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**FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES**

Dina Shalabi

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

M.A. (Education)

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FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

**A Multiple Case Study on Parent's Perspective About Influence of the Islamic Culture on Muslim
Children's Daily Lives**

TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS

Maurice Taylor

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

Lorra McLean

Francis Bangou

Gary W. Slater

Le Doyen de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales / Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

**A Multiple Case Study on Parents' Perspective about the Influence of the
Islamic Culture on Muslim Children's Daily Lives**

Dina Shalabi

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

Any educational or training system that ignores the history or perspective of its learners, or does not attempt to adjust its teaching practices to benefit all its learners is contributing to inequality of opportunity (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 26).

In a multicultural society, there should be a pressing need to acknowledge the cultural heritages and social variations of its members in order to validate their experiences and realities. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how Muslim parents interpreted the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives. The study addressed this influence by examining Muslim children's daily funds of knowledge. This study also aimed to examine how Muslim parents suggested their children's fund of knowledge to be addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model at public schools. Muslim parents in five ethnically diverse households were interviewed, and observational notes about physical surrounding during the interview sessions were recorded. A qualitative multiple case study was designed to answer research questions and understand the influence of the Islamic culture in these households. Data was analyzed through the integration of the analysis framework adapted from Stake (2006) while using Nvivo computer software for analyzing qualitative data. Eight themes emerged from the study and allowed for a discussion on the centrality of the religion in these households, the collective cultural paradigm, and the scope of identity negotiation taking place on a daily basis. For the purpose of this study, implications to educators were incorporated into Gay's (2000) characteristics of cultural responsive teaching in order to integrate Muslim students into classroom pedagogies.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Reflective Introduction

This thesis research investigated the influence of the Islamic culture on Muslim children's daily lives. This influence was addressed by Muslim parents who came from various ethnic backgrounds. Their accounts provided knowledge about daily aspects of Muslim households that tend to be generally neglected by educators in the public school system in Canada. The following three vignettes provided a sample of many observations that prompted the initiation of this research.

Asmahan Mansour, an eleven years old soccer player from Ottawa, was expelled from a tournament soccer game in Quebec, 2007 (Sharify-Funk, 2008). The game referee asked her to take off her headscarf during the game. Asmahan was asked to leave the soccer field because she refused to remove her headscarf. I found myself captured by many questions circulating in mind on why she was asked to do so. Was it a simple request for safety issues, as the referee claimed later on? Did the situation lack the appropriate accommodation of a young Muslim girl? Was it simply that the referee had no prior knowledge about the significance of the headscarf to a Muslim female and thought it would be acceptable to simply ask her to remove it? Away from the complexity of the situation, or may be the simplicity of such request in a sports field, the most puzzling question was 'what goes on in Asmahan's daily live to make such a young girl become so persistent and firmly standing by her decision to not take her headscarf off?'

A friend of mine had moved her four years old daughter from a public preschool to an Islamic private preschool in the middle of the semester. When I inquired about the decision, my friend told me that her daughter did not have friends because she was speaking the Arabic language more than English when communicating with the other children. She also

mentioned that her daughter became increasingly uncomfortable and less confident about her social skills. Currently, my friend related to me that the teachers at the private preschool facility speak to her daughter in both English and Arabic, and she is now using both languages comfortably when talking to the other kids. Most importantly, she now has friends. Even though I don't have tangible evidence that language was the only reason for not having a successful social experience, I was speculating the role of first language in developing her sense of identity and ability to situate herself in a place that not only does not understand her language, but perhaps is also unaware of her entire culture.

In 2006, a Dutch newspaper released insulting comic cartoons about Muslims' most followed figure, Prophet Mohammed. An incredibly immense outrage was exerted by Muslims all over the world in forms of peaceful and sometimes violent protests, flag-burning incidents, campaigns to boycott Denmark , and many political and religious summits were held to publically announce that such cartoons were unacceptable and worthy of a world-wide apology to all Muslims (Kampmark, 2007). As I tried to bracket who I am out of the self-identification of being a practicing Muslim, I was astonished by the volume of the reaction that I witnessed. It is quite obvious that such powerful corollary would have not come in vein. In fact, it would be imprudent to assume that this reaction was sudden and random. Apart from one's stance or attitude regarding this world-wide reaction, I argue that a sincere and objective look at the daily lives of Muslims might lend a chance for a better understanding, or at least an insight, around the reason for such massive anger or frustration.

It is almost inevitable to watch the news on television, read any newspaper, or listen to any news radio station without encountering segments on the Muslim world, Muslim governments, and Muslims' link to terrorism. The Muslim individual and how she or he lives on a daily basis is hardly addressed. The three above mentioned observations, and perhaps

many more, created a complex body of wonders, questions, and urge to explore the daily lives of Muslims. I wanted to learn and reflect what goes on in a Muslim household that would make Asmahan so decisive not to remove her headscarf. I wondered why it was explicitly important for my friend to try to maintain her daughter's first language. I also wanted to know if there was any connection between Muslim households' daily lives and the immense rage for what was viewed as a relenting insult to Muslims all over the world. These reflections were initial driving forces for the desire to embark on a hermeneutic journey and enter Muslim households to explore how it is like on a daily basis by investigating what is important, valuable, inspiring, discouraging, or unacceptable.

Thesis Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case study is to explore how Muslim parents interpret the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives. The study addresses this influence by examining Muslim children's daily funds of knowledge. These funds of knowledge are defined as the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992, p. 133). Accordingly, this study also aims to examine how Muslim parents expect their children's fund of knowledge to be addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model at public schools. Gay (2000) describes culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 29). Specifically, this study addresses parents in Sunni Muslim households, as significant representatives of Sunni Muslim students' daily funds of

knowledge, to provide information on the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives.

This study employs a constructivist paradigm, where I rely on Muslim parents' description and interpretations (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2002). This qualitative approach, which employs a multiple case study analysis design, helped me better understand what shaped the reality of Muslim students in their households, and how this knowledge could be a resource for educators in the process of developing culturally responsive pedagogical models. Accordingly, five Muslim households representing a sample of the diverse Sunni Muslim population in Ottawa were recruited from an Islamic organization that served Sunni Muslims.

Chapter One of this thesis is intended to provide a defining structure of the study and an overview of fundamental elements of the research. I begin by presenting how the term 'Islamic culture' is addressed in this study, and how it is situated within the boundaries of this research. This is followed by a discussion about the religion of Islam by addressing essential beliefs and understandings that are relevant to this research. Additionally, the following sub-sections present the rationale and the significance of the study, and finally, I end this introductory chapter with the research questions.

The second chapter provides a focused literature review that is connected to the contexts surrounding the study. I begin by providing a contextual layout of multiculturalism in Canada, which was an important factor in the decision to study a minority group. I also provide a description of the Muslims' presence in Canada based on previous scholarly research and statistical evidence. Moreover, the literature review addressed minority households and their involvement in their children's education from different perspectives. The chapter also addresses a review of theories and frameworks that were relevant to this

study, and a rationale for choosing a specific theoretical path. Finally, the conceptual framework of this research is discussed as a guiding map for conducting the study.

The third chapter presents the methodological choices that were employed in this research. A presentation on using multiple case studies analysis is provided, and a discussion on the relationship with the research and the researched is also addressed. The process of recruiting participants based on specific set of criteria is described, and strategies implemented for ensuring validity are also discussed. The chapter further describes the integration of Stake's (2006) framework of analysis and the Nvivo computer software as tools to analyze a multiple case study.

The fourth chapter presents the finding of the research by, first, describing the profile of each household, and second, by presenting the themes of the study that emerged from the data collection sources. The final chapter provides a more focused discussion generated based on the findings. Suggestions for educators and policy makers as presented within Geneva Gay's perception of cultural responsiveness are explained. The chapter ends with limitations of the study and implications for future research.

What is the Islamic Culture?

Muslims come from various sects, such as Sunni and Shiite, and also from different ethnic backgrounds around the world. There is diversity in the experiences and practices of Muslims based on the ethnic cultural norms, attitudes, and native language (Azmi, 2001). Ricardo Garcia (1982) defines culture as "a system of beliefs, values, customs, and institutions that when combined weaves as a cluster to provide a person meaningful ways for survival" (p. 7). The lifestyle of Muslims may be seen as the same system that Garcia addresses in his definition of culture. This system is represented in the intersections among

the various aspects of Muslims' daily lives, such as religion, ethnic backgrounds, and relationship patterns among members of a specific ethnic group and the larger community. Because of the centrality of religion as a factor that informs all aspects of a Muslim's life, and because of the compassion that Muslims have for this religion (as an ideology at least) (Akhtar, 2007), I decided to address the system described above as the 'Islamic culture'. Akhtar (2007) and Zine (2008) claim that Muslims tend to be addressed as followers of the religion of Islam, who have a fixed set of rituals and practices, while ignoring the influences of ethnic cultural backgrounds, first language, and household and community relationships. I argue that the daily experiences of Muslims are rarely addressed in a holistic matter to reflect the various elements that influence their lives. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine how this system, as represented in funds of knowledge, functions and influences the daily lives of the Muslim children in different contexts where ethnicity, language, gender, and education are presented in different ways. To shed some light on the central component of the Islamic culture, the next section will provide a brief overview about the religion of Islam since it is a central component in the Islamic culture.

What is Islam?

In this section, I would like to selectively discuss some of the commonly held beliefs about Islam as understood by a person who claims to be Sunni Muslim. According to Robinson (1999), this qualifier first indicates that this person is familiar with the fundamental pillars and teachings of the religion of Islam based on the Sunni approach. Second it indicates that his person understands a set of common technical words and phrases used among Sunni Muslims. These words are usually in the Arabic language. Since this research study focuses on Muslim parents and their interpretations of the influence of the

Islamic culture on their own children's daily lives, it will also be helpful to provide foundational information that I feel the reader of this research might need to know early in this investigation.

Islam is a monolithic religion like Judaism and Christianity (Akhtar, 2007). Robinson (1999) explains, "The root meaning of the Arabic word *islam* is submission or self-surrender, surrender being understood in the positive sense of recognising God's sovereignty and entering into his 'peace'" (p. 15). Followers of the religion of Islam are called Muslims. The word *salam*, which is the common greeting among Muslims, shares the same Arabic root as the words Islam and Muslims, and it means peace (Ibid).

Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad, who is the last prophet according to the Sunni Islamic teachings, received revelation from God over the period of twenty three years of his mission (Ruinson, 1999). This revelation formed the divine scripture of the Quran. Muslims believe that the Quran was revealed to Mohammad in the Arabic language in an era where the eloquent use of the Arabic language was incontestable and absolutely aesthetic. Yet, Muhammad's claimed miracle was the words of God that were inimitable in content and linguistically flawless (Esposito, 1988). The people who opposed Muhammad at the time of revelation allegedly attested for the Quran's beautiful use of the Arabic language. The main message of the Quran is that there is only one God and that he is the only deity worth of worship (Esposito, 2002, Nasr, 1997). Muslims also believe that the Quran, as a revelation from the only almighty God, provides moral guidance and practical ruling for most aspects of life, and that it is the main source for the Islamic *Shari`ah*, which is the Islamic or divine law according to Esposito (1988), or the will of God (Waines, 2003).

In terms of Muslim's view about the other monolithic religions, and how Islam is positioned in relevance to these religions, Esposito (2002) asserts:

As Christians view their revelation as both fulfilling and completing the revelation of the Old Testament, Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad received his revelations from God through the angel Gabriel to correct human error that had made its way into the scriptures and belief systems of Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, Muslims believe that Islam is not a new religion with a new scripture. Far from being the youngest of the major monotheistic world religions, from a Muslim point of view Islam is the oldest because it represents the original as well as the final revelation of God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (p. 4).

Pillars of Islam

The religion of Islam is built on five main pillars as a core for representing Islam as an ideology and practice (Esposito, 1988; Grieve, 2006). These pillars are mentioned in almost any book that talks about Islam, and they are frequently referred to in most religious talks and lectures. Knowledge about the five pillars is considered a crucially fundamental and essential knowledge to any Muslim, and it one of the first Islamic knowledge that Muslim children learn about.

The first pillar is the declaration of faith which proclaims that there is no god but *Allah* (Arabic word for God), and Mohammad is his messenger. This declaration has to be publicly announced when someone becomes a Muslim. However, Muslims use this declaration on a continuous basis in their daily prayers and as a constant reminder of their commitment towards God.

The second pillar is the prayer, *Salat*, which has to be offered physically in a fixed manner five times a day individually or in congregation while directing one's body towards the city of Mecca. Each prayer is offered over the span of a specific time; so there is a dawn prayer, noon prayer, afternoon prayer, sunset prayer, and evening prayer. Each prayer involves reciting Quran in the Arabic language. The five prayers serve as an act of consistent connection with God, and therefore it is one of the most important rituals in Islam (Brohi, 1997). Friday is a holy day for Muslims, and the noon prayer on Fridays is supposed to be

performed in congregation. It is an obligatory prayer for Muslim males. Females can attend it on a voluntary basis. A short talk done by a preacher usually precedes the Friday prayer, and the talk serves as a spiritual reminder or a way to tackle a current issue that pertains to the Muslim community. All types of Muslim prayers usually have to be preceded by using water to cleanse one's hands, face, mouth, nose, head, arms, and feet. Females do not offer prayers during menstruation.

The third pillar is almsgiving, *Zakat*. It is considered compulsory, unlike charity which is voluntary-based action that is highly recommended in Islam. Islam considers almsgiving as a duty on every capable Muslim to support the community and the social welfare by annually giving a portion of their wealth and assets to the needy (it is usually around two and half percent of one's wealth). The direct translation to the word *Zakat* is 'purifying'. Almsgiving is intended to purify one's soul by drawing away from the worldly matters, and therefore, it calls for drawing closer to God by fulfilling his commands and fulfilling the obligation towards the community.

The fourth pillar is the fast of the month of Ramadan. For about a month every year, Muslims have to abstain from food, drink, and sexual activities from sunrise to sunset. Muslims tend to increase their spiritual connection with God during the month of Ramadan; this includes offering more voluntary prayers, engaging in more charity acts, offering services to the community, connecting with relatives, and abstaining from wrong doing. The purpose of the month of Ramadan is also to draw one away from worldly matters such as fulfilling the needs of the physical body. It is a way to strengthen one's spirituality and inner self by abstaining from things that individuals are used to and comfortable with on a daily basis. The month of Ramadan also calls for gathering a sense of sympathy and unity with the hungry and the needy. Muslims end the month of Ramadan with one of the two main

celebrations in Islam, Eid ul Fitr, which translates as the festivity of breaking the fast.

Muslims start the festival with a congregational prayer that is followed by a short talk. Eid is a great opportunity for family and the community to unite and celebrate together.

The last pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage to Mecca, *Hajj*. It involves visiting and performing rituals around the *Ka`ba*, which Muslims believe to be the first place of worship on earth dating back to Adam's time. This journey, according to the Quran, traces its roots back to the story of Abraham and God's command to sacrifice his son (Ismail according to the Islamic traditions, and Isaac according to the Jewish and Christian traditions). Millions of Muslims gather in the city of Mecca every year all wearing simple cloths (men wrap themselves with two seamless white sheets). The significance of Hajj lies in the symbolizing of unity that is manifested physically, in the appearance and performance of the rituals, and spiritually, in the belief that all humans are equal before God regardless of one's rank, status, colour, or nationality. The journey of Hajj ends with the second main celebration in Islam, Eid ul Adha. It translates as the celebration of sacrifice where Muslims offer animal sacrifice following what Abraham did when he was asked to slaughter a ram or a sheep instead of his son.

When addressing the five pillars of Islam, I have recognized two significant features that overarch these pillars. All the five pillars include a community component at the rationalizing level of the action or the actual performance of the pillar. Administering connection with god in a collective manner appears in the declaration of faith, congregational prayers, giving back to the community by paying alms, re-connecting with the needy of the community during the month of Ramadan, and performing Hajj with millions of people at the same time. The second feature appears in the concepts of sacrifice and struggle as means of disciplining one's inner self and willingness to do relatively uncomfortable things in order

to draw closer to God. This notion comes in response to Muslims' belief in the concept of resurrection at the hereafter. Muslims believe that everyone is accountable for his or her deeds, and one's reward or punishment on the Day of Judgement is dependent on these deeds and God's willingness to forgive (Esposito, 1988). Therefore, drawing a closer connection with God and constant abiding to his rules in this life could make a Muslim experience an eternal residence in paradise in the hereafter, which is a fundamental goal and a powerful daily driving force to any Muslim (Brohi, 1997; Waines, 2003).

The religion of Islam is a central component in the daily lives of practicing Muslims, and even with non-practicing Muslims sometimes (Akhtar, 2007). Muslims regard Islam as a holistic experience in which actions, sayings, and even thoughts should be administered, as much as possible, in accordance with the Islamic teaching of the Quran and the prophet Muhammad (Hodge & Nadir, 2008; Said, 1981). Therefore, Muslims' daily activities, rationale for conducting social endeavors, and even assumptions about reality are hardly fragmented and detached from the religion, a struggle that many Muslims face in non-Muslim countries where the separation between daily lives and religious institutions prevails.

This foundational information as presented in Muslim's perception of God and his revelation to Prophet Mohammed, and the five pillars of Islam is essential for the understanding of this study. It provides a grounding that may help the reader situate the various topics that were addressed by the interviewed Muslim parents. It will also provide the reader with an opportunity to connect Muslim's daily lives with the belief system in the religion of Islam.

Rationale for the Study

As the number of minority students is growing significantly in Canada, there is a pressing need to address the issue of making the schooling experience compatible to their cultural patterns (Azmi, 2001). Various types of social science research on minority groups has shown that learning at schools can be positively facilitated through responding to students' cultural perspectives and family literacy (Gay, 2002; Phuntsog, 1999; Villegas, 1991). The need is even more crucial for cultures that are widely distorted and often surrounded by misconceptions. Studies on the need and the various practices of culturally responsive teaching of students from different cultural backgrounds, specifically African and Aboriginal students, are well documented in literature (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Dei, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nielsen, Nicol, & Owuor, 2008). These studies and others call for trying to understand the families of the minority students in order to understand the minority students themselves.

Various Canadian and American qualitative studies in the field of multicultural education suggest that one of the cultures that need to be addressed in the literature, in teacher education programs, and in professional development programs is the Islamic culture (Berkson, 2005; Esposito, 1995; Khamela & Wannas-Jones, 2003; Mastrilli & Sardo-Brown, 2002; Subedi, 2008; Zine, 2007 & 2008). These studies have shown that there are intensive and persistent fallacies and stereotypes about Muslims and Islam around the world. Furthermore, misconceptions about Islam as one of the fastest growing religions in the world are being often times adopted by high governmental and federal levels around the world, and sometimes these misrepresentations turn into policies that move beyond labelling and stereotypes (McAuliffe, 2007; Grieve, 2006; Said, 1981).

On a community level, lack of understanding basic elements of Muslims' daily lives may contribute to hostility against Muslim students at schools. Statistics Canada (2008) reported an alarming fact that young people, age twelve to seventeen years old, contributed to over one third of hate crimes in Canada, which is double the proportion of non-hate crimes committed by the same age group. About half of these hate crimes were attributed to race/ethnicity or religion (ibid). This age group is found in schools, which makes such places in most need for re-constructing the students' understanding of various cultures in order to facilitate tolerance and empathy. By conducting this study, I hope that it will contribute to a better understanding of Sunni Muslim students' needs, learning preferences, and the importance of home cultures. The shared knowledge provided by Muslim parents in this study could not only provide educators with an opportunity to re-evaluate school practices, but it will also provide Muslim parents with a sense of empowerment and involvement in their children's education.

In a Canadian context, various studies have explored the experiences of Muslim students and the challenges they face to avoid pressures of assimilation, and the challenges they encounter while trying to fit in the main stream culture (Berns- McGown, 1999; Hoodfar, 2003; Rezai-Rashti, 2005; Zine, 2001). These studies were primarily focusing on ethnographic research where Muslim parents and Muslim students from various ethnic backgrounds were interviewed. However, the issue of culturally responsive pedagogy, which is influenced by students' households, is rarely tackled in studies about Muslim students. Therefore, I was specifically interested in hearing the voices of Sunni Muslim parents, who are an understudied group, as representatives and transmitters of various forms of the Islamic culture.

Significance of the Study

Various interdisciplinary fields, such as psychology of minorities and counselling cultural groups, are starting to recognize the effects of social inequalities and injustices inflicted upon Muslims around the world based on the lack of knowledge about this group. Many social scientists are advocating for becoming culturally responsive to Muslims in workplaces and social work practices (Bullis, 2001; Hodge & Nadir, 2008; Irving & Barker, 2004; Nadir & Dziegielewski, 2001; Williams, 2005). However, addressing Muslims' funds of knowledge in the classroom experience as a tool to make education more comfortable to Muslim students is not considered systematically. With the number of Muslim students in Canadian public schools growing significantly, this study aims to produce knowledge, from Muslim parents as genuine cultural funds of knowledge, which educators could utilize in the process of developing strategies to create learning environments that integrates the Islamic culture in the Canadian educational and social fabric.

Additionally, the study will provide knowledge on the importance of the parents' role in their children's education, and how teachers could possibly involve, empower, and validate the experiences of parents as cultural agents in the efforts to bridge the gap between home and school. The study will also help teacher educators, pre-service, and in-service teachers to be more exposed to the dynamics of linking religious cultures to classroom pedagogies as part of culturally responsive pedagogies. This will not only contribute to the literature on establishing healthy social environments in classrooms, but will also encourage educators to consider creative ways of engaging minority students in general and Muslim students in particular within their given context and setting. Furthermore, I hope this study would contribute to shifting perceptions about the Sunni Muslim households and challenge some of the misconceptions about this growing segment of the society.

Researcher's Prior Experience

Born to a semi-conservative Palestinian Sunni Muslim family, I lived the first decade of my life in Kuwait. Upon witnessing the Gulf War, my family decided to leave Kuwait. It was an overwhelming decision for my parents since it never crossed their minds that they would leave the country in which they had all their seven children. My family drove to Jordan over two unforgettable nights in a war zone. Even though Jordan was a Middle Eastern country with a majority Muslim population who spoke the Arabic language, it was not an easy transfer to a country with a complete different socio-economic environment.

I completed my high school in Jordan, and then I travelled to the United States to obtain my bachelor degree. I went through various phases of coping and developing survival techniques. I certainly had to negotiate my multiple identities and prior experiences in order to maintain my Islamic life patterns while trying to integrate into the new society. Even though I like to believe that my experience was meant to strengthen my ability to affirm who I am, share my cultural values, and respect other forms of living styles, I was also overwhelmed by the different challenges I faced on a daily basis in the process of maintaining my cultural continuity. It was certainly not the most comfortable experience to be the only Muslim female in the university students' residence a week after September 11th, a period when confirming stereotypes about Muslims was a common reactionary tendency. Even though I received assurance from the residence advisor that I would be safe and I should feel free to report any issue of discrimination or violence, I encountered various incidents of name calling, threats, and accusations. The situation was more intensified because of wearing a headscarf, a symbol that was ambiguous to most students, administrators and faculty members.

