Pakistani Immigrant Parental Perspectives on New Media Literacies

by

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This phenomenological study researches Pakistani immigrant parents’ perspectives and attitudes on how their children use new media technologies. Parental attitudes are directly linked to student achievement (Hampton, Mumford & Bond, 1998) and parents are the gatekeepers of technology use in the home, where, during unstructured time, children can experiment and develop skills in using new technologies (Ito et al, 2010). Therefore, this study looks at how parents, through their actions and attitudes, encourage or discourage their children from developing competencies in using new media technologies. By examining the pedagogical histories of parents and their concerns and rules about technology use, this study adds to the literature on parental attitudes towards the use of technology as a pedagogical tool. Further, this study examines the issue from an immigrant perspective, focusing on 10 Pakistani immigrant parents who live in the Greater Toronto Area and whose children attend public school.
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Dedication

For Humair

Thank you for taking care of me and supporting me in every sense of the word
# Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgements iii

Dedication v

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

1.1 Contextualizing the Research Problem 6

1.2 Research Problem 8

1.3 Research Questions 9

1.4 Significance of the Study 9

1.5 Limitations of the Research 13

1.6 Bracketing the Problem 14

1.7 Conclusion 16

Chapter 2: Literature Review 18

2.1 Parental Perspectives of Technology in the Home 21

2.2 Parental Participation 23

2.3 New Technologies and New Literacies 26

2.4 Immigrant Education 31

2.5 Conclusion 34
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Approach
3.2 Design
3.3 Recruitment
3.4 Data Collection
3.5 Research Participants
3.6 Data Analysis
3.7 Ethical Considerations
3.8 Conclusion

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Reproducing Pedagogical History
4.2 Presence of Technology in the Home
4.3 Primary Use of Technology
4.4 Concerns Regarding the Use of Technology by Children
4.5 Management of the Use of Technology
4.6 Technology as a Tool of Identity Construction
4.7 Alternatives to “Messing Around” with Technology
4.8 Conclusion
Chapter 5: Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

5.1 Discussion

5.2 The Research Questions

5.3 Implications of the Research

5.4 Future Research

List of Tables

Table 1: Internet Usage in Pakistan and Canada

Table 2: Participant Profiles

Table 3: Themes

References

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Appendix B: Participation Information Form

Appendix C: Consent Form

Appendix D: Definition of Terms
Chapter 1: Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, immigration had led to a diversification of formerly homogenized societies (Castles & Davidson, 2000). While immigration has always taken place, the marked rise after World War II in the number of people crossing international borders has redefined the economic, political and cultural composition of the world. The increased ease in crossing boarders paired with the rise of the information age has given rise to concepts such as “the global village” which strives to understand the complex questions of identity, citizenship and belonging that are associated with the process of immigration and disappearing boarders. New technologies allow for easy communication and interaction between countries, and traditional forms of assimilation, whereby immigrants became members of the host culture, are no longer viable. Instead a more transnational perspective is undertaken, where an individual’s link to their host country, and other immigrants from the country of origin, is acknowledged. (Sanchez, 2007).

This study looks at Pakistani immigrant parents who live in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and whose children attend public school in Canada. It undertakes to explore these parents’ perceptions with regard to the access their children have to new media technologies and how they encourage or discourage its use, taking into account their position as active decision makers with distinct cultural identity and values. It explores the attitudes of individuals who have moved from the Third to the First World, where by virtue of their act of immigration they are hoping to build a better life.

Since its inception soon after World War II in 1947, Pakistan has seen a great deal of violence, both internal unrest and in its continuing conflict with India. Ethnic, religious
and political violence have been common in a continuous fight for power, ideology and revenge. In this history of political unrest, many consider there were a few years during the military government and following presidential term of Pervez Musharraf, when violence was at a minimum in the major cities, and the economy was stable. Unfortunately, that respite was short lived and after Benazir Bhutto’s assassination in 2007, the violence returned and the economy, built on unsustainable government subsidies, crashed. These internal conflicts were exacerbated when Pakistan was named a target for terrorists due to its alliance with the United States of America in its War on Terror. Since then, violence around the country has increased drastically; most significantly, military institutions have become targets, further weakening the public sense of security.

With this history of political and economic unrest, many Pakistanis who have the means or connections try to emigrate from the country. Reasons for the “quit Pakistan syndrome”, as the local media has termed it (Yusuf, 2011), vary from political or religious persecution to a simple desire for a new life in a safe environment. According to the CIA World Factbook, in 2012 net migration for Pakistan was -2 per 1000 (for every thousand people in Pakistan, two are leaving the country). Destinations for Pakistani immigrants stretch across the globe, with Singapore, Malaysia, the Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, America and Canada being amongst the most popular countries due to language and religious compatibility.

Before leaving, most Pakistani emigrants have lived, at least briefly, in a city in Pakistan that is connected internationally, through trade and businesses as well as through new media such as the Internet, television and radio. This is a requirement of legal
emigration from Pakistan as individuals have to register with the Bureau of Immigration and Overseas Employment. These offices are only present in major cities - Peshawar (sister city to the capital Islamabad), Rawalpindi, Malakand, Karachi, Multan, Lahore and Quetta – which are also mandatory ports for departure to other countries. In addition the highly competitive cellular phone market, and the resulting low rates of both instruments and airtime, has ensured a 68.8 percent (PTA\(^1\), May 2012) penetration of cellular phones in Pakistan. Thus even in rural areas people are becoming increasingly connected.

Mobile technology is increasingly been seen as a liberating resource in the third world, connecting remote areas and improving sellers’ economic situations by expanding their businesses or obtaining better rates for their products while still lowering market prices (Corbett, 2008). However, in Pakistan, the majority of mobile phones are used for making phone calls rather than for text messaging or accessing the Internet (Qamar, 2009). While this may be explained to some degree by the socio-economic conditions of the population and by illiteracy, the infrastructure for widespread Internet usage does not yet exist in Pakistan (ISPAK\(^2\), April, 2012, Freedom House, 2011).

Internet penetration in Pakistan has reached only 11 percent with Web 2.0 applications blocked and substantial political censorship (Freedom House, 2011). Particularly significant is that only 1.7 million people (ISPAK, April 2012), in a country of over 170 million, have access to broadband Internet. This results in few people having easy access to video streaming and other Web 2.0 applications. Even dial up connections

\(^1\) PTA – Pakistan Telecommunications Authority  
\(^2\) ISPAK – Internet Service Providers Association of Pakistan
are beyond the reach of the majority of the population with workplaces, colleges and universities being the primary source of Internet access.

Social networking sites like Facebook are starting to make an impact in Pakistan by generating awareness of issues that traditional media does or will not cover, like the video from the Taliban controlled Swat Valley that showed a public flogging of a burqa clad woman which lead to wide support of military action in the area, or the video of the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto which caused the Pakistani Government to change their statement regarding the official cause of death. Nevertheless, only a small segment of the society is active online, as Kugelman (2012) notes.

Admittedly, this lack of mobilization may be partly attributable to an increasingly conservative Pakistani society that frowns on public expressions of support for minorities and other pluralistic causes. And it may also be rooted in Pakistan’s weak legacy of large scale, broad based public mobilization, which is a consequence of the country’s instability, of a populace dependent on patronage and invested in the status quo, and above all Pakistan’s deeply divided society (pg 5).

While the Internet is used as a means of entertainment or information, unreliable and slow connections and limited mobile Internet services, which are very expensive, result in few people having an online presence. Further, businesses do not rely on online operations and basic services, such as utility bills and banking, are still done in person.

When compared to the statistics from Canada, it is not surprising that Pakistani immigrants have to adapt to a culture that is used to operating online. Statistics Canada
(October, 2011) shows that in 2010, 80% of the people in Canada used the Internet for personal purposes.

A majority of Internet users went online to bank (68%) or to read or watch the news (68%). Many users obtained travel information or made travel arrangements online (65%), visited or interacted with government websites (65%), or searched for medical or health-related information (64%). (Statistics Canada, 2011)

Furthermore, 58% used social networking sites, with statistics being higher for those under thirty-five (86%) compared to 3.4% in Pakistan (Kugelman, 2012), where Facebook is recorded as being the most visited site in 2011. The statistics comparing Internet usage in Pakistan to Canada are summarized below in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population (2011)*</td>
<td>177 million</td>
<td>34 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Penetration</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook usage</td>
<td>3.40%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Population statistics are based on word bank figures and have been rounded to the nearest million

This research focuses on those Pakistani immigrant families that maintain close social ties with other members of the Pakistani immigrant community in Toronto and looks at how they manage the increasing availability of new media in their lives and the lives of their children. The purpose of the research is to explore how these parents navigate the issues that arise with the increasing availability of new media, such as safety,
censorship and cultural alienation. Most importantly, it examines how they choose to, or choose not to, provide access to or use these tools of new media technology.

1.1 Contextualizing the Research Problem

Since moving to Toronto to pursue my Masters in education, I have been interacting with various relatives, friends from my high school in Pakistan and family-friends who have moved and settled in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) before I arrived. One evening, during a relatively small sit down dinner at a family-friend’s house, a couple with a teenage boy and preteen girl, my friend’s son ate very quickly and left the table in a rush. While excusing his manners, she told us that he was eager to return to his game console as he and his friends had set up a time to play collaboratively online. This led to a discussion on new media, which ranged from how certain, previously valued skills such as penmanship, conversation and reading were disappearing, as new technologies become more accessible and competency in them are required in work and social spheres.

During the discussion, my friend voiced concerns she had with regard to the types of games her son was playing, in particular disapproval of games with explicit sexual content. She was concerned that such games were teaching him to think of women only as sexualized objects. Similarly, she was nervous about a Facebook friend of her daughter’s who had mentioned that he ‘loved’ her. She knew about this incident because the family computer was kept in the central sitting room and television lounge so that the parents could monitor the children’s Internet use. She was confident of her daughter’s innocence in the matter, since she was neither hiding this post nor aware of its
implications. However, because the ‘friend’ was not someone her mother knew, she consequently had concerns for her daughter’s safety.

Her husband on the other hand took a more liberal stance, claiming that their children should learn to be competent online and that concerns about this Facebook friend were a sign of her over-protectiveness and excess caution with regards to online interactions. As this discussion continued, it transpired that my friend’s husband had actually rented a game for his son to play, which included the sexual content my friend was uncomfortable with. He felt that since the game was popular and his son was interested in playing it, it should be allowed. His reasoning was that his son was exposed to similar content on the television all the time and that values were developed through family interaction, not through media.

This argument highlighted the “dueling discourses” (Leander, 2007) present in the literature of parental concerns with regard to their children using new media. The Internet was seen both as space where different experiences and learning takes place, and alternatively as a space of “stalkers, of uncontrolled behavior, of unknown dangers” (Leander, 2007). What was problematic for me, during this argument, was the either-or opinions of the parents, even while the reality of the experience their children were having with new technologies and new media literacies were in mediated and monitored contexts.

As I delved further into the literature concerning parental attitudes toward new literacies I saw that many of the same issues that were addressed in the literature had been argued across the dinner table that night. But while most of the argument was fairly typical of what was reflected in the literature, what had not been addressed before, what
was in fact conspicuously missing in the academic sphere, was an exploration of the
cultural underpinnings of the argument. It was not only that my friend was apprehensive
that her daughter might have attracted unwanted attention on Facebook, but also was
concerned about the opinions of other family members who were also on Facebook.
Further, the sexual content of the game was not only problematic for her because it
objectified women, but also because that was not a habit she appreciated her son, as a
Muslim, developing.

1.2 The Research Problem

It is getting increasingly difficult to isolate children from new media and new
media literacies as technology becomes more easily accessible, through schools or
institutions such as the public libraries in addition to that which is available at home.
Further, new media technologies and programs or Apps to use on them are being created
for increasingly younger audiences (Dredge, 2012) in an effort to start creating
competencies at an early age. This study attempts to understand how Pakistani immigrant
parents negotiate the use of these mainstream technologies by their children. The study
seeks to uncover how comfortable these parents are with the use of these tools and
examines how they view new media with respect to their cultures, traditions and values,
balancing their concerns against their desire to provide the best experiences and futures
they can for their children.

The concerns these parents have with regard to new media have implications for
the use of new media in the home, as these parents are the gatekeepers of technology
access, through purchase and permission. Further, their attitudes regarding new media
literacies and the correct use of new media technology will affect how, and to what extent, their children interact with these tools and the artifacts they create. In a world where an individual’s digital identity is becoming an increasingly important part of their identity, learning to interact, create, and design meanings (The New London Group, 1996) in multiple formats and collaboratively are skills that are becoming essential.

1.3 Research Questions

The central research question for this phenomenological study is:

What are Pakistani immigrant parental perspectives and attitudes on how their children use new media technologies and how do they encourage or discourage its use and monitor access with respect to their children’s safety, their culture and their values?

Further questions to clarify the core inquiry are as follows:

• What are the major concerns Pakistani immigrant parents have with regards to the use of new media technology? How do they address these concerns?

• How do parents encourage or discourage their children to use these technologies? What are considered good or appropriate uses of technology?

• What role do parents think schools and other institutions should play with regard to the use of new technologies?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study has significance for the development of competencies in new media technologies for immigrant youth, and their subsequent ability to enter the job market.
Oblinger and Hawkins (2006) note how students who have a familiarity with using computers and being able to navigate the Web are generally considered technologically competent. However, they note that while most adolescents, in particular those who are going to college or university, have some familiarity with browsing on websites and word processing, their ability to use other applications, such as “presentation development (65%), spreadsheets (63%), graphics (49%) or creating Web pages (25%)” (Obliinger & Hawkins, 2006, p. 12) are not as well developed. Further, they note that while students are able to access vast amounts of data online they do not necessarily have the skills to analyze it for reliability or bias, or to use the technology in order to develop skills to become lifetime learners.

This study aims to discover how Pakistani immigrant parents are enabling their children, or limiting them, in developing the ability to use new media technologies in a variety of ways and forms in order to enable them in becoming lifetime learners. In essence it looks at how the home environment encourages or discourages these second generation immigrants from engaging in situated learning⁴ (Gee, 2010). Thus, being competent in new media technology, for the purpose of this study, takes on a more holistic meaning, of being able to function easily with multiple forms (audio, visual, sensory or written) and platforms (for example formal, informal or collaborative) of communication and to transfer those skills to apply to multiple scenarios and not just reproduce them.

