Representations of Muslim Cultures and Societies in Children’s Literature as a Curriculum Resource for Ontario Classrooms: Promises and Prospects

By

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Abstract

Situated in the context of multiple challenges and possibilities faced by Muslim students and communities in the Western socio-political and educational contexts, this qualitative research examines curriculum perceptions pertaining to Muslim children’s literature and attempts to answer the major research question: “How can Ontario curriculum be enriched with curriculum resources comprising of Muslim children's literature?” This question touches several chords within curriculum studies, teacher development and schooling in general, therefore, an integrated framework combining insights and concepts from critical pedagogy, anti-racism, post-coloniality, multiculturalism, as well as, anti-orientalism are applied to guide the research’s data collection and analysis. Additionally, my own situatedness within the study as a minority Muslim woman teacher with experiences from East and West plays a critical role in engaging and deconstructing the complex webs of Muslim representations in curricular resources.
The near absence of Muslim children’s literature in Ontario curriculum and paucity of the Muslim content for elementary students are investigated through a three-pronged approach: (1) Examination of the Trillium List; (2) Engaging with the voices of contemporary writers of Muslim children’s literature; and (3) Critically dissecting the contents of select literary pieces, which have potential of being used as curricular resources. The understanding created through engagement with the above exploration generate opportunities for relevant conversations and awareness for both Muslim and non-Muslim stakeholders. This research is thus a unique study of Muslim children’s literature through application of systematic frameworks to bring social justice and offers a promise of development of cosmopolitan ethics in young Canadians. It assures equipping Ontario teachers with significant knowledge to validate experiences of elementary children through stories. The use of Muslim children's literature as curricular resources has the capacity to promote bridging of cultures, create responsiveness around Muslim students' background, alleviate misconceptions in the students and promote confidence in parents of Muslim children, especially those in the public schools.

The findings show limited authors writing Muslim stories, little literacy and reading culture amongst immigrant Muslims, lack of publishers and not enough recognition of Muslim literature and authors in Canada. This study helps teachers and policy makers to develop a deeper appreciation of multicultural ethos of the Canadian education system and recommends stakeholder involvement for a more inclusive holistic, authentic and credible State curriculum with pluralist Muslim representations.
Acknowledgments

Praise be to Almighty who created humankind and gave it the capacity to ‘read’.

This work is a culmination of help and blessings of many, many people who have travelled with me on “the road not taken” (Robert Frost, 1916) and enriched my life in every step of the way. These innumerable great companions in this very rewarding intellectual journey have made “all the difference”, indeed.

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Dedication

For my father

Barkatali

who always believed in me no matter what

And my mother

Zohrakhanu

whose loving legacy I proudly inherit

Till we meet again...
Chapter 1
Introduction

“...Children need stories about everything; Muslim children need to, have stories about their own culture and religion (especially in countries like ours) in order to give them confidence. Non-Muslim children need to know about cultures other than their own... story puts a human face on human activity. The reader can enter a world that is either familiar or unfamiliar, and in either case this is useful.”

- Professor Roderick McGillis on the value of fictional tales about Eid (Gilani-Williams, 2007, p. 27)

“The constantly evolving nature of Islam as faith as a way of life and as global presence, means that Muslim writing will continue to chart and inform intellectual debates on modernity and culture into future.”

– Rehan Ahmed, 2012, p. 15

In this dissertation, I make a case for enriching the Ontario curriculum with a robust inclusion of children's literature\(^1\) to reflect Muslim cultures and societies. In my research, I aim to promote critical engagement of Muslim children in Ontario classrooms as well as equip Ontario teachers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, with significant knowledge for such an engagement to combat racism and Islamophobia\(^2\) (Van Driel, 1992) through a multitude of theoretical and conceptual frameworks combined in Critical Appreciative Inquiry\(^3\).

The study involves nurturing Muslim perspectives in the school curriculum to make it more holistic, authentic, credible and multicultural. It is seeded in the examination of issues and challenges related to Muslim children's literature, from its need to its availability, and appropriateness as a curriculum material with an emphasis on situating such literature within the theoretical framework of diverse conceptualizations of curriculum, teacher development, and contemporary debates in the field of curriculum studies. My intention is to determine the

\(^1\) The word literature in the present research denotes fictional and imaginary writing encompassing the expressions of cultures, civilizations and societies in the finest literary traditions through various genres (Miller, 2002).

\(^2\) Islamophobia is indiscriminate negative racist attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims (Bleich, 2011).

\(^3\) Discussed in detail in Chapter Three and also presented in Appendix F.
paradigmatic chains of curriculum perceptions and how they are similar to or different than the comprehension of such chains in education. Appreciation of Kanu’s (2006) post-colonial imaginations and an examination of relations between Islam and the West through Orientalist approaches (Said, 2003) highlight the limitations of orientalist representations. Such lenses also guide me in the process to challenge the monolithic image of Islam. As Azmi (2008) writes:

Islam is not a monolith. It is spread over more than 50 countries and takes on the color and the culture of the country in which it resides. So it speaks in the moderate voice, the liberal voice, the reformist voice, the conservative and the fundamentalist voice. (Azmi, 2008, p. x)

The loaded diversity within Islam is very often undermined through popular discourses having post-colonial and orientalist underpinnings.