In the United States and Canada, I was engaged in various educational capacities, such as tutoring and academically advising minority students and students with disabilities. I became familiar with two important observations. First, I paid close attention to minority youth and how they were experiencing marginalization through assimilation, activism, and forms of resilience. Second, I came to understand how fundamental and beneficial to the society it would be when education becomes equally available and comfortable to all students from various cultural backgrounds. I realized, through these observations and my formal education on minority groups, that multicultural communities are in constant need to re-evaluate the challenges faced by minority groups, address their interpretations, and search for ways to integrate them into the larger society. It was from this point that I wanted to address and hear the voices of Muslim families who are part of a group that has been suffering marginalization and lack of understanding (Akhtar, 2007).

Research Questions

As this study aimed to explore the influence of the Islamic culture on Muslim students' daily lives, the funds of knowledge that shape Muslim children's everyday experiences were examined in Muslim household settings. Therefore, the primary research question was: "How do Sunni Muslim parents describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives?". In order to make use of this knowledge, the secondary research question was designed to address how these funds of knowledge could be addressed in school. The secondary research question was: "How would Sunni Muslim parents like to see these funds of knowledge addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model?".

CHAPTER TWO: FOCUSED LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims to provide a review of the literature surrounding the topic of this thesis research and how this literature shaped the creation of the conceptual framework. As it is important for the reader of this study to be exposed to contexts of the research, this chapter starts with a description of diversity in Canada by addressing the Multiculturalism Act and how it is linked to minority education. The discussion on Afrocentric alternative school program is also put forward as a relevant issue to this review, and a section on Muslims in Canada is also addressed in this chapter. A review of the literature on minority households and education, and the role of parents in the educational process of minority students are presented. These are followed by a discussion on what the literature says about the type of communication between teachers and minority parents. Additionally, this chapter provides a segment on issues around the experiences of Muslim students in public schools. The chapter also reviews some of the theories and approaches that were developed to address various pedagogical issues that link culture to learning. A cumulative critique and rationale for choosing a specific path of a conceptual framework follows. Finally, a diagram of the conceptual framework that resulted from the previous focused literature review is provided as a guiding feature for the conduct of this study.

Contexts of the Study

Diversity in Canada

In order to situate the issue of culture and education in a Canadian context, I will briefly discuss the Multiculturalism Act as a recent feature in the journey of addressing

diversity in the Canadian governmental policies. In her discussion on the Canadian history of ethnocultural political mobilization, Kobayashi (2008) asserts, "Canadian history, like that of other settler societies, is based on a recursive relationship between the economic marginalization and social stigmatization of ethnocultural and racialized minorities and the ideological justification of the founding "nations" as dominant" (p. 133). The author here is suggesting that relying on cultural misconceptions while offering less opportunities for economic and social empowerment of minorities and cultural groups is characteristic of societies with multicultural populations. There has been a large volume of critiques to the efforts of assimilating minority groups into a Eurocentric lifestyle while repressing cultural differences in schools (Collet, 2007; Joshee, 2004; Masemann, 1979). I argue that these critiques have contributed to the development of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. The act was adopted by the Canadian parliament in July 1988, and with this, Canada became the first country in the world to pass a national multiculturalism law (Boyington, Roberts, & Kazarian, 2008).

The Multiculturalism Act (Government of Canada, 1988) was articulated in 10 items to signify the act as a policy of the Government of Canada. The items addressed four main areas that have relevance to this discussion. The first area was to declare multiculturalism as a significant feature of the identity of the Canadian society and an important element in the decision-making process at the federal level. The second area was to address the government's commitment to integrate individuals from all origins into the society and to facilitate their participation and cultural development. The third area was to promote that cultural diversity as a strength to the Canadian society where interaction among the various cultures could bring creativity and enhanced cultural understanding and awareness. The

fourth area was to declare the right of preserving and enhancing the various manifestations of the cultures in Canada, specifically the use of languages other than English and French.

Developed through various fluctuating efforts of political acknowledgement of minorities and the growing social activism that was demanding a more profound entrenchment of ethnocultural policies within the fabric of the Canadian society, the Act came in response to the growing numbers of visible minorities and immigrants coming to Canada with their own cultural values and heritages. Esses and Gardner (1996) project that by the year 2016, visible minorities will likely comprise close to 20% of Canada's adult population and 25% of children, and that the west Asian and Arab community will be the fastest growing visible minority group in the Canadian society. In the province of Ontario for instance, Statistics Canada (2006) estimates that 77% of the increase in population from the year 2001 to 2006 was due to immigration. This leaves Ontario with over half of Canada's visible minority population. It is also reported that visible minority constitute about 25% of Ontario's population (Ibid).

On a conceptual level, I argue that articulating the items of the Multiculturalism Act presented Canada's acknowledgement of cultural diversity as a positive feature that needs to be sustained in the Canadian society. On the implementation level, there have been various arguments that applications of the Act have been limited, and at times, restricted to cultural food, dances and costumes (Kobayashi, 2008; Zine, 2008). McLeod (1992) asserts that such superficial acknowledgment of cultural variations is an important stage for creating cultural awareness and accessibility, yet McLeod and Kobayashi (2008) conclude that multiculturalism in Canada needs much more profound efforts to address diversity in the domain of human rights and anti-racist policies and applications. Another critique of the Multiculturalism Act, as it relates to this study, is that the Act is administered in ways that

address ethnic and language variations and neglects religious diversity even though some cultures heavily rely on the teaching of their religions when experiencing everyday lives (Karim, 2002).

Multiculturalism and Education

McLeod (1992) identified three approaches to multicultural education. The first approach is ethnic-specific education where members of cultural groups are educated about their own heritages and languages through cultural enrichment and language retention programs. In a historical review on the development of multicultural education in Canada, Moodly (1995) reported that community and school efforts to recognize cultural variations to help students of minority preserve their ethnic heritages led to offering 'Cultural enrichment' and 'language retention' programs in the 1970's. For instance, the demand of a Chinese community to decrease the distance between school culture and home culture led to the establishment of a Chinese Canadian bilingual bicultural program where students were instructed in Chinese for a short session during the school day. Similar examples occurred in some schools that offered such programs for First Nation students and Greek students. Moodly (1995) asserted that these students generally demonstrated improvement in academic performance, self-esteem, and school attendance. However, it appeared that these programs targeted students belonging to specific cultures and did not extend the awareness to students of other backgrounds in the same school. Multiculturalism was considered an instrument to cultivate cultures as separate entities and not as a whole body of distinct cultures functioning in one society.

The second approach is the problem-oriented education, where education should be designed to acknowledge and deal with critical issues such as inclusion and racism. This

approach is witnessing a growing movement, which is currently addressing the need for developing anti-racist education (Dei, 2008; Dei & James (2002). The third approach addresses the cultural/ intercultural education where classroom pedagogies should incorporate teaching for and about the cultures of the students in the classroom. The notion of culturally responsive pedagogies, which is part of the scope of this study, fits within the boundaries of this last approach.

The debate on multiculturalism in public schools is an ongoing discourse that has presented different perspectives on the role of multiculturalism. Bruce Collet (2007) presents two sides of the debate:

Orthodox liberals view the role of public schools as striving to unify all children, regardless of their cultural affiliation, under a single national identity. While they may state that schools do have a role of teaching children to respect cultural difference in general, they steadfastly maintain that it is not the place of schools to advance a child's particular cultural identity. Multiculturalists approach view education from nearly an opposite philosophical orientation. In contrast to orthodox liberals, they see the role of public schools as actively recognizing the cultural identities of its student body, and addressing the children not just as citizens of one nation, but in terms of their identity as members of different cultural groups (p. 136).

This study relies on a stance that is situated along the range between the two sides of the argument. I have confidence that schools have capacities not only to teach children to respect cultural differences in general, but to also validate students' social variations and to affirm that home cultures are meaningful experiences that could be connected to classrooms.

Relevant Issues

In order to further present the social context surrounding this study, it would be relevant to put forth one of the most recent discussions or debates that address culture as a central component to learning in Canada, specifically in Ontario. At a special meeting of the Toronto District School Board in January 2008, trustees voted narrowly 'Yes' for the

establishment of an Afrocentric alternative school in Toronto (TDSB, 2008). An Afrocentric alternative school is, as defined in the same report, “a school open to all students, which uses the sources of knowledge and experiences of peoples of African descent as an integral feature of the teaching and learning environment” (P. 6).

The Afrocentric Alternative School came in response to the struggles and the reported feeling of alienation that Black students continually experience in Canada. Codjoe (2005), in a qualitative study that interviewed Canadian Black students, reported that they continuously suffer race discrimination, lack of representation in the curriculum, low teachers expectations, and negative stereotypes. The proposed pilot Afrocentric program offered in three schools centered on five essential goals. The first goal was to develop inclusive curriculum that addresses the histories and experiences of African people. Second, it initiated programs that would raise the expectations of Black students. The third goal attempted to re-instill values that were distorted by stereotypes and stigma attached to Black students. Fourthly, it provided teachers with professional development that offers them tools and ways to support Black students. Finally, it created links between the school and students’ homes by empowering members of the Black community and eliminating barriers to parents’ involvement in their children’s education.

Critiques to the establishment of Afrocentric Schools included two main arguments (Lund, 1998). First, an argument suggesting that such schools are bringing back the days of segregating and isolating Black students from the rest of the society. Second, Lund argues that an Afrocentric School would create another ‘centre’ model similar to the Eurocentric model that proved to lack inclusivity of other learning styles and needs, which could lead to “constructing yet another hegemonic way of teaching” (p. 192). In contrast, George Dei, who is a strong advocate for the establishment of Afrocentric Schools, contents that

“education must cultivate a sense of community and social responsibility if we are to ever meet and wrestle with the challenge and possibilities for African youth education” (2008, p. 349).

Thompson and Thompson (2008) both agree with Dei on the fact that while race is becoming more visible in Canada, racism is becoming more invisibly implemented. Both authors, however, suggest that the lack of discussion about inclusive educational systems in Canada contributed to such polarized positions of for-or-against the Afrocentric Schools. They question that if Afrocentric Schools are considered a solution for what Black students are struggling with, is this solution addressing the actual problem of marginalizing them in the first place? Ekwa-Ekoko (2008) conducted a recent qualitative exploratory research study in which she interviewed eight Black adults to examine the reaction of the Black community in Toronto towards the establishment of the Afrocentric Alternative School. The research revealed that even though these adults thought this was only a step towards empowering Black students, they were experiencing a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty about how this model would help integrate Black students into the larger community.

The recent decision to create an Afrocentric alternative schools is being addressed in this thesis for three reasons. The first reason is to reflect the idea that minority education is becoming part of the learning equation where school boards and teachers in a Canadian context are exploring and considering students’ cultures in daily learning activities. The second reason is to reflect the inevitable role of parents and the cultural community in providing elements of what shapes minority students’ realities. The third reason is to provide a contextual comparison to what Black students are encountering and what Muslim students continually face in terms of suffering negative stereotypes, feeling alienated, and witnessing lack of positive representation in the curriculum (Zine, 2001). Despite the fact that Muslim

students continue to encounter similar negative experiences as Black students and other marginalized minority students, and despite my belief that an Afrocentric School is one option that needs to be explored and evaluated at this stage, I argue that there is more work yet to be done with Muslim students and their communities to better integrate them in the Canadian public school system than to separate them from their peers. Therefore, this study attempted to enter Muslim households and gather information on how Sunni Muslim students live their reality. This knowledge might shed some light if schools decide to develop culturally responsive strategies to accommodate and incorporate the lives of these students.

Muslims in Canada

The Muslim population in Canada doubled from the year 1991 to 2001, and half of the 579,600 Muslims in Canada reside in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2001). In the year 2017, one study predicts that the number of Muslims in Canada will have increased by 160% (“North America, Canada,” n.d.). Members of the Muslim community in Canada belong to different ethnic backgrounds, mostly from South Asian and Arab descent, and the majority follows the Sunni sect (Karim, 2002). This ethnic diversity has resulted in social variations in the understanding and practice among the Muslim population (Azmi, 2001).

As with elsewhere in the United States and Canada, Muslim students comprise a growing group in the public schools system in the city of Ottawa (Nimer, 2002). Muslim students in Canada face many challenges, such as pressures to assimilate, identity dilemmas, school drop out, feelings of alienation, and the predicament of Islamophobia (Collet, 2007; Khalema & Wannas-Jones, 2003; Zine, 2001, 2006). Azmi (2001) states in his qualitative study on Muslim educational institutions in Toronto that “there has been a fairly long history of Muslim community discontent with the public schools” (p. 261). Even though racism in

Ontario schools is considered a serious obstacle to multicultural and anti-racist education (Dei & James, 2002; Richmond & Mendoza, 1990), some schools are exploring venues to help create more inclusive strategies to accommodate students of minorities. According to Collet (2007), one school in Toronto filed a report to the Toronto Board of Education in 1992 in which the lack of Muslim students' participation in school activities, including swimming and dancing music was noted. This lack of participation was due to the lack of parents' granting permission in compliance with religious teachings. The establishment of the Cultural and Religious Practices Group with the support of the Equal Opportunity Office and the Equity Studies Centre in Toronto was a responsive action to integrate and Muslim students and their community in the educational system. School staff, Muslim parents, and religious figures led the group and produced a document that outlined concerns, challenges, and issues regarding the experiences of Muslim students in public schools. It also provided recommendations to accommodate Muslim students within the horizons of the Board's policies.

In the year 2000, the Toronto District School Board issued a 72 page document entitled *Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances* (Toronto District School Board, 2000). The document outlined some of the religious practices of 11 belief systems that might require accommodations in public schools. The document was developed in consultation with Faith Group Representatives from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care. The areas of accommodations in this report included: 1) Observation of major religious holy days and celebrations, 2) School opening or closing exercises, 3) Prayer, 4) Dietary requirements, 5) Fasting, 6) Religious attire, 7) Modesty requirements in Physical Education, and 8) Participation in daily activities and curriculum. The section on the religion of Islam was the

most detailed among all the types of accommodations of other religions. Attention was given to times of daily prayers, mixing between genders, and guidelines around social interactions.

Currently, many Muslim parents in Canada enrol their children in alternative Islamic schools in order to safeguard their children's Islamic identity and lifestyle (Parker-Jenkins, 1995; Zine, 2008). However, Islamic schools in Ontario are private schools and are not funded by the government, and therefore, the majority of Muslim parents choose to send their children to receive education in public schools (Azmi, 2001; Nimer, 2002; Zine, 2008).

Minority Households and Education

Ethnographic and anthropological studies on various minority groups in the United States and Canada have shown that there was a clear tendency to rely on misconceptions, stereotypes, irrelevant generalization, and less empathetic assumptions when addressing minority households in a large portion of the literature on cultural differences and the schooling experiences of minority (Akhtar, 2007; Cross, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Moll, et al., 1992; Weinstein, Curran, Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003; Stoicovy, 2002; Zine, 2001). These studies, which followed mostly a qualitative tradition, reported that the literature on linking home culture to pedagogy has regarded minority households in Canada and the United States as deficient environments for providing cognitive and social development opportunities for their children. Diversity within each cultural group was also neglected, and Eurocentric models of learning were regarded as superior to other cultural models and practices.

Similarly, various sociological and educational studies that conducted interviews among Muslim students, Muslim parents, and Muslim community leaders reported that the studies on Muslims living in the West has alienated Muslim households and did not consider the dynamics and the influence of the Islamic culture at home when addressing challenges

faced by Muslim students in public schools (Akhtar, 2007; Azmi, 2001; Daun, & Arjmand, 2005; McCreery, Jones, & Holmes, 2007; Zine, 2001, 2008). Such neglect created an assumption that Muslim households were not fully equipped to prepare students for the schooling experience. This assumption was affirmed when there was a lack of Muslim parents' involvement in their children's education coupled with a withdrawal from some of public schools' activities for religious reasons (Collet, 2007; Merry, 2005).

Anthropological research, mainly ethnographic studies, on the role of culture in the lives of minority students started a new wave of starting to consider the importance of often neglected aspects of the students' daily experiences; their cultures. Consequently, incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into teaching as a pedagogical approach has been occupying a growing segment in social science and educational research. Scholars and researchers, who happened to be teachers sometimes, have coined various terms and theories about responding to cultures while teaching. Their studies have focused on specific cultural groups, such as Black students, Aboriginal students, Chinese students, Muslim students, and Native Hawaiian students (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Gay 2000, Ladson-Billings, 1992; Lee, Rosenfeld, Mendenhall, Rivers, & Tynes, 2004; Jordan, 1985; Nielsen, Nicol, & Owuor, 2008; Qin, 2006; Snow, 1997; Villegas, 1991; Zine 2001). These studies have shown that students' academic performance and social experiences are enhanced when they receive teaching that utilizes aspects of their home culture. Dei (1995), and Madsen and Mabokela (2005) report that when teachers employ neutral and color-blind pedagogies with all students regardless of their cultural perspectives, students tend to withdraw from the educational process; and learning becomes a tool, or a force, to assimilate immigrant students and students of minority into the mainstream culture. Dei (2002) goes further to describe exclusionary education as a continuum that could range from racial segregation to color-

blind pedagogies. The former perceives race as an undesirable element that does not fit into the mainstream culture while the latter disregards students' realities that are shaped by their cultural identities and individual differences.

The Role of Parents

Over the last two decades, various qualitative sociological research studies on the home cultures of minority households in Canada and the United States showed that the role of parents, as representatives and reinforcing agents of funds of knowledge, is the most significant factor in shaping minority students' identities and social experiences (Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008; Dworn, 2006; Joshi, Eberly, & Konzal, 2005; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Villegas, 1991; Zine, 2001). Assimilation into the mainstream culture is one of the major fears that minority parents face when living in the West. Tutwiler (1998), in her work on home-school relationships, elaborates by stating that "assimilation dilemma becomes an issue for ethnic/cultural groups for whom particular religious teaching is part of an ethnic/cultural group identity, because mainstream assimilation may lead to changes in religious beliefs and practices as well" (p. 54).

A growing body of literature on multicultural professional development for educators has called for establishing partnerships between schools and minority households with more attention given to the cultural narratives provided by the parents in order to obtain an authentic capture of the cultural experiences of these students (Lee, Spencer, et al., 2003; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Weinstein, et al., 2003). González et al. (2005) reported that parents are usually willing to share their cultural heritages and experiences with teachers when they feel there is a genuine interest in learning more about their culture to later incorporate it into classrooms' daily pedagogies. On the other hand, Sandel (1998) reported

on a review of 66 studies related to how students succeed in school. The review revealed that when parents are involved in their children's schooling experience; their children tend to achieve at least one of the following: higher grades, reduced placement in special education or remedial classes, higher graduation rates, and higher enrolment in post secondary education.

Ethnographic research has revealed a clear centrality of the religion of Islam in the lives of Muslim households and practicing Muslim youth specifically (Beshir & Beshir, 2000; Hodge & Nadir, 2008; McAuliffe, 2007; McCreery, et al., 2007; Merry, 2005). Research on cultural awareness in the fields of social science and humanities also suggests that educators and the Western society tend to neglect this centrality of the Islam in the lives of Muslim students, and this tendency is attributed to the unfamiliarity with the Islamic culture, fear of terrorism influenced by the media, and a general refusal to see any religious paradigm given a public role in a secular society (Akhtar, 2007; Espesito, 1995; McCreery, et al., 2007).

Muslim parents living in the West play an indispensable role in instilling cultural values and norms in their children's daily lives (Hoot, Szecsi, & Moosa, 2003), and Muslim children are expected to honour their parents' teaching and advice for the high status Islam gives to parents (Beshir & Beshir, 2000; Bemat, 1985). Comparing to other minority groups, Hoodfar (2003) asserts that "parental fears concerning drinking, sexual activity and possible pregnancy are even more pronounced among Muslim parents" (p. 18). As mentioned in the rationale for this study, this present research responded to the need for addressing Muslim parents when trying to understand minority students, and to provide these parents with an opportunity to voice their interpretation of the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives.

Teacher-Parent Communications

Educational qualitative studies done on the relationship between minority households and public schools have also shown that there are barriers between minority parents and public school teachers. The literature suggests that these barriers stem from four roots (Hanhan, 1998; Joshi, et al., 2005; Merry, 2005). The first was the disparity between teachers and minority parents in their cultural knowledge and language. The second root is the general observation that teachers tend to feel less comfortable when discussing religious issues with parents. The third root stemmed from the limited opportunities for informal meetings between teachers and parents to learn more about their culture in a more relaxed environment. Finally, the fourth root was due to the different understanding of teacher role versus parent role in the child's education. In cultures that emphasize individuality, like in the Western culture, parents tend to attribute their involvement in their children's education, such as attending parents' meetings and helping their children with homework, as one important element in their children's success at school. However, cultures that emphasize a collectivist paradigm, like in the Middle East for example, tend to believe that their role is mainly to instil respect to education and educators, and that interfering in the daily educational process at school might be understood as a form of illegitimate interference and lack of trust. Parents from some cultural backgrounds also tend to believe that success at school should be mainly inspired and instilled by teachers at school (Ernestine & Bair, 2002; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001).

The lack of communication between teachers and Muslim parents has resulted in a considerable lack of knowledge on various aspects of Muslim students' daily lives (Hoot, et al., 2003). Even though Muslim parents have high academic expectations of their children (Merry, 2005), the challenges faced by their children represent critical obstacles to doing

well in school. Studies have called for the necessity of having parents address these obstacles with teachers (Beshir & Beshir, 2000). Hoot et al. (2003) report that Muslim parents are usually enthusiastic to share their knowledge about Islam with their children's educators through welcoming them to visit Muslim households or worship places.

In her work on parental involvement in schools, Elizabeth Sandel (1998) provided ways to involve parents and methods to evaluate such involvement in schools from a practitioner point of view. A clear feature of the research was the importance of knowing and learning about the families of the students in order to help them engage in the schools, and to help educators understand the needs and strengths of their students. Recruiting parents to volunteer at schools, allowing them to be part of the decision making process, and offering community services and skill development courses were all among the strategies to break the barriers between school and parents. When addressing minority parents, Sandel considered visiting their homes and talking to the parents on a personal level as highly recommended ways for learning about the cultural backgrounds of the students.

