supported by the dominant society, but for rejected groups, assimilation, segregation, or exclusion is preferred (Berry, 2006; Kâgitçibasi, 2009; McCoy et al., 2011).

Immigrant Children in Schools: The Case of Muslims

With this rapid increase in the country's immigrant population, there is an increase in the immigrant child population in Canadian schools as well. These immigrant children face many challenges in their host country, as compared to their Canadian-born peers (Albanese, 2009). One huge challenge is racism, which results from individual or institutional attitudes and behaviours that create social isolation and alienation among immigrant children. Most of the time these attitudes and behaviours are based on stereotypical assumptions about the superiority of the dominant race (Kâgitçibasi, 2009).

Racist attitudes affect society in many ways. They increase discrimination, violence, poverty, and stereotypes about minority ethno-cultural groups. Racism can also become the reason behind the exclusion of children from certain groups or classes and could marginalize the competencies of children who have different norms of competence than the dominant society (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Such racist views affect teachers' expectations of children in the minority group and can also affect peers' attitudes in the form of making fun, physical jokes, or even physical attack (Zine, 2008). According to Young (1990), "judgements . . . are made unconsciously . . . and these judgements often mark stereotype, devalue, or degrade some groups" (p. 133).

Schooling plays an important part in the acculturation of immigrant children (Albanese, 2009), and schools play a major role in increasing the racism that already exists in society (Macrine et al., 2010). When immigrant children do not see their race, culture, and language as part of their classroom, they cannot see themselves as belonging to the classroom group (Cohen, 2008) and they may start thinking that their values, race, and culture are inferior to the dominant culture. Another disturbing issue is the loss of first language; immigrant children often start

thinking that their language is less valuable than the mainstream language. This loss of language creates a large communication gap between these immigrant children and their families, and the transmission of family values and culture becomes very difficult (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2007).

Kirova (2001) identified social isolation and loneliness as common experiences among immigrant children, who often face rejection by their peer group and, as a result, develop feelings of being "excluded, unwanted, and disliked" (Kirova, 2006, p. 152). Mainstream classroom teachers, because of their unfamiliarity with or stereotypical beliefs regarding certain groups, underestimate these children's learning abilities and interact differently with these children (Barrera, 1995; Berhanu, 2008; Brown, 2004; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Zine, 2006). All the above-mentioned factors not only affect these children's school performances, they also have an effect on the children's acculturation into Canadian culture. Often this acculturation results in assimilation, which is totally contradictory to the goals of Canada's multiculturalism policy.

Current global situations not only affect the Muslim community as a whole, but offices, schools, and other public institutions have also begun to change their ways to accommodate Islamophobia or xeno-racism. Muslim students face racism and discrimination from their non-Muslim peers, teachers, and administrators (Zine, 2006). Discriminatory attitudes on the part of students are often supported by teachers' lack of response to racist bullying or their penalizing of the victims (Zine, 2000). In result, Muslim children develop feelings of disaffection and marginality because of the lack of social acceptance. I pick a few examples from the literature on Muslim children's school experiences. Allen (2005) shared a story of a Pakistani girl studying in a British high school who told how her teacher ignores her reports of bullying by her peers. These non-Muslim students were telling her, "We killed hundreds of your lot yesterday. . . . Saddam is your dad, you love him, don't you . . . we are getting revenge for what you Pakis did

to us on 11 September" (p. 1). When the student complained to the teacher about it, the teacher responded, "Never mind, it is not serious. It'll soon pass; you'll have to expect a bit of teasing at a time like this" (p. 1). In another example, Sirin and Fine (2008) discuss Sahar, an American-Palestinian Muslim girl who complained about negative remarks thrown toward her from another student in her school, but her teachers, school administrator, and guidance teacher all ignored her complaint. Sheridan and North (2004) quote a non-Muslim teacher's confession to another non-Muslim teacher: "I hate Muslims—they are a waste of time and space and they cause trouble all the time" (p. 175). Sahli, Tobias-Nahi, and Abo-Zena (2009) share a similar experience of a young Muslim girl:

> The tragic story retold on National Public Radio (NPR) of a fourth grade Muslim girl who was deeply traumatized after her teacher presented an inflammatory book to "educate" the class about the 9/11 tragedy. The young Muslim girl relates how her classmates' attitudes towards her changed: "They all saw me as a different person—like before reading the book [they thought] I was just a normal child and then [after reading it, they thought] I turned into an Islamic extremist who hated the world and wanted to kill everybody. . . . All my friends were starting to question me—"Why does your mom wear that on her head?" "Are you sure you're really not related to him [Osama bin Laden]?" Students began taunting her, calling her "loser Muslim" and "Osama." The young girl was so traumatized by the situation that she suffered deep harm; her father's inability to cope with his daughter's devastating encounter with prejudice led to the eventual breakdown of the family unit. This story is an extreme example of the effect classroom marginalization can have on a student's identity. (p. 8)

Due to widespread stereotypes about the Muslim community, some teachers hold low expectations for Muslim youth, which can lead not only to negative evaluation and bias in assessment, but to underachievement as well (Kâgitçibasi, 2009). The need to "be with your own kind" (Zine, 2004) is produced by a lack of inclusion and acceptance, which can lead to isolationist attitudes. Many teachers' biased attitudes damage Muslim students' self-esteem and identities (Abbas, 2005).

Even though tolerance and multiculturalism are a part of the curriculum in Canadian schools, many children are receiving totally different messages at home. These messages affect these youths' behaviour toward their Muslim peers in school. Muslim children are often bullied by their non-Muslim peers both in and outside school. Britto (2011), in the executive summary of her report about bullying, said:

> While bullying is on the rise in American schools, the reasons why Muslim children are being bullied vary: the American mainstream's limited knowledge, pervasive misperceptions, and negative stereotypes about Muslims. Little is known about Islam and Muslims, and little is being done to redress this situation (p. 1).

Biased attitudes are not limited to inside the school boundaries. Family members of Muslim children have also been bullied in public places in front of their children. Tobias-Nahi and Garfield (2007) shared similar comments and experiences in their research on Muslim youth in Canadian schools. They presented the following experience of a group of young women who wear hijabs (head coverings). These young women faced open behaviours of insult and hatred:

> Last summer, I went to the zoo with my friends and we were all wearing hijab….
> I overheard a man who was working there saying, "They cover their heads

> because they're ugly inside." I was shocked and frightened. I just wanted to shout and yell at him that we don't wear it because of that. Then I remembered that I chose to wear it even though I knew people would say ugly insults and do mean things. (p. 90)

The need to gain acceptance is very important among minority youth. Because of the lack of social acceptance, Muslim youth develop feelings of disaffection and marginality. Muslim youth have to try to adjust their identities within three totally different cultural frameworks: the dominant culture, their ethnic culture, and Islam. The multiple social identities that Muslim students occupy are totally different from each other (Zine, 2004). These students are forced to develop one identity to deal with peer pressure at school and another to adjust to the conflicting cultural demands of the home and community. In their article, Sahli et al. (2009) said:

> Some Muslim youth may acknowledge their religious faith internally, but may think carefully about whether and when to reveal their faith to others. Muslims who are not recognizable as such have the option to decide whether to self-identify as Muslims, which is a choice that may be perceived as both a privilege and burden. The responses to negative images about Islam may lead to a variety of outcomes, including maladaptive responses where youth develop behaviors and approaches that are inconsistent and appear disingenuous because of feelings of shame or being conflicted. . . . Many other Muslim youth choose or feel forced to keep their Muslim identity invisible. . . . Some may not have strong religious convictions, while others feel that being perceived as a practicing Muslim may put them at risk of being isolated or looked down upon. (p. 18)

There is a large gap between the Muslim children's families' culture and values and those of their peers and non-Muslim friends, and this gap is amplified by widespread myths about Islam and Muslims. As a result, when it comes to identity formation, Muslim children face completely different identity formation tasks as compared to their peers. According to Abo-Zena, Sahli, and Tobias-Nahi (2009):

> Feelings of defensiveness and of being under attack or scrutiny because of their religion are widely considered to be part of the fabric of a Muslim youth's life experiences, and thus this psychological dimension and fear of being an outcast is an aspect of their lives within the school context. . . . Hostile behavior and bullying in school settings is a common reality for Muslim students, evidenced by incidents of discrimination that have occurred nationwide in the classroom, in the cafeteria, during extra-curricular activities, and on the school bus, where the perpetrators have been not only students, but also teachers and other school personnel. (p. 5)

Rezai-Rashti (1994) criticized the Eurocentric focus of Canadian education because it often clashes with Muslim students' cultural and religious beliefs. She shared her own experience of being a practitioner of antiracist education and gender equity in a school board. She witnessed how Muslim students were treated due to negative stereotypes about the Muslim community. She wrote, "In dealing with teachers, students and administrators I find their interaction with Muslim students to be based largely on stereotypes of Muslims that are reminiscent of a long-gone colonial era" (p. 37).

Zine (2001) also pointed toward the Eurocentric focus of Canadian education despite the country's "multiethnic, multilingual, and multiracial demographics" (p. 400). Zine (2004)

collected the following statements from students and parents in Toronto about their experiences after the incident of 9/11: “After September 11 my teacher told me I should change my name from Muhammad, because it was not a good name.” “Other kids keep telling me go back where I came from.” “My son said, ‘Mom, we came from a war and now we are not safe or wanted in this country.’” “After September 11, we stopped being seen as Canadian citizens and became the enemy” (p. 111).

Zine (2008) also described incidents of racism, Islamophobia, and harassment Muslim children face in Canadian schools. Muslim children were called terrorists, and girls who wore hijabs had stones thrown at them during their walks to and from school. There are indications of increasing alienation, bitterness toward the West, and political and religious radicalization among young Muslim youth in Canadian schools. The hopes of host countries for the integration and assimilation of second-generation immigrants turns into disappointment because of these indications. Schools now have a significant responsibility due to the multiple religious and cultural interpretations in society (Merry, 2006). Canadian multiculturalism is already criticized for its impracticality and Eurocentricity; many scholars are now raising concerns about race, gender, and class inequalities (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Since 9/11 there has been a rise in terrorism and extremism cases all around the world. In Canada, there has also been an increase in homegrown “militant Islamist or ‘jihadist’ based terrorism” (McCoy & Knight, 2014, p. 4), which has not only become a big concern for Canadian security, but has also increased tensions between the mainstream population and the Muslim community. These terrorist acts of a few extremists have destroyed the image of the whole Muslim community (Salili & Hoosain, 2014) and renewed the debate about the integration

of Muslims (McCoy et al., 2011) into mainstream Canadian society. Social integration is not only a personal and individual process, it is a dialectical process, and in the current situation, it may be difficult to achieve. A serious issue is that schools, being a reflection of the views of society, have also been affected by the negative effects of 9/11 (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004).

Canada was the first country in the world to adopt a multiculturalism policy at the national level. An essential goal of multiculturalism is an increase in the sense of belonging of all ethnic cultural groups within the larger Canadian society. However, this goal can only be obtained when Canadians hold positive attitudes toward each other's beliefs and values. To make multiculturalism successful, the acceptance of differences and tolerance of cultural diversity and of ethnic groups by the mainstream population is vital, but in the case of Muslims, who are the targets of open criticism nowadays, it might not be possible. Multiculturalism has failed to achieve its goals of equality and justice (Reitz, Breton, Dion, & Dion, 2009) in the case of Muslim immigrants.

My daughters' school experiences during their schooling in Canada are aligned with current research which provided evidence that Muslim children's religious beliefs were being targeted, not only by peers but by educators (Zine, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b) and that these experiences affected Muslim children's performance in school. The situation has become more severe over the past twenty years as many students and their parents have reported incidents of racism, Islamophobia, and harassment in Canada (Zine, 2004).

My research findings, like other studies on Muslim students, provide evidence that interactions of non-Muslim students, teachers, and administrators with Muslim students are usually based largely on negative stereotypes (Abu El-Haj, 2002; Rezai-Rashti, 1994; Zine,

2000, 2004). These attitudes include assumptions that are mostly developed before non-Muslims and Muslims encounter each other and are often based on the negative projection of Muslims through the media (McCoy et al., 2011; Zine, 2004). These perceptions often lead to assumptions of failure or limited chances of success for these young Muslim students (Dei et al. 1996; Hoot, Szecsi, & Moosa, 2003; Rezai-Rashti, 1994) and result in Muslims students' negative perceptions of themselves. These negative images can lead Muslim children to develop feelings of low self-esteem and inferiority and can even result in suicidal tendencies (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005) that could reduce their chances of social integration and full participation in mainstream Canadian society.

I conducted my study on Muslim children's school experiences because these outcomes of negative images are contradictory to the key objective of Canadian multiculturalism policy, which is to help immigrants retain their ethnic identities and to facilitate ethnic groups to fully participate in Canadian society. My daughters' experiences as immigrant students in school also told me a different story about how they faced racism and discrimination, not only from their peers but also from their teachers, other members of the school, and people outside the school community. Islamophobia is clearly present in Canadian schools according to my participants' experiences, and the schools, being part of the larger community, reflect the practices and behaviours of the dominant society (Macrine, McLaren, & Hill, 2010). Due to the negativity about Muslims in mainstream Canadian society, Muslim children face negative attitudes and comments by their peers, teachers, and other members of the school community. Through the stories my participants shared with me, I gained an in-depth understanding of how Canada's multiculturalism policy is implemented in schools, which are important institutions for achieving the goals of multiculturalism within the broader society.

Significance of the Study

My study is an important addition to the literature since the existing studies have examined only the experiences of Muslim high school, college, and university students (Abdallah-Shahid, 2008; Abukhattala, 2004; Zine, 2001, 2004, 2006). Prior to my study, no research focused specifically on the classroom experiences of Muslim children who were attending mainstream public schools in Alberta. My study fills this gap in the literature regarding whether Muslim students in Alberta experience biased attitudes from their peers and teachers in schools.

The importance of conducting research on young school-aged Muslim students' related issues is supported by a recent Statistics Canada (2011) report, according to which Muslims are one of the fastest-growing immigrant populations in North America. Most members of this population are young and this number will grow in the future, especially in Alberta, which has become a popular destination for immigrants from all around the world.

Another motivating factor behind my research on Muslim students' school experiences was the current global situation, such as the events in the Middle East, the recent homegrown "militant Islamist or 'jihadist' based terrorism" in Canada (McCoy & Knight, 2014, p. 4), and the media's projection of Muslims as terrorists. All of these events raise the importance of addressing issues related to the Muslim community, especially those that affect young students, whose responses to such messages and the resulting attitudes toward them have not been studied before. If religious discrimination is not addressed in the early years of schooling, it could lead to alienation among Muslim students because of their peers' and teachers' rejection and biased attitudes, which, in turn, could affect their success and reduce their chances of integration into the dominant culture in the future (McCoy et al., 2011; Ward, 2001).

Canada's multicultural approach focuses on the importance of a cohesive society by recognizing the importance of diversity among the immigrant population. According to Canadian multiculturalism policy, it is not a requirement for immigrants to assimilate. They are not required to leave their ethnic and cultural identities behind; rather, they are encouraged to keep their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness because it is considered to have a positive impact on social cohesion (Reitz et al., 2009). An essential goal of Canadian multiculturalism, the development of a sense of belonging of all ethnic cultural groups to the larger Canadian society, can only be obtained through positive interactions between immigrants and the mainstream Canadian population. Acculturation theories emphasize helping new immigrants to maintain their existing identities within their new national identities in order to achieve proper and full acculturation in the host country (Kymlicka, 2010). The biased attitudes of the mainstream community after the recent extremist acts conducted by a few extremists—and for which the whole Muslim community is blamed—can result in alienation among Muslim children which may lead to antisocial or even criminal behaviour stemming from radicalization among these young immigrant future citizens of Canada (McCoy et al., 2011). We can see examples in Britain where tensions between immigrant and mainstream youth have increased and reached a level where they have become a threat to national safety (Ghuman, 1998).

Early prevention of these tensions is possible only through policies and practices based on research. The findings of my study provide important insights into the lives of Muslim immigrant students who are trying to adapt to their host country while maintaining their families' and communities' religious beliefs and practices. I expect the findings of my study to help researchers, teachers, school administrations, and policy makers to understand the complexities involved in addressing the needs of children from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds,

and to understand the role that school can play in the development of these children's hybrid identities as Muslim Canadians. One main goal of Canadian multicultural policy is the integration of immigrants into Canadian society, which can best be achieved by providing immigrants sufficient meaningful opportunities to maintain their own culture while participating in the larger society. Through my research it became possible for me to hear the voices of young immigrants. I hope the study's findings will help other Muslim children in their acculturation into Canadian society and that they also will help in maintaining peace and integrity in the future Canadian society by achieving the goals of multiculturalism.

Structure of the Dissertation

After this first introductory chapter there are five other chapters in my dissertation. Chapter 2 highlights some key points from the literature which provide the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of my research. Chapter 3 gives details about the methodology and methods I used for my qualitative study. I start this chapter with a brief discussion of the constructivist paradigm in which qualitative interpretive inquiry is situated. After that, I explain the basic tenets of hermeneutics as they apply to my research. Finally, I focus on the methods I used to conduct this research. In Chapter 4, I present narrative portraits of my seven participants. I have divided these portraits into two categories: male and female. These portraits include the stories each participant shared with me. I also include my general impression of each participant and a copy of their pre-interview activities. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings from my interviews with the seven study participants and focuses on findings, analysis, and discussion. Once I finished my data collection in the form of my participants' stories about their experiences in Canadian schools, I started identifying common themes within the data. I identified four main themes about which all seven participants talked. These main themes are relationships with

peers; teachers' attitudes; community behaviour; and the role of media. Under each theme are some subthemes. All of the participants gave some suggestions for new Muslim students in Canadian schools. The sixth and final chapter features conclusions and the future implications of this study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review: Toward Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This chapter begins with an overview of the literature on acculturation and sense of belonging. Understanding the experiences of the immigrant population in mainstream society depends on these two important goals that the host society expects immigrants to achieve. The level of achievement of these goals depends entirely on the strategies immigrants adopt and the attitudes of the host society toward these immigrants. How certain groups of immigrants are viewed by the host society affects the school experiences of the children who belong to that group. The literature on acculturation and sense of belonging helped me deepen my theoretical understanding of these two key concepts in relation to the school experiences of my participants. Because this study is about Muslim immigrant students' school experiences in Canada and because immigrants are directly affected by the policies of the host country, I also reviewed key literature on Canadian multiculturalism and multicultural and antiracist education. The attitude of a host society is shaped by the policies that society has for its immigrants. Schools, as part of the larger society, are not exempt from the effects of these policies (Macrine et al., 2010). These policies affect the school experiences of the immigrant children because school policies are shaped according to national policies (Macrine et al., 2010).

At the end of this review I include literature on the basic concepts of critical pedagogy in relation to my research topic. This approach helped me in understanding the relationships among different structures of the society and how and to what level mainstream culture holds the power to affect the immigrant population's experiences in the host society. There is a deep relationship among all these concepts; they are intertwined with each other. Immigrants' experiences in a host society shape the future direction of their acculturation and help them to develop a sense of

belonging (Berry, 2006). Critical pedagogy provided me with critical lenses to analyze these experiences deeply and critically.

Acculturation of Immigrants

Acculturation refers to the process of adaptation of immigrants to the host country's culture, and to cultural changes that come forth through intercultural contacts (Berry, 1997, 2012). It is a process by which a person or group experiences constant, first-hand interactions with a person or group from another culture. In this process, identities, senses of self, behaviours, attitudes, and values go through constant change (Berry & Kalin, 1995). This definition highlights acculturation as change that may occur in all groups in contact with both dominant (mainstream) and nondominant (immigrant) groups, but nondominant groups are more likely to change during the acculturation process (Berry, 1997, 2012).

Process of Acculturation

The effect of acculturation is greater on the minority or immigrant group than on the members of the host society. This is because the immigrant group must adapt to the culture of the host society in order to attain a certain position in the host society (Kâgitçibasi, 2009). When studying acculturation, one must measure changes not only at the level of an individual but also at the group level. The level of acculturation will vary from person to person depending on their attachment to their own culture and their willingness to adopt the host culture (Berry, 1997). This means that the level of acculturation may be different for the whole group compared to the level of acculturation for any particular individual (Berry, 2006).

The way in which members of pluralistic societies acculturate also depends on the closeness of the community. An individual's acculturation depends heavily on the group's tendency to maintain contact and encourage group participation (Berry, 2006). These factors

impact the acculturation strategy that is adopted by different groups. According to Berry (2006), individuals within a group may choose to adopt one acculturation strategy over another, but they might change their strategy depending on the group they interact with. Furthermore, dominant groups can exert force over minority groups to choose a particular acculturation strategy (Berry, 2006).

Berry's Model of Acculturation

John Berry, a Canadian cross-cultural psychologist, has conducted many studies on acculturation and acculturation strategies worldwide (Berry, 2003, 2006; Berry & Sam, 1997). He is an expert in this field and his work is often cited by other researchers studying acculturation. He discusses in his research the effects of acculturation at the individual and group levels. More specifically, he discusses the acculturation strategies adopted by immigrants and the effects of the dominant group's behaviour on the immigrant's choice of acculturation strategy. Furthermore, he describes the reactions of the dominant group to the acculturation choices made by the minority group.

Berry (1980, 2012) proposed a model of acculturation which is one of the most well-known and commonly used models to address immigrants' experiences during their cultural contacts with the dominant culture. This model addresses how individuals interact with their particular environments. According to Berry (2005), the basic questions that arise when people from different cultural backgrounds come together are as follows: What are the priorities of these people? Do they want to make relationships with the dominant culture or do they value limiting relationships and contacts to people who share their cultural identity?

Acculturation is concerned with how ethnic minority individuals adapt to the dominant culture and how their beliefs, values, and behaviours change as they interact with the new culture

and its members (Berry, 1997, 1998, 2005). According to Berry's theory, the acculturation of a minority person can be measured through two seemingly independent dimensions: the degree of assimilation to the majority culture and the degree of maintenance of the minority culture (Berry, 1980, 1984, 1990, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2005; Berry & Sam, 1997). The level of assimilation into the dominant culture shows an individual's involvement and experience with the dominant culture (Berry, 1997, 1998, 2005; Berry & Sam 1997). It also determines the position of the individual on a continuum, from complete participation to complete rejection of the host culture's values, attitudes, and behaviours (Berry & Sam, 1997). Maintenance of the minority culture depends on the weight the individual places on their culture of origin and it may vary, from strong observance to total neglect of maintaining the culture of origin (Berry, 1997, 1998; 2006; Berry & Sam 1997).

Berry (1997) proposed four acculturation patterns of an individual regarding their involvement and experience with the dominant culture: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. He described these acculturation patterns as a continuum in which complete inclusion is on one side and complete exclusion of the minority group is on the other. If an individual becomes fully absorbed into the dominant culture's ways of life, both culturally and linguistically, it resulted in assimilation. If acceptance of the dominant culture and maintenance of the heritage culture are both high, the outcome is called integration. If maintenance of the heritage culture is low, the outcome is called marginalization, and if maintenance of the heritage culture is high but positive relationship with the dominant culture is low, it is called separation. Separation is often the immigrants' own decision. Marginalization is a result of exclusion in which the immigrants have already separated from their home culture, but have not fully adopted

the host culture. Relationships between the four strategies and the host and immigrant cultures are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Berry's Acculturation Strategies

Acculturation strategies	Preservation of ethnic culture?	Positive relationship with the new culture?
Assimilation	NO	YES
Integration	YES	YES
Separation	YES	NO
Marginalization	NO	NO

Source: (Berry, 1980, p. 14)

The table developed by Berry (1980) displays the relationships among the acculturation strategies used by groups, the effects of national and social policies, and the patterns of beliefs, norms, and common behaviours which determine the behaviour of the dominant/host society. Kim and Berry (1986) said, "Those whose appearance makes them distinct from the dominant population may be less attracted by assimilation or be kept away by racism and discrimination" (p. 159).

Berry uses national and societal policies with regard to immigrants to show how immigrants are affected by the attitude of the host societies toward them. Berry (1997, 2009) describes four different national and societal policies regarding acculturation and immigration. I developed a table that demonstrates the corresponding national and societal policies with Berry's four acculturation strategies (Table 2 below).

Table 2: Berry's Acculturation Strategies Compared With National/Societal Policies

Berry's acculturation strategy	Analogous national or societal policy
Separation—remaining separate from the host culture and avoiding interactions with the host culture.	**Segregation**—separating a group of people because of cultural, racial, or physical differences.
Marginalization—excluding oneself from both the host and original cultures.	**Exclusion**—cleansing of a group of people based on cultural, racial, or physical differences.
Integration—including oneself in both the host and original cultures.	**Multiculturalism**—accepting different cultures within one society.
Assimilation—becoming fully absorbed into the dominant culture's ways of life, both culturally and linguistically.	**'Melting pot'**—an ideology that encourages full absorption in the host culture.

Limitations of Acculturation Strategies

Berry's model has some limitations. First, the lines between the four stages of acculturation are not clearly defined (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). Second, the theory does not consider the greater or lesser acceptance of certain ethnic groups in the host society. This acceptance, or lack thereof, limits the immigrants' choices of acculturation strategies and puts them in a disadvantageous position in regards to acculturation. Berry assumed that the immigrant has full control over which acculturation strategy they choose. Furthermore, the model does not include other factors that may impact the immigrant's choice (Kosic, 2002). Berry's (1980) acculturation strategy model does not acknowledge that immigrants from cultures that are very different from the host culture, such as Muslims in Canada, are not well accepted in the host society (Kâgitçibasi, 2009). These culturally distant immigrants do not have the opportunity to

choose a strategy of acculturation. For example, because of their dress code, beliefs, culture, and religion, Muslims may not be free to choose full assimilation into the dominant society. In spite of these limitations, Berry's acculturation approach is theoretically very strong, and is popular among researchers.

Integration vs. Assimilation

Integration is the most desirable acculturation strategy for immigrants in a multicultural society like Canada because maintenance of the ethnic culture while adopting the host culture's values is always very beneficial for the development of a multicultural society (Berry et al., 1984; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Stress and conflict can develop if there is a difference between the acculturation strategy immigrants prefer and the strategy they have to adopt (Clément, Noels, & Deneault, 2001). It is very hard to explain how immigrants negotiate between their two cultures. How immigrants decide which dimension of acculturation to choose is not an easy question. They do not have a lot of choices, and these possibilities are further restricted due to many other factors, such as the demands of the host culture or their own ethnic culture and their own personal preferences and circumstances (Berry, 1997, 2012; Ward, 2004). Often these choices are affected and restricted by the immigration policies. The ideologies and strategies of immigrants are not always aligned with those of the host society (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997). Research on acculturation has shown that immigrants from similar cultures to the host culture find the cross-cultural transition easier compared to immigrants who come from a culture that is extremely different from the host culture (Kâgitçibasi, 2009; Ward, 1996, 2004, Ward, Fox, Stuart, Wilson, & Kus, 2009; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward & Kus, 2012; Ward, Stuart, & Kus, 2011).

Integration of Muslim Immigrants in Canada

According to Statistics Canada (2006), religious minorities are expected to grow between 60 and 110 percent by 2017 as compared to the Christian population. The integration of non-Christian minorities (including Muslims, Sikhs, and many other religions) is an important part of the policy of multiculturalism in Canada. Although there is an increase in the population of racial minorities in Canada, there is a decrease in the level of integration of these minority groups, and around one-third of Canada's racial minorities face discrimination of some kind (Banting, Courchene, & Seidle, 2007, p. 65). Canadians usually deny the existence of ethno-racial discrimination in the society, but the results of Canadian attitude surveys contradict these claims (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Reitz et al., 2009). These surveys provide evidence that certain groups of immigrants experience discrimination in mainstream Canadian society (Dion, 2001, cited in Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009).

Even though Canadian multicultural policy seems very sound and appears to give immigrants the full right to retain their culture and have it recognized, in practice the situation is different. Canadian multiculturalism has failed to achieve its goals of equality and justice (Reitz et al., 2009). Many Canadians have a totally different approach toward multiculturalism than the official policy. Some may consider it very important, but according to others it is "fundamentally flawed" (Reitz et al., 2009, p. 1). Adams (2007), in his review of public opinion data, finds that most Canadians think that "something about multiculturalism is broken and that immigrants aren't adequately adapting to life in Canada" (p. 29). There is a perception among some Canadians that "certain religious minorities have values, beliefs or practices that are difficult to integrate into Canadian society because they clash with Canadian ideas" (Soysal, 1997, cited in Reitz et al., 2009, p. 9). Not all immigrants are accepted by the mainstream society. Certain

groups of immigrants, such as Muslims, get little acceptance or in some cases total rejection from the mainstream society. This trend, paired with recent cases of extremism, have sparked a debate about the integration of Muslims in Canada (McCoy et al., 2011). As explained by Reitz and colleagues (2009), because "many Canadians share concerns about Islamic extremism, there has been a significant and growing Canadian debate about the social integration of the new minorities" (p. 9).

Islamophobia.

Over the past twenty years, different views on Muslims' presence in the West have posed questions about Muslims' integration, identity, culture, and religion (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009). Muslims are usually identified by Westerners as being foreign and alien (Zine, 2001). According to the findings of various research studies, Muslims in North America, especially in the post-9/11 period, are the victims of negative stereotypes because of their religious beliefs (Charani, 2005; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001; Shaheen, 2003), and as a group they face many challenges when they try to adapt to a foreign culture (Amer, 2005). The events of 9/11 have resulted in negative assumptions and attitudes of fear and hatred toward Muslims or Islam, which has led to Islamophobia and increased violence against Muslims (Sajid, 2005; Sivanandan, 2006). According to Sajid (2005), Islamophobic beliefs about Muslims are based on the assumption that Muslims are religious radicals who believe in violence with non-Muslims. According to Sajid (2005), Islamophobia is not new in Western culture, but it spread more widely after 9/11. Sajid (2005) states that Islamophobia can be characterized by the belief that Muslims (a) are religious extremists; (b) have violent tendencies toward non-Muslims; and (c) disapprove of ideas like equality, tolerance, and democracy and consider them to be anti-Islamic concepts. Islamophobia is very closely related to the concept of xenophobia, which means fear of strangers or the

unknown (Nicolino, 2006). Sivanandan (2006) introduced the term *xeno-racism*, which he says "denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or deporting them" (p. 2). According to Sivanandan, xeno-racism is a xenophobia "that bears all the marks of the old racism, except that it is not colour coded. It is racism in substance, though xeno in form" (p. 2).

Fekete (2004) expands the term xeno-racism by including Islamophobia in it. Sivanandan (2006) asserts that "the racism directed at Muslims on the basis of religion, signified . . . not just by race or immigration status but by dress and appearance as well, combining the characteristics of both asylum seeker and terrorist, [reflects)] the combined war on asylum and on terror" (p. 2).

History of Islamophobia.

Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon. In Western culture, resentment toward Islam and Muslims has a long history originating in the eighth century (Stone, 2004). In fact, the marginalization of Islam and Islamic civilization, which constitute the core components of Islamophobia, has always been a part of Western civilization (Said, 1981). However, Islamophobia has changed its forms. For example, in the fifteenth century, the enmity against Muslims in Spain was starkly different from the hostility that had been seen in the Crusades in the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries or from that seen in the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries during the time of the Ottoman Empire (Stone, 2004). The current form of Islamophobia has been reinforced after the incident of 9/11. Islamophobic discourses that have led to a view of radicalized Islam have emerged recently. Following the incident of 9/11, tension between the Western world and the Muslim community has peaked. I chose 9/11 as a benchmark for my study because of its proximity to the advent of the study. It was therefore a salient occurrence in my participants' lives and in the dominant discourse.

The Sense of Belonging

A sense of relatedness or belonging is a basic need of all human beings (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Maslow, 1954). According to Croucher (2004), "individuals have both an emotional and material need to belong, and an array of sociocultural, political, and administrative groups including families, churches, schools, ethnic groups, nations, and states, fulfill that need" (p. 40). Croucher further explains belonging as an extremely complex concept and states that "it functions at the level of individuals and groups, ranging from very small to very large, and can connote juridical as well as emotional dimensions of status or attachment" (p. 40).

Integration of immigrants into the mainstream Canadian culture, a main goal of Canadian multiculturalism, is hard to achieve without the development of a sense of belonging among new immigrants. Belonging is linked to an emotional attachment to a place and often includes feeling "at home" and safe (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006, p. 2). According to Anthias (2006),

> to belong is to be accepted as part of a community, to feel safe within it and to have a stake in the future of such a community of membership. To belong is to share values, networks and practices and it is not just a question of identification. Belonging is about experiences of being part of the social fabric and should not be thought of in exclusively ethnic terms. (p. 21)

Immigrants cannot feel integrated until they feel their culture and values are valued by the members of the host society. If individuals feel they do not belong to a specific situation and place, they try to find different ways of dealing with these feelings (Bhatti, 2006).

Another main aspect of belonging is that it is usually controlled by power relations and includes individuals who have the power to include or exclude others whom they think are not

valuable to that particular group. Belonging to a group "necessitates and implies boundaries which may be social, cultural, political, or economic in nature" (Croucher, 2004, pp. 40–41). The dominant group in any society sets the terms for the participation of the minority ethnic groups in the larger society. Segregationist politics from the dominant group could lead to separation of culturally and ethnically diverse groups (Berry, 2006). Anthias (2006) argues that belonging is associated with social inclusion or exclusion. In her concept of belonging, she discusses different dimensions of it:

> There is the dimension of how we feel about our location in the social world.… Belonging in the relational sense is about both formal and informal experiences of belonging. Belonging is not only about membership rights and duties (as in the case of citizenship), or merely about forms of identification with groups, or with other people. It is also about social places constructed by such identifications and memberships, and the ways in which social places have resonances with stability of the self, or with feelings of being part of a larger whole and with the emotional and social bounds that are related to such places. (p. 21)

Children and the Sense of Belonging

Research demonstrates that children from a very early age have been found to be highly aware of the physical places and social groups where they do or do not feel welcome or "at home" (Lee, 2001). Research also provides evidence that children can "create and maintain their own places and social sites of belonging to facilitate more socially inclusive activities" (Olowing, 2003, p. 217). Scourfield, Dicks, Drakeford, and Davies (2006), through their research with 8- to 11-year-olds in Wales, found that these children showed a strong awareness of "spatial, social, and cultural boundaries" (p. 14). Children have a social and emotional need to

belong. For children, schools are sites for social interaction and where they are influenced by their formal and informal relationships with others. These relationships shape their belonging, not only in the school community, but later on in the society at large as well. Children's feelings about their positions in the social world involve the spatial, relational, and positional dimensions of belonging. These dimensions and their characteristics help in evaluating new immigrant children's schooling experiences as well (Scourfield et al., 2006). Goodenow (1991) proposed that a sense of belonging at school reflects "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment" (p. 80).

Educational research studies show that the ways in which new immigrant children are classified and labelled at school could produce, reproduce, and strengthen these children's social positions (Apple, 1982, 1999; Darder, 1991). Discussion of new immigrants' acculturation, integration, social inclusion, and interconnection in society at large is dependent on the answer to the question of how immigrants adjust to the new society's way of life socially, culturally, religiously, and politically and make their new environment their home, as well as how they develop a sense of belonging. Research studies associated with immigrant children's adaptation, identity, and academic success and school participation (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Candappa & Egharevba, 2002; Cummins, 1984; Kirova, 2006; Kirova & Wu, 2002; Miller, 2003; Rumbaut, 2005) suggest that minority students' school experiences often exclude and marginalize them. In order for minority children to feel a sense of belonging within a dominant majority culture, they must overcome many challenges (Darder, 1991; Miller, 2003). In school these children's social interactions and relationships with their peers and teachers have an important effect on their academic and social development. Two main factors in successful school settings for young

immigrant children and which help in their well-being are opportunities to belong and supportive relationships (Weisner, 2005, p. 3).

Multicultural Policy of Canada

Canada's multicultural policy was developed in early 1970, and Canada became the first country in the world with this kind of policy at the government level (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Multiculturalism as a national policy gives a unique identity to Canada. Canada' approach to multiculturalism is different to that of the United States, where more importance has been given to the idea and practice of being a "melting pot" (Gordon, 1964, p. 74). Canadian multicultural policy evolved through three different phases:

- The first phase started in the pre-1971 era. The main focus of this era was to increase nation building through immigration, and for this purpose Canada opened its doors to new immigrants. In 1970, Canada, as a member of United Nations, joined the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (United Nations, 1965), which suggests that all humans are equal under the law. As a result of this convention Canadian multiculturalism policy was implemented in 1971.
- The second phase took place with the creation of the Canadian Human Rights Act (Government of Canada, 1977/1985) which aimed to ensure equality and eliminate discrimination in the federal jurisdiction. Through this act, the Canadian Human Rights Commission was also established.
- The third and current phase of Canada's policy of multiculturalism began in 1982 when the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms became part of constitutional law (Dewing, 2009).

Section 15(1) of the Charter protects equality rights:

> Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (Government of Canada, 2013)

In 1988, Canada passed the Multicultural Act, in which diversity became an essential characteristic of Canadian society. The Charter and Multiculturalism Act totally changed the meaning of Canadian cultural identity and created multiculturalism as a "fundamental characteristic of Canadian heritage and identity" (Black-Branch, 1995, p. 38). According to Canada's multicultural policy, all ethnic groups in Canada have equal status, and each ethnic cultural group has a duty to fully participate in the growth of Canadian society.

The Critics of Canadian Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism has been an issue of debate in Canada over the past four decades (Abu-Laban & Dhamoon, 2009). Canadian society still has not reached the final stage of integration, even though it is guided by the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, which focused on promoting full and equal participation of all members of Canadian society. Although Canadians generally have positive attitudes about multiculturalism, these attitudes vary according to the ethnic group in question (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Kâgitçibasi, 2009). A 1993 national poll found that most Canadians have racist attitudes even though they do not admit them openly (Bergman, 1993, cited in Ghosh & Abdi, 2004, p. 52). According to some scholars, it is very difficult to achieve true multiculturalism, which demands true respect and tolerance for all cultures (Siegel, 1997). According to Biles and James (2008), there is a call for new measures of integration, because tensions over the past 30 years have increased concerns about the issues that affect the successful integration of new immigrants, specifically "visible minority" groups.