Further, the research is aimed at teacher empowerment rooted in critical pedagogy (Ellsworth, 1989; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1981, 1983; Kincheloe, 2004; Leonardo, 2002) that investigates, explores and discusses school-based issues, local politics, issues in the media, and/or injustices, with an aim to break the culture of silence among the oppressed as an antidote to the stories of dominant groups, as well as indulge in informed action.

After outlining the topic of investigation, I have substantiated some of the connected threads in the following sections. I first situate myself vis-à-vis the problem, and describe the thesis questions as a way to achieve the desired result. I then will discuss a detailed rationale as to why I wish to pursue my research on the given subject and its related sub-themes of understanding of the notions of childhood, Muslim child, as well as history and development of children’s literature. Within these strands, Muslim children’s literature is brought in. Because my current study is also a part of the collaborative degree in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development, as well as, Comparative International and Development Education (CIDE), I also
bring nuances from CIDE studies to show how different dimensions from the latter enrich my endeavor. Finally, I end the chapter with a delineation of the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Situating Myself

As the only child of my parents studying in a girls’ day school, which was a convent of Jesus and Mary in the northern part of India, I was privileged to have every possible requirement and comfort. Although my mother tongue is Gujarati and my father spoke Urdu, I had my entire education in English. Being a minority girl in a largely Muslim orthodox environment, I was sheltered from every possible 'outside influence.'

My interest in English literature as a student and teacher dates back to my early childhood days when we were nurtured with much care and affection into fairy tales and domestication stories in our school. Since then, I have come a long way in understanding various complex webs of not only literary theories, but also my relationship with the English language and the tensions associated with my efforts to situate myself in the intricate colonial mazes related to English literature and language, as well as my search for my authentic expressions in the context of Muslim subjectivities. Children's literature is an area in which I have relatively little prior scholarly knowledge, and I have therefore hosen the same as my major research. I perceive it as an opportunity not only to strengthen this strand, but also to widen my scope as a teacher of English literature to include the genre of children’s literature as, “The critical academic study of children's literature is an exciting, entertaining, and rapidly expanding field” (Hunt, 1990, p. x). The hazy boundaries of children’s literature as regards to style or content make it an even more desirable area of study.

My individuality as a teacher for more than twenty-five years now, in various geographical and cultural contexts, is colored by the British educational milieu that was an
integral part of my upbringing and which has left an indelible mark on my being as a teacher; from my approach to education to my love of English language and teaching practice, all are colored by the colonial upbringing that I was subject to. My teachers fascinated me with their ‘style’ and ‘knowledge’ so much that I always persisted on becoming a teacher. I am living this dream now.

My educational experiences have directed my teaching and teacher training initiatives. Self-examination through the method of Currere (Kanu & Glor, 2006) has made me realize how much these have molded my identity as a teacher. I am now surprised to find that every action of mine is guided by reminiscences from the past. This is a powerful lesson for me in the role of context, history, and (auto)biography in the framing education and the way it can serve the cause of promoting teacher profession (Miller, 2010).

The truth of curriculum as I have lived and learned is that: “everything that is written is true.” My work and identity as an English teacher have relied on such paradigms to some extent, and I am a teacher with deep love, respect, and passion for English language and literature. This affiliation with English has alienated me from my language, cultural symbols, and to a large extent, even rituals. On the occasion of family marriages, I can't sing folk songs like my cousins, who all went to vernacular schools and do not know English at all. I clearly see threads of gender, class, and linguisticism (Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988) in the way I perceive both curriculum and teacher development. My case appears to align with that of Rajgopal Parthasarthy (1977), and I even see parallels with Marilee (Granger, 2010), who fails to recognize patterns around her because of deep layers of conditioning binding her. My teacher identity, as I examine it now, is clearly gendered. I also perceive a dichotomy in the power equations between the positions that I have enjoyed as a teacher, and the fact that I have hardly

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4 “My tongue tied in English chains…” (From: Homecoming).
ventured into other domains. More so, I have always maintained that women make ‘good’ or ‘better’ teachers.

As an estranged product of colonial educational processes, I try hard to prove my authentic self. I witness psychic defense, disavowal, and attachment to not being critical in my thinking. These efforts have created a tension between my potentially genuine lived past, and the questions that arise out of the critical social justice framework that my education has aroused in me. I am afraid of being ungrateful or unfaithful to my past and to the blessings that I have received. I have been exceptionally fortunate. From where I originate, many Muslim women do not go to schools, let alone get a higher education. Apparently, the process of my becoming ‘white-washed’, (Lensmire, 2008) to my culture as a female Muslim teacher carries a deep, complex web of multidimensional effects of a colonial upbringing. The complexities of these dimensions get more layered through an admixture of my beliefs and practices rooted in my faith and in the Indian tradition.