Muslim students in public schools

One of the main purposes of this study is to try to understand the dynamics and the influence of the Islamic culture on Muslim households as key forces for shaping their realities and cultural experiences. To do so, it is imperative to explore the daily challenges faced by Muslim students in public schools and be able to link these challenges with what the parents want educators to know in order to help Muslim students manage these circumstances.

Au (2001) provides a description of the dilemma that minority students face upon entering the schooling experience:

For all children, schooling by its very nature involves a break with the family and the familiar. But for children of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, schooling brings an immersion into a world not just unfamiliar but uncomfortable, in which rules governing participation may be in conflict with cultural values (conclusion).

For Muslim children, this uncomfortable experience becomes more complicated in the presence of negative presumptions about Muslims in the West (Esposito, 1995).

Ethnographic research and case studies based on Muslim students' narratives in North America incontestably show that Muslim students encounter identity dilemmas, pressures to assimilate into the mainstream culture, persistent incidents of racism, feelings of alienation, predicaments of Islamophobia mostly created by biased media, low academic expectations, little or no reference to the Islamic heritage in the curriculum, and finally, the urge to drop out of school (Collet, 2007; De Souza, 2008; Khalema & Wannas-Jones, 2005; Mastrilli & Sardo-Brown, 2002; Schmidt, 2004)

In a Canadian context, Jasmin Zine (2001) addressed a noticeable gap in the literature, which was the limited discussion on the intersection of religious identities and other aspects of Muslim students' daily lives, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity. She analyzed ethnographic case studies on ten Muslim students and their parents. The analysis examined Muslim students' high school and university experiences, and attention was given to the process of negotiating their multiple identities to maintain their Islamic lifestyle in a secular environment. Zine identified three fundamental multilayer zones in which Muslim students' negotiation process took place, their ethnic culture, the mainstream culture, and the religion of Islam. The findings suggested that Muslim students "were using their multiple identities as means of resistance to counteract their marginality within secular Eurocentric schools" (p. 401).

Gender in the Islamic culture tends to be receiving a larger volume of attention on the public and social levels, and more recently, on the political level (Akhtar, 2007). Muslim females have been surrounded by negative and distorted perceptions constructed through colonial images and symbols of oppression (Zine, 2001). Rezai-Rashti (2005) reports on findings from focus group sessions that she conducted with 12 Muslim females, aged 16-18 years old, to talk about their experiences in public schools. The findings revealed that they experienced pressures to assimilate and struggled to construct their identity. Based on her experience as an educator in some Canadian schools, Rezai-Rashti in the same study reports on her observations that teachers' and administrators' interaction with Muslim female students was mostly based on misconceptions and stereotypes. She asserts, "Muslim girls who wear the veil are automatically considered passive and oppressed and educators often seem to hold the views that these girls have been forced by their oppressive parents to wear the veil". The young females also reported that when conflicts were raised between them and their parents, teachers and counsellors attributed the conflicts to issues related to cultural difference as opposed to possible teenage identity differences or communication deficiencies.

Such a generic assumption lacked further investigation in the lives of these students, and in some cases, resulted in advising the females to abandon their families and leave their homes. Rezai-Rashti contends that educators failed to situate these struggles in the dynamics and intersections of Muslim students' multiple identities. On the other hand, Hoodfar (2003) provides a discussion based on interviews conducted with 59 veiled Muslim females from various age groups to talk about their experiences with the veil. Most of the interviewed young females reported that their parents became overprotective as they reached the age of puberty. Their parents also placed restrictions on going out with friends and participating in social activities. Hoodfar suggests that the females in the study wore the veil as an adaptive

strategy to show their parents and the community that they could sustain their commitment towards the Islamic culture and religious principles despite their involvement in a society to which parents feared their children's cultural continuity might be interrupted.

The practice of *Hijab*, wearing headscarf for Muslim females, is becoming more visible in Canadian educational institutes. Hence, Muslim females face another layer of visible social differences, compared to Muslim males, which has been an issue of controversy over the last decades (McAuliffe, 2007). The debate that took place in Quebec in regards to banning the headscarf in public schools caused a serious concern to the Muslim community in Canada (McDonough, 2003). One of the arguments that was put forward by the supporters of the ban was that the headscarf could be an obstacle to fully integrate young Muslim females (Ibid). Hoodfar (2003) asserts "It is not the veil or Islam that has prevented the Muslim community from being fully integrated into Canadian society; rather, it is, to a significant degree, the colonial image of Muslims and the veil, along with the continuous demonizing of Islam, that has proved a major obstacle to such integration" (p. 39). Qualitative studies that address the experiences of Muslim females suggest that the issue of Hijab continues to face arguments that largely rely on misconceptions, lack of understanding, and denying the element of agency of these Muslim females (Hoodfar, 2003; Rezai-Rashti, 2005).

Connecting Culture to Pedagogy

Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales (1992) introduced the concept of *funds of knowledge* in their study on Mexican-American households. The study was conducted by researchers and teachers of the children at school. What was interesting in this study was that the teachers entered the children's homes to identify and document bodies of knowledge that

influenced the daily lives of these children, and not to communicate with the parents in regards to the progress of their children. Based on an ethnographic study that implemented qualitative interviews with the parents, the researchers regarded the bodies of knowledge and resources available in each home as key contextual learning environments. These environments provided the teachers with a wealth of knowledge on what each family regarded as important, and how communications and utilization of resources were accomplished within the individual household and the larger community. In congruence with this knowledge, the teachers in the study were able to develop classroom learning modules that were tailored to address what was familiar to the children in their households. This process allowed students to feel more engaged in the learning modules, and resulted in improving their academic achievement and self esteem. Another outcome was when parents were allowed to take on a collaborative role as equal partners with the teachers in their children's education, parents felt their experiences were validated and respected. They also felt empowered and capable of being involved in their children's education (Cirney, 2009).

Religion, household relationships, kinship as related to extended family members, relationships with the larger community, and contribution of cultural institutions towards cultivating social identities are all considered funds of knowledge that have an impact on minority students' everyday experiences (Gonzales & Moll, 2005; Moll, & Greenberg, 1990; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). On a linguistic level, Dworin (2006), in his discourse analysis on improving language skills in a bilingual class (English and Spanish), suggested that minority students' funds of knowledge could be essential for schools to utilize and incorporate in order to make learning how to write more meaningful and applicable to students' realities.

Erickson and Mohatt (1981) developed a framework of *culturally congruent instruction*. One of the key methods through which this framework called teachers to accommodate and improve the academic performance of Native American students was the insertion of home language into instructional practices. First language, as a product of a student's culture and accumulated knowledge, was perceived as an essential component in the learning acquisition process. In a similar vein, Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp (1987) suggested using *culturally compatible instruction* as a way to "match the practice with the culture" (p. 279) through modifications to the classroom organization, motivational management, and instructional practices according to the Native Hawaiian culture.

Culturally relevant teaching, a term coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), means inserting aspects of the cultural backgrounds of the students in the organization and instruction of the classroom. She believes that this type of teaching should be incorporated in the way teachers perceive their own culture and others' cultures, the way they run the class in terms of social interactions, and their perceptions about knowledge (1992). Ladson-Billings believes that teachers see themselves as members of the community and that teaching is a role to give back to the community. She also states that the community is a significant resource of cultural knowledge that teachers should utilize to learn about their students. Ladson-Billings sees culturally relevant teaching as a tool to empower minority students while recognizing that the pedagogy for producing empowered students must be reciprocal interaction-oriented as opposed to transmission-oriented, where students are given decision-making opportunities. According to Ladson-Billings, culturally relevant teaching perceives knowledge as continuously recreated, recycled and shared which results in improving black student's academic success, socio-cultural success, and parent and student satisfaction.

In her book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, & Practice* (2000), Gena Gay advocates for *culturally responsive teaching*. Based on a number of qualitative studies she conducted on students of color in public classrooms, she provides six characteristics that portray the essence of this type of teaching. First, Gay sees culturally responsive teaching as *validating* in that it teaches “to and through the strengths of students” (p. 29). It validates the authenticity of the cultural values pertaining to different ethnic groups, and it also validates the multiple identities that students can develop in school and at home by bridging the gap between schools and parents. The second characteristic is the *comprehensiveness* of culturally responsive teaching where it extends student’s developmental opportunities beyond academic achievement to creating a sense of community, skills enhancement, and positive social attitudes. Gay also sees culturally responsive teaching as *multidimensional* in that it could address one cultural topic from different dimensions, and how it is perceived by other groups of people. Agreeing with Ladson-Billings (1992) Gay considers culturally responsive teaching as *empowering* as it enhances students’ confidence level of who they are and their ability to succeed regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Another characteristic of culturally responsive teaching, according to Gay, is that it is *transformative*. This type of teaching has a revolutionary nature where educators bring creative practices and engagement strategies in order to change the traditional methods of teaching. Finally, Gay sees culturally responsive teaching as *emancipatory* where it provides access to other versions of realities and authentic cultural resources that are not restricted or designed by the mainstream culture.

In an approach that addressed reciprocal cultural knowledge transfer between teachers and parents, David Bensman (1999) proposed the notion of *Cultural Interchange* as “a process by which members of groups with different traditions, values, beliefs, and

experiences gain a greater degree of mutual understanding” (p. iii). Bensman conducted ethnographic case studies that examined the type of communications among three minority students, their families, and their teachers in a low-income American neighbourhood that was predominantly for Hispanic and African American residents. Attention was given to communications where students inserted their cultural perspectives into learning and socializing events. The teachers’ own cultural paradigms and how they were used in the communications with the students and their parents were also examined. Visits to the students’ homes were conducted to capture natural settings of each household and to learn more about the cultural everyday practices and how that related to perceptions about education.

Bensman (1999) reported that the process of cultural interchange was conducted through various techniques. First, schools provided support to the parents by offering skills development courses. Some teachers visited parents to learn more about their cultural backgrounds. This made parents feel welcomed and supported by the school. Second, teachers tried to build trust relationships with the parents by communicating with them formally and informally during teacher-parent meetings, lunches, and trips. Third, the teachers made deliberate efforts to identify commonalities and differences between themselves and the parents. This aided in helping both the teachers and the parents to know each other as people who have mutual respect for each other’s values and perspectives. These techniques made the students feel comfortable to bring in their home experiences and values to the classroom without the fear of being perceived as strange, unwelcomed, or misunderstood. The students also felt that there was a value for what shaped their lives at home, and that home and school could be connected in a meaningful way. The study reported that the process of cultural interchange was not facilitated in the same manner for all parents.

Bensman noticed that barriers between minority parents and teachers were not always easy to break due to fear of revealing immigration status, language barriers, and fear of being misunderstood.

Carol Lee's approach of *Cultural Modeling* was another strategy to connect students' home culture, prior formal and informal learning experiences, and classroom practices in a way that would create a hybrid culture in the classroom (Lee, 2001). This hybrid culture was created by deliberately identifying and utilizing the complexities that African American students brought into the classroom from their homes and communities while reflecting how their knowledge is historically and practically constructed. The creation of this hybrid culture, as suggested in this approach, is done through the constant socialization among three dimensions, family and community practices, academic disciplines, and classroom practices. It was noted that narrative was one key literacy medium that African American students were most comfortable with. Accordingly, the framework employed narrative analysis to understand the various culturally specific dimensions that the students used in their narratives. The approach framework gave a special focus on "repositioning language and community-based practices, which had been viewed as deficits, to be seen as sites of complex reasoning applicable to particular tasks in academic subject-matter learning" (Lee et al, 2003, p. 7). Attention was given to body language, gestures, language tone, and cultural referents. Accordingly, researchers were able to design classroom practices, problem solving activities, and participation structures that connected with the students' knowledge and analysis techniques (Lee, Rosenfeld, Mendenhall, Rivers, & Tynes, 2004). The findings revealed that learning was facilitated when teachers used phrases and styles of learning used at home. It was also reported that these new instructional designs, which provided cultural prompts aligned with students' cultural background, made African American students much

more engaged and comfortable in their classrooms, and it also allowed them to produce higher quality written narratives.

More recently, Siwatu (2009) developed the *Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-efficacy Scale* (CRTSE), which includes a list of competencies that reflect the knowledge and skills essential for culturally responsive teaching. These competencies addressed efforts to minimize the mismatch between the school culture and the home culture “by using the students’ cultural backgrounds to make learning more meaningful to them” (Siwatu, 2007, p. 1093). Key competencies that relate to this thesis researcher are: 1) Constant communications with the parents of minority students and administering less intimidating parents-conferences, where the teacher is not at the centre of the communication, 2) The ability to insert students’ first languages into classroom activities 3) The ability to address the cultural heritage and cultural contribution of student’s ethnic backgrounds.

Rationale for the Conceptual Framework

Cultural responsiveness could be one of the most challenging tasks for public schools (Andrews, 2005; Bauer & Kroeger, 2004; Nielsen et al., Nicol, & Owuor, 2008). The challenge, based on the previously cited literature, is due to the fact that there are no specific guidelines for how to best link home culture to education and classroom practices. Nevertheless, there are three clear elements to initiate a successful connection between home culture and classroom pedagogies. First, all the literature delineated above made it explicit that in order for education to become meaningful, accessible and engaging, it has to give special attention and value to students’ cultural backgrounds and explicitly make reference to them in classroom pedagogies. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) go further to claim that

ignoring students' cultural backgrounds could contribute to depriving them from the very basic right of receiving an equal education opportunity.

Second, this same literature addressed common teacher characteristics that linked home culture to the schooling experience. Common characteristics were the continuous self-evaluation of perceptions regarding the various cultures and ethnicities, the willingness to move beyond "a thin and single- stranded relationship with the students" (Moll et al, 1992, p. 134), and finally, the understanding that students' communities are valuable resources in the process of understanding the students themselves.

Third, the literature also supports the notion that once culture becomes an important element in the process of engaging minority students, it becomes inevitable to have closer communications with the parents in their households and communities. It was also noted that showing respect to parents' cultural backgrounds and beliefs could be a key strategy to initiate the communication. This study will further address the discussion in some of the literature on the role of parents in students' perceptions and daily practices.

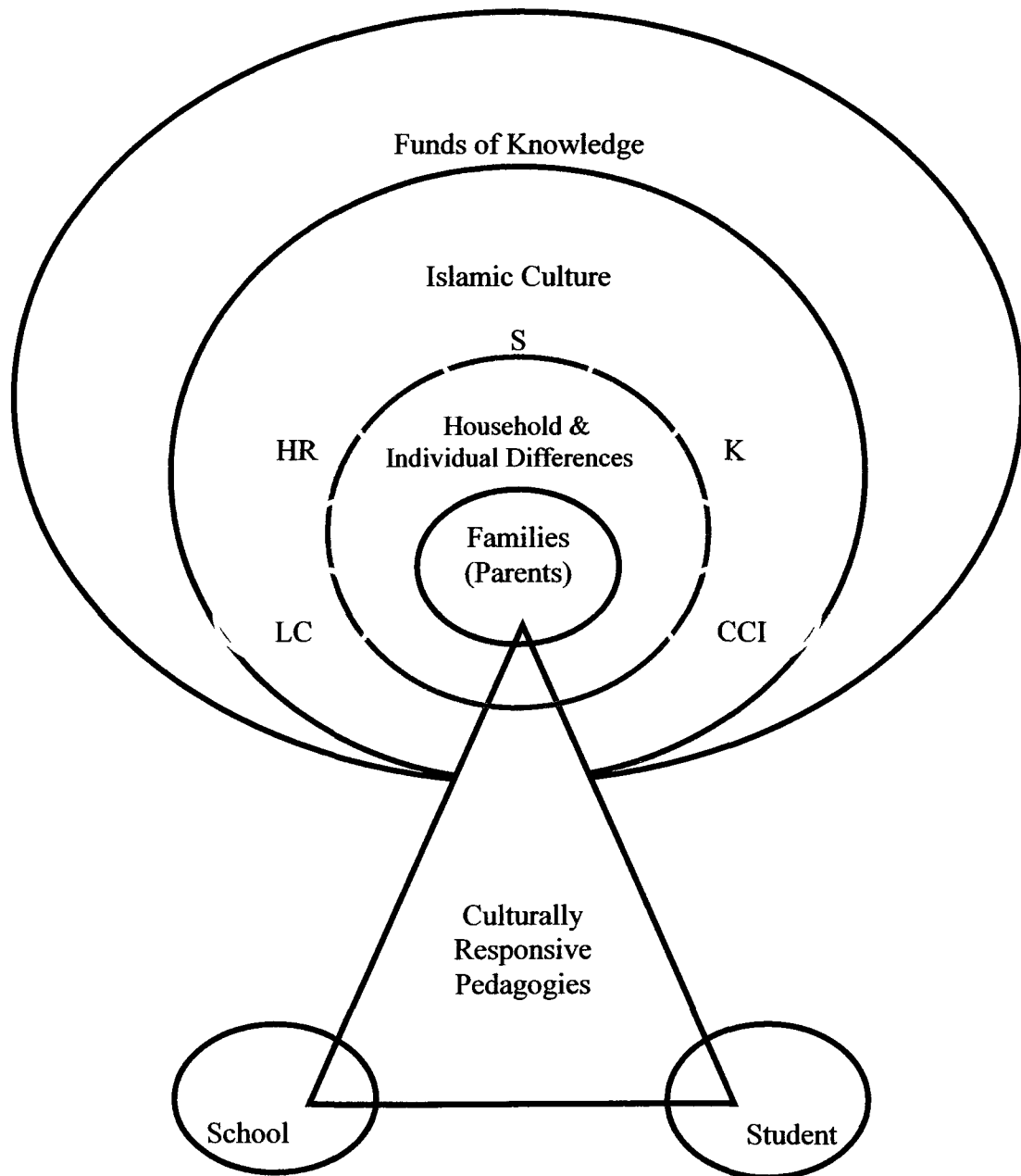
The notion of funds of knowledge and the framework of culturally responsive pedagogies will be used in the remaining sections of this research. Funds of knowledge are anything that could influence students' thinking, perceptions and experiences. These bodies of knowledge are what should be captured before any implementation or instructional designs aimed for utilizing such funds of knowledge. This study focused on knowledge as described by Sunni Muslim parents. Accordingly, the study aimed to provide new information that could be beneficial for potential instructional designs and classroom activities that would engage Muslim students.

Addressing the link between cultural background and education as perceived by the interviewed parents, and not teachers, will be referred to by using the term *culturally*

responsive pedagogical models. ‘Responsiveness’ indicates mutual accommodation and an ongoing modification of the instruction based on the evolving nature of the students’ cultural perspectives as opposed to ‘congruence’, which has an unrealistic connotation of exact matching between classroom and household. On the other hand, ‘relevance’ and ‘appropriate’ in culturally relevant teaching and culturally appropriate teaching might indicate shallow attempts to understand students’ cultural backgrounds and do not indicate an understanding that should be mobilized and process-oriented.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Parents as transmitters of cultural funds of knowledge in a cultural responsive pedagogical model.



As delineated in the literature review, research on education in multicultural environments call for constant interactions between schools and minority households in order to become more responsive to the various cultural lifestyles. Figure 1 illustrates the lines of communications among three of the most important elements in the schooling experience of minority students into a type of culturally responsive pedagogical model.

Figure 1 also shows that household funds of knowledge play a significant role in the model. The most fundamental funds of knowledge in Muslim households is the Islamic culture, which is represented in a sphere surrounding the five elements that reflect the influence of the Islamic culture in the households. These elements are: 1) Household relationships (HR), which address the relationships and interactions among parents and their children, 2) Spirituality (S) as a set of beliefs and rituals, 3) Kinship (K) as related to extended family, who may also be living outside of Canada, 4) Relationship with the larger community (LC), and 5) Contributions of cultural institutions (CCI) towards cultivating social identities. Cultural institutions could be a mosque, a Sunday school for teaching another language, a community centre for members of a specific ethnic background, or a private daily school.

Because of the significant role of parents as transmitters of cultural funds of knowledge and important resources for learning about minority students' daily lives, this study was concerned about how Muslim parents interpreted the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's funds of knowledge as the latter shape the cultural experiences of Sunni Muslim children's daily lives. Hence, my primary research question was "How do Sunni Muslim parents describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives?"

Since this study addressed the notion of culturally responsive pedagogies as drawn from the literature on the significance of linking culture to classrooms, my secondary

research question was “How would Sunni Muslim parents like to see these funds of knowledge addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model?”. This study acknowledged that the answer to this research question was addressed from the parents’ points of view, and it might not be relevant or applicable in some public schools. It is an important first attempt to give Muslim parents an opportunity to voice their perspectives and views on how to become culturally responsive to their children. These perspectives could be valuable feedback to educators in the domain of multicultural education.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This section addresses the methods that were chosen for the current study. A description of the study design is first provided. Also, a section is designated to describe the relationship among the researcher, the research, and the researched. The participants' recruitment process is then explained. The methods chosen for data collection were also described, and a description of the measures taken for validation is provided. The chapter ends with a discussion on the strategies used for data analysis.

Study Design

Overview

Creswell (2003), Mason (1996) and Stake (1995) suggest that study design should be derived from the rationale of choosing the topic, the significance of the study, and how the researcher would like to address the research questions. Therefore, my research relies on Muslim parents' views and the subjective description of the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives. This evolving and emergent nature of the study was congruent with the characteristics of a qualitative study that employs a constructivist paradigm, where I tried to understand how Muslim households construct their realities based on the influence of the Islamic culture (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). Shkedi (2005) contends that "qualitative research posits that the most powerful way to understand human beings is to watch, talk, listen and participate with them in their own natural settings" (p. 7). Therefore, interviewing Muslim parents, from various ethnic backgrounds, in their households was the data collection strategy where I aimed to capture aspects of the Islamic culture in a more naturalistic setting. The physical surrounding of the households was also described. Each Muslim household represented a case study, and a collection of five case studies was

analyzed according to Stake's *Multiple Case Study Analysis* (2006) and Nvivo software concurrently.

A Multiple Case Study

Stake (1995) defines a case study as “a study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, and coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). An instrumental case study extended to several cases constitutes multiple case studies (Stake, 2005). According to Stake (2006), multiple case studies should have a ‘quintain’, which is a concept, a category, or an idea that binds the various cases together. Stake asserts, “multicase research starts with the quintain. To understand it better, we study some of its single cases, its sites or manifestations. But it is the quintain we seek to understand. We study what is similar and different about the cases in order to understand the quintain better” (p. 6). The quintain of this study was the influence of the Islamic culture on Muslim children's daily lives. This approach suggests that each case should be described as part of the research process, and it had to be explored to show how parents in these households described the influence of Islamic culture on their children's daily lives. Stake (2006) contends that multiple case studies usually produce a large amount of data and it requires the researcher to have high organization skills to categorize the data properly. He also suggests that it is better sometimes to have only one person working on the data because it will not be beneficial to defragment the work among many researchers. However, Stake suggests that more than one reviewer should critique the work and ensure that findings are properly based on the gathered data. This issue will be addressed in the section on trustworthiness.