Canadian multiculturalism is also criticized for its inability to address increasing racism in Canadian society (Kirova, 2008). It is argued that the policy of multiculturalism is an insufficient attempt to showcase diversity without challenging inequities. The policy is also criticized for being based on a very broad concept that all cultures are different in nature but have equal status in Canada. Especially after the incident of 9/11, anti-multicultural society discourse has increased among the general population. This discourse highlights the need to move beyond the current policy of multiculturalism (Wong, 2008).

The main aspect of the anti-multiculturalism movement is the claim that multiculturalism has failed to achieve its goals of equality and justice. Latour (2003) criticizes multiculturalism, arguing that "globalisation destroys multiculturalism" (p. 24). He stated that multiculturalism failed, not only after 9/11, but that its failure started over the past three to four decades of neoliberalism. According to him, the West should change its attitude and no longer see minority groups as "others." Latour emphasizes that an honest debate on the issue of multiculturalism is necessary in this era. The political commentator Margaret Wente (2006) shares the same thoughts; she wrote an opinion piece in *The Globe and Mail* titled "End of the Multiculturalism Myth" in which she argued that, "in Canada, we can afford to cling to our multiculturalism illusions that differences are to be celebrated, and make our land a better place … but secretly, we don't really believe that differences are okay" (para. 17).

According to the sociologist Mahfooz Kanwar (cited in Corbella, 2006), whose views were published on the front page of the *Calgary Sun*, "multiculturalism creates nations within a nation and divides the loyalty of people." He wrote these views about the official Canadian policy on multiculturalism after the arrest of 18 people in a plot to plant a bomb in Toronto. The incident of 9/11 gave rise to the anti-multiculturalism movement and the term *post-*

multiculturalism was introduced. 9/11 raised questions about multiculturalism and proved that it has failed. Instead of integrating immigrants into Canadian society, the policy segregates the country's diverse racial, ethnic, and religious groups (Wong, 2008). Abbas (2005), in his critique on current multicultural society, states that multicultural society

> is seemingly where "African immigrants clean toilets" and the upper-middle-class English gents are lawyers, pilots, surgeons and bankers. The word multicultural no longer carries with it any connotation of equality or respect—if it ever did. Worse, it implies that all "moral obligations" have been met when a society is "multicultural." (p. 156)

There was a drastic change in the attitude of Canadians toward multiculturalism after the events of 9/11. The results of a poll conducted by Environics Research Groups in 2003 show a decrease in the positive attitude of Canadians toward multiculturalism compared to their 2000 survey results (Association for Canadian Studies, 2003). Despite the multiculturalism policy at the government level, the majority of Canadians admit the presence of a dominant culture and are in favour of minority groups having to accept and adopt the values and norms of that dominant culture (Fleras & Elliot, 2007). Bannerji (1996) criticized multiculturalism in her article "On the Dark Side of the Nation: Politics of Multiculturalism and the State of 'Canada'" by saying that the main purpose of multiculturalism in Canada is the maintenance of hegemonic power relations.

Canadian Multiculturalism and Education

Over the years there has been a theoretical shift from assimilation to multiculturalism in democratic societies. Multiculturalism brings a new ideology and way of thinking in education. This theoretical shift creates a conflict between assimilation and multicultural education. The

goals and purposes of both theories are totally different and understanding both is very important.

With the increasing movement of people globally, the role of education has become more challenging, especially in Western multicultural societies like Canada. Ghosh and Abdi (2004) state that "the conceptual and pragmatic notions of multiculturalism would go beyond just accommodating or tolerating the different baggage that new groups and individuals are bringing with them" (p. 10).

Multicultural education in Canada is linked to immigration and considered a response to the growing cultural pluralism of Canadian society. Canadian multicultural education is identified as one of the important steps necessary for the integration of immigrants (Kymlicka, 2001). The 1971 federal multicultural policy, the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the 1988 Multiculturalism Act increased the emergence of multicultural education (James, 2003). Canadian multicultural policy shows a new ideological path to the growth of Canadian society. According to this policy, the role of education should be the inclusion and recognition of all cultures and beliefs. It should be a "fusion of horizons" or "third space," which is actually a renegotiation of cultural space (Bhabha, 1994). It should be what Freire (1985) called education for critical consciousness. To bring equality and justice, the main principle of a multicultural society is that the empowerment of the individual is a must. Empowerment, according to Giroux (1992), is "the ability to think and act critically" (p. 11), which is only possible through multicultural education.

According to Canadian multiculturalism, the main focus of education in Canada should be on the equal status and participation of all ethnic groups in the growth of Canadian society. One of the purposes of a multicultural education is to help immigrant children shape their

identities and to help them develop a positive self-image and critical thinking (Davidman & Davidman, 2000). The accomplishment of multicultural education is measured by its ability to develop unity within diversity and to integrate ethnic identity with national identification (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Mansfield and Kehoe (1993) identify three goals of multicultural education: equivalency in achievement; more positive intergroup attitudes; and developing pride in heritage (p. 3).

In a multicultural society, everyone has a right to be different, so the focus of education should be on the fusion of cultures; this fusion would reflect all cultures, not only the dominant culture. The needs of all students should be considered. Multiculturalism has a deeper philosophical meaning that should be reflected through the education system of a multicultural society. Education in a multicultural society should develop an integrated rather than a segregated society. Educational institutions should prepare their students to fully participate in a multicultural society. According to Ghosh and Abdi (2004), "a redefined multicultural education is not only one that would not only engage in human right concepts, but would go so far as to question existing social structures and institutions in the context of social relations of gender, race and class" (p. 138).

Issues in Multicultural Education

Although Canada has a comprehensive multiculturalism policy, there is no clear definition of multicultural education. McLeod (1987), writing in the Ontario context, states that "there have been general, sometimes vague, commitments but very little that we classify as provincial multicultural education policy" (p. ix). Moodley (2001) also said that no single model of multicultural education exists in Canada, and multicultural education is not properly included in school programs or teacher education programs. In a multicultural society, schools have a very

important part in bringing equality and justice into society. The question to ask here is, "Do schools in policy and practice, as well as in the process of education, give equal access, equal opportunity, and equal treatment to children of different racial, ethnic, gender, and social class background" (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004, p. 2)?

In this new era of globalization, multicultural education could be used as an important integration vehicle, but in spite of its growing importance, schools are not properly equipped to deal with the increasing diversity. The rising dropout rates of visible minority children as compared to Canadian-born children (Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, & Jamieson, 1999; Watt & Roessingh, 2001) and the overrepresentation of some ethnic groups in crimes (Wortley, 2003) shows the failure of current multicultural policies and practices.

Multiculturalism has become a controversial term because, in its present form, instead of involving both dominant and subordinate groups, it supports only the dominant group's understanding of the world (Carty, 1991). In a multicultural society, knowledge usually focuses directly on people's differences, but in Western societies, the main goal of education is the spread and assimilation of all who are different into the dominant culture (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Canadian multicultural education theoretically seems very sound, but in reality it is not successful in providing opportunities for equal participation to all ethnic groups, both in educational and economic fields (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). A main problem in the implementation of Canadian multicultural education is the lack of federal control over education and the provincial governments' inability to fully influence education (Kirova, 2008). The Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 1982/2013) provides legal protection against discrimination on the basis of race, but on a provincial level there is no proper implementation of

this protection. As Ghosh and Abdi (2004) assert, "the multiculturalism clause for education is vague" (p. 45).

In practice, the provincial governments follow a policy of assimilation rather than integration, which is totally contradictory to Canada's multiculturalism policy. According to critical pedagogy theorists (Brown & Kysilka, 1994; Cole, 1986; May, 1994; Wilhelm, 1994), there is a gap between theory and practice: multicultural education ignores racial differences and discrimination and every group claims their point of view is right. This creates confusion and frustration (McLeod, 1987). In her review of the literature, Kirova (2008) identifies five pitfalls of multicultural education practices:

> 1) Emphasizing exoticized, knowable (other) cultures solidifies the boundaries between majority and minority cultures.
>
> 2) By renaming the difference from racial to cultural, White dominance is reproduced.
>
> 3) Multiculturalism's view of the self/culture relationship reiterates the cultural hegemony associated with Eurocentrism.
>
> 4) Multiculturalism's culturalist ideology reinforces existing inequalities.
>
> 5) Multicultural education is assimilationist in creating national citizenship and identity. (pp. 107–112)

Kirova (2008) criticizes current multicultural practices, arguing that the current multicultural education in Canada based on ethno-racial distinctions does not contribute toward excluding racism. The inclusion of a broader worldview is important, because without complete knowledge of others, we are prone to create a biased image of others. The success of a school in a multicultural society depends not on its results, but on a question asked by Ghosh and Abdi

(2004): “What kinds of citizens are being produced” (p. 178)? To produce citizens for a multicultural society, a true, unbiased, and diverse multicultural education is very important. Without it, the results could be totally different.

Multiculturalism ideology brings a major change in the expected role of new immigrants to Canada, from assimilation to integration. The ideology emphasizes a fusion of cultures but ignores important issues related to racial discrimination and race. To overcome these issues of race and discrimination, an appropriate philosophy of education is needed that emphasizes equality. This can never be achieved without a precise understanding of the politics of difference and inequality based on ethnicity, race, and class. This also depends on understanding the prevailing discrimination and prejudices of the society in the form of racism (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004).

Antiracist Education

Ridley (1995) explained racism as “any behaviour or pattern of behaviour that systematically denies opportunities to a particular social group, while advancing and supporting privileges of another group” (p. 60). Greene (1988) considered racism as a pattern where a group or individual is constantly preferred over another group or individual. This preference could be on the basis of race, colour, ethnic or cultural background, or religion. Blauner (1972) defines racism as “the tendency to categorize people who are culturally different in terms of non-culture traits” (p. 17), such as facial features, hair, and skin colour. We can use this definition in the context of Muslims’ appearance.

Prejudice and stereotypes can serve to promote racism (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Nicolino (2006) defines stereotypes as “faulty generalizations [that] frequently serve as mental shortcuts” (p. 17). Stereotypes can affect the attitudes and behaviours

of one group toward another, and negative stereotypes usually become a major reason for prejudice (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Allport (1954) explained prejudice as "an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed, and it may be directed toward a group or an individual of that group" (p. 10).

According to Ghosh (2002), multicultural education transforms into monocultural education, because instead of focusing on different cultural perceptions it just focuses on having diverse classroom populations. She argues that classrooms need "to be more inclusive and representative, which is not possible with the current form of multicultural education" (p. 115). Critiques of multicultural education (e.g., Chinnery, 2007a, 2007b; Gillette & Boyle-Baise, 1996; McCain & Salas, 2001; Moodley, 2001; Tilley, 2006) directly or indirectly raise the importance of the antiracist movement in education. Antiracist education, according to many theorists, could be used as a replacement for multicultural education. Guo and Jamal (2007) support combining multicultural and antiracist education, while Banks and Banks (2010) state that "multicultural education without an explicit antiracist focus may perpetuate the worst kinds of stereotypes if it focuses only on superficial aspects of culture and the addition of ethnic tidbits to the curriculum" (p. 399). Canadian scholars Fleras and Elliott (2007) assert that "a more radical extension of multicultural education known as anti-racism education" (p. 325) challenges both the limitations of multicultural education and "the inequities that continue to persist both within and outside the education system" (p. 325).

Abella (1984), Thomas (1984), and Lee (2001) are pioneers of antiracist education in Canada (Dei, 1996). In current literature, antiracist education has been described by several other authors as well (e.g., Kincheloe, 2008; Kumashiro, 2004). According to these scholars, antiracist education critically reviews discrimination in schools because school discourses have biases that

spread racism and other forms of marginalization. Antiracist education believes that school discourses create systems of advantage and disadvantage. The dominant culture gets the advantages and subordinate groups are disadvantaged. Antiracist education considers all aspects of how some students are given more advantages than others, not only in pedagogy, curriculum, and policies, but also in teachers' attitudes toward these students and their communities (Banks & Banks, 2010). Ghosh (2002) explains that antiracist education "emphasizes the political, historical, social, and economic aspects of all knowledge [and] exposes the dominant ideology, provides alternative perspectives to the predominant Western worldview and exposes the social construction of race and gender" (p. 116).

According to Dei and Calliste (2000), antiracist education acknowledges the relations of power found in everyday systems and practices. Dei (1996) defines antiracist education as "an action oriented strategy for institutional, systematic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression" (p. 25). Carrington and Troyna (1988) argued that antiracist education has the ability to help in the cognitive, social, and affective development of children through its emancipatory concept of educational change. They further elaborated on antiracist pedagogy by saying that it "celebrates negotiation rather than imposition; cooperation and collaboration in preference to competitive individualism" (p. 209).

Like critical pedagogy, antiracist education relates issues of race and social class with issues of power and equity and takes a comprehensive view of race and racism that is based on more than skin colour. Dei (1996) states that "anti-racism education is not the advancement of knowledge for its own sake . . . the purpose of anti-racism education is to help create a just and humane society for the well-being of all people" (p. 26).

This definition of antiracist education clearly states that it can play an important part in multicultural societies because the main goal of multiculturalism is to have a society where everyone has equal rights to live according to their own beliefs and culture, which is not possible without a just society. Thomas (1984) stated that in a democratic society antiracist education can help to prepare learners to see beyond their own understanding of racial issues and also can help them in understanding the real meanings of democracy. There is a big difference between antiracist and multicultural education's origins, philosophies, assumptions, and goals. The main purpose of antiracist education is to attain justice, equal opportunities, and freedom for minority students. Antiracist education also discards the idea that racism is mainly an issue of individuals. Like critical pedagogy, antiracist education believes that racism is present in the structures and beliefs of everyday life (Troyna, 1992).

According to Dei (1996), antiracist education is a demand of today's globalized capitalist society, and the challenges produced by today's capitalist orientation can only be addressed by antiracist education. Because immigration is on the rise due to globalization, the number of minority students in our classrooms is rising, especially in North American countries, which are the current hub of economic growth and thus attract a huge number of immigrants. Even though the population of diverse groups continues to increase in North America, schools remain Eurocentric in their views (Dei, 1996). While the government continues emphasizing equal opportunities, it almost totally neglects the policies of antiracism and equity (Dei, 1996).

The growing number of immigrant students in schools increases the importance of antiracist education. A key point of antiracist education is the inclusion of all. It emphasizes the respect of all in spite of all the differences. It also helps in showing the way of living together in bigger communities in peace and harmony by accepting differences (Tilley, 2006). According to

Rezai-Rashti (1995), antiracist education focuses on giving racially dominated groups' awareness of their rights. Antiracist education is thus viewed as political (Thomas, 1984), and requires "involvement by educational institutions in political issues" (Troyna & Williams, 1986, p. 107). Ghosh (2002) presents three broad goals of antiracist education:

1. To attempt to integrate all minority groups into the education system.
2. To provide teachers and students with the knowledge and critical abilities to counter racism both within and outside schools.
3. To identify and change educational policies, procedures, and practices that foster racism. (*Race Relations Bulletin*, 1999, pp. 1–7, cited in Ghosh, 2002, p. 116)

By keeping these goals in mind we can say that antiracist education could provide a solution to the crisis of multiculturalism. It can help immigrant minority children in overcoming the effects of racism. It not only helps immigrant children, but it also guides teachers, peers, and the community to understand the issues of racism and discrimination faced by immigrant children in schools.

Critical Theory of Education / Critical Pedagogy

Critical theory focuses on "how injustice and subjugation shape people's experiences and understandings of the world" (Patton, 2002, p. 130). Critical theorists start with the idea that men and women are fundamentally not free and dwell in a world filled with challenges and unevenness of power and privilege (Giroux, 1997). These theorists believe that schools are sites of both domination and freedom (McLaren, 2007). Critical pedagogy theory assumes that mainstream schools hold and promote hegemonic ideologies (Gramsci, 1971/1992) and foster the supremacy of the ideas and beliefs of the dominant culture (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe, 2005; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren,

2006). The mainstream school culture works not only to support students from the dominant class but also limits the experiences and dreams of the subordinate groups (Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1983; Greene, 1988; Kozol, 2006).

Critical pedagogy allows researchers to rethink the purpose of schooling and the ways by which one can fight for social justice. Critical pedagogy focuses on the development of *critical citizenry* and aims to achieve an integrated society and classroom in which individuals and groups are not divided on the basis of differences (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004, p. 21). Critical citizenry could be developed through the *socialist vision* of critical pedagogy, which is based on critical analysis of dominant approaches to education and the role of the school as a place for equality and social justice (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Kincheloe (2004) argues that critical pedagogues perform like detectives who detect new theoretical insights and search for new ways of understanding the relationship between power and oppression and the ways these forces shape the everyday life experiences of human beings.

Critical Pedagogy and the Concept of Knowledge

Critical pedagogy, also called dialectical educational theory, provides a model that allows examination of the core political, social, and economic underpinnings of the larger society. Critical theorists see school knowledge as historically and socially embedded and *interest bound* (McLaren, 2007, p. 196). School knowledge is a social construction that is deeply rooted in power relations. Knowledge and power are interconnected with each other. Knowledge determines the way we look at the world. How one understands the world is dependent on someone's position or power in society. There is a deep connection between knowledge and power (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004), but the traditional theories of education did not recognize this connection. The traditional theories of education are based on the view that there is only one way

of knowing, but according to critical pedagogy there are different ways of knowing and a diversity of worldviews. The inclusion of different worldviews in education very much aligns with the philosophy of multiculturalism (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004).

Due to globalization, societies have not only gone through changes in all spheres, including social, economic, and political, but tensions have increased regarding what knowledge and culture will be transferred through schools. Ghosh and Abdi (2004) assert that the actual function of knowledge is to show the way toward freedom, which can only be possible through increased understanding of the hidden aspects of power. The main philosophy of critical pedagogy revolves around its aim to empower those who have been and are being targets of the inequalities in public spaces and programs of education (McLaren, 1995a, 1995b).

According to Kincheloe (2008), critical theory research is transformative and can help in revealing biased practices in schools related to class, race, power, oppression, and knowledge. Critical pedagogy holds the view that all knowledge is shaped within a historical framework and this historical perspective provides life and meaning to human experiences. Freire (1970) also emphasized the historical foundations of knowledge. He argued that injustices are created and distorted by human beings and that the history of mankind is filled with the examples of it. According to him, "there is no historical reality which is not human" (p. 125). Through this perspective, schools must be understood not only within the context of their social practices but also within the context of the historical events that affect educational practice. Students and their experiences must be understood as a historical moment under particular circumstances (Darder et al., 2009). The examples of these circumstances include colonization and the Cold War, which affected all spheres of life and created stereotypes about certain religious and cultural groups.

The historical view of knowledge challenges the traditional understandings of historical conflicts, differences, and tensions in history (Giroux, 1983).

Culture

Ghosh and Abdi (2004) state that "culture refers to the way in which a group of people responds to the environment in terms of cognition, emotion and behaviour" (p. 31). McLaren (2007) defines culture as specific ways in which a social group lives out and makes sense of its given conditions of life. He explains culture as "a set of practices, ideologies, and values from which different groups draw to make sense of the world" (p. 201). According to Hartman (1997), culture is a way of life which is extracted from "history, and invested with sense and meaning" (p. 27). The concept of knowledge is directly connected to culture in that "how people's relations are structured in terms of the differences discussed and selectively explains the discrepancies that arise in defining and using the practices of knowledge and experience" (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004, p. 32).

According to critical pedagogy, to know how culture is reproduced and made visible in social relations it is very important to find out which group or individual has power in society. The ability of individuals to express their culture is related to their collective power in society as a group (Berry, 2006; Kâgitçibasi, 2009). That is why majority culture always has the power to make decisions and policies in favour of their culture, which in turn allows it to become the dominant culture (McLaren, 2007). Critical theory analyzes the links between culture and power.

Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci's (1971/1992) concept of hegemony is the basis of today's critical pedagogy. Hegemony refers to a process through which the dominant culture dominates subordinate classes or groups through moral and intellectual control. Hegemony maintains

domination not by force but mainly through social practices and structures. It is produced in particular social sites such as schools and curricula, churches, work, entertainment and media sources, and even within cultural and family groups (McLaren, 2007). Hegemony is a fight between the powerful and the oppressed, in which the powerful will always overpower the oppressed. In this fight, the oppressed unconsciously participate in their own oppression (Freire, 1985). The notion of hegemony is very important to critical pedagogues because it "points to the powerful connection that exists between politics, economics, culture and pedagogy" (Darder et al., 2009, p. 13).

In any society, hegemonic powers not only affect the dominant discourse but control schools as well. According to the critical pedagogy approach, schools adhere to hegemonic processes that aid in creating cultural and economic superiority of the dominant group in society through creating ideological hegemony among students. Issues of race, class, power, and gender are central to critical theorists' approach to the study of schooling, according to which mainstream schooling supports a bias that results in the reinforcement of the dominant culture (Darder et al., 2009; Gramsci, 1971/1992; McLaren, 1989, 1995a, 1995b, 2007). Mainstream research practices do not have the capacity to solve problems related to the systems of class and race because of their inability to analyze things critically. In contrast, critical theorists are trying to empower the powerless and also aim to transform existing social inequalities and injustices (McLaren, 2007, p. 160). Critical theory allows for the interrogation of power relationships at a societal level as operationalized in schools. Critical theorists try to bring about social justice and overcome oppression through social criticism (Darder et al., 2009).

Critical pedagogy integrates the concept of hegemony in order to expose the uneven power relations and social settings that maintain the interests of the ruling class (Gramsci,

1971/1992). Critical theory recognizes the dominant relations that are present between politics, economics, culture, and pedagogy. The process of hegemony preserves the existing power relations. Understanding how hegemony functions in society provides critical educators with a foundation for understanding not only how domination starts but how it can be challenged and overcome through critique and social action (Darder et al., 2009, p. 12).

Ideology

According to Darder et al. (2009), "ideology can best be understood as a societal lens or framework of thought, used in a society to create order and give meaning to the social and political world in which we live" (p. 12). Hegemony refers to a process, but ideology refers to structures or belief systems that give specific preassumed meanings to things. Ideology can be used to question and reveal the inconsistencies which are present among the mainstream school culture and the lived experiences and knowledge of the students. According to Giroux (1983), "ideology is a crucial construct for understanding how meaning is produced, transformed and consumed by individuals and social groups . . . it raises questions about why certain ideologies prevail at certain times and whose interests they serve" (p. 161).

Hegemony and ideology are very closely linked to each other and are sometimes referred to as "ideological hegemony" (McLaren, 2007, p. 79). According to Giroux (1983), ideology becomes ideological hegemony when it is used by the dominant class to justify their practices. Ideology and hegemony work together to maintain existing unequal power relations. Ideology provides meanings to things and allows us to make sense of our world, but its link to power and domination shows that used less for positive purposes (McLaren, 2007).

Hegemony and ideology are very important for each other and could not work without one supporting the other. Ideology refers to the manner in which both individual and groups

produce, represent, and live out their ideas, values, and beliefs. It also refers to sense and meaning making (Giroux, 1983). McLaren (2007) explains it as "a way of viewing the world, a complex of ideas, various types of social practices, rituals and representations that we tend to accept as natural and as common sense" (p. 205). It is the result of the relation between meaning and power in the social world.

McLaren (2007) described the positive and negative functions of ideologies. According to him, the positive function of ideology is to "provide the concepts, categories, images and ideas by means of which people make sense of their social and political world, form projects, come to a certain consciousness of their place in the world and act in it" (p. 206) and the negative function "refers to the fact that all such perspectives are inevitably selective" (p. 206).

Dialecticism

Dialecticism is an essential part of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy views education as a sociopolitical space (Freire, 1970, 1985; Giroux, 1998; Greene, 1988; McLaren, 2003), and a critical researcher challenges traditional thought by analyzing educational topics through dialecticism (Darder et al., 2009; Giroux, 1998; McLaren, 2003). Dialecticism is a very complex idea and its meaning can be explained in many ways. According to Carr and Kemmis (1986, cited in McLaren, 2007), dialectical thinking "is an open and questioning form of thinking which demands reflection back and forth between elements like part and whole, knowledge and action, process and product, subject and object, being and becoming, rhetoric and reality, or structure and function" (p. 194). Dialecticism helps in searching the deeply rooted meaning of things. It also helps in understanding the dialectical relationship between different terms, such as underprivileged and overprivileged classes or groups. According to critical theorists, an individual is a "social actor [who] both creates and is created by the universe of which he/she is a

part" (McLaren, 2007, p. 194). Critical theory helps to focus on the two sides of social contradictions, which helps not only in analyzing the dialectical relation between two concepts, but also in developing a deeper understanding of how the two are interrelated yet interact with each other in totally different ways (Darder et al., 2009). It also develops understanding of the complex dialectic relationships between biased and unbiased points of views.

Dialecticism is used as a tool to bring change through critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy has a dialectical view of knowledge that usually works to uncover the relations among cultural norms, values, standards of the society, and the purpose of knowledge. According to this dialectical perspective, the problems of society are not random or isolated events; instead, they take place because of the interactions among individuals and society (McLaren, 1989, 2007). Critical pedagogy tries to create a dialectical understanding of the world through the critical understanding of the hidden effects of power and privilege in a multicultural society that claims to offer equal opportunities to all its members (Darder et al., 2009; McLaren, 2003).

Conceptual Framework

The literature review I completed for my research allowed me to deepen my understanding of some very important concepts that framed my study. When I entered into my data analysis, I had prior understanding of the relationships among different factors that affect and shape immigrants' experiences in a host society. Because Muslim culture is substantially different from the mainstream Canadian culture, the key concepts I explored in my literature review helped me understand how these two cultures interact with each other and affect Muslim immigrants', especially children's, experiences in mainstream Canadian society.

Next I discuss those concepts and ideas from the literature review which specifically helped me in the conceptual understanding of my study. The most important concepts are

acculturation and the development of a sense of belonging among immigrants. Immigrant experiences cannot be studied without understanding these concepts, especially when we study immigrants' experiences in the Canadian context. Canadian multicultural policy emphasizes the positive acculturation and development of senses of belonging among immigrants, which is not possible without successful integration of immigrants into the broader Canadian society. In addition to these two key concepts, critical theory's concepts of culture, hegemony, ideology, and dialecticism provided me with critical understanding of the complex and hidden meanings behind my research participants' experiences and how these experiences affect their senses of self and belonging.

Muslims' Acculturation

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the first and most important concept in relation to immigrants' experiences in the host society is acculturation, which refers to the process of adaptation to the host country's culture and to cultural changes that come forth through intercultural contacts (Berry, 1997, 2012). Ideology and acculturation strategies of immigrants are not always aligned with those of the host society (Bourhis et al., 1997). Immigrants from similar cultures to the host culture find the cross-cultural transition easier than do immigrants who come from a culture that is extremely different from the host culture (Kâgitçibasi, 2009; Ward, 1996, 2004, Ward et al., 2009; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward & Kus, 2012; Ward, Stuart, & Kus, 2011). Integration is the most desirable acculturation strategy because maintenance of the ethnic culture while adopting the host culture values tends to be beneficial for immigrants (Berry, 1980; Ward & Kennedy, 1999), but this might not be possible in the case of Muslim immigrants. Muslim immigrants to North America have to face a greater degree of acculturation stress as compared to non-Muslim immigrants from the same ethnic background (Amer, 2005).

In other words, we can say that the Islamic identity of Muslim immigrants affects their experience of acculturation. Acculturation stress might result from conflict between Muslim beliefs and practices and mainstream cultural values (Amer, 2005). There is a greater chance of stress and conflict if there is a difference between the acculturation strategy immigrants prefer and the strategy they have to adopt on demand of the host society (Clément et al., 2001). When we talk about Muslim children's school experiences, we need to understand that they are affected by these differences. Schools, as a part of the society at large, reflect the attitudes of the mainstream culture (Macrine et al., 2010). Muslim immigrant children's school experiences are shaped according to these attitudes. When Muslims are viewed negatively by the mainstream society, Muslim children in schools are also negatively viewed by their school teachers, peers, and other members of the community at large.

Muslim Children's Acculturation and the Role of Schools

Integration of immigrants into the mainstream population, as the most desirable acculturation strategy (Berry, 1980), occurs when immigrants maintain a balance between the dominant culture and their heritage culture, but in the case of immigrant children it demands more than just maintaining a balance. To integrate immigrant children into the mainstream culture, the development of their sense of belonging is very important. Immigrant children cannot fully integrate until they feel welcome or at home in school (Lee, 2001).

In the case of Muslim children's integration into Canadian schools, many experience racism and a lack of social acceptance, which leads them to develop feelings of disaffection, marginality, social isolation, and loneliness (Zine, 2004). Most of the time, the attitudes and behaviours of Muslim children's non-Muslim peers at school are based on stereotypical assumptions about the Muslim community at large. When these young immigrant children do not

see their race, culture, and language as part of their classroom, they do not see themselves belonging to the classroom group, and some of them start to think that their values, race, and culture are inferior to the dominant culture (Zine, 2004).

Schooling is considered an important part of the acculturation of immigrant children. It is very important for them to integrate into both their ethnic community and the mainstream society (Berry, 1980), but in the case of Muslim immigrant children who became targets of criticism and discrimination, not only from their peers but from their teachers, other school staff, and the community at large, integration may not be possible (Abu El-Haj, 2002; Rezai-Rashti, 1994; Zine, 2000, 2004). An increase in Islamophobia not only makes Muslim children's psychosocial adaptation and acculturation into the school community extremely difficult, or in some cases totally impossible, it also makes it difficult for them to maintain their own ethnic identities. As a result, some Muslim children are forced by their fear of rejection to hide their religious identities. Some of these Muslim children fail to connect with their new homeland and feel they do not belong to their new place (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005; Niyozov & Pluim, 2009).

The effects of Islamophobia are not limited to the school boundaries. Often the community outside of school also rejects and isolates these young Muslims with biased comments and attitudes. Zine (2004) found that Muslim youth have to try to adjust their identities within three totally different cultural frameworks: the dominant culture, their ethnic culture, and Islam. The multiple social identities that Muslim students occupy are totally different from each other. An effort to fit in to all of the different contexts often results in split personality syndrome (Zine, 2004). Muslim children feel pressured because they have to maintain the different cultural expectations of home and school. These students are forced to develop one identity to deal with peer pressure at school and another to adjust to the conflicting

cultural demands of the home and community. Thus when young Muslim immigrants feel that they are viewed negatively by others in school, they are more likely to view society negatively and reject being part of the larger society. This could lead to their separation or marginalization instead of integration.

Development of Senses of Self and Belonging Among Muslim Children

For the positive acculturation of immigrants, the development of a sense of belonging to the larger Canadian society is essential, and it can only be obtained through positive interactions between immigrants and the mainstream Canadian population. A main aspect of belonging is that it is usually controlled by power relations and includes individuals who have the power to include or exclude others whom they think are not valuable to belong to that particular group. The dominant group in any society sets the terms for the participation of the minority ethnic groups in the larger society (Apple, 1982, 1999; Darder, 1991). Segregationist politics from the dominant group could lead to separation of culturally, religiously, and ethnically diverse groups like Muslims. New immigrants' acculturation, integration, social inclusion, and interconnection in society at large depends on the answers to questions of how immigrants adjust to the new society's way of life socially, culturally, religiously, and politically and make their new environment their 'home,' as well as how they develop a sense of belonging to it. This is especially relevant when we talk about children's' experiences, because children have a social and emotional need to belong, and from a very early age have been found to be highly aware of the physical places and social groups where they do or do not feel welcome or 'at home' (Lee, 2001). For children, schools are the sites for social interaction and where they are influenced by their formal or informal relationships with others (Scourfield et al., 2006; Goodenow, 1991). These relationships shape their sense of belonging, not only in the school community, but later

on in the society at large as well. Muslim children who face racist attitudes from the people around them might not able to see themselves as belonging to their school culture and, as a result, may feel segregated and distant from their school culture instead of developing the sense of belonging that is a desired outcome of multiculturalism in a pluralistic society like Canada. Without this sense of belonging these children cannot fully acculturate into the broader society.

Muslim Children's Identities

Over the last 15 to 20 years, rapidly increasing events of terrorism have resulted in negative assumptions by the public regarding Muslims, as well as their negative depiction in the media. Terrorist attacks have changed not only the way Muslims are identified by others but also the way Muslims identify themselves. Muslim youth in Western countries may have multiple identities which can be categorized as imposed, hybrid, hyphenated, or negotiating multiple identities. In the current era of terrorism, where Muslim identities are under attack by the dominant culture, it is very difficult for Muslim immigrant children in Canada to keep their Muslim identities. They have to fight continuously with the dominant culture to develop and maintain their hybrid identities as Canadian Muslims. To manage their hybrid identities, young Muslims in Canada and other Western countries have to live in liminal spaces (Bhabha, 1994). Liminal spaces are sites that do not belong to any one place. The liminal space in which Muslim students live are public schools, which reflect the broader society. The Othering of Muslim immigrant students in schools creates tensions that influence these children's experiences in school (Abu El-Haj, 2006).

The post-9/11 climate in schools affects the peer relations of Muslim students. Jackson (2010) has argued that media is responsible for this climate because the post 9/11 mainstream media has bombarded the public with stereotypical images of Muslims and narrowly portrayed

Islam as a violent religion prone to terrorism. These stereotypical images in the mainstream media put Muslims at risk of prejudice and discrimination in the public sphere (Jackson, 2010). Among all these images, the most common picture of Muslims since 9/11 has been of a "scary, shady character: an unlikeable, intolerable enemy of society" (Jackson, 2010, p. 9). DeRosier (2004) found in her study on Muslim students' school experiences that because of their Muslim identities these students lost their friends. They were harassed and bullied by their peers. Muslim children are forced to reevaluate their identities according to the mainstream society (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006). Islamophobia and global crises are negatively affecting young Muslims' identity formation tasks because they are forced to hide their Muslim identities in order to survive in their school environments (Sirin & Fine, 2007).

Critical Pedagogy and Muslim Children's School Experiences

The increasing evidence of Islamophobia and increasing hate crimes in Canada raises questions about the effectiveness of multiculturalism in the integration of minority immigrant children in Canadian schools (Zine, 2004). It also indicates that the current model of multiculturalism is not able to help these immigrant children to fully integrate into Canadian society (Pratt, 2002). There is a dialectical relation between the experiences of immigrant children at school and their acculturation attitudes, so critical pedagogy through dialectical thinking provides an understanding of the relationship between Muslim children's school experiences and hidden relations of power and privilege (Macrine et al., 2010). Critical pedagogy claims that people are marginalized through their socially constructed identities; therefore, Muslim students' Muslim identities could be a reason for their marginalization in schools. Racism is not simply a preexisting condition or an unavoidable fact of life which is impossible to change. It is learned and spread through time and through geographic locations and historic

events (Greene, 1988; Ridley, 1985). According to Dei and Karumanchy-Luik (2004), "consciousness and awareness of racism helps us to analyze our place within the racist experience" (pp. 8–9).

Chapter 3. Methodology and Methods

In this chapter I present key conceptual and theoretical foundations of my research methodology along with an outline of the conduct of my study. For my research I used qualitative research methods. I understand this qualitative research as an interpretive inquiry informed by key ideas from hermeneutics.

I start this chapter with a brief discussion of the constructivist paradigm in which qualitative interpretive inquiry is situated. Next, I explain the basic tenets of hermeneutics as they apply to my research. Finally, I focus on the methods I used to conduct this research.

Constructivist Paradigm

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) defined a paradigm as "a loose collection of logically held together assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research" (p. 33). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, quoting Bateson, 1972), researchers are "bound within a net" of their epistemological, ontological, and methodological grounds, which could be referred to as a paradigm. They elaborated that a paradigm is a "basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (p. 105). According to Mertens (1998), a research paradigm is a "way of looking at the world that is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action" (p. 6).

Keeping all these definitions in mind, I situated my research about Muslim children's school experiences in a constructivist paradigm informed by interpretive inquiry and hermeneutical approaches. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, cited in Ellis, 2006), "to be interested in children's experience and sense making situates one in the constructivist paradigm

with a commitment to hermeneutical and/or narrative approach to research" (p. 112). They further argue that the aim of inquiry in the constructivist paradigm is to develop more informed understandings than what was achieved before. Other main concepts of the constructivist paradigm which I kept in my mind while framing my research were that the nature of reality (ontology) influences beliefs about knowledge and the attitude of the researcher (epistemology), how to explore that (methodology), and what questions to ask. Constructivist ontology is relativist because, according to this perspective, truth is constructed by the knower individually and socially. In other words, human beings construct their own realities and there is no objective reality which could be grasped independent of the knower. Social realities sometimes do not match up with each other, and no position is considered to be more or less true. Further, these realities could always be more informed or refined. The underlying epistemological understanding is that knowledge is transactional and subjective (Merriam, 2009).

According to Gadamer (1989), knowledge is developed by human interactions and is not something ready-made or predeveloped; one has to create it. According to the ontology of the constructivist paradigm, because of the various possible constructions of meanings, the data collected from participants need constant revision. Epistemologically, the constructivist paradigm views the inquirer as being positioned in the role of participant and facilitator, who is communicating with the participants to construct understandings as the inquiry unfolds. Methodologically, according to the constructivist paradigm, the inquirer and participants refine their understanding through their interactions with each other. The main purpose of the research, according to this paradigm, is to gain insight and understanding through a dialectical interaction between the researcher and participants. The text obtained through this interaction is considered a shared text in which both researcher and participants have taken an active part in constructing.

For this purpose, the difference between knower (participants) and known should disappear. According to constructivism, the aim of inquiry is to understand and reconstruct knowledge. The criteria for quality of qualitative research are trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, and conformability, which reflect positivists'/post-positivists' criteria for validity and reliability.

To gain knowledge about Muslim students' classroom experiences, I interacted with my participants through pre-interview and interview activities. I started working on my research with a belief that there are many realities, which are not the same for every person. I believe that all knowledge is construct bound. That is why I was not searching for a single interpretation. While I acknowledge that my interpretation of my participants' realities was bound by the key constructs outlined in my conceptual framework, I look at my research as an effort to understand both the meanings constructed by my participants and the contexts that raised these constructed realities.