Such a critical self-reflection directs me towards the unfinished business of self-realization. Moreover, I appreciate that the way people tell their own story is the way they look at themselves. Changing your story can change your destiny. I envisage my present research as a critical engagement towards bringing this change. I look forward to continuously engaging my autobiographical accounts into educational inquiry and practice to arrive at solutions and answers to pedagogical, and curricular issues and problems, hopefully leading away from relating or re-inscribing to the normalized identity categories (Miller, 2010), as well as moving towards examining possibilities of change (Kanu & Glor, 2004).

These complex webs of educational, developmental, religious, and female dynamics guide my vision for the present research, which is also admittedly a privilege accorded to be the cultural capital that I gathered while growing up in a colonial education system and through
English medium education. Ironically, my education in English and subsequent position as a teacher in universities in India that I worked at brought me name, fame, and wealth. But the same was questioned in Canada. On the one hand, India was the first country to introduce English as a subject and promote it as a field of study, and on the other, the western English-speaking stakeholders do not want to recognize it. My English language and literature degrees, as well as pertinent education, were not recognized in Canada both for further studies or jobs. More fine tuning of language and skills were required to get on board at workplace and higher education.

As a minority Muslim woman, I am always challenged by Muslim identities continuously depicted and created around me. This coupled with my search for an authentic self-expression in the quagmire of multiple subjectivities (Davies, 2003) such as my colonial upbringing in a convent of Jesus and Mary in the Mughal capital of India, my Muslim identity, my belief in fairy tales from my childhood, and the like, drives me to delve deeper into aspects of Muslimness and how these are depicted within children’s literature. My curiosity of the subject is also related to my childhood memories of books and readings that have contributed to the formation of my inner psyche and paradigms, which both haunt and enrich me. All these chords put together form the mosaic of my research.

1.2 Thesis Question

I have selected this topic for research as a result of (a) my interest in literature as an English teacher for more than twenty years; (b) the value it holds as a curriculum and teacher development resource; (c) to appreciate how Muslim children's literature as a genre is understood by various stakeholders; (d) how perceptions of the stakeholders are commensurate with those expressed in educational field; and (d) why and how the ideas of perceptions of curricular resources related to Muslim children differ from person to person. Summarily, my intention is to
determine the paradigmatic chains of curriculum perceptions and how they are similar to or different than our comprehension of the same in education.

The problem of Muslim children’s literature as framed within the conceptions of childhood, educational institutions in which this literature is used as curriculum resources, as well as paucity of its production and dissemination, will be examined by first identifying the cultures and contexts of Muslim children, the need for engaging with such materials in the teaching-learning processes, and a brief sample of such existing materials through a literature review.

I will discuss the issues and challenges surrounding the Muslim children's literature, the complexities accompanying the necessity of a relevant discourse, the importance, space, and use of Muslim children’s literature as fore grounded for eliciting responses through a qualitative research methodology. The implications of these responses for curriculum and teacher development are the envisaged outcome of the research.

I will address the question:"How can Ontario curriculum be enriched with curriculum resources comprising of Muslim children's literature?"through an in-depth engagement with the following sub-questions:

1. What is the status of children’s literature reflecting Muslim cultures and societies in the available curriculum resources for children in Ontario?
2. How are Muslim identities represented in these resources?
3. What do some of the prominent contemporary authors of Muslim children’s literature, as critical stakeholders, think of the availability of such materials and projection of Muslim identities, as curriculum resources and for teacher development purposes?
4. What are the implications of the above-mentioned discussions and findings for curriculum studies and teacher development?

These queries are attempted within the borders of Elementary Language Arts of Ontario curriculum, and through an analysis of fictional literary resources about Muslim children.

The findings from the current research bring the following outcomes:
1. A detailed understanding of the presence of Muslim children’s literature in Ontario with an insight into Muslim representations and status of the current resources available in the market.

2. Perceptions of (sample) critical stakeholders i.e. five popular, contemporary Muslim children’s authors about the gaps and strengths of the same through an in-depth interview and data analysis.

3. Implications and recommendations for inclusion of such materials for teacher and curriculum development through policy recommendations.

1.3 Rationale: Defining the Problem

Islam is one of the major faith traditions of the world. Together with the two other chief faith traditions of Christianity and Judaism, the three make up approximately half the world’s population (Bunge, 2002) and share common histories.

Nancy Larrick drew attention to a lack of ethnic and minority presentations through her 1965 landmark article in Saturday Review. Subsequently, many paid attention to the production of such materials, especially to be included in the curriculum as textbooks. A survey of contemporary research on children’s literature indicates considerable silence on Muslim children’s literature (Wolfe et al., 2011). Furthermore, what is available is seldom representative of the multiple realities of 1.6 billion Muslims⁵ spread throughout the world. Lack of acknowledgment of the level of denseness involved in knowing and teaching Muslim children and appreciation of the deep cultural and ethical complexities surrounding the Muslims around the world has confused many minds in academia as well.