³ For a more detailed description of “situated learning”, please see Appendix D: Definition of terms
Without competency in new media technologies and collaborative cultures of design and creation, children may suffer when entering work environments, which are becoming more horizontal rather than top-down in the new economies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). If parents continue to value individual performance of their children above the ability to interact and create and share knowledge communally, they are jeopardizing the continuity of their children’s cultural capital by requiring them to fit mainstream molds of education which privilege the dominant culture. “Thus, the goal of education becomes how to ‘fit’ students constructed as ‘other’ by virtue of their race/ethnicity, language, or social class into a hierarchical structure that is defined as a meritocracy” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 467)

If parents disapprove or limit access to these new literacies then their children can suffer either academically or socially, especially if other students are being granted greater access to these collaborative learning environments and easier access to new technologies. As western societies are moving more towards knowledge economies (Bourne 2004) students who have not developed extensive competencies in these technologies will face problems later in their educational experiences and when entering the job market. Further, if they are excluded from the communities that are formed around these technologies, students can suffer social exclusion if not ostracism, in addition to the loss of cultural capital.

Children value what they can display, whether it is a picture modified on Photoshop, a video made with a cell phone, or even a high score on a computer game. If access to online social networks is restricted, or if parents are not appreciative of their children’s work when creating digital artifacts, even access to the technology will not
allow children to develop their full potential in using these technologies. This becomes problematic as the creation of a digital identity and competency in navigating different modes of communication and interaction becomes increasingly important, especially with regards to creating meaning and being critical of the information and media presented to us. Active participation, instead of passive consumption, is becoming more common with new media tweets, blogs and Facebook updates and new technology, in particular wireless and mobile technology, allowing an individual to design his or her experiences (The New London Group, 1996) in real time and in multiple formats.

By understanding Pakistani immigrant parental concerns with regards to the development of new literacies by their children, teachers can help address those concerns and reach out to the parents in order to overcome them. The literature clearly indicates that parents are more inclined towards participation in their children’s schooling when educators initiate contact (Halsey, 2005). However, research also shows that immigrant parents do have a high stake in their children’s education and are willing to take action to further their perceptions of what is best for their children (Hampton, Mumford & Bond, 1998; Archer, 2010). This research can become a resource for educators who encounter reluctance from immigrant parents to allow their children access to new literacies, by providing an understanding of their reluctance. It can also be a guide to addressing those concerns, especially with respect to making use of the technologies in more culturally relevant ways.
1.5 Limitations of the Research

While this research project attempts to add to the literature on parental views on new media by approaching the phenomenon from an immigrant perspective, this research has limitations in both its scope and its aspect. By considering only Pakistani immigrant parental perspectives, it does not allow for a general understanding of the concerns that parents from other cultural backgrounds may have or how different values or traditions may be represented or be in conflict with new media technologies. The research undertaken here is very specific in its focus on uncovering concerns of only one visible and ethnic minority and on one aspect of the educational system, although the introduction of new literacies and new technologies in pedagogical environments are becoming more common and more central to the curriculum.

Participants for the study have been recruited from a middle or upper middle socio-economic background, in order to ensure that they and their children have the economic means to access a range of new media technologies. Due to this requirement, participants have lived in urban centers in Pakistan before immigration; those from rural backgrounds would not have the financial means to access a range of technology. While this limits the scope of this research, the project will provide a starting point for creating more culturally inclusive practices in both the use and development of technologies for pedagogical purposes.

Further, by design, this research is aimed at understanding only parental perspectives on this issue. This is because immigrant parental perspectives and concerns are often not voiced and literature on the subject is scarce. The study of the interaction between Pakistani immigrant cultures, values and traditions and new media technologies
can also be undertaken from the perspective of educators and students. In order to fully understand the dynamics of these interactions, I would recommend that these perceptions be studied in future research projects.

1.6 Bracketing the Problem

Although currently residing in Canada, I am a Pakistani citizen myself and have grown up in the same educational environment as the parents who participated in the study. I was always a mediocre student while in school, as I could not memorize vast quantities of information as required by the pedagogy that I had access to. I also had great problems with spelling and writing coherently due to an undiagnosed learning disability. School being a highly frustrating environment, I looked for avenues outside of school where I could develop expertise. My interests lead me to workshops and classes in computer programming and various artistic crafts, such as pottery and stained glass painting, which laid the foundation for my future experiences with non-traditional ways of learning.

Despite my struggles in school, which left me with a mistrust of the more traditional forms of teaching, I completed my high school in Pakistan, sitting for first my O-Levels and then A- Level examinations before heading to a liberal arts college in the USA. It was here that I first encountered a more inclusive form of pedagogy, which allowed me discover my love of learning, despite the initial culture shock of having to adapt from a system where I had been expected to memorize to one where I had to formulate original ideas and opinions. After completing my Bachelor of Arts I returned to Pakistan where I worked in the media industry, following my passion with the arts. After
three years of being constantly restrained by the conservative nature of the industry, I turned to teaching before applying for my Masters in Education. I taught Design Technology for the Middle Years Program in the only International Baccalaureate World School in Pakistan, which, needless to say, was an elite private school. It was during this period that I first encountered parents’ deep mistrust of new media technologies.

When I asked my students to do research for a project, I often had to confront parents who did not appreciate that a simple Wikipedia search, which had been directly copied from the Internet, was not acceptable and that I was looking instead for understanding and investigation on the part of the student. Further, when I asked them to create email accounts so they could contact me in case of problems or submit work to me online, or taught them how to make websites, there was great uproar amongst the parents. However, what really caused me to clash with the parent body in the school (which carried a lot of influence) was that none of the assignments I gave were direct or had simple requirements but instead were open ended and required the students to engage their own opinions and interests. Projects such as “design a costume for yourself as a superhero” or “design a board game based on the novel you are reading” were met with great skepticism and I often was asked the question “what do you want them to do exactly?”

Thus when interacting with Pakistani parents in Canada, their concern regarding technology was not surprising. However often a wide range of technology was available to for children to use. Whereas my parents had always been liberal, some of the individuals I was interacting with had come from more conservative backgrounds and did not appreciate how technology could benefit their children. While they talked about how
the art of spelling was disappearing, I was contextualizing my own experiences with being unable to spell correctly (and suffering academically for it) with the benefits of having a spell-check. While they were concerned about how dangerous the Internet was for their children, and how they were spending too much time texting, I was remembering how I used the Internet to further my hobbies, something that had only increased since moving to Canada and having reliable Internet access. While they discussed the evils of Facebook, I thought of how many people I had been introduced to in Canada by friends in Pakistan and the US, though the social network site.

Having moved to Canada, I appreciated how new media technologies were helping me adjust to life here. Having the luxury of paying bills online, discovering the GTA and learning my way around with the help of Google Maps and the TTC website made the move to Canada much easier for me. Further, between my smartphone and my laptop I was able to say in regular contact with family and close friends who are spread all over the world. Sites like YouTube taught me a lot of small skills that I had not needed to learn before, things like peeling a pomegranate to the correct way to clean an oven. I started blogging on my pitiful attempts to grow herbs in my apartment and received some good tips and advice from other people who posted on my blog.

1.7 Conclusion

In order to study the phenomenon of how Pakistani immigrant parents view new media usage by their children and the extent to which they facilitate situated learning or

\[^4\text{TTC\, Toronto Transit Commission, public transport serving the city of Toronto}\]
competencies in new literacies, I undertook a qualitative research project for which I interviewed ten parents who had immigrated to the GTA and who had children attending public school. In the following chapters I outline the research project, first by situating it in the relevant literature. This review of the literature includes: what the current understandings are of parental perspectives with regard to new media; how parental involvement and interest in a child’s learning is directly linked to achievement; what the possibilities are with regards to using technology to further new literacies; and the challenges faced by immigrants when encountering education in their new country.

After examining the literature, I describe both the design of the research project and the process of analysis that was undertaken once all the interviews had been completed. This is followed by a report of the findings from the research process, wherein I discuss six categories of information and identify fourteen themes that emerged from the interviews, which help to answer the original research question. In the final chapter, I analyze the findings of the research with a view to answering the research questions and look at further implications.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

More topics are being introduced into school curriculums while at the same time greater focus is being directed towards standardized tests, as seen in the American policies of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the subsequent Race To The Top fund announced in 2009, or the increasing attention being directed towards the results of the tests administered by the Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) in Canada. Consequently, time for unstructured work and exploration is decreasing during school hours. Although schools are increasingly technologically friendly, with easy Internet access and increasing numbers of computers available, budget restrictions and teacher competency with new forms of technology delay integration of the latest technological advances.

Even when computers are employed as learning tools in schools or during other supervised programs like summer camps or after school activities, heavy demands of the curricula and other similar expectations result in fairly specific tasks being structured by instructors. As a result, children have easier access and more unstructured time with technology at home or in other informal environments, especially among middle and high-income families (Ito et al. 2011). These factors are becoming increasingly important when considering the development of competencies in new technologies.

It is not enough, unfortunately, to have physical access to this technology if other forms, such as time and ability to experiment, are limited. Further, the literature clearly shows that a child’s achievement in any task is improved when parents show interest or approval of that activity (Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). Thus it is important to consider how
parents perceive the use that their children are making of technology that is available to them and understand their concerns in order to gain better and more effective access to it.

In order to situate the study on Pakistani immigrant parental perspectives within the existing academic literature, I first undertake a review of the literature concerning parental attitudes towards technology in the home. As the literature on this topic is limited, I then provide context for the study by exploring how influential parental perceptions can be on children with regards to the acquisition and learning of skills and competencies, both in the home environment as well as for academic achievement in more formal institutional settings. A review of this literature is appropriate as it emphasizes the importance of having positive parental attitudes and support for children. A premise underlying this study is that parental support develops students’ enthusiasm for literacy and enables them to achieve excellence in their work.

Having undertaken an exploration of what parental perspectives are with regards to new technologies and why they are crucial to children developing competencies in using them, I then explore the possibilities and advantages that children will have if they do learn to communicate through multiple forms of representation and engage in new literacies. With access to more diverse and powerful forms of technology, a new mode of interaction is forming, and new ways of learning and communicating are developing. A review follows of the literature surrounding the possibilities and practices of new literacies and how they can be encouraged and developed through new technology to aid in traditional literacies, in order to better understand their importance.

As we will see in the literature surrounding new literacies, one of the greatest advantages for adopting pedagogy based on new literacies or multiple literacies is in
educating immigrant communities. New literacies provide space for those who are not comfortable in the dominant forms of communication to learn and show their knowledge in institutions (such as schools) where typically only dominant cultures are valued and taught. Adopting this form of pedagogy can be highly effective in developing and educating population in countries, such as Canada, with a high rate of immigration and a diversity of cultures. However, such pedagogy is not typically accessible to immigrants whose children are attending public school in the GTA. To better understand the challenges faced by the Pakistani immigrant participants in this study, a review of the literature on immigrant experiences is provided.

It is appropriate for this study to draw from these four distinct areas of literature, as there is no single body of academic studies that can fully contextualize all aspects of this topic. This study in particular hopes to add to the literature on parental attitudes with respect to their children’s use of new technologies, as it approaches the topic from a qualitative perspective, which will give greater insight into the reasons behind parental attitudes. Further, the study approaches the issue of parental attitudes towards new media technologies from the perspective of a particular group, Pakistani immigrant parents, with focus on cultural and familial values that do not belong to the dominant culture. This has not been done before. I now turn to a review of the existing literature on parental perspectives on new media technologies.

2.1 Parental Perspectives of Technology in the Home

Despite having a better knowledge of how individuals learn, school systems have not radically changed in the last century or so. They are based on the Western European
model that, through colonialism and cultural borrowing, has become almost universal (Farrell, 2009). Thus when computers are used at schools, they are often used as learning aids and do not provide the space for experimentation or learner-driven exploration that is ideal for developing competencies in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Wellington, 2001). Ito et al. (2009) examine how children and young adults are increasingly developing competencies, sometimes far greater than the adults in their lives, though use of computers and other technologies during unstructured times when there is no guidance or formal requirements imposed on the direction of their learning. Similarly Plowman, McPake & Stephen (2008) identified how for many young children, family practices in using technology, ranging from the frequent use of computers by parents at the home to the use of digital cameras during holidays, helped them develop competencies, although the teaching process might not be visible or explicit. In many cases, the children either through trial and error, imitation or copying acquired the skills.

One field where the potential for family use of technology has been recognized, at least in academic literature, is in the use of assistive technologies (AT) for learners with special needs (Reis et al., 2010; Alper & Raharinirina, 2006; Jeffs, Behrmann & Bannan-Ritland, 2006). While recognizing the importance and possibilities of using AT to help students with disabilities overcome obstacles to learning, these studies consistently report that this technology is under- or inadequately-used or abandoned due to lack of family involvement. It is significant to note that in situations where assistive technology has been successfully integrated into a child’s learning environment, both parents and children have been actively involved in the choice of AT used.
Unfortunately, despite the greater access and freedom available when technology is present in home environments, not much research has been done with regards to understanding parental attitudes and perceptions (Wellington 2001, Ortiz, Green & Lim 2011). This is an omission, as access to the tools of learning is not the only factor in developing competency, with the attitudes and practices that surround the children emerging as key factors as well (Plowman et al., 2008). Quantitative studies do show that parents generally link proficiency in the use of computers to better education and careers for their children, and support the teaching of technology in school (Ortiz et al, 2011). These studies also show that computer availability in the home is linked to the attainment of higher education by parents and other socioeconomic factors. As these parents also, generally, take great interest in their children’s achievements, a case can be made that parental approval fosters the development of greater competency.

It should be noted, however, that it is not only for academic reasons that parents may grant their children access to technology (Hollingworth, Mansaray, Allen & Rose, 2011). The social capital associated with technology that parents are hoping to access both for themselves and their children, by participation in the Discourses\(^5\) (Gee, 2008)-the behavior, language, values and tools and places - surrounding new and fashionable inventions, as well as actual possession of the latest gadgets in order to fit-in, are also factors in the decision to acquire technology. Hence, in many situations where parents do not associate technology with learning, they may still grant access to it. In such cases, 

\(^5\) For a more detailed description of “Discourses”, please see Appendix D: Definition of terms
learning through technology may not be overt but may provide children with new forms and types of knowledge and skills, as we will see later when reviewing the literature on new literacies.

In cases where children are being given access to new technologies, parental interest in the technology will prompt children to develop their expertise in using it. I now turn to the literature on how the degree of parental participation is directly linked to student achievement. The literature also clearly shows how the social capital that parents have can be used utilized to change and improve educational institutions.