Relationship to the Research and the Researched

Ladson-Billings (2005) suggests that researchers from minority groups should tackle the tensions within and around their cultural communities, and should try to understand the underpinning issues of their cultural experiences in a Western society. Young (2001) also addressed the need for researchers from minority groups to bring in the voice of the marginalized. Reflexivity, defined as a “self-discovery journey” (Banister, 1999), is also addressed in the discussion on the role of the researcher as a member of the studied group. As a member of the Sunni Muslim community, I wanted to engage in a process through which I could utilize my cultural membership and my skills to understand and solicit interpretations from other members of the same community, which is a growing segment of the society that happens to be misrepresented.

Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Parker (2005) contend that a researcher’s self-disclosure could contribute to the success of an interview through creating a higher level of rapport and willingness to talk about personal details. Accordingly, my prior experience that was addressed in the first chapter of this thesis was shared with all participants to create a level of rapport and mutual ability to share information on our cultures. In their reflective discussion about “doing research on the researcher” (p. 60), Acker and Feuerverger (2003) talked about the emerging development of the interdependent themes of empathy and emotions as they interviewed participants from their professional community. The authors reported that they were most empathetic and able to identify with individuals who were in the same academic field and with those who had similar life experiences to those of the researchers. Empathy was defined as “the quality of being able imaginatively to project oneself into the situation of another individual: to walk in their shoes and thus understand their motivations, actions and emotions in greater depth than is usual” (p. 51). The authors also addressed the emotions that

they developed as responses to the accounts and stories of the participants. Similarly, developing a sense of empathy and passion towards the participants and their accounts was not difficult to achieve as I shared cultural membership with the participants and spoke Arabic, which was the same first language used in some of the participating households. I mostly identified with those who had similar life experiences to mine. For example, one of the parents lived in three of the countries I lived in during almost the same timelines. He witnessed the Gulf War and he also moved to the United States after he completed high school in Jordan. Another participant described his experience of not being able to speak proper English when he moved to Canada, an experience I had gone through upon moving to the United States. Also, one of the female participants shared with me constant attempts to develop professionally in her field while trying to create an Islamic environment in her household. Overall, I was able to imagine and reflect on my own prior experience of immigration, being marginalized, and efforts to sustain my cultural continuity.

It was clear that the participants felt I was able to relate to them to a great extent. This was evident as they were all consciously engaged in the conversation and tried to expand more on their interpretations of their realities as individuals and as families by providing different examples and stories. I did not feel they were holding back information, nor did they try to be limited with the examples they provided. Furthermore, I felt the families trusted my role as a researcher to reflect their voices and their children's needs to the academic community. In one case, the parents told their children about the purpose of my research, and one of the children asked the parents if she could send me an e-mail with her thoughts. The parents allowed this communication and were supportive of it. All the parents related to me the need for such research, and they also shared their reflections on how being

part of the conversation on their homes' funds of knowledge helped them evaluate and articulate their daily experiences.

I perceive my membership of the Sunni Muslim community as strength to this study. In her discussion about advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality, Chavez (2008) asserts as she draws from researching her own family, "Insiders can understand the cognitive, emotional, and/or psychological precepts of participants as well as possess a more profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field" (p. 481). Macintosh (1997) and Ladson-Billings (2005) also contend that belonging to a minority group facilitates noticing social inequalities. My membership of the Sunni Muslim community, along with being socially and professionally involved in the larger non-Muslim community, allowed observations of injustices inflicted upon minority groups in general, and upon Muslims in specific. For example, throughout my work experience in the United States, I witnessed prejudice exerted with Asian students and students from Hispanic heritages on the social and policy levels. My close interactions with Muslim students, in the United States and in Canada, has also allowed me to hear their recurrent experiences with discrimination on a daily basis as students in classrooms and as they tried to apply for jobs.

Also, being a mother who is aware of the challenges that will be facing my son when he enters the space of public education, I was able to relate closely to the concerns, worries, and challenges that some of the parents shared with me as they were constantly trying to balance their children's experiences as Muslims and being active members in the larger society. Relating to the culture, the experience of motherhood, and the familiarity with the language that was used by the studied group contributed to establishing a level of rapport and reflected a genuine interest in learning from the participants about their daily lives.

On the other hand, sharing my cultural background with the participants might have been a factor in the unsaid during the interview sessions. As Rapley (2004) suggests, interviewing members of the same culture might not allow the researcher to ask questions about simple issues within the culture, or the participants might not elaborate on what they think is already known by the researcher. This assumption, according to Chavez (2008), is considered one of the challenges of being an insider of the researched community. The unsaid could have been issues or topics that were considered understood since I was an insider who was familiar with the fundamental concepts of the Islamic culture. The unsaid could have also been reflections about issues that are usually avoided in the Islamic culture, such as drinking alcohol, drugs, dating, and pre-marital sex, which are topics that cause anxiety and fear among Muslim parents (Hoodfar, 2003). The participants could have avoided explaining how they deal with conflicts and tensions with such issues as they might have assumed that I was familiar with such topics.

Participants Recruitment

The site that was chosen for recruiting participants was one of the largest mosques that served the Sunni Muslim community in Ottawa. The construction of the mosque began in 1970 and finished in 1975 with the majority of the work being done by volunteers from the Muslim community. It now has a capacity of five hundred people. In the middle of a residence area, this mosque participates in various programs open to the public where non-Muslims are invited to learn about the Islamic culture and have access to the prayer halls to observe the daily prayers. The halls of the mosque are simple with no furniture, statues, or paintings on the walls. It is believed that this would aid in focusing on drawing closer to *Allah* during the prayer or while listening to a religious talk. The selected mosque was not

considered only a place of worship; it also offered various activities and services to Muslim families in Ottawa throughout the week, such as Sunday Islamic School, lectures on various topics including lessons marriage and household relationships, funeral services, and library services. Friday is considered the Muslim holy day, and Friday prayer is a highly important weekly gathering for Muslims (Grieve, 2006; Robinson, 1999). The selected mosque receives hundreds of people every Friday. Attendees of this specific mosque represented Muslims from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, such as Arab, South Asian, East Asian, and Anglo Saxon. Mosques usually have separate prayer halls for males and females due to the Islamic tradition of trying to minimize mixing of the opposite genders in the same place, specifically during worship. The mosque was requested to allow site access for recruitment of participants to take place in the mosque facility. "A call for participant's" flyer was posted in the prayer halls for four weeks in both the males' prayer hall and the females' prayer hall.

Participation Criteria

Three criteria were used to select participants. First, the parents needed to have at least one female child and one male child in the K-12 public school system. This criterion was decided on to ensure representing any variation in the influence of the Islamic culture on children of both genders. The second criterion was that both parents in each household needed to accept to be interviewed together in their home. This criterion was used to represent the variation of each gender's interpretations and views about reality in their households. The third criterion was that the examined households were chosen to reflect diversity among Muslims in terms of ethnicity, education, length of residence in Canada, and home spoken language. Eight families were interested in participating in the study. However,

only five families met all the criteria. Even though one of these families had only one male child in public school, I still decided to interview the family because they were representing a large community of their ethnic background. The families that were selected were originally from Pakistan, Tunisia, Egypt, Somalia, and one family of a Palestinian father and a Canadian mother. The five families were contacted and requested to sign a consent form (Appendix A) that further described the study and the participants' role.

Data Collection Instrument

Two sources of data collection were used in this study, face-to-face interviews and observations. Fontana and Frey (2005) define interviews as "creating a contextually bound and mutually created story" (p. 696). Tierney and Dilley (2001) listed four purposes of interviews. The purpose of the interviews in this study fell under the category of "to understand the social context of learning" (p.455), and that to understand the influence of the Islamic culture as a context that has a major impact on Muslim students. To support the data collected through interviews, each household was described using an observation checklist (Appendix B) adapted from Creswell (2007). These observations occurred during the interviewing process. The checklist directed observations in a more systematic manner to ensure reliability and reflection of tangible evidence of the influence of the Islamic culture on different households. These methods were used because of the lack of literature on social contexts in households when addressing minority children (Lee, Spencer, & Harpalani, 2003; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003).

Appendix C is the Biographical Questionnaire that I used to introduce the study to the participants and answer their questions. I first introduced myself as a researcher and as a member of the Muslim community. I also provided the participants with an overview of my

ethnic background, education, and my experience in living in the Middle East and in North America. This was done following the suggestion of Fontana and Frey (2005) for using an “empathetic approach” in interviewing cultural groups. The approach implies removing barriers between the researcher and the interviewee in order to establish rapport and a foundation of trust between the researcher and the participant.

Open-ended interview questions (Appendix D) were formulated to answer the primary and secondary research questions, and they were developed based on the elements addressed in the conceptual framework. For the primary research question, six interview questions were asked to address how Muslim parents describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their children’s daily lives. This set of interview questions tackled the issues of spirituality and rituals, household relationships, kinship relationships, relationship with the larger community, and contribution of cultural institutions. For the secondary research question, three interview questions were asked to address how Muslim parents would like to see these funds of knowledge addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model. According to Stake (2006), themes are what the researcher would like to understand and investigate, and they also help in directing the analysis of the case studies. Hence, themes were derived from the interview questions. Accordingly, Appendix E represents the initial themes and the interview question to which each of themes corresponded. Other emergent themes were added once they were recognized during data collection. Each interview session lasted between forty five minutes to sixty minutes, and they were all digitally audio-taped. Then, each interview session was transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

Validation

Pilot Testing

Even though the interview questions were modified based on the feedback from my supervisor, proposal examiners, and ethics board at the University of Ottawa, I decided to further validate the interview questions since they were the main data collection instrument. Therefore, in order to verify that the interview questions were formulated in a way that allowed the participants to precisely comprehend what the questions were trying to explore, the first family interview session was treated as a pilot case. One of the purposes of pilot testing is to ensure the development of a valid data collection instrument (Colton & Covert, 2007). It is also meant to check for ambiguity in wording any of the interview questions, or any ambiguity about the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2007). I made sure to send the participants my list of interview questions a few days before the scheduled session. I wanted to provide the parents with sufficient time to consider the questions and think about examples to share with me at the interview session. During the pilot case, the interviewed parents told me at the end of the interview that the questions made more sense when I further explained to them the purpose of the study at the beginning of the session. Accordingly, I started to include a brief, yet concise description of the purpose of the study along with the interview questions. I noticed that the parents in the following interview sessions were more prepared to answer the questions, and they also provided more details and examples directly related to the studied topic.

Multicultural Validity

Multicultural validity was also considered in this study. This type of validity refers to “our ability to capture the multiple cultural perspectives accurately, soundly, and appropriately” (Kirkhart, 1995, p. 2). Multicultural validity involves designing questions that are perceived as familiar to cultural groups. Therefore, the interview questions were

created in accordance to what was evident in the literature on Muslim households, yet not fully investigated or explored from the perspectives of parents who have children in Canadian public schools. Kirkhart (1995) suggests that in order to achieve multicultural validity, the researcher should demonstrate interpersonal competency where he or she is aware and sensible to cultural variations in general, and to the cultural facets related to the studied group in specific. As I am an active member of the Muslim community, and as I also have been immersing myself in the literature on various cultures and the Islamic culture, I tried to design interview questions that were elucidating and relevant to Muslim parents from various ethnic backgrounds. It was generally evident that the parents were comfortable in sharing stories and examples to clarify their meanings and interpretations.

Trustworthiness

Merriam (2002) asserts that “internal validity asks the question, how congruent one’s findings are with reality? In qualitative research this question is usually constructed as, are we observing or measuring what we think we are observing or measuring?” (p. 25). As strategies to accomplish validity, Merriam (1998, 2002) and Creswell (2009) suggested clarifying the researcher’s conceptual framework and position of the study, and conducting peer examination. The conceptual framework was described and explained in the chapter on literature review, and my prior experience and relationship with the research and the researched were shared with the participants and explained in Chapter 1 and earlier in this Chapter. Peer examination means “asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge” (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Accordingly, one non-Muslim graduate student in the Faculty of Education and one Muslim graduate student from the Faculty of Education were requested to review a preliminary draft of the study. They were also asked to review the

themes and initial analysis to ensure that the analysis relates to the collected data, and that the findings are formulated to answer the research questions. Both colleagues had access to the Nvivo coding and reference summaries. My colleagues and I discussed their feedback through emails and informal meetings. Their feedback related to the organization of the sections, suggestions for elaborating on some of the themes, and suggestions about including specific issues in the discussion section. The feedback was carefully considered and it added to the attempts of further creating a more coherent study. The participants were also given a chance to review the transcripts to ensure that the recordings were accurate, and to add, clarify, or remove any of the text. Another way of establishing trustworthiness in this study was through describing the physical surrounding of each household (Merriam, 1998). This served as a way to provide more information about the physical context of the Muslim households and what the children of these households are used to.

Member Checking

Creswell (2009) suggests that allowing participants to view initial findings and themes increases the reliability of the research. One participant was selected to review the preliminary findings and to provide feedback about whether they corresponded to the data collected and helped to answer the research questions. The participant was selected because she expressed a willingness to participate in further reading the findings at the time of her interview. Another reason for selecting this participant was because she was also involved in prior research experiences, and therefore, she was able to provide feedback that was relevant to a research based project.

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) suggests that multiple case studies should go through two stages of analysis: Within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis. She explains that “each case in cross-case analysis is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself” (p. 154). She then asserts that cross-case analysis “increases the potential for generalizing beyond the particular case. An interpretation based on evidence from several cases can be more compelling to a reader than results based on a single instance” (p. 154). Two methods of analyzing the data occurred concurrently. First, I adapted Stake’s (2006) outline on how to analyze the data from all cases, internally and collaboratively. Additionally, NVivo software was integrated to ensure that all data had been considered for analysis. NVivo software was also used as an organizational tool where the interview transcripts were exported from Word documents into the software screen, and the data was organized according nodes and their respective codes in the transcripts. The processes of retrieving data, understanding relationships among various nodes, and visually recognizing codes in each document were made more efficient using Nvivo software. Welsh (2002) suggests that using a software to organize data can add a rigour dimension to qualitative analysis because it ensures that data is fully interrogated, and this aids in enhancing validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

After reading the transcripts of each case several times and making margin notes, the process of internally analyzing each case began. Transcripts were exported to Nvivo, and free nodes were identified. According to Gibbs’ (2002) manual on how to use Nvivo, a node is a concept or an idea that is defined based on the collected data. Nodes call for thinking and rethinking the text and its interpretations. Each case generates multiple nodes, and in this study there were 41 *free nodes* that represented the findings, which were answers to interview questions and observational notes, categorized by themes of the study. Eventually,

eight themes were generated in this research. The process of coding was demonstrated by connecting passages of a text to the underlying idea of each free node. Gibbs (2002) also asserts, “In qualitative analysis, the very process of identifying and connecting the passages of text and clarifying the concept or idea represented by the node they are coded at is an important part of analysis” (p. 58). Creswell (2007) suggests that process of coding should look for “information that the researcher expected to find before the study, surprising information that the researcher did not expect to find, and information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to the researcher or the potential audience” (p. 153). Appendix F, an Nvivo generated tabulation, shows the themes of the study on the first column, free nodes corresponding to each theme, and the number of data references (text and observations) that were coded at each node. It also shows from which case (source) of the five cases each reference came from.

The free nodes under each theme were then clustered into merged findings that later represented sub-themes, which are presented in Chapter Four. In Nvivo language, the themes of the study are called *tree nodes*. Appendix G represents the tree nodes (themes) and the merged findings that corresponded to each theme. A decision was made to keep the findings of the last theme (suggestions about culturally responsive pedagogical models) unmerged because it was essential to include all the suggested provided by the parents.

The process of cross-case analysis began when the merged findings were recorded respectively in the first column of Appendix H, as adapted from Stake (2006). The second column represented the cases from which the findings came from, a process that was retrieved using Nvivo. As the merged findings under each theme directly contributed to the understanding of the theme that they corresponded to, an H (representing high contribution) was recorded at the intersection of the merged finding and the theme. Cross-case analysis

revealed that some of these merged findings (sub themes) were also contributing to the understanding of other themes as well. Yet, they were not coming from the findings directly responding to interview questions covering these other themes. Therefore, an M (representing medium contribution) was recorded at the intersection of the merged finding and the other themes. This recording was based on direct quotes from the participants when asked the interview question that related to the specific theme, and also based on observations made about the physical surrounding during the interview session. In the following chapter, each theme will be addressed by discussing each sub-theme. In some instances, the discussion of each sub-theme could draw on evidence from other sub-themes in order to provide a more coherent and connected understanding of the dynamic influence of the Islamic culture.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

As this study aims to explore the influence of the Islamic culture on Muslim children's daily lives by investigating their daily funds of knowledge as described by their parents in five Muslim households, this chapter starts with presenting the profiles of the participating families as recommended by Creswell (2007). Appendix I represents general biographical information about each family. This is followed by a more detailed background that is important to contextualize each case. Eight themes are then presented based on the gathered data; and they are: spirituality and rituals, household relationships, relationships with the larger society, contribution of cultural institutions, teacher-parent communication, relevance of the Arabic language, and suggestions about cultural responsive pedagogical models. Each theme is supported by evidence gathered from the two data sources, the parents' answers to the interview questions and from the observations noted about the physical surroundings during the interview sessions.

Family Profiles

The Azeem Family

From a Pakistani background, the Azeem family consists of Mehreen, the mother; Faheem, the father; and two boys. The oldest, Asaad, is in Senior Kindergarten in a local public school. His younger brother, Omar, is three and a half years old. The family speaks mainly the Urdu language at home, while both Mehreen and Faheem are highly proficient in the English language.

Mehreen's childhood was in the United Arab Emirates where she attended a Christian Missionary school. She believes that her concept of multiculturalism developed in her early

schooling experience. The school she attended had children from various ethnic backgrounds. She then moved with her family to Pakistan, and later she obtained her Bachelor of Engineering in Computer Systems from a Pakistani university. She moved to Ottawa eight years ago after she married Faheem. She decided to be a home-maker and take care of the children. Mehreen and Faheem believe that her decision to stay home and spend time with the children was valuable and essential for the cultural development of their boys. Mehreen regarded family as one of her top priorities. She recently tried to pursue further education in the field of management, but she realized that it was distracting her from her duties as a mother. Mehreen tries to be consistently involved in her children's education, cultural awareness, and overall well being. She always tries to provide her children with reasons for doing daily practices. She also keeps an open dialog with her children, especially with Assad who always likes to ask questions about people's actions and their rationale for certain behaviours.

Faheem, a very outgoing individual, obtained his Bachelor of Science in Computer Science. He also has a Master degree in E-Business Technology from Atlantic Canada. He works as a consultant for government agencies, and he is also a part time professor at a university. Faheem moved to Ottawa eleven years ago. He recalls that his knowledge of the English language was very limited when he moved to Ottawa. His first years in Canada revolved around home, work, and school. He had limited social interactions, and he was trying to preserve his cultural continuity in the new environment. Faheem comes from a family of six children. He is the only one in Canada, and he has two brothers and one sister in the United States. His other siblings are in Pakistan. Faheem's parents alternate visits among their children periodically. At the time of the interview session, Faheem's parents were visiting him for a few months.

As Omar is not of school age, most of the discussion revolved around Assad's school experience and his home practices. A bright and talkative five years old boy, Asaad is always interested in answers to his favourite question, "why?". He is a process-oriented boy who liked to know how and why people do what they do. He speaks both English and Urdu. Last year, he also took classes at the mosque to learn how to read the Quran in the Arabic language using the proper rules of reading the holy book. This year, Asaad has a new teacher in his public school, and he is still in the process of adjusting to her classroom practices and ways of communications. Mehreen claims that he was accustomed to his teacher from last year, who was very accommodating of her son's cultural demands, such as dietary restrictions and holidays. The teacher always tried to communicate with Mehreen to make sure she understood Asaad's needs whenever there is a special holiday or any event in Asaad's life. Mehreen is hoping that the new teacher will show the same interest in learning about Asaad's personality and culture as the previous teacher did when she used to ask Asaad about his trip to Pakistan, and about his experiences in Ramadan and Eid.

The Sulaiman Family

The Sulaiman family consists of Diana and Ahmed, and their three children. The oldest, Amira is in first grade; Sameer is in Junior Kindergarten; and Wardah is two years old and she stays home with the mother. Diana and Ahmed speak English when they communicate with each other. Ahmed speaks Arabic and English when he talks to his children; and Diana speaks French and English when she communicates with her children. Diana is on a paternal leave from her job at the Federal Government for the last five years, and she made a conscious decision to stay at home with her children until they are old enough to go to school. Her decision was affirmed after her recent attempt of going back to

work for a month. She felt she was taken away from her household, and she believed she was losing control over managing their home.

Diana is French Canadian who was born and raised in Montreal. Her family moved to the city of Ottawa fifteen years ago. Her family also lived in Burkina Faso in West Africa for three years and then came back to Ottawa. Diana converted to Islam in 2001, and she married Ahmed after she finished one year of college in the business administration field. Diana is constantly alert and appears to be vigilant while raising her children. She tries to be closely involved in her children's education, behaviour, and personality development. One of her missions in raising her children was to help them develop a sense of pride of who they are and the culture they belong to. Moreover, Diana's Islamic identity is clearly apparent in her physical appearance, in her use of language, and in her attitude towards life and family. She wore the headscarf and dressed modestly. The Arabic words and phrases she used in our conversation were mostly religiously derived, such as the phrases "praise to God", and "by the will of God". Her pronunciation of the Arabic vocabulary was clear and proper. She was also articulate when she addressed the issue of this life versus the hereafter, and she seemed to be clear on how a Muslim should strive to please God and live life while trying the best in all aspects in order to gain paradise in the after life.

Ahmed, from a Palestinian background, was born and raised in Kuwait. He spent the first sixteen years of his life there until the Gulf War. He moved to Jordan where he completed high school. Ahmed and his family moved to Canada in 1995. He obtained his Bachelor degree in Electrical Engineering from a western province university. Ahmed currently works as a full time Technical Engineer. Due to the nature of Ahmed's work, he travels frequently within Canada. He relies on Diana to spend time with the children and engage in the development of their social and academic lives. One of the things that Ahmed

enjoys while traveling is the diversity in cultures in every place he visits. When he talked about his Islamic identity in relation to his ethnic background, he contended, “Islam did not come to abolish people’s ethnic backgrounds and norms. It builds on them. I see culture as a mosaic, spices of the religion. As long as it doesn’t go against the religion, there’s nothing wrong with it. It makes things more exciting”. He explained that he always tried to keep in touch with some of the Palestinian traditions, and he wanted his children to learn about them as well.