Muslim children’s literature is an important topic of research in Canada, and internationally, because of the diverse and multicultural classrooms that are a common reality, owing to the large-scale mobility of people as a consequence of globalization. Furthermore, the presence of religious diversity raises conceptual and practical issues, which can be understood

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⁵ Almost 23% of the world’s population making it the second largest religion in the world (http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/07/worlds-muslim-population-more-widespread-than-you-might-think)
either through academic perspectives such as those of history, religious studies, philosophy, and sociology, or from different religious viewpoints, including Hinduism, Buddhism, African religions, Chinese religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Meister, 2011).

Additionally, the majority of Muslims around the world are amongst the poorest, most marginalized, and the least formally educated (Abbas, 2005). Muslim children also share this burden of socioeconomic status. The processes of westernization, colonization, secularization, and globalization, have created unprecedented pressures on the identity and understanding of a Muslim child. The challenges of addressing the differentiated needs of the Muslim child are aggravated by schools and teachers failing to understand and respond to racism, Islamophobia, low expectations of Muslim students, and a general lack of knowledge, as well as insensitivity towards Muslim culture and religion (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009).

The production of materials for Muslim children’s literature has not been enough to begin with (Hayden, 1992). Hazel Rochman (1993) lamented the dearth of materials on Muslims in the English language. The same is expressed by Click (2001), saying “We need books that humanize, not that preach, [books] that just tell about people as individuals and that make you see connections with people who look very different”(p. 13).

This insufficiency was intensified in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 (9/11) incidents when demand for more quality materials arose amongst teachers and librarians to help children make sense of what was happening around them (Click, 2001). As Diana Hayden (1992) writes:

Most of the books currently being published about Arab culture are nonfiction. Unfortunately, there is very little fiction available for children about Arabs and none at all about Arab Americans. The majority of available titles are informational books and biographies about Arab countries and leaders, as opposed to Arab Americans. (Hayden, 1992, 20)
She continues to maintain that until 1988 there were no nonfiction books about Arab Americans. Further, most of the publications are directed toward children in the upper elementary grades and middle school. There is very little production of folklore and anthologies. No single picture-book version of popular stories is in print or available. Hayden’s observation supports my plea for multicultural literature having Muslim representations.

An exception to such a situation has been *The Arabian Nights*. The Arabs conquered a substantial amount of land in the aftermath of the rise of Islam, but not all of these were arabized. For instance, the Persians (today Iranians), even after becoming the followers of the faith, retained their unique flavor of culture and identity. In fact, the Arabs constitute only one sixth of world’s Islamic population, though “as the originators of the faith, Arabs consider themselves at their core, and seldom distinguish between the two” (Hayden, 1992, p. 19). However, much of the image of a Muslim is paralleled with that of an image of an Arab.

Just as a concern for ethnic diversity in children’s books was addressed as an aspect of promoting better world relations, particularly after World War II, the same is required today in the case of understanding Muslim history and cultures. The importance of studying Muslim children’s literature is critical for making informed choices for curriculum and teacher development in the multicultural ethos of Canadian classrooms today (Memon, 2009). In the context of fast-changing demographics including the multicultural immigrant population of Canadian Schools and increasing Muslim population in North America, it is a moral imperative for teachers and researchers to engage with such materials.

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6 The population of Muslims in Canada is approximately one million, predicted to triple in twenty years (Lewis, 2011)
In the aftermath of 9/11 and a *Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington, 2003) there have been large-scale confusion and questions around Muslims, their cultures, and their beliefs. In such a scenario, librarians have expressed their concerns for a scarcity of quality fictional and non-fictional materials on Muslim and Arab-Americans (Click, 2001), especially to combat prejudice, stereotyping, and scapegoating. Additionally, there is a glaring absence of literature and awareness about some of the very important aspects of Muslim Children's life, such as that of *Eid, Ramadan*. Fawzia Gilani-Williams said “I was at the airport, and it was winter. There were reminders of Christmas and Hanukkah. It was also *Eid*, yet I saw no evidence of *Eid*. It was as if Muslims didn't exist” (Gilani-Williams, 2007, p. 26). Such underrepresentation of Muslims is supported by curriculum studies as well.