2.2 Parental Participation

Conventional measures of parental engagement in their children’s schooling and thus by traditional definition, their education, is through membership in and frequency of attendance at school councils, evaluation of outreach programs and parental satisfaction surveys (Flessa 2008). However, these limited definitions of parental involvement need to be expanded and the interest and participation of parents in the home environment also needs to be considered. The literature indicates that it is not only student performance, such as in standardized testing, which benefits from parental involvement, but also the development of attitudes and habits that will ensure students become lifetime learners. Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey (2010) argue that:

parental involvement is such a vital resource to children’s academic success because it contributes to the development and enactment of cognitive and motivational resources within the child rather than to the more distal outcome of standardized achievement test scores. (p. 27)
The historical case study of the Monroe School (Horvat, Cruci & Partlow, 2010) provides an example of how collaboration between the school and the students’ parents resulted in a better and more diverse learning experience for the community. Unfortunately, as Minke and Anderson (2005) discuss, it is rare for educational boards in the United States to require teachers to have training in collaborating with parents, resulting in few teachers trained to undertake this responsibility. Untrained teachers either do not initiate parental involvement or severely limit it, in an effort to maintain control and avoid confrontation. Parents are often equally reluctant to participate or collaborate with schools uncertain of their welcome, unclear about opportunities, unfamiliar or weary of official institutions, previous negative experiences or in the case of minorities due to cultural differences. Other, more practical reasons for a lack of visible involvement might exist, including economic conditions, work related issues, living arrangements or lack of resources (Plevyak, 2003).

When considering the experiences of immigrant families, the question of parental involvement in learning becomes more complex. It is widely acknowledged that shifting from one country to another is one of the most “stressful transitions a family can undergo” (Gaytan, Carhill, Sarez-Orozco, 2007, p.11). The study shows that newcomer immigrant youth view family as an important resource in their lives. However, because student immersion in the dominant culture through educational institutions is much faster than that of parents, many opportunities for misunderstanding arise causing students to have difficulty in negotiating the home and school environments (Phelan, Davidson & Cao, 1991). This is especially true when parents live and even work in cultural enclaves.
It is not enough to be open to parental collaboration or to use parental social capital in bettering the school, as was done by the principals in the case study by Horvat et al. (2005). This is especially true when dealing with immigrant populations, which may have negative, or at the very least different, perceptions of institutions of authority. As seen below research shows that a truly collaborative atmosphere needs to be developed in order for students to fully benefit from any resources parents are willing to dedicate to improving their children’s educational opportunities. While it is traditional to view parental involvement from a school-centric position (Flessa, 2008; Minke & Anderson, 2005), this attitude and policy needs to be shifted and a more equal relationship developed.

Project FAST (Families are Students and Teachers), a pilot project conducted in East Cleveland, Ohio, redefined the role of parents as collaborators in their children’s education by conceptualizing the school as an extension of the family through long term collaborative projects and activities, and by fostering relationships with families (Hampton, Mumford & Bond, 1998). The emphasis in this project was not on having a parental presence in school, but rather on giving parents the tools with which to support education in their own homes, at no extra financial cost. In order to facilitate this, monthly workshops were held for parents at a time convenient for them. Project FAST teachers planned and conducted these workshops, emphasizing four areas:

(a) knowledge and tools parents need to reinforce instruction,

(b) creating a home environment that facilitates achievement,

(c) the development of children’s self-concept, and

(d) discussions to enhance basic parenting skills. (p. 418)
Through these workshops, parents were empowered to aid their children in their academics. The methods employed involved helping parents to foster positive self-image for their children by showing them respect, praising them whenever the opportunity presented itself, and by spending time with them on enjoyable activities - essentially encouraging children to participate in new literacies.

Thus the importance of a supportive and encouraging learning environment is as important as the provision of learning tools. By encouraging their children to become lifetime learners, parents can engage in literacy practices that are driven by their children’s interests instead of focusing learning on traditional methods. When allowed to engage in literary practices that are non-traditional, children can learn to communicate in multiple modes and forms and to engage in situated learning, as we see below, that can further help them convey meaning across language barriers. Further, when learning does not occur in silos, as it does in a conventional classroom environment, children can also develop competency in situated learning as can be seen below in the literature review on new technologies, new literacies and multimodality.

2.3 New Technologies and New Literacies

The New London Group (1996) consisted of academics who came together to confront what they saw as the inability of traditional literacies, which are primarily focused on the acquisition of language, to adapt to increasingly diverse societies and increasingly dynamic and multimodal forms of representation.

The main areas for common or complementary concern included the pedagogical tension between immersion and explicit models of teaching; the
challenge of cultural and linguistic diversity; the newly prominent modes and technologies of communication; and changing text usage in restructured workplaces. (p. 62)

Instead of limiting meaning making to the process of decoding a static dominant language, they expanded the concept of pedagogy to incorporate a more active and transformational process, what they referred to as designing meanings, rather than a process of reproduction. They coined the term “multiliteracies” to reflect a pedagogy that values the interaction of different cultures and ways of knowing and communication that exist in diverse societies, as well as the incorporation of “multimodal” forms of communication. These “multimodal” forms included written and oral language, visual representation, audio representation, tactile representation, gestural representation, spatial representation, and representation to oneself (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), all of which are being developed or acknowledged as valid forms of meaning making. The New London Group’s (1996) vision was of a strong nation that valued difference while providing opportunities for all, irrespective of cultural, social and linguistic differences. They wanted to provide social and cultural capital to all members of the society, using a pedagogy of multiliteracies that acknowledged, accepted and respected different forms of learning and knowledge. In this process the state and educational institutions would act as “neutral arbiters of difference” (The New London Group, 1996, p 69).

Unfortunately, this vision of education for equity has not become a reality. Damerin (1998) notes how, “agendas for equitable and multicultural education are already in opposition to biases deeply engrained in the resulting educational practices” (p. 12). Educational institutions are still premised on the assumption of students who belong
to the dominant culture, although efforts are being made in various countries including Canada, to make the curriculum more culturally relevant. Ladson-Billings (1995) proposes a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy that would produce academically successful students who are competent socially in the dominant culture as well as amongst their own, and who are simultaneously able to critically analyze and critique the social order (Ladson- Billings, 1995, p.474).

Similarly, Jim Cummins (2009) encourages the use of children’s competency in their first language in order to bridge the gap between their existent knowledge and that required by school systems. Farrell (2009) cites the example of three alternative schools in Bangladesh, Columbia and Egypt, who target those students who are most at risk for dropout or have inadequate competency in numeracy and literacy. When graduates from these schools enter mainstream school systems they are able to perform at par or better than those who have gained primary education through more traditional forms of schooling.

In the examples given in these three, very different situations, that of African Americans in the U.S.A, Canadian immigrants and marginalized populations, certain characteristics in the pedagogy of the school are consistent. In all of the examples students are encouraged to study collaboratively, seeking help from other students before turning to the teacher for assistance. Essentially they are creating collaborative cultures of learning. Further, there is flexibility in the curriculum, with instructors adapting lessons and allowing for a degree of unpredictability in their learning environments.

Gee (2010) develops these ideas and extends them into the world of new media technologies that allow for multimodal representational artifacts. He suggests that the
self-directed or collaborative learning that occurs during the use of new media, associated literature, fan sites and fan fiction facilitates situated learning. He cites the example of children who are able to interact with, and manipulate to their advantage, texts and complex gaming systems that are well beyond the level they would be expected to perform at in school. Such activities foster in them the skill sets that are identified with new literacies.

Engagement with the different levels and functions of games teaches children to multitask and accessing different resources such as instruction booklets, websites or blogs trains them to participate in communications through different mediums and sources as well as gather data and synthesize information. Children are also developing original artifacts using software such as Scratch, a programming language that allows you to create your own stories, animation or art and share it online, or Bitstrips, where individuals can create their own comic strips. All these acts of participatory learning, or development of competencies in new literacies, take place in the guise of recreational activities. They nevertheless encompass both acquisition and learning (which are distinctive in that the former in unintentional and the latter deliberate\(^6\)).

Pedagogues have successfully brought multiple forms of media into the classroom environment in order to engage students and scaffold learning. This allows disenfranchised students or students from diverse backgrounds space to represent themselves as well as their cultures, different learning styles and abilities in the classroom

\(^6\) For a more detailed description of “acquisition” and “learning”, please see Appendix D: Definition of terms under “Literacy”.

(Day, 2010; Cummins 2009; Lotherington, & Chow, 2006). It should be noted, however, that a cultural reading is not necessarily the outcome of this culturally open style, and often other interests surface.

The simple introduction of technology into the classroom does not, unfortunately, make a curriculum culturally responsive, or foster new literacies. Sianjina (2000) identifies six elements – cultural relevance, equitable access, instructional flexibility, cultural awareness, a favorable multicultural environment and technological integration (Sianjina 2000) - that should be present before technology in the classroom can be considered culturally responsive.

Similarly Lankshear and Knobel (2007) demonstrate that new technologies can be used to produce or reproduce traditional forms of literacy. They argue that a single author typing an essay on a word processor should not be considered as developing competency in new literacies unless the authorship is opened to the community or the work is produced communally. This is certainly reflective of the holistic approach to competency in new technologies discussed earlier, which demands evidence of skills transfer across multiple forms and situations as a marker of individual proficiency. We see in the case of Ridgeview Academy, a private school for girls from grade 5-12 (Leander, 2007), how certain new technologies such as overhead projectors can perpetuate the traditional dynamics of the classroom. Further, while allowing work to be done on laptops, the school used them as tools for traditional literacy pedagogies – for example, replacing handwriting with word processing. However, Leander does note that despite the school not using these tools to develop competencies in new literacies, these practices developed organically from the students who were more willing to share, critique, and change their
artifacts and thus engage in new literacies and communities of learning, if working in
digital formats rather than in hard copy. Thus it is the responsibility of the adults to allow
for the space for discovery and experimentation (Ito et al., 2010), whether that space is
available in the school or at home.

2.4 Immigrant Education

While it is true that technology can provide a space for immigrant and
disenfranchised youth to represent themselves, institutions and instructors must be
willing to accept these different forms of representation and help students use them as
scaffolds towards academic success in mainstream westernized school systems. As
Ballenger (1996) discovers when attempting to read a storybook to Hatian children, not
all students come to educational institutions with the knowledge of the dominant culture.
The role of teachers in helping students adapt to new cultures and living environments
without ”otherizing” them is crucial as school is a key institution of socialization (Carr &
Klassen, 1997). In addition to being aware of their cultural, ethnic and linguistic
diversity, Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasizes in her theory of culturally relevant
pedagogy that learners must be successful in their academics as well as recognized as
unique individuals with specific cultural and ethnic histories. In order to accomplish this,
however, one must overcome the policies of assimilation predominant in countries, like
Canada, which have historically been open to immigration.

The policies of assimilation, initially designed to safeguard the ideal of the
“nation” (Castles & Davidson, 2000), have been reinforced by the desire for immigrants
to adapt to their new lives. This willingness to change, inherent in all immigrants
(Corson, 2001), has allowed immigrant populations, predominantly those that are visibly and ethnically distinct from the dominant culture, to be marginalized on the "basis of socially constructed markers of phenotype (that is, physical appearance or ‘race’), origins or culture.” (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p.63)

Schools are one of the most common and unavoidable of these westernized institutions where immigrant youth interact with, and are often immersed in western culture and society, though the curriculum, the teaching staff and their peers. Even in multicultural countries like Canada, the majority of educators are part of the dominant culture (Blais & Ouedraogo, 2008). While adapting to the new culture gives immigrant students the social and cultural capital needed to exist and eventually succeed in their new environment, it can cause tensions within families. Further, because educational institutions and subsequent career opportunities require the passing of “key situations” (Corson, 2001, p. 48) that typically do not question the underlying, dominant assumptions, immigrants are typically forced to comply with dominant Discourses in order to succeed.

However, it is a mistake to think of culture as static or existing in a dichotomy. Although immigrant populations do adopt some of the attributes of the dominant culture (Castles & Davidson, 2000) they also maintain elements of their own, resulting in a unique blend of cultures that cannot be adequately represented by either source cultures. Ellsworth (1989) explores the phenomenon of how, even in situations where people are willing to be sensitive to issues of social justice, different and very fluid associations and identifications form based on circumstance.
The desire for change and a better life that often drives immigration typically carries with it a strong will to succeed. It would be a mistake to think that all immigrant parents are disenfranchised, due to language, work or economic difficulties or even cultural differences, or that they are disinterested in their children’s education. Immigrants who enter as skilled workers or investors in particular are actively involved in all levels of their children’s education, from helping with homework to being part of parent-teacher associations. Archer’s UK-based study of minority ethnic middle class parents (2010) discovered that parents were willing and able to tap into the same administrative resources at the school as parents from the majority, white culture. One of the most common complaints by this demographic was that their children were not being encouraged to excel, an attitude they had gotten used to when their children attended private schools in their countries of origin. However, this ability and willingness to climb the ladder of authority to confront problems was tempered by ethnic self-consciousness:

Whilst on the whole parents seemed to challenge schools with confidence on a range of issues, they also appeared to be sensitive to the danger of being negatively stereotyped by schools as ‘pushy’ (Phil) or ‘complaining’ (Ann) parents. This sometimes meant, as Phil put it, being strategic, to choose your battles’. Some minority ethnic parents also seemed to feel less comfortable in adopting the ‘complaining parent’ persona with several parents and pupils describing how their families were more likely to attempt to resolve issues without recourse to the school. (p 462)

Thus even when knowing their rights and desiring better opportunities for their children, immigrant parents feel at a disadvantage, and hesitate to make themselves conspicuous. It
is here that new technologies can help, both in providing information to parents and helping them recruit support when voicing their grievances, and by providing educational opportunities outside of school. These can occur either through formal channels such as online educational programs or informal avenues such as those discussed earlier that help promote the development of new literacies and situated learning.

2.5 Conclusion

Although the theory and tools exist to provide relevant educative experiences for second-generation immigrant students, it is clear that if immigrant parents do not use their economic, social and cultural capital to demand such experiences, they will not be put into practice effectively. While traditional literacy learning is essential to success in western societies, by scaffolding and providing support, transitions from different styles of learning can be accomplished more easily.