Qualitative Research Methodology

I chose to apply a qualitative research methodology for my research because qualitative research is a field of inquiry in which phenomena and events are studied in their natural settings in an attempt to make them easily understandable or to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Because the purpose of my study was to understand Muslim children's experience of schooling according to their own perspectives, qualitative research was best suited to this purpose since qualitative research is carried out in an effort to understand events according to the participants' viewpoints. Merriam (2009) states that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings that people construct, and they believe that the meanings are rooted in people's experiences. Merriam (2009) also describes qualitative research as an umbrella term which covers multiple forms of inquiry that help us

understand and explain the meaning of social incidents in their natural settings. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), qualitative researchers try to understand the actual meanings behind human behaviour and human experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) agree that qualitative research helps "to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 2).

Qualitative research is "pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 2). The main principle of qualitative research is "based on the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (p. 2). Qualitative research is a process of "seek[ing] to discover and to understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 11).

I based my research on the assumptions of qualitative research: that it provides a picture of the whole, and it uses field work, data collection, and analysis to provide new techniques and expand on situations (Merriam, 1998). Another reason for choosing qualitative research was that it explains situations and is flexible to various circumstances. This quality of qualitative research helped me in summarizing and processing new data immediately. It also assisted me in the discovery of unusual responses, and in looking at both verbal and nonverbal aspects of the data I collected from my participants (Merriam, 2009).

Interpretive Inquiry

As Merriam (2009) states, case studies can have a descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative emphasis, and the form of inquiry I used in this qualitative study had an interpretive emphasis. My interpretation of my conversations with children about their lived experiences of schooling served as a foundation for critical analysis (Ellis, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Interpretive inquiry is a step-by-step, sequential process in which we create our path by walking it (Ellis,

2006). For interpretive inquiry, one should be "committed to learning what the participant means by his or her expression [and] be committed to learning about the wholeness and complexity of his or her experience" (Ellis, 2006, p. 115). One important and appealing feature of interpretive inquiry which motivated me to use it was its openness. In interpretive inquiry, the researcher is not locked into a specific method or classification system.

Interpretive inquiry provides understanding through interpretation of the conversation between the researcher and the research participants. According to Gallagher (1992), it is not possible for a researcher to reproduce strict meaning because that could result in changing the meaning of the conversation. Mayers (1999) describes interpretive inquiry as a process of "dialogic conversation with myself, with others, with literature, with participants, with society, and with the world" (p. 15). She elaborates on it by using a metaphor of the ocean: "Meaning and understanding unfold through the constant renewal of questions and conversation. This process is fluid. It has a movement like the gentle (or maybe not so gentle) ebb and flow of the ocean's tide" (p. 16). Jardine (1998) defines a good interpretation as "not definite and final, but . . . one that keeps open the possibility and the responsibility of returning" (p. 43).

According to Ellis (2006), beginnings of interpretive inquiries are always important and one should start with "openness, humility, and genuine engagement" (Ellis, 1998c, p. 18). Ellis describes interpretive inquiry as a spiral and an interpretive process as a series of loops in a spiral. The loops represent the researcher's repeated efforts to reexplain text or data. Each loop represents a separate effort to get closer to what one wishes to understand. Each loop could be a different question that provides us with information and a path as we then can reframe the question for the next loop. What is learned may cause a change in the direction of the study. It could possibly lead to a dramatic "uncovering" by the other parts of the spiral. Interpretive

inquiry is an unfolding of the spiral. It may not lead to solutions, but it could still help the researcher to understand the problem or questions from a different angle, which would allow reframing of the questions. One thing which I kept in mind throughout my research was that "the aim of interpretive inquiry is not to write the end of an existing story but to write a more hopeful beginning for new stories" (Ellis, 1998c, p. 10).

Hermeneutics

Under the tenets of the constructivist paradigm, I applied ideas from hermeneutics to help me understand what was going on in my participants' lives (D. G. Smith, 2010). The main objective of any hermeneutic study is to reach an interpretive understanding of the meaning that an individual has attributed to the situation they find themselves in (D. G. Smith, 2010). Prasad (2005) suggests that "the notion of hermeneutics remains extraordinarily pervasive in qualitative research, often being used interchangeably with that of interpretation" (p. 30). J. K. Smith (1993) describes hermeneutics as "a source of reflection on the nature and problem of interpretive understanding" (p.188). According to D. G. Smith (1991), hermeneutics "is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it" (p. 201); meaning "is not out there awaiting discovery, but is brought into being through an act of understanding" (J. K. Smith, 1993, p. 195).

My study was based on the knowledge I attained through conversations with my participants. In my interpretive inquiry, which was informed by hermeneutics, I was not just gathering and reporting facts, but I was also creating the understanding of those facts (D. G. Smith, 1991; Yanow, 2000). Ellis (2006) said:

> the interpreter—the one hearing or perceiving—actively constructs the meaning of what someone else says and does by drawing on everything else he or she has heard or observed. Thus it is not enough for a researcher simply to report

> quotations of what participants have said about the research topic and to presume that they passed on the participants' meanings unaltered. There is no meaning until it is constructed by the one hearing or perceiving. (p. 115)

Ellis (2006) describes three themes of hermeneutics. The first theme is the natural creative character of interpretation, holistic work rather than perspective. The second theme is moving back and forth between webs of meanings, micro and macro. To understand a part, one has to understand the whole; to understand the whole, one must understand the parts. The third theme is the role of language, which could enable or limit the interpreter's understanding. According to Ellis (1998c), "understanding is always temporal since as our prejudices change and our language changes so do the interpretations we can make" (p. 9).

According to an assumption of hermeneutic inquiry, a gap is always present between the words that are physically spoken and the actual meaning of those words. These two can never be exactly the same. The meaning will always exceed and never be fully aligned with the words that were chosen to give expression to a phenomenon (D. G. Smith, 2010). One can never claim to know what people meant by what they said. Being a researcher, I certainly needed to listen beyond the words to recognize inconsistencies, contradictions, omissions, and concerns. As Prasad (2005) notes:

> the task of the researcher is to get beyond the text's obvious meaning in order to discern its latent and hidden meanings. Thus, a crucial notion within hermeneutics is that of subtext, or the text underneath the surface text. By implication the subtext constitutes the "real" or more important text. (p. 36)

The Hermeneutic Circle

Prasad (2005) argues that "no undertaking in hermeneutics is possible without understanding and using the hermeneutic circle, one of the foundational pillars of the tradition" (p. 34). The hermeneutic circle consists of two arcs that together help in the interpretation. In the first arc, the forward or projection arc, researchers mainly see what they already believe or know—imposing their fore-structure or pre-understandings related to the topic. J. K. Smith (1993) stated that "the interpreter is part of the circle or context within which the interpretation must be realized" (p. 187) and "everybody has certain or particular interests, values and purposes that are brought to the interpretation of the expression of others" (p. 186). The backward or evaluating arc is used to evaluate and reexamine the data to see what may have previously been missed. It is important to see what was absent as well as what is present (Ellis, 2006). Also, alternate interpretive frameworks are "tried on" in a search for the most adequate interpretive account for all the data and all patterns within it (Ellis, 2006).

The flow and "unfolding" quality of hermeneutics helped me throughout my data collection and analyzing process in addressing my research questions. I was involved not only in collecting and recording facts, but in making meaning of those facts (D. G. Smith, 1991). I had to be careful to reach out to my participants in a way that provided them with a space to show themselves (Ellis, 2006). In order to understand the experiences that participants shared with me from a hermeneutical perspective, I had to develop a greater sense of the whole, which means understanding the broader picture of the current global situation, because, as Ellis (2006) points out, "without reading individual stories within the larger stories of which they are a part, researchers are not likely to critically interpret the conditions contributing to the individual stories they have uncovered" (p. 116).

My Role as a Researcher

Before conducting this qualitative research I considered some important characteristics of a researcher as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), who argue that a qualitative researcher is like a bricoleur, a person who makes quilts, who is a "jack of all trades" or "a kind of professional do-it-yourself" person. According to Denzin and Lincoln, the qualitative researcher creates a methodological bricolage, or a narrative, which comes out of the data. The bricolage is a "complex, dense, reflective, collage like creation that represents the researcher's images, understanding and interpretations of the world or the phenomenon under analysis" (p. 3).

To make this methodological bricolage, the bricoleur is to carry out tasks such as interviewing, observing and interpreting documents, and practicing deep self-reflection. The researcher has to be knowledgeable of different paradigms, work between and within challenges, and go beyond perspectives and paradigms. The researcher understands that research is an interactive process formed by their own history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, as well as those of other people in the setting. The researcher knows that all researchers tell stories about the worlds they have studied.

Along with this bricoleur role, being an interpretive inquiry researcher I also understood that my role as an interpretive inquirer is to unfold the spiral of my research question. To do this I used pre-interview activities with participating students as an entry point to the first loop of my research spiral. Ellis (2006) states that it is very important for a researcher to have an ability to understand the problem or question differently and to reframe the question. As noted above, what the researcher learns may affect and change the direction of the study, possibly leading to a sudden "uncovering" through other parts of the spiral. D. G. Smith (1991) argues that "the purpose is not to translate my subjectivity out of the picture but to take it up with a new sense of

responsibility—to make proposals about the world we share with the aim of deepening our collective understanding of it" (p. 201).

As I analyzed the data I collected, I repeatedly moved back and forth between webs of meanings to understand the whole and the parts. I reexamined the data for "confirmation, contradictions, gaps or inconsistencies . . . in an attempt to see what went unseen before" (Ellis, 1998b, p. 26). If there was no surprise in the data, I reconnected with my participants because I believed that if I could not see what it meant, I had not come close to the participants in such a way that they could tell it to me. I reframed my questions several times and tried to move back and forth in the web of my research. It is very important for researchers to move beyond their initial findings to see what is missing. I tried not to add my own prejudgments in my interpretation and to let my research reveal itself without adding my own view within it. According to Erickson (1984), assumptions and prejudices are part of us, and we cannot fully leave them behind; however, as much as I could, I tried to minimize my own prejudgments based on my own and my daughters' experiences of being Muslim immigrants in Canada.

Changes in researchers' thinking and process are important. It is absolutely normal for researchers to discover deficiencies in their early understanding. Language is also a very important tool for a researcher that can enable or limit understanding. Language is a mediator of communication, so, as a multilingual researcher, I used my multilingual ability in my interactions with my participants to make them comfortable with sharing their experiences with me.

Research Design

Research Site and Participants

Upon completion of my candidacy and ethics approval, I selected seven Muslim immigrant elementary school children who were foreign born and were attending public schools

in Edmonton, Alberta. At the beginning of my research, I wanted to choose students who were currently enrolled in elementary grades, but after having a discussion with my supervisory committee I decided to select participants who had already passed their elementary grades. I made this change because students who have already passed their elementary grades are mature enough to make a decision about whether they want to share certain experiences with me or not. Another reason for my decision was that if they had had any bad experiences during their elementary grades, they might be already out of trauma attached to that experience and recalling their experiences would be less likely to cause any stress or harm to these students' mental and physical well-being (Ellis, 2006).

The students I interviewed included individuals from middle-class families from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. They self-identified as Muslims and all of them belonged to the Sunni sect of Islam. Among them, the students had previously had schooling experiences in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Dubai before immigrating to Canada. All seven study participants had lived in Canada for at least eight years and had attended elementary school both inside and outside Canada, which allowed them to compare their experiences in both places. I gained access to these children through my personal relationships within the community in the city in which I live. I used convenience and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2011; Neuman, 2012) because of the investigative nature and small sample size and because of the feasibility and relatively easy access that I, being a Muslim, had to these Muslim immigrant children.

I obtained consent from the participants' parents for their participation in the study (see Appendix A for consent letter). As a qualitative researcher I tried to reduce my personal bias by being reflexive through working "simultaneously at epistemological, theoretical, and empirical levels with self-awareness" (Lather, 1991, p. 66). According to Pillow (2003),

> self-reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's role(s) in the construction of the research problem, the research setting, and research findings, and highlights the importance of the researcher becoming consciously aware of these factors and thinking through the implications of these factors for her/his research. (p. 197)

To reduce my research bias I used multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical approaches. Lather (1991) argues that "the minimum requirement for assessing validity should be the techniques of triangulation" (p. 67). I also conducted member checks (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) by providing participants with copies of the transcripts of their interviews so that they could confirm that the information on the transcripts was correct. I also asked them to add, expand, or delete anything in the transcripts if they wanted to modify any information.

As I did my research with children, I tried to lessen the power relationship that often exists during social interactions between a child and an adult (Green & Hogan, 2005; Lewis & Lindsay, 2000) through the use of pre-interview activities and open-ended choices about what aspects of their experiences the children wanted to share with me (Ellis, 2006; Ellis, Hetherington, Lovell, McConaghy, & Viczko, 2013).

It is very important for a researcher to be reflexive toward their own subjectivity by recognizing the significance of the power of self, relationships with others, and relationships with society. According to Pillow (2003), to become reflexive a researcher needs to be critically conscious of their socially constructed identities and their position according to their age, gender, ethnicity, race, class, language, values, and nationality. In the study I strove to be reflexive during the whole data-gathering and analysis process and was conscious of my own subjectivity and social position as a middle-class woman and a mother of school-aged children from a Muslim Pakistani immigrant background. In addition, I was aware that in the case of immigrant children,

researchers need to be sensitive and careful. As described by Kirova and Emme (2007), researchers need to be aware that they use "cultural lenses through which they view and interpret the experiences of immigrant and refugee children" (p. 88). While collecting my data I was very conscious of my cultural lenses and interpretations and tried to keep my personal views and biases away as much as possible. However, I acknowledge that because of my preexisting social relationship with my participants, it was impossible to be impartial to what they revealed to me. I was perceived by them as family friend and a member of the larger South Asian Muslim community, and thus I did not need to work extra hard to establish trust; it was already there. However, because of my preexisting relationships with the participants' families, I was extremely careful about collecting information from my participants that pertained to their families. I involved the participants in the data collection and data interpretation processes as co-producers of the data. I gave them the freedom to choose what they wanted to share with me or not by providing opportunities for them to review the data several times. They were encouraged to delete and/or add information as they saw appropriate during their review of the data.

I saw them as co-participants, not as subjects of my research, and as co-producers and co-interpreters of their data (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection Methods

My primary data collection consisted of pre-interview activities, face-to-face interviews with the participants, and observational and key-word notes collected during the interviews. The interviews took place over the course of one year. With each participant I conducted two to three interviews, during which I listened to the participants' experiences to uncover and address issues such as power, race, class, and social justice. I tape-recorded and transcribed these interviews. Later on, I checked my notes against the tape recordings.

Pre-interview activities.

Before conducting semistructured interviews with each of the participants, I asked them to complete pre-interview activities (see Appendix C). Even though I gave them these activities a week prior to our first interview, only five participants completed their interview activities. Two male participants could not find time to finish the activities due to their other commitments. I did not insist on them finishing the activities because I did not want to place a burden on them.

The purpose of the pre-interview activities was to help participants recall significant memories and reflections and also to enable them "to recall significant experiences, analyze them, and reflect on their meaning" (Ellis, 2006, p.113). Ellis (2006) argues that qualitative research usually uses interviews in order to explore people's thinking and experiences. She states that "the object of an interview is not simply to get answers to the questions, but to learn what the topic of research is about for the participants" (p. 113). For this purpose, I developed pre-interview activities. Because it is always a good idea to provide participants with a wide variety of choices for their pre-interview activities, I provided participants with several choices. I included activities containing "schedules, activity logs, lists of key words, maps, timelines showing significant events, collages, photographs, pictures, diagrams, and visual metaphors" in following the examples presented by Ellis and colleagues (Ellis, 2006; Ellis, Amjad, & Deng, 2011; Ellis, Janjic-Watrich, Macris, & Marynowski, 2011, Spring; Ellis, Hetherington, Lovell, McConaghy, & Viczko, 2013). These activities established some common ground for further discussions and became a bridge between the children's and my understanding.

The pre-interview activities are consistent with hermeneutics because they assisted the participants in disclosing their understanding in a way that they wished and also to find the main ideas behind their experiences as related to the research topic (Ellis et al., 2011). These activities

helped me in reframing my interviews because through them, some of the subtopics were identified. The pre-interview activities also helped in understanding the whole/part relationship I needed to be aware of (Ellis, 2006). As Ellis (2006) notes, without such an "opportunity for recollection and reflection, participants are likely simply to draw on available discourses to say something that comes to mind readily and sounds sensible" in the course of an interview (p. 113).

Semistructured interviews.

After these pre-interview activities, the next step in my data collection was interviewing the children. I did two to three face-to-face interviews with my participants. I used open-ended questions based on the participants' pre-interview activities, which provided the children with ample opportunities to express or share their stories with me (see Appendix D). The main focus of my interviews was on the points that came out of the pre-interview activities. I spent substantial time and effort refining my original list of open-ended questions. I made various revisions. I adopted my final list of questions (see Appendix D) from the open-ended interview questions, as suggested by Ellis (2006). I started the conversation with my participants in a way which allowed them "the freedom to talk about what they perceive as important" as it is linked to the research topic (Michrina & Richards, 1996, p. 52). Neuman (2012) indicates that questions are used to draw in advance the background of meaning in which a particular inquiry will move. I added probes whenever needed to encourage children to share more details in their stories.

Even though my main focus was on children's school experiences, I adopted a holistic approach and tried to have a sense of wholeness, as described by Ellis (2006), before conducting these interviews. I gave the children the choice of time and place for their interviews. These places were quiet and undisturbed, and the participants and I visited the place before the

interviews. Even though I obtained formal consent from the children before my interviews (see Appendix B for student assent letters), I asked the children again if they were still interested in participating in the interview process. I recorded the interviews after obtaining permission from the children, and I let them handle the tape recorder if they wanted, allowing them to turn it off any time they wanted to (Ellis, 2006). I recorded my observational notes right after each interview. These notes about the children's facial and verbal expressions were documented as accurately as possible. Each and every interview was recorded, and personal comments and emotional feelings were recorded separately (Neuman, 2012). Hutchinson and Wilson (1994, cited in Westcott & Littleton, 2005) state that in hermeneutic research, the focus of interviews should be on participants' lived experiences because the interview is "not about unearthing things; rather it is about constructing an account with a child" (p. 150).

In conducting the interviews, I followed the detailed description of the interview process presented by Weber (1986). According to her, the interview is an essential part of everyday experience, not an artificial simulation. *Interview* means "seeing the between," or meeting to share a viewpoint. Understanding the real meaning and purpose of interviewing is very important to understand deeper meanings. Interviews are a mode of learning in which we learn not only about others but about ourselves as well. An interview must be in the form of a conversation between the interviewer and the participant, which helps the participant recall the experience and aids in expanding the common understanding between interviewer and interviewee (Creswell; 2011; Neuman, 2012; Weber, 1986). The interview is an example of human dialogue in which questions are used to draw the framework of direction in which a particular inquiry will go. The main purpose of posing a question is exposure; the answer in turn invites more questioning to guide the interview (Ellis, 2006)).

According to Weber (1986), the interview has its best moments when the interviewer and the participant are both caught up in the phenomenon being discussed, when both are trying and wanting to understand. At these times, both people forget the tape recorder, forget that "this is an interview," and simply talk, listen, and focus on the phenomenon in question. Interviewing is an art because to keep quiet and to listen actively and patiently is not an easy task (Seidman, 1991). When interviewer and participant are talking to each other, the interview becomes a shared experience affecting both. Richardson (2005) suggests that the participant becomes in a sense the teacher, the one whose job is to teach this stranger what they know. The effects of an interview can continue long after the people being interviewed have left. While doing interviews, my participants and I often became so involved in our conversations that we forgot the tape recorder was on, and students shared their experiences with me without any interruption.

An invitation for an interview is actually an invitation for a conversation. The nature and quality of this invitation is very important. It should be genuine, such as, "I would like to know you and I would also like you to know me" (p. 66). The interview is private and confidential, but also social and public. I followed measures to protect confidentiality. However, there is always a chance of public exposure, and a chance of either abuse and betrayal or trust and shared understanding. It depends on the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the participant, on the preconceptions they bring to the interview, on what happens after the interview is over, and on how the researcher decides to deal with the experience. It is not part of the research task to make the meaning clear; rather, the task is to remain true to the original aural experience as much as possible.

During my analysis, I considered the tape recording combined with written transcripts and notes as my data of preference for analysis (Creswell, 2011; Neuman, 2012). Another

purpose of taking notes, according to Seidman (1991), is "to keep track of things . . . and as a way for me to come back to them when the timing is right" (p. 57).

Observations.

Another method for my data collection was observations. During the interviews I observed and recorded children's facial expressions and other nonverbal expressions relevant to their observations. According to Boostrom (1994), a researcher needs to have a quality of deep understanding of an environment before undertaking a study of it. The most important thing is the ability to identify what needs to be considered and what should be ignored. He notes that a researcher can confidently go into the field with a clearly developed question in mind, apparently knowing exactly what to look for, but the main challenge is to bring research questions and data collection into a continuous connection. Boostrom (1994) states:

> If [researchers] look too narrowly, they will see little and may learn nothing from the environment they study, having limited their results to the question they posed. On the other hand if they do not attempt to limit their focus, they may see too much and still learn nothing, becoming swamped by an ocean of details. (p. 52).

According to Boostrom (1994) it is very important for a researcher to learn how and what to observe. He characterizes the researcher as changing in the process of observation and going through "different stages as a video camera, playgoer, evaluator, subjective inquirer, insider and finally, reflective interpreter" (p. 53). Only the researcher can decide what to observe; no one else can help and not even past experiences and books can guide the choice. Researchers can make this decision without the help of any methodological theories or frameworks; what they need is to pay attention to find their own way of observation (Boostrom, 1994).

Data Analysis

The purpose of my analysis was to recognize what the data were telling me about the kind of experiences Muslim students had in their elementary grades. During this whole process, I kept my research questions in front of me, which helped me to focus on my analysis. To analyze my data, I used the analysis of narratives method described by Polkinghorne (1995), in which "researchers collect stories as data and analyze them with a paradigmatic process" (p. 12). In this process, "the evaluation of the story has a pragmatic dimension in the sense that its value depends upon its capacity to provide the reader with insight and understanding" (p. 20). Polkinghorne explains that "narrative configuration refers to the process by which happenings are drawing together and integrated into a temporally organized whole" (p. 5).

I collected the data in the form of stories shared by my participants during their interviews. According to Mishler (1986, cited in Polkinghorne, 1995), interview responses will often be used as stories because,

> if the interviewer will not suppress the interviewee's responses by limiting the answers to what is relevant to a narrowly specified question, a storied answer will be provided. The interviewers solicit stories by simply asking the interviewee to tell how something is happened. (p. 13)

According to Ricoeur (1986/1991, cited in Polkinghorne, 1995), "stories are particularly suited as the linguistic form in which human experiences as lived can be expressed" (p. 7). To analyze the stories, I used pragmatic analysis, in which "narratives seek to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data" and the researcher "looks for various kinds of responses, actions, and understandings that appear across the storied data" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13).

As a bricoleur who created a methodological bricolage, or a narrative which emerges from data, I performed the research tasks of interviewing and observing and then I used these data to form a bricolage. I asked participating Muslim children to share stories about their experiences at school with me and then I transcribed these recorded stories and used the written texts for analysis. I reduced full responses to core ideas. I pulled out pieces from the full transcript that spoke to the point of the story and used them to interpret my data Mishler (1986, cited in Polkinghorne, 1995).

Analysis of the data started from a review of the literature to identify recent and emerging research trends about my research topic. I modelled my data analysis from the perspective of forward and backward arcs of the hermeneutic circle. While developing themes, I kept my research question in mind, and I coded the themes that emerged from the data. To evaluate my work I used a constructivist approach by including "verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring, political praxis, multi voiced texts and dialogues with subjects" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12). According to Patton (2002), there is no right or wrong method of organizing, analyzing, and interpreting the data. All are recommendations, not prescriptions. The researchers need to do the best they can, relying on their own intelligence, expertise, and judgments, which is not easy at all.

It took me a long time to learn the skills of data analysis, and many times I became stuck and felt that I was doing something wrong. It took me a while to understand that I am a doctoral student and what I am doing is part of learning. To reduce the chances of any misinterpretation, I read every transcript several times, as I felt this was important before starting the process of coding. My codes consisted of short, simple phrases or sentences which I wrote in the margins of the interview transcripts. Before identifying themes, I clustered these phrases into different topics

for each participant. Then I chose similar broader topics among all my participants. After finding common topics, I clustered each participant's topics under the broader topics, and in this way I found the common themes.

I found three outcomes from my interpretive inquiry as described by Packer and Addison (1989): (1) ideas for helpful action; (2) new questions or concerns; and (3) change in me as a researcher because I discovered inadequacies in my initial pre-understandings. Packer and Addison (1989) claim that "validity is not the issue, in terms of proving an interpretation true or false" (p. 29). They suggest that "a circularity of understanding is essential and that the real test of an inquiry or interpretation is whether or not it reveals a solution to the difficulty that motivated the inquiry" (p. 29).

I followed Schwandt's (2007) suggestion that "the inquirer employs a variety of analytic strategies that involve sorting, organizing, and reducing the data to something manageable and then exploring ways to reassemble the data in order to interpret them" (p. 7). I also adopted four general approaches as suggested by Packer and Addison (1989, cited in Ellis, 1998c) to evaluate my interpretive accounts: (1) requiring that it be coherent; (2) examining its relationship to external evidence; (3) seeking consensus among various groups; and (4) assessing its relationship (p. 30). In addition, I used six questions presented by Ellis (1998c, p. 31) to evaluate my interpretive account to determine whether it uncovers the answer or not: (1) Is this interpretive account convincing? (2) Does it fit with other materials I know? (3) Does it have the power to change? (4) Does it transfer my understanding? (5) Does it uncover the solution? (6) Has it opened up new possibilities for new researchers, research participants, and the structure of the context?

Ethical Considerations

Interpretive research emphasizes the importance of intimacy and open-endedness, which makes the protection of participants' autonomy and privacy very important. Interpretive research is intimate because it brings the researcher and participant close together. It is open ended because the interviews and participant observation may lead to sudden new questions (Howe & Moses, 1999). Howe and Moses (1999) suggest that for protecting an individual's autonomy, informed consent is one of the most important ethical principles in social research. The research participants must be fully informed of every aspect of the research at the beginning of the study and their consent must then be obtained. Participants can only consider the risks versus the benefits if they are fully informed. According to Bhattacharya (2007), "a formal consent form can serve as an agreement to participating in a research project and a fluid guideline for data collection and representing" (p. 1101).

I submitted my research proposal with all the details to the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board in March 2013. In this proposal I provided all the details about the research, including the risks involved. After receiving the ethics approval, I asked all the child participants in this study to sign a consent form developed specifically for this research, along with a special form prepared for their parents' consent. This form included all the details about the topic, nature of the research, participating site, voluntary nature of the study, and confidential measures. I gave participants a package with all the details and pre-interview activities so they could make a decision whether they wanted to participate or not. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) refer to two guidelines to ensure that, first, "subjects enter research projects voluntarily [and] understand the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations that are involved" and second, "subjects are not exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they might derive" (pp. 49, 53).

To all of the participants, I explained the confidentiality measures and voluntary nature of the research verbally as well. To maintain confidentiality, I use pseudonyms instead of the participants' real names (Creswell, 2011).

Researching Children's Experiences

In preparation for conducting my research with young children, I read the literature on conducting research with young children very carefully and tried to adopt all necessary measures to prevent my participants from experiencing any possible discomfort. Research with children and on children's issues is a very important part of today's research. Children have their own understandings of the world around them, which are not easy for an adult to understand (Green & Hill, 2005). Ellis (2006) calls children "social actors" who create their own culture through exploring the physical and social resources available to them (p. 111). It is not easy for an adult to peek into the world of children exactly as they are looking at it. The child's private life has "an internal representation of the world" around them (Green & Hill, 2005, p. 2). Green and Hill (2005) state that in most societies children "are valued for their potential and what they grow up to be but are devalued in terms of their present perspectives and experiences" (p. 3). According to Holloway and Valentine (2000, cited in Ellis, 2006),

> although adult's perspectives are needed to analyze the conditions that limit or enable children's experience, it is children's own sense making and ways of proceeding that ought to inform adult's understanding of the significance of the conditions in which children live. (p. 111)

A researcher needs to study effective ways to get rich answers to their questions. They have to frame their research on the basis of previous research on the issues and ways of conducting research with young children. Ellis (2006) asserts that to interpret the actual meaning

behind a child's experience, a researcher needs to learn about the child's background so they can make "a sense of wholeness and complexity of the child's life in order to interpret the significance of what the child says or shows regarding the research topic" (p. 119).

In recent years there has been an increase in the demand for the development of ethically appropriate research methods for children, especially after the assertion of this right under the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989). Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child laid emphasis on children's right to form and express their opinions freely on all matters that concerned them. It also stressed that those children's voices be heard and increase in importance according to their age and maturity (Morrow & Richards, 1996, cited in Kirova & Emme, 2007). According to Green and Hill (2005), every child has a unique personality and, especially in the case of immigrant children, consideration of the diversity and individuality of a child is very important. These authors assert that "researching children's experience is a project that is fundamentally problematic . . . and highly inferential" (p. 6).

Kirova and Emme (2007) state that in the case of research with immigrant and refugee children, specific attention to all the possible ethical issues is very important. They refer to these children as "children in especially difficult circumstances" because before arrival in their host countries they may have encountered "family separation, rape, abduction, or trafficking" (p. 6).These immigrant and refugee children may also encounter problems in their new countries. They may have issues both at home and at school, including rejection from peers, feelings of loneliness, and discrimination. According to Kirova and Emme (2007), "these circumstances demand not only sensitivity on the part of the researchers, but awareness of the cultural lenses through which they view and interpret these experiences" (p. 6).

Davis (1998, cited in Hill, 2005) presents similar arguments for researchers, saying, “it is important for researchers to be reflective, question their own assumptions about children and adapt to each individual, rather than assume there are universal answers to the ethical and methodological issues of researching with children” (p. 65).

Morrow and Richards (1996) emphasizes the continuous nature of ethical consideration while conducting research with young children, and Hill (2005) presents the following list of ethical considerations:

1. Involvement of children in the research: children can participate in their research plans in different ways, from choosing research questions to interpreting and presenting the data.
2. Consent and choice: children need to be properly informed about the aim of the research. They should also be informed about the amount of time and commitment required.
3. Possible harm or distress.
4. Privacy and confidentiality: at least three elements should be there, including public confidentiality, social network confidentiality and third-party breach of privacy. (pp. 65–75)

I followed Hill’s (2005) instructions by providing children maximum information and free choices. According to Hill, children should know about “the aims of the research; what time and commitment is required; who will know the results; whether there will be feedback; whether confidentiality is promised” (p. 69). I was very careful about children’s rights as described by Hill (2005), including welfare rights, protective rights, provision rights, and choice or participatory rights. Hill states that children should be able to make choices about

a. the agreement or refusal to take part;

b. opting out (at any stage);

c. determining the boundaries of public, network, and third-party confidentiality; and

d. contributing ideas to research agendas and processes, both for individual research projects and to the research enterprise as a whole. (p. 81)

Next, in Chapter 4, I present narrative portraits of my seven participants.

Chapter 4. Portraits of the Participants

In this chapter I present and then summarize narrative portraits of my seven participants. These portraits include the stories the participants shared with me about when and how they moved to Canada and how, after immigration, they started attending schools here in Canada. I also include my general impression of each participant. I have divided the portraits into two categories, male and female. Although the male and female participants had similar kinds of school experiences, there were still a few differences due to the dress code of the female participants (i.e., hijab), which differentiates them from their classmates. Until they grow up, male Muslims have no visual symbols that indicate their religious beliefs.

One common experience among all seven participants was that they moved to Canada in their childhood after the age of 8, and they all finished either full elementary education or some part of their elementary grades in Alberta. Each student shared their unique story with me. In the process of attempting to understand these students' experiences holistically, I was able to identify common aspects of their experiences that led to the division of data into four broad categories: relationships with peers; teachers' attitudes; neighbouring community behaviour; and the role of media. I also identify common themes among the students' stories, which are described in the next chapter.

A number of factors other than their age at immigration and the location of their elementary school attendance contributed to the selection of the study participants. One factor was their ability to express and communicate their ideas and experiences. All the participants were eager to share their experiences because they saw this as an opportunity to express their feelings and emotions, and they also seemed to recognize the value of this research. They shared

their rich experiences, paying close attention to details, with minimal input from me. The participants were from different parts of the world and all of them passed through different experiences. One common characteristic was their religion: Islam.

See Table 3 for demographic information about my seven participants.

Table 3: Participant Demographics

No.	Name	Gender	Originally from	Age at immigration	Years in Canada	Residing country before immigration	Initial city of settlement
Male Participants							
1	Farooq	Male	India	10	3	Qatar	Toronto
2	Saeed	Male	Pakistan	8	9	Saudi Arabia	Toronto
3	Ali	Male	Pakistan	8	8	Pakistan	Fort McMurray
Female Participants							
4	Shama	Female	Pakistan	9	9	Saudi Arabia	Toronto
5	Fatima	Female	Bangladesh	8	10	Dubai	Edmonton
6	Mariam	Female	India	8	3	Qatar	Toronto
7	Amina	Female	Pakistan	10	8	Pakistan	Toronto

Portraits of the Male Participants

Farooq

My first male participant, Farooq, is 13 and currently studying in a middle school in Edmonton. Farooq's family moved to Canada almost three years ago. He has one younger sister who was 8 years old when the family immigrated to Canada. Originally they are from India. Farooq was born in India, and then the family moved to Qatar and stayed there for ten years.

Farooq's family's financial situation in India was not good; they were a lower middle-class family. They lived in a small apartment in a highly populated area. His father applied for a job in Qatar and gradually moved his family there from India. In Qatar, their financial situation improved because the salary and living conditions were better than in India. They lived in a high-rise building which was mostly populated by migrants from South Asia. The school Farooq and his sister went to there was filled with students from South Asian backgrounds. All the families gathered in the playground in front of their building almost daily. The children of these families had a fun time playing and talking to each other during this time. Even though they were living in a new country, they were interacting with people of the same ethnic background. Qatar is a Muslim country, so they had their religious celebrations together. India is not too far from Qatar, so Farooq's mother visited India several times during their stay in Qatar, and she took her children with her.

Some friends of Farooq's family applied for immigration to Canada, and after hearing their success stories, Farooq's father decided to apply for immigration as well. They had no idea about the Canadian culture. They just applied because people were telling them very fascinating stories about Canada. They completed all their paperwork and in three years they obtained permanent residency in Canada. Farooq's father is an engineer by trade, but now he is working as an electrician in Edmonton. Farooq's mother is a stay-at-home mother who does not have formal education and has difficulties speaking English. She is trying to improve her language skills by taking English classes. Farooq also could not speak English well when he first arrived, but he learned it very quickly.

Upon immigration, the family landed in Toronto first, and then Farooq's father decided to move to Edmonton. During their one-month stay in Toronto, Farooq did not attend school and

just stayed at home. In Edmonton, he started his schooling in the Mill Woods area, which is a hub of the city's South Asian community. He attended school there for two months and then the family moved to Spruce Grove. The school experience in Spruce Grove was different from his previous school experiences. According to Farooq, his experience in Mill Woods was very good as compared to his current school experience in Spruce Grove. In Mill Woods, he made many friends from his own ethnic and cultural background. He still has friendships with those children and he visits them often. He found it very easy to adjust to the school environment in Mill Woods. He actually liked it more than his school experience in Qatar, where he was failing due to the education system, which focused on rote memorization of written texts, with the students having very few opportunities for hands-on practical learning. The Qatari teachers were very strict and often used corporal punishment to discipline their students.

When Farooq first started his schooling in Mill Woods, he was quite impressed and found it very easy and flexible as compared to his experiences in the schools of Qatar. According to Farooq, here in Canada the method of asking and responding to questions is totally different from that in Qatar because there is recognition that multiple answers to a question are possible. The students can answer in any way they want without fear of punishment for giving the wrong answer. It took Farooq a while to adjust to the education system here. At first he was confused, but now he is a little more comfortable with it than before. He likes the Canadian system because there is no uniform, and he has found that the teachers are very cooperative and do not force or pressure students to work very hard. He likes the play-based learning here in Canada.

Farooq's father alone made the decision to immigrate to Canada because he felt that the education system in Qatar was not good and he wanted to give his children a better education. He was working as an engineer in Qatar, but he left his job to provide a better future to his children.

He found a job after a while in Edmonton, but it is not related to his skills and qualifications. He made this sacrifice in the hope of a better future in Canada. Farooq was not very excited when his father first decided to move to Canada, but he looked forward to being in a new place and imagined the possible adventures he could have in Canada.

Even though Farooq's experiences with his peers in Spruce Grove were not very good, he said he really likes his teachers because they are very good. On the first day, when he went to register at the school, he was surprised that the principal was standing at the door and welcoming everybody by name. It wasn't like his previous school experiences. His family was quite shocked too, as they were not expecting that. Farooq said that his school experience in Canada is pretty smooth, simple, and easy. He likes the freedom in the schools here, but sometimes he gets distracted by this freedom and wastes his time. However, he always works very hard to finish his work within the time given.

The most difficult thing in Canada for Farooq has been finding new friends. He had a large number of friends in Qatar, and he used to play with them every day. Leaving them behind was the most difficult part of coming to Canada for him. According to him, the reason behind making fewer friends here in Canada is that people are different here. Even after spending three years in Canada and having finished his elementary grades, he still has fewer friends at his middle school. The common use of drugs and alcohol by his schoolmates is the main reason why he does not want to make friends with them. He also does not want to make friends with people who are related to gangs involved in drug dealing. He wants to make friends with youth who have similar interests, such as games and computers.