Niyozov and Pluim (2009) sum up these curricular concerns thus:

Islam and Muslims are absent from Western textbooks or present only to a limited extent as part of subjects such as Social Studies, World Religions, World History, and Geography. Whenever Muslims are represented, the depictions are very simplistic, such as images of Arabs with camels. The texts portray Islam as the religion of Arabs and Mohammad, give Eurocentric versions of the Crusade stories, and present pro-Israeli depictions of the Arab–Israeli conflicts. (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009, p. 648)

There are considerable problems in the literature related to Muslim writing disseminating Islamic education. Farid Panjwani (2004, p. 24) offers that these writings seek to be exclusive in its understanding of contemporary educational conditions. It advocates a particular interpretation of Islam as a solution to current problems. Further, it invokes theoretical Islam grounded in scripture. Finally, most of the writings on Islamic education fail to provide any feasible and creative solutions to the problems of education.

These problems in Muslim writings speak of the need for variety and depth in the available sources. Panjwani (2004) further defines these problems as ‘Monolithic versus

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7 A ‘manufactured’ term according to Said (2003, p. xxix)
Pluralistic Presentation’ (Panjwani, 2004, p.378), ‘Literalist versus Symbolic Understandings’ (Panjwani, 2004, p. 380), and ‘Historical/humanist versus Absolutist Approach’ (Panjwani, 2004, p. 382). These categories present the monolithic and popular understanding perpetuated for Muslims through Muslim writings. They lack the rigor and variety that different interpretations of scriptures and cultural practices that Muslims have from Indonesia to America.

Significantly, the historical factors related to the development of Islam are not taken into account when writing about Islam. As Noor (2002) writes, “There is no such thing as a 'pure' Islam that is outside the process of historical development. The actual lived experience of Islam has always been culturally and historically specific, and bound by the immediate circumstances of its location in time and space” (Quoted in Panjwani, 2004, p. 26). The concrete historical agency of Muslims, who have historically grappled with and responded to the intellectual and educational issues of their time, is quite misconstrued. There are also difficulties within the teaching of Islam as a component of religious education in public schools (Panjwani, 2005). It lacks cohesion, which is one of the major aims of teaching such a curriculum in public schools.

Orientalist depictions of Islam and Muslims as ‘...backward, anti-modern, oppressive of women, intolerant to diversity, subject to and supportive of despotic rulers and corrupt politicians, and devoid of any genuine intellectual life and creativity’ (Said, 1981; Abukhattala, 2004), as well as books containing factual errors add to such problems (Ali, 2007). There is a need to create awareness in the teaching-learning processes regarding the significance of the Quran and hadith, historical contributions of Muslims, and Muslim ethics and social behaviors so that these can be used to engage and inform the children. The absence of such classroom

8 Descriptions of the notion of the hereafter in Muslim contexts are an example of the literalist approach. A physical notion of heaven and hell is predominant in general understanding, whereas there are multiple interpretations of belief (Panjwani, 2004, p. 381).
resources and lack of wherewithal with the teachers to handle the cultural nuances of Muslim cultures and societies may lead to “a pedagogy that commits to making children receptive and docile and is also one that denies human dignity and freedom” (Kinichele, 2004, p. 98).

The popular image of Islam and the ensuing silence or misrepresentation is akin to Foucault’s ‘regimes of truth,’ where what is deemed true depends on particular configurations of power (Kinichele, 2004). Further, what Said (2003) called “the terrible reductive conflicts that herd people under falsely unifying rubrics like "America," "The West" or "Islam" and invent collective identities for large numbers of individuals who are actually quite diverse” (p. xxvii) can be mobilized and critically dealt with through the help of such curriculum materials given in the hands of appropriately trained teachers in the multicultural classrooms. Engaging with Muslim children’s literature promises a possibility of “slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow” (Said, 2003, p. xxix).

Many national libraries lack such literature, and librarians have expressed that some of the materials available out there are dated, saying, "There's not a whole lot of Muslim children or even about explaining faiths" (Click, 2001, p. 13). Owing to lack of familiarity with the subject, many American authors and illustrators suffer the deficiency in the knowledge to approach the subject.

The Western Islamophobia after 9/11 has not only refreshed certain classic confessional attitudes, but has also anachronistically projected them through various expressions of policies and culture. This response is akin to colonial and orientalist mindset, wherein Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of Christianity, posing a threat and requiring mutation as well as control (Said, 2003). Such a position negates the spirit of Enlightenment that gave birth to historical sensitivity, which recognized that the Bible and all religious books emerged in a
certain setting, and that questions of authorship and community are as important as divine inspiration. Durkheim (1858-1917) brought forth the critical relationship of religion with the society to maintain that the former is "...an important glue for the sense of identity within a community" (Markham, 2011, p. 5). Just as religious studies’ approach to study religious diversity is shaped by a primary value of ensuring that "the other" is explored in a way that does not misrepresent it, and seeks to understand other faith traditions on their terms (Markham, 2011), education has a similar responsibility as well.

Our students live in a world of Internet and mass media that distracts them towards fragmented and decontextualized knowledge as a result of their a-historical focus. A sensational approach to creating news about distant warfare aggravates such a situation. In addition, education is threatened by nationalist and religious orthodoxies supported by the mass media (Said, 2003, p. xxv). Conversely, the world of cyberspace also offers a vast opportunity for democratic engagement with the world communities.