Further, in the new technological age in which we exist, possessing only traditional literacies is no longer sufficient in order to begin, or survive, in skilled careers. If teaching and learning do not incorporate situated and multimodal methods of communication, then students’ survival in our rapidly changing and increasingly unstable economy is tenuous at best. In order to accomplish the original goal of education, that of creating workers ready to engage in the economy, learning has to move beyond the classroom and education must evolve from what it has been for the last century. In order to accomplish this goal, a true collaboration must exist between school and home environments, both so that learning can be reinforced and so that children can be encouraged and supported by their parents in their pedagogical endeavors. This research
project aims to understand what Pakistani immigrant parents’ perspectives and attitudes are with respect to technology usage by their children, in an effort to further collaboration between home and school environments.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Qadeer (2003) identifies two main types of immigrants to Canada, those who are professionals and entrepreneurs and have their own cultural, symbolic and economic capital, and those who enter as refugees or family-class immigrants and work in low-level positions. Irrespective of the type of immigrant, practices, habits and resources that were previously taken for granted have to be relearned, or even completely reinvented by the whole family. These include simple habits of buying groceries to navigating the transport systems available. In addition to this is the overt implication of not belonging (Bannerji, 2000), as officials and citizens alike question your origins and reasons for being present in Canada.

This study was designed to understand how parents who emigrated from Pakistan to Canada and who have settled in the GTA negotiated the benefits associated with the increasing access and availability of new media technology with their concerns about that technology. It also aims to contribute to the overall literature on parental perspectives on the use of technology—although from a specific cultural and socio-economic perspective, one that has not been adequately addressed.

By focusing on parents who have immigrated to Canada from Pakistan this issue can be studied from a specific cultural context, that of an immigrant parent. The culture in Pakistan is a unique blend of conservatism (especially as it is influenced by increasingly radical Islamic beliefs), progressivism (as witnessed by the mobile revolution in the country), and westernization (as seen in the recent media expansion in the country). The “dueling discourses” (Leander, 2007) of new media—an educative tool or source of inappropriate material—take on a new complexity when viewed from this
cultural perspective, especially when considering the outlook of individuals who maintain close ties with other immigrants. Maintenance of cultural values in this context become problematic as learning and communication in Pakistan is primarily through transmission, originating from a figure of authority, which could hamper the development of children as collaborative creators.

3.1 Approach

The research project was designed as a qualitative study, in order to understand and elicit opinions and explanations from participants with regards to the use of new technologies by their children. In addition, because the study was being undertaken from the perspective of a particular visible minority group, that of Pakistani immigrants to Canada, a qualitative approach was appropriate in order to better explore all the factors that affect the participants in the study.

In particular a phenomenological approach was taken so that the issue, parents perceived use of new technology by children, could be explored from the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007). This form of qualitative research is appropriate for the study since it highlights the importance of active decision-making on the part of the participant and allows for an understanding of the “essence” (Creswell, 2007) of the phenomenon, through rich and descriptive detail elicited during interviews.

3.2 Design

Once I had determined that I would be conducting a phenomenological qualitative research study, I formulated the following research question:
What are Pakistani immigrant parental perspectives and attitudes on how their children use new media technologies and how do they encourage or discourage its use and monitor access with respect to their children’s safety, their culture and their values?

Further questions to clarify the core inquiry are as follows:

- What are the major concerns Pakistani immigrant parents have with regards to the use of new media technology? How do they address these concerns?
- How do parents encourage or discourage their children to use these technologies?
  What are considered good or appropriate uses of technology?
- What role do parents think schools and other institutions should play with regard to the use of new technologies?

Based on these questions, a proposal was put forward for the research, which indicated interviewing as the source of data collection in keeping with the phenomenological design of the study. The proposal included the protocol for a semi-structured interview of thirteen open-ended questions (Appendix A). Although the number of questions was more than is typical for a phenomenological study, I felt they would help me gain the desired depth and breath of data from the participants, especially as only one interview was to be conducted for each parent who agreed to take part in the study. This was seen as sufficient for the scope of the study as the attitudes and perspectives of parents with respect to their children’s use of new media are formulated over time and thus multiple interviews would not have elicited any significant change in the data.
The design of the study required face-to-face interviews from ten participants. I determined that face-to-face interviewing was essential as it let me gauge the responses of each participant through body language as well as through verbal dialogue. Further I concluded that ten interviews would allow me to gather sufficient detail into the phenomenon while still allowing each participant’s voice to remain distinct. Each interview was to be recorded and then transcribed for analysis, which will be described in detail later.

In keeping with the conventions of phenomenological research before analyzing the data collected from the interviews, I “bracketed” my experience of the issue under study and recorded my relationship with respect to the community of immigrant Pakistanis in the GTA. By acknowledging my personal experience with education in Pakistan, as well as the challenges of settling in a new country, I was able to acknowledge some of my assumptions and therefore attempt to separate them, as much as is possible given my background, from the process of analysis.

3.3 Recruitment

When ethics approval was obtained from the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board, ten participants, as outlined in the proposal, were recruited for the study through my ties in the community, which included family, friends and family-friends who had immigrated to the GTA previously. Criterion sampling was used to determine participants for the study, which required that participants have emigrated to the GTA from Pakistan, have ties with the Pakistani immigrant community, and have at least one child attending public school within the GTA. Those individuals I reached out to in order
to help me recruit participants were provided both hard and soft copies of the participant information sheet (Appendix B) to clarify the intent of the study and the eligibility criteria for the study. My experience with the community led me to believe that they are mostly unwilling to talk to strangers, even if they are Pakistani, and therefore I thought that having a personal contact introduce the research project would be a more productive and successful form of recruitment. This method also provided a sense of security both for me as a researcher as well as for the participants when we met for the interviews.

It should be noted that none of the individuals I personally contacted were eligible for the study. Intermediaries were also provided both a hard and soft copy of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) so that potential participants were aware of the study and their degree of involvement as well as the benefits of the study before agreeing to participate. Participants were only contacted once the intermediary had ascertained their willingness to participate. Thus every effort was made not to put pressure on individuals who were potential participants for the study.

### 3.4 Data collection

As per the design, ten participants were recruited for the study. Seven of the interviews took place at neutral locations such as coffee shops or food courts near the participants’ residences in Mississauga, one interview was conducted in the participants’ house in Mississauga, and another two at the participants’ work place in downtown Toronto. Nine of the interviews lasted from about fifty minutes to seventy minutes, only
Anita’s interview lasted about one hundred and eighty minutes. Before the interview started, participants were once again handed the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) as well as verbally informed of their rights as participants and assured of their anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. While all participants verbally understood and agreed to the conditions of the study, written consent, in the form of their signing the Consent Form (Appendix C) was also gained.

Participants were also given the option of reviewing the interviews once they had been transcribed, an option that none of them took, however four of the participants have asked for the results of the research, another option that was available to all participants. All participants were also informed of their right to refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study up to the point when the analysis of the information was to begin, a date they would be informed of. No participant took either of these options. All interviews were recoded digitally on the iProRecorder and application available for the iPhone through the Apple App store and developed by BIAS software. In addition I took notes during all interviews.

3.5 Research Participants

The study was designed to recruit Pakistani participants living in the GTA. However, the final participants of the research were all residents of Mississauga, a city west of Toronto and part of the GTA in the Municipality of Peel. All participants of the study were living in condos or houses in middle class or upper middle class neighborhoods, which were rented, mortgaged or owned outright, a factor that seemed to

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7 This and all other names used in this study are pseudonyms
depend primarily on how long ago they had immigrated to Canada rather than on economic differences. It was appropriate to invite participants from this socio-economic background, as they would have the financial ability to provide a range of technology at home.

As per the participant criteria, all the parents who were interviewed had one or more children in the public school system, although the ages of the children varied. Thus opinions of parents with children ranging from Montessori to High School were obtained, providing diversity in experiences and opinions regarding access to and appropriate use of technology. All the parents who were interviewed have Bachelors degrees and most had undertaken some form of further studies, either obtaining a Masters degree or other diploma from institutions in Pakistan or from the West (primarily North American universities). About half the parents had also done courses in Canada in order to be eligible to work after immigration. A summary of the participants can be found in the table below (Table 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Family Makeup</th>
<th>Education Background of Participant</th>
<th>Technology in the House</th>
<th>Employment Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saira</td>
<td>Two parent household, daughter (15), son (11)</td>
<td>High school: Matric (Pakistan); Bachelor of Science and Engineering (Pakistan); Diploma Course in Computers (Pakistan); Digital Communications and Business Administration course (Canada)</td>
<td>Desktop, Wii, PlayStation (family use); BlackBerry (participant’s); iPhone, laptop (husband’s); iPod (daughter’s)</td>
<td>Participant had job as an IT professional, and is now looking for work. Husband is employed as well as working independently as an insurance broker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assad</td>
<td>Two parent household, daughter (15), son (10)</td>
<td>High school: A-Levels (Pakistan); Masters of Business Administration (Pakistan); Certificate of General Accountancy (Canada)</td>
<td>Computer; PlayStation; Xbox (family use); iPhone (participant’s) BlackBerry (wife’s); iPhone (daughter’s); iPod (son’s)</td>
<td>Participant currently employed in Canada at an engineering firm. Wife is a homemaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasleem</td>
<td>Two parent household, daughter (15), son (13)</td>
<td>High school: A-Levels (Pakistan); Bachelor of Arts (Pakistan); Masters in Economics (Pakistan);</td>
<td>Desktop, PlayStation, Wii, (family use); Desktop, Motorola Razor (participants’); Android cell phone, desktop (daughter’s); iPod with mobile chip (son’s);</td>
<td>Participant works as a journalist. Husband works as a manager in a bank</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (Cont.)
Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
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<th>Name of Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swaiba</td>
<td>Single mother, two sons (18 and 16)</td>
<td>High School: A-Levels (Pakistan); Bachelors in Computer Engineering (Pakistan); Masters in Computer Engineering (United Kingdom)</td>
<td>Desktop, Xbox (family use); iPad, laptop (participant’s); 2 Laptops (sons’)</td>
<td>Participant is a systems engineer in an IT firm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzma</td>
<td>Two parent household, daughter (14)</td>
<td>High school: O-Levels (Pakistan); Bachelor of Arts (Pakistan)</td>
<td>Desktop, Laptop, iPad (family use); Blackberry (husband’s); iPhone (shared between participant and daughter); iPod touch (daughter’s)</td>
<td>Participant works part time in retail. Husband works in a bank in the insurance department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabia</td>
<td>Two parent household, two daughters (11 and 8)</td>
<td>High school; A-Levels (Pakistan); Bachelor of Arts (Pakistan); Masters in Economics (Pakistan);</td>
<td>Desktop, laptop, iPad, Wii (family use); Laptop, iPhone (husband’s); BlackBerry (participant’s) Android (elder daughter’s), iPod (younger daughter’s).</td>
<td>Participant develops children’s websites from a virtual/home office. Husband is a vice president in a technology firm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>Single parent household (husband in Pakistan), daughter (4)</td>
<td>High school diploma (UAE); Bachelor or Arts (Started in US finished in Pakistan)</td>
<td>Laptop, iPad (family use); BlackBerry (participant’s), iPhone (husband’s)</td>
<td>Participant is a homemaker. Father works for a family owned business in Pakistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (Cont.)
Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zehra</td>
<td>Two parent household, two sons (17 and 14)</td>
<td>High school: Matric, Nurse Training (Pakistan); Montessori Teacher Training (Canada)</td>
<td>Wii, iPad (family use); 2 Notebooks (sons), Laptop (parents).</td>
<td>Participant is a Montessori teacher. Husband works in the hospitality sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheerbano</td>
<td>Two parent household, two daughters (6 and 4)</td>
<td>High school: A-Levels (Pakistan); Bachelors (USA)</td>
<td>2 Desktops (family use), laptop iPhone (husband’s); Laptop iPhone (participant’s)</td>
<td>Participant is a Ph.D. candidate in environmental engineering. Husband a professor of Computer Science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>Two parent household, daughter (14) and son (10)</td>
<td>High school: A-Levels (Pakistan); Bachelor of Arts (USA)</td>
<td>2 Laptops, iPad, Xbox, Wii, PlayStation (family use); Samsung Galaxy (husband’s); iPhone (participant’s); BlackBerry (daughter’s), iPod (son’s).</td>
<td>Participant is a homemaker. Husband is an importer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Notes
Matric, short for Matriculation is the examination held in grade 9 and 10 after which a student receives a Secondary School Certificate. The Government of Pakistan holds these examinations. They are a pre-requisite to entering college.
O Level (Ordinary Level) or A Level (Advanced Level) examinations are set and graded by the Cambridge Board in England. They are typically taken at the end of grades 10 and 12 respectively. The syllabus set by the Cambridge Board is widely followed in private schools across Pakistan.
Due to the nature of the community, nine out of the ten participants were mothers. This was in part due to my own position as a female in a community where segregation between the sexes, although not strict or enforced in this socio-economic segment, naturally occurs. Thus while no distinction was made during the recruitment process, mothers were generally more comfortable talking to me. Eventually this turned out to be beneficial to the study since Pakistani mothers are generally considered to be responsible for children’s upbringing. This is in keeping with traditional gender roles, as illustrated by the fact that only Tasleem and Zehra of the female participants had full time jobs out of the house. Of these two Zehra is a teacher, allowing her to be home after regular school hours. Further, at least in the perspective of the participant mothers, they were more directly involved in establishing and enforcing rules around technology, while fathers were more likely to indulge their children.

3.6 Data Analysis

Once interviews were completed, they were transferred to my personal computer and transcribed. After each transcription, I completed a memo, which was both analytical (in that it listed the technologies available to the family) as well as reflective (as it also recorded major observations or interesting perceptions based on what I considered significant statements).

Once all interviews were transcribed, I returned to each memo and identified seven categories of information relevant to answering the research questions: reproducing pedagogical history, presence of technology in the home, primary use of technology, concerns regarding the use of technology by children, management of the use of
technology, technology as a tool of identity construction, and alternatives to “messing around” with technology. These were written out in an analytical memo, and will be discussed in greater depth later. Once these categories had been identified I returned to the interviews and coded them by category. This allowed me to identify how each category related to participants and to identify relevant passages, which preserved participants’ voices during later analysis. Once the categories of information were coded, I wrote further reflective memos on each, which helped me to identify fourteen themes (to be discussed later).