Farooq said his classmates judged him at first, but when they got to know him closely they often became his friends. Even though he has some good friends now, some other students

at school make him upset all the time with their comments about Muslims. According to him, the students are getting their attitudes from the media, which often shows negative things about Muslims. It sticks in their minds that Muslims are bad people, but being a Muslim, Farooq knows it is not true, and that Muslims are good people. Once he went to the principal to complain about the students' bad comments. She called the students into her office and told them to stop saying and doing the things that bother him. She also told Farooq that if they did it again she would take action against them. These students stopped bothering him with comments about Muslims being terrorists, but now they bother him with comments about his culture. He is from India, and other students in the school thought he worships cows and snakes. He said most of the time at school he has fights with those who try to make fun of his religion and culture.

Farooq said that teachers here are generally good, but when they have class discussions about current global situations they all talk against Muslims. He said that the teachers all seem to think Muslims are killers and they are responsible for all the terrorist activities happening around the world. He said that even though his classmates make fun of him, he has never tried to hide his Muslim identity. When the other students tease him about Islam, he just ignores them, because he thinks people do these kinds of things just to make other people's lives worse.

It is not only Muslims who are mistreated in the school; Farooq's Hindu friend is also teased by other students, and both of them are given strange looks in the hallways at school. It is not only because of their skin colour, but also because of the way they behave. For example, his Hindu friend never eats meat because he is vegetarian, and Farooq eats only halal (meat that is prepared according to Muslim ways). The other students were surprised that his friend never eats bacon or other meat. For them, it is a very strange thing, and they think Farooq and his friend are peculiar.

Farooq told me that his experiences of racism are not limited to the school boundaries. His mother wears a hijab, and whenever she goes out to the mall other people are always looking at her. Once when he and his mother went shopping in Toronto, the cashier was letting other people just pay and go, but he checked to see if their cash was real or not. The security guard was also watching them because his mother was wearing a hijab. Farooq feels that here in Edmonton there are people who do not respect immigrants. He said he wants to be a part of the community, but because of people's behaviour, he always stays back. Farooq is a very active child. He wants to fully participate in his school community by joining in on sports and gym activities, but because his religion prevents him from wearing shorts, his classmates think he should not take part in sports.

Farooq said that in his free time he wants to read the Quran and also play some video games. It is not that he is really fond of reading the Quran, but he has to, because his parents have strict rules about prayers in their house. He is a technologically savvy young person who is very good with computers and loves working with them. His peers and teachers are surprised when they notice this. When he first came to Canada, his skill with computers was just average because he was new and trying to adjust to Canada at that time, but now he is one of the best students in the class when using computers.

Many students at Farooq's school take drugs, even during recess, but he never does because he is a Muslim. He tries to keep himself away from drugs for two reasons: first, because of his parents' influence, and second, being a Muslim, he cannot even think of taking drugs. He has faith in God, and according to his beliefs, what God has decided for someone will come to that person at the right time. There is no need to find an escape through drugs.

Farooq also told me about many things which he wanted to do or already did. He said he always had good ideas about school projects. He did a project in grade 7 about smoking for which he made lungs to demonstrate how smoking is harmful to health. Everybody was quite surprised by his presentation. He always daydreams about driving a car and hopes this dream will come true. He said the best thing about being his age is that it is fun; there is no pressure on him and he enjoys every moment of his days. The hardest thing might be that his mind is influenced by things very quickly. An example of this is when he was caught shoplifting; he regrets that decision and feels very bad about having done it. He said he shoplifted because he saw it in movies and he thought it would be lot of fun to do it. Another thing that bothers him is the misconception among his classmates that if someone come from or lives in a Middle Eastern area they will be a dangerous driver. They think that because Farooq came from Qatar he should not get a licence to drive a car. He said they get this information mostly from the media. Farooq said it is usually nationals of Qatar who are dangerous drivers, not "people like him." He said his father is a wonderful driver who has never been pulled over and never received a ticket.

On Friday afternoons Farooq goes to the mosque while his non-Muslim peers are playing. He said there is no break for Eid (Muslim holidays) here in Canada while it was totally different in Qatar, where Muslims are the majority. Qatari schools had a break on Fridays, so it was easy for him to pray. He said in Canada other students have passed comments on his religious practices. Sometimes he is affected by their comments and sometimes he just ignores them. The effect of all these things depends on his mood.

There are three Muslim students in Farooq's school, and Farooq said he is pretty sure their school experiences are similar to his even though he never has a chance to talk to them at school. He is a very hard-working student who wants to help his parents. He said he is going to

start working in a car wash soon. He thinks that will be a little hard because of his skin colour. He worries that some people may scream at him simply because they are racist.

My Personal Reflections on Farooq

Farooq made a drawing as part of his pre-interview activity (see Figure 1 below); he drew the change in his life in his elementary grades after immigration. When I asked him to explain these drawings, he provided me with lots of background information about them. Overall, Farooq is very talkative and expressive. He shared many of his experiences in and out of school with me. I conducted two formal interviews with him and had many informal conversations over the phone and on Skype. The atmosphere during our interviews was very friendly. He was cheerful throughout the conversations but at times, he became a little emotional. He provided me with lot of insightful details about his school experiences in Canada.

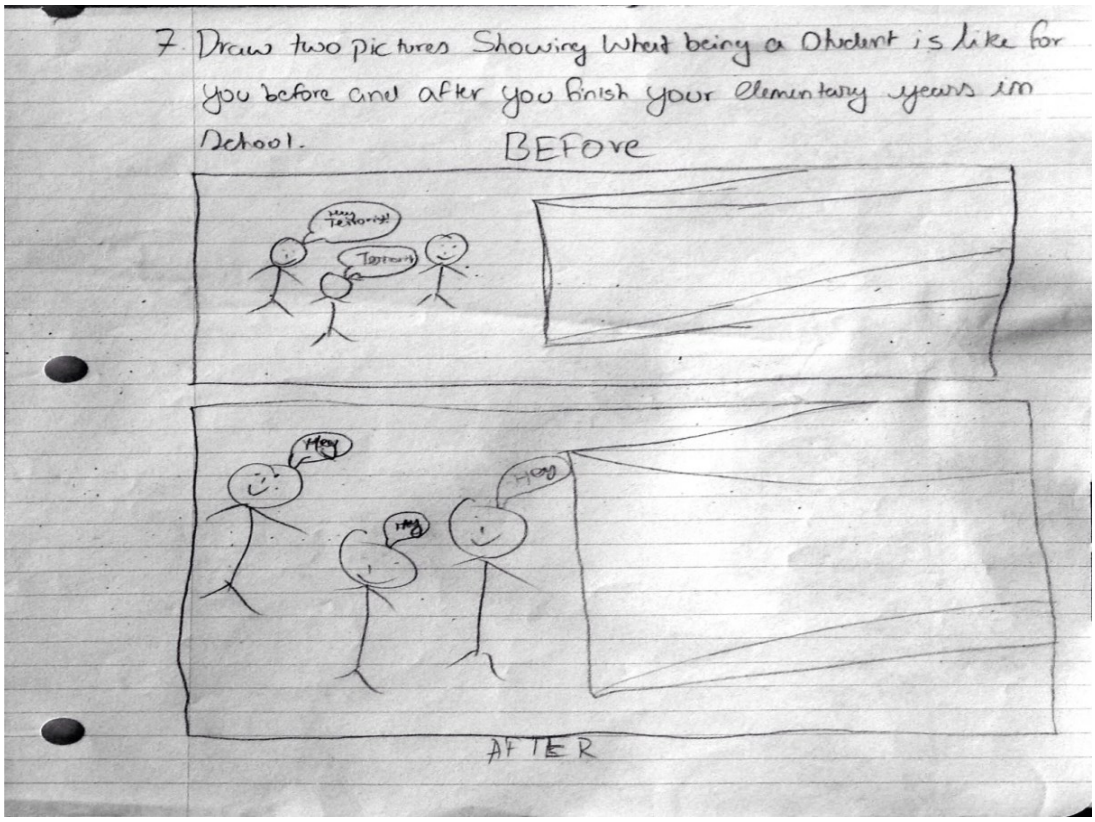

Figure 1. Pre-interview activity by Farooq.

Ali

My second male participant, Ali, was 16 years old and in grade 10. Ali moved to Canada from a remote area of Pakistan. His father was an engineer and his mother was a teacher by profession. With three older sisters, Ali is the youngest in his family. The family was quite well off in Pakistan. Ali was just 8 years old at the time his family made the decision to move to Canada. Because they moved to Canada when he was very young, he had no ideas about Canada before moving. He did not visualize Canada and had no expectations. When he arrived, he was surprised by the harsh weather, because it was very cold here. His family arrived in winter and they had no jackets because they were not expecting it to be that cold. The first few days without a jacket were among the hardest days in Canada for Ali. Everything was new and strange. Among all these strange things, there were a few things he really enjoyed, such as continual running water and electricity. There were many power outages in Pakistan, which ruined everyone's whole day. Ali said that the most difficult part about immigration was leaving their relatives behind. He said he still misses his relatives. He was very close to his grandparents, who are not in this world anymore. He regrets that he was not with his grandparents when they died, and he feels sad that he can never see them again. It took a while for him to overcome his sadness.

Ali started his public schooling in Canada, as he was home schooled in Pakistan. His father applied for immigration a long time ago, and he did not send Ali to school because he was expecting to move to Canada at any time. This is Ali's eighth year in Canada. His family first settled in Fort McMurray, where a few of his father's old friends were living. His father worked at a few odd jobs, and then later decided to open a gas station in partnership with one of his friends. That business was the reason the family moved from Fort McMurray to Edmonton.

Ali started his schooling in Fort McMurray but was enrolled in school in Edmonton when they moved. He likes his school experience in Canada. He said the education system in Canada is very good because teachers explain everything carefully and do not pressure the students a lot. Ali also likes the opportunities for physical activities provided at school. The teachers do not make students sit in one spot for the whole day. According to him, when he first attended elementary school in Edmonton, he was scared and nervous because he did not know what people would say about him. He was confused, and he found school quite difficult because he had to learn about the new atmosphere. It took a week or two to get used to the new world around him. In elementary school he made new friends quite quickly. He was good at sports and played soccer at school with other children, and in this way they became his friends.

When I asked Ali to choose between his elementary years and high school, he said he liked his elementary years better than his high school years because there was a lot of fun and they got nap time at school, which was a new experience for him. Ali was a very active child who did not want to sit the whole time in class. He started his schooling very late, so he was not used to sitting for long periods of time. He especially remembers his elementary days in which there were a lot of physical activities, including music and dance. His favourite sport was soccer, but because of its unavailability in elementary school he started playing other sports. He preferred elementary school to secondary and high school because there was no pressure to work and the teachers were very polite. However, he said he also likes his high school experience because it helps him in his future postsecondary education. His high school education has helped him get to know about Canada and his role as a law-abiding citizen. He has also gained global awareness about what is going on in other parts of the world, which he was totally uninformed about before high school.

Ali was hesitant to make new friends at first because of his lack of fluency in English. He had difficulty understanding others. In Pakistan, he did not go to school. His home languages were Urdu and Punjabi and he was never exposed to English. His first friend in elementary school who was from the same ethnic background helped him a lot in interacting with other children, and also acted as an interpreter for him. He helped Ali by explaining everything discussed in the class. He lived near Ali's house, so he even helped him with his homework as well. Ali learned English very quickly.

Respect toward teachers is an important part of the teachings of Ali's culture and religion, and he always tries to be conscious of this. He believes teachers have the most important part in their students' learning because the teachers are the ones who know about learning and are the experts of knowledge. If teachers did not teach their students and left them on their own, they would not learn at all. Ali liked his elementary school teachers because they were very nice to him. They helped him in his adjustment to the new school culture. He also attended ESL classes, which helped him overcome his language barrier.

For his future school years, Ali hopes to get better grades so he can get admission in a well-reputed postsecondary institution. He is very hopeful for his future and wants to do something that interests him. He loves math and he is very good at it. Although there is no clear connection between math and physical activities, he has a special interest in sports and often spends his leisure time playing outside.

Sometimes when Ali gets bored in school he daydreams about what he will do after graduation. In his elementary grades he wanted to be in military. He had dreams in which he was wearing an army uniform. He hates doing school homework and loves physical activities. He said that one year ago, he was an out-of-shape kid, so he practiced running and improved a

lot. He keeps getting better and better, and he wants to do even better, so he practices every day whenever he has some extra time.

Ali has friends from different backgrounds. He makes friends pretty easily. He said he was always good at making friends, even in his elementary years. He said that the schools here in Edmonton are almost the same as in Fort McMurray, but his experience in making friends was different. His school in Fort McMurray was not that multicultural, but he never had any trouble making friends. This situation totally changed when he moved to Edmonton. It became very difficult to make friends because the other children in the school treated him differently. When he was in grade 7 he faced some racism at school. Some students in his class made racist comments about his cultural and religious identity, and called him bad names. This situation continued even in grades 9 and 10, but in grade 7 it was the worst. Gradually the name-calling stopped and he made some good friends with whom he used to go on bike trips and play. Now most of the children are very good friends with him, but they used to make fun of him in the past. The teachers were never aware of the situation because he never complained. In high school, as a freshman in tenth grade, the situation is better. There are students from a wide range of backgrounds, and there is no extreme racism in his high school.

According to Ali, when he entered high school the teachers' attitudes toward students changed as they got to know their students better. They became more strict and more friendly at the same time, in a good way, not a bad way. Ali's studies are getting harder every year. According to him, the best part of going to school every day is that you get to meet your friends and talk to them for a while. He said that being a Muslim is not bad in high school because nobody cares about it. In junior secondary school, students were very narrow-minded, but as soon as they got older there was a big change in their thinking and they stopped bothering him

anymore, except for few of them. He said it is very normal, because you can't make everyone happy. He is happy that he has some good friends now who understand him and his feelings.

My Personal Reflections on Ali

Ali was a little reluctant in sharing his ideas, and it seemed like he had difficulty in remembering his experiences, specifically his elementary grade experiences. He had very limited experience with the education system in Pakistan, but he shared a lot of insights about his schooling in Canada. He did not finish his pre-interview activities because he was not comfortable with writing. He said that he prefers to share his experiences verbally, but when I offered him a chance to read the data I collected through his interviews, he read them carefully and added some information on the written transcripts.

Saeed

My third male participant, Saeed, was 17 years old. He moved to Canada from Pakistan with his parents and two older siblings when he was 8. Like the majority of immigrants, Saeed and his family went to Toronto first, where they lived for two years. Immigration to Canada was a big move in Saeed's life, as he had never lived in a multicultural environment before. His father quit a very good job when the family immigrated. At first his father wanted to continue his job and send his wife and children to Canada, but his mother refused to go alone. Before his family immigrated to Canada, Saeed's mother was a stay-at-home mother who had never lived alone. She was a little reluctant to move to Canada because she thought it a faraway country. When they moved she was quite upset, and she worried about her children's futures because she did not want her children to live in a non-Muslim country. On the other hand, Saeed's father was quite excited because he thought Canada would provide better opportunities in regard to the children's education and job prospects.

Saeed started his elementary schooling in Toronto in an area that is a hub for new immigrants. The school was very multicultural, with most of the staff as well as the students coming from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Most of the students were from South Asian countries. Saeed found it very easy to make new friends because most of the children in the school were from his neighbourhood. His family lived in a high-rise building with multiple levels. He said he did not remember much about his school experience back home because he was very young. He did not even remember much about his two-year school experience in Toronto; he just remembered that all his friends there were from Pakistan and most of them lived in the same building or nearby, and they would walk to school together sometimes. His mother would stand on the balcony of his apartment and watch him go to school with his friends.

After the family had been in Toronto for a while, his father found a good job, but after few months he was laid off by his company, so he started applying to companies all across Canada. Soon he found a job in Edmonton and decided to move his family there. Saeed was a little excited about this move and hoped he would make new friends in the new city, but when they arrived in Edmonton, they found it quite different from what they expected. They lived in a neighbourhood close to his father's job that was predominantly Caucasian, and there was only one boy from Pakistan in Saeed's class. Saeed said that when he first came to Edmonton he did not find friends as quickly as he had in Ontario. Some students were very racist; they ignored him and openly made comments about his appearance. He tried to adapt to the culture of his new school by changing his clothing style and accent, but still those students did not like him. Gradually he found some good friends, but the children who disliked him never changed their behaviour toward him.

Saeed said that when he moved to Edmonton he was the first child from a different ethnic group in his school, so the children were rude to him. Now, as time passes and there are more Muslim students in the school, the attitudes of the other children toward Muslim students have changed. He said that the students in Toronto were more open-minded, probably because they had more experience with immigrant children because Toronto is more multicultural than Edmonton. He also thought it might be because younger children exhibit less racism than those in high school.

Saeed found little difference between the education systems in Canada and Pakistan. When comparing the two, he said that education in Canada is easier academically as compared to Pakistan. According to him, everything is almost the same, just in different contexts. He believes learning in a school setting is dependent on the learner. Teachers are there to teach, but it mainly depends on students because they can change the environment of the class. The teacher's job is to help, control, and discipline the students. When he was in elementary school, the hardest thing for him was to make friends because he was very shy. He said he did not remember anything related to his elementary grade teachers, and that he found his best teachers in middle school. Most of the middle school teachers were not that old; they were lot younger than the elementary school teachers and were all in their early thirties. They always helped him when they saw he needed it or when he asked them for any help.

Saeed is a very active child who is involved in Boy Scouts. He often goes camping with his scouting group. He also often works to help others by raising funds for good causes. When he was in elementary school in Ontario, he collected money for charity with his friends. His goal was to collect $400, but they collected $2400, which was much more than he thought they could collect, and he attributes it to his strong commitment. He also has an ability to get other people to

go along with his ideas and he has succeeded in fundraising many times because his friends trust him. His biggest dream is to buy a cabin. According to him, the best thing about being his age is that although society pushes people to do things, if you are a teenager nobody can put a lot of expectations on you.

My Personal Reflection on Saeed

Saeed did not finish his pre-interview activities because he was very busy with his extracurricular activities. He was one of the most confident children I interviewed. He answered all the questions with confidence and took long pauses before his answers because he was relating the questions to his memories. He made sure he answered everything exactly as it happened, including all minor details. He did not remember much about his elementary years, but he provided a very good comparison between all the school levels he passed through, both in and outside Canada. He too revisited the data to clarify his initial responses.

Portraits of the Female Participants

Shama

My first female participant, Shama, was an 18-year-old girl who had just finished high school. Shama immigrated to Canada at the age of 9 from Saudi Arabia, where her father had worked as an engineer for five years. She was born in Pakistan and spent her early years in both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. In Pakistan, they lived in an extended family system with her grandparents, aunts, and uncles. The family was financially well off in Pakistan because her father worked in a good organization there. When they moved to Saudi Arabia, the family's financial condition became even more stable because her father received a better salary package. Before immigrating to Canada, Shama's mother was a stay-at-home mother who spent most of

her time taking care of her children. Shama had two brothers, one older and one younger. When the family immigrated to Canada nine years ago, her older brother was 14 and her younger brother was 8. All of the children started their early schooling in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are different culturally, but because both are Muslim states the values in the two countries are the same. Shama said that she never had any problem maintaining her religious beliefs and values before moving to Canada. According to her, being a Muslim in a Muslim society, a person gets many opportunities to interact with their religion, but here in Canada, it is a little different. Shama is very religious and wants to be a good practicing Muslim. She feels herself becoming distant from her religion while living in a Western society in Canada, because of the great difference between Western values and the teachings of Islam. Many things that are not allowed in Islam are very common in Canada, so as a Muslim, Shama has to put extra effort into keeping her religion and beliefs. Even in this Westernized environment, she tries to follow her religion strictly. She said that living in North America she sometimes feels very isolated and drifting away from her religious beliefs and practices. As a result, she thinks it is better to surround herself with things that are important to her. She said she wants to spend her extra time studying and learning her religion in a better way. Learning the Arabic language (the language in which the Quran is written) in her extra time is also a part of her dreams. She told me that she always prays that she will become a good Muslim and go to heaven when she dies. Her family and religion play an important role in her daily life. She also considered the holy places of Mecca and Medina as important, and she places her family after these two places, which show the importance of religion in her life.

Shama was very young when her parents decided to immigrate, and she has no specific memories about their move. Her father and mother discussed how moving to Canada would be

helpful for the family's future and would provide their children with a better education. Shama did not remember much about her life before immigration, but she remembers that she was happy and sad at the same time about moving: happy about going to a new place, but sad about leaving her friends behind.

Shama has lived in three different countries and three different societies. She mentioned very proudly that she has experienced and been exposed to more multicultural environments than other young people her age. Moving to Canada was not something very big for her, because she had already moved a lot, and it was just another move to her. Before moving, she did not have a specific picture of Canada in her mind. Canada was just a new place for her.

Shama's family landed in Toronto, and after finishing all the paperwork, they returned to Saudi Arabia for two months because her father had not yet resigned from his job there. He wanted to evaluate the job market in Toronto before quitting his existing job. During their two-month stay back in Saudi Arabia, her father applied for different job opportunities in Toronto. They returned to Toronto when her father secured a job, which was not related to his engineering qualifications, but was good enough to support his family.

The family lived in Toronto for almost a year and a half. In Toronto they lived in an area which was the hub of the Indian and Pakistani community. They rented an apartment in a high-rise building, which was a new experience for her. They had lived in a low-rise building in Saudi Arabia, but had never lived in a high-rise building before. In Toronto there were many Pakistani and Indian families in her residential building and she never felt as if she was outside Pakistan. The family bought ethnic food and groceries very easily from the grocery stores in their neighbourhood.

When Shama attended elementary school in Toronto, most of the students were of either Indian or Pakistani background. She said that even though she did not feel like an immigrant there and found it very easy to make new friends from similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds, it still took two months to get into the social circle in a totally new country. At first she made friends mostly from her own ethnic background because they accepted her more easily than other children at school.

Shama's family made another big move when, in an effort to improve his income, her father accepted a job in Edmonton. They moved to Edmonton when Shama was in elementary school. It was a big change for her, and she had to leave her friends one more time. When they arrived in Edmonton, they found it very different from Toronto. Shama said it was the first time she felt like an immigrant. Her parents bought a house in a predominantly Caucasian community in the south of Edmonton. She was the first Muslim student in her school. Even though she had travelled a lot in her elementary years, her move to Edmonton was the hardest among all her moves due to the unfamiliar environment in and out of school. Shama said that her move to Alberta was very difficult because Alberta is less multicultural than the places where she had lived before. According to her, the people in Alberta are not used to seeing people from other cultures, so it is very hard for them to accept differences.

Shama found her school experiences in Edmonton completely different from the school experiences she had had in Toronto and Saudi Arabia. Even though her school experiences in Toronto and Saudi Arabia were quite different from each other, her experiences in Edmonton were the most different, and the worst, of all. For the first time in her school life, she felt like a stranger who did not belong in that place. It took her some time to overcome her feelings of loneliness, but she eventually was able to make some good friends, both boys and girls. Shama is

a very social girl who loves to have many friends. A big change occurred in her life when she started wearing a hijab almost at the very end of her elementary grades. All of her friends and teachers were surprised because her decision was sudden and unexpected. Once she started wearing the hijab, other students in the school kept their distance from her. She felt this experience a little heartbreaking. Before wearing the hijab, it was very easy for her to make friends, but after wearing it everything became difficult for her. Now to make friends, she had to take the initiative as compared to before when people were more willing to make her their friend.

Making the decision to wear a hijab was among the most difficult decisions of Shama's life. Even though nobody forced her and it was her own decision, she still had to convince herself before she started wearing it, because she was afraid of social rejection. She chose to do it because she wanted to follow the teachings of Islam. She wrote notes to herself with motivational words saying that she had to make the decision, and finally she made it. The reaction of the other students was a little shocking, but not totally unexpected. Before wearing the hijab, she was afraid, and her main concern was her peers' reaction. She was not sure how they would react, and she did not want to lose her friends or have them think that she was some kind of weird kid. She thought in this way because when the class had discussed 9/11, everyone looked at her as if she had something to do with it, and because of that she was a little nervous. She said that if she were in Saudi Arabia or even in Toronto, it might not have been as difficult as it was in Edmonton. She was a little angry with her parents for making the decision to move to a place where she could not practice her religion freely.

Another big change that Shama noticed after she started wearing a hijab was that the male students in her class stopped talking to her. It seemed like they were scared of talking to her. From the day she started wearing the hijab, she no longer had any male friends. She thinks

that her peers' behaviour toward her was because of the negative image of Muslims created through the media, portrayed by their parents, or even sometimes brought up in class discussions.

After completing middle school, Shama entered high school. She preferred her high school experiences over those in elementary and middle school because she became more confident. She never felt left out in high school because she became more mature and her expectations of others changed as well. She no longer cared about what others thought of her. She still thinks that children in elementary and middle school were rude to her because she was different from them. Her sense of style was different. Because of her religious restrictions, she did not wear short sleeves or short pants, so other students in the class thought she was not a cool person and ignored her. This situation became worse when she started wearing a hijab.

Shama said she did not like elementary school because she had a hard time making friends. She felt lonely because of the attitudes of the other students in the class. She said they displayed this kind of behaviour only with her because children who came after her mixed with the others in the class very easily. She said that when she moved to Canada she wore different clothing because she was new to the school and did not know what to wear to school. She felt more comfortable in high school, where children were more open-minded. They did not focus just on her physical appearance; they also started looking at her as a whole person. She said that as she grew older and became more mature she developed the ability to convince other people to go along with her ideas or what she wanted to do, especially with her friends. She sometimes convinced her high school friends to go for those kind of activities in which she could participate as well. She said that being a Muslim she had her own limitations. She did not go to parties even though her friends often invited her. She explained to them why she could not attend their parties

and tried to convince them to do things in which she could get involved, like going to Galaxyland or a park.

Shama said that, on the other hand, her elementary school teachers were nicer than those she had in high school. The one exception was a single elementary school teacher who treated her badly. She did not like Shama because she often wanted extra help with her daily routine at school. This was because Shama was new and did not know much about the school system in Canada. In Saudi Arabia, children were treated like people who needed guidance and help, but in Canada children are treated as independent individuals. Shama was used to receiving guidance from her teacher all the time, but the teacher in Canada expected her to do everything on her own. Shama struggled with this for a while, but she quickly learned the new routine.

There was only one thing Shama did not like about her high school: the class discussions that they had in social studies about current global situations. The teachers and students often claimed that Muslims were responsible for all the terrorist activities happening all around the world. They sometimes ignored the fact that they had a Muslim student in the class and that their comments and discussions might hurt her feelings. Some teachers were good in that they presented both sides of the picture, but most of the time, teachers and students ignored this. Shama shared lot of events both in and outside school in which she felt she was treated badly by her school and local community. These events were quite disturbing and created distance between her and the community around her.

My Personal Reflection on Shama

I found Shama to be a very mature teenager who answered all the questions I asked in a very cordial manner. She understood the value of my research topic and tried to help me as much as she could through her full participation in my study. She participated all the way through,

from data collection to data analysis, and she also read the draft and suggested changes that helped me in understanding the data in a better way.

I gave Shama the option of doing pre-interview activities. She chose to make a schedule of a typical day when she was in school. She also included a list of important places, her support circle, and her experience at school before and after wearing a hijab, along with a list of things she liked about her elementary grades. She was very expressive in her pre-interview activities, which showed how there were changes in her school life, especially after she started wearing the hijab.

She finished her pre-interview activities (see Figure 2) before her interviews, which I found very helpful, and I used them as a basis for my interviews with Shama. I asked her to explain her activities, and this initiated a strong communication between us. Even though Shama is a very confident young woman, in her first interview, she was a little shy and hesitant to share her experiences openly. That is why her initial responses were brief and given very carefully. In her second interview, she suddenly opened up and shared her inner feelings about her school experiences. She was especially vocal when I asked about her experiences of being an immigrant student in her school in Edmonton. She showed a lot of interest in her responses and also revisited the data to make changes. Our "off-the-record" talk also provided me with a lot of information about Shama and her family and their journey of immigration.

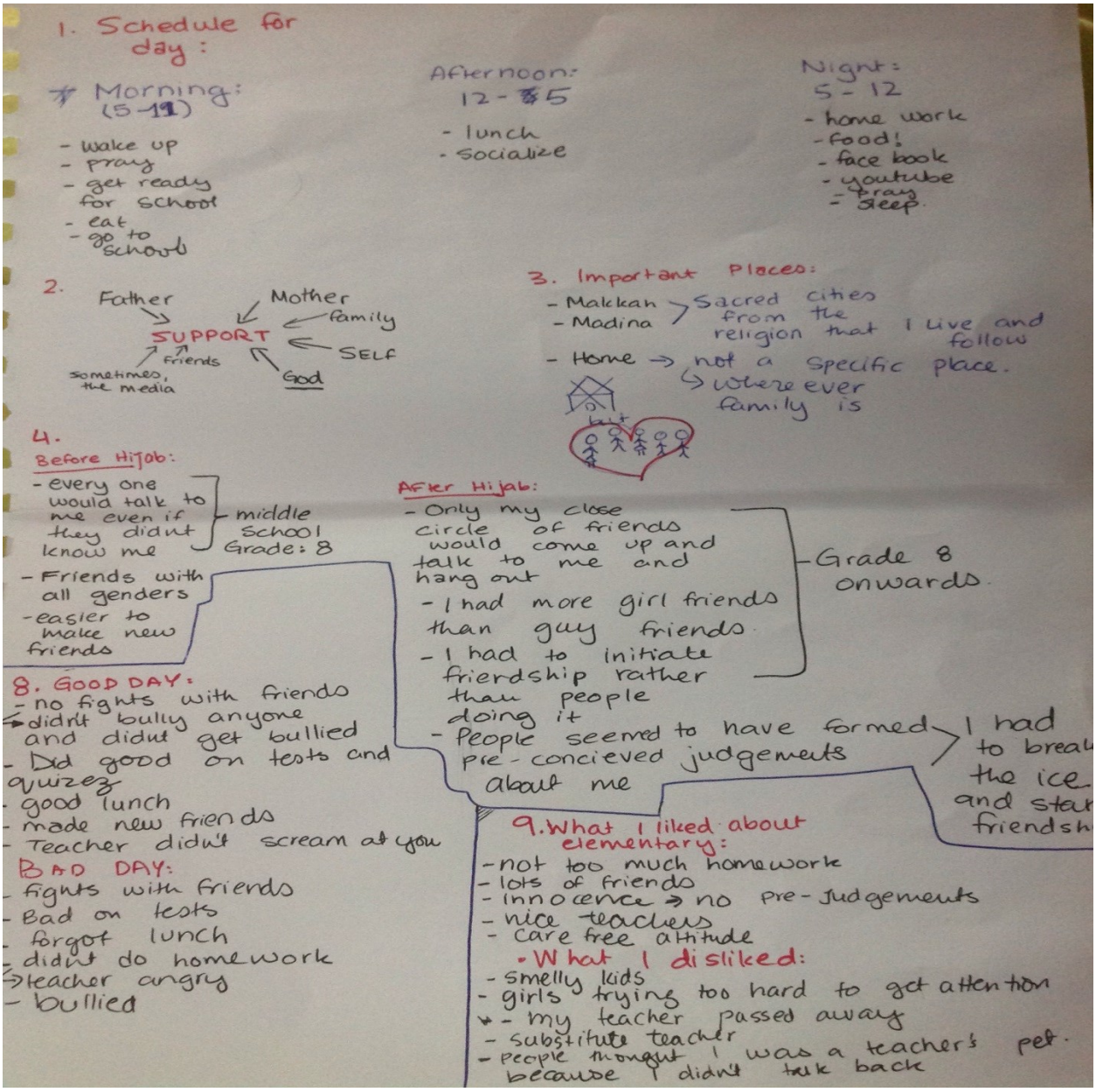

Figure 2. Pre-interview activity by Shama.

Fatima

My second female participant, Fatima, was a very expressive 18-year-old originally from Bangladesh who just graduated from high school. Fatima's family came from a small town in Bangladesh, although Fatima never lived there and had only visited it twice in her life. Her family lived in Dubai for several years before moving to Canada. Fatima was born in Dubai and

is the youngest in her family. She had three older sisters, two of whom got married before the family immigrated to Canada. Two of her sisters lived in Canada and one was settled in Dubai with her husband.

Fatima was only 9 when she and her family moved to Canada. Moving to Canada was not something her family had planned in advance, but rather it was a big and unexpected move. The reason behind it was that one of Fatima's elder sisters got married in Edmonton and moved to Canada permanently, then applied for the immigration of her whole family. Initially the family made the decision to move simply because they wanted everyone to be together. Fatima was quite excited about coming to Canada. She knew that Canada has a very good education system and that she would be able to go further because of it. She was also very happy because she was going to see her sister whom she hadn't seen for almost five years. Her sister told her many good things about Canada, including that it has a lot of opportunities. Fatima was excited to be a part of Canadian culture and also wanted to explore all the new opportunities.

Fatima's father was a pharmacist in Dubai and the family was quite well off there. He was in his sixties when the family moved to Canada, and he could not find a job in his field. He was forced to work part-time at 7-Eleven. To supplement the family income, her mother, who had never worked outside the home before, took a job at Walmart. Fatima said that it was hard for them, but now they were all used to being hard workers.

When Fatima's parents were getting ready to move to Canada, they said to Fatima and her sister that although they were moving to a totally different society, it did not mean they had to change their values and beliefs. Her parents said, *"You just have to embrace what you were brought in with and just take in the good things and leave the bad behind. Just remember always to be true to yourself."*

When they arrived in Canada, the family stayed in Fatima's sister's house for two weeks and then found a place to live in Spruce Grove, a suburb of Edmonton. Their move to Spruce Grove was completely different from their move to Dubai from Bangladesh because, while Dubai was a new place, the culture and religious values there were almost the same as in Bangladesh. Spruce Grove at that time was a completely Caucasian community, and people were not used to a multiethnic environment.

The family arrived in Canada in the summer and the schools were closed for the summer break, so Fatima had almost two months to make herself comfortable with the new environment in Canada and to observe and learn new things. She stayed at home and waited to start school. In September, she started her elementary education in the Spruce Grove community school near their house. She was the only Muslim student in her school. All her schoolmates were Caucasian Canadians, mostly Christian. Because Fatima was born in Dubai, which is a Muslim country, she had been brought up in a Muslim culture. Most of her friends in Dubai were Muslims and they frequently went to each other's houses, especially for the celebration of Eid, so Fatima felt very comfortable going to her friends' houses. When she moved to Canada, she had to restart everything. She adapted to the new culture very quickly. Her teachers helped her in her transition to the culture of her new school by arranging group activities and helping Fatima to communicate with the other children, which was difficult for her due to the language barrier.

Fatima told me that making friends on her own had always been difficult for her, and in this less multicultural environment at school it became even more difficult. Even though the situation was very awkward for her, she ended up making many friends, but it was not easy at all. There were students who did not like her, but she tried not to let that bother her. The students who became her friends told her to ignore the rude students because they were, according to her,

very close-minded. She did not pay any attention to them. Her friends assured her, *"We will be here for you and we will be your friends."*

In her school years, Fatima often went to her friends' houses and their parents were very interested to learn about her, especially when she was a new immigrant. They were very curious to know where she came from and why her family had chosen to come to Canada. According to her, they were curious because they had some false information about Muslims and did not know where Dubai was. They thought she was a refugee, but she explained to them that Dubai is a very peaceful country and there is no war or any serious conflict. She explained to them that her family had come to Canada because her sister had immigrated first and they just wanted to live together as a family. Furthermore, Canada is a land of opportunities. Fatima said that she never felt offended by any of the questions asked by her friends and their parents.

Fatima said she tried to adapt to Canadian culture, which was totally different from the culture in Dubai. In an effort to adapt, she tried to change her accent, but she never tried to hide her Muslim identity. She said that she greets people on Christmas and Easter, even though she is not personally celebrating these events. She does this because she thinks it is polite to wish other people happy holidays, and she does not think it affects her as a Muslim or mean that she loses her own values and beliefs. She still prays, fasts, and celebrates her own festivals, such as Eid. She is still the person she was raised to be. Her parents do not really understand the festivals in Canada, such as Halloween and Easter, and they think Muslims should not take part in them. At school they had Halloween parties and Fatima took part in them because she knew they were not religious celebrations and would not interrupt her religion. For a long time her parents were a little confused about these holidays, but now they understand them better.

Fatima found the education system in Canada better than Dubai's because in Dubai the focus is on homework and in Canada education is more flexible and fun oriented. Fatima preferred her high school experience over elementary school because she met so many new friends there. In high school she got to know more interesting people and had lots more options to choose from in regard to courses. She actively participated in all her class activities in high school, especially the assignments in social studies class, which involved a lot of personal ideas and thoughts. For those assignments, the students had many debates and Fatima always took an active part in them. In her grade 12 social studies class, they talked a lot about immigrants in Canada and also about 9/11. According to her, most people, because of the media projection of Muslims, think that all Muslims were part of the 9/11 incident. Her classmates had open discussions about Muslims, and some said that all Muslims are extremists and terrorism is a main part of Islam. Being a Muslim she knew this is not the case, so she always protested against it. Sometimes even her teachers became a part of these discussions, but when she complained to them about it, they became very sorry and tried to avoid these kinds of discussions in the class.

Fatima is a very hard-working girl. She told me that she uses her extra time to work and make extra money to support her studies. She is not going to university this year because she wants to work and save some money for her university education. She travelled to the Dominican Republic last summer and spent a week there with some of her friends from high school.

My Personal Reflection on Fatima

Fatima is a very confident young woman. She took a keen interest in completing her pre-interview activities. She made a timeline from her elementary to high school years in which she gave all the important details about her school experiences in Canada. Her pre-interview activity was quite helpful in providing me with an outline of her school experiences year by year. During

interviews with her, I used the timeline and asked her to elaborate on it. It also helped me in looking at the broader picture of her school experiences in Canada.

I found Fatima very expressive during her interviews as well. She initiated sharing information about herself during her interviews without any interruption from me. She described herself as an open and sociable person who loves to talk and share ideas. Even in our first meeting she was quite confident and comfortable in sharing her ideas with me. She started our conversation by sharing how her family had immigrated and adjusted to their new society. She shared many "off-the-record" events with me about herself, her family, and her friends. When I provided her the opportunity to review her interviews, she made a few changes and added some new information. I think she decided to be part of my study due to her desire to share her experiences, not only with me but also with other immigrant students like herself.