In recognition of the need for such materials as felt by the teachers and librarians, there have been attempts at capturing the basic tenets of Islam and Muslim through the creation of informational and fictional books on Islam. Although such materials cover a good expanse of knowledge and understanding of Islam, most are framed through a religious approach, resulting in viewing Islam primarily as a religion. This is problematic because it negates the cultural practices of more than 1.6 billion people. It is also reductionist, as the Venture of Islam (Hodgson, 1977) is much more than religion; it is civilizational too.

For Ontario classrooms to be truly multicultural, the inclusion of children's literature reflecting Muslim cultures and civilization becomes imperative. Today, as in no other time in history, large numbers of Muslims live outside the traditional Muslim territories, demonstrating
the urgency of such a need. Free discourse between the West and Islam is now possible under these circumstances.

The present White, Western, and Christian dominated educational conversations, coupled with lack of relevant components in teacher education, leads to misguided perceptions of a Muslim child, who is constantly challenged to measure up with the dominant culture to the detriment of rejecting his or her culture, parents, and religion (Shatara, 2007). In such a scenario, the perspective of a Muslim child is marginalized. The addition of the voices of Muslim children represented through Muslim children’s literature⁹ can promote a discussion through which Muslim children can be brought from the periphery to the center in the classroom context. For lack of such an engagement in the classroom and teacher development context, they are ostracized (Shatara, 2007), and their cultural difference is perceived as a cultural disadvantage (Lake, 1990), resulting in their heightened alienation. The absence of multicultural classrooms and lack of wherewithal with the teachers to handle the cultural nuances of Muslim cultures and societies may lead to what Kincheloe (2004) maintains, “a pedagogy that commits to making children receptive and docile and is also one that denies human dignity and freedom” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 98). Critical engagement with such materials is fundamental to oppose the simplistic attitude of taking knowledge at its face value.

A vigorous inclusion of Muslim children’s literature as a curriculum resource will serve towards inculcating cosmopolitan ethics in our students through dialogue, action, and inclusion of possibilities, which is a desirable response to lead all of us towards transformative citizenship (Banks, 2008). Cosmopolitan Ethics denote the spirit of unity of all of humanity, with its diverse manifestations in the form of various cultures and societies throughout the world. Understood in

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⁹ Muslim Children’s Literature as a category and subject of the present research has been capitalised in the present thesis.
this way, it promotes tolerance premised on thriving pluralist humanity (Appiah, 2006). When students are aligned with the improvement of larger purposes of humanity, it enables their liberation from narrow, divisive boundaries of 'colonial tendencies' (Banks, 2008). Within this appreciation is the paradigm of inclusion, which is also a model of hope and possibilities (Aga Khan, 2008). Additionally, it offers prospects of holistic knowledge and education (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006).

Furthermore, children’s stories have an autobiographical element, which can be used to bring conversations around curriculum as personal, autobiographical process (Aoki, 1993; Grumet, 1989; Pinar, 2004) and are a guide on how we use a reconceptualist scholarship to guide teacher education. Lack of such materials will leave us complying by the dominant discourse supporting the "banking theory of education”, whereby curriculum as dialogue is "...reduced to the act of one person’s ‘depositing’ ideas in another” and "...become a simple exchange of ideas to be consumed by the discussants” (Freire, 1970, p. xx). Just as a concern for ethnic diversity in children’s books was addressed as an aspect of promoting better world relations, particularly after World War II, the same is required today in the case of understanding Muslim history and cultures. The following excerpt from the speech of Aga Khan IV (2004) sums up the need for my research:

I would hope to see the day when the definition of an educated person in Judeo-Christian culture would include an intelligent understanding of the Muslim world. That person would appreciate the eminent position of Islamic civilizations in human thought and knowledge. That would include an understanding of their tradition of research and achievements, from philosophy and the arts to the sciences, architecture, and engineering. (Aga Khan, 2004, p. xx)

Muslim civilizations have played a critical role in the development of knowledge and sciences but awareness of these is largely missing. Teacher education has the potential to fill this gap.
1.4 Notions of Child and Childhood(s) in the Context of Development and Definitions of Children’s Literature

The idea of children's literature can be best comprehended when situated within the context of the concept of child in the respective society and culture. This applies to Muslim children's literature also.

The conceptions of childhood vary across traditions and time (Bunge, 2002), and there is no uniform agreement on the boundaries of childhood. The expansive production of juvenile literature today is the result of the luxury of understanding and engaging with the cultural and conceptual matters of childhood (Shavit, 1986). This scenario developed during the seventeenth century and gradually took the shape of present-day recognition of a child, which asserts that children’s needs are different from adults, thus, polarizing the unified world of the adults and children. Such a development is credited to the Industrial Revolution, the rise of bourgeois, and the drop in infant mortality rate (Shavit, 1986; Townsend, 1977).