Amira and Sameer seem to be outgoing and like to share their schooling experience with their parents. They both go to a French immersion public school. Diana mentioned that she was deliberately looking for a school that had students from as many cultures as possible. She wanted her children to be exposed to different lifestyles and belief systems. Because the Sulaiman family lives in an area with a small Muslim population, they try to visit the main mosque in the city in order to bring their children closer to the Islamic culture. Diana mentioned that her children like to go to the mosque because they feel a sense of peace.

The Nabeel Family

The Nabeel household has four children, three boys and one girl. Mohammad is 18 years old, Samaah is 16 years old, Zaid is 14 years old, and Nooh is two and a half years old. The family speaks mostly Arabic at home. Adnaan, the father, had worked for the military in Tunisia, and then he moved with his family to Canada in 1997. He speaks three languages, Arabic, English, and French. Adnaan currently works as an Office Manager at one national Muslim organization, and as a part time travel agent. He also volunteers on many projects for the Muslim community- for example, he helps manage a local school that teaches how to read and memorize Quran; and he also helps plan and carry out activities in Muslim festivals

and camps. Adnaan strongly believes that hard work and sincerity are the fuel for everything he does, including raising kids and building a Muslim community that is proud and integrated into the larger society. He believes that his involvement, along with the commitment of other members in the Muslim community, is part of what he calls “seeds of goodness”. Adnaan argues that these seeds of goodness will grow one day and show the fruits that will benefit the youth of the Muslim community. Adnaan likes his children to see him working and volunteering for the betterment of the Muslim community. He believes this will expose them to the dedication and efforts needed to establish a strong Muslim community that they can count on and use as a resource to strengthen their identity as Muslims.

Shafeeqa, mother of the family, has a Bachelor of Arts in Middle Eastern Literature from Tunisia. Shafeeqa and Adnaan believe that it is for the sake of their family and children that she had to stay at home in order to fulfill the responsibility of taking care of the children and providing them with a sense of home and culture. Shafeeqa is happy that her relationship with her children is very strong and they feel comfortable to initiate conversations with and to ask her questions about the Islamic culture. Recently, Shafeeqa decided to start offering babysitting services from home. Adnaan believes that through the babysitting service that Shafeeqa provides, she exemplifies the role of an individual who is managing a business while raising children. Shafeeqa is also very visible in the Muslim community, and she tries to offer help whenever she could.

The concept of giving to the community is clearly apparent in the Nabeel family. Mohammad, Samaah, and Zaid are always encouraged to volunteer for events offered to the Muslim community. Adnaan and Shafeeqa believe that their children are capable of negotiating two cultures, the Islamic culture, and the Canadian culture. Samaah, for example,

was the only Muslim female in her class at her elementary school. Yet, she was able to do well academically, and she managed to establish strong friendships with her non-Muslim classmates. Samah is also committed to wearing the hijab. The children in the Nabeel family speak Arabic, English, and French. The three older children went to the same two-days a week Quran school that Adnaan volunteered for. They master reading Arabic, and they also read the Quran according to the rules of *tajweed*, which means enchantment while pronouncing the Arabic letters clearly from their points of articulation in the respiratory system.

The Abdul Kareem Family

The Abdul Kareem household has five children, three girls and two boys. The parents, Shukri and Rashad, are both from a Somali background. Shukri, the mother, moved to Ottawa in 1991; and Rashad, the father, joined his family in Canada in 1994. The family speaks mostly Somali at home. Shukri and Rashad also insert the English language in some of their communications with their children when they do not understand certain Somali vocabulary. Family bonds are very essential in the Abdul Kareem household. Therefore, the Somali language is of particular importance to the Abdul Kareem family because it is almost the only medium through which they could communicate with some of their relatives and extended family members. Shukri's mom is currently living in the Abdul Kareem's household, and she only speaks Somali. At the time of the interview session, Shukri's sister was visiting from Australia, and Rashad's sister who lives in Ottawa was also visiting the family. Indeed, the Somali language was the common language in the household.

It was a conscious decision for both parents that Shukri stays at home to take care of the children and to provide them with a sense of the Islamic culture and the Somali lifestyle.

In fact, Shukri stated that she believes it is her duty to create an environment that cultivates her children's Islamic identity and culture. One example is that she dedicates two to three hours every Saturday where she sits with her children to read and memorize the Quran together; read and interpret *Hadeeths* (sayings and actions of Prophet Mohammad), and also study the biographies of other prophets like Ibrahim, Moses, and Jesus. This knowledge setting resembles a *Duksy*, a Somali word that describes an informal gathering that formulates a circle of individuals who meet to learn about the religion and reading Quran. At one point, Shukri offered this *Duksy* to children from the Somali community, but with her growing responsibilities in the household, she now only offers it to her own children.

Born and raised in Somalia, Rashad comes from a large family. His parents stressed the role of education in the family. He received his Bachelor's in the field of geology at a Somali university. Then, he continued his higher education in the same field by obtaining a Master degree from a university in the Netherlands, and his PhD from Italy. He also did some graduate courses in Ottawa. Now he works for one educational organization where he counsels students at risk, such as students who are having trouble graduating from high school. He is also involved in activities for reaching out to minority communities, and he is involved in committees that address issues around equity and representation. Rashad's work in the sphere of public schools, specifically in a school that has a large Muslim student population, exposes him to how students are negotiating their multiple identities, and how the notion of multiculturalism is implemented in such schools. In his household, Rashad strives to instill Islamic teachings in his children because he believes that one's culture is what keeps the soul constantly revived. Rashad believes that nurturing the soul is often neglected in the Western society.

The Abdul Kareems' three daughters are Hamdi, 20 years old, and the twins Taibah and Alia, 19 years old. The three girls have been wearing Hijab for over six years. All of them attended public schools prior to their university enrolment. They are involved in the Muslim Students Associations on their campuses, and they also attend lectures and classes instructed by prominent scholars in the field of Islamic teachings. Shukri mentioned that she has a close relationship with her daughters, and they always engage in conversations about various issues in their lives, such as friendships, cultural norms, and school life. The other two children in the Abdul Kareem household are Taha, 15 years old, and Adam, 13 years old. They both go public schools, and as Rashad is currently working in the public school system, he seems to be aware of the issues and challenges that his sons face on a daily basis, such as peers influence, assimilation pressures, and issues of self-esteem.

The Jafaar Family

From an Egyptian ethnic background, the Jafaar family consists of Salma, the mother; Omar, the father; and three children. The oldest child is Nahlah, 10 years old. The second child is Yomna, 9 years old. The youngest is Shehab, 8 years old. The family uses both English and Arabic in their household, and they believe that the Arabic language is important for the cultivation of their cultural identity.

Salma was born in Egypt and raised in the United Arab Emirates. She received a Medical Doctor degree in Paediatrics from Egypt, and she also became licensed as a Paediatrician from the Medical Council of Canada in 2007 after intensive sets of examinations. Salma lectures at a university level on various medical topics, and she also conducts scientific research in a number of national organizations. Her research involves raising awareness about the disease of Hepatitis C among different ethno-cultural groups at

high risk. Salma is closely involved in her children's education and she tries to communicate with her children's teachers on a regular basis through e-mails and one-on-one meetings. She is particular and articulate when describing the personalities and learning preferences of her children. She tries to keep constant communications among members of the family where she initiates open discussions on topics that she feels important for the development of her children academically, socially, and culturally.

Omar was born and raised in Egypt. He moved to Canada 10 years ago, and he joined the Faculty of Medicine in a Canadian university. Omar recently obtained a PhD degree in Human Genetics from the Department of Biochemistry, Immunology, and Microbiology. He is currently involved in a local university as a Post Doctoral Fellow. Omar is also heavily involved in various projects in the Muslim community, such as his role on the board of one Islamic school, and his role in organizing events and festivals for the Muslim community. Omar indicated that he usually likes to expose his children to different forms of lifestyles and cultures by having family friends from various ethnic backgrounds. He also likes to have his children involved in voluntary work for the Muslim and the non-Muslim communities.

The children in the Jafaar family have attended both an Islamic school and a public school. This year, they all have been in a public school for issues of proximity and travel time. The discussion with Salma and Omar revealed that their children are very observant and they are critical of cultural norms in their households and in the outside home environment. The children are constantly reflecting and comparing their knowledge as Muslims, and the knowledge they receive in their public school. For example, the concepts of volunteering, behaving in schools, and stress management undergo detailed discussions whereby Salma and Omar try to explain how these concepts are perceived and encouraged or discouraged according to the Islamic culture.

Salma described her oldest daughter, Nahlah, as very outgoing and group-oriented as she likes to fit in and belong to a group. Yomna, on the other hand, is more action-oriented where she likes to help people and volunteer at different events in school and outside of school. She likes to assist her teachers, and she is also a reading buddy to many of her classmates. Yomna seems to understand her position as a Muslim. She likes practicing putting the head scarf on in Muslim gatherings and during mosque visits even though she is not yet required to wear the hijab as she has not yet reached the age of puberty. Nahlah, however, is more concerned about how people perceive her; she thinks that by putting the scarf on, she would no longer fit in with her group. All the three children in the Jafaar family go to Saturday school where they learn Arabic and Islamic studies. They also attend weekly one-on-one private lessons to learn the Arabic and the French languages.

Omar and Salma are always particular in keeping the connection with the Islamic culture in almost all aspects of life. The Jafaar family also tries to do things collectively where all family members are involved and helping each other. Salma believes that this approach will help cultivate strong bonds among everybody in the family.

Theme One: Spirituality and Rituals

Allah-Consciousness

When asked about the influence of the Islamic culture on the household's spirituality and daily rituals, the interviewed parents addressed this area in two interconnected ways. First, they all addressed the role of faith and connection with God as a way to sustain their existence and conduct of everyday life. It appeared that having a god-conscious attitude overarched the various funds of knowledge in the families' daily lives. Second, the

interviewed parents signified the theme of spirituality and rituals mainly in offering rituals such as prayers, making supplications, reading Quran, and fasting.

Faheem in the Azeem household addressed how he was raised as a Pakistani child to view religion as an encompassing factor in everyday actions. He repeatedly mentioned, “In every aspect there is always Islam in it. This is what we learned from our parents. In everything there’s something that relates to *Allah* or to Islam”. Helping the children establish a strong faith that resides in their hearts and guides their actions is one of the main issues that Adnaan Nabeel was concerned about while raising his children. Faith, according to Adnaan, relates to the understanding that everything belongs to *Allah* and that Muslims strive to do their best in everything in order to satisfy *Allah*. Adnaan further elaborated:

I have no doubts about my kids’ faith and their connection with *Allah*. They understand that things happen for a reason and they should be content with it. If an accident happens, they accept it and they know it is part of our destiny and they should thank *Allah* for it anyway. It’s the attitudes and manners that go up and down, but faith is stable in their hearts.

Another example was how Rashad Abdul Kareem articulated it when he said:

When we came to Canada, we didn’t only bring our bodies, but we also brought our souls. Our souls need to be fed, and the food of our souls is our religion. I believe that religion provides you with moral support when you are down for example. Religion helps us hold our desires and emotions. Religion gives you assurance, and it provides us with that sense of peace of mind in every moment. This peace is needed at all times, and that’s why we are teaching our children the religion. We have to give something that we believe is valuable and important as we have been given by our ancestors and parents.

Daily Prayers

All parents in the study addressed the importance of offering the five daily prayers. Salma in the Jafaar household asserted, “I tell the kids that this is the first thing that *Allah* asks about on the day of judgement, the prayer”. Appendix J shows a chart that Salma and Nahlah developed to help Nahlah stay on track with her daily prayers. The chart was put on

the wall in the family room, and it only showed the recordings from Tuesday and Friday. A check mark meant that she performed the prayer on time. A crossed check mark indicated that she performed the prayer at the end of the allocated time for that specific prayer (almost close to the time of the next prayer). A cross mark meant that the time of the next prayer occurred before Nahlah performed the previous prayer. Salma did not only stress the importance of the prayer, but she also developed a tool to keep her children organized and conscious about them.

Also, on the theme of daily prayers, Diana in the Sulaiman family said, “Five times a day is just good enough for constant reflection on why we’re here and be thankful. I don’t want my kids to miss out on the prayer”. Diana keeps reminding her children that this life is short and the hereafter is what they should aim for as praying is ultimately one way to reach *Jannah* (paradise) on the day of Judgement. In the Abdul Kareem family, the Fajr (dawn) prayer was seen as a daily protection from evil. Rashad asserted, “I used to take my sons with me to pray Fajr at the mosque. They used to be lazy because it’s early, and they used to complain. I told them, you’re protected the whole day. This is what the hadeeth (saying of Prophet Mohammad) says. Now they wake me up to go pray”.

In an Islamic setting, like in a mosque for example, right before each one of the five prayers, there is usually a loud public pronouncement that calls people to prayer. It lasts for about three minutes, and it summarizes the fundamental teachings of Islam that there is no God but *Allah*, Mohammad is *Allah*’s messenger, and prosperity is for those who follow the commands of *Allah*, of which prayer is one of most essential (“Adhan”, 2010). This pronouncement is called the *Adhan*, and it is usually done in the mosque. Some Muslim families install software that is programmed to start the call at the time of the prayer. For

example, the Azeem family had this same system installed through which they were able to create a more Islamic environment, and were constantly reminded of the time of the prayer.

Du`a' (Supplication)

Du`a' (supplication to God) was another significant daily activity that some families addressed. According to the Islamic teachings, supplication could be in the form of verbally praising God and asking him for fulfillment of material needs or blessings in this life and for the hereafter. The Abdul Karim family uses supplication as a form of family support where they ask God to support a family member, heal the sick, or help someone find a job. The reliance on God and the belief that all matters go according to God's will are clearly present in the families. In the Jafaar household, the family uses supplication to ask for God's forgiveness. Salma asserted, "When the children fight together, we ask them to ask *Allah* for forgiveness, and he or she has to say sorry to the harmed person. We make it clear that if this person doesn't forgive you, *Allah* won't forgive you". Here, Salma stressed the fact that she does not want her children to function in isolation from the other people around. She wanted her children to be conscious of both God and the people surrounding them.

Reading and Memorizing Quran

Reading Quran was another important spiritual experience to most of the families in the study. They considered reading the words of *Allah* as a way of communicating with him and receiving his commands. Therefore, reading Quran was considered an action that the parents made sure it took place frequently. Shukri in the Abdul Karim family believed that it is her duty to teach her children how to read Quran. The Jafaar parents encouraged their children to read Quran and they teach them that they could be rewarded multiples of good

deeds on the Day of Judgment for reading the book. Salma mentioned, “We explain to them that they can get rewards for every letter they read in the Quran. So sometimes we sit and read together. That way they connect with the Quran together”. Diana Sulaiman believed that the Quran was the direct source to learn about the religion. As Diana was a convert, and since Ahmed’s family was not around very often, Diana explained that they try to rely on the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet to understand the religion. This was slightly different than receiving the knowledge from immediate and extended family members, which was one main strategy that the other four families relied on.

The Virtues of Fasting

Since the month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars in Islam, all the participants addressed fasting as an important spiritual experience that they encourage their children to do at a young age, even though it is not mandatory until they reach puberty. As Ramadan follows a lunar calendar, the month could fall in the summer. Therefore, some of the participants mentioned that they were training their younger children to fast for half a day from food and drinks, or they could fast the whole day from food, but not drinks. Fasting was signified for reasons other than a form of obedience to God’s commands. First, it brought the community together because Muslims usually break their fast in groups. Adnan from the Nabeel household mentioned that his family always broke the fast with other families during Ramadan. Ahmed in the Sulaiman household mentioned that he used to think breaking the fast as a group is a Middle Eastern tradition. He later found out that it was an action that had its roots from the teachings of Prophet Mohammad who used to consider breaking the fast as an action that needs to be celebrated as a group. Secondly, it was believed by the participants that Ramadan helped to develop a sense of empathy with the hungry, and it also made people

appreciate provisions. Mehreen and Diana stressed the fact that they constantly teach their children not to waste food. Mehreen mentioned, “I teach my son that we have to respect food. We need to respect the things we have. We do this to take care of things, so that *Allah* doesn’t become angry at us and take away everything we have”. Diana also mentioned, “When we fast, we think of those kids who don’t have food and who suffer every day compared to us who only fast 30 days”.

Theme Two: Household Relationships

Collective Attitude and the Value of Respect

Families that follow a collective cultural system tend to adhere to a hierarchal structure that organizes types of interactions and communications among family members (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000). The interviewed families expressed that they generally prefer doing things together as opposed to engaging in actions individually. All of the families mentioned that they tried to pray together when all immediate family members were present. The Sulaiman family and the Jafaar family read the Quran together on a daily basis. The Abdul Kareem family also made sure to read the Quran together every Saturday. All the families also expressed their preference for breaking the fast together as a family or with community members. Even though there was an evident hierarchal structure based on age within the participating families, there was also an understanding of the concept of shared responsibilities. Salma asserted, “We have the habit of getting engaged in everything together as a family. No one is supposed to serve anybody. Everybody is supposed to serve the family”. Age was an important element that determined the type of communications among family members. Grandparents and parents deserve the highest level of respect and honour, and children were expected to request permissions or at least seek advice from their

parents regarding most issues in their daily lives. Respect was also a virtue that was expected to be addressed when dealing with parents and elders of the community. Faheem linked respecting parents to *Allah*'s pleasure, and he mentioned that he continuously teaches his son by saying, "*Allah* will be pleased with you if you please your parents. Have you ever seen me speak to my dad in a bad tone? I don't want *Allah* to be mad at me".

Some parents in the study considered raising children as part of a loop or continuum of generational parenting. On one hand, the Azeem family and the Abdul Kareem family, for example, made it clear that they tried to raise their children based on how they were raised by their parents; and they liked to instil the same values that they, the parents, grew up with, such as respect, love for the religion, and working for the community. Shukri acknowledged that her children might not accept everything she tries to teach them as they are living in a different culture. She also acknowledged that the Western culture might not stress the same values that she is trying to teach her children, such as working collectively and caring for the family, but she believed it was a responsibility that she had to fulfill. Also, Ahmed from the Sulaiman family mentioned, "I grew up in an environment where the relationship between the family members has to be strong. The brothers and the sisters have to care about each other, protect each other, and talk with respect to our parents. Our parents used to do the same thing to their elder family members, and they used to take us to visit our uncles and our aunts, and this is how they treated them".

On the other hand, there was a common belief among some of the interviewed families that children should treat their parents in the way they, the children, would like to be treated as parents in the future. There are a number of stories in the Islamic traditions about parents who were treated with less respect, or even abandoned by their children because they, the parents, were disrespectful of their own parents. These traditions are continuously

shared with Muslim children who are taught that *Allah*'s pleasure is linked to the parents' pleasure. Salma once saw her friend's daughter yelling at her mother. Salma immediately spoke to the young girl and explained, "if you listen to your mom and be nice to her, *Allah* will be satisfied with you and give you blessings in your life".

The Role of Mothers

The parents of the participating households made informed decisions that the mothers remain at home to take care of the children so as to help them develop strong cultural identities. All the mothers attempted some form of higher education; for example, two of them held bachelor degrees, and one of them was recently licensed to practice medicine in Ontario. Hoodfar (2003) reported on a Canadian study that interviewed 69 Muslim females to examine their experiences with the veil. One of Hoodfar's findings was that even though the mothers in her sample were considered professional in their fields, such as the fields of accounting, economy, and computer science, the majority of them felt more satisfied by being homemakers and raising their children since the males are responsible for household provisions according to the Islamic culture.

Four key points emerged to signify the role of mothers in the households. First, all parents agreed that the mother's presence was essential in transferring the Islamic culture and making sure it was understood, practiced, and appreciated. Mehreen preferred providing her son with the rationale for doing certain practices such as fasting and following a specific dietary system. Salma used stories and examples to help her children understand certain virtues in the Islamic culture such as charity and collective work. She was also systematic in ensuring that her children understand and practice the Islamic teachings. For example, when her daughter Nahlah turned 10 years old, Salma told her that she was of an age where she

was supposed to adhere more closely to the Islamic teachings, such as becoming more responsible for her actions, offering all prayers on time, and not sharing the bed with any of her siblings. To encourage Nahalah to do these three things, Salma provided her daughter with three incentives. She enrolled her in a course for babysitting training since Nahlah always wanted to enrol in such class, gave her the family computer's password so she could use it when she needed to, and bought her some jewellery to make her feel like a grown up.

Second, some of the interviewed parents were specific about the role of the mother in the constant screening of their children's behaviour and friendship choices, and also their role in providing reminders of their responsibilities as Muslims. Salma addressed how she always tried to remind her children to strive for what is better and more beneficial. She asserted:

We remind them that you get what you pay for. If you want *Jannah*, you have to pay the price for it. Money doesn't come to us while we're sitting home. We have to work hard to get that money. Same with *Jannah*, we have to work hard to get. We have to remind them all the time. Going up the ladder is not as easy as sliding down.

Another example was when Diana talked about her attempt to go back to work when her youngest child was a year and a half old. She did not continue because she felt she was not involved in her children's lives as she was before. She explained:

I went back to work for one month, and I told my boss I'm sorry I can't continue. Being away would mean that you don't have a full concept of what's going on in the house. You just cook, eat, and you go to work. You have no idea what the kids are doing and you don't have time to talk to them because you're so exhausted. It's like having no life. It doesn't make sense to have both of us outside of the house. Everything would fall apart.

Thirdly, some of the parents viewed the mothers' devotion to take care of the household, as opposed to working full time outside of home, as an opportunity to act as a role model to the children. Specifically in the Nabeel family, Shafeeqa recently started to offer babysitting services to the Muslim community in her household. Her husband Adnaan

mentioned that, “Shafeeqa has very good relationship with our Muslim community. We’re grateful to this babysitting business because she acts as a role model for our kids in terms of dealing with the community and dealing with the children in our house”.

Fourthly, even though the children in the participating households were from various age groups, all the parents agreed that their children had stronger relationships with their mothers when it came to communications and seeking advice. Shukri in the Abdel Kareem family mentioned that her daughters, who are currently in university, feel comfortable sharing their daily stories and events with her, and they make sure to ask for her permission to go out with friends or participate in certain events. Shafeeqa also mentioned that her older son, who is 17 years old, felt closer to her than his father when it come to asking questions about the religion and soliciting permissions to do things, such as going out with friends and participating in social activities.