Mariam

My third female participant was Mariam, an 11-year-old girl middle school student who had finished elementary school the previous year. Mariam is the younger sister of Farooq, one of my male participants. Mariam and Farooq moved with their family to Canada from Qatar. Mariam is two years younger than Farooq and was quite young when they immigrated to Canada. She did not remember much about her move.

Mariam is a very quiet girl who prefers not to share her feelings with others unless someone shows a personal interest in her. She characterized her as a shy girl who does not interact with other people and always keeps her feelings to herself. She started her elementary grades in Qatar. She said that because of her quiet personality she did not have many friends in Qatar. When I asked her about her reaction when she heard that her family was moving to Canada, she said she did not remember much about moving, being the youngest among all her

family members. She did not participate in discussions with her parents about their immigration decision or plans, as her brother had. One thing she still remembers is that she looked forward to the nature and scenery in Canada because her father told her that Canada is very beautiful. She never imagined it would be this cold.

Mariam's school experience in Qatar was almost the same as Farooq's. The only difference in Mariam's and Farooq's experiences was their varying attitudes. Farooq, as compared to Mariam, is a very social child who loves to interact and share his feelings with his friends. That is why he had a long list of friends before immigrating to Canada, while Mariam had a very select group of friends. When Mariam first arrived in Canada, because of her shy personality, she was afraid that she wouldn't make any friends here. That fear came into her mind because her first impression of the people in Canada was not that good. She said that people looked very mean to her, but later on she found out that she was wrong, and people actually were not mean at all. She got this impression because, when she first started going to school in Edmonton, nobody talked to her and people ignored her. Then she changed schools and moved to Spruce Grove, where she made many friends. She has no idea why children were rude to her in Mill Woods, even though it was a highly multicultural school and most of the children were from the same ethnic background as hers. She tried her best to make new friends and always greeted her classmates no matter how indifferent they were toward her, but they just ignored her.

When her family moved to Spruce Grove, in an effort to make friends, Mariam always took the initiative to help other people. For example, if somebody was sad she talked to them to see if they wanted to "hang out" with her. Sometimes other students in the class took the initiative, but most of the time she spoke to them first. When she made her first friend in her new

school, they just talked to each other and became friends. She did not remember who talked first. Then another girl came up to her and they too became friends, and in this way they formed a group. She said her experience in Spruce Grove might have been different because in Mill Woods she was new and not familiar with the environment, and now she is familiar with everything and finds it easier to make friends.

Mariam told me that even within her circle of friends, she is very quiet. In her group there is a girl who, according to Mariam, *"always wants to get attention and always act like a boss."* Whenever Mariam gives her ideas, most of her friends listen, except that girl. Because of her, Mariam stopped sharing her ideas and often stays quiet. She said it is useless to share your ideas when nobody listens. She has a complaint about people that they do not listen to her, which she believes is probably because she is too quiet and has dumb ideas because she is too young.

Mariam, like her brother, found schools in Canada better than the schools in Qatar because of the flexibility of Canada's education system. She also loves the small breaks between her classes, and she finds that curriculum is easier and more interesting than in Qatar. Mariam was happy about coming to Canada because her father told her that schools in Canada are very easy and there would be less pressure on her as compared to the schools in Qatar. When she first started her schooling in Canada, she did not notice a big difference. Everything was almost the same; she did not even find any difference in the students. There was not a big surprise for her.

After all these years in Canada, Mariam has adapted to the environment here. She said that her friends now help her a lot in her adjustment to school. If she is ever sad because something happened at home, her friends always try to cheer her up and make her happy. She loves to be in Canada because the school work is not hard, people are very nice, and there are more subject choices here as compared to Qatar, where the focus was on course content only.

She said that here in Canada studies are more fun oriented. She had just entered secondary school and was really enjoying it and liked it better than her elementary school.

Mariam takes an active part in physical activities. She told me that she is a very fast runner, and she came in third at her school track and field meet. She is also good at playing basketball. She said she likes sports because her quiet personality does not affect her participation in sports or in other extracurricular activities that do not demand much verbal interaction with others. Other than sports, she dreams about becoming an artist and painting landscapes and sketching people.

Mariam feels a special bond with her religion and wants to pray and read the Quran more than she is doing now. According to her, a good Muslim is supposed to pray five times a day, but due to her school routines, Mariam is not able to pray this often, although she tries.

Mariam is very careful when it comes to her Muslim identity. Nobody in her school knows that she is a Muslim, not because she hides it from others, but because she never tells others unless someone asks her about it. Somewhere in her mind she has the fear that if somebody finds out about her Muslim identity, they might feel she is a bad girl, because they might think she is a terrorist. Mariam feels that people have this perception mainly because of the media, because there is always some bad news about Muslims on TV, on the radio, or in the newspapers. Even if people in class talk about current affairs, she always keeps quiet and never discloses her Muslim identity. She never tries to defend Muslims either. She said she knows the truth that Muslims are good people and she does not need to tell it to others. The second reason for not revealing her Muslim identity is her fear that people might leave her and stop talking to her. She has a fear of social rejection from her friends. She also thinks she is a little young to talk about these issues.

Mariam dreams about becoming a stage actress one day. She wants to take part in school plays but has not had an opportunity yet. She has never disclosed her wish to her teachers because she thinks they might think that, since she is quiet and shy, she would not be able to participate in school plays. She also believes in the power of wishing. Once when she was trying out for the volleyball team, she said she pushed herself by telling herself that she could do it. Finally she was successful. She said one thing she really loves about being her age is that she has more fun in her life than older people do. She can do whatever she wants to do. She said that older people think you are little so they let you do whatever you want to; if you make a mistake they forgive you and do not make any big punishment for you. The hardest thing for her about being her age is that older people instruct her all the time and she finds it really hard to meet other people's expectations.

My Personal Reflection on Mariam

When I asked Mariam if I could interview her, at first she was very excited to take part. That may have been because I interviewed her older brother and she wanted to share her experiences with me too, but when I started interviewing her, I found her to be completely different from Farooq. Compared to Farooq, she was quite shy, and she hesitated in sharing her experiences in detail. She also had difficulties with the English language at first, but over the course of the study she learned it quickly and now she is quite fluent in it. However, when it comes to critical thinking and expression, she lacks the language skills to do it. I had two interviews with Mariam, and she changed her statements many times during the interviews. She seemed a little self-conscious and also took long pauses in answering interview questions. Her views, which she shared during her interviews, not only changed several times, but also did not match up with the drawing she made as part of her pre-interview activities (see Figure 3).

Keeping these things in mind, I gave her an opportunity to write her experiences in the form of a story, and I found that quite helpful in understanding her true experiences in Canada.

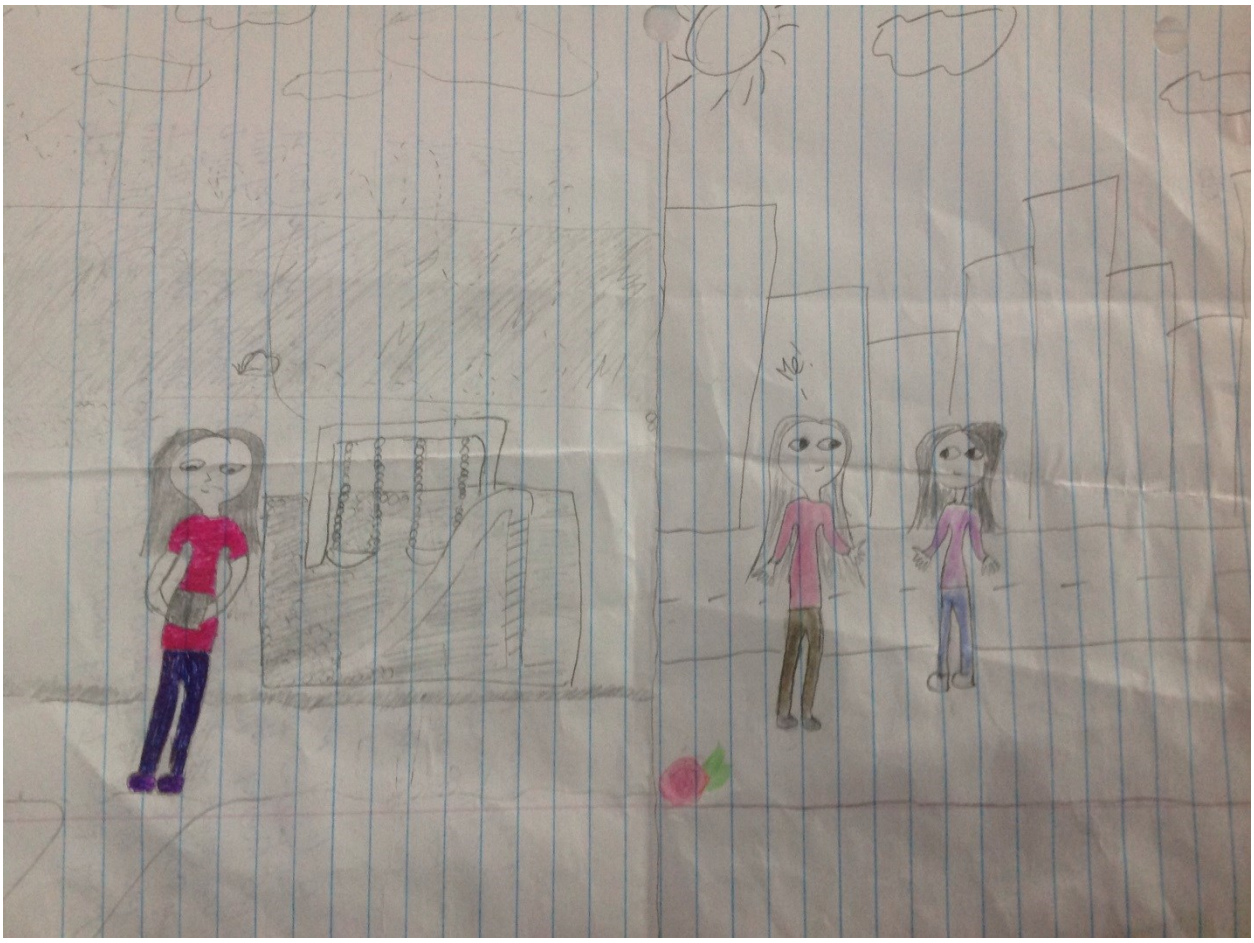

Figure 3. Pre-interview activity by Mariam.

Amina

My fourth female participant, Amina, was a first-year university student who had moved to Canada from Pakistan at the age of 10. She had one older sister who was also in university. Amina attended kindergarten to grade 2 in Pakistan and began her schooling in Canada from grade 3. Amina's father is an electrical engineer who works for a large oil company in Pakistan. He came to Canada with the family and stayed here for three months. He tried to find a decent job for himself, but due to the unavailability of good jobs for foreign-qualified immigrants in

Canada, he returned to Pakistan. Amina's mother not only raised her two daughters as a single-parent immigrant to Canada, she also restarted her studies. Even though she has a master's degree from a prestigious university in Pakistan, she had to repeat her degree in Canada. Before moving to Canada, Amina's mother used to stay at home, but in Canada she has to go to work. She leaves early every morning to catch the bus. When the family lived in Pakistan, they always had many people at home, but in Canada Amina stays home alone sometimes for the first time in her life. It has been a totally new experience for her, and it upset her because she was not used to it. Even for Amina's mother it was a big move to leave her children at home alone. She never done so in Pakistan, but she had to do it now because she is without a social support network in Canada. Amina said she remembers that when they were in Pakistan her mother smiled all the time. In Canada, she has so many responsibilities that she has changed and sometimes gets very angry about small things.

Amina and her mother and sister initially landed in Toronto and lived there for five years before moving to Edmonton. Her mother decided to continue her PhD studies in Alberta, so they moved from Toronto to Edmonton. Amina found Toronto to be a very multicultural city as compared to Edmonton. She said that when her family first arrived in Canada she was quite shocked, because she always had a different picture of Canada in her mind. She thought she was going to a place where they would have a lot of fun, but after landing and going to the house where they lived initially, she was totally shocked. That place was full of mice. She had never seen a mouse in her life before. She was very frightened and started shouting.

Amina's family had a good life in Pakistan. They lived in the housing complex of an oil refinery where her father works. When they came to Canada, with the help of one of their relatives who was already living in Toronto, they rented the upper portion of a very old house in

a ghetto community that was a hub of Indian and Pakistani families. Even though the living conditions in the area were substandard, Amina's family found the neighbourhood very helpful in their adjustment to the new Canadian environment. Amina started her schooling in Toronto at the local school, Riverside Elementary School. The majority of the school's population came from diverse cultural backgrounds outside of Canada. The two months she spent there, according to her, were the best time she ever had in any school in Canada. The teachers were very nice. The school had celebrations of different cultures, and the teachers sometimes wore clothes from different cultures. In school they had free breakfast and snack options. Every day after school the children went to the library which was very close to their school, and they participated in lots of activities and read many books there.

Amina had an aunt living in Toronto who was a big support during the family's adjustment in Canada. Whenever they felt lonely, they visited her house. This helped them in overcoming their feelings of loneliness. In Pakistan, Amina and her sister used to socialize with their cousins and other relatives on a frequent basis, so having their aunt in Canada with them really helped. In Toronto, they never feel like immigrants even though the society was very different from the culture they had belonged to in Pakistan. Because of the availability of ethnic food and people of the same ethnic background, they never felt like they were completely cut off from their roots.

Immigration was not easy for Amina and her sister at all because it not only brought separation from their culture, but it also separated them from their father. Amina said that her immigration experience might not have been as difficult if her father had settled in Canada with them. They had never lived without their father before immigration. Amina said she still remembered how upset she had been when her father left Canada for Pakistan. She cried very

loudly. Her mother and her sister were also very sad. They did not eat well for several days after he left for Pakistan because they felt depressed and lonely. Gradually everything settled down, but they never had the same family experience they used to have when they all lived together. Even though things have changed a lot now, Amina still has a vacuum in her life which can never be filled.

Amina remembers her school days in Pakistan as good experiences. She attended a private school and had a lot of fun. She always waited for her father to come home in the evenings after school. She was very attached to her father. They used to go swimming and play at the community club with their father. She told me that she still remembers those days, and she had tears in her eyes as she recalled them. Her grandmother used to visit the family very often and Amina spent hours with her listening to her stories. She also had many friends of her own age in the housing complex where the family used to live before immigrating to Canada. Almost all of those children were her schoolmates as well.

Amina had completed grade 3 when she came to Canada, but she was placed in grade 3 in Canada because school admission is on the basis of age. Because she was quite young at that time it did not affect her very much. The family came to Canada at the end of April, so after two months they had their summer break. During the summer break her mother decided to move the family to another place and rented an apartment in a high-rise building. That area was also very multicultural, but the living conditions there were much better than the place they initially lived in soon after their immigration. Amina made lot of new friends in the new neighbourhood.

Amina said that although most of her teachers were good, her grade 3 teacher was not. Amina thinks the teacher did not like her. Even in class, the teacher made comments about Amina in front of her classmates. The teacher was suspicious of her about everything. Once

Amina did an assignment on which she spent lot of time in the hope that she could become the teacher's favourite child. Instead of praising her efforts, the teacher called her into her office to investigate whether anyone had helped her or where she had copied the assignment from. She said she stopped taking part in the class activities after that event because she was very disappointed. The teacher called Amina's mother and complained that Amina was not fully participating in class activities, which made her mother very upset. She still regrets not telling her mother about these things, but at the time she was new, and in her culture, respecting adults is considered an important quality for a child.

After two years, Amina's family bought their own house in a nearby community and moved out of their apartment. That community was a little less multicultural compared to the previous ones, but still there were many immigrant families. The school was quite good and the teachers were very cooperative. Amina never had any issues with her peers and teachers there.

The family lived in Toronto for five years before moving to Alberta for Amina's mother's studies. The area where they bought a house was in a very white community. At first, Amina did not like the people in the community, but gradually she found some good friends. Making friends was not an easy thing for her because most of the children in school were white and were not used to people of colour. Amina told me that when her mother decided to move to Edmonton, she was not happy because she did not want to leave her friends behind. At first she did not like Edmonton, because according to her, it was a very cold and isolated place as compared to Toronto. She was very sad and angry with her mother.

Amina shared many experiences, both in and out of school, in which she faced biased attitudes, not only from her peers, but from the teachers and other community members as well. Amina said she is a quiet person by nature, but one of her teachers tried to investigate all the time

why she was sad, even though she told her teacher that she was not sad or anything like that. The teacher never did this to the other students, but always assumed that Amina was hiding something from her about the treatment she was getting at home.

In her social studies classes, the teachers often led discussions about current issues, such as the rise of globalization and its effects on today's society. Most of the time these discussions turned into anti-Muslim debates where everyone talked against Muslims without realizing that they had a few Muslim classmates. For one of Amina's class projects, the teacher showed them a movie about the Holocaust and afterwards said that if a holocaust ever happened again, it would happen to Muslims. This comment made Amina very disturbed and she had difficulty sleeping for many days. She woke up several times during the night because she was having bad dreams about a holocaust for Muslims.

Sometimes in Amina's classes, students had discussions about Sharia law, and Amina remembers that they all talked badly about it. Many of the students made very racist comments when they discussed it. They even talked about asking Muslims to leave the country because their laws do not fit with Canadian culture and they should not have the right to live in Canada. These discussions even continued after the class ended. All of these discussions made Amina very upset, and she had bad feelings for days afterwards.

Amina said that she always feels a little disconnected from her friends because she cannot go out with them to parties. She said she invited her friends over to her house several times when she was young, but when they grew older, her friends' interests changed and they started going to late-night parties where drinking took place. Being a Muslim, Amina cannot go to places like that, so she always refuses. For this reason she lost a lot of her friends. Also, her friends started

hanging out with boys, which, according to Islam, is prohibited for Muslim girls, so Amina felt herself segregated and did not see herself belonging to the culture of her friends.

My Personal Reflection on Amina

Amina was very expressive and shared many of her insights about her school experiences in Canada. She has strong personal opinions about things, and I found her very confident in expressing those opinions. Even though she was very busy with her studies, she took a keen interest in her pre-interview activities (see Figure 4) and made a timeline of a typical day in her elementary school. In that timeline, along with drawings, she also provided rich descriptions of her school experiences in Canada. These descriptions helped a lot in initiating some good discussions during her two interviews, and she was very cooperative. She took the initiative during her interviews and reviewed the transcribed data. She made a few changes and added clarifications to some of her previously shared information as well, which helped me better understand what she wanted to share.

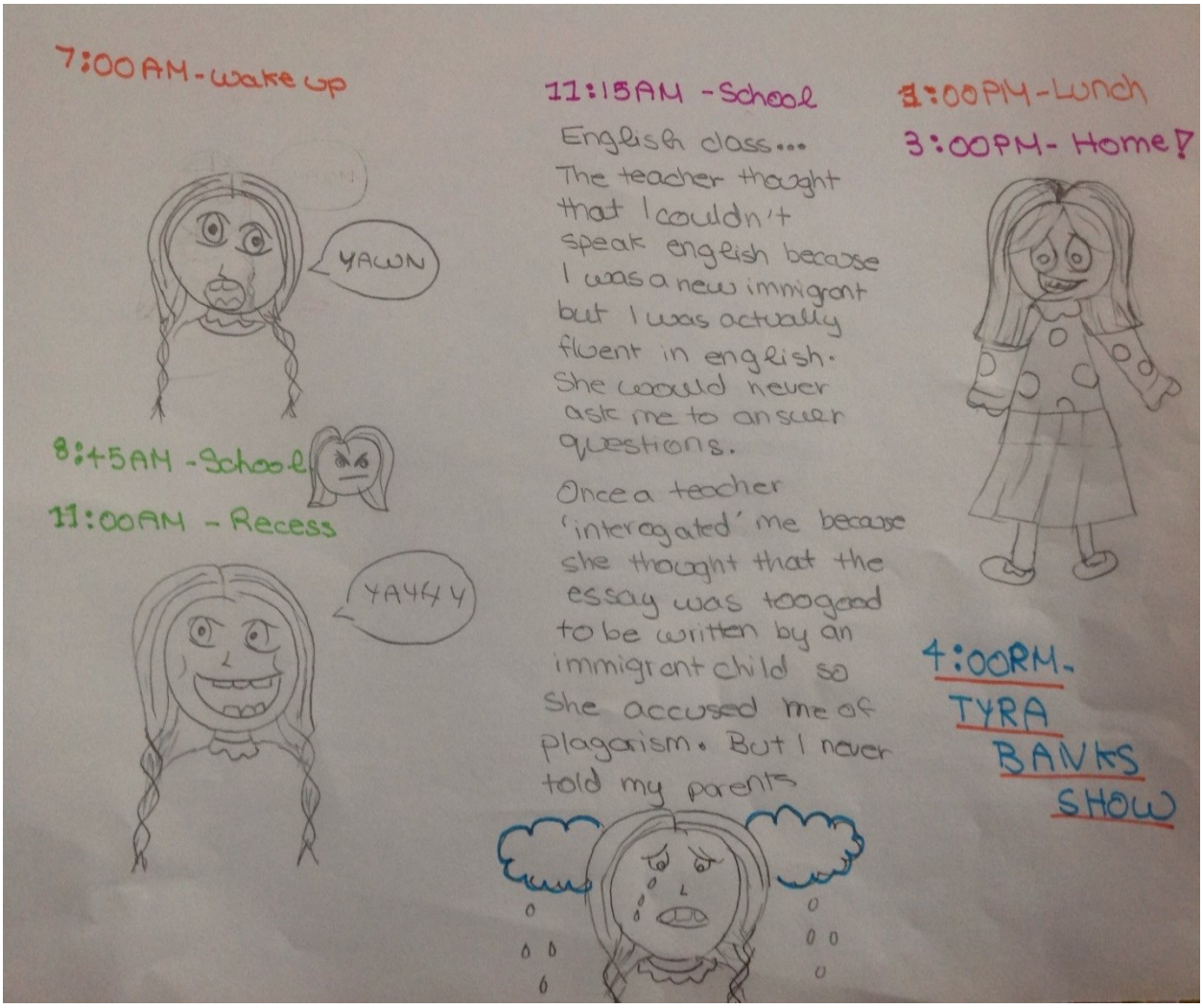

Figure 4. Pre-interview activity by Amina.

Summary of Ideas About Participants' Alberta School Experiences

In this section I present a summary of key ideas about my participants' experiences, based on the portraits of them presented in this chapter. I pulled out some common experiences in the case studies and drew the following six conclusions based on the various ways in which my participants reported similar or different experiences.

1) **How "shocking" it was for the student to start at a new place in Alberta depended on:**
   - whether it was the first new place for the student (Fatima).
   - whether it was the first new place that was so different from previous places they had resided (Shama, Saeed, Farooq, Fatima).
   - whether the school population was characterized by diversity (Shama, Farooq, Ali, Saeed).
   - whether ethnic food and people of the same ethnic background were available (Amina, Shama, Saeed).
2) **Making new friends in a new school in Alberta was easier when:**
   - the school was very multicultural and the students came from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Saeed, Amina, Farooq, Shama).
   - the student had no visible signs showing their religious affiliation, such as name, style of dress, or religious practices (Shama, Farooq, Fatima).
   - the student played sports (if a boy) (Ali).
   - the student took an active part in physical activities (Mariam).
   - the student took initiative and helped their peers in school (Mariam).
3) **Making new friends in a new school in Alberta was more difficult when:**
   - all the other students in the school were Caucasian (Saeed, Farooq, Shama, Fatima).

- the student disclosed their Muslim identity (Mariam).
- the student openly kept their Muslim religious practices, such as fasting or daily prayers (Farooq, Shama).
- the student ate only halal food (Farooq).
- the student wore the hijab (Shama).
- the student could not follow Western ways of dressing due to religious restrictions (Fatima, Farooq).

4) What were some of the positive elementary school experiences reported in the case studies?

- Elementary school was more relaxed or less pressured in terms of working hard compared to schools they had attended elsewhere (Ali, Farooq, Mariam).
- Elementary school included a lot of fun-filled activities, such as physical activities, including music and dance (Ali).
- There was no pressure to work and the teachers were very polite (Ali).
- Younger children exhibited less racism than those in high school (Saeed).

5) Things that improved in junior high or high school were:

- Sometimes other students had a more sophisticated or mature acceptance of diversity (Shama, Saeed).
- Children became more open-minded as they got older. They did not focus just on physical appearance, but also started looking at others as a whole person (Shama).
- Students got to know more interesting people in school and had lots more options to choose from in regard to courses (Fatima).

- The curriculum helped the participants to know about Canada and the role of a law-abiding citizen. It also provided global awareness (Ali).
- There was more flexibility and independence (Saeed).

6) Things that became more unpleasant in junior high or high school were:

- The social studies curriculum treatment of 9/11 (Fatima, Mariam, Farooq, Saeed, Shama, Amina).
- The class discussions in social studies about current global situations (Shama, Saeed, Amina, Mariam, Farooq).
- Differences between Muslim and non-Muslim ways of socializing, such as going to late-night parties, drinking alcohol, and hanging out with boys, created distance among friends (Amina).
- Some students engaged in open criticism and passed comments in the hallway (Farooq).

These ideas are summarized in Table 4 below, after which, in Chapter 5, I present the findings from my interviews with my study participants.

Table 4. Summary of Ideas About Participants' Alberta School Experiences

Starting School at a New Place in Alberta	Making New Friends in a New School in Alberta		School Experiences in Alberta		
Depended on:	**Was easier when:**	**Was more difficult when:**	**Positive elementary school experiences**	**Things that improved in high school and junior high school were:**	**Things that became more unpleasant in high school or junior high school were:**
Whether it was a first new place for the student (Fatima) Whether ethnic food and people of the same ethnic background were available (Amina) Whether it was the first new place that was so different from previous places they had resided (Shama, Saeed, Farooq, Fatima) Whether the school population was characterized by diversity (Shama, Farooq, Ali, Saeed)	The school was multicultural and the students came from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Saeed, Amina, Farooq, Shama) A student took active part in physical activities (Mariam) The student had no visible signs showing their religious affiliation, such as name, style of dress, or religious practices (Shama, Farooq, Fatima) The student took initiative and helped their peers in school (Mariam) The student played sports (if a boy) (Ali)	All students in the school were Caucasian (Saeed, Farooq, Shama, Fatima) The student ate only halal food (Farooq) The student wore the hijab (Shama) The student disclosed their Muslim identity (Mariam) The student kept their Muslim religious practices such as fasting or daily prayers (Farooq, Shama) The student could not follow Western ways of dressing due to religious restrictions (Fatima, Farooq)	Elementary school was more relaxed or less pressured in terms of working hard compared to schools they had been at elsewhere (Ali, Farooq, Mariam) A lot of fun-filled activities such as physical activities, including music and dance (Ali) No pressure to work and the teachers were very polite (Ali) Younger children exhibit less racism than those in high school (Saeed)	Sometimes other students had a more sophisticated or mature acceptance of diversity (Shama, Saeed) Children became more open-minded as they got older. They did not focus just on physical appearance, but also started looking at others as a whole person (Shama, Saeed) Students got to know more interesting people and had lots more options to choose from in regard to courses (Fatima) The curriculum helped participants to know about Canada and the role of a law-abiding citizen; it also provided global awareness (Ali) There was more flexibility and independence (Saeed)	Social studies curriculum treatment of 9/11 (Fatima, Mariam, Farooq, Saeed, Shama, Amina) The class discussions in social studies about current global situations (Shama, Saeed, Amina, Mariam, Farooq) Open criticism and passing comments in hallways (Farooq) Differences between Muslim and non-Muslim ways of socializing, such as going to late-night parties, drinking alcohol, and hanging out with boys, created distance among friends (Amina)

Chapter 5. Presentation and Analysis of Data

This chapter presents the findings from my interviews with the seven study participants. The students interviewed included individuals from Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi backgrounds. Among them, they had prior school experiences in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Dubai before immigrating to Canada. All of the study participants had lived in Canada for at least 8 years (see Table 3 in the previous chapter for demographic information about the participants). The stories they shared with me describe their school experiences and how these experiences affected their schooling and their sense of belonging within the school culture and the culture around them. Once I finished collecting my interview data in the form of my participants' stories about their experiences in Canadian schools, I started looking to identify common themes within the stories (see Table 5 below). All seven participants' experiences had four main themes in common: relationships with peers; teachers' attitudes; neighbouring community behaviour; and the role of media. Within each theme are some subthemes. All of the participants also gave some suggestions for new Muslim students in Canadian schools.

Table 5: Participants and Themes

No.	Names	Relationships with Peers	Teachers' Attitudes	Neighbouring Community Behaviour	Role of Media	Suggestions for New Muslim Students
1	Shama	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Fatima	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Farooq	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Mariam	✓	✓		✓	✓
5	Saeed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Ali	✓	✓			✓
7	Amina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Presentation and Discussion of Data

This section is organized by the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data I collected from my participants regarding their school experiences in Canada. I delineated and explicated these themes and subthemes and also drew some conclusions in regard to them. These themes and subthemes helped me understand the process of my participants' acculturation into Canadian society and the factors which had affected their school experiences, either negatively or positively.

Theme One: Relationship with Peers

Friendship with peers is very important for young children. They feel secure and safe in the company of their friends, and positive relations with friends affect their emotional, social, and cognitive well-being (Kirova, 2010). Children in their early years of schooling need deep and strong relationships with their peers. In the case of immigrant children, good relationships with peers can become particularly important in learning their new language and culture. However, immigrant children have left their old friends behind and often have to struggle to make friends in their new school settings.

All of my participants talked about their relationships and friendships with their peers as an important part of their student life, especially in the early years when they first immigrated to Canada and encountered a new culture and language they did not fully understand. It took a long time to develop some good peer relationships. Eventually, most of my participants made some positive peer relationships and found friends, but initially all of my participants had a hard time in making friends. Shama told me about her early experiences in a Canadian school without having a friend: *"After immigration when I entered into my elementary years it took me two months to get into the friendship circle just because I was a new kid in the school and it was a*

new country for me. It took me at least two months to actually get into a circle of friends. I still remember how hard those days were. I was feeling very lonely. Then I made a few friends who were from my own ethnic background. It was because they accepted me more easily than other kids."

All of my participants appreciate the flexibility and openness of the Canadian education system. They liked the way they were welcomed by their teachers and administrators when they arrived as new immigrant students to their schools. There was no pressure placed on them to work and the teachers were very polite. Teachers helped them to interact with their peers, but it was still very hard for my participants to find some good friends. They finally developed some good friendships, but it took a lot of effort and time on their part. Fatima shared with me about her early school years: *"My first year of school was kind of scary, as I didn't know anyone and I didn't know the school and I was the only Muslim in my class and all the other kids were white Canadians. I still tried to stay positive. My teachers were very nice and they helped me, like, communicate with the other kids, but still it was very hard for me to adjust. It was a totally new, strange environment for me."*

Although feeling lonely and having a difficult time making friends at school is not unique to my participants, the anti-Muslim discrimination which has been on the rise affects school communities, especially because the so-called War on Terror, post 9/11 tensions, and many other homegrown terrorist acts inside and outside Canada constantly link Islam and Muslims with terrorism. All these incidents are affecting the school experiences of Muslim children, and being part of the Muslim community, they have to face misunderstanding and unfriendly attitudes from some of their peers, teachers, and other people in their surrounding communities. As a result of these negative experiences, some Muslim children try to defend themselves and their faith by

explaining their own understanding about the teaching and principles of Islam to their teachers and peers. Others try to hide their Muslim identities (Abo-Zena et al., 2009). Mariam, who was the youngest of my participants, told me, "*I never tell anyone that I am Muslim because they might think I am not a good person."*

Despite the few positive relationships they eventually developed, my participants shared their experiences of rejection, bullying, and Islamophobia or xeno-racism on the part of their peers at school. As a result of these experiences, they felt isolated, which not only disturbs these children emotionally, but it also makes them feel inferior and affects their school performances (Zine, 2006). The desire to fit in with and gain acceptance from their peers and the impossibility of reaching this goal produces a vacuum that affects these children's school performances and, as a result, leads to lower self-esteem (Niyozov, 2010). Farooq shared a heartbreaking incident about when he overheard a few of his fellow students talking about Muslims and how bad they think Muslims are and that they should be kicked out of the country. Farooq said,*"Once I was walking in the hallway and some people were talking about how Muslims are not good, they are terrorists, and they should be kicked out of the country. So that kind of stuff makes me upset."*

This whole conversation made Farooq very upset and he was afraid that one day he would be kicked out of the country. This feeling made him feel disconnected from his new homeland, and he felt like a total stranger where other people are not willing to accept him. He said he was upset for a long time after overhearing this conversation. When he got home from school that day, he cried and had a fight with his mother, asking why his parents had brought them here when people are not welcoming and are rude to them. He remained upset for several days. He is still affected by this incident and always has a fear that one day he and his family will be asked to leave this country. This feeling also lowers his self-esteem because he feels his status

in Canada is inferior to that of his Canadian-born non-Muslim peers. He lost his interest in his studies and got very bad grades this year. Other studies on immigrant children's educational performance and social, cultural, and psychological adjustment clearly show that lower self-esteem in Muslim immigrant children is linked to poorer school performance (Abo-Zena et al., 2012; Tobias-Nahi & Garfield, 2007).

When my participants talked about their relationships with their peers, nearly all of them shared about three common experiences on the part of their non-Muslim peers: rejection, bullying, and Islamophobia. I discuss each of these subthemes below.

Rejection.

Almost all the participants talked about how they were rejected by their peers and how, due to this rejection, they felt lonely and isolated. They told me that they gradually developed some good peer relationships, but at first it was very difficult for them. Biased comments about their Muslim identities made by their classmates upset and hurt them. At the time when they really needed friends to help them adjust in their new school environment, they faced rejection. The main reasons behind peers' rejection was the way my participants dressed and their cultural and religious practices. Other students in the school did not accept these differences at first. My participants had to struggle to find their way in their new environments. Struggles such as these are not unique to these few Muslim children; all immigrant children face challenges in new school environments, but Muslim children find that their cultural and religious identities create additional barricades to their acculturation and intensify their feelings of loneliness.

Kirova (2001) has identified social isolation and loneliness as common experiences among immigrant children. According to her, immigrant children often face rejection from their peer groups and, as a result, feel lonely, excluded, unwanted, disliked, and "empty of happiness"

(Kirova, 2001, p. 3). In the case of Muslim children, their religious affiliation often becomes an obstacle in making new friends and is also a main reason behind the rejection from their peers that leads to loneliness (Abo-Zena et al., 2009; Khan, 2009; Mossalli, 2009). Muslim immigrant children who are born and raised in the predominantly Christian Western world have to deal with two completely different cultures: one in their homes and the other in their schools and communities at large. Their religious beliefs require them to dress and behave according to Islamic traditions, which is not an easy task while living in a secular Western society. In an effort to strictly follow the practical aspects of their religion, Muslim children living in Western countries have to face many social and emotional challenges, including harassment and isolation by their non-Muslim peers because of their Muslim identity and appearance.

Below I elaborate on three common reasons for peer rejection as described by my participants: (1) rejection based on cultural and religious practices; (2) rejection based on Muslim identities; and (3) rejection based on Muslim ways of dressing.

Rejection based on cultural and religious practices. A main reason behind peer rejection, according to my participants, was their cultural and religious practices. These Muslim immigrant children found it much harder to develop good friendships with their peers from the mainstream population because, not only were they culturally different, but there was also a big difference in religious beliefs and practices between the two groups. Muslims' ways of living are very different from Western ways of living. Some religious restrictions do not let Muslim children fully adopt the culture of their peers and become a big hurdle in their peer relations. Shama, who immigrated to Canada from Dubai, which is a Muslim country, told me that *"being a Muslim when you live in a Muslim society, you get many opportunities to interact with your religion, but here it is little different. There are many things which are not allowed in your*

religion, but they are very common here. So you have to put some extra effort into keeping in touch with your religion and beliefs."

Almost all of my participants in their early years of schooling after immigrating to Canada made friends with children of their own ethnic backgrounds because of the similar cultural or religious beliefs, values, and language, which meant there was greater acceptance of each other. This changed, however, when they entered higher grades, but unacceptance of differences was still there. Farooq shared his experience of feeling excluded and rejected by his peers due to his religious restrictions. He could not eat at his breaks during Ramadan, so sometimes when he fasts he stays inside the school and does not accompany his friends for lunch. Another thing Farooq mentioned is that he eats only halal food. Whenever he went with his friends to eat at lunch break, he never ate sausages or bacon. His friends were always surprised that he never ate bacon because it is the most favourite lunch food of all of them. His friends thought it was very weird and made fun of him, and many of his friends just left him alone because they thought he was different. Because of their comments, Farooq would sometimes stay in the school at lunchtime. Lunchtime was his only opportunity to socialize and make friends, but he often lost that opportunity.

The prayer routine according to the Muslim faith is an example of religious practice that may lead to rejection and isolation. A few of my participants told me how, while performing their religious prayers during school hours or outside in the community, they face many peer-related social problems. Their peers often begin to reject them because they feel these customs are very strange, and they therefore try to avoid the Muslim children's company (Salili & Hoosain, 2014). For example, on Friday afternoons, Farooq goes to the mosque while other kids are playing. Friday prayers are very important for Muslims. Whenever his friends invited him to

play on Fridays he refused, so sometimes they got annoyed and left him. He said that they also go for parties and drink, which is not allowed in Muslim culture, so he always has to refuse to go with his friends. He said he had to do it because he wanted to keep his religious beliefs, but it resulted in him losing his friends. He told me that his peers rejected him because *"we are different, for example, we fast for the whole month of Ramadan, they think we shouldn't be here because there are everyone eating everywhere and there are us who don't. Every time I go to 7-Eleven my friends ask me to buy something with meat and I always try to explain them that I can't eat this kind of meat. They don't understand what halal meat is, so I always told them I am vegetarian. I tried to explain but it didn't work. Even though they eat bacon and stuff, they think hand slaughtering is cruel and should not be allowed, and they say you will go to hell for this."*

Feeling excluded due to peer rejection could reduce Muslim immigrant children's chances of proper acculturation in their school environments. Farooq's story provides a good example of a boy who is not comfortable in his new school environment. Because there are always questions asked of Muslim students regarding their religious practices, most of the time they try to support themselves and their faith by explaining what they understand to be the principles and practices of Islam to their teachers and peers (Abo-Zena et al., 2009; Khan, 2009).