The ideological understanding of children, their spiritual well-being, and concern for their education and discipline, lead to respecting them rather than treating them as a means of amusement. In this way, development of the notion of childhood, the cultural understanding of a child, and production of children's literature are interconnected (Shavit, 1986). Additionally, these developments are a cause of the establishment of educational institutions, school systems, and a canonized repertoire of children's literature in response to the needs of a child. Notably, most of the understanding of the educational needs of a child is adult-driven and premised on the social, as well as moral purposes behind raising a child. The textbook production of each context mirrors this trait.
1.4.1 Defining Children's Literature

Children’s literature carries the knowledge that is cultural, politically, and socially constituted through texts, such that they hold ‘socializing power,’ communicate cultural elements, and promote models of social action amongst younger populations (Apol, 1998; Nodelman, 1996). They are narratives foundational for psychological and cultural values of every society that provide an intellectual and symbolic framework through which children can integrate experience and perception (Kline, 1993). Notably, children’s literature is a key resource for introducing patterns of thought from one generation to another (Kline, 1993).

Rose (1984) offered the complexity of defining children's literature, saying that "Children's fiction is impossible...in the sense that it hangs on an impossibility...This is the impossible relation that exists between adult and child"(p. xx). The substance and boundaries of children's literature are generally understood as texts that children read (Nodelman, 2008), or even anything that appears on the children's list by a publisher (Townsend, 1974). Nancy Anderson (2013) defines it as “all books written for children to be [children’s] literature - excluding works such as joke books, cartoon books, and nonfiction works that are not intended to be read from front to back, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference material” (pp. 2-3). Thus, according to Anderson children’s literature is essentially fictional.

The complexity of defining children’s literature is further compounded as its primary audience: the child, who is equally a multi-defined and multi-dimensional subject of study in the academia (Hunt, 1990). Children’s literature is open to debates in cultural studies, whereby "... the power of the child as a cultural trope (standing for innocence, the natural, the primitive, and so on) has led to a neglect of the child as a social being, with a voice" (Rudd, 1996, p. 30). Within the complexities of defining children’s literature lies the importance of this literature. Peter Hunt (1990, p. 2) expresses that such texts are culturally formative, and of massively important
educationally, intellectually, and socially. Children’s Literature reflects society as it wishes to be and as it unconsciously reveals itself to be.

Also, children's literature presents a child as both 'constructed', i.e. created in a fixed image by adults, and 'constructive', i.e. having a possibility of creative intervention even through children's voice. The space between the constructed and the constructive presents a powerful possibility regarding “...postcolonial theory compatible with postmodern formulations of hybridity, intertextuality, third space, in-between-ness and native re-articulation” (Kanu, 2003, p. 78). This holds the possibilities of curriculum reform and reconceptualization.

Children's literature, like the concept of childhood, is a cultural construct, and has evolved over the period. The way society perceives childhood is what constitutes the gist of subject matter prevalent in juvenile books. It includes a variety of genres such as fiction, non-fiction, traditional literature, drama, storybooks, picture books, poems, novels, comics, talking books, e-books, and others. Contemporary publications for children's literature mark them by their genre, age level, as well as visual, verbal, and stylistic components.

The boundaries between children's literature and those of adult literature are mutually overlapping as well, which is illustrated through, for example, the *Harry Potter series* (year range) Swift's (1667-1745) *Gulliver's Travels* (1960), and Orwell's (1903-1950) *The Animal Farm* (1946). The subject matter and form of children's literature have varied significantly from period to period, making it a vehicle for cultural preservation. Children's literature prior to the twentieth century had been predominantly white in both content and illustrations (Bader, 1976). Contemporary children's literature is a highly innovative, challenging, and financially profitable field (Fass, 2004), making it alluring even for established adult literature writers. Women have produced more children's literature, as raising and nurturing of children is generally deemed as
women's forte (Fass, 2004). Children’s literature is considered less significant than the adult literature, and is generally less expensive too.

1.4.2 Defining Multicultural Children’s Literature

Muslim children’s literature falls broadly under Multicultural children’s literature. Just as the understanding of what constitutes children’s literature has evolved, the definition of multicultural literature has also evolved through a historical understanding of various underrepresented populations particularly in the United States of America. Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman (2009) through a historical examination of multicultural literature in the United States have discussed various definitions of this literary category. Multicultural literature primarily developed as the recognition of near absence or stereotypical presence of people of color and racist publishing practices prior to 1960. It has connections to all literature, multicultural education and publishing trends. Initially the definition of multicultural literature included race and ethnicity only, but later expanded to include different groups and issues of gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, ages, religion and geographical location. Thus, gradually this literature emerged to include not only African Americans but also Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans and Asian Americans.