Theme Three: Relationship with Extended Family Members

Cultural Transfer and Sustainability

One of the issues that surfaced when talking about relationships with extended family members was *Silat Al Rahm*. This Arabic term refers to the blood connection among family members, which dictates that treating kinship with respect is required and linked to prosperity in this life and the hereafter. Rashad Abdul Kareem mentioned, “We are taught to draw closely to our family members. We have to stand by each other, and this is something my religion taught me”. Rashad’s mother-in-law lived with in the Abdul Kareem’s household, and the family saw her presence as an opportunity to strengthen the connection with her, and offer her support as she was over 70 years old. Shukri’s sister was also visiting the family for three months, and this was also seen as a chance to draw the children closer to

their aunt. Faheem's parents were also visiting him, and their visit usually lasted for more than three months. Faheem elaborated on his parents' visits by saying, "I would want my parents to live longer with us because I want my kids to see how we were raised". He saw his parents' presence as an important factor in creating a cultural environment in which they were able to reinforce cultural practices, such as offering daily prayers, reading Quran, watching Islamic programs on the television and on the internet.

Adnaan and Shafeeqa talked about their recent visit to their birthplace, Tunisia. Omar and Salma also talked about their children's recent experience in visiting Egypt. It was important to both families that their children interact with their extended family members and learn the culture from their relatives. Salma mentioned that she makes sure her children keep in contact with their relatives in Egypt through e-mails and phone calls. Ahmed Sulaiman also reported that he wanted his children to interact with their grandparents and relatives and be exposed to the environment in which he grew up. It was important for him that the Islamic culture be transferred to his children even though they live away from their relatives.

Sense of Security

Two types of security were depicted in this sub-theme. The first one was identity security. According to Rashad Abdul Kareem, the extended family was considered an educational source about the history of Somali people and the struggles they had to face. Rashad viewed this type of education as a way to educate his children on their identity and provide them with a historical background that they could securely rely on when facing stereotypes. Rashad elaborated, "History repeats itself and the kids have to be aware of it. This is important because they need to have the knowledge in order to face any stereotype or

wrong information”. Ahmed Sulaiman also viewed keeping strong ties with extended family as a way to provide his children with an opportunity to observe the Islamic culture and how it is practiced by his ancestors. In this regard, he mentioned, “At the end, they’ll grow up and they will be asked, what are you? they can’t say I’m nothing. They have to know their roots, and they have to have something to fall on”.

The other type of security covered the emotional side. Salma addressed her family’s recent visit to Egypt and how her children felt “unconditional love” regardless of how they looked or what race they were from. This was also experienced in the Azeem family. Moreover, when Shukri was asked about the type of relationship they had with extended family members, she addressed the moral support and the ability to rely on extended family members when faced with hardships. Shukri said:

Relationship with extended family members is very important, and we keep telling them that family members are closer than anybody else. We found that kids growing up here don’t pay attention to these things, and that’s why we try to teach our kids. We tell our children that if anything bad happens, they could rely on our extended family members because they’ll always be there for us.

Theme Four: Relationship with the Larger Society

Responsibility towards the Larger Society

All the interviewed families expressed a sense of responsibility towards the larger society. Some of the families talked about their involvement within the Muslim community, and some addressed the type of relationships they had with the non-Muslim community. The majority of the families linked their actions to following a collective cultural system that is *Allah*-conscious and hereafter-driven. There was also a clear vision for the future when addressing actions linked to serving the community. The following four examples show how parents described their involvement and relationships with the Muslim community as paths

towards long term positive outcomes in this life and the next life as well. For example, Salma explained, “according to our Islamic culture, we learned that the best among us is the one who serves people the most. We try to stress this point when we talk to our kids. The kids get surprised sometimes when I do something for nothing in return. I tell them I did it for the sake of *Allah*. The action is not wasted; it’s actually an investment for later”. The Jafaar children volunteered for seven events within a six months period. Four of these events were not related to the Muslim community, and three events were organized for the Muslim community, such as the Eid Festival. Both of Salma’s daughters were also volunteering their time to clean the classroom after the children leave, and Yomna volunteered her recess time to sort the mail for the teachers at school.

In the Sulaiman family, Diana talked about how her daughter Amirah was always excited and happy when she saw Muslims in her neighbourhood, and she always tried to initiate greetings because she was taught that *Allah* would grant her double the rewards for initiating the greeting. Diana also talked about how her family always tried to establish a sense of empathy towards the needy and the disadvantaged. Diana and Ahmed mentioned that they use the satellite television to show their children programs from different countries to reflect on issues of poverty and oppression that were taking place around the world. Diana and Ahmed used this method to help their children become aware of challenges some people face on a daily basis, and to help them become more appreciative of what they have.

Mehreen Azeem talked about her sense of responsibility towards her son’s Muslim peers. Mehreen said, “I have this feeling that when my son does something wrong, the mothers of the other kids have the right to stop him. On the other hand, I believe that I have the right to stop their kids if they do something wrong. I want my kids to grow better and their kids to grow better simultaneously”. Adnaan Nabeel believed that his work for the

Muslim community could have a long term effect on cultivating his children's identity and belonging to a strong community. Adnan elaborated by saying:

Our time is divided amongst many things. We make sure to designate some time for building our community. We make sure to designate time to take care of our relatives. That leaves less time to spend with our kids. However, we tend to focus on the development of our kids' manners and faith. It's important that our kids grow up seeing their father working for the community and trying to help out creating services for Muslims. We don't get funded for many things, so we have to work hard to build a community centre, or a mosque where our kids could practice their religion and the teachings of Islam.

The Islamic culture in the Public Sphere

When the interviewed parents spoke about some of their experiences in the public spheres, such as schools, work, and the neighbourhood, a special focus was placed on the issue of observing Islamic traditions as a factor in the type of relationships the families had with the larger community. Some parents talked about instances where they felt comfortable about their Islamic identity and their ability to follow the Islamic traditions, while others addressed instances where they felt that their ability to observe and cherish the Islamic traditions was challenged. Mehreen talked about an incident where her son was invited to a birthday party for one of his classmates. The mother of Asaad's friend contacted Mehreen and asked her about any family dietary restrictions. Mehreen appreciated the initiative and expressed how this made her and Asaad feel comfortable. Faheem also talked about a social work event that took place during the month of Ramadan. His team delayed dinner until it was time for Faheem to break his fast and join his co-workers. He expressed that this simple action made him feel included and that his tradition was understood and accommodated. Diana Sulaiman talked about how she suggested instructing a class that would teach the Arabic language at her daughter's school. She mentioned that the school administrators took this suggestion seriously and surveyed the parents to assess the need for such a class. The

school started offering teaching Arabic as a second language in the following semester, and it has been now running for three years. The Jafaar and the Sulaiman families also mentioned that it was very important for them to keep pleasant relationships with their neighbours as this was one of the Islamic teachings that Muslims should adhere to.

On the other hand, most of the parents were apprehensive to situations where they feared that practices or norms of the Islamic culture might be violated even if the violation was unintentional. Even though Rashad had excellent relationships with his non-Muslim colleagues, he mentioned that he experienced alienation at certain occasions especially when drinking alcohol was involved in social work gatherings. He mentioned that it was his responsibility to address this issue with his son. Rashad said:

My son has non-Muslim friends. Sometimes he wants to go to their houses. I drive him, but once I told him: you could go but this type of relationship is very difficult. There are limits that we have to respect and we can not move them away at certain times. I told my son that your friend's mom or dad might be drinking while you're present. You are not allowed to do that. I give you permission to go there, but I have to provide you with such information because it's my duty.

Salma and Omar talked about their experience with the administration of their children's elementary school when they requested time and space for prayer. Salma and Omar described the communication as frustrating. They reported that the vice-principal was not responsive to their need, and she also devalued their request by telling the children "not today, you could pray tomorrow". As a result, the children missed the noon prayer for two days, which was highly unacceptable for the Jafaar family. Salma also mentioned that her children were about to forgo their need to pray in school because they did not feel comfortable with the situation. This became a serious concern for Salma and Omar because prayer was one important daily aspect that they never wanted their children to abandon.

The Nabeel family and the Jafaar family also stressed that they felt responsible to represent Muslims and Islam in the most appropriate manner, which usually made them become very careful of how they acted and behaved. Adnaan mentioned that his daughter Samaah was comfortable representing herself as Muslim because she understood the Islamic culture and her family's heritage. Adnaan reiterated, "She's always careful about her actions because she doesn't want to reflect a negative image. She thinks that if she does something wrong, people will judge Muslims based on her action".

Theme Five: Contributions of Cultural Institutions

Cultivation of Cultural Identity

All the interviewed parents reported that it was important for their families' cultural development and awareness to be connected to cultural institutions, such as the mosque and weekend schools. Asaad Azeem went to a weekend school to learn how to read Quran in Arabic and also to learn Islamic studies. His mother, Mehreen, observed how he was able to quickly learn the Arabic language and the rules of reading Quran. She also mentioned that the school helped him improve his self esteem because he felt he was capable of learning something that the community and his household applauded and respected. Asaad was happy to help his classmates with their exercises on learning the Arabic language, and his mother reported that she was impressed about how he was confident about his ability to correct students' mistakes and help them pronounce correctly. Mehreen also talked about how fascinated Asaad was in hearing stories about the prophets, such as Ibrahim, Noah, Moses, and Jesus, and how he continually repeated these stories at home.

Wardah Sulaiman, the children of the Jafaar family, and the children of the Nabeel family went to a weekend school that taught Arabic language and Islamic studies. As the

three daughters of the Abdul Kareem family were in university age, they started to join advanced series of classes and lectures designed for youth to teach them the Islamic traditions through more contemporary approaches. Rashad considered these classes as important ways to connect his daughters with the Islamic culture, and he believed that paying fees for such classes was as important as paying for their university tuitions.

Three of the families, the Azeem family, the Nabeel family, and the Jafaar family, indicated that weekend schools were not always appealing to their children, yet the parents always encouraged them to go and learn whatever they could. Because Omar and Adnaan were involved in the planning and implementing of activities for the Muslim community, they both mentioned that making these schools more attractive to the children in the community was a vital issue that community leaders and volunteers were concerned about. Adnaan considered these types of schools of particular importance because they represented essential tools to make Muslim children become attached to their culture and roots. Adnaan was confident that the children of the Muslim community will appreciate these schools at one point in the future, and he provided an example to illustrate his point:

One day we prayed together, and after the prayer, Samaah said “alhamdulillah alhamdulillah” (Praise is due to God, Praise is due to God). I asked her what happened. She said “today my mom’s friends came over and they were talking about Islamic matters in Arabic, and then they read Quran together. I was able to understand everything. If it weren’t for the Saturday and the Quran school, I wouldn’t have been able to understand anything.

It also appears from this example that being able to understand the conversation in the Arabic language was providing Samaah with a sense of belonging, which she attributed to her attendance in cultural institutions.

Theme Six: Relevance of the Arabic Language

The Importance of Arabic Language to Islamic Culture

Even though the Arabic language was not the first language in three of the participating households (the Azeem's, the Sulaiman's, and the Abdul Kareem's), the Arabic language was of particular importance to all the families as a tool to cultivate and sustain the Islamic culture in their households. There was a clear connection between understanding the Arabic language and the ability to comprehend the religion of Islam. As mentioned earlier, all the children in the participating families acquired further development of the Arabic language. The importance of the Arabic language was distinctly referred to by the Sulaiman family, who spoke mainly English and French. Diana suggested offering an Arabic class in her daughter's school. Her suggestion received school's approval, and it was offered twice a week for 23 children from various ethnic backgrounds. Ahmed also said:

I'm an Arab, but even if I were from any other ethnicity, I would still want to learn Arabic, and I would make the same emphasis to my kids to learn Arabic. It's almost a pre-requisite for learning the religion. I want them to learn the religion directly from its sources. I read the translation and I don't think it encompasses everything. I don't blame them because an Arabic word can have so many meanings, and the translation captures only one meaning. Sometimes, the translation is not even accurate, and the meaning might be lost.

Omar Jafaar agreed with Ahmed in that the Arabic language was a tool to understand the religion. Omar also agreed with Nabeel that the Arabic language was a channel to sustain their connection with their families living in Arabic countries in the Middle East. The Jafaar household and the Nabeel household believed it was also important to have their children visually connected with Arabic calligraphy. Their houses displayed frames on the walls that had calligraphy of verses from the Quran. The Nabeel household also had the names of their children engraved in Arabic writing on metal pieces that were displayed on the wall as a representation of Tunisian traditional art. There was also a number of Arabic books in the

Nabeel's and the Jafaar's book collections that were displayed in their family rooms. The frequent use of Arabic phrases was clearly observed in all the interview sessions. The phrases were mainly linked to *Allah*, such as *masha' Allah* (God has willed it), and *subha Allah* (glory to God). Some Arabic phrases were associated with actions as well, such as the examples that Diana provided including the phrase *bismiillah* (in the name of God), which was expected to be said at the start of any action. Another example was the phrase *alhamdu lillah* (praise be to God), which was also expected to be said at the end of actions, such as eating.

The Azeem and the Abdul Kareem families, where Arabic was not their first language, emphasized their desire to have their children not only be capable of reading Quran in Arabic, but also to be capable of understanding what they were reading. Faheem and Mehreen expressed that they were only able to pronounce the Arabic language but had no comprehension of the words. They were genuinely interested in having Asaad understand the language in order to help him understand the religion better. Shurki Abdul Kareem mentioned that she taught her children how to read Arabic, and because she did not understand the language, she familiarized herself with an English translation of the Arabic text to establish some kind of comprehension with Arabic being the reference point

Theme Seven: Parent's Involvement in their Children's Education

Styles of Teacher-Parent Communications

From the five participating households, the mothers in three households were more involved in their children's education at home and at school than the fathers. These families were the Azeem family, the Sulaiman family, and the Jafaar family. Adnaan Nabeel was more involved because Shafeeqah was engaged in the babysitting services she offered in

their household, and Rashad was more involved in his daughters' schooling because Shurki regarded spending time with her younger children as her priority. Shukri mentioned that since the boys were becoming older, she started becoming more involved in her son's education through visiting their schools, volunteering, joining fieldtrips, and engaging with the teachers in informal conversations about the Islamic culture.

In terms of the parents' perception about the teachers' role in the schooling experience of their children, three findings are reported. First, three families, the Azeem's, the Nabeel's, and the Jafaar's, believed that there was, and should be, a reciprocal type of communication between the teachers and the parents of minority students. Mehreen Azeem tried to keep open channels with her son's teacher by updating her about Asaad's life, family's norms and values, and cultural holidays. Mehreen mentioned that Asaad's teacher from last year also kept Mehreen informed about issues that might have concerned her as a mother of a Muslim student, such as dietary restrictions, celebrations and holidays. She also asked Mehreen to join the class and talk about Eid as part of a small celebration the class organized for this holiday. As for Adnaan Nabeel, he kept close communications with his children's teachers through visiting the school, calling the teachers, and engaging in informal discussions with the teachers about various issues such as bullying and class attendance. Salma Jafaar reported that she always kept an open dialogue with the teachers and administrators of her children's school. She introduced herself to Nahalah's science teacher, and he asked her if she would be willing to allow the class visit a lab in the university. At the time of the interview, Salma was preparing for the visit and both her daughter and herself were excited about the event.

The second finding was noted in the Sulaiman family where Diana and Ahmed believed that the process was less reciprocal since the teachers were always overwhelmed

with academic and administrative tasks. Therefore, they expected teachers to be less engaged in acquiring cultural information about their students. Diana and Ahmed expressed that they would have liked to have more communications with the teachers through emails or social and informal events for the parents. Diana and Ahmed also indicated that they were the ones taking initiatives to let the teachers learn about the Islamic culture.

The third finding was noted in the Abdul Kareem family where Rashad expressed that it was the duty of the teachers to inquire about students' cultures and faiths. He explained that some cultures, including the Somali culture, might delegate the responsibility of education to teachers. He implied that teachers in these cultures are highly respected and parents' involvement could be a sign of intrusion and disrespect. He added further by saying:

In my culture for example, the teacher is expected to take care of teaching, not the parents. Here it is different. Minority parents here are expected to be more involved in their children's education. On the other hand, if the school notices that the parents are not being part of their children's education, they should communicate with them for the sake of the students. Some parents in our community lack education and that's why they don't want to participate in communications with the school, and the other side, teachers perceive this lack of involvement as a sign of lack of interest. The children are the ones that fall in the crack.

Theme Eight: Suggestions about Cultural Responsive Pedagogical Models

A final theme related to the purpose of the study was suggestions from Muslim parents about how to incorporate their children's' funds of knowledge in culturally responsive pedagogical models in public schools. Further discussion on these suggestions will be addressed in Chapter Five as part of the section on implications for educators, which is designed to directly link the characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogies to the parents' suggestions. The suggestions can be categorized into four areas. First, the parents tackled the issue of cultural responsiveness as a concept that stems from schools' consciousness of the essence of multiculturalism in Canada. Most parents recommended that

teachers and school administration reflect a sense of interest in learning about the students' cultural backgrounds and a sense of respect for the students' ways of living and cultural heritages. The parents wanted the teachers to care about their children not only as students, but also as people who belong to a culture that is rich in philosophy and history. Accordingly, the parents suggested that schools and teacher education programs should focus more on creating opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers to learn about the core values and beliefs of various cultures, specifically those that have religion as a fundamental element.

The second area addressed establishing alliances between schools and the parents or the community. The parents addressed themselves and the Muslim community as important resources that the schools and the teachers could utilize to learn more about the Islamic culture, or to have as guest speakers who could provide students with living examples of how Muslims live and what they believe in. The third area addressed the suggestion of incorporating aspects of the Islamic culture into the curriculum, such as class discussions and projects. The parents claimed that this is an attempt to make the curriculum more familiar to Muslim students' daily lives. It would also allow their children to feel that their cultural variation is something they could share instead of hiding or assimilating. Some parents mentioned that schools are the best places to negate the stereotypes and misconceptions around the Islamic culture. The fourth area addressed efforts to accommodate manifestations of cultural norms and obligations, especially those that pertain to the religion of Islam, such as prayers, fasting, and religious holidays. They also suggested incorporating the Arabic language as a means to support the process of cultivating their children's cultural identity. The parents indicated that this would show their children that their language is valid, and that the school is willing to help them develop such crucial element in their cultural identity.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the data collection resources and helped the reader understand the influence of the Islamic culture on Muslim children's daily lives. Eight themes emerged from the gathered data. The first theme addressed how spirituality and rituals were represented in the participating households. The following three themes talked about the type of relationships that were exhibited within each household, with the extended families, and with the larger society. The fifth theme tackled the contribution of cultural institutions, such as a mosque and a weekend school, in cultivating the Islamic culture in the households. The sixth theme emerged as another fund of knowledge, which talked about the relevance of the Arabic language in the participating households. The seventh theme addressed parents' involvement in their children's education by discussing the styles of parent-teacher communication styles. The final theme presented suggestions on how the parents wanted to see their children's funds of knowledge incorporated in culturally responsive pedagogical models. The first six themes could be seen as funds of knowledge that affect the daily lives and the learning preference of Muslim students. Accordingly, the next chapter will provide a discussion on the findings, implications for educators especially with attention from the last two themes, implications for future research, limitations and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The previous chapter presented the findings from the collected data in five Muslim households. The first six themes responded to the first research question, which was “How do Muslim parents describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their children’s daily lives?”. This influence was described through the daily funds of knowledge, which were presented in the themes of spirituality and rituals, household relationships, relationships with extended family, relationship with the larger society, contribution of cultural institutions, and the relevance of the Arabic language. The last two themes, which addressed parents’ involvement in their children’s education, and the parents’ suggestions on how to incorporate their children’s funds of knowledge into classroom and school pedagogies, responded to the second research question, which was “How would Muslim parents like to see these funds of knowledge addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model?”.

This chapter aims to generate a discussion on the findings to provide the reader with a more focused knowledge about the influence of the Islamic culture on Muslim children’s daily lives. This chapter also aims to link the findings to the previously addressed literature. The chapter will also discuss the implications of these findings. It is particularly important to echo Creswell’s (2009) idea of reflexivity, which indicates that interpreting findings is based on the researcher’s cultural, social, and gender positions and attitudes that he or she brings into the research. Therefore, I would like to assert that the following discussion and implications could have been formulated differently if the research was conducted by another individual who might have had different relationships with the research and the researched.

Discussion

Three areas of discussion are generated from the findings of this research. The first area is the centrality of religion in the lives of Muslims belonging to various ethnic backgrounds. This area encompasses the themes of spirituality and rituals, and the relevance of the Arabic language. The second area is the cultural paradigm that the families signified; this area drew on findings from the themes of household relationships, relationships with extended family members, relationships with the larger society, and parents' involvement in their children's education. The third area of discussion is the process of identity negotiation, which encompasses the findings in the theme of contribution of cultural institutions, and relationship with the larger society.

The Centrality of Religion

The findings of this multiple case study confirmed some of the previous literature that the religion of Islam informed most aspects of Muslims' decisions and views of reality. However, most of the literature on the religion of Islam provided a one way discussion that describes how the religion feeds into the lives of Muslims. How Muslims operationalize, administer, and rationalize the teachings of the religion was rarely discussed. This research study provided a description of a living example of how the religion is administered in Muslim households on a daily basis according to the voices of Muslim parents. By doing so, Islam was not presented in this study as a static set of rituals and worship activities, but as a dynamic feature that informed and rationalized many aspects of Muslims' manifestation of the Islamic culture in a Western society. This is particularly relevant since previous research on Muslims in Diaspora reported that adhering to the teachings of Islam had increased upon moving to the West ((Berns- McGown, 1999; Zine, 2001). The clear consciousness of God

(*Allah*), as signified in the daily prayers, reading the Quran, supplications, and fasting, was an important aspect in the continuity of the Islamic culture in these households. It appeared that the Arabic language was an essential tool to preserve the Islamic culture in all the participating families. They viewed the Arabic language as a way to understand the Quran, and ultimately understanding what *Allah* has commanded Muslims, and also as a way to sustain relationships with extended family members. All Muslim children in this study allocated time to learn the Arabic language and reading and memorizing Quran.

The consciousness of *Allah* influenced Muslims' connection with not only this life but also with the after-life. The parents believed that this life was a passage that could determine the kind of life one would have in the next life. The more *Allah* conscious an individual can be, the better the passage becomes. Yet, to experience the passage successfully, the parents reported that they had to exert efforts to sustain this consciousness through, for example, practicing goodness towards oneself and towards the society through praying, offering supplications, and benefiting the community. *Allah*-consciousness could also be increased by avoiding what Sunni Muslims believe is prohibited according to the religion of Islam, such as drinking alcohol and dating. Rashad Abdul Kareem believed it was his duty to educate his son about the undesirable presence around drinking alcohol. In the Jafaar family, dating and mixing with the opposite gender are practices that are continually talked about in the family as undesirable. This has made Nahlah go through the fear of having to date or dance with boys in order to fit in at her school. In addition, the parents implied they are expected to reduce attachment to this life since it is only the passage to the hereafter and not the ultimate goal. Reducing this attachment is done through doing things for the sake of *Allah* as much as possible and not for worldly rewards and materialistic achievements.