Rejection based on Muslim identities. All the participants mentioned feeling lonely at some point in their school years in Canada. They felt excluded, rejected, and ignored by the peers in their school because of their Muslim identities. As a result, some of them tried to hide their Muslim identities, because they feared rejection and hatred from their peers (Khan, 2009; Mossalli, 2009). They have this fear in their minds because of the negative portrayal of Muslims in the media that has become a common topic of discussion everywhere. Even in class discussions Muslims were openly criticized. Mariam, who was the youngest participant in the

study, said that she does not reveal her Muslim identity if not asked about it directly: "*Nobody knows that I am a Muslim and if they ask me I would tell them, but I never tell them on my own. There are a lot of misconceptions about Muslims, and I am a little afraid that they might think I am a terrorist and I might lose my friends."*

While some of the children hide their identities others do not want to do that; they want to keep their identities even though it is very hard to do. Fatima, who was also worried about the negative connotation attached to her Muslim identity, said that she thought of hiding her identity, but she never did it. She said, *"It was very tempting for me to hide and not tell people or act normal, but I never hide my identity from people. I always tell people, 'OK, I am a Muslim.' There is nothing to hide; it's who I am."*

According to my participants, no matter what strategy they adopted to hide their identity, either by total denial or by keeping it to themselves, they felt rejected by their peers. At first, nobody was willing to accept them for who they were. Eventually some of them developed a few good relationships with their peers, but most of them did not. According to my participants, they felt marginalized because of their Muslim identities. Because of the continuous rejection and biased behaviour from the mainstream non-Muslim school population, they were forced to develop and maintain double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903/1994). Furthermore, due to the continuous rejection by their peers because of their Muslim identity, some of my participants in turn felt embarrassed, which led to a lowering of their self-esteem. A few of them tried to hide their belonging to their religious community and tried to minimize the supposed differences between them and their non-Muslim peers by copying their non-Muslim peers' clothing, hairstyles, and ways of life. In an attempt to fit into the mainstream, they sometimes felt

pressured to keep their identities secret or deny their real identities. They always feared losing their friends if the friends found out about their Muslim identities.

The findings of other research studies (Abo-Zena et al., 2009; Sahli et al., 2009), on Muslim children's school experiences in the Western world clearly show that in some extreme cases, Muslim children even abandoned their Muslim beliefs. Some children adopted practices that are not compatible with the teachings of Islam. Smith and Denton (2005), for example, in their large-scale study about religion in the lives of adolescents in the United States, found that was is more common among religious minority youth as compared to those from mainstream religions to adopt the characteristics of other religions.

Rejection based on Muslim ways of dressing. Another big hurdle in my participants' adjustment in their schools was their ways of dressing. There are certain restrictions in Islam in regards to dressing. Muslims are not allowed to wear revealing clothes. Women are required to cover their heads with a scarf and they have to cover their whole body. These ways of dressing are completely different from the Western ways of dressing. All my participants talked about it as a main reason behind their peer rejection. Shama said, *"I didn't like elementary school. In elementary school I had a hard time making friends. I felt lonely because of the attitudes of the other students in the class mostly. They had this kind of behaviour only with me because children who came after mixed with the others in the class very easily. I guess when I moved to Canada I wore different clothing. It was not totally different, but I didn't dress like the rest of the class and it was just because I was new to school and I was not aware of what to wear in school. I wore loose fitted clothes with long sleeves and loose pants as I came from a Muslim society where people didn't wear revealing clothes."*

Farooq told me that due to his religious restrictions he can't wear shorts in gym class, which make his classmates think he should not take part in sports. As a result, Farooq feels lonely, isolated, and excluded. These requirements of his religion and culture affect his friendships. He told me, *"A few of these kind of things are restricting my participation in the school community. For example, for gym I change my clothes and everyone wears shorts, but I wear my sweat pants, so they think I am different. The teachers even notice these things, but they don't really do anything about this."*

Fatima shared a similar experience regarding religious restrictions on her way of dressing. She said, *"In summer my friends wear tank tops and shorts, but I don't, because being a Muslim, we are not supposed to wear revealing clothing. I would just wear shirts and cardigans with leggings, that kind of stuff. I never exposed too much skin or anything. My friends sometimes avoid me as they think I am not cool and old fashioned and wear dresses like grandma."*

Shama faced clear rejection from her classmates, even her friends, when she started wearing the hijab, because the hijab is a religious symbol that to many non-Muslims is a sign of oppression. She said that some people think that people who wear a hijab are extremists. She told me,

"I was a little scared before I started wearing hijab, as I was not sure what kind of reaction I will have to face from my peers and I didn't want to lose my friends. I didn't want them to think I am some kind of weird kid. I thought in this way when we had discussion about 9/11 in class. Everyone just like looked at you like you had something to do with it, and because of that I was little nervous."

Shama described how she became an outsider among her friends just because she added a scarf to her dress; otherwise she was the same person. She said she found this experience heartbreaking, because it created distance between her and her friends. She said, *"Before wearing the hijab it was very easy for me to make friends, but after wearing the hijab everything became a little difficult for me. Now for making friends I had to take the initiative as compared to before when people were more willing to make me their friend. After wearing the hijab I tried to make others comfortable with me so they could accept me as their friend. Making friends became very hard once I started wearing the hijab. It was previously very easy as compared to now."*

Shama's experience is very similar to that of other female Muslim students who cover their heads. They face rejection from their peers and other members of the mainstream society with whom they interact. To many non-Muslims, head covering has become a sign of extremism and oppression (Tobias-Nahi & Garfield, 2007). This is not only the case with females who cover their heads, but also with male members of Muslim community who have identifiable signs related to being Muslim.

Bullying.

Being bullied by peers in school is another very common experience among Muslim children. They are not only bullied by verbal comments, but sometimes they feel bullied by the actions of their classmates. There are many reasons why Muslim children are bullied, including their peers' limited knowledge about Islam and Muslims, misunderstandings, and negative stereotypes about Muslims (Abo-Zena et al., 2009). Within mainstream Canadian society there is little knowledge about Islam and Muslims, and little is being done to address this situation (Niyozov & Pluim, 2007).

All my participants were victims of prejudicial bullying during their school years in Canada. When other students found out their Muslim identities, they started calling them names, such as "terrorist" or "extremist," which often is detrimental for the well-being of Muslim children. That is why Muslim children fear that if they disclose their identities or follow a dress code which has negative connotations attached to it, they will be rejected by their peers and other members of society (Zine, 2004). Before making a decision to wear the hijab, Shama had to go through a major trauma; she said, *"Making a decision to wear the hijab was the most difficult decision of my life so far. I motivated myself by making notes with motivational phrases saying that I have to make it. I knew it will be very difficult, but it was not that difficult. The reaction was a little bit surprising, but I am glad I did it. I was a little scared before I started wearing the hijab, as I was not sure what kind of reaction I would get, and didn't want to lose friends. I didn't want them to think I am some kind of weird kid. I thought this way, because when we had a discussion about 9/11 in class everyone just like looked at me as if I had something to do with it and because of that I was a little nervous. . . . The reaction of other students was a little shocking to me. Before wearing the hijab I was scared about what the reaction of other kids would be. It was a very difficult decision for me to make. My main concern was my peers' reaction."*

Almost all the research on Muslim students' school experiences in Canada has provided similar accounts. Muslim female students face more biased attitudes from their peers than male students, and as a result they need more time to acculturate into the mainstream population. The negative experiences they face affect both their psychological well-being and their school experiences (Abbas, 2005; Niyozov, 2010; Zine, 2004).

There are many different kinds of bullying (e.g., physical, verbal, social, or emotional). Sometimes the children who bully Muslim children do not even realize their actions can be classified as bullying; they simply do it out of ignorance. At times the victims may not even recognize they are being bullied. No matter how and in what way bullying happens, it is always very harmful to the vulnerable young children who are trying to find their place in the mainstream society, both inside and outside of school (Britto, 2011; Rezai-Rashti, 1994; Zine, 2001). It is not easy for Muslim students to grow up in a post-9/11 North American society. Every day they have to face new challenges where their beliefs are being targeted by other members of the community around them, including their peers. These challenges are often linked to the misunderstandings of other people about the religion and culture of these innocent young Muslim children (Rezai-Rashti, 1994; Zine, 2001, 2004). Shama talked about bullying in her school years:

"There was bullying in the past. I don't remember any specific one, but you feel it when people don't want to be with you and don't want to hang out with you, like just walking away when you want to talk to them. I think bullying happened in different ways. Even with the attitudes they give you, like how they make you feel unwanted and stuff. I think that is a part of bullying as well. All other teachers are nice and try to ask other kids to go and hang out with the student, but that is the only thing they can do."

The experiences of my male participants were not very different from those of the female students. Farooq, who was one of the most expressive children out of all my participants, mentioned that he had been bullied by his classmates several times. He never tried to hide his Muslim identity and he tried to remain positive. According to him, bullying is common, not only for Muslim children but also for children from other backgrounds. Farooq told me, *"Even though*

my classmates made fun of me, I never tried to hide my Muslim identity. Even though there is a lot of negativity among my classmates about Muslims because of the negative media projection of Muslims. Other students still always tease me about Islam, but I just ignore them. It is not a big deal, because people do these kinds of things just to make other people's lives worse. They even do it with the people from other backgrounds. Like I have a friend who is Hindu; we studied in class together. There is always a negative look towards us when we are walking or passing people in the hallways. People always look at us differently in a strange way. It is not only because of our skin colour, it is because of the way we behave, too. For my Hindu friend, people were surprised how my friend never eats meat and kind of stuff, and I never ate bacon and stuff like that, so yeah, it is very different."

When I asked him how these attitudes affect him, he replied, *"The effect of all these things depends on my mood. If I am happy, I don't care about others, but if I am down a little bit, then I don't do well and I listen to the other people's comments and those get stuck into my mind."*

When I asked Farooq to recall his early years in Canada, he became quite upset and said those were among the hardest times in Canada. What he remembers is fighting with other students who made fun of him. He is from India, so other students in the school thought he worships cows and snakes, and they made comments to him that made him very upset. He described his early years in the schools of Alberta as follows:

"It was always fighting against someone who was trying to make fun of my religion and something like that. For example, some people think I am worshiping cows and snakes as I am from India. It is not me, as I don't worship cows and things; I worship Allah. I explained it to them many times, but they kept on saying this to me. It was not always specific children who said

that; it is a wide range of students who said that to me. I had this kind of conflict in the first couple of months when I came to Canada."

He continued: *"There are people who don't want you to be the part of the community, but I really want to be a part of the community."*

Like Farooq, Fatima was bullied in elementary school, but when she complained about it to her school administrators, they helped her and warned the children who were bullying her. She said, *"For me when I was bullied I was still young, and I didn't have the confidence to stand up to the person. The best thing at that time for me was to talk to my school counsellor. That's how it stopped. My counsellor and my principal talked to the bully and I got an apology and it never happened again."* Even a few of her friends stood by her and told her to ignore those children who were bulling her; they said that *"they are there to help her and [would] always be there for her."*

It is not easy for teachers and school administrators to stop this bullying because they cannot watch children at all times or outside the school at lunchtime or at the end of the day. Often teachers and administrators are unaware of their own prejudices about Muslims, and it is very hard for them to understand the severity of the bullying. Most of the time, complaints by these young children do not get as much attention as they should, and this can lead to devastating effects on the well-being of these young immigrant children, especially in the years when they are most in need of friendship. Other researchers, such as Allen (2007), also shared incidents of bullying ignored by teachers. In his article he shared a story of a Pakistani girl studying in a high school in Britain who told how her teacher ignored her reports of bullying by her peers. Also, Sirin and Fine (2008), in their study, shared an incident of an American-Palestinian Muslim girl

who complained about negative remarks thrown toward her from another student in her school, but her teachers, school administrator, and guidance counsellor all ignored her complaints.

Racism, Islamophobia, and peer rejection.

There are clear signs of Islamophobia in the biased attitudes of peers toward Muslim children. Their biased attitudes are based on the commonly spread hatred toward anyone perceived as a Muslim, which exceeds the limits of normal racism (Sajid, 2005). Nearly all the participants in my study commented about their relationships with their peers, specifically about how their peers rejected them and showed biased attitudes toward them, at first simply because of their different skin colour and language. This rejection based on biased attitudes grew more severe once these children's peers learned of their Muslim identities. Haque (2004) writes:

> Islamophobia exists today as a social phenomenon that seems to be omnipresent. It is not surprising that such views, so prevalent in general society, also influence how students view Islam and their Muslim peers. Pejorative attitudes affect classroom interactions between teachers and students and among students. (p. 4)

For the participants in my study, making friends became more difficult when these immigrant children lived in areas that were not very multicultural and other children in the schools had little exposure to other cultures, religions, and languages. All the participants in my study had a hard time making friends when they first began attending school in Canada because of their differences. They had to take the first steps to secure friendships and put extra effort into making their classmates comfortable with them. They all made this effort in order to gain social acceptance from their peers. To do this, they adopted many strategies, sometimes doing things that were against their religious values and beliefs, for example, eating non-halal food or wearing revealing clothes. Sometimes the children felt guilty for doing things that were contradictory to

their culture and religion. They tried to fit in to the mainstream school population by any means. Their feelings of being disliked or even hated, along with feelings of guilt, upset them, but they tried to stay positive. For example, when Farooq first attended school in Edmonton, he faced open rejection from his classmates based on their biased attitudes when they learned that he was from India, because those children thought everyone from India worship cows and snakes and belongs to the Hindu religion. These children started irritating Farooq with their negative comments because of their stereotypical assumptions. The situation grew even worse when they found out that Farooq was a Muslim. There were many incidents when Farooq felt rejected and left out by his classmates due to their racist views about Muslims. Farooq talked about how his classmates made comments to him that Muslims are killers and they are responsible for all the terrorist activities happening around the world. He told me, "*There is a lot of negativity among my classmates about Muslims because of the way Muslims are projected in the media. These students always tease me about Islam and also give strange looks in the hallways at school."*

Fatima, who moved to Canada from Dubai, shared some similar experiences, relating how she had to ignore her classmates' negative comments and try to make them comfortable so they would accept her as their friend. While there were some children who did not like her at all, there were a few who helped her adjust to the school environment. They encouraged and supported her in her school adjustment, but unfortunately these students were not the majority. Fatima shared,*"Making friends on my own was difficult and kind of awkward for me. . . . I was the new student, so I had to be extra out there, and I had to present myself and I had to introduce myself. I ended up making some good friends. There were a few students who didn't like me, but I didn't let that get into my head. Even the students who became my friends said to me, 'Ignore*

them, as they are close-minded. Just don't pay any attention to them. We will be here for you and we will be your friends."

Fatima also mentioned racist attitudes from her peers due to her different looks and ways of behaving, which were very culturally appropriate in her culture but seem strange to some Westerners. Because of her skin colour and accent, her classmates assumed she was from an uncivilized culture and commented negatively on her actions, which made her feel upset and hurt. These students rejected her attempts to become friends and treated her differently than they treated their other friends in the class. She shared, *"I was in gym, and that was the first time I have ever seen snow, and I was just playing around and having fun and saying it was the first time I have seen snow. Those close-minded people, they just thought I am an uncivilized person who doesn't know how to behave decently in a civilized manner. They just assumed that I am uncivilized and came from a very backward place. They didn't say it to me, but one of my friends overheard it that they were saying that I came from a backward Muslim country, Dubai, so that is why I have no manners. My friends didn't want to say it to me, but they just said it and I was very hurt by that."*

Shama, who started wearing a hijab in her elementary grades, faced open rejection and racism from her peers. She said it was a big change in her life, and that it made her feel like a total stranger to her friends and classmates. She said people changed their behaviour toward her as soon as she started wearing a hijab. Shama chose to make a drawing as part of her pre-interview activities. In her interpretation of the drawing, she drew she explained how everyone was friendly to her before she wore the hijab, and she had friends from all genders, but after wearing it, male students at the school became reluctant to talk to her. She also talked about it in her interview. She said, *"In grade 8 I started wearing the head scarf and all my friends and*

teachers were quite surprised by that. On the first day I wore it to the school, one of my teachers said to me, 'Now that you started wearing the hijab, we are not going to see your pretty hair again,' and I said, 'Nope.' This was kind of very sudden and I was expecting this kind of remark. These remarks made me a little upset. It was a kind of sudden and unexpected decision from the other kids. They tried to keep themselves distant from me even though I was the same on the inside. There was no change in me, just that I started wearing the hijab and that's all."

Peer rejection on the basis of racism is not only the case with female students; the male students had to face it as well. According to my participants' experiences it occurs less in multicultural environments, but it is on the rise in the white majority areas where other students have less exposure to other cultures. Saeed, who moved from Toronto to Edmonton, had a hard time making friends. In Toronto, he had many friends from his own ethnic background, and he mixed with them very easily and had no problems socializing with them. Most of his friends in Toronto had relationships with his family as well, because they all lived in the same community. According to Saeed, when he was in Toronto he never felt like an immigrant. He made a few friends from his own ethnic background very quickly. He faced rejection from his peers for the first time when his family moved to Alberta. He found it very difficult to make friends in Edmonton. Some students refused to talk to him and he felt very bad about it. The children were not friendly toward Saeed in the beginning. They made negative comments to him, but he ignored them and, as a result, he finally made a few good friends. According to him, students in middle school were more racist than all other school levels. He said that in elementary grades, the children did not know much about racism, but by the time they enter high school, they are racist even though they have learned ways to hide their racist feelings. He commented, *"Like, students in Toronto were more open; probably they have more experience and even though if we*

look back from now I don't think there was any racism like here. There may have been some but nothing significant. The children in Toronto are living in a multicultural society, so they are aware of what is normal. Over here like that isn't true until you enter into high school where students who have racism but they keep it hidden, because maybe they realize it is not acceptable in normal society to be like that and they see the difference. They might have shown it when they were younger and some of them did, yeah. . . . There were some kids when I was in the middle school in Alberta who openly showed their racism and publicly expressed that. I went to high school with the same kids, and then it was obvious that they still don't like me. But they didn't publicly display it anymore as in their middle school years, because they realize that it is affecting their reputation."

Ali, who spent his early school years in Fort McMurray, found it much harder to adjust to middle school in Edmonton, in comparison with his elementary grades. Even though the schools in both places were not very multicultural, his experiences at school in Edmonton were very different. He said that it may have been because children notice individual differences, such as skin colour or style of dress, more as they get older. He said that younger children who know little about what is going on around the world are a little less biased and show less racism. They also accept differences more quickly than older children, who already have preconceived notions about people around them, especially when their parents and teachers all share similar biased viewpoints about certain groups of people. According to Ali, *"Even though the school in Fort McMurray was not that multicultural, I found more biased attitudes from the middle school students in Edmonton. Now most of the children are my friends, but they used to make fun of me. They make fun of me because of my physical differences from them."*

Ali said he had difficulty making friends in high school, but not in his earlier grades. According to him, children did not differentiate much while making friends in elementary grades as compared to higher grades. He was a little shy in his childhood because he was the only immigrant child in his class. He intentionally adopted behaviours that made him popular among his friends. In an effort to fit in, he tried to hide his strong accent by imitating the accent of his Canadian-born peers, and sometimes he just kept quiet even though he had lot to tell and share with his friends. He also sometimes tried to hide his identity from his friends by not telling them that he was a Muslim. This attitude of his friends changed in higher grades as they became more mature, which helped him in making friends.

Theme Two: Teachers' Attitudes

After relationships with peers, the second most common theme that emerged from the data was teachers and their attitudes toward Muslim immigrant children. Almost all of my participants appreciated how, in their elementary grades when they were newly arrived in their schools, teachers were nice to them and tried to help them adjust to their school environments. Some of the participants who were not used to this kind of attitude from their teachers back home even felt quite overwhelmed by their teachers' behaviour. Unfortunately, things got worse in high school when teachers started teaching about current global issues, specifically 9/11. Teaching culturally and religiously diverse students is a very demanding job. Teachers sometimes find it hard to keep their personal biases away from their teaching practices. The current global situation has not only affected the Muslim community as a whole, but offices, schools, and other public institutions have also begun to change their ways to accommodate Islamophobia or xeno-racism (Sheridan & North, 2004). Due to widespread negative views about Muslims in the society, some teachers intentionally or unintentionally promote the practices of

racism and Islamophobia (Sheridan & North, 2004). As a result, Muslim youth develop feelings of disaffection and marginality because of the lack of social acceptance. Discriminatory attitudes on the part of students are often supported by teachers' lack of response or penalizing of the victims (Zine, 2000). Low teacher expectations of Muslim youth can lead not only to negative evaluation and bias in assessment, but to underachievement as well (Kâgitçibasi, 2009). The need to "be with your own kind" (Zine, 2004) is also produced by a lack of inclusion and acceptance, which can lead to isolationist attitudes. Teachers' biased attitudes damage Muslim students' self-esteem and identities (Abbas, 2005).

In my study, other members of the school community (e.g., teachers and administrators) contributed to Muslim students' alienation because of their own personal biases and prejudgments about Muslims. These adults at times ignored non-Muslim students' biased attitudes or only gave them minimal reprimands. Farooq related to me that when he complained about some students' racist comments to his principal, the principal called those students to his office, but she treated their behaviour as normal and let them go after a mild scolding. According to Farooq, the principal did not administer appropriate measures to prevent such events in the future. He was expecting a stronger reaction from the top administrator of the school, and he felt disappointed by his principal's behaviour. He had a completely opposite image of the administrators in Canada in his mind because on his first day of school, his school principal had impressed him and his whole family when she greeted them at the door of her office. He was expecting a totally different attitude from her in regard to this event, and he was shocked. Following the incident, the students stopped bothering him directly, but they continued to tease him indirectly by commenting about Muslims. This created a void between Farooq and his classmates, and he often felt lonely. He told me,

"The students bug me every time with their comments about Muslims. Once I went to the principal to complain about these students. She called the students in her office and told them not to say and do the things which bother me again, but she didn't take an action against them. She also told me that if they do it again she will take an action against them. Now the students are not bothering me to that terrorist kind of ways, but they are bothering me with my culture kind of stuff, which is bothering me but not affecting me, so I never complained about it to the principal after that again. I tried to resolve it on my own by explaining to them, and it really helped."

Teachers' ignorance.

Almost all my participants talked about their experiences with some of their teachers and how they sometimes unintentionally hurt their students' feelings. Specifically in the case of immigrant children, teachers sometimes get impatient or even annoyed by the extra assistance these children need in their initial settlement in the new environment of their classes and schools, especially in the elementary grades, without realizing that all these things are new for these young students. These immigrant children are not less competent than their classmates, they are just new and do not know much about the new world around them, and their difficulties are part of their adjustment to the new environment. Shama shared her experience as a new immigrant child in her elementary grades as follows:

"My teachers in elementary years were very nice. Only one of my teachers was very weird and very rude. She was very impatient with me. I was not aware about the lockers and how to use them. She was very angry and rude when I asked her. She didn't realize that I am new to this system. I don't think there were some other reasons behind it. She just wanted things go

smoothly and just wanted to go with the flow. She didn't like students to tell exactly the things, but I kept on asking for help. She was just annoyed by me."

Amina also shared some of her elementary grade experiences. She said that when she arrived in Canada she was a quiet child, because this was considered a quality of a good child in Muslim culture. She never made eye contact with elders, always listened to them, and spoke less in front of them. After immigration, when she started going to school, her teacher misunderstood this quality and thought that Amina was a withdrawn and even asocial child. She called Amina's mother to discuss her shyness and asked her to encourage Amina to talk at home. Amina said that her mother was very upset, because she always thought of her as a very confident and respectful child. That teacher did not understand this young immigrant student who was already in a challenging situation of adjusting to a new environment, and she expected her to do things that were against her culture and religion. That experience made Amina's adjustment to the school culture very difficult. She shared,

"When I entered into my elementary grades, my teacher, who just started her teaching career, misunderstood my behaviour. She thought I am a very shy and dumb student when I was not. For one of my class assignments I wrote an essay after many days of hard work, and she doubted on my skills of writing by saying did I cheat it from somewhere. I was quite shocked as cheating is considered a very bad thing in my culture and religion. I cried for many days, but I didn't tell it to my mom as she will feel bad and shocked. Now that I have grown up and better understand the whole situation I always feel angry for not complaining about that teacher's behaviour to my mom."

In other participants' school experiences, teachers had a hard time in understanding the culture and religion of Muslim immigrant children. Sometimes the teachers mistreated the

Muslim students because of their own limited knowledge about these children's home culture and religion. Often teachers made comments in front of other students without realizing how hurtful they might be for their young students, who have a natural need for respect among their peers. These kinds of behaviours not only affect the feelings and school performances of these students, but also affect their positive image among their classmates. Although these kinds of behaviours are often unintentional, they have a devastating effect on the school performance and adjustment of the new immigrant students, especially in their early grades (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Young, 1990).

Shama, who started wearing her hijab in her elementary grades, shared a comment made by her teacher which hurt her feelings and motivated other children in the school to comment on her style of dress. She said, *"In grade eight I started wearing hijab and all my friends and teachers were quite surprised by that. One of my teachers in front of the whole class said to me, "Now we are not going to see your pretty hair again," and I said 'nope.' This kind of remark made me a little upset and initiated a serial of comments from other students to ask me questions about my scarf."*

As Shama's experience indicates, teachers sometimes indirectly contribute to the negative behaviours of Muslim children's peers at school. Teachers have a central role in maintaining a peaceful and just environment in school. The way teachers interact with immigrant children affects their relationship with their peers, as other students in the class may stop talking and being friendly to these students. Teachers need to be very sensitive to issues related to culturally and religiously diverse children in their classes Too often, they are not fully aware of these issues and, instead of helping these children adjust to their new school environment, they behave in a way which make the children feel disconnected from their school environment.

Shama also told me that in her higher grades she and her classmates studied topics such as Sharia Law and terrorism in their social studies class. The class discussions about these topics sometimes hurt her feelings, because her classmates openly criticized Muslim culture and Islam due to widespread negative assumptions in the society about Muslims. Shama mentioned that one of her Muslim classmates always got very upset when teachers discussed these topics. For one of their class assignments, the teacher asked students to write an essay about Sharia law, and a student made some very rude comments about Muslims. This student also quoted teachings from the Quran without having proper knowledge of it. Being a Muslim, Shama felt angry and embarrassed in front of the whole class. According to her, teachers should care about these kinds of things, especially when they have Muslim children in their classes. She said, *"One of my Muslim friends in my class got very upset with the class discussions about Muslims and 9/11. Everyone in the class thinks that because you are Muslim and have the same religion as the suspects of 9/11 have, you are responsible for this event and they want you to agree with them. It is not that somebody is pinpointing towards you but it is actually the atmosphere created through the discussions make you feel in this way."*

Schools can play a major role in increasing the racism that already exists in society. Racist attitudes affect society in many ways. They increase discrimination, violence, poverty, and stereotypes about minority ethno cultural groups, which could also become a reason behind the exclusion of children from certain groups or classes, such as Muslims. This exclusion could marginalize the competencies of these religiously diverse children, who have different norms of competence than the dominant society (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Mainstream classroom teachers who are unfamiliar with or hold stereotypical beliefs regarding certain groups underestimate these children's learning abilities and interact differently with these children (Barrera, 1995;

Berhanu, 2008; Brown, 2004; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Zine, 2006). Such racist views affect teachers' expectations from children in the minority group and can also affect peers' attitudes, resulting in them making fun, making physical jokes, or even physical attacking immigrant children (Zine, 2008). One common criticism, on the basis of different research studies, against public schools and many teachers is that they are damaging Muslim students' self-esteem and identities by showing racist attitudes toward their Muslim students (Abbas, 2005; Van Driel, 2004; Zine, 2004.

"Good" vs. "bad" teachers.

While some teachers have biased attitudes toward Muslim children, research studies also show that some teachers are working against racism and Islamophobia by making connections with these students and their families. They try to make their students feel welcome, safe, and comfortable in their classrooms (Niyozov, 2010). Shama said that in spite of a few "ignorant and inconsiderate" teachers, there were a few other teachers in her school who actually helped, by explaining the difference between Muslims and extremists while teaching such topics. Shama shared an example of one of her teachers who, while teaching such a topic in his class, explained everything and provided a very good picture of the current global situation. She said she really appreciated his way of teaching and that every teacher should adopt the same strategy in their classrooms. She said, *"In my social studies class, one of my teachers talked about current issues, but he made the difference between Taliban and Muslims very clear in front of the whole class. He also explained that terrorism is more a political thing than related to religion. It is more kind of a tribal mentality than what religion teaches us. I thought that was a good idea and a right thing to do instead of just telling what they do is based on religion."*

While a few teachers played an important role in providing students with a good overview of the current global situation, others totally ignored the fact that they had students from Muslim backgrounds in their class who could be hurt by some of the topics discussed in class. Sometimes teachers had class discussions without considering the diverse population of the class. Teachers sometimes ignored the importance of providing detailed information while teaching such topics in their classes. Shama shared the following experience from her class discussions:

"The discussions on religion are part of our social studies curriculum. I don't really remember the right words used by the teachers, but they showed us the movies about 9/11. Teacher tried not to use the word Muslim but she used the word Islamists. After that our social studies teacher gave us an assignment to write an essay and everyone in the class chose to write about the event of 9/11 except me and my friend. They all described 9/11 as a terrorist activity and talked about Muslims badly. It was just me and another girl who chose a different topic, but all others chose 9/11. So I am guessing they got affected by it a lot."

In contrast to Shama, Saeed does not think teachers are responsible for the negative behaviours of students in school. According to him, students learn these negative attitudes from the media or from their parents, who may also learn it through the media. He said, "*I don't think teachers are responsible for such kind of behaviour from the students. These students learn these things either from their parents or through the media."*

Ali, who moved to Edmonton from Fort McMurray, a predominantly white community, said that the attitudes of the teachers were almost the same in both cities. He said he did not remember any hard times in his class when he was in his elementary days. He said, *"I was a quiet child in my elementary grades so I don't remember much about my interactions with my*

teachers. Even in my higher grades I am little shy to talk in the class so I have nothing special to share."

Ali also said that things changed a little bit when he entered his middle and high school grades, but still there was nothing special to share about. Farooq said that his middle school teachers did not say bad things about Muslims, but on the other hand they did not try to stop negative comments or explain the details about incidents of terrorism when a discussion arose in the class. Again, the response from teachers varied from teacher to teacher according to how each teacher taught in their class. Farooq said,

"While teaching about these events, the teachers don't show two different perspectives, they just stay in the middle. They don't say Muslims are not terrorists or Muslims are terrorists, they just be in the central line. They really don't create any problem. Central line means the teachers would say most of the Muslims are not terrorists but some of them may be. Some teachers explain it a little but most of them don't."

Farooq blames teachers for not fulfilling their duty of providing real facts or the right information. According to him, if his teachers ever explained something in front of the class, they provided only partially correct information and ignored some facts. As a Muslim student, he wanted his teachers to explain more details in front of the class instead of just saying that Taliban are responsible for all the events that happened on 9/11 and they are Muslims. This statement is very general; it does not provide the whole picture and could contribute to the negative image of Muslims. Farooq said,

"The teachers are not giving exact right information, but they are giving information which is partially right. When people talk about Muslims [in class], I feel they are talking about me, not about anybody else, just about me because I am Muslim. We have many Muslim students

in our school in other grades, but in my class I am the only Muslim student. I don't say teachers say something in favour of Muslims but they shouldn't go on the terrorist side about Muslims. Everyone have different angle of looking at the different things. We had a discussion in our class about 9/11, like who did the 9/11, and only two of the students think government was responsible, the rest of the class said the terrorists are responsible for 9/11. They think terrorists are mostly Muslims like al-Qaida and things like that. I tried to explain the difference between terrorists and Muslims, but people have different views which are wrapped around their head by media."

Teachers' biased approaches to curriculum topics.

Amina, who had just finished high school, shared some of her experiences regarding teachers teaching biased curriculum in the classes. She talked about the discussions in her social studies classes where sometimes teachers also become part of these discussions and supported the comments made by non-Muslim classmates. These discussions hurt her feelings and, being a Muslim, she know that the negative things said about Muslims are not true. She said,

"In our social studies classes we often had discussions on the current global events. Whenever we had these discussions, other students in the class and teachers openly blamed and criticized Muslims. According to them, teachings of Islam provoke and motivate terrorism, while being a Muslim I know it is not true. Islam is a religion of peace and love. The people who are terrorists could not be Muslims. They are just using the label of Islam. I tried to explain it in front of my class, but they didn't listen to me. Even the teacher didn't pay attention to my comments. It is the duty of teachers to provide a big picture to their students. I always had that complaint with my teachers."

Farooq mentioned a similar class discussion which made him upset and indirectly affected his school performance because he felt disconnected from the class afterwards. He was also punished by his teacher, who took points off his final marks because Farooq went against what his teacher had said regarding Muslims and Islam. Farooq said he felt very disappointed after that and felt he did not belong in that place where his beliefs had no value at all. His classmates also openly made fun of him about it. All these things led him to fall behind and eventually fail that class. He said,

"When they have these kinds of discussions in the class I feel kind of disconnected. These things are affecting my studies as well. In the past couple of months I am failing as I am not paying attention anymore. I also started feeling that school is too boring and that's the only reason I failed. The school experiences don't affect me at home because when I come home I forget everything. Only in school I feel upset because of the comments passed on me. One of the assignments on these topics affects my marks as well as I will go completely opposite to what teacher said in the class and instead I back fired on them and they really don't like that and that really bring my marks down."

Saeed also talked about class discussions in which Muslims and Islam were openly criticized without the students or teacher seeming to realize that there was a Muslim child in the class whose feelings were being hurt by these discussions. The other students and the teacher all thought that Muslims are not good people and should be barred from entering Canada, because they are killers and could be dangerous for the unity of Canada. Other global issues were also discussed in the class and Saeed's classmates also blamed Muslims for these incidents. He commented on it:

"Everyone is thinking that it is the Muslim culture and mentality to kill everybody. That is what we discussed in class. Both teachers and students have the same thoughts. The teachers commented that Muslims want to show the world how cruel they could be so they can conquer the world. What they did in Syria they can do in the other countries too and maybe the UN will jump in and they will take over the UN as well. These are the comments of my teachers, but the students say the same thing as well. They changed it, though, as most of them haven't gone out of this country so they have no experience with other cultures. The farthest they may go is Mexico, so they don't know what the world is really about and they think that their country will be attacked first because there are too many Muslims coming in. Most of them are not in favour of Muslims."

Teaching in an era of globalization is not an easy job and it is very demanding, especially when the teachers have a culturally and religiously diverse student population in their classrooms. Every word and action of the teachers has a deep effect on the students' development and can contribute to their future acculturation in their new homeland. Negative experiences that happen in schools can restrict these students' positive adjustment in the schools, affecting not only the school culture but the broader culture as well.

Mariam shared an experience where her teacher showed the class a video in which Muslims were openly criticized. She was the only young Muslim child in the whole class. She got so upset after watching that video that she felt like she was responsible for all current events of terrorism. She tried to explain her point of view being a Muslim to her friends but nobody listened to her because the teacher showed the video to the class and students trusted her more than this young Muslim girl who wanted to defend her identity in front of her friends and

classmates. This incident affected her growth as a well-integrated future Canadian citizen. She shared,

"Sometimes you are watching some documentary and people say Muslims did this and that when they didn't, and sometimes while sitting I told them how you know it happened and Muslims did that. The videos we see are arranged by teachers or principals. The teachers don't explain and say that Muslims did this, it is the students who discuss in this way. It is media who is responsible for it. Just during the videos they said this. Once we watched video on 9/11 in which narrator said Muslims did that and it happened twice. We watched those videos in social studies class. We read a book about World War II and then 9/11 came up and our teacher wanted us to watch this video. The teacher didn't say Muslims are responsible. Once we had a substitute teacher and he said something about Muslims are terrorists and terrorism is a practice of Muslims, and that really really hurts my feelings. I share it with my parents and they said just ignore it as he didn't know about it. I am not sure, students must think Muslims are bad after watching that movie."

Theme Three: Neighbouring Community Behaviour

The third main theme that most of the participants pointed out in their interviews relates to their experiences in the community outside school. Just like the in-school environment, the out-of-school environment plays an important part in the adjustment of immigrant children.

The host society at large plays a significant role in shaping the lives of its new members (Berry, 2006). How they are treated by the dominant society affects these children's future acculturation strategies. My participants had a very positive image of the mainstream Canadian population before they arrived in Canada. Even after immigration they liked the way people opened doors for each other and said "thank you," which were not common practices back home

where everyone was busy on their own. But unfortunately my participants' later experiences, which they shared with me, changed the image of the mainstream Canadian population for them. The Muslim immigrant children who participated in my study felt unwelcome and unwanted by the dominant culture, so it is likely to be more difficult for them to adapt to their host society. According to Berry (2006), the acculturating group could face a great deal of stress because of the discriminatory attitudes of the host culture toward their own culture and religion. On the other hand, Berry (2012) cites many research studies which suggest that multicultural societies that promote diversity and encourage immigrants to keep their ethnic and religious identities impose less acculturative stress on new immigrants. With its official policy of multiculturalism, Canada is supposed to be such a society, but in practice it is not.