It should be noted that one interview, that of Assad, became corrupt during the recording or transfer of the file and thus his information is based on the notes taken during the interview. As a result no direct quotes from Assad have been included.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

During the design of the study, no significant ethical problems were anticipated with respect to the participants. One consideration taken into account was that by being involved in this study, individuals would necessarily be labeled as belonging to a minority group, that of Pakistani immigrants. However, as all participants already identified as belonging to this group, no problem was faced in this respect. In addition, since no questions were asked which could have been deemed sensitive regarding their immigration status, participants were in no way put at risk due to this study.

Another possible vulnerability that was considered during the design of the project was that inquiring into the background of individuals might bring personally sensitive issues to the surface. This was one reason why it was made clear during the
initial interview protocol, and again while asking these questions, that general, non-specific answers were sufficient. Although participants answered with varying degrees of detail, none experienced any difficulty or awkwardness with regard to the questions asked. These concerns were made explicit to the Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto during the submission of the ethics protocol, and only once approval from the board was granted did the interviews take place.

One concern that did surface during the study was that participants became slightly uncomfortable when discussing their concerns with sexual content that was accessible through new technologies. This became noticeable when participants repeatedly assured me that their children were “good” and didn’t go on such sites, except by mistake or other similar happenstances. I can only assume they were concerned that I would think badly of their children or talk about this aspect of the interviews to other members of the community. In this instance, I believe my being part of the community, and having gained personal references for the interviews, was detrimental to the research process.

At these times, to mitigate their embarrassment, I assured them that I did not in any way believe other than what they were telling me, and that I was asking only to ascertain their concerns, not making judgment on or assumption about their children’s behavior. This seemed to help, as after my assurances, they generally spoke freely. The only exception to this was one mother, Saira, who had been brought up in a very conservative family, and therefore I can only assume any discussion of sexual content was uncomfortable for her.
3.8 Conclusion

Having designed the project as a phenomenological study and undertaken the research, which consisted of interviewing ten Pakistani immigrant parents from middle-income families, the next chapter reports my findings based on significant statements made by the participants during the interview process. Despite some technical difficulties, a rich dataset was obtained from the parents interviewed, which after analysis has been grouped into seven categories to help in answering the research questions and through which additional themes were uncovered. A deeper analysis of the findings will be undertaken in the final chapter.
Chapter 4: Findings

Having completed the interviewing process as per the design of the phenomenological study to research how Pakistani immigrant parents’ attitudes regarding to new media technology usage by their children, I formed six categories of information that helped to organize the data and find emergent themes. An exploration of these categories has been undertaken below, and themes identified within each category. A summary of the themes is given in Table 3 (page 75-76).

4.1 Reproducing Pedagogical History

Understanding the pedagogical history of participants was one of the first areas explored during the interviews. This was critical in understanding how these individuals viewed education, and helped contextualize their attitudes with regards to their children’s new literacy practices. When analyzing the interviews, it became clear that parents were comfortable with, and in fact encouraged, the use of computers for research and word processing—replications of the traditional literacy practices they recalled from school—but were not generally in favor of working collaboratively on group projects. Parents preferred their children to work independently, as they had done during their own education.

While the interview question was directed towards how they were educated, participants were quick to share where they studied, showing great pride in their educational achievements. Nine of the participants (all except Anita who completed high school in the UAE) had completed high school in elite private schools in Pakistan. Eight of the participants had gone through high school following the Cambridge Board
syllabus, while the remaining two had followed the Matric syllabus established by the Government of Pakistan. In both systems, students ended high school by sitting for final examinations (O Levels and A Levels for Cambridge Board or Matric final examinations) before continuing their education in undergraduate institutions.

While the high schools of the participants varied, all reported that their schools prized individual achievement over group work or collaborative learning. Anita recounts:

No, I don’t remember any group work. We didn’t have projects. It was very individual. Because they followed a, because it was an American-British system mixed, it was more British where we didn’t have any tasks or doing projects or stuff. I don’t even remember doing many essays for that matter. It was simple schoolwork. No, no projects and no collaboration.

Except for Tasleem and Uzma, the other eight participants do remember collaborative work during their post-secondary education. Saira, who was very forthcoming on the subject of her experience with collaboration during her diploma course in computers, talked about an assignment that was designed to prepare her for professional project work. The final project for the course required her group to evaluate a Pakistani hotel’s the accounting system and to suggest upgrades and enhancements that would increase efficiency. She remembers how she and her teammates would work on the project:

We used to go as a group to the accounts department and we used to ask questions to all the people who were working there and then we used to write individually all our, what we used to get from them. And then finally we used to sit together
and discuss with each other and I got this information from that person and what did you get? And then we used to write it in points and then we used to divide the work, how we are going to make it. Who is going to do what and who is going to do what and it was really interesting.

Saira’s comments clearly show how despite having encountered collaborative learning environments and new literacy learning at a later stage in her life, it was an experience she enjoyed and learn from. This was consistent across the parents interviewed. Mariam recounted how she enjoyed having a collaborative space in which to brainstorm, both with other students and professors, when she was doing her Bachelor of Arts degree, and Sheherbano (who is perusing a PhD) mentioned how she and other students in the laboratory collaborate to complete their research assignments. The monthly informal dinners with her “lab mates” was mentioned several times during the interview.

Tasleem also remembers her education background in Pakistan as being individualistic although her experience collaborating did not start until she entered the workplace:

Individual work, it was all individual. The first time I remember doing teamwork in any way was when I started working. Whenever, you pretty much can’t publish anything as a journalist anywhere, if you are writing you need a publisher, you need a editor. So it’s collaborative work. But definitely in the school system, there it’s all your own individual effort. So there is nothing like teamwork or being divided into groups or doing group work. Its how you perform by yourself.

Tasleem’s example is extreme, in that all other participants did encounter more collaborative work during their college experiences, but does highlight how her
educational background did not prepare her for the more collaborative spaces that exist in the workplace.

It is surprising therefore that despite having a clear preference for working collaboratively, and generally appreciating the need for collaboration when working professionally, participants including Assad felt that group work was imposed on the children. Likewise, Saira’s daughter would have to actively convince her mother that the assignment required collaboration. The major concern surrounding this dislike for group work was that the children would waste most of the time that was allotted to the group activity. Marium voiced her concerns in this regard:

I like her to work all by herself. Because even I think that when these friends all get together they are going to do work, but they are going to do other stuff more. They are going to have fun more and work less so I am always telling her this [solitary work] is best. But when she wants to work in a group I let her do that.

With the exception of Zehra, the other nine participants actively discouraged the use of new technologies in order to facilitate collaboration, even with friends or other students, thinking of it as an excuse for getting access to technologies that they did not otherwise have permission to use. Despite believing that children would waste time when getting together to do group work, they preferred having them meet physically to do assignments. Rabia was frustrated by this concept of using Facebook to work collaboratively:

I don’t see why they need Facebook to do their projects, I have heard a lot of parents say they gave them access because they needed it for a project. No they can pick up the phone, they can text, there are so many other [ways to
communicate]. How did we do it? How do I do projects? I don’t do it on Facebook.

Only Zehra thought that using new technologies like Skype and email was helping her son work in groups.

So earlier, they used to come home do some assignments that need to be done, like some media work where they need to be together to have it done, so they are together. But other written parts, they can always email it, they can Skype it they can share their ideas. So that is how it’s being done now.

In general, however, parents preferred that they either text or call each other rather than using new technologies. Saira was perhaps the strictest in this respect, wanting her children to use the landline in the house for this purpose.

Perhaps one reason for this reluctance to allow the use of technology for purposes outside of traditional literacies was the absence or highly restricted use of technology during the participants’ own educative experiences. Neither the Matric nor the Cambridge Board syllabi encourage the use of new technology, with teaching still relying heavily on approved textbooks. Saira recounts how she learnt to make presentations for projectors during her diploma course in computers. Similarly Tasleem encountered a computer for the first time when she was studying for her Masters degree:

I never used a computer till I did my Masters. In fact the first time I used one, in terms of where technology is concerned was after I got my first job. So we were not exposed to any kind of technology. I still remember listening to Nelson Mandela coming out of jail and the fall of the Berlin Wall on a little transistor which could get BBC on the AM channel. So for me it was all though textbooks.
As discussed in more depth later, parents did not have any concerns with regards to children using computers for their schoolwork and actively encouraged them by giving them access to the tools they needed. However this comfort with the use of technology was limited to reproductions of traditional literacy practices. It is clear from looking at their own educational history that parents were not happy when their children’s learning diverged from the practices they were familiar with. This is the first theme that emerged from the interviews that were conducted.

4.2 Presence of Technology in the Home

Despite not wanting their children to use technology to aid in collaborative endeavors for schoolwork, all the families had an extensive sampling of technology available in the house (see Table 12, pg 43-45). One of the main reasons given by participants in the research for the availability of technology in the home was the need for the family to remain abreast of new technological innovations. Tasleem recounts why she grudgingly got her daughter, the elder of her two children, a phone:

But even with the phone, she got it in grade 10 and that’s when I think we realized she will really not be able to fit in into the school system if she doesn’t get a phone. So the way it is with clothes, it’s just like an added accessory.

Saira had a similar situation arise with her daughter, again the elder of her two children. Although she is vehemently against getting her children cellular phones, she relented enough to get her daughter an iPod, “Because all the kids have that and I don’t want her to get any kind of complex or something. So I told her okay, we will get you one when you get good marks”. 
Although fitting in with contemporaries was the primary reason Saira compromised her rules against technology use at a young age, she still used the gift as a reward for obtaining good grades. With the wide variety of technology available, and the need to constantly update and maintain it via purchase of games, updates or replacement systems, most parents used technology to reward their children for accomplishments in other areas. Uzma referring to her only daughter stated, “it’s mostly reward system, I think, [it] depends on her grades. If she is up to mark, we do get her what she wants.” Mariam and Assad similarly rewarded their children with cash, which they then used to buy games or gaming consoles. Of all the parents interviewed, only Zehra did not believe in a reward system for technology, claiming it was a form of bribery.

In addition to using technology as a reward for good behavior or academic achievement, all parents except for Zehra also used it for birthday presents, especially since most children requested it from their parents. Tasleem sheepishly told me how her son had already done his research as to what games he would like for his upcoming birthday. She shrugged and said, “I told him, okay email me.” Assad, Swaiba and Zehra agreed, that while technology should not be excessive, if it is within your budget, you should stay abreast of new developments. Assad went so far as to call technology a necessity of the modern world.

The use of technology as a fashion accessory was another trend throughout the interviews. Parents were willing to invest in technology, despite their ambivalence with regards to its usage, to give the impression of being technologically aware amongst their, and their children’s, social networks. This impulse to fit-in was greater than their misgivings with regard to technology and was enough to overcome their own reservations.
and concerns. Considering the wide range of technology available, it also became a convenient reward or gift that could be given.

Although the introduction of technology in the home environment was a way for all participants to conform to the identity of the modern, technologically savvy individual, the parents who were interviewed also saw technology as a learning tool. Sheherbano, the mother of two young daughters, Anita, mother of one young daughter, and Taleem, who had both a daughter and a son, all agreed that they liked having technology in the house because of its potential as a learning tool. Tasleem stated:

I am not stopping them from getting their numbers and working around that, because I feel that it develops the brain, and eye and body coordination, when he uses his PlayStation or Wii. They have got all the gizmos.

Similarly Anita does not restrict her daughter from using her iPad, as she feels she is learning a lot from it. In particular she often mentioned a game based on the cartoon Fireman Sam - a current favorite with her daughter - which taught her how to act around fires. Swaiba further expanded this concept of technology as an educative tool to considering technology as a resource for lifetime personal improvement “because it’s the growth, [and] everyone wants to grow as human beings. If she is a person who wants to grow there is always room for improvement.”

This idea, of technology as a tool for lifetime learning is in keeping with Oblinger and Hawkins (2006), whose perception of competency in information technology included the skills to become lifetime learners. Further, this was one of the few instances where a parent started considering technology as more than just a tool to make traditional literacies more efficient and instead considered its potential for individual development.
4.3 Primary Use of Technology

Given participants’ perception of new technology as a tool to support learning, it is not surprising that, when asked what they considered the proper use for technology, parents universally replied “research.” For example Uzma stated:

I think, time wise, it is a good thing because I remember spending hours in the library which now I don’t think you need to do. Because you have everything available at home.

All the parents interviewed unhesitatingly said that computers were used primarily for schoolwork, with Swaiba mentioning how her son took his laptop to school in order to take notes. Using computers as a resource was another idea that all the parents were in favor of, and supported by making new technologies accessible to their children at home. Tasleem stated:

So we understand they need fast computers for the work they do, because I think it’s the school system, they want things on computers. They want them to do their research and there is only that much you can do taking the kids the library for, and even there you just get that half an hour time stamp.

Parents liked the fact that technology was making the process of learning more efficient. Uzma appreciated that the school posted homework assignments and updates on current projects on the school website. Zehra, as we have seen before, thought technology was an efficient way for her sons to work collaboratively.

For the purposes of this study, however, the recreational uses of technology were perhaps more interesting, as their use was not imposed by outside sources and allowed the children the opportunity for the development of multiliteracies. By far the most
common use of technology outside of schoolwork was for communication, especially messaging friends and Skyping with family. When Tasleem felt the need to buy her daughter an Android cellular phone so that she would fit-in with her peers at school, they did not bother with getting a calling plan and instead got her a text-only plan. Similarly Saira’s daughter opted for an iPod when given the option between it and a laptop, as it allowed her to comfortably and constantly tweet with her friends. Zehra commented on how her sons would often take breaks from completing their assignments to get current with what was happening amongst their friends: “that is, you know, they are on the laptop [and] they want to peek in. From their assignments they just go peek, tweet here, see if something and go back to their work.” Unfortunately, this habit of constant communication with friends was not always seen as a positive habit. Tasleem referred the cell phone as her daughter’s “third hand” and Mariam was considering taking away her daughter’s BlackBerry as she felt the messaging application (BBM) was distracting her too much.

It’s feeling very negative, the technology. Because they are basically, they use the phone a lot, they are on the BackBerry. That is really distracting for them.

Especially the BBM. Especially Mahnoor, she is very distractible.

Further, Saira recounted how her daughter went behind her back and downloaded Twitter on her iPod, something she was not technically allowed to do.

While opinions were mixed about children being in constant contact with each other, all the parents interviewed were great advocates of Skype. In particular they liked the freedom of being able to call Pakistan easily. Swaiba was particularly enthusiastic about this function of technology:
There is Skype, I can see my mom in Pakistan. I love the technology because calling is free. This is with the technology. Otherwise it was so expensive to call Pakistan and to call from Pakistan. The distance is closer. Probably there is no distance left, honest to god, you can call every day. This is the best part of the technology.