It is perhaps important for educators to understand that spiritually and god-consciousness are central to Muslim students. This centrality could be translated into daily rituals such as offering prayers, which were essential to all the participating families in this study. The centrality of the religion also shapes and influences how Muslim students perceive life, experience reality, and articulate definitions. The concept of reward and goodness, for example, were broadened to encompass not only materialistic and tangible effects, but also to encompass sentimental rewards such as the pleasure of parents and the pleasure of *Allah* that could lead to paradise in the hereafter. For example, volunteering and working for charitable causes were seen as ways to follow one of Prophet Muhammad's teachings which dictate that the best of people are the ones who serve people the most. Fear, on the other hand, was in some cases linked to losing Allah's pleasure and deserving retribution not only in this life, but also in the next life. Such long term thinking and contemplation that were beyond this life's reality guided the households' rationale for their practices. For example, Faheem taught his son that one of the reasons for respecting his father was that he did not want *Allah* to be mad at him. Mehreen also taught her son that if they did not respect *Allah*'s bounties, he will take them away from them.

Cultural Paradigm

In their article about modifying cognitive therapy to accommodate Muslim clients, Hodge and Nadir (2008) generally described the Islamic culture by saying, "life is seen as a holistic experience in which the spiritual informs all aspects of existence. Among the more commonly affirmed are community, consensus, interdependence, self-control, complementary gender roles, implicit communication that safeguards others' opinions, and identity rooted in religion, culture, and family" (p. 32). Even though this study did not

examine all these characteristics, it was clear that the participating households regarded family relationships and relationships with the community as fundamental in their daily lives. This important aspect signified a collective attitude in which family members practiced interdependence on each other in sustaining their cultural identity and providing moral and emotional support. Evidently, mothers had the most integral role in transferring, sustaining, and cultivating the cultural identity of the families.

Power dynamics also played an important role in the participating households where parents represented authority and children were expected to show respect to their parents and follow their parents' guidance and advice. Growing up in a society that appreciates individuality, these values might not be completely recognized or sometimes appreciated. In her interviews with Muslim females, Rezai-Rashti (2005) talked about how some teachers and counsellors advised Muslim females to leave their houses and abandon their cultures when there were conflicts between these females and their parents revolving around issues of permissions and cultural norms. Rezai-Rashti suggested that this not only represented a stereotypical perspective about the Islamic culture as oppressive, but it also contributed to the lack of understanding the power dynamics in Muslim households and the complexity of the process of negotiating multiple identities where the Islamic culture shapes the cultural identity of the parents. In this study, the findings shed light on how household relationships are rationalized and administered in a collective cultural paradigm that is guided by the constant consciousness of God and motivated by rewards in the hereafter.

It is also important to understand how ethnic implications could influence the families' involvement in the Islamic culture. For example, as Ontario became one of the top destinations for Somali refugees after the 1991 upheaval in Somalia, many Somali women suddenly became the heads of their households since most refugees were females and

children (Israelite, Herman, Alim, Mohamed, & Khan, 1999). In the Abdul Kareem family, Shukri moved to Canada three years before her husband was able to join her. Shukri was also pregnant with their twin daughters Taiba and Alia, and she gave birth during the first year of her arrival to Canada. The dramatic social, economic, and cultural change that Shukri went through is something that most Somali families encountered upon arrival to Canada. The resilience that Shukri exhibited in her attempts to sustain her family's cultural continuity and ethnic social norms is perhaps something that needs to be examined as a fundamental fund of knowledge for Somali students specifically. The Sulaiman family was another example of how ethnic background shaped their experience as members of the Islamic culture. As Ahmed was a Palestinian Muslim, his family had a more developed understanding of the experiences of people living in political and social unrest. The family's awareness of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as one of the most heated conflicts in the Middle East, allowed them to have a more profound knowledge about the concepts of struggle, hunger, and appreciation for the community. These concepts were also linked to issues that pertained to the religion of Islam, such as living this life as a passage for the next life, and the obligation to help the needy and the hungry. This understanding that has a political dimension adds another layer to the complexity of the how the Islamic culture is formulated in their household.

Identity Negotiation and Cultural Continuity

The majority of the interviewed parents had gone through experiences of migration, relocation for work and education purposes, and displacement for political reasons. It was evident that these experiences provided the parents opportunities to be exposed to various cultures and ways of living while trying to preserve their Islamic culture as the most

influential factor in their daily lives. Their attempts to preserve their cultural continuity were extended to preserve their children's cultural continuity as well since the children also were constantly negotiating their identities in school and at home. This point was articulated by Adnaan Nabeel when he explained that empathy and attempts to understand the cultural orientations of his children are vital factors to respect, appreciate, and accommodate them. Adnaan perceived his children's cultural difference as a feature that add a rich experience to his children's lives, and that this difference deserves respect and appreciation.

It appeared that as the parents were trying to preserve their children's Islamic culture, they and their children were engaging in a similar process of identity negotiation described by Berns-McGown (1999) and Zine (2001) in Canadian contexts. Their studies reported that Muslims' daily lives function on interchangeable and continually intersecting schemes of isolation, interaction, and accommodation while experiencing a sense of ambivalence throughout this dynamic process. The findings of this study also generally reflected this tendency. With regards to the isolation strategy, I argue that this term might have a negative implication attached to it. Instead, for the purpose of this study at least, the findings suggested that these Sunni Muslim families were practicing perseverance in order to preserve their cultural identity. Perseverance was translated into sending their children to cultural institutions and creating provisions to sustain the Islamic culture in their households, such as reading Quran at home together, learning the Arabic language, and running gatherings for Islamic knowledge. For some families, this was seen as a duty and a responsibility they took upon themselves with little support from the larger community.

With regards to the interaction strategy, all the families made a conscious decision to send their children to public schools and not Islamic schools. Some of the parents engaged in activities that involved individuals and groups of various cultures. For example, Salma

volunteered to organize a trip for science demonstrations at a university laboratory. She was also involved in providing knowledge about the Islamic culture to health practitioners. Mehreen also accepted an invitation to speak at her son's class about Eid and how it is celebrated.

With regards to the accommodation strategy, some parents had open dialogues with teachers and school administrations on how to accommodate the influence of the Islamic culture in their children's daily lives, such as the need to pray and celebrate Islamic holidays. The example of Diana as she suggested offering a program that taught the Arabic language was another attempt to work with educators in order to accommodate Muslim students. These attempts could indicate, though not contested in this study, that these families believed there was a space within the schools regulations and social contexts in which wishes to accommodate Muslim students were possible and could be achieved. As well, there was also evidence to support the sense of ambivalence that some parents and their children experienced while in the process of negotiating their identity. For example, Salma reported that her daughter Nahlah was apprehensive about wearing the hijab because she wanted to fit in with her group. She thought that the headscarf placed a boundary that could prevent her from social interactions with her classmates. Also, the instance of Rashad Abdul Kareem when he advised his son to be alert in his relationships with non-Muslim friends was an example of ambivalence and apprehension caused by the fear that such relationship could jeopardize his faith.

All the families were connected with mosques, weekend schools that taught about the Islamic culture, and schools and private classes that taught the Arabic language. These cultural institutions were seen as tools to provide the children with cultural knowledge, a sense of belonging, and pride. Adnaan Nabeel and Omar Jafaar indicated that these

institutions are mostly based on community efforts to sustain their services. This indication leads to reflecting on the establishment of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. The purpose of the act was to promote culturally sensitive institutional change in order to preserve cultural languages and cultural norms that enable cultural groups feel included and accommodated. The cultural institutions that the interviewed families addressed in this study could be included or integrated into the system of public education while functioning within the boundaries of such important statute that signifies diversity in Canada. At the end of the interviews in the Azeem family and the Sulaiman family, Faheem and Ahmed indicated that the idea of trying to understand the students' funds of knowledge and create ways to validate them and then channelling them into pedagogies brought comfort and relief to both of them. They reported that they always felt their attempts to preserve their children's cultural identity were only individual efforts that were not systematically supported by the schools or the larger community. This reality could jeopardize inclusion and participation of cultural minorities as Akhtar (2007) asserts, "when a mainstream and dominant culture cuts a minority culture from the power and from other sources that will sustain group pride, the result is group de-motivation and group dysfunction that affect the individual who belong to the minority group" (p. 86).

Through the Lens of a Pedagogical Model: Implications and Recommendations

The interviewed parents were asked how they would like to see their children's funds of knowledge incorporated in culturally responsive pedagogical models at their children's public school. Accordingly, this section presents the parents' suggestions and my recommendations on how to be responsive to Muslim children in the public school system.

The recommendations will be linked to Gay's (2000) characteristics of cultural responsiveness in public schools, which were briefly addressed in the literature review of this study. To reiterate, Gay described cultural responsive teaching as validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. The link to the findings is presented for two reasons. First, Gay's characteristics of cultural responsiveness help understand and situate each of the suggestions and recommendations as viewed through the pedagogical lenses. Second, these characteristics are not addressed in the previous literature on integrating Muslim students into the public school system. Therefore, this section will add to the literature by presenting how these characteristics could be operationalized in order to respond to Muslim students and their cultural needs in the public school system. Some of the recommendations that were addressed by the parents were profound and I decided to include some of their direct quotes in order to help the reader to connect with their input within a pedagogical discussion.

Validating

Gay suggests that incorporating students' home cultures could be validating to the authenticity and legitimacy of the cultural heritage and style of living of students from various cultural backgrounds. Hence, culturally responsive teaching helps students develop a sense of pride of who they are, and it helps them praise other cultural heritages. For the Muslim parents of this study, the Islamic culture could be validated through different ways. First, the parents stressed that it is vital for educators to understand that Muslim students live on a nexus of multiple identities. This understanding would help educators attempt to investigate each identity. The parents addressed that proper investigation would provide a chance to authenticate the students' home culture and make them feel that their home culture

is meaningful even in a classroom setting. Proper investigation could mean involving parents and community members to talk to schools about the specifications of the Islamic culture and how it functions in Muslim households. One of the participants suggested having more informal meetings with teachers in which the parents would feel comfortable talking about the home culture. Secondly, the Islamic culture could be validated through issues of representation. Diana Sulaiman mentioned how she felt that her Islamic culture was validated when she saw three equal in size symbols that represented Christianity, Judaism, and Islam printed on the wall of the gym at her daughter's school. Offering an Arabic class at the same school is considered a venue of responsive representation that validated an important element in the Islamic culture. for schools with a large Muslim population, offering an Arabic class could be a significant responsive mechanism to validate the Islamic culture.

Comprehensive

The second characteristic of cultural responsiveness is that it is comprehensive since it addresses the academic, cultural, emotional, and behavioural aspects of students. All the interviewed parents suggested that spirituality and rituals are the most fundamental elements in the Islamic culture. They also stressed that it is important to acknowledge these elements as factors that shape Muslim students' social perspectives and cultural knowledge and literacy. Daily prayers were also important factors to sustain the Islamic cultural continuity. The parents strongly recommended that schools provide Muslim students with prayer time and space to observe their religious obligations. This is in congruence to what the Toronto District School Board (2000) had presented in its document entitled *Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observance*. The section on the religion of Islam outlined the right for Muslim students to have time and

space to offer their daily prayers. From November to March (when we follow Daylight Saving Time), the noon prayer falls during the school day, and Muslim students are expected to perform the prayer before the time of the next prayer, which starts during school hours as well. The interviewed parents expressed their constant concern that their children needed to offer the prayer in a timely fashion since it is not recommended to miss any of the five prayers. Outside of the Daylight Saving Time, students could have sufficient time to offer the noon prayer at home since the next prayer occurs after four o'clock in the afternoon. When the Jafaar family tried to explain this to the administration of their children's school, the vice-principal exhibited doubts and lack of trust in this new information that was addressed approximately two months after the beginning of the school year. It would be advantageous if a similar document to the Toronto report could be prepared for educators in the school district boards in Ottawa in order to provide schools' administrations with such information. Some of the families explained that high schools with a large Muslim population are likely to accommodate Muslim students' daily need to pray; however, Muslim students in elementary schools struggle to fulfill this important Islamic requirement. The struggle could be attributed, though not contested in this study, to the fact that the students at this age are normally building their cultural identity and exploring various cultural manifestations that could be influenced by many factors, such as peer pressure, media, and popular culture.

Multidimensional

The third characteristic of cultural responsiveness in schools is that it is multidimensional. Culturally responsive teaching involves addressing issues and concepts from various cultural angles, and also incorporating cultural orientations of students from various backgrounds into curriculum content, classroom management, and student-teacher

relationships. For example, the concept of consumption has different interpretations from one culture to another. The concept was addressed by three families in this study, and it appeared that consumption was linked to perceptions about preserving food, responsibility to share food and time with others, and pleasing God. Gay suggests that tackling concepts from different cultural perspectives could help students be critical of cultural values and beliefs, and also be able to correct misconceptions about their cultures, which is a process that helps students become more confident about their connection with their cultures. This was similar to some instances with one of the Adul Kareem's daughters where she was able to correct one of her teacher's comments about how Muslim families raise their children to be militant. Abdul Kareem attributed his daughter's ability to refute her teacher's suggestion to the family's effort to teach her the Islamic culture and the true understanding of the religion.

The dimension of student-teacher relationships was also addressed by the interviewed families. Most parents suggested that their children, especially those at early school years, are perceptive of their teachers' attitudes towards their cultural orientations. The children become excited to share their cultural knowledge when they sense their teachers' genuine interest in learning about their culture. The parents indicated that this type of interest improves their children's ability to talk about their Islamic culture and how they practice it on a daily basis. This was experienced with Asaad Azeem whose teacher from the previous academic year used to show a high level of interest in learning about the Islamic culture. Mehreen mentioned that Asaad was always interested in sharing cultural knowledge with his teacher; and this motivated him to acquire more knowledge about the Islamic culture from his mother and develop a higher self-esteem about who he is. Mehreen mentioned that Asaad was not having the same enthusiasm to share information about his cultural background

because he did not witness the same level of interest in learning about his culture with his current teachers.

Empowering

The fourth characteristic suggests that cultural responsiveness is empowering. Some of the parents suggested using Muslim students as resources to talk about their Islamic culture and how they live it on a daily basis. Acknowledging their home cultures and lifestyles could empower the students as cultural beings and help them realize that other ways of living are acceptable and valid. Ahmed Sulaiman addressed this issue as a vignette that I would like to use verbatim:

For instance, a teacher could say that Mohammad for example is fasting today, and may be he could tell us a few points about Ramadan and what it means because this would help with improving the kids' self esteem. The kid will say, ok I'm different but everybody knows about how I live my life, so kids start coming out of their box and start interacting with everybody. Being different and having no one knows about the differences make minority kids start hiding their differences and keeping them to themselves and start feeling alienated.

It is important to acknowledge that teachers have their assessment tools to evaluate proper approaches that could empower students and increase their self esteem and confidence in their cultural backgrounds. Activities for cultural empowerment could be also extended to involving parents and community members who could be contacted and asked to share their cultural knowledge with educators or with students. Mehreen was an example of this suggestion when she was invited to talk about Eid in her son's class. As another example, the fact that school administrators were attentive to Diana's request to consider offering an Arabic class made her feel as an empowered stakeholder who could play a role in guiding the school to what is more culturally responsive to her children's needs.

Transformative

The fifth characteristic of cultural responsiveness according to Gay (2000) is that it is transformative. This characteristic implies that educators transform students' cultural differences and home cultures into strengths and characteristics that leverage students' abilities to share their cultural knowledge and heritages. In this domain, Trumbull and Pacheco (2005) asserted, "learning builds on what students already know. What students know can serve as the bridge to new knowledge and new ways of knowing" (p. 21). All of the interviewed parents stressed how vital it is to respect and appreciate their children's cultural backgrounds and where they come from. It was important for the parents that educators understand that minority children are constantly exploring concepts and experiences within their multiple cultural identities. It would be relevant to address these concepts as perceived by the students' cultural paradigms. One way to do this is by addressing how the concepts of community and giving back to the community are articulated in the Islamic culture, and how they could be relevant to philanthropic topics that encourage students to share their knowledge, time, and efforts. This could affirm and validate one of the cultural practices that Muslims are encouraged to perform, and it also transforms this knowledge into a strength and a more community-based virtue that is relevant to today's society. I would also like to draw on the same example of offering an Arabic class in a public school as was the case with Amirah Sulaiman. The Arabic language, which is an important cultural factor in the Islamic culture, was considered a cultural tool that could be administered as an accessible knowledge. Since course offering was endorsed by the school, the class seemed to be a cultural experience that was transformed into a shared knowledge that students utilized to cross cultural boundaries and learn more about other ways of experiencing life.

Emancipatory

The sixth characteristic of cultural responsiveness is that it is emancipatory. This characteristic builds on realizing that mainstream cultural assumptions and norms might not be meaningful or applicable to students of minorities, which adds to the complexity of students' process of identity negotiation on a daily basis. Cultural responsiveness provides all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, with an opportunity to have access to other ways of understanding and legitimizing the world. Gay asserts, "Culturally responsive pedagogy helps students realize that no single version of "truth" is total and permanent. Nor should it be allowed to exist uncontested" (p. 35). In a multicultural society like the Canadian society, it should be unacceptable to continue marginalizing other forms of experiencing life where such experiences make complete sense in households that stem from rich heritages and cultures with vast contribution to human civilization. Gay suggests that schools are the best places to offer opportunities to challenge existing social and power structures that tend to be normalized. As mentioned by some parents, the cultural diversity of the Canadian society is what makes Canada a beautiful piece of cultural mosaic in which each culture should be nurtured and cultivated to capitalize on the essence of multiculturalism with no tolerance for labelling and stigmatizing. A personal account that was mentioned by Diana Sulaiman exemplified her fear of having her children marginalized and associated with misconceptions. Diana asserted:

I remember we had an Indian boy in our class when I was in school. He was known as the "Indian boy. We loved him and we included him, but it felt that he was segregated. I'm afraid that my kids will grow up to be called the "Muslim kids" or the "Arab kids" with a negative tone. I want them to grow up being proud of who they are and not afraid of difference and labelling. The kids need to be exposed to these differences so they won't be afraid of them.

Furthermore, Gay (2000) suggests that when students feel that their cultural differences are respected, accommodated, and discussed critically in class, students will more likely have an opportunity to release psychological stress that is associated with trying to assimilate and hide these differences. After my interview with the Jafaar family, Nahlah asked her mother Salma about the reason of my visit. Salma explained to her the purpose of the research. Nahlah prepared an email and requested her mother to forward it to me. Her message reflected anxiety as she said:

I am very and I mean VERY afraid of next year!!!! Going to grade six won't be that easy..... The dances, activities with boys and again DANCES!!!! In most public schools like mine must have a dance for grade six at least once in the school year, either the Snow Flake Dance or the Rock n' Roll Dance etc. I want the teachers to at least expect these 2 things:

1. Most Muslims won't come

2. No boys should ask these particular girls out

And when the boys are deciding who to ask out the teacher should tell us what day it is!!!!

In the Islamic culture, some families are particular about gender relationships in general, and after the age of puberty in specific. Casual physical interaction with the opposite sex will be highly avoided. Nahlah, at a young age, was experiencing feelings of apprehension towards having to reject some common social activities in school; a decision that might lead to alienating her from the group. The issue of male-female interactions according to the religion of Islam was addressed in the Toronto District School Board's document (2000) that outlined accommodations of religious requirements and practices. It would be advantageous if such issue is addressed in schools at the city of Ottawa, specifically those with a large Muslim population.

Limitations of the Study

Four areas of limitations should be addressed in order to help the reader better understand and situate the findings and implications. The first area discusses limitations regarding access to data. The second area discusses limitations related to interpretations and analysis of the findings, while the third discusses limitations related to the issue of transferability in a qualitative research. The fourth area discusses limitations around issues of dependability and contexts of the study.

Access to Data

Being a practicing Muslim who is also involved in the Muslim community, I have been privileged to have access to the participating households and to establish a level of rapport and trust with the families. It is important to acknowledge that approaching this type of study while lacking shared social experiences with members of the Islamic culture could have not provided the same opportunities to enter the houses of these families.

Another issue that emerged during the phase of recruiting the participants was fulfilling the criteria for participation. One of the largest Muslim populations in the city of Ottawa is the Somali community, and therefore, I was genuinely interested in interviewing a Somali family to represent this large community in the research. Most of the Somali families who contacted me to be part of this study did not meet all the criteria, specifically the criteria of having both parents present during the interview. I addressed this issue with some members of the Somali community and they anecdotally expressed that Somali families in Canada are experiencing high divorce and separation rates. Some of the Somali families are also struggling to reunite with their family members like their husbands and wives. Therefore, the Abdul Kareem family in this study might not be representative of the

demographical profile within the social fabric of the Somali community in the city of Ottawa, and possibly other cities in Canada.

Finally, as the recruitment process for participants was initiated in a mosque, it is assumed that the parents who showed interest in participating were likely to be practicing Muslims. This study recognizes that collecting data from households of non-practicing Muslims could have likely yielded different information, and therefore, different interpretations of the influence of the Islamic culture. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that participants of the study were relatively belonging to a homogeneous group of middle-class individuals who are highly educated and have been in Canada for an extended period of time. This study could have had a closer representation of the diverse Muslim population in Ottawa if the profiles of the families were less homogeneous, such as having parents with no higher education and who had recently settled in Canada.

Interpretations and Analysis

The findings and conclusions of this thesis research are limited to the data collected from five Sunni Muslim households with children enrolled in public schools. The data gathered could have had a different scope and focus if the participants were following other sects of the religion of Islam, or if each household had a different ethnicity than the ethnic backgrounds of the interviewed parents. Additionally, even though I previously discussed my relationship with the research and the researched, and I also described my prior experience in the Middle East and in the United States and Canada, this research study is limited to my own interpretations of the data through my personal analysis of the previous literature review and the personal filters that were constructed and reconstructed by my cultural and academic background. The themes that were generated in this study represented what I believed was

helpful to better understand the influence of the Islamic culture. I acknowledge that other themes might have emerged from the same data if analyzed by an individual with a different cultural background.