In North American societies, discrimination and rejection from the host society play a major role in isolating and marginalizing Muslim immigrants, due to the widespread negative views and different political events that associate Islam with terrorism. The religious beliefs, values, and ways of living of Muslims do not match with Western values, so they are not recognized by the members of the host society. As a result, Muslims often face biased attitudes from the members of the Western societies, which then affects their acculturation into the broader society. Marginalization often happens after failed attempts at participation by the immigrant groups in the broader society. When marginalization is forcefully imposed by the dominant group, the result is called exclusion (Berry, 1997). According to Berry (2003), "integration can only be freely chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society has an open and inclusive orientation towards cultural diversity" (p. 24).

Almost all my participants shared experiences with mainstream community members and talked about how they were sometimes hurt by the attitudes of the people around them.

Sometimes even very small gestures and comments made by a member of the dominant culture affected them deeply. Most of these were actions that happened unintentionally.

Neighbouring community's racist attitude toward Muslims.

Communities whose members have less exposure to other cultures tend to be more racist as compared to communities with a larger immigrant population. This is especially the case for Muslims because there are widespread negative stereotypes about Muslims in the society. The participants of my study experienced several incidents where they felt rejected or ignored because of these stereotypes. Sometimes even the parents of their non-Muslim peers demonstrated such behaviours, which deeply affected the Muslim children emotionally. Saeed shared his experience of going to a classmate's house for a class project. In his words, *"For a few of our group projects we had to go to each other's houses. I went to one of my group member's house with two other friends, and I noticed the difference between his parents' attitude towards me and other kids. They didn't trust me."*

This incident became a roadblock for Saeed, who felt left out of the group because of the parents' attitudes. Saeed said that after this incident, he avoided going to his friends' houses because he felt very uncomfortable in an environment where people did not trust him or behaved differently toward him than toward others.

This is not only the case in which a study participant faced negativity from adults outside school. Shama shared a similar experience. She wears the hijab, which in the Western world is associated with oppression and terrorism. The sad thing is that women who wear hijabs are considered extremist simply because they are trying to follow their religion. Shama said, *"I went trick or treating [on Halloween] with my younger brother and I was wearing a hijab. A man said, 'Are you dressed up like a terrorist?' That was the rudest comment I ever got."*

Halloween is not considered a religious celebration, so Shama thought that by participating she could be a part of the broader community. Unfortunately that single comment made her very upset, and she said that after that incident she never went trick or treating again. The host society plays a large role in shaping the acculturation strategies of each immigrant. The comment on Halloween impeded Shama's integration into the broader community. She shared another similar experience:

"One of my friends' foster parents are Jewish. Her mom is very nice but her dad, whenever I went over, is really very very rude to me. I don't know why. My friend is pretty nice to me. I am guessing at home her parents are not approving that I am her friend. Her mom is alright, I can tell that. I went to their house once but after that attitude I never went there again. I think it is because I was wearing hijab."

All the participants mentioned how upset they felt after such experiences and how these incidents prevented them from attempting future interactions within the neighbouring community. Most of the time people do not realize the severe impact of their comments or small gestures toward these young students. Such ignorance creates distance between the mainstream community and these young children, and that distance could be a major obstacle in their future integration into Canadian society. Ali, who experienced some similar biased attitudes from his classmates, believes that a big reason for the racism among school students is their home culture, their parents, and the media. He shared,

"The reason behind middle school racism was parents and media at the same time, because parents turn on the news and they hear the stuff like that and they just start blaming specific person or something, and then their kids get influenced and learn the same thing. Those children come to school with this kind of stuff and pass on this information to others."

People who live in more multicultural communities show less biased attitudes as compared to communities that mainly consist of people from one dominant culture, because in such societies people are not used to accepting differences. It is difficult for them to accept that there could be people around them who have totally different views. All my participants who moved from more multicultural Canadian cities to Edmonton, which is comparatively less multicultural, shared similar experiences. They faced less negative behaviours in the highly multicultural areas, such as Toronto. Saeed, who moved from Toronto to Edmonton, thinks people in Alberta are very racist. He said that even in school non-Muslim children make racist comments about Muslim children. According to him, it is all because of their home culture and the media. He shared his early experiences as follows:

"When I was in Ontario nobody was racist. But here, five six kids are racist. They didn't understand. This is Alberta, you know. People are racist here. I don't care about them. They never physically harm, but they pass on comments. It is a pretty conservative society and I can't completely understand it. I think these students got it from their parents and their parents got the idea from the media. Teachers are pretty neutral. They tried to resolve the issues. I don't say they are biased, but they are nice to those [racist] kids. It is less in Ontario as compare to Alberta."

Fatima, who moved to Edmonton from Dubai, heard very good things about the people of Canada before immigration and was quite impressed by the attitudes of the people when she first arrived. She said, *"Before coming, I heard people in Canada are very nice and when I came here and saw people in the mall opening doors for you and say thank you when you opened door for them it really surprised me because that was not the case in Dubai, everyone was on their own."*

Even though Fatima's first impression was very good, she later experienced some biased attitudes that changed her thinking. She experienced open racism from members of the broader community. She told me,

"There are people in the community who are closed minded and who think I am uncivilized because of my skin colour and different language I speak. They feel uncomfortable, and I understand that because they are not used to it. They used to being monolingual and they used to see people from a single culture, so when they see a person with different skin tone and they speak different languages and from different culture and religion, so obviously something will trigger in their mind and they feel uncomfortable, and it's in human nature to be discriminative and racist."

Fatima shared an incident that occurred when her family first moved to Spruce Grove, which is a predominantly white community. The people there were not used to people from other cultures, and it was very hard for them to accept differences. Fatima presented an example of her mother when she used to work at Walmart. One day Fatima went to Walmart to visit her mother, just to check in with her. She was talking with her mother in their home language and a white women turned around angrily and said, *"Excuse me."* Fatima said, *"I told her that 'sorry we are not talking to you or anything about you,'"* but the woman still found it very offensive that they were talking to each other in a different language. Fatima explained to me that her mother does not speak English properly, so that is why she communicated with her in the Bengali language. In contrast, Fatima said that her neighbours are nice people. Whenever her mother and father leave together for work in the morning, her father says hello to the neighbours and they never have any conflict with them. She also said,

"The people are becoming very diverse here now and people are started to be more open-minded. It just some people in the community who are closed-minded and that is because they used to be in a closed bubble and they haven't had experience with other cultures. Now in Spruce Grove more people of colour are coming in. In the last six years there more people from diverse cultures have been coming to Spruce Grove."

Even though people are getting used to having a more diverse population around them, with Muslims they show a totally different attitude because the differences between the mainstream population and Muslims are vast. According to Fatima, people have negative attitudes toward Muslims because of the negative stereotypes about Muslims. She said,

"It was really strange how people have this false information in their head and they just automatically assumed that 'oh, you are a Muslim, so are you part of terrorism' or 'did you have to leave your country and come to Canada because people thought you were terrorists?' and stuff like that. It feels very bad when people think of you like that, but I mean, you just stay calm and say no, tell them what really happened, tell them what the real thing is and that Muslims are not terrorists and they are just following their religion and culture and they come in peace. Unfortunately 9/11 just ruined the image of Muslims."

The widespread negative stereotypes about Muslims have led some people in the Western world to be fearful that any Muslims they see could be terrorists or want to harm them. This is especially the case when Muslims wear traditional clothing, and when the men have full beards and the women wear the hijab. These members of the Muslim community are often targeted by non-Muslim members of Western societies. Farooq, for example, shared some experiences that occurred because his mother wears a hijab, so people identify their Muslim identity and treat them badly. He said,

"My mom wears hijab and when she goes outside in the mall other people always look at her. Once we went on shopping in Toronto and the cashier there was letting other people to just pay and go but he checked our cash as it is real or not and security would be on to us because my mother was wearing hijab. Here in Edmonton there are people who don't respect you. Suppose you are in Walmart and you asked for help for shoes or something they show their attitudes towards you than another person."

Farooq was very upset about the experiences he had had within or outside his school community. He said he wanted to be part of Canadian culture, but the attitudes of other members of the society have been a barrier and restricted his full participation in society. Farooq believes that other people think that Muslims are different from the rest of the community because they have different dietary practices. He gave the example of Muslims fasting for the whole month of Ramadan, and of non-Muslims in the community thinking that Muslims shouldn't be here because they do not behave the same way as the society at large. He presented the example of comments passed by his classmates (e.g., Muslims slaughter sheep and the non-Muslim community members think it is animal cruelty and look down on Muslims for this) to demonstrate that mainstream Canadians do not think Muslims are part of mainstream society. He said he tried to explain to his friends several times, but they would always forget it and repeat the same things again and again, making Farooq very upset.

All these experiences make these young Muslim children's acculturation into mainstream Canadian society very difficult. According to Berry's (2012) acculturation theory, the acculturation of immigrants depends on many factors, an important one being mainstream society's attitude toward them. The acculturation process of immigrants who receive positive and welcoming attitudes from their host communities goes more smoothly, and they find it very easy

to integrate into mainstream society. On the other hand, immigrants who are vastly different from the host society, as Muslims are from non-Muslims in Western cultures, for example, have a more difficult experience of acculturation. In some cases this leads the immigrants to adopt a separation strategy. Religious Muslims show more resistance toward Western beliefs and it is more likely that they will choose separation as their acculturation strategy. It is very important for practicing Muslims to keep their religion and maintain their culture while avoiding the effects of the culture and religion of the dominant culture. The dominant society's acculturation expectations may also shape the acculturation strategies of Muslim immigrants (Berry, 1980, 1997). If behaviours toward Islam and Muslims are unfriendly and unsupportive, the dominant culture may force these Muslim immigrants into separation or segregation (Berry, 1997).

There are huge differences within and among different immigrant groups, and as a result, there is variety in their experiences and methods of acculturation as well. In the case of immigrant children, their acculturation is shaped by their families, peers, school experiences, teachers' and administrators' attitudes, and the attitudes of other members of society with whom they interact (Phinney, Berry, Vedder, & Liebkind, 2006). In addition to those factors, children's acculturation is also shaped by the children's personal characteristics, by contextual factors, and by any discrimination they may have experienced within and outside their school communities (Phinney et al., 2006). Muslim children face difficult acculturation processes because of their traditional cultural and religious values and beliefs, and because of social pressures and the attitudes of their non-Muslim peers (Podikunji-Hussain, 2014).

Another thing which most of my participants think makes their acculturation process more difficult as compared to immigrant children from other cultures and religions is their

physical appearance. The signs related to Muslim identity (e.g., hijab, beard, or turban) often are a symbol of oppression and terrorism in the eyes of people in the host country.

All of these negative community experiences affect Muslim students' sense of belonging to the broader Canadian society that is so important for their future acculturation and well-being (Abdallah-Shahid, 2008; Abukhattala, 2004; Mays, Zine, 2001, 2004, 2006). Many educational researchers (e.g., Finn, 1989; Osterman, 2000) agree that the need for belonging is one of the most important needs all students need fulfilled for them to perform well in all types of learning environments. Sense of belonging is often used as an indicator of social integration. The results of my study suggest that because of the widespread negative stereotypes about Muslims, Muslim children feel alienated and excluded from their school communities, have lower academic performance, and have difficulty in their social interactions with their peers and teachers (Niyozov, 2010; Zine, 2001, 2012). They are also frequently victims of xeno-racism. These school experiences affect their future integration into the society at large and also affect their sense of belonging to their new homeland.

Theme Four: Negative Projection of Muslims Through the Media

One common theme, which almost all the participants mentioned, and which, according to them, is a basic reason for all the misunderstandings about Islam, is the negative projection of Muslims in different forms of the media. The participants all agreed that media has played a major role in the current situation of Muslims, specifically after 9/11. Through the media, Muslims are represented as terrorists. Incidents such as 9/11 and the so-called War on Terror not only ruin the image of Islam, but due to this negative representation, Muslims have become victims of discrimination, fear, anxiety, and oppression (King, Abuzayyad-Nuseibeh, & Nuseibeh, 2014). The cultural, social, and religious beliefs of Islam are entirely different from

the Western worldview, and the media has been targeting Islam as a violent religion (Nicolino, 2006). This negative projection affects Muslim/non-Muslim relationships even before people from the two groups interact with each other (Kâgitçibasi, 2009). Farooq, who experienced biased attitudes from his peers, thinks it is because of the media that everyone has a negative image of Muslims in their minds. He said,

"The students are getting this from media as negative things about Muslims are all over the media. It kind of stuck in their minds that we [Muslims] are these bad kind of people, but we are not, we are other kind. They never share it to me. They hear these things over the media because if I heard something over the media next day they tease me with that news."

Fatima, who experienced discriminatory attitudes from her schoolmates, also thinks the media is responsible for all the negativity about Muslims in society. She shared many incidents in which people made negative comments about her Muslim identity and her ways of dressing, specifically in class discussions. These comments were generally based on the negative projection of Muslims in the media. Her classmates often gave examples that they had heard or read in all forms of media, which usually differ greatly from reality. As a Muslim, Fatima knows that what her classmates said is not true. She told me,

"When I was in high school, we did lot of our assignments, like social studies class, which involves lot of your ideas and thoughts out there, and we had lot of debates. . . . In grade 10 the main topic was about globalization and how multinational companies are actually taking over so many other countries just trying to occupy. We talked about 9/11 when I was in grade 12. We talked a lot about like immigrants in Canada and all the people who have this idea only by knowing what's in the media and not what really is going on."

The media presents images of Muslims as "uncivilized, unhuman, heartless, religious extremists" (Shaheen, 2003). The symbols associated with Muslims and Islam, such as the hijab and beards, continue to be presented negatively in the media, and thus provoke feelings of hatred. This hatred has resulted in increased violence toward Muslims (Hendricks et al., 2007).

Fatima told me about class discussions in which students openly discussed their belief that all Muslims are terrorists. Her teacher gave them class time to discuss the role of the media in all these portrayals, because some students in the class had presented biased comments about Muslims' identities, saying that all Muslims are murderers and their religion requires them to kill people. Fatima was offended by these comments and tried to make her point of view clear to the other students in the class, but nobody listened to her. According to her, negative ideas about Muslims are stuck in people's minds and it is not easy to remove this false information they have about Muslims. She told me,

"The media is showing bad image of Muslims after 9/11. According to media all Muslims are part of 9/11 and stuff like that. Even our teacher asked one of our students and he responded that people who wear turbans and have beards are responsible for such events. There is a misconception that all Muslims are terrorists. We discussed a lot about that, how media ruin the image of Muslims."

Negative stereotypes about the Muslim community have led to bullying of Muslim students (Britto, 2011). The increase in negative thoughts about Muslims increases hidden as well as open racism and discrimination against them. This increase could be a grave threat to young Muslim children's hybrid identity development. They are forced to choose between maintaining their own cultural values and practices and adopting the host country's values and practices. A third option is to maintain both, but doing so is not at all easy due to the current

situation (Berry, 2006). Fatima, who experienced racism in her school, said that she always tried to explain to her friends the main reason for these stereotypes about Muslims, which, according to her, are not based on the facts at all but on biased media reporting. Fatima told me about a class discussion in which she felt very bad because all her classmates were talking negatively about Muslims. She said,

"Obviously it's not right and automatically my reaction is that it's not true. It's just the media, and if you truly knew the Muslim culture, we are not violent or bombing and anything, we are just misunderstood. I told my teachers about it. I was very disturbed by what my other classmates said. I tried to clear it up by putting my ideas, but nobody listened to me. My teacher privately came up to me and apologized if the comment offended me or anything. He said, 'If there is any false information that people are saying, just let me know and I will correct it.' The teacher explained everything in the class and the main focus was that the media make people think like that. Once we shared our opinions, he cleared everything [up] and he said it is not actually how it is. It is media who turn everything around and make it looks what it is not."

Amina also commented on how the basic tenets and beliefs of Islam are being incorrectly portrayed by the media. She said, *"The media projects negative views of Sharia law, human rights in Muslim countries, and the role of women in Islam. The media highlights the Taliban's behaviour toward women in Afghanistan and presents it as something that all Muslims do."*

The racist attitudes of the Western world toward Muslims are not based on skin colour; rather, it is connected with their Muslim identity and dress. To Westerners, the hijab connotes a sign of threat and oppression (Macdonald, 2003). My study participants talked about these points. They told me how people around them have preconceived notions about Muslims and

said that they often encounter negative experiences in and outside school. For example, Farooq said,

"It's sometimes in the community as well, for example, I felt bad about how people look at my mom as she is wearing a hijab. I tried not to go to my friends' houses. My friends invited me but I never go."

The negative projection of the Muslim community in general is very damaging to Muslim students' well-being (Niyozov, 2010). All my participants told me that they find it very difficult to maintain their boundaries with their Muslim identities because of the discriminatory attitudes toward Muslims in mainstream society. Similar to what Elashi, Mills, and Grant (2010) described, it is very hard for them to find a balance between the two cultures, because most of them have a feeling that their identities are not similar, or are in conflict with mainstream identities.

Most of the time, parents and other adults in the lives of non-Muslim students appear to be responsible for the biased attitudes of my study participants' non-Muslim peers, because they openly discuss the negative events happening around the world on the basis of information they get from the media. Ali shared some experiences:

"In grade 7, I had to go through some racism. The reason behind middle school racism was parents and media at the same time, because parents turn on the news and they hear the stuff like that and they just start blaming specific person or something and then their kids get influenced and learn the same thing. Those children come to school with this kind of stuff and pass on this information to others."

Fatima shared some similar thoughts about the behaviour of her classmates toward her: *"How people think about you is mostly from the media not from the teachers. Parents might*

influence their kids, like if one parent victim of 9/11 and they believe that Muslims are responsible for 9/11 and Muslims are terrorists they can say their child not to support any Muslim activity."

Directly or indirectly, the media play a huge role in shaping public opinion about Muslims worldwide. Since 9/11, Muslims have become one of the hottest news topics in the media. Islam is presented as "offering a world . . . of prevailing disorder" (Brasted, 2001, p. 221), in spite of "the normal, stable social existences experienced by the vast majority of Muslims" (p. 222). This misinformation has become a huge problem, because in today's world many people rely only on the media for information about current events. Reza (2011) refers to this misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims by the media as "underdevelopment, illiteracy, homelessness and failed state . . . a threat to liberal and secular states . . . alien to the west" (p. 234). Merskin (2004) analyzed speeches made by US President George Bush after 9/11 and presented evidence that Bush portrayed Arabs as "evil, bloodthirsty, animalistic terrorists" (p. 1). As a result of this labelling, Muslims have become negative characters in the eyes of people in the Western world. Muslims in the West experience prejudice, discrimination, oppression, and violent attitudes from people in their communities (Abu El-Haj, 2006; Ghazal, 2008). Taylor (1992) explains the problem of "misrecognition" and "non-recognition" as follows:

> The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm; can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (p. 25)

To reduce the adverse effects of non-recognition, the participants in my study offered a number of suggestions for the new generation of Muslim children coming to the Canadian school system after them.

Advice for Upcoming Muslim Students

All the study participants gave some suggestions, based on their own experiences, for Muslim students who have just immigrated and are going to enter Canadian schools. Most of them said that new Muslim students in schools in Alberta might not have experiences similar to theirs, because Alberta is becoming more multicultural and the school environments are changing as well. Albertans are getting used to encountering people of colour and from different backgrounds, and are not reacting toward the differences as they did before. Among my participants, those who immigrated or moved to Alberta from areas with white majorities said that when they came to Alberta, they were among only a few, and in some cases, they were the only Muslim child in the whole school. Their school experiences have been very different from the students who moved from areas with large immigrant populations. Saeed, who moved to Edmonton from Toronto, said,

"I was the first kid from a different ethnic group in my school, so the kids were rude to me, but when my other Muslim friend came, he didn't have to face issues like I did. Some kids are racist and they don't like Muslim kids. So no one needs to be scared; it is not a big deal like some new kids may worry. . . . You have the same powers and rights in the school as other kids, don't be paralyzed if other kids say anything to you. Just shrug it off, after a while other kids will be fine and will realize what they are doing is not right. Just be positive about it, unless they did something which hurt you."

Ali, who had moved from Fort McMurray to Edmonton, gave advice for Muslim students new to Canada based on his own school experiences. He told me that he faced some open racism in his middle school grades, but by high school children had learned to hide their feelings from others, so he never had to face prejudice or racism. Even in his elementary school grades, children did not focus much on individual differences, and Ali considers those days among the best school years in his life. He advised new students that they do not need to change at all. They just need to be calm and have patience because, according to his experiences, everything will settle down after a while. He said,

"Being a Muslim is not bad in high school, as nobody cares about it. They don't show any differences, they are same with everyone. . . . All the new Muslim students have to do is to be the same; there is no need to change or anything. Come to school as a normal person and do the things as you normally do."

Farooq, who is very strict in following his religious beliefs, said he always feels he is different from other kids due to his religious beliefs and practices. He said he sometimes feels he is very different from the mainstream population, especially when he is unable to follow some of his religious customs, such as not performing Friday prayers or Eid prayers, because there is no national holiday on those days. He said one thing that makes him a little upset is that Canada is a multicultural country, but when it comes to celebrations, they only focus on one religion, Christianity. He feels it is unfair for only one religion's holidays, such as Christmas, to be officially recognized. He sometimes feels himself left out because of that. He shared,

"It feels a lot different when, on Friday at 12 o'clock, everyone is watching TV, but I am praying Namaz. My friends always say, 'We were watching this program and you were praying.' They don't make fun of me, but I kind of feel different. I don't want to be like others because I am

a Muslim. If you are doing the same as others, then what is the difference between them and you? I don't want to keep that difference. I want to keep myself different, but I want to present myself in a better way. Most likely what I want to be when I grow older is someone who teaches others about different perspectives. Canada is multicultural and there are many kinds of cultures and religions, but if you go to Middle East the majority of the people are Islamic, so the way they work is really different. They take time off on Friday for prayers. They also have a national holiday on Eid."

Farooq said he never changed and nobody can change him; no matter what environment he is in, he will always follow his beliefs. He wants to keep the differences he has and he does not care what others think about him. He, too, gave some advice for new Muslim students in Canadian schools:

"I would give the advice that if you are coming to a new school and you are brand new and nobody knows you, don't try to change you and don't try to be like them, then there will be no difference between you and them. They will keep on thinking about you the terrorist kind of stuff. You should try to explain them what is your religion and how it works so they can better understand you. For friends it would more likely to be if you are in high or middle schools, try to find people of similar interests, like you like playing volleyball and football, and in this way you can make many friends."

Farooq also said, *"As more people from different cultures and religions will move to this place, more acceptance will be developed among people. There are lots of people over here that have different perspectives, speak different languages, and understand different ways, so people will understand it. I never changed myself and that is my advice for the other fellow Muslim students."*

Fatima shared completely different views than Farooq. She sees religion as a personal thing and always celebrates Western holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and Halloween, because according to her beliefs, participating in other celebrations and customs does not mean that you are losing or giving up your own. It is just a nice gesture to show others that you care about them. Fatima used her immigration experience in Alberta as advice for new students to follow. She said,

"I tried to adapt because I came from a totally different culture in Dubai, and like I adapted as I changed my accent and then here it's very into Easter, Halloween, and Christmas, so I say 'Merry Christmas' to them. It is not that I started to celebrate Christmas. It is just a polite thing to do, just to wish them or even like 'Happy Holidays' and stuff like that, and I don't think it affected me as a Muslim. I still pray, fast, I still celebrate Eid, and I still haven't changed my values and beliefs. I am still the way I was raised to be."

Fatima also said that her experience in schools in Alberta did not surprise her. She has travelled to different countries around the world and she knows that people are often judgmental of others. She said that people always think their beliefs are right and everyone else in the world is wrong. The advice she gave for an incoming Muslim student to school in Edmonton is this:

"My experience being a Muslim in my school was not difficult, because people are always being judgmental and always try to bring you down and always pick on your weak points, but it doesn't matter anymore. I was afraid of getting bullied because I was Muslim and I was influenced by the media a lot. I did watch movies in which Muslims always get bullied, so I was scared about that and I had that thought in my mind. I worried that I was going to get bullied and yeah, I did get bullied. I had my feelings hurt by others saying bad things about me behind my back, but there are ways to deal with it. If you are ever bullied you have to tell someone. You

can't just keep it inside; you have to tell it to someone, otherwise they keep on bullying you over and over again. You need to ask for help and you need to say 'Stop.'"

Fatima continued, advising Muslim immigrant children that there is no need to hide their Muslim identity, because Canada is a free country where everyone has a right to follow their own beliefs and no one can force them. She said,

"I would say no matter what there will be people who will constantly judge you as it is a part of human nature, but we have to understand and believe this is whom you are and don't conceal it. You have to embrace it and you have to be proud that, wow, you believe in something. You have a right to believe in your faith and religion. It is not a crime, it is not a bad thing at all. You live in this country. It is a free country. You're allowed voicing your opinion, you're allowed to be yourself, and if people don't like it you can take a stand. You can fight for your rights."

Mariam, who was the youngest participant and quite shy when it came to expressing her feelings, also gave suggestions for new Muslim students:

"Don't be ashamed of what you are. The people here might call you terrorist if they get to know you are Muslim because it is all over the media. News media said Muslims are not good, they are terrorists, but it is not true. It does matter who you are, some people are good and some are bad. Good and bad people are in every culture. . . . If somebody is calling you bad on the basis of your culture you should tell about them to your parents, your teachers, or friends so they all can defend you."

All my participants were very confident and expressive, and they provided great suggestions for newcomers to Canada. Their advice reflects their identity formation journeys. These journeys have not been easy for these children. Some of them found it relatively easy, but most had difficulty creating a space for themselves in their new school environments. They

struggled to find a balance between their old identities as Muslims and their new hybrid identities as Muslim Canadians. The suggestions they presented for new Muslim students are examples of these struggles, and their stories reveal the true picture of the hardships of their acculturation journeys. These examples also show their resilience toward all the outer forces that are pushing them to assimilate, but they resist and maintain their home culture and values while also maintaining their hybrid identities as Canadian Muslims.

Summary of Findings

My participants liked the flexibility of the Canadian education system and found it to be better than their previous school experiences. Having freedom of speech and learning was a new experience for some of them. However, although some of the participants shared positive experiences of developing a few good relationships with their peers after a period of loneliness and isolation, most of the experiences they shared with me were coloured by discrimination. One common experience for all of the participants that was clearly evident from the data I collected is that they face biased attitudes from their peers, teachers, and other members of the school and neighbouring communities. They faced less racism based on their skin colour or religion when they were in their early grades, because, compared to their middle and high school years, when racism was at its peak, the racism in the early years was less overt. Further, while in the early grades racism was based on visible differences, in higher grades religious and cultural differences also became a part of it. In addition to students, some teachers also contributed to racism by having class discussions in which Muslims and Islam were openly criticized. Other members of society, for example, school administrators and the other students' parents, showed their own biased attitudes through their prejudiced behaviour toward these Muslim children.

Due to the current global situation, "Muslims are judged guilty and have been suspected as the persons of disdain and distrust" (King et al., 2014, p. 18). All my participants believed that this disdain and distrust is due to the widespread negative views about Muslims and Islam in the media. They blame the media's negative portrayals of Islam and its followers for the current backlash against Muslims around the world. This trend became prevalent in North America after 9/11, but the situation has worsened, due in part to the increasing number of terrorist and extremist cases happening all around the world. These incidents not only affect the image of Muslims in the eyes of the world, but they also affect Muslim children's school experiences, specifically in the Western world. The Muslim identities of my participants made it very hard for them to integrate fully into their schools and neighbouring communities. The reason behind it was the racist attitudes of the members of these communities due to the widespread hatred in the Western world against Muslims.

My findings are consistent with other research studies that provide evidence that children from Muslim immigrant families in the West experience more extreme challenges in the processes of acculturation and psychosocial adaptation to the environments of their new countries than children belonging to other religions (Berry, 2006, 2012; Podikunji-Hussain, 2014). Specifically, because incidents of global and domestic terrorism and extremism have increased since 2001, and negative attitudes toward Muslims have also increased in the society at large in their new countries, it has become more difficult for Muslim children to maintain their cultural and religious values at home and successfully adopt the culture of the mainstream society at the same time. After these incidents, Muslims have had to suffer extreme scrutiny, which has had a profound effect, not only on the acculturation process of Muslims at large, but

also on the identity development of young Muslim children, who are experiencing other developmental changes along with their acculturation process (Podikunji-Hussain, 2014).

Chapter 6. Research Questions, Reflections, and Recommendations

This study set out to explore the following questions: How do Muslim children attending public elementary schools in Canada experience their schools? What are their perceptions of their mainstream classroom peers' and teachers' attitudes toward them? How do these perceptions impact the children's experiences in a mainstream school? What kind of classroom or school experiences have either supported or diminished these students' sense of belonging? Through one-on-one semistructured interviews, I provided opportunities for my seven participants to share their experiences in Edmonton schools. The critical lenses I used to analyze the data provided me with a deep understanding of Muslim students' school experiences and how these experiences affected their sense of belonging, not only within their schools but also within Canadian society at large.

My personal experiences as a Muslim immigrant and the mother of two daughters who attended school in Canada, along with my review of the literature on Muslim children's school experiences in North America, provided me with some prior understanding of the challenges immigrant Muslim children face in Canadian schools due to their affiliation with the most openly criticized religion in the world: Islam. However, the findings of my study extended my prior understanding of Muslim children's experiences in public schools. By focusing on the school experiences of Muslim students in Edmonton and, more specifically, on their perceptions of their non-Muslim, Canadian-born peers' and teachers' attitudes toward them, the study's findings add an in-depth understanding of young Muslim children's school experiences in a city which has only recently become a preferred destination for newcomers to Canada and thus has not been a focus of previous studies on similar topics. My study contributes to the literature describing

Muslim students' experiences in Canadian schools in two main ways. First, it focuses on children who were born outside of Canada and who attended elementary school in Canada as their first encounter with the dominant society. The majority of studies on Muslim students' experiences in mainstream schooling in Canada have been conducted with students in high school or postsecondary institutions, and there was a dearth of research on younger Muslim children in school. My study's findings fill that gap. In addition, because my participants also had experiences in junior high and high school, they were able to compare their experiences at the different levels of the school system in regard to racism and discrimination, bringing new insights into these differences. Second, my research focuses on a city in Canada that is not one of the three major cities (i.e., Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver) where newcomers land and tend to establish themselves. Immigrants choose to settle in these three cities in part because they have a number of well-established ethnic communities that can support newcomers from the same ethnic and/or religious backgrounds. There was a lack of research on young Muslim children's experiences of schooling in medium-size cities in Canada, such as Edmonton. My study's findings fill that gap. In addition, because all but one of the participants in this study started their elementary school in cities other than Edmonton, they were able to compare their school experiences in the different places they lived based on the diversity of the student body and thus brought new insights regarding the particularities of their experiences in Edmonton schools.

In this final chapter, I summarize the main findings of my study according to the main research questions. I also connect my study's findings with the findings of other studies on the topic of Muslim children's school experiences and acculturation patterns in order to provide some recommendations, both for educational practice and for future research.

Reflections on Research Questions

My Participants' School Experiences in Canada

The main question of my research was 'How do Muslim children attending public elementary schools in Canada experience their schools?' One common experience almost all my participants shared was that they faced more challenges in establishing peer relationships and friendships than their Canadian-born peers did. Despite many attempts to establish such relationships, they faced discrimination, not only from their peers but also from other people in and outside of their school communities. My participants' continuous negative experiences (as described in Chapter 5) resulted in feelings of social isolation and alienation and restricted their integration into the school community.

What emerged from the data I collected is that the Muslim children who participated in my study were marginalized in their schools in various ways, either through biased curricula, discriminatory school cultures, or negative and unfair attitudes on the part of their peers, teachers, and school administrators. My participants attributed their peers' and teachers' attitudes toward them to stereotypes created by the negative projection of Muslims in the media, which have been perpetuated continuously since 9/11. According to my participants, since 9/11, the media has bombarded people around the world with stereotypical images of Muslims. This one-sided portrayal of Islam as a violent religion prone to terrorism had a negative effect on their school experiences and also promoted racism within their school contexts. Other students in their classes viewed them with suspicion because they believed all Muslims were involved in terrorist activities and that Islam teaches hatred toward all other religions. According to Ghosh and Abdi (2004), schools reflect the views of the larger society, and "racism in school results from a spectrum of attitudes, ranging from negative stereotypes and low expectations from teachers to

tracking and labelling" (p. 69). Other researchers (e.g., Allport, 1954; Blauner, 1972; Nicolino, 2006; Greene, 1988; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Ridley, 1995) have also found that stereotypes affect the attitudes and behaviours of one group toward another and usually become a major reason to promote racism.

Islamophobia, a form of discrimination rooted in negative stereotypes about Muslims, (Abu-Laban & Dhamoon, 2009; Fekete, 2001) in Canadian schools is evident in my participants' school experiences. The portrayal of Islam as "violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a 'clash of civilizations'" (Runnymede Trust, 1997) is one of the eight components that define Islamophobia in the Runnymede Trust's 1997 document *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*. This definition is widely accepted, including by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Under this definition it is clear that my participants experienced Islamophobia inside and outside of their school boundaries. Two examples of this were Farooq's experience when he faced racism in the form of biased comments directed at him, and when Shama faced biased attitudes from her peers because she started covering her head, which, according to Western beliefs, is considered a symbol of oppression and religious extremism.

My data suggest that my participants experienced another major component of Islamophobia, that "Islam is seen as separate and 'other.' It does not have values in common with other cultures, is not affected by them, and does not influence them" (Runnymede Trust, 1997). My participants have accepted this component as a fact of their lives. They all agreed that there is a consistent tension between the mainstream and Muslim culture, because these two are very different from each other in every context, from food to daily rituals. Often these

differences from the norm (mainstream culture) become the main reason behind discrimination against new immigrants (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004).

The Muslim children interviewed for my study have to negotiate between their Muslim identities and the identities that are demanded—or, in some cases, imposed—by their hegemonic school cultures. My participants felt pressured by their school peers to leave their Muslim identities at home. Mariam, my youngest participant, shared that she never reveals her identity in front of her classmates because of the fear of rejection, which was developed due to the anti-Islam and anti-Muslim discussions that occurred in and outside the classroom. The pressure from peers was not limited to those participants who chose to hide their identities; even those who wanted to keep their identities had a difficult time following their religion due to the biased attitudes of their peers. For example, Farooq had a hard time praying and fasting, which are two fundamental components of Islam; this was due to his classmates' open criticism of his practices. Despite the lack of research on Muslim students' elementary school experiences, the findings of my study have a lot of similarities with the findings of other studies on Muslim middle school and high school students' school experiences (e.g., Zine, 2004). These studies also found the same experiences of Muslim youth who try to adjust their identities within three different cultural frameworks: the dominant culture, their ethnic culture, and Islam. The multiple social identities that Muslim students occupy are entirely different from each other. An effort by Muslim students to fit in into the school culture often results in split personality syndrome (Zine, 2004). The participants in my study who decided to openly embrace their religious identities by wearing the hijab, not eating certain foods, or not going to parties where drinking of alcohol was involved were more openly and severely rejected by their peers. These children found it much

harder to adjust to their school environments compared to my other participants, who either hid their Muslim identities or adopted their peers' culture fully or partially.

Another disturbing fact that my participants reported is that Islamophobic behaviours shown by non-Muslim peers were not disciplined appropriately by their teachers or other administrative staff. Several of my participants reported incidents of bullying where the perpetrators were not adequately reprimanded. For example, Farooq was subjected to prejudiced comments, but when he reported the incident to the school administration and teachers, he was not taken seriously. This kind of behaviour on the part of teachers and school administrators is indicative of another component that defines Islamophobia: "Anti-Muslim hostility is seen as natural or normal" (Runnymede Trust, 1997). My participants felt that their teachers and principals' neglectful behaviours served as roadblocks to their acculturation in Canadian schools.

A major component of Canadian multiculturalism is that individuals from all cultural backgrounds should be equally treated in the society, in spite of their differences in language, religious beliefs, political and social views, or national origins. The Canadian concept of multiculturalism is based on integration and can be viewed as "a two-way street" (Dorais, 2002, p. 4) in which newcomers have a responsibility to integrate while the host society has a duty to accommodate, welcome, and respect the new immigrants (Anderson & Black, 2008). However, my participants' experiences reflected a vastly different situation. Islamophobic behaviours that their peers and school personnel exhibited forced them to live in liminal spaces (Bhaba, 1994) instead of developing hybrid identities as Muslim Canadians, which is the stated goal of multiculturalism in Canada. Their experiences support the criticism that Canadian multiculturalism has failed to achieve its goals of equality and justice (Reitz et al., 2009), particularly in the case of Muslim immigrants.

My participants' experiences provide further evidence in support of research (e.g., Zine, 2000, 2004, 2008) which has found that an increase in Islamophobia has made Muslim children's psychosocial adaptation and acculturation into their school communities extremely difficult or, in some cases, impossible. Some of these Muslim children, as a result of unsuccessful acculturation, fail to connect with their new homeland and experience isolation from it (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005; Niyozov & Pluim, 2009). Schooling is considered an important part in the acculturation of immigrant children (Berry, 2006), and their negative school experiences led my participants toward marginalization and separation instead of toward positive integration. According to critical pedagogy (e.g., Darder et al, 2009; Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 1983; Gramsci, 1971/1992; Kincheloe, 2005; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 2006), mainstream schools promote hegemonic ideologies and the mainstream school culture works not only to support students from the dominant class but also to limit the experiences and dreams of subordinate groups (Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1983; Greene, 1988; Kozol, 2006). As a result, schools become places that foster isolation and spread racialized injustice; racism in schools is on the rise (Dei & Karumanchy-Luik, 2004).

The effects of Islamophobia are not limited to school boundaries; the broader community also rejected and alienated my participants. An incident that highlights this rejection is when Shama went trick or treating on Halloween wearing her hijab, and a man commented on her head covering and said that she looked like a terrorist, without considering how his comments might affect her feelings. Similarly, Farooq shared his mother's experience of wearing the hijab. He shared how, whenever he accompanies his mother in public, he faces biased attitudes. These experiences distanced him from the surrounding community and resulted in isolation. Although it is very important for immigrant children to integrate into both their ethnic community and the

mainstream society (Berry, 1980) in the case of my participants, who became targets of criticism and discrimination, not only from their peers but from their teachers, other school staff, and the community at large, such integration was not easily achievable (Abu El-Haj, 2002; Rezai-Rashti, 1994; Zine, 2000, 2004).