Anita, whose husband lives and works in Pakistan, also appreciated constant contact via Skype, particularly underlining its affect on her daughter’s relationship with her (daughter’s) grandparents:

I think the advantage of Skype for her is that she stays in touch with her grandparents. And whatever she can learn from them, which she could have learned had she been in Pakistan, I think she still learns from them. Just by talking.

Thus the ease of communication that technology permitted was certainly a common element in all interviews.

While research and communication were cited as the major uses for technology in the homes of the participants, another universal activity among children was downloading popular media: predominantly television shows, but also in most cases music. In all the participants’ families gaming was also a regular activity, although it was noticeable that when there was a single child, these games were more often played on an iPad than on a gaming console, even when it was also present in the house. However, due to parental restrictions, these games were primarily played with friends, family or one-on-one with the console, instead of collaboratively online.
When asked direct questions, parents did mention that their children went online to further their hobbies. Specifically, finding out information on sports and looking up recipes were mentioned in this respect. Assad recounted, in passing, how his children had managed to sell their PlayStation on Kajiji, an online forum, and used the proceeds from that to buy a Wii. Unlike most participants, who simply quoted “research” on their interests as being one of their pastimes on the Internet, Uzma shared some details regarding her daughter’s online activities:

Honestly she is more into sales and stuff, like sometimes she makes business cards and prints them online, Those kinds of things she does too. Or she looks up websites for garage sales, or how to go about it, and things are posted, so those kind of things she does too.

Parental concerns did restrict the use of technology in these areas, as they universally did not approve of their children posting online or engaging in virtual conversations. Instead even where children’s interests were being encouraged, technology was used passively.

4.4 Concerns Regarding the Use of Technology by Children

By far the greatest concern that parents had with regard to their children’s use of technology was the risk posed by the misuse of chatrooms or other social networking media such as Facebook. For example Uzma stated:

Honestly with something like that, to join a forum or something, I would like to be around when she does that. Because you really don’t know what is on the other end and what kind of people you get involved with. Because then you have random people messaging you as well. So I am not very comfortable with that.
Additionally, Anita was not comfortable with her daughter chatting with other students in her grade. While Swaiba had given permission to her sons to play online, she still had concerns, and relented only after limiting permission to monitored chatrooms, such as the official Microsoft chatrooms for the Xbox.

When he started using it, it was very scary for me, because we don’t know who is the person on the other end, so we have to be very very careful. So we have to teach them that do not disclose your ID, do not tell them where you are from. Be very specific, because its like a chatroom, sort of a thing, when you are playing gaming, Xbox or Play Station. Because everything is now so connected you can log into a room on Xbox and people from all around the world, people from Pakistan or China, they are now connected together. So you do not know who the other person is. So it’s scary but you have to be very careful with the kids as well. (Swaiba)

Content, on all forms of media, was another major concern for parents. For example Saira stated:

And I am telling them, even my son, I am telling them that these bad sites that pop up all the time, all these nude sites and stuff like that. They shouldn’t be watching that.

Although most parents mentioned sexual content first, with the notable exception of Zehra and Anita (who mentioned violence first), when prompted, all participants were uneasy about exposing their children to violent content as well. Parents primarily used official ratings for television shows, video games and movies, and only Rabia mentioned actively seeking out information on the Internet or other sources if ratings or television-
style warnings were not easily accessible. Mariam, Uzma and Assad said they tried to follow these ratings but were not enforcing them strictly. Saira in particular felt she was not able to prevent her son from playing violent video games as he would play them while visiting older cousins. Zehra and Anita were the only participants in the study who decided on the appropriateness of content based on their own judgment.

Anita was especially concerned about content for her young child as her ability to navigate the iPad, which she used regularly, was outstripping her traditional literacies, and as a result she was watching content that her mother felt was not suitable for her.

So that is my main concern, violence. Sexual content I think becomes the parent’s responsibility to make sure the kid does not get access. As I said I would definitely get parental controls. But as I said, she was on YouTube and looking at Dora cartoons, and one of the Dora cartoons was full of violence. And the language they were using was horrendous. I was shocked when I saw that clip.

(Anita)

In this case, Anita’s daughter had accessed a cartoon that was not part of the official Dora franchise. This “fake cartoon” as Anita called it was an example of how open these forums are and how engaging in new literacy practices does not always have a positive outcome. It again reflects the fact that children not only need to learn to use new technologies, but that they need to learn them responsibly and need to acquire skills to evaluate the information they access. In this case, Anita’s daughter is very young, and her mother is vigilant. However, as children grow older, they need to be able to analyze the material they are accessing for quality and usefulness.
Another major concern that the parents had concerned content their children posted online being misused. Tasleem in particular, expressed this fear:

In case they got into any trouble with it, like posting your pictures and that picture could be used on some other body and some other head,

I really don’t want them to regret something they posted twenty years ago from now, and then because there is no way of retracting anything that goes on cyberspace.

Apart from Swaiba and Saira, who are professionals in the Information Technology field, most parents felt uncomfortable using platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and therefore felt they were unable to help their children if they got into trouble online. Most of their uneasiness came from hearing cautionary tales associated with posting material online without having extensive experience doing so themselves. In particular pictures seem to cause the most concern for participants. Saira and Rabia objected to their children posting photographs of themselves online as they could be used to identify them or because they could be digitally altered.

Lastly all parents considered some technology available to their children to be a waste of time. This complaint was most often lobbied against texting, Facebook messaging and tweeting, as seen earlier—although all parents also heavily critiqued gaming. For example Tasleem stated:

He [my son] does all his time on [his PlayStation]. Like today I am not going to be at home till nine and before my husband comes home, he pretty much all the time will be on PlayStation. [If] there is no parental control, they can spend 24
hours on it. And that is one of the main reasons why even in summer, I have to enroll them in half day camp.

Tasleem also thought that technology was making her children lose the art of conversation and personal interaction and making them lazy, as they were no longer reading in-depth. She found that although they were abreast of current events, they were getting their news from online sources or friends.

They don’t bother reading the Toronto Star which comes home, but they know what is happening simply because they go on line and they talk to friends, or whatever. So they are in the know, but they are not going to sit and read an eight-hundred-word article. They are going to read a forty-word snippet and say they know everything.

She even felt that they didn’t use Twitter, as putting in a hundred and forty characters was too much work. Similarly, Uzma thought her daughter was using technology too much, even if she had nothing in particular she wanted to do, and Mariam was dissatisfied with the introduction of gaming consoles to her house, as she felt her children were getting addicted to it.

The other technology I am not very happy about is, their father has introduced them to a lot of games, like the Xbox and the Wii. And they do get kind of addicted. And it really does curtail their reading. Because when they are bored they just play games, instead of when we were bored we would read a book, or just play boardgames or go out and play. (Mariam)
While each parent had differently prioritized concerns regarding the use of technology, they can be grouped into four distinct areas: safety concerns, improper content, lack of control, and wasting time.

It is interesting to note that parents relied heavily on information provided to them by their children’s schools about safety on the Internet rather than relying on peer groups or their own research. Considering the distrust that exists for institutions, especially those that are government run, in Pakistan, this was an unexpected finding. Some parents, like Saira, Mariam, Assad and Rabia, had not considered the dangers involved with going online until these institutions had provided the information. This is because, while Pakistan has a high crime rate, among their demographic children are extensively chaperoned and hence avoid this form of abuse. All participants regularly attended the workshops held by the school in conjunction with the police departments. Tasleem had even put the guidelines provided during workshops for safe Internet usage on their desktop as a constant reminder for her children.

4.5 Management of the Use of Technology

In order to manage these concerns parents have imposed various restrictions on the technology in order to ensure responsible use. Workshops at schools, conducted in collaboration with the police department, have been greatly beneficial for parents in this regard. All parents mentioned limiting computer use in private spaces as a strategy to monitor content, keeping computers in family common rooms where parents can easily keep an eye on what their children are doing. This however is a factor of age, Tasleem’s
fifteen-year-old daughter is now allowed to take her laptop into her room, and Swaiba’s
eighteen-year-old son has similar privileges.

However, in both these families, what Tasleem calls an “open concept” is
practiced, where all passwords are shared amongst the members of the family and
therefore parents can check at any time what their children are doing. For example
Swaiba claimed:

And I know what they will watch, because I never allow them to close the door.
Our doors are always open. No matter whatever time, I can always walk into the
doors, walk into the room, see what they are doing. The password I know, I know
all the passwords. I know everything in the phone, I know everything. I know I
have their email accesses. I have their iPhone accesses, I have their Facebook
access. This is the only thing I can control and this is the only way. My email is
open, my Facebook is open, their email and Facebook is open so we share
everything, so there is no point of their hiding.

Tasleem also insisted that her children make her a “friend” on Facebook if they wanted to
open accounts. Ironically this has caused them to swear they will never open accounts as
Tasleem herself if very active on the site for her job.

Given this constant monitoring, it was interesting that all parents mentioned
trusting in their children with regards to their use of new technologies. All the
participants indicated that they had spoken to their children about appropriate uses of
technology, so that they know what is not considered acceptable. Despite this, even in
instances where technology is allowed in a private space, parents still conducted checks
on the content being accessed. For instance Uzma recounted:
Sometimes when she is in her room, I do go and check what is on, and if I think she is trying to hide something, I think I would be able to tell, right. By her body language. That is the only way I do it, I don’t track it any other way.

Still parents like Uzma, Rabia, Sheherbano and Saira do expect their children to follow their rules of not going onto certain websites or watching material that they feel was inappropriate. In these instances, the parents expected their children to approach them if they wanted to bend rules, such as go on to YouTube to watch a specific video, or if they were uncertain about whether the media was acceptable. Swaiba stated:

You have to teach your kids how to respect and how to be respected. I don’t believe in the system that everything should be exposed. You pay money, you get everything. You write one word and Google ads just pop up. You have to have trust in your kids and you have to believe them and you have to control them [so] that they cannot do any bad stuff. And I don’t know, it’s very, being a single mom, I find it very hard to control each and every thing.

These claims of vigilant oversight and knowledge of their children was particularly significant in light of Sara and Zehra’s revelations, during their respective interviews, that their children had engaged with technology in ways that they had not approved beforehand. In Sara’s case, this was when her daughter opened a Twitter account on her iPod and Zehra’s son posted a video on YouTube. Both parents eventually accepted these practices as harmless, at least in the manner their children were using them, and allowed continued access given the understanding that they were to be kept informed of such activities. However, these examples raise the question of how much parents actually know about their children’s use of new media technology.
In addition to monitoring what their children are doing on the Internet, all the parents mentioned placing restrictions on how long or when they could use technology for recreational purposes. Mariam, for example, does not allow her children to play on their Xbox during the school week, although this rule had been lifted for the summer holidays. Tasleem did not give her son the password to the Internet router at home to prevent him from playing online through his game console. This was the only measure of control she could impose on the time he spent gaming due to her work schedule, as she did not anticipate him playing any one game more than six times when playing alone. Saira and Anita both had two-hour restrictions on any technology-based activity, irrespective of whether they were using the technology for homework or recreation. Anita remembers telling her son:

So I am not going to allow you [son] to use it more than two hours. Two hours I have put a limit on everything. Like I have told them even if you are doing homework, if you are on the computer after two hours you have to take a break.

The final measure that most parents had taken to prevent their children from being exposed to improper content was through parental controls. Zehra, again, was a notable exception on this point; however her children were the oldest in this group, with her eldest son progressing to university in the following academic year.

4.6 Technology as a Tool of Identity Construction

Despite all participants being well educated and fairly aware of current trends, it was surprising to find that they all considered technologies to be culturally neutral. After some probing and rephrasing of questions, the participants reluctantly agreed that
technology was giving their children some exposure to Canadian and Pakistani cultures. This exposure was primarily in the form of watching television. Saira, Swaiba, Rabia, Zehra, Sheherbano and Uzma all thought that their children were getting some exposure to Pakistani culture by watching Pakistani television, usually while in their company. Although they did emphasize that their children did not display any personal interest in the channels, since they were on in common areas they thought the children were getting some exposure. For example Uzma stated:

So as far as the language is concerned, she had picked up a lot of words from TV which we normally don’t use in our day to day life, from Urdu and all that. But like if we are watching something she would sit and watch the program with us—maybe not turn it on on her own, but if she sees something she does ask me oh what’s this, which place is this? Why are they doing this? So she is exposed to a lot more things than she normally would. If I didn’t have these channels.

Alternatively, Tasleem, Anita and Mariam both thought that their children were being exposed to too much South Asian culture by living in Mississauga and therefore looked to television as a way to introduce them to western (particularly North American) culture.

In using technology to aid in identity construction, Assad was perhaps the most proactive. On multiple occasions he mentioned how he utilized the Internet to play recitations of the Holy Quran, what is called *tilawat*, in particular during the Islamic month of *Ramzan* when it is customary to read the Holy Quran in its entirety. He also used the Internet to look at *hadith*, the saying and practices of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad, as recounted by his followers and companions, and email them to his children. Similarly, in an effort to prevent her child from becoming a bully later in life,
Anita was determined to prevent her five-year-old daughter from seeing violence in cartoons or other media artifacts. She acknowledged that at the moment her daughter would not understand it, but believed it would make a lasting impression and influence her personality in later years.

Despite these examples of actively using technology to create an identity, the consensus amongst the participants remained that technology is value neutral. For example Swaiba stated:

Values come from the upbringing. Technology definitely sharpens your skills and makes you more accessible to the new world. But I think, so as [given how] the world is going now days technology, a person is nothing if you don’t know about technology.

Parents believed that values and character originated in the family and that technology was just a tool, without recognizing that even the importance they placed on it as a learning tool infused it with meaning. This is particularly interesting, as other learning tools, such as books, were not thought of as distinct from character building. This disassociation between belief and practice was troublesome for me and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

4.7 Alternatives to “Messing Around” with New Technologies

Given the educational background these participants have, of individualistic work and minimal collaboration, and the valid concerns that they had regarding the use of new technologies by their children, it is not surprising that they did not actively encourage the use of new media technology in the home. While “hanging out” with new technologies
(Ito et al., 2009) was seen as a necessary evil, parents did not encourage their children to progress to the stage of what Ito et al. (2009) call “messing around” with technology. This is the point at which they claim children experiment with technology during their unstructured time. Much of the situated learning that Gee (2010) describes takes place during this form of unstructured exploration.