On the analytic level, the purpose of this study was to profoundly understand how the Islamic culture influenced the daily lives of Sunni Muslim children at the interviewed households. This purpose dictated that patterns and themes should be clearly detected in the transcripts and carefully presented collectively in order to help the reader understand the influence of the Islamic culture. On the other hand, in order to allow for a diverse representation of how the influence of the Islamic culture could be lived and experienced, it was relevant to present discrepant data within each pattern by showing how each family followed a specific pattern or theme. It appeared that each pattern or theme was manifested according to varied priorities and rationale. Reading Quran, for example, was an evident pattern in the data, but it was demonstrated differently in each family, some with more frequent reading and understanding than other families. This study, therefore, is limited to the data that followed the patterns and themes of the study in order to provide the reader with a collective and clearly evident description of the influence of the Islamic culture in the interviewed households. Narrations such as workplace issues related to Muslim employees, who were addressed by the Azeem family, were important foundations for significant future research questions. However, such narrations were not consistent across cases and did not follow a pattern that would aid in understanding the influence of the Islamic culture.

This research adapted one of Stake's (2006) frameworks of analysing a multiple case study in which I integrated documents generated from the Nvivo computer software for analyzing qualitative data. There were no previous studies that employed an integration of these two tools for the purpose of analysing research data. As this is a novice attempt to

utilize technology following a specific framework of analysis, the decisions that were made to facilitate such integration were based on careful attempts to adhere to the framework of analysis by following steps and guidelines for conducting the analysis. Personal analytical judgement that stems from previous research involvement in computerized organization of data allowed me to confirm the decisions that were made to facilitate the integration of both tools used for data analysis. It is relevant to acknowledge that other researchers could implement other ways of integrating Nvivo into Stake's (2006) framework of analysis, and eventually, provide a different set of merged findings and themes from the same data set.

This study acknowledges that some of the suggested implications and recommendations were relevant to the interviewed parents and pertinent to the surrounding social and cultural contexts of the study. However, these recommendations might not be applicable in certain schools within certain contexts. Rather, the suggestions could be seen as opportunities to consider ways of acknowledging and utilizing Muslim children's' funds of knowledge, and to examine the possibilities of incorporating such suggestions, or at least modified versions of these suggestions, into classroom pedagogies. On the other hand, the models suggested in this study might be relevant to the process of integrating students from other cultural backgrounds, and in this case, attention will be given to their cultural funds of knowledge.

Finally, answers to the interview questions did not reveal gendered data even though representation of gender was one of the criteria implemented for recruiting participants. Interview questions could have been formulated differently to generate discussion on how the influence of the Islamic culture might be gendered in a Sunni Muslim household. Questions on how the interviewed Sunni Muslim parents would like to see their children's funds of knowledge recognized in public schools based on the gender of their children might

have presented information on gender roles, expectations, and gender perceptions in these Sunni Muslim households. It is worth noticing that my membership of the Sunni Muslim community might have been a factor in the parents' silence about gender in their households. The parents might have assumed that I understood gender roles due to being a Sunni Muslim researcher.

Transferability

Creswell (2007) explains that transferability refers to how closely the results of the study could be transferred to other similar situations and settings. He also contends that it is the responsibility of the reader or the future researcher to evaluate how transferable the conclusions are to a similar situation or setting (Creswell, 2007). In order to provide the reader with information to conduct the evaluation, profiles of the families based on their educational attainments and the length of their residence in Canada were presented at the beginning of the fourth chapter. Nevertheless, no attempts were made to collect information on socio-economic status of the participants or the academic performance of their children. These are two important realizations that might be considered before generalizing conclusions of this study to other similar situations or settings.

Dependability

The idea of dependability calls for the qualitative research design to provide information about the social surroundings of the research study. In the literature review of this study, I included a section on the contexts of the study where I described diversity and the concept of multiculturalism in Canada. I also addressed a relevant recent issue that linked culture to pedagogy, and a description of the experiences of Muslims in Canada from a

sociological perspective. The decision to undertake this study and the conceptual design of this research were dependent on these social contexts. It is essential to acknowledge that the conduct of this study might have taken a different route if these social surroundings were not acknowledged at the inception of this thesis research. It is also important for future researchers to understand that any change of these surroundings on political, social, or pedagogical levels will highly affect the design of research on investigating what shapes the experiences and realities of minority groups.

Implications for Future Research

Three research questions emerged after the analysis of this multiple case study, and therefore will require further investigation in order to respond to or fully address such inquiries. Since the interview questions of this thesis research were formulated to solicit description of how the Islamic culture influenced a specific set of funds of knowledge, future research projects could investigate a wider scope of the influence of the Islamic culture manifested in other types of funds of knowledge and described by individuals other than the parents themselves. Accordingly, the first research question is “how does the Islamic culture influence the daily lives of Muslim children?”. In order to tackle this influence, a qualitative tradition might be more relevant since it calls for study designed that would genuinely and profoundly explore an issue or a phenomenon. Creswell (2007) contends that this intention of exploration is attributed to “the need to study a group or population, identify variables that can then be measured, or hear silenced voices” (p. 40). Conducting an ethnographic research study in a Muslim household for an extended period of time could provide an opportunity to closely examine what shapes the experiences of Muslim children. This could be done by recording observations of daily activities of Muslim children and their parents. Since this

thesis research revealed the importance of the Arabic language to sustain the Islamic culture in the participating Muslim households, this suggested future research could observe literacy acquisition tendencies as a manifestation of the influence of the Islamic culture in Muslim households. An additional data collection method could be conducting interviews with leaders in Muslim institutions, such as in mosques or in Islamic schools, to further learn about the influence of the Islamic culture from individuals involved in the community and are aware of the challenges faced by Muslim families in the West.

Another research design that could yield more information about the influence of the Islamic culture could be conducting an exploratory mixed method research study. Future researchers could quantitatively ask a selected sample of Muslim parents and leaders of selected Muslim communities to provide information and ratings of how the Islamic culture influences their children's daily lives. Qualitative interviews and open ended survey questions can also be methodological choices that could cater to the process of understanding more funds of knowledge in Muslim children's daily lives.

Another direction to further examine the influence of the Islamic culture on Muslim students who go to Islamic educational institutions would require collecting data from a sample of Islamic schools, for example, about the type of Islamic and Arabic education they offer. The study would also investigate daily activities that are designed to sustain the Islamic identity of Muslim children. Qualitative interviews with teachers in these schools would be appropriate to provide information on how they describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their students' social and behavioural skills. The comparison is needed to add a contextualized dimension to the process of understanding the type of influence that the Islamic culture has on Muslim children.

The previously discussed literature review reported on studies conducted to examine how Muslim students in high schools tried to maintain their Islamic identities (Rezai-Rashti, 2005; Zine, 2001). The findings of this thesis study also revealed that Muslim students in elementary public schools might not be accommodated to practice their Islamic culture the way that Muslim students in public high schools do. Future researchers could conduct an exploratory case study that aims to shed light on how Muslim children in elementary schools experience being Muslims in a public environment. Accordingly, the second research question that emerged from this study is “how do Muslim children in elementary public schools negotiate their multiple identities?”. Collecting data from focus groups that include Muslim children in elementary public schools could reveal information about the dynamics of the daily experiences that these children go through in their schools and how they intersect with their lives in their homes. This type of information would contribute to the literature a better understanding of the multiple identities and complex experiences that these children might encounter in an age where a sense of identity might not be completely formulated.

A final research question that emerged from this study is “What are public schools’ best practices of integrating Muslim students in culturally responsive pedagogical models?”. This research question is particularly important because it appeared from the previous discussed literature review that linking culture to pedagogy was rarely addressed when investigating integration of Muslim students into the public sphere. Case studies designed to explore best practices of a sample of schools that systematically integrate Muslim students, specifically in contexts with large Muslim population, could be another suggestion for future research on linking culture to pedagogy. This type of research could involve content analysis of school policies, classroom assignments, and communication letters sent to parents. The study could also involve interviewing teachers and administrators to examine their

perceptions on the concept of cultural responsiveness and the strategies they use to integrate Muslim students in the classroom. This suggested research study could be expanded to further explore cultural responsive pedagogies by investigating best practices in three main areas; teacher-student styles of communications; group work, and evaluation practices. These three areas could yield considerable information on how the knowledge about the Islamic culture can help teachers and educators respond effectively to social and academic needs of Muslim students.

Final Summation and Reflection

The purpose of the thesis research was to explore how Sunni Muslim parents from five ethnically diverse households described the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives, and how these parents wanted such influence to be incorporated into school and classroom pedagogies. The literature on this topic and the contexts surrounding the study were reviewed and presented to provide a background on how the conceptual framework of this thesis research was constructed. The study responded to the pressing need of addressing the issue of making the schooling experience more compatible to Muslim students' cultural patterns. The influence of the Islamic culture, therefore, was described through addressing the funds of knowledge that were manifested in forms of daily spirituality and rituals, various types of relationships, contribution of cultural institutions, and the relevance of the Arabic language.

Two data collection sources were chosen for this study, face-to-face interviews with both parents of each household, and recordings of the observations taken during the interview sessions about the physical surroundings. An analysis approach that integrated Stake's (2006) framework of analysing a multiple case study with the Nvivo computer

software was implemented in this research. Accordingly, eight themes emerged to help understand the daily influence of the Islamic culture in the participating households. Six themes responded to the primary research question that asked “How do Sunni Muslim parents describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their children’s daily lives?”, and two themes responded to the secondary research question that asked “How would Sunni Muslim parents like to see these funds of knowledge addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model?”.

Accordingly, the findings generated three areas of discussion. The first area was the centrality of the religion of Islam in the lives of Muslim households. This was mainly signified in the daily prayers, offering supplications, reading Quran, and the virtues of fasting. There was also a clear link between acquiring the Arabic language and sustaining the centrality of the Islamic faith in these households. The second area of discussion presented the cultural paradigm as depicted in the households. This was explained by the collective cultural pattern that cherished and respected family and the community, and how this operated within implications of ethnicity. The third area of discussion was about identity negotiation as presented by the parents. This area drew on Berns-McGown’s (1999) and Zine’s (2001) presentation on Muslims’ process of negotiating their identity through functioning on the intersecting schemes of isolation, interaction, and accommodation while experiencing a sense of ambivalence throughout this dynamic process. Finally, implications and suggestions provided by the parents on how to integrate their children’s funds of knowledge into school and classroom pedagogies were addressed based on Gay’s (2000) characterization of culturally responsive pedagogies. Geneva Gay explained that culturally responsive pedagogies are validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory.

In the reflective introduction of this thesis research, three vignettes were presented as events that triggered and influenced the decision to undertake this qualitative study. Asmahan's decision to keep her headscarf could have been an attempt to practice perseverance in order to preserve her cultural identity as a Muslim female. This could have been a stage in which she tried to negotiate her identity in a Western society that perhaps did not understand the value of this endeavour she chose to practice. The discomfort and alienation that my friend's daughter experienced because she spoke Arabic to her peers could have been legitimized once the importance of the Arabic language was understood. The Arabic language in this study was considered an important fund of knowledge that contributed to the cultivation of Muslim children's identity. The immense anger that was exerted throughout the world after the comic cartoons were released in a Danish newspaper could have been a powerful message that Muslims wanted to send to the world. Perhaps this message reflected the face that these cartoons added insult to the injury. At times of Muslims being marginalized and stereotyped, straining out a vital point in what is central in Muslims' lives was tremendously unacceptable and emotionally agitating.

As a final note in this thesis research, this study aimed to move from stereotypes and misrepresentation to empathy that feeds into learning about others, from neglect and alienation to showing genuine interest in acquiring knowledge about cultural groups, and from victimization to proactive approaches that are designed to include all students regardless of their cultural orientation.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent for the Parents

Title: A Multiple Case Study on Muslim Parents' perspective About the Influence of the Islamic Culture on their Children's Daily Lives.

Researcher: Dina Shalabi, Master of Arts student, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, 613-882-1795, dshal045@uottawa.ca

I, _____, and I, _____, understand that the purpose of the above mentioned study, which is conducted by Dina Shalabi from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, is to learn about how Muslim parents describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives, and how parents would like these daily experiences addressed in schools. I also understand that this study aims to produce knowledge, from Muslim parents as genuine cultural funds of knowledge, which educators could utilize in the process of developing strategies to create learning environments that integrates the Islamic culture in the Canadian educational and social fabric. I am also aware that the study will provide knowledge on the importance of the parents' role in their children's education, and how teachers could involve, empower, and validate the experiences of parents as cultural agents in the efforts to bridge the gap between home and school. Dina further explained to me that the study will also assist teacher educators, pre-service, and in-service teachers to be more exposed to the dynamics of linking religious cultures to classroom pedagogies as part of culturally responsive models.

I understand that my participation, as a Muslim parent, will consist of participating in one audio-taped interview of approximately 45-60 minutes during which I will provide answers to questions regarding the topic of research. The interview has been

scheduled for _____ at _____ on the _____ of _____.

I understand that the information obtained from this interview will only be used for the purposes of this study. I understand that even though there are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study, I was assured by Dina that I have the right to refuse answering any of the interview questions. I also understand that observational notes will be taken on the physical space in which the interview session will take place. I have been assured that my participation in the study is voluntary, and I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence. I am also aware that I can refuse to answer any of the interview questions.

I understand that in order to keep the information obtained from this study strictly confidential, a pseudonym or a false name will be used in any written text resulting from this research. I am aware that the data collected from the interview on audio tapes, and the transcripts of the interviews will be kept in a secure manner. Dr. Taylor will personally store the information gathered as audio tape recordings and transcripts in a secure location in his office. Only Dina and her thesis supervisor will have access to the information. The data will be kept for seven years after which paper records will be shredded and tapes will be physically destroyed.

I am aware that Dina will present me with a \$30 gift certificate from a book store as a token gift in recognition for my participation.

I am aware that any inquiries about the research study should be addressed to

Dina Shalabi at 1010 Cahill Dr. Ottawa, K1V 9H8, 613-882-1795,

dshal045@uottawa.ca, or to her Thesis supervisor, Dr. Maurice Taylor at 145 Jean

Jacques Lussier, Ottawa, K1N 6N5, LMX 230, (613) 562-5800,
mtaylor@uottawa.ca,

I am aware that there are two copies of this consent form, one of which I may keep.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the

Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550

Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Tel.: (613) 562-5841. Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Father's signature: _____ Date: _____

Mother's signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Observations Checklist¹

Household:

Date:

Check	Descriptive Categories	Reflective Notes
☐	Room decorations (living room, dinning room, study room, children's bedroom, kitchen)	
☐	Books, printed material, & art work (description and language)	
☐	Type of electronics (Computers, CD players, iPods, etc.) & TV programs being viewed at the time of the interview	
☐	Type of Spoken language	
☐	Others	

¹ Source: Creswell, J. W. (2007, p. 137). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among the five approaches* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

APPENDIX C

Biographical Questionnaire

Interview Protocol for: A Multiple Case Study on Muslim Parents' perspective About the Influence of the Islamic Culture on their Children's Daily Lives.

Time of Interview: 45-60 minutes

Date: TBD

Place: TBD

Interviewer: Dina Shalabi

Interviewee: TBD

Position of interviewee: Muslim Parent/s

Position of the interviewer: Investigator for a Master's thesis

Introductory Questions

Can you tell me about your work life and educational background?

How many children do you have?

What is your ethnic background?

How long have you been in Ottawa?

Do any of your children go to public schools?

What grades are they in?

What language do you speak at home?

Subject-related interview questions

Appendix D. Culturally responsive pedagogies, and also funds of knowledge will be defined and explained before addressing the interview question.

Conclusion

Thank the participant
Confidentiality assurance

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Primary Research Question: How do Muslim parents describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives?"

1. How would you describe the influence of the Islamic culture on your daily religious rituals such as praying, fasting, and other aspects of the religion of Islam?
2. How would you describe the influence of the Islamic culture on your household relationships?
3. How would you describe the influence of the Islamic culture on your relationship with the larger Muslim and non-Muslim community?
4. How would you describe the influence of the Islamic culture on your kinship relating to your extended family members?
5. How would you describe the contribution of an important cultural institution towards cultivating your family members' social identity?
6. Is there any other significant influence of the Islamic culture on your family life that you would like to share with me?

Secondary Research Question: How would Muslim parents like to see these funds of knowledge addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model?

1. How would you describe your involvement in your child's/children's education?
2. How do you think these funds of knowledge can be addressed in culturally responsive pedagogical models?
3. Can you suggest any other ways of using these funds of knowledge in culturally responsive pedagogical model?

APPENDIX E

Themes of the Study

Primary Research Question: How do Muslim parents describe the influence of the Islamic culture on their children's daily lives?"

1. Influence of the Islamic culture on household's daily spirituality and rituals (corresponding to interview question 1)
2. Influence of the Islamic culture on household relationships (corresponding to interview question 2)
3. Influence of the Islamic culture on kinship as related to extended family members (corresponding to interview question 3)
4. Influence of the Islamic culture on relationships with the larger community (corresponding to interview question 4)
5. Influence of the contribution of an important cultural institution in cultivating cultural identity (corresponding to interview question 5)

Secondary Research Question: How would Muslim parents like to see these funds of knowledge addressed in a culturally responsive pedagogical model?

6. Muslim parents' involvement in their children's education (corresponding to interview question 1)
7. Muslim parents' suggestions on how to address their children's funds of knowledge in culturally responsive pedagogical models (corresponding to interview question 2)

APPENDIX F

Free Nodes

Themes	Findings (free nodes)	Sources	References
Spirituality and Rituals	<i>Allah</i> -consciousness	3	6
	Fasting	3	6
	Praying	5	11
	Ramadan	4	5
	Reading Quran	5	6
	Religion	4	6
	Supplication	3	3
Household Relationships	collective attitude	4	6
	Hierarchical structure	4	6
	Respect	3	5
	Shared responsibilities	2	4
Kinship relationship as related to extended family members	Respect extended family members	2	3
	Cultural transfer and sustainability	3	5
	Role of the mother	5	10
	Sense of security	3	4
	Silat rahm	3	4
Relationship with the Community	Sense of Community	3	3
	relationship with the non-Muslim community	5	8
	Giving Back to the Community	4	5
	Representations of Muslim	3	3
	Building a Muslim community	0	0
	Feeling Peace	1	2
	Identity cultivation	4	7
	Learning	5	6
Contribution of Cultural Institutions	Self-esteem	5	16
	Parent's involvement	4	6
	parent's perceptions about the role of schools and teachers	3	6
Parents' involvement in their Children's education	Teacher-parent communication	5	9
	The need to learn Arabic	5	10
	Understanding the religion	5	7
	Identity cultivation	3	6
	Daily use of the Arabic language	2	2
Relevance of the Arabic Language			

Suggestions on Culturally Responsive Pedagogical Models	Acknowledging Muslim holidays and celebrations	3	3
	Arabic language	2	4
	Incorporating cultures into curriculum	3	4
	Interest in children's culture	3	4
	Involving parents & community	4	3
	Acknowledging & supporting prayers	4	4
	Providing teachers with opportunities to learn about faiths and cultures	3	4
	Respecting difference	5	8
	Understanding parenting styles	2	3

APPENDIX G

Tree Nodes

Themes (Tree Nodes)	Merged Findings (Sub-themes)
Spirituality & Rituals	<i>Allah</i> -consciousness Daily Prayers Du`a' (Supplication) Reading Quran Virtues of Fasting
Household Relationships	collective attitude & the value of respect Role of the mother
Relationships with Extended Family Members	Cultural transfer and sustainability Sense of security
Relationship with the Larger Society	Responsibility towards the Larger Society The Islamic culture in the Public Sphere
Contribution of Cultural Institutions	Identity cultivation
Relevance of the Arabic Language	Importance of Arabic language to Religion
Parents Involvement in their Children's Education	Styles of teacher-Parent Communications
Suggested Culturally Responsive Pedagogies (No merged findings)	Acknowledging Muslim holidays and celebrations Arabic language

Incorporating cultures into curriculum
Interest in children's culture
Involving parents & community
Prayers
Providing teachers with opportunities to
learn about faiths and cultures
Respecting difference
Understanding parenting styles

APPENDIX H

Merged Findings across Cases³

	Merged Findings (Sub-themes)	Cases	Themes of the Study							
			S&R	HR	K	LC	CCI	RA	PI	CRP
1	Allah-consciousness	Az, N, Ab	H	M		M				M
2	The virtue of fasting	N, S, Az	H			M				M
3	Daily prayers	Az, S, N, Ab, J	H	H				M		M
4	Reading Quran	Ab, J, S, Az	H	M			M	M		
5	Supplication	Ab, J	H	M						
6	collective attitude	Ab, S, J, Az		H	M	M				M
7	Role of the mother	Az, S, J, N, Ab	M	H						
8	Cultural transfer and sustainability	Ab, S, Az, N, J		M	H					M
9	Sense of security	Ab, J, S		M	H					
10	Responsibility towards the larger Society	Az, J, S, Ab, N				H	M			M
11	The Islamic Culture in the Public Sphere	Az, S, J, N, Ab	M			H				M
12	Identity Cultivation	Ab, Az, S, N, J					H	M		M
13	Importance of Arabic language to Islamic Culture	Az, S, Ab, J, N	M				M	H		M
14	Styles of teacher-Parent Communications	Az, S, J, N, Ab							H	M

Az: Azeez family

S: Sulaiman family

N: Nabeel family

J: Jafaar family

Ab: Abdul Kareem family

S&R: Spirituality & Rituals

HR: Household Relationships

K: Kin relationship with Extended Family Members

LC: Larger Society

CCI: Contribution of Cultural Institution

RA: Relevance of the Arabic Language

PI: Parental Involvement

CRP: Culturally Responsive Pedagogies as suggested by the parents

³. Source: Worksheet 5B. Stake, R. E. (2006, p. 59). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: Guilford Press.

APPENDIX I

Biographical Information of each Family

	Azeem Family	Sulaiman Family	Nabeel Family	Abdul Kareem Family	Jaafar Family
<i>Ethnic Background</i>	<i>Pakistani</i>	<i>Palestinian- Canadian</i>	<i>Tunisian</i>	<i>Somali</i>	<i>Egyptian</i>
Mother	Mehreen	Diana	Shafeeqa	Shukri	Salma
Father	Faheem	Ahmed	Adnaan	Rashad	Omar
Child 1	Asaad	Amira	Mohammad	Hamdi	Nahlah
Gender	M	F	M	F	F
Age	5	6	16	20	10
Child 2	Omar	Sameer	Samaah	Taibah	Yomna
Gender	M	M	F	F	9
Age	3.5	5	15	19	F
Child 3		Wardah	Zayd	Alia	Shehab
Gender		F	M	F	M
Age		2	13	19	8
Child 4			Nooh	Taha	
Gender			M	M	
Age			2.5	15	
Child 5				Adam	
Gender				M	
Age				13	

APPENDIX J

Nahlah Jafaar's Daily Prayer Chart

Salah	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Fajr (Dawn)		X	√	√	√		
Dhur (Noon)		X	√	√	√		
Asr (Afternoon)		√	X	√	√		
Maghrib (Sunset)		√	√	√	√		
'isaha' (Evening)		√	√	√	√		