Teachers' and Peers' Attitudes

My participants' school experiences are replete with rejection, bullying, and Islamophobic behaviours from their peers. There is a dialectical relationship between my participants' school experiences and their perceptions of their classroom peers' and teachers' attitudes (Darder et al., 2009; McLaren, 2003). Because my participants were viewed negatively by their classmates, they viewed their classmates' and teachers' behaviours negatively as well. The participants in my study claimed that their non-Muslim peers had preconceived stereotypical images of Muslims on the basis of what they heard in their classes, from their parents, and through the media. Despite the fact that there is a lack of research on young Muslim students' school experiences, my study's findings about the experiences of my participants are supported by research studies on older Muslim students which provide evidence that the post-9/11 climate in schools affects the peer relations of Muslim students. For example, DeRosier (2004) found, in her study on Muslim students' school experiences, that because of their identities, Muslim students lost their friends and were harassed and bullied by their peers.

Because this study is the first to examine Muslim children's school experiences in Alberta, it is essential to discuss my participants' views about their peers' and teachers' attitudes in Edmonton's schools. According to my participants, limited exposure to other cultures is a big factor behind non-Muslim students' biased attitudes in Alberta. The students I interviewed said that sometimes these biased attitudes led to discrimination which was not only on the basis of

their skin colour but also on their religious identity. Those who had school experiences in other cities before moving to Alberta stated that racist attitudes were less common in areas with more multicultural environments, such as Toronto and Montreal. They suggested that perhaps because Edmonton has been, at least in the past, less diverse compared to these big cities, both students and teachers have had less exposure to students from racially and religiously different backgrounds. They elaborated that now that Alberta and specifically Edmonton is becoming more multicultural, people have started to accept differences more readily. However, they also claimed that in the case of Muslim immigrants, the situation is still distinct from those of other ethnic and religious groups. From their viewpoint, the schools mirror the attitudes of the larger society and that is the reason why Muslim children in Alberta schools face biased attitudes from their peers and the people in the surrounding communities.

The Impact of These Perceptions on My Participants' School Experiences

My participants' lack of social acceptance by their peers and teachers led to them developing feelings of disaffection and marginality; they sometimes felt isolated and lonely. Due to their fears of peer rejection, my participants adopted behaviours which were inappropriate according to their cultures and religions, such as hiding their Muslim identities, wearing Western clothes, or trying to adopt the accents of their peers. They felt guilty and ashamed later on, but they did it to survive in their school environments. Having friends is a basic social need of children, and without positive, reciprocal peer relationships they feel lonely and sad. In an effort to fulfill their social needs, my participants sometimes had to go against their own will and desires. For example, Shama mentioned that she wants to surround herself with her Islamic culture, but it is not possible here in Canada. Several practices that are common among non-Muslim peers, such as the use of alcohol in high school and eating pork, are not appropriate

according to Islamic beliefs, but my participants felt they had to do these things in order to fulfill the need to belong to their peer group. Farooq mentioned how he felt when there were school holidays at Christmas but no acknowledgment of his religious festivals, such as Eid, which is an important religious celebration for Muslims. Fatima mentioned how, in order to show her openness and acceptance of other cultures, she celebrated other cultures' events, even going against her parents will. However, she missed seeing her own culture's and religion's celebrations being a part of her school and larger community. She hid her feelings from others and, by doing this, had to suppress her own feelings. This "requirement" to change their personal identities made my participants feel oppressed, which limited their success and affected their school experiences. According to them, instead of positive experiences at school, they had negative experiences and sometimes lost their ability to perform well in their schools. They lived in two different worlds: one at home and another one at school.

My participants faced discriminatory attitudes, not only from some of their non-Muslim peers and their families, but also from some of their teachers and other school staff. They perceived their teachers' inability to properly address issues of racism and Islamophobia as being due to a lack of training on teaching in multicultural classrooms. According to my participants, teachers often shared biased stories about Muslims during class discussions instead of providing an unbiased picture of current global issues. Sometimes inadvertently, their teachers promoted behaviours based on the stereotypical image of Muslims perpetuated by the media. As a result, participants felt compelled to "defend" Islam and explain that extremist views are not shared by the majority of Muslims. They said that only a few teachers presented both the positive and negative images of Islam and Muslims in front of the class. Most of the time, the teachers showed videos or shared news from the media without properly researching them on their own.

This negligence affected other students' behaviour toward my participants, and they began to openly criticize Muslims, both inside and outside the classrooms. According to my participants, the teachers' attitudes affected not only their peer relationships, but also their school performances. Some of my participants shared that teachers deducted marks for their efforts to defend their beliefs about current incidents where Muslims were perceived as terrorists or religious extremists. These negative images led to the academic failure and alienation of some of my participants.

Development of Senses of Self and Belonging

Belonging is linked to an emotional attachment to a place and often includes the feelings of being at home and safe (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006, p. 2). The development of a sense of belonging plays an integral part in the integration of new immigrants in a society (Berry, 2006). New immigrants' integration into the society at large is dependent on how they adjust to the new society's way of life socially, culturally, religiously, and politically and make their new environment their home (Berry, 2006). This is especially true when we talk about children, because they have a social and emotional need to belong and they have been found, from a very early age, to be highly aware of the physical places and social groups where they do or do not feel welcome or at home (Lee, 2001). Anthias (2006) explains that belonging is associated with social inclusion or exclusion. To develop a sense of belonging, positive integration of immigrants in both their mainstream and ethnic cultures is very important (Berry, 1980), but ideology and acculturation strategies of immigrants are not always aligned with those of the host societies (Bourhis et al., 1997). This seems to be the case with my participants. Immigrants from cultures similar to the host culture find the cross-cultural transition easier than do immigrants like my participants, who come from a culture that is substantially different from

the host culture (Kâgitçibasi, 2009; Ward, 1996, 2004; Ward et al., 2009; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward & Kus, 2012; Ward, Stuart, & Kus, 2011). Research (e.g., Anthias, 2006; Berry, 2006) provides evidence that belonging is usually controlled by power relations, meaning that some individuals have the power to include or exclude others whom they think are not valuable enough to belong to that particular group. The dominant group in any society sets the terms for the participation of the minority ethnic groups in the larger society (Berry, 2006).

In Canada, the development among immigrant children of a sense of belonging with their new homeland is crucial in order to achieve the goals of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, but currently what appears through the data I have collected from my participants is that developing this sense of belonging may not be easily achievable for Muslim children due to the perceived vast cultural and religious differences. According to my participants, it is not an easy task for them, because there is less acceptance of Muslim culture in Canada. They say that there is a compatibility issue between these two cultures. They referred to the current global and domestic incidents of terrorism that affect the attitudes of the mainstream Canadian population toward Muslims. Research studies associated with immigrant children's adaptation, identities, academic success, and school participation (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Candappa & Egharevba, 2002; Cummins, 1984; Kirova, 2006; Kirova & Wu, 2002; Miller, 2003; Rumbaut, 2005) also found that minority students' school experiences often leave them excluded and marginalized and, as a result, minority children must overcome many challenges in order to feel a sense of belonging within the majority (host) culture (Darder, 1991; Miller, 2003).

In school, immigrant children's social interactions and relationships with their peers and teachers have an important effect on their academic and social development. Two main factors which help in successful school settings for young immigrant children, as well as help in their

general well-being, are "opportunities to belong" and "supportive relationships" (Weisner, 2005, p. 3). According to my participants, when they did not see acceptance of their culture and religion within their schools, they did not see themselves as belonging to the classroom group, and some of them started thinking of their values, culture, and religion as being inferior to that of the dominant culture. Schools, being a part of the larger society, depict the attitudes of the broader culture (MacLaren, 2010). In this case, it appears that schools have adopted one of the components of Islamophobia: "Islam is seen as inferior to the West" (Runnymede Trust, 1997). My participants felt that an increase in Islamophobia not only made their adaptation and acculturation into the school community extremely difficult, or in some cases impossible, it also made it difficult for them to keep and maintain their own ethnic identities. As a result, some of them were forced, out of fear of rejection, to hide their religious identities and some of them developed the feeling that they did not belong to their new country. My participants' school experiences marginalized them in their schools. They not only had difficulties maintaining their heritage culture, but they also were excluded from their school culture due to not fully adopting the host culture (Berry, 2006).

Often the choices made by immigrants on the path to acculturation are affected and restricted by the immigration policies of the host country (Berry, 2006), but this should not be the case in Canada. The Canadian approach to multiculturalism—that is, integration versus assimilation—focuses on the importance of a cohesive society by recognizing the importance of diversity among immigrant populations and does not require them to abandon their ethnic and cultural identities; rather, they are encouraged to keep their ethnic and cultural identities because diversity is considered to have a positive impact on social cohesion (Reitz et al., 2009). Unfortunately, my participants' school experiences demonstrated that this is not always the case.

While the maintenance of the ethnic culture while adopting the host culture values is beneficial for immigrants (Berry et al., 1989; Ward & Kennedy, 1999), in the case of my participants, maintaining their religious identity affected their experience in schools (Amer, 2005) and caused some of the them to hide their identity in order to survive.

The increasing evidence of Islamophobia as well as an increase in hate crimes in Canada (Zine, 2004) indicates that the current model of multiculturalism is not able to help Muslim immigrant children fully integrate into Canadian society (Pratt, 2002). Canadian multiculturalism is not succeeding in achieving its goals of equality and justice (Reitz et al., 2009). Certain groups of immigrants, such as Muslims, gain little acceptance and in some cases face total rejection from the mainstream society (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Kâgitçibasi, 2009; McCoy et al., 2011; Reitz et al., 2009). My participants' experiences demonstrate that the perception among some Canadians that "certain religious minorities have values, beliefs or practices that are difficult to integrate into Canadian society because they clash with Canadian ideas" (Soysal, 1997, cited in Reitz et al., 2009, p. 9) was particularly strong in their school contexts.

Actionable Implications and Recommendations for Practice

One unanticipated outcome of my study was my participants' suggestions to the "next generation" of Muslim children who will attend school in Edmonton, as well as to their teachers and administrators. I present here a few recommendations for policy and practice based on the suggestions and school experiences that my participants shared with me during their interviews. In addition, since my focus in this study was on the integration of Muslim students in Canadian schools, I also present some suggestions for change in the current policies and practices of Canadian multicultural education, because multicultural education is identified as one of the important steps necessary for the integration of immigrants (Kymlicka, 2001). I introduce some

additional recommendations based on my own understanding that being a part of the broader Canadian society, schools have a responsibility to provide equal and just educational opportunities to their diverse learners. Schools need to reevaluate their pedagogical approaches and practices if they are to meaningfully include students from all backgrounds in their school settings. Below are a few suggestions for policy makers, administrators, teachers, future Muslim immigrant children, and future research in this regard.

Implications for Policy

It is a school's responsibility to help its students integrate into the broader Canadian society by providing them an equal and just school environment where their differences are respected, but unfortunately, according to the findings of my study, schools lack antiracist policies and practices. A prime example of such lack is when my participants' experiences of racism and discrimination were not taken seriously by the school administrators (see Chapter 5). The ignorant and neglectful attitudes of school administrators contradict Canadian multicultural policy and clearly show a failure to implement the policy at the school level. In a multicultural society such as Canada, the role of education should be the inclusion and recognition of all cultures and beliefs, and the society should be a "fusion of horizons," or "third space" (Bhabha, 1994). Schools are important places where new young immigrants should feel welcomed, but my participants' school experiences provide a clear indication that Canadian schools are not properly equipped to deal with increasing diversity (Derwing et al., 1999; Watt & Roessingh, 2001; Wortley, 2003). Schools are failing to provide opportunities for equal participation to learners from all ethnic groups (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004).

To overcome racism and discrimination in schools, including Islamophobia, an appropriate educational policy that emphasizes equality (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004) is needed.

Multiculturalism in schools must not be limited to celebrating different cultures; rather, it should seek the meaningful and full inclusion and participation of children from all ethnic and religious groups. Instead of simply trying to preserve students' heritage culture, multicultural education should promote a genuine dialogue among different cultural groups in which students' identities are negotiated and reshaped. Cultural identities are not fixed; rather, culture is historically bound, active, and able to reconstruct and transform itself (Kirova, 2008). Therefore, there is a need for new educational policy with an emphasis on critical approaches toward cultural differences which enable students to question racist discourses by understanding the intricacies of culture and racism. The "third space" in schools should be a space in which differences and multiple contradictory identities can coexist (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). The new policy should focus on developing broader horizons where cultural, social, class, and gender differences are not only validated but also provide minority students with the opportunity to develop their own individual hybrid identities (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004).

To overcome racism and discrimination in schools, an appropriate education policy is needed that emphasizes equality (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 1982/2013) has implications for education under the legal provisions to prevent discrimination, but the Charter is not implemented at the provincial level, particularly in schools. A main problem with implementation is the lack of federal control over education and the provincial governments' focus on a policy of assimilation rather than integration (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). A critical review of the educational policies at the provincial level is essential in order to fully incorporate Canada's multicultural policy into the education system. Multiculturalism in schools must not be limited to celebrating different cultures; rather, it should seek the meaningful and full inclusion and participation of children from all ethnic and

religious groups. Revising policies at the provincial level will bring about change in schools' policies as well.

Implications for Schools

With growing diversity, the Canadian educational system now demands more openness and acceptance of the cultures and beliefs of people from different ethnic groups. My participants' school experiences clearly indicate that schools are not providing an inclusive experience for all their learners, particularly the students from religious minority backgrounds. Canadian multicultural education seems theoretically sound, but according to my participants, in reality, it is not successfully implemented in schools and has thus failed to provide equal opportunities for all children to participate. Educational administrators need to adopt strategies to integrate Muslim students within the school setting. They need to promote the concept of "us" rather than the "other." Educational administrators need to understand the difficulties Muslim students have to face while they attend their schools. Schools should apply behavioural guidelines for all their students in regard to acts of discrimination, marginalization, or Islamophobia. The implementation of policies against racism must be conducted by school administrators in order to provide all their learners equal opportunities for future growth as members of Canada's multicultural society.

In the multicultural society of Canada, it is the responsibility of educational institutions to create a sense of belonging in school communities. However, according to my participants, the situation they experienced in the schools they attended is quite different. Instead of feeling a sense of belonging to their school communities, they felt rejected and excluded. They were bullied and felt marginalized due to their religious beliefs and practices. The racism they experienced made it difficult, if not impossible, to develop a sense of belonging. If Canadian

multicultural policy promotes full inclusion of all citizens despite their racial and religious differences, then schools must play a stronger role in helping young immigrant children develop a sense of belonging to their school community. Immigrant children cannot feel a sense of belonging at school unless they receive support from their teachers, peers, and other members of the school community. Belonging is a fundamental human need and is also very important for self-actualization and the development of self-worth. In schools, students' need to belong is fulfilled when they feel comfortable and secure. Teachers' and administrators' caring attitudes contribute to students' sense of belonging to the school community (Glasser, 1986). Peers and teachers can make a big contribution toward the development of a feeling of belonging in students' lives. The freedom to make choices and to act as team-mates with peers also helps in the development of a sense of belonging. Students work hard for their academic achievements when they feel accepted and their work is acknowledged by their peers and teachers (Goodenow, 1992; Martella, Nelson, & Marchland-Martella, 2003). As this study has demonstrated, Canadian schools are not properly equipped to address the basic need to belong of their Muslim students, and thus foster isolation and reproduce injustice due to the presence of racism in schools. Schools need to implement antiracist programs which help students cope with the racism they face inside and outside school boundaries. Schools need to acknowledge their students' social, religious, linguistic, ethnic, and racial differences by adopting antiracist approaches rather than simply celebrating different cultures.

Because multicultural education has failed to achieve the goals of multiculturalism, antiracist educational philosophy needs to be fully implemented in schools' infrastructure. The importance of antiracist philosophy has increased due to the current global crisis. Canadian schools will continue to have more Muslim students because of the rise in refugee and immigrant

populations from Muslim countries, such as Syria. A system that closely monitors Muslim students' acculturation in the schools needs to be implemented as quickly as possible. The administrators need to find ways to accommodate the diverse needs of their students, particularly those whose religious beliefs and cultural practices are vastly different from the mainstream norms and practices, for example, Muslims. By implementing, monitoring, and enforcing antiracist educational philosophy and practices, schools can overcome the effects of racism and promote diversity in their schools. Antiracist education as a philosophy helps in considering all aspects of how some students gain advantages over others, and antiracist philosophy is important, not only in pedagogy, curriculum, and policies, but also in teachers' attitudes toward students and their communities (Banks & Banks, 2010). An antiracist understanding at an institutional level can be used to bring change to our current biased teaching practices.

Educational institutions need to critically review their policies, procedures, and practices to bring about necessary change in schools. Administrators should arrange professional development opportunities for teachers to update their knowledge about current global situations. Most of the time teachers rely solely on the information they acquire through different forms of the media. Guest speakers from different fields could be invited who speak about current global issues to update teachers' knowledge. Another possibility could be to hire more Muslim staff or consult current Muslim staff members in their school settings for day-to-day issues and problems regarding Muslim students. Along with Muslim teachers, the parents of Muslim children could be used as a resource. Schools could revise their strategies to invite Muslim parents so that they feel part of the school system and join school activities to eliminate the gap between home and school. Discussion forums arranged by school administrators where Muslim and non-Muslim parents can share their concerns could help in reducing tensions between the mainstream

population and the Muslim community. Reduced tension within the broader community could indirectly improve Muslim children's relationships with their non-Muslim peers at school, because, according to my participants, most of the time their non-Muslim peers' attitudes toward them are due to their parents' negative prejudgments about Muslims.

Another recommendation is to include different cultures and religions in school activities. This consideration could be helpful in the development of a sense of belonging among new immigrant children because, when children see acceptance of their cultural beliefs and values, they will feel more connected and at home (Lee, 2001) in their new school environment. It would also help students from other backgrounds to understand beliefs and values other than their own. Many of my participants expressed their feelings about how, when they did not see their beliefs as part of their schools, they did not see themselves as belonging to their school communities, and they felt ignored and marginalized. For example, one of my study participants, Farooq, said that one thing that makes him a little upset is that Canada is a multicultural country, but when it comes to celebrations, they only focus on one religion, Christianity. He feels it is unfair for only one religion's holidays, such as Christmas, to be officially recognized.

One change schools could easily incorporate into their practices is awareness of Muslim holy days and prayer schedules. Schools should allow their Muslim students exempted absences for Friday prayers and Muslim holy days. The schools could also designate rooms within the school where students could perform their daily prayers while taking a short absence from their classes. This strategy could be used for other cultures' and religions' practices as well, so that immigrant children feel part of their school communities. These practices can also reduce biases among other students because they get a chance to gain awareness about other cultures and religious beliefs.

Implications for Teachers

Canada's culturally and religiously diverse classrooms demand culturally and religiously sensitive teaching practices. There are two main aspects of teaching: teaching methods and curricula. These two aspects have an equal part in teaching and a strong impact on students' future development. How do teachers teach their students? The methods they adopt and then the selection of the curricula they teach require more than sensitivity in the case of teaching in diverse classrooms. They require an acute sense of social justice and a clear vision of the role of the school as an acculturation agent in a multicultural society. It is important that teachers' training programs prepare all existing and future teachers to understand the demands of their diverse student populations. At present, our teacher training programs lack a focus on concepts such as cultural relevance, multiculturalism, and justice (Steeler & Stillman, 2005).

In the next two sections, I make suggestions for future improvement on the basis of my participants' recommendations.

Teaching methods.

The findings of my study raise the importance of culturally and religiously responsive teaching methods to eliminate prejudice. My participants shared that some of their teachers did not understand the requirements of their diverse classrooms. At times, they fully ignored the presence of Muslim children in their classrooms while teaching about current global problems for which Muslims are blamed. They held open discussions on these topics during which they openly criticized Islam and Muslims. Teachers need to be sensitive about their students' backgrounds before presenting any negative viewpoints in front of the whole class, and consider in advance how such views can affect these students' peer relationships, academic engagement, and overall sense of being and belonging. In the case of Muslim children, there is so much

negativity about Islam and Muslims that it is hard for teachers to protect their classrooms from anti-Islam discussions while teaching about current global issues. Their success entirely depends on how the teachers present global issues to the class. They can either blindly oppose Muslims and Islam or provide evidence so that students can see the bigger picture. Teachers naturally have their own personal viewpoints, but being teachers, they have an obligation to help children develop their ability to critically examine a topic while considering alternative, sometimes conflicting perspectives. As one of my participants, Shama, suggested, it is important for teachers to make clear the difference between terrorism and Islam while teaching about Sharia law or other topics about Muslims. Not all Muslims are terrorists or responsible for whatever is happening around the globe. A deliberate effort by teachers is needed to clear up these misconceptions.

It is hard for non-Muslim teachers to identify the biases within their teaching or in the curricula they are using, because their understanding is greatly influenced by their own personal experiences and interpretations within their position in social structures of society (Banks, 2003). Teachers need to work toward building healthier relationships with all their students, but especially so with their students from minority backgrounds so that they are better able to understand the students' behaviours, experiences, and needs. To teach in a multicultural classroom, a purposeful shift in mindset is essential. Teachers need to adopt inclusive approaches to their teaching which focus on developing mutual respect.

Teachers should be careful when making comments to any of their students in their classrooms. The findings of my study confirm that unintentional comments can have a devastating effect on students' peers relations and class performance. An example of this from my study was when a teacher openly made remarks about Shama's head covering which later on

affected the attitudes of other class members toward Shama. Classrooms could be used as spaces to reduce distance and biases among different groups. After parents, teachers have the most powerful interactions with children and can make a strong impression on a child's personality. Further, any effort toward the promotion of multiculturalism could affect the solidarity of the whole nation. Therefore it is a national and professional duty of teachers to adopt culturally responsive teaching methods.

Inclusive curricula.

The second important aspect of teaching is curricula. Teachers to some extent have the power to select and teach the curricula according to their own philosophy. To strive for social justice in our current culturally and religiously diverse classrooms, it is imperative that teachers understand the sensitive nature and importance of the current global issues and are able to plan curricula that include the needs of all their students. My participants' school experiences are an indication that currently the public school curriculum, at least in Alberta, is still Eurocentric and thus unable to meet the needs of diverse students and fulfill the goals of Canada's multicultural policy. While teaching topics of global political importance, teachers can suggest materials to add to the curriculum that provide a broader, multi perspectival picture to their students. Teachers need to put in more effort and inform themselves about multiple perspectives on current global issues, and present unbiased views to their students. We need curricula based on wide range of perspectives, including those of religious, not just ethnic and cultural, minority groups. Our culturally and religiously diverse students do not see themselves as belonging in their classrooms otherwise. Teachers need to introduce a curriculum that helps students develop not only tolerance but also an understanding of different worldviews, and embrace diversity.

Social studies teachers in Alberta often have discussions in their classes about Sharia law and terrorism. According to the participants of my study, in most of these discussions the teachers speak against Muslim beliefs and blame the whole Muslim community for the increase in terrorism. One of my participants mentioned a movie her teacher showed about the Holocaust; after that movie the teacher said that if another Holocaust ever happens, it will happen to Muslims. This video made my participant feel distraught for days. These kinds of disturbing effects of biased curricula can easily be reduced by a careful selection of the curricula and additional teaching materials, but the sad reality revealed by my participants is that teachers are not fully aware of these effects because of their inability and lack of training to prepare an inclusive curriculum for their classes. According to my participants, only a few of their teachers showed sensitive attitudes toward their students' differences and tried to present an unbiased picture while teaching these topics in their classrooms. My participants appreciated these teachers and wished that all their teachers would show the same sensitivity and awareness while teaching such topics.

Recommendations for the Next Generation of Muslim Children in Alberta's Schools

All my participants presented suggestions based on their own experiences for future Muslim children in Alberta schools. The suggestions they presented for new Muslim students reflect their struggles, hardships, resilience, and resistance to maintain their home culture and values while also maintaining hybrid identities as Canadian Muslims. All my participants agreed that in the beginning they found it very hard to survive, but as time passed by they learned to survive in their school environments. They found ways to develop a healthy identity after all the hardships they faced. They all made suggestions to support and encourage the newcomer Muslim

students and assure them that everything will be settled after a while. Below are a few recommendations based on their suggestions.

Most of the study's participants said that new Muslim students in schools in Alberta might not have experiences similar to theirs, because Alberta is becoming more multicultural and the school environments are changing as well. Albertans are becoming used to encountering people of colour and from different backgrounds and are not reacting toward the differences as much as they did before. Among my participants, those who immigrated or moved to Alberta from areas with white majorities said that when they came to Alberta they were among only a few, and in some cases, they were the only Muslim child in the whole school. Their school experiences are very different from the students who moved from areas with large immigrant populations.

One piece of advice which most of my students gave was about their cultural values and beliefs. Ali advised new students that they do not need to change their values and beliefs at all. They just need to remain calm and have patience, because, according to his experiences, everything will settle down after a while. Fatima agreed, advising Muslim immigrant children that there is no need to hide their Muslim identity, because Canada is a free country where everyone has a right to follow their own beliefs and no one can force them to change. These participants said that new Muslim students just need to be open and strong, and everything will be fine after a while.

Recommendations for Further Research

Due to its nature there are certain limitations of this study which need to be addressed in a replicable study, such as this project being limited to a small sample size of seven foreign-born Muslim children attending mainstream public schools in Edmonton. Participants' parents,

teachers, peers, and school administrators were not included in the study. Also, all of the participants were Sunni Muslims from middle-class families with Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi backgrounds. Any future qualitative study of Muslim students with a larger group representing a cross-section of different Muslim sects, socioeconomic backgrounds, and pre-migration experiences that are different from the backgrounds of my participants would be very beneficial, particularly if it included parents, teachers, and members of the mainstream community. Given the diversity within the Muslim community as well as the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversities within Muslim populations worldwide, such a study would provide insights into the different experiences Muslim children may have within schools in Canada.

Some other limitations of the study are that it took place over the span of one year so the findings are limited to only that period of time. Since I was the only observer, listener, interviewer, and interpreter of my participants' accounts, I acknowledge the possibility that my own ontological and epistemological beliefs have affected the data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods of the study. Choosing participants from my social circle was advantageous because I was able to utilize the preexisting trust to develop new research relationships with my participants; however, there were also disadvantages. The participants were aware of my close relationship with their families. Therefore, they may have refrained from sharing all aspects of their school experiences with me due to fear or suspicion that I might disclose information to their parents. A longitudinal study or one conducted by different researchers from different backgrounds could also be helpful in providing a more in-depth understanding of the topic.

Final Thoughts

This chapter provided insights gained in relation to my research questions, my reflections on the research procedure, and recommendations for future research. I tried to understand the lived experiences of a small number of Muslim students attending public schools in Alberta. I fulfilled my research goals and found the answers to my research questions. Before starting my research, I had some prior ideas about Muslim children's school experiences based on my daughters' experiences and my own, but my research findings provided more information than I expected. There is definitely room for improvement in the Canadian education system to provide better, more equitable, and more fulfilling school experiences for religiously and culturally diverse immigrant children, especially Muslim students. Canadian schools should have the ability to cater to the needs of their culturally and religiously diverse populations. They should have the ability to provide positive learning environments to these diverse students. To do so, they need to reevaluate their curricula and teaching practices.

There is also room for change at the policy level. Canada was among the first countries in the world to adopt a policy of multiculturalism, and Canada is working toward equality and human rights. Due to the current global crises, such as conflicts, wars, droughts, and famine, there is a rise in refugees to Canada from Muslim countries, which will in turn bring an increase in the Muslim student population in Canadian schools. Now it is time to implement the Canadian multicultural policy in schools beyond merely cultural celebrations.

As I was finishing the final section of my dissertation, I saw a news report in *The Dallas Morning News* (Selk, 2015) about a Muslim student in Texas who made a homemade clock and took it to school. Instead of being praised for his creativity, he was arrested because teachers and other staff in the school suspected that the clock was a bomb! The worst part of the story was

what the police officer said when he saw the boy: “Yup. That’s who I thought it was” (i.e., he knew it would be a Muslim student). This is an eye-opening incident for us all. Although it did not occur in Canada, we must learn from it. We need to prevent such incidents from happening in the future if we want to integrate young Muslim children into Canadian society.

As a multicultural country, Canada has always taken actions toward the promotion of human rights and equality. I am hopeful that my participants’ astute observations and interpretations of their school experiences and their peers’ and teachers’ behaviours and attitudes toward them will help to bring about needed improvements in the future at both the institutional and policy levels, and that Canada will become a safe haven for people of all religions and cultures.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Parent Consent Form for Child Participation

Study Title: Multicultural Education and Immigrant Children: The Case of Muslim Children in the Canadian Schools.

April, 2013

Dear _____

My name is Afshan Amjad and I am a doctoral student at the University of Alberta. I would like to tell you about a research study I am conducting as part of my doctoral program. The study has been approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board. A research study is a way to find out new information about something that interests you. What interests me is what Muslim students have to say about their elementary school experiences to write a thesis for my doctoral program.

In my study I would like to find out more about what are the Muslim students' elementary school experiences. I am interested in the listening to the students' stories about their school experiences.

By being in this study your child will help me to understand Muslim students' elementary school experiences in Edmonton. I will use what I learn from your child—the things they said or draw and show me in my work for the University of Alberta. One of the benefits of the study for your child as a participant is to help him to recall and share some of their good/bad moments in their elementary grades.

If you allowed your child to join my study I will give your child a choice to choose a place for their interviews (e.g., your house, my house, mosque, community centre or in the library) where I can talk to them about their elementary school experiences. I will audio record our interviews. I would like to meet with them 2 to 3 times for a maximum of 1 hour. To help me to learn about them, I will have them do one drawing activity and also interview them and ask them questions about how were their elementary school years.

Everything your child will tell me and what we discuss about their experiences will be anonymous I will not use their real name anywhere. I will not share their identification with anyone which means that everything will be confidential. If they feel slightly tired or bothered by the recounting of a negative experience during their interviews, I will remind them that we can stop the interview or take a break at any time. You also need to know that your child do not have to answer any questions they do not wish to answer.

Before you say “yes” or “no” to allow your child to participate in this study I will answer any questions that you have. You are free to allow or not allow your child to join this study. It is up to you. Even if you allow them to join the study you can ask questions at any time. If you allow this study will explained to your child and ask him to sign a form as well. You can say yes now and change your mind later. All you have to tell me that your child will no longer be a part of this study. You have until December 31, 2013 to opt out.

If you have any questions or concerns throughout the study you can always talk to me.

Sincerely,

Afshan Amjad
PhD Candidate
University of Alberta

Parent Consent Form for Child Participation

Study Title: Multicultural Education and Immigrant Children: The Case of Muslim Children in the Canadian Schools.

Investigator: Afshan Amjad, PhD Candidate, Elementary Education Department,
438 Education South, University of Alberta
Phone#7805711957 **Email**:aamjad@ualberta.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Anna Kirova, Elementary Education Department,
438 Education South, University of Alberta
Phone#780-492-0913 **Email**: anna.kirova@ualberta.ca

I _____ hereby give my consent for
(Print full name of parent/guardian)

_____to participate in the research study with Afshan Amjad
(Print full name of student).

I agree to:

- My child participating once or twice a month for a maximum of 1 hour sessions for 2 to 3 times in the setting of his/her choice.
- My child participating in pre/post-interview activities and having his/her drawings used as part of the data collected for the study.
- My child participating in conversations about his/her elementary school experiences.
- My child being audio-recorded during the pre/post-interview activities, semi-formal interviews and conversations about their elementary school experiences.

I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary and I have the option to withdraw my child from the study without penalty or prejudice by contacting you, the researcher.
- If my child feels slightly tired with the additional task of the interview, the researcher will remind him/her that we can stop the interview or take a break at any time.
- The researcher will remind my child that he/she does not have to answer any questions they do not want to answer.
- Data generated by my child may be withdrawn at any time up until data analysis begins, which will be when all of the interview transcripts have been verified by the participants and returned to the researcher until December 31, 2013. Once data analysis begins data cannot be withdrawn.
- The researcher, Afshan Amjad and her supervisor, Dr. Anna Kirova will be the only persons who will have access to the data collected.
- Pseudonyms will be used for my child and the school to protect identities.
- The audio-recordings of the conversations about the drawings, the semi-structured interviews in addition to conversations about the elementary school experiences will

be transcribed. This and other data will be securely stored to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

- All research interviews, activities and conversations will be kept strictly confidential.
- The data collected will be retained by the researcher for five years and then destroyed.
- I will receive a copy of this signed consent form for my records.
- The data collected for the study will be used in a written dissertation and may be used in professional or academic conference presentations or written articles in journals and/or books.
- I will receive a copy of the final report by contacting the researcher.

Yes, I agree to have my child _____ participate in the research study.

No, I do not wish to have my child _____ participate in the research study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Phone: _____

Email address: _____

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix B: Assent Letter for Student Participants

April, 2013

Dear _____

My name is Afshan Amjad and I am a doctoral student at the University of Alberta. I would like to tell you about a research study I am conducting. The study has been approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board. A research study is a way to find out new information about something that interests you. What interests me is what Muslim students have to say about their elementary school experiences to write a thesis for my doctoral program. In my study I would like to find out more about what are the Muslim students' elementary school experiences. I am interested in the listening to your stories about your school experiences.

If you would like to take part in the study, I would like to hear your stories about your elementary school experiences--about your moments of joy and sadness, about your friends, about your teachers, about anything which you experienced during your elementary school years in Edmonton Public schools.

By being in this study you will help me understand Muslim students' elementary school experiences in Edmonton. I will use what I learn from you—the things you say, draw and show me in my work for the University of Alberta. One of the benefits of the study for you as a participant is to help you to recall and share some of your good/bad moments in your elementary grades.

If you agree to join my study I will come to the place of your choice (e.g., your house, my house, mosque, community centre or in the library) and talk to you about your elementary school experiences. I would like to meet with you 2 to 3 times for a maximum of 1 hour. To help me to learn about you, I will have you do one drawing activity and also interview you and ask you questions about how were your elementary school years.

Everything you tell me and what we discuss about your experiences I will not share with anyone but my Professor at the University, which means that everything will be confidential. I will not use your real name, so you will be anonymous. If you feel slightly tired during your interviews, I will remind you that we can stop the interview or take a break at any time. You also need to know that you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

Before you say "yes" or "no" to participate in this study I will answer any questions that you have. You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. If you join the study you can ask questions at any time. This study has been explained to your parents so you can talk this over with them before you decide. You can say yes now and change your mind later. All you have to tell me that you no longer want to be part of this study.

If you have any questions or concerns throughout the study you can always talk to me or to your parents.

Sincerely,

Afshan Amjad
PhD Candidate
University of Alberta

Assent Form

_____Yes, I will be in this research study

_____No, I do not want to be in this research study

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Data

You will receive a copy of this signed assent form for you or your parents to keep.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix C: Pre-Interview Activities

Please use the coloured markers and pens and pages provided and complete one or more of the activities below, and bring it with you to our interview.

1. Show a schedule for your day, week or year and use colours to indicate how time is spent.
2. Draw a diagram and use colours to show where your support or support systems come.
3. Draw a picture or make a diagram of a place that is important to you. Use key words to indicate the parts or what happens in each of the parts.
4. Draw two pictures showing what things were like for you before and after something important happened in your life.

And also please complete one or more of the activities below, and bring it with you to our interview.

5. Make a timeline showing important things that happened that changed what school was like for you in your elementary years.
6. Make two drawings: one showing what you thought life would be like for you in when you were in your elementary school and another showing what it turned out to be like. You can use speech bubbles or thought bubbles.
7. Draw two pictures showing what being a student is like for you before and after you finish your elementary years in school.
8. Make two drawings: one showing a good day being an elementary grade student and one showing a not so good day being an elementary grade student.
9. Make two drawings: one showing what you like about life in elementary school and another showing what you do not

Appendix D: Interview Questions

General questions

1. If you had to go to school only three days a week, what are some of the things you'd like to do with the extra time?
2. Have you ever done anything that other people were surprised you could do?
3. What is the most difficult thing you have ever had to do or, is there something you've done that was really hard to do but you really wanted to do it?
4. Have you ever done anything really different from what most people of your age have done?
5. Some people really believe in the power of wishing. Do you think you do? ....Has it ever worked?
6. Do you ever get other people to go along with your ideas or what you want to do? What about in activities with friends or routines at home?
7. Sometimes we like to day-dream about things we'd like to do, or things we'd like to try, or things we'd like to become. Can you remember anything you've ever day dreamed about?
8. What's the best thing about being your age? ..... [after answer] What's the hardest thing about being your age?
9. What would you like to be really good at doing?
10. Some people believe that willpower can take them a long way. Do you think that you've ever used willpower?

Questions about children's experience in Canada generally

11. I'm going to ask you some different kind of questions now, questions about how you see things. For example who do you think makes the biggest difference to what happens in the classroom, the principal, the teacher, or the students?
12. What did you like about your school experience in Canada?
13. What is the best part of going to school in Canada? …….. [after answer] What would you say is the worst difficult part?
14. If you could choose to spend two weeks in either high, secondary or elementary school what will be your choice and why?
15. What are some of the things you hope for you in your future school years?

Questions about their experience of an elementary school student in Edmonton

16. Before you came to Canada, what were you good at in school or most interested in at school?
17. What was it like to you when you first attended the elementary school in Edmonton? Were you happy or excited or scared?

18. When you first started going to school here, what surprised you most? Did anything surprise you about the teachers, the other students, or about the activities in school?
19. When you started going to school here, what was easier than you thought it would be? …… [after answer] What was more difficult than you thought it would be?
20. Right now, what is the best part of going to school every day?
21. What are some of the things you don't like so much about being at school?
22. Since you have been in Canada, how have things changed for you in school?
23. What is it like to be Muslim in your school? Does it make any difference to your school day? Does it make it easier or more difficult in any way?
24. If a student who is Muslim was going to start attending your school, what advice would you give to this student?
25. What do you look forward to doing this summer?
26. Are there any questions you would like to ask me?