Instead, parents encouraged their children to focus on other hobbies. Zehra explained:

I find, if my younger one is more on iPad and playing games and things then he’s because during school days, now it’s holidays so it’s different, but during school days they don’t even have time to do that. Because assignments are for two hours, and he is more into other sports and activities. So it’s more of traveling between activities. But he does have Kobo, you know the e-reader and everything. So he reads books on that and everything. So they know more time needs to be spent in productive work rather than tweeting here and around. But they like to be, they are more in sports people, so they are more into, you know, either they come with us to the gym. [They go] whenever we go, whenever we have time, rather than being home.

Uzma was concerned about the time her daughter spent on new technologies, and so spoke of how she encouraged her interest in cooking instead. Like Zehra, Swaiba encouraged her elder son’s interest in cricket. Even though Anita encouraged her daughter to play on the iPad, this was limited and she preferred that her daughter play outdoors or with her toys. Mariam was constantly trying to return her children to playing
games like Monopoly on the board instead of on their gaming consoles, as she felt it was more sociable.

A limited exposure to multimodal forms of learning was encouraged or at the very least tolerated in the form of research done to further a child’s interests, such as looking up facts or information about sports or discovering cheats or problem solving for gaming. Assad, Mariam, Zehra and Swaiba mentioned how their children would go online to look up facts on sports or view instructional videos for other hobbies (which were not specified).

Swaiba and Zehra allowed their teen children to play games online, although Swaiba only allowed this because she felt that Microsoft was constantly monitoring the Xbox chatrooms and removed those who misbehaved from the online community. Of the ten parents interviewed, only Zehra’s older son regularly posted on a cricket website established by a friend, and was also the only child who had posted a video on YouTube, though this was not something she necessarily approved of:

Yeah there are some clips. They post them on YouTube for sure. But again, you know what, he likes to sing so he made up this song and he just put it on YouTube. And I was like why are you doing that? But you know what, then I just got back and as far as I know it, what is on it [YouTube], and he is coming and telling me, it’s fair enough. It’s something not going behind my back and people are telling me that, something, [in that case] I would not like it. And as far as it’s appropriate, its not like nudity or not about violence or anything. It’s not about any drugs or anything like that. (Zehra)
Reading was a habit that parents either lamented that their children did not have, as in the case of Mariam and Sheherbano, or were very proud that their children had developed as a replacement for being online. However, with the exception of Zehra and Swaiba, interestingly, reading was only considered a constructive activity if it was taking place with physical books.

They read a lot. I think they have, we have almost five bookshelves in the house between four of us so they are avid readers. But they get their news from the Internet. They don’t bother reading the *Toronto Star* which comes home, but they know what is happening simply because they go online and they talk to friends, or whatever.

Zehra and Swaiba’s prejudice in favor of physical books is interesting, particularly given their children were the oldest in the study. A theme of granting greater access to online technology with age was consistent in all the interviews, “I used to monitor them but now they are old enough and I trust them” (Swaiba). All the parents interviewed had preconceived notions of when they would grant greater access to technology for their children. Saira felt it was not appropriate for her children to have cell phones before they were sixteen and Facebook accounts before they turned eighteen. Similarly Tasleem was going to grant her son access to the Internet router in another two years so he could play online (at the age of fifteen) which was the same age her daughter was given a laptop and granted permission to take it into her room. Sheherbano and Anita both had firm timelines in mind for when they would grant their daughters greater access. This practice is again reflective of how parents were exposed themselves, with access to technology increasing with their level of education.
### 4.8 Conclusion

A summary of the themes consistent through the participants interviews have been given below in Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example of significant statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents preferred traditional pedagogical practices</td>
<td>I don’t see why they need Facebook to do their projects, I have heard a lot of parents say they gave them access because they needed it for a project. No: they can pick up the phone, they can text, there are so many other [ways]. How did we do it? How do I do projects? I don’t do it on Facebook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Technology as an accessory</td>
<td>That’s when I think we realized she will really not be able to fit in into the school system if she doesn’t get a phone. So the way it is with clothes, its just like an added accessory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Technology as an educative tool</td>
<td>Technology as an educative tool Because it’s the growth, everyone wants to grow as human beings if. If she is a person who wants to grow there is always room for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Computers as a resource</td>
<td>So we understand they need fast computers for the work they do, because I think it’s the school system, they want things on computers. They want them to do their research and there is only that much you can do taking the kids the library for, and even there you just get that half and hour time stamp.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5  | Technology for communication | • I love the technology because calling is free.  
• They use the phone a lot, they are on the BackBerry. That is really distracting for them. |
| 6  | Safety concerns | When he started using it, it was very scary for me, because we don’t know who is the person on the other end, so we have to be very very careful. |
| 7  | Improper content | And I am telling them, even my son, I am telling them that these bad sites that pop up all the time, all these nude sites and stuff like that. They shouldn’t be watching that. |
| 8  | Lack of control | I really don’t want them to regret something they posted twenty years ago from now, and then because there is no way of retracting anything that goes on cyberspace. |
Despite having access to a wide range of technology and resources, it is clear that parents did not encourage their children to develop competencies on them beyond basic web searching and word processing (Oblinger & Hawkins, 2006). Their practices at home did not encourage their children to practice situated learning (Gee, 2010), whereby children could participate in activities that encourage the transfer of skills from different contexts. Nor did they encourage new literacy learning in environments where ownership and space is more fluid in concept. Instead parents valued individualistic achievement and promoted the acquisition only of traditional literacies. A discussion of the themes and implications for parents, educators and policy makers is undertaken in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

When Tasleem discussed her concerns with regards to her children’s use of technology, she wanted them to adhere to one simple rule, “Use technology, but don’t get used by it!” She wanted her children to learn to use technology effectively so that they could make it their “slave” instead of “becoming a slave to it.” However the strict controls she placed on the use of technology in many ways limited the extent of competency her children could achieve.

In this chapter I first undertake a discussion of the themes identified previously and summarized in Table 3 (page 75-76). I then undertake to answer the original research questions that drove the study followed by the implications this research has with regards to parents, teachers and for future policy. I finally identify further research that could help in better understanding parental perspectives and attitudes towards new media technology usage by their children, but were beyond the scope of this study.

The themes that I identified as being consistent across the participant interviews reveal two underlying principles guiding Pakistani immigrant parents’ attitudes towards children’s’ technology use. The first is that parents are unwilling to move beyond their own knowledge or perceptions of how technology should be used. For them, technology should be used for specific purposes, and lifestyles beyond that should remain similar to what they are familiar with, based on their own childhood experiences. Secondly, parents, being unfamiliar with new literacies and multimodal forms of communication, want to maintain control over all aspects of technology use, primarily due to safety concerns. These two principles are discussed in more detail below.
5.1 Discussion

It is clear from the interviews and subsequent analysis that the parents who participated in the study were not willing to explore beyond their technological comfort zones. As members of a privileged socio-economic group from Pakistan, they are concerned about maintaining markers of class, as is seen in their consciousness of having their children fit-in with their social circles. This, in part, allowed them to reconcile their mistrust of technology with owning it. As seen in theme 2, one of the reasons parents bought technology was because they regarded it as a fashion accessory, something that must be owned because it fits the image they want to project or the Discourses they want to participate in. Thus they allowed their children to research games, other technologies and hobbies, since these practices allowed them and their children to be involved in the Discourses surrounding technology.

However the conservative nature of their use of new media technologies is clearly evidenced in themes 3 (technology as an educative tool) and 4 (computers as a resource) where technology use was acceptable to the parents primarily as an extension of the traditional forms of literacy. Similarly, theme 5 (technology is used as a tool for communication) represented another blessed use, since they have seen technology, in different incarnations, used for communication all their lives.

However, the desire these parents had for children to return to more traditional forms of entertainment, as seen in theme 13 (alternative pastimes), where parents promoted physical activity and other hobbies instead of, rather than in addition to, spending leisure time on new media technologies, shows a lack of understanding of possibilities beyond traditional literacies. Thus they are willing to have their children
participate in the Discourses - the language, behavior, tools, spaces, and communities - that evolve around new media technologies, but not engage with them.

This could in part be due to the second attitude that emerged from the study, that parents are not willing to cede any control when using technologies. Their major concerns, safety and lack of control over content (themes 6 and 8, respectively), indicate a desire to supervise every aspect of their children’s technology use. Parents exhibit an understandable desire to protect their children, but one result of this protectionism that parents are not willing to allow their children to explore technologies beyond their (parents’) own comfort areas of technology use. While this level of control may extend to other aspects of their children’s lives as well, it is not necessary with respect to new media technologies, that allow children to explore the boundaries of their own imagination with relative safety. In this respect, parental fears of surrendering control are potentially stifling. Thus while the participants talk of trusting their children to follow the rules they establish, there is still a provision for oversight (theme 10). And while participants’ concern for their children’s safety is both valid and necessary in current online environments, a greater degree of freedom, accompanied by the knowledge of the dangers, for children to experiment and expand their online identities is not necessarily unsafe or undesirable.

This lack of willingness to experiment can be attributed to the highly formulated and traditional pedagogical backgrounds of most parents. The private and public education curricula in Pakistan are largely dictated by the Cambridge Board of Examinations testing requirements and do not allow for much independent thought or extracurricular activities. Further, the highly individualistic and formulaic nature of
educational practices in Pakistan has not predisposed these parents to think of knowledge as collaborative or learning as situated, or communication and expression possible in non-traditional forms. Thus they are not happy with the increased focus on groupwork (theme 1) that is part of the pedagogy in Canada.

5.2 The Research Questions

While the study did reveal two underlying principles behind the attitudes and perceptions that participants had with regard to new technology use by their children, the project was originally designed to address the following research question:

What are Pakistani immigrant parental perspectives and attitudes on how their children use new media technologies and how do they encourage or discourage its use and monitor access with respect to their children’s safety, their culture and their values?

As discussed earlier, parents in the study want to be seen as technologically advanced and competent—which is in keeping with the study undertaken by Hollingsworth et al. (2011)—but prefer that it remain a passive experience. Tasleem, for example, described herself as an “end user.” Parents are willing to let their children consume the products of new media technologies, but are unwilling to let them engage with them or let them take media consumption beyond information access or entertainment. Certainly, they are cautious about children becoming content producers themselves. This stance prevented the parents in the study from creating a culture of exploration in their home environments. While further research would be needed to see how this affects the competencies that their children develop with new technologies, it does limit the
opportunities they have for situated learning through new media technologies. No reference was made in interviews to children writing fan-fiction, creating their own role-playing games, or exploring (even in the privacy of their own homes) with visual art programs such as Photoshop.

While these activities may be taking place outside parents’ purview, the act of secrecy would restrict opportunities these children have to experiment or play with these tools. Software like Adobe Photoshop is powerful and complex and can only be used to its full potential when users are given time to explore its many tools and contact other subject experts. I personally first learnt how to use this software during a summer internship, during which the entire graphics department of a television channel was available to answer my questions. Blogs and websites have further helped me explore newer tools. My interest in learning the software was supported by those employees who both gave me the space to make mistakes and encouraged me to explore as well. This experience was typical in learning to use software as is indicated in the literature on parental attitudes influencing achievement (Hampton et al., 1998), which directly links parental interest to improved performance by students.

Instead of providing this space and encouragement, this study reveals that participating in online forums such as YouTube and Facebook is barely tolerated and more traditional pastimes emphasized. While research on hobbies was mentioned as a way participants’ children use new technologies when they have time, parents did not encourage the use of technologies to expand children’s interests. Looking up facts about cricket was acceptable but creating a database of players or making their own cricket videos—even for the use of training—was not encouraged. With respect to my own
experience with more traditional pastimes, such as reading books or playing outdoors, these activities give children limited opportunities to develop and enlarge their own spheres of interest or gain expertise in current interests. Hence activities such as gaming, writing fan-fiction or designing T-Shirts for their cricket teams are left aside.

In particular the constant reminders that parents give to their children of the dangers associated with interacting online and the strict limitations on where and how long they can use the technology do not suggest that any space was available for children to explore new literacies or multimodal forms of communication. Instead only extensions of traditional literary practices - knowledge gathering, communication and word processing - were taking place or encouraged. Given the uncertain environment that these immigrant parents have moved away from in Pakistan, which demanded constant vigilance against personal violence, whether through almost daily acts of terror or ethnic violence, it is not surprising that participants first concern with regards to new media was for their children’s safety. In a country where dishonestly is common, given the high rates of bribery at all levels and the expectation of government deception, their suspicion of members of chatrooms is understandable, and shared by all adults, whether parents or educators, who are responsible for children’s use. However, without allowing a degree of freedom—with appropriate caution and information available to all parties—children can use new technologies in more non-traditional ways.

It is interesting to note, that all cautionary tales these parents shared were based on physical danger to their children. Further, while parents censored content, there was only minimal, and mostly incidental, identity construction taking place via new technologies. Considering how central television shows and serials were in the lives of
the participants, it is strange that their first inclination was to think of technology as culturally neutral. This illustrated how these parents were willing to accept the concept of technology as negative but resisted acknowledging new media technologies’ positive uses. While further questioning did lead parents to cite examples of how technology (especially television and Skype) has helped these participants introduce Pakistani or Canadian cultural values to their children, the connection was not naturally or instinctively made.

It was interesting to note how dependent parents were on official ratings, warnings and guidelines with respect to judging appropriateness of content for their children. This further indicates a lack of trust in their judgment with regards to technology. Six of the parents cited the workshops held at their children’s schools, in collaboration with the police department, as their primary source of information about safe and responsible use of new media technologies. Parents’ trust in institutions was further corroborated by the fact that they supported their children using technology in school, where they felt that there were sufficient controls on content accessibility. Here once again, parents’ desire for control is evident, along with aspirations for their children to be technologically competent. Further, faith in institutions and official ratings echoes parents’ own pedagogical background, which rewarded following instructions rather than formulating their own questions. This results in an assumption that educators have the “right” answer, as seen in my own experiences as a teacher where my students’ parents were unwilling to let their children explore and were instead looking for a straightforward solution.
5.3 Implications of the Research

This project clearly highlights the need for parents to be more open to experimentation with regards to new media technologies. With more work being done on open forums, children need to learn to work collaboratively; skills that develop early in life through groupwork in school and new media technologies. Further, while their concerns about the dangers of working online are real and valid, parents also need to acknowledge that having an online presence is essential in developing networks to support children’s hobbies, develop their personalities and eventually find employment. While this was not necessary in Pakistan where online identities and social networking have not permeated society to the same degree as in western societies, online environments like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are important resources for individuals in Canada. Finally, parents need to become aware of the fact that new media technologies are not value neutral, neither in content nor in physical form.

This is one area where teachers can help to educate parents. The participants in the study relied heavily on the information sessions held in school and these could become a forum where parents can be informed about research into media studies and popular culture. School newsletters can also be used to enlighten parents about how new media technologies and the content available on them are the products of the culture in which they are created. Further, workshops held on safety could include information or, ideally, seminars on ways in which technology can be used to promote new literacy learning. Instead of only highlighting the negative aspects of using technology, school could become a space where parents and children get the opportunity to explore non-traditional uses of technology. This could eventually lead to children producing more
work themselves, perhaps even eventually building a library of artifacts that reflect their own identities as second generation immigrants, rather than merely borrowing artifacts from the two cultures they are straddling.

Finally, policy makers can put into place provisions to make the Internet more secure and to give children space within formal institutions to experiment. Policy makers can ensure that time be set-aside during school hours where children can work on their own projects, with supervision but also with open access. Further, having teachers trained in, and comfortable using, diverse software and multimodal forms of communication will aid this process. They can both be a resource in the event of a child having difficulty with a technology or software while simultaneously integrating student activity into the curriculum. Finally, having more secure sites that require formal identification, rather than simple online sign-in sheets, will allow children to participate in networking and multimodal forms of communication in environments that are more safe.

Policies can also help with the creation of artifacts and resources that are more reflective of immigrant culture and make them more accessible. The participants had to turn to specialized technology to get access to television channels from Pakistan, so that they could keep abreast of news and other television programming. Further none of the participants knew of any Apps or programs that they could use to help their children gain, or maintain, fluency in their first language. Having access to this type of content might make parents more willing to allow their children to experiment and explore on new technologies.
5.4 Further Research

This study, in keeping with the practices associated with phenomenological research, used criterion sampling focused on a specific demographic, that of Pakistani parents from middle income families who had immigrated to the GTA from one of the larger cities in Pakistan. While this study does aim to add depth to the overall literature on parental perspectives of media usage in the home, I believe that similar studies should be conducted with parents from other ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds so as to give breath to the topic. So far, those studies that have been conducted, such as the one conducted by Plowman et al (2008), are primarily focused on parents belonging to the middle to upper-middle class, which allowed for a range of technologies to be available for the children’s use. While this study adds to this literature on parental perspectives with regards to technology by addressing the issue from the perspective of an immigrant community, it would be interesting to see how a study with immigrant parents from low-income brackets or who have entered the country as refugees would compare. Such a study would provide insight into how individuals without the financial resources to have technology easily accessible in the home negotiate the similar dilemmas.
References


**Websites**

ISPAK – Internet Service Providers Association of Pakistan

http://www.ispak.pk/index.php
BEOE - Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan


PTA – Pakistan Telecommunications Association, Government of Pakistan


Index Mundi – Pakistan Demographics


Statistics Canada – Government of Canada. Individual Internet usage and E-Commerce

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Thanks for participating

Overview of research / Gaining of consent / Information with regards to withdrawal from the study

Acknowledgement of consent

Overview of participation

Feel free to not answer any question you find intrusive or offensive in any way

Feel free to stop the interview at any point

If you would like to withdraw from the study at any point, please let me know and all information with regards to your participation will be deleted.

Reminder of anonymity

All names used will be pseudonyms

Questions for Participants

1. Why did you immigrate to Canada? You do not need to go into specific reasons or examples unless you would like to. I am just trying to understand, generally, what prompted the move?

2. What is your educational background? How were you taught when you were in school?

3. What do you consider a proper use of new technologies?

5. What do they primarily use new technologies for? Schoolwork? Recreation?

6. Do you encourage the use of new technologies for your children? How?

7. What are your rules with relation to the time they spend on new technologies?

8. What are your rules for use of new technologies? Time limits on usage? Websites they can or cannot visit? Games they can(not) play? Television they can or cannot watch?

9. Do you provide access to new technologies as a reward?

10. Do you feel that new technologies are helping your child/children adapt to culture in Canada?

11. How do you feel about new technologies with respect to your own culture?

12. What do you feel about more collaborative forms of creation (new literacies)?

13. Who do you ask advice about access to new technologies (friends? family? do you follow ratings?)
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Pakistan Parent Perspectives on New Media Literacies

Dear Potential Participant,

Thank you for showing interest in participating in the study titled Pakistani Parent Perspectives on New Media Literacies being conducted by Hina Yusuf as part of her Masters Thesis at the Ontario Institute of Education, University for Toronto and supervised by Dr. Lance McCreary Ph.D. who is a faculty member and Associate Professor at the Institute. Below you will find information relevant to the study, however if there are any other questions you may have regarding the study, please feel free to contact the principal researcher or the supervisor (contact details given below). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the University of Toronto’s Research Ethics Review Office (contact details given below).

Details of the Study

This study seeks to uncover and examine the opinions that Pakistani immigrant parents in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) have with regards new media technologies in particular as they are used by their children. Understanding parents’ perspectives on new media is essential as they are the gatekeepers for access to technology for children, especially in contexts that are outside of regulated institutions, such as schools or after school activities. By studying the issue of parental opinions on new media through the perspective of Pakistani immigrant parents, this study aims to add to the overall literature on parental concerns regarding the use of new media by their children. By focusing on parents who have immigrated to Canada from Pakistan this issue can be studied from a specific cultural context, that of an immigrant parent.

Recruitment of Participants

This study is looking for parents who have emigrated from Pakistan and have settled in the GTA and have children currently attending a school in one of the public school boards in the GTA. A total of 10 people will be interviewed for this study.

Nature of Participation

Participants will be asked to be available for one audio-taped interview that will last approximately one hour. Interviews will take place at a location that is convenient for the participant and will be held primarily in English.

Participants will be asked to share reasons for immigrating to Canada and about their own educational history to understand their backgrounds in order to better appreciate and investigate reasons for their opinions about how their children use new technologies and develop new literacies (defined for the purpose of this study as the formation of participatory models of knowledge creation). These background questions will be followed by questions regarding the use of new technologies and development of new literacies as they take place in the home environment.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Participants may refuse to participate at any time, decline to answer any question, or withdraw during the course of the interview, without any negative consequences. Participants will have the option of reviewing their interviews after they have been transcribed to provide suggestions, corrections and comments. However once final analysis of the interviews has begun, participants will no longer have the option to withdraw from the study. The final date for withdrawal will be provided at the time of the interview. Participants may request a copy of the results of the research.

Benefits of Participating

UT - Office of Research Ethics – Protocol Submission Form for Supervised Sponsored Research
12 Queen’s Park Crescent West – McMurrich Building, 2nd floor, M5S 1S8, Toronto

Version Date: Aug’10

99
Although participants are unlikely to receive any direct benefits as a result of this research, participation in the project could help them clarify their own opinions with regards to new media usage by their children. Further, if they request a copy of the final analysis, participants can possibly get a better understanding of how other individuals in their communities negotiate the benefits and risks associated with the use of new technology.

Ultimately this research will add to the literature on parental opinions regarding the use of new media leading to better understanding of their desires and concerns with respect to their children developing competencies in the use of new media.

Confidentiality of Information
The information provided by participants will remain strictly confidential and will be carefully edited to remove or disguise personal details, which may even remotely identify participants. The data collected for this research may be used for publication in journals, books or presentations, but participants’ identities will not be revealed. All recordings and transcripts will be destroyed within four months of completion of the study and will be stored in encrypted files on the researchers laptop.

Individuals who would like to participate in this study or have any questions regarding the study, may contact the researcher by e-mail or telephone. Contact details are given below:

E-mail: hinna.yusuf@mail.utoronto.ca
Telephone: 647-831-6164

They may also contact Dr. Lance McCreary, who is supervising this study by e-mail at lance.mccready@utoronto.ca

Any participants who have questions regarding their rights as a participant may contact University of Toronto’s Research Ethics Review Office by e-mail or telephone. Contact details are given below:

E-mail: ethics.review@utoronto.ca
Telephone: 416-946-3273

Thank you for considering participation in this research.

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Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form

I ____________________________ have read the information sheet for study titled Pakistani Immigrant Parental Perspectives on New Media Literacies being conducted by Hinna Yusuf for her Masters Thesis at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, and acknowledge that my participation is voluntary. I have understood my rights of withdrawal, have had all questions answered satisfactorily and understand that my information will remain anonymous.

Signature of Participant

I would like to verify the transcription and preliminary analysis for accuracy:

YES (contact email) ______________________________ NO

Please indicate whether you would like the results of this research sent to you once they become available.

YES (contact email) ______________________________ NO

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Appendix D: Definition of Terms

Due to various lenses and perspectives in educational theory, it would be useful to understand and put in context how certain key terms are used in this study. Below I have defines the terms “Discourse”, “literacy”, “new literacies”, “dominant culture”, “situated learning”, “multiliteracies” and “culturally relevant pedagogy” to provide clarity and to situate them in the research from which they have emerged.

Discourses: I draw here on the theory of Discourses as put forward by Gee (2008) who posits that Discourse is entrenched in the identity of a person as they interact in specific contexts:

A Discourse with a capital “D” is composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading coupled with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing, with other people and with various objects tools and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognizable activities. (p. 155)

Gee posits that communication is more than just using language, but instead a complex interaction of language, behavior, values and the ability to use these and the tools, places and technologies associated with a specific context, or Discourse, in order to convey a specific meaning to other individuals who belong to the same Discourse. Participating in a Discourse is therefore a way to indicate that you belong, whether to, for example a particular race, profession, socio-economic class or gender. Thus, individuals are necessarily members of multiple Discourses, although typically individuals have a
primary Discourse, which is how they are taught to interact, socialize and communicate early in life, and which often forms the baseline of an individual’s personality. Other Discourses individuals encounter and participate in, as they enter increasing wider contexts of interaction, are considered secondary.

**Literacy:** In order to understand the term “literacy” it is useful to first look at how Gee (2008) defines acquisition and learning:

Acquisition is a process of acquiring something (usually, subconsciously) by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. It happens in natural settings which are meaningful and functional in the sense that acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and they in fact want to so function. This is how people come to control their first language. (p. 169-170)

Learning is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily form someone officially designated a teacher) or through certain life experiences that trigger conscious reflection. This reflection involves explanation and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently involves attaining, along with the matter being taught, some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter. (p. 170)

Gee posits that all individuals get their primary Discourse through acquisition. In this Discourse they are able to communicate with those they are closest to. However secondary Discourses require adoption of ways of thinking, communicating –both orally
and though writing – and behaving with individuals with whom you are not intimate and thus is more regulated or formal. Thus “literacy” is to be understood as being situated in specific social and cultural situations. Hence Gee (2008) considers mastery of secondary Discourses as literacy.

Learning is situated within Discourses and thus literacy and is essential for juxtaposing and situating various Discourses and analyzing them allowing individuals to gain “meta-knowledge” and engage in libratory practice and social development. Whereas acquisition can lead to mastery in a Discourse, it will also lead to “colonized” (Gee, 2008) individuals as Discourses are resilient to self-critique.

**New literacies:** The term new literacies, as it will be used in this study, indicates a move towards a more fluid mindset around space, knowledge and ownership. It indicates a use of new technologies to create participatory environments in contrast to those that had producers and consumers. Lankshear and Knobel (2007) argue that traditional literacies can be replicated on new technologies, but that new technologies have allowed greater participation and proliferation of new literacies, which did, in fact, exist before new technologies. Lankshear and Knobel (2007) state:

The more a literacy practice privileges participation over publishing, distributed expertise over centralized expertise, collective intelligence over individual possessive intelligence, collaboration over individuated authorship, dispersion over scarcity, sharing over ownership, experimentation over “normalization,” innovation and evolution over stability and fixity, creative-innovative rule breaking over generic purity and policing, relationship over
information broadcast, and so on, the more we should regard it as a “new” literacy. (p. 21)

This is in keeping with ideas of culturally relevant pedagogy as proposed by Ladson-Billings (1995) whose study of effective teachers for African American students showed a willingness by these teachers to create “fluid student-teacher relationships” (p. 480).

**Dominant Culture:** When referring to dominant culture in this study, I am referencing the culture of what Ellsworth (1989) calls the “generic human,” who she describes as being a “young, White, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, thin, rational, man” (p. 310).

**Situated learning:** The concept of situated learning (Gee, 2010) revolves around the ability to apply concepts, understanding or skills in different contexts, irrespective of what those contexts are. It is in contrast with general or verbal understanding where mastery can be demonstrated in terms of general principals but cannot be applied to real world situations. Thus, the use of language, the skill of language acquisition, and the effective use of language in situated learning contexts will be transferable across Discourses. Alternatively, a more general understanding will only permit an individual to perform within a given Discourse.

**Multiliteracies:** The term coined by The New London Group (1996) is used to indicate a different approach to pedagogy than that of traditional literacy, which is centered on the mastery of formal language. This language, usually the language of the dominant culture
of a society, is stable and unchangeable and is preserved in the rules of formal grammar and canonical texts chosen by academics and educators who act as the gatekeepers of that knowledge (Bourdieu, 1991).

Multiliteracies, instead of working only with one form of knowledge or communication, acknowledges the diverse ways of knowing, learning and communicating that exist within societies and which are being further developed through new technologies.

A pedagogy of multiliteracies, by contrast focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone. These differ according to culture and context, and have specific cognitive cultural and social effects. (…) Multiliteracies also creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes. (The New London Group, 1996, p. 64)

**Culturally relevant pedagogy:** A grounded theory developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant pedagogy calls for the teachers to instruct students in such a way that they are academically successful, maintain their cultural capital and develop an understanding of the political cultural and social inequalities that exist in society. Ladson-Billings noted that while the practices of those teachers whom she identified as culturally relevant pedagogues were very different, there were common characteristics amongst. Most importantly the teachers shared a belief that all students could succeed academically, were willing to allow unpredictability in their classrooms, were willing to
share authority in the classroom, especially with respect to learning from the students and allowing them to learn from each other, and had a conception of knowledge as something that is developed shared and recycled and is to be viewed critically. In addition, these teachers were very connected to the community in which they taught. Finally, with respect to assessments, these teachers were dedicated to bridging knowledge for their students and assessing them in multiple ways and forms.