The definitions of Multicultural literature are fluid and associated with shifting historical, sociopolitical, and economic contexts. Multicultural literature is defined as “literature by and about people of color” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 73). Cooperative Children’s Book Centre (CCBC) also defines multicultural literature as books about people of color. Mingshui Cai (1998) offered that central to the debate of what is multicultural children’s literature is the question of inclusion of many cultures (He, 2015). Cai also (1998) identifies three principal definitions in the research on multicultural literature. These are: a focus on people of color, assumption that
multicultural literature stands for multiple + culture, and the assertion that all literature is multicultural (p. 312). The latter assertion is also supported by Patrick Shannon (1994), where he maintains that all people have multiple social memberships, thus, all literature is multicultural. This claim undermines the original purpose of multicultural literature as representing underrepresented populations.

The term gained recognition in 1980s due to a momentum in scholarship and publishing activities related to multicultural literature. In Canada multicultural literature holds great significance because of its multicultural ethos (Botelho, 2009). Multicultural literature in Canada was published as early as in 1950s.

It is critical to observe that the label of multicultural literature does not make any literature multicultural as it may not necessarily include the experiences of diverse people other than white.

1.4.3 Defining Muslim Children’s Literature

The challenge of arriving at an understanding of what constitutes Muslim children’s literature can be situated within the questions of defining children’s literature. Broadly, it can be appreciated as children’s literature that has at its core expressions of Muslim cultures, civilizations, beliefs and practices. It may or may not be authored by Muslim authors, but those penned by non-Muslim authors may be an interesting category, as it would present an outsider’s perspectives. For Muslims, faith is inseparably intertwined with the daily living and the choices that they make. The 'Islam is a way of life' (Aga Khan, 2005) worldview, and a spirit of being a 'living faith' (Siddiqui, 2006) is expressed in literature depicting Muslim lives. Because children's literature largely deals with cultivating good human beings in children, the ethical and moral concepts consciously or unconsciously surface in such books. The genre of Muslim children's
literature as a separate label does not exist for reasons detailed in the rationale of making this literature an important research topic.

The increased mobility and migration of Muslim populations to the West within last three to four decades gave birth to their apprehensions over the education and socialization of their children in a completely new environment. The primary concerns of the Muslim parents centered on preservation of Muslim culture, values, and ethical practices emanating from an essentially religious worldview. The latter anxiety is especially caused due to Muslim children's exposure to the Western, secular, and individualistic outlook on the educational system that they were then integrated into. Muslim children's literature written in the West, particularly in English, is a response to the challenges of assimilation in the multicultural western society, politics of identity and gender equality, accommodation of religious education, radicalism, racism, and Islamophobia (Janson, 2012). The content of such books as available in North America (or the West in general) ranges from Muslim festivals (Ahsan, 1987; Gazi & Rayyan, 1996; Hoyt-Goldsmith, 2001), glimpses into Muslim cultures and practices (Abdel-Fatteh, 2005), cultural encounters, and challenges of growing up as a Muslim child (Ali-Karmali, 2012; Colfer, 1998; Eteraz, 2011), as well as narratives from Muslim history including that of Prophet Muhammad (Al-Saleh, 1985; Azzam, 1996, 1997, 1998). The examples from the Quran and the Prophet draw a base for inspiring ideals of piety and morals directed towards the inspirational image of an ideal society amidst the challenges confronted by the Muslims in the new lands. Most of these books written by Muslim writers represent a Sunni perspective.

Muslim children’s literature offers insights into Muslim cultures and societies living in different parts of the world. Their lived experiences, as shared in the multicultural Canadian milieu, are vital for bringing in a nuanced understanding of multiculturalism, which may not be just limited to development and availability of appropriate content, but go beyond that. This
multicultural approach of viewing Muslim lives is, as Banks and Banks (2004) assert, is a way of viewing the world and its people.

1.4.4 Muslim Child

Childhood is a social construct (Aries, 1962; Bisht, 2008; Burr, 2003) that historically varies across cultures. A general understanding of the basic tenets of faith followed by the Muslims and their cultural manifestations offers vistas into the granular subjectivities of a Muslim child. Understandably, the latter may neither be exhaustive nor all-inclusive of Muslim realities around the globe co-existing in various permutations and amputations. The concept of a child, besides being rooted in the contextual culture, also emanates from the traditional Muslim literature. Islam’s second Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab is said to have addressed parents, saying, “Consider the mindset of your children when you talk to them, for surely they were born in a time very different from yours” (Moosa, 2002, p. 293). This view offers glimpse into understanding of the Muslim child, although, such examples of understanding are very few.

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2004), Muslims follow Islam, the principal tenets of which are surrender, faith, and spiritual beauty. Islam believes in One God, and acknowledges all the prophets of the Abrahamic traditions. It acknowledges the underlying unity behind the multiplicity of revelations and the universal ethical premises accompanying it. It negates the common approach of perceiving things in duality. For instance, men and women are not perceived as binaries. They are created from the same source. In this way, the gender understanding within Islam is inclusive\(^{10}\) (The Quran, 4:1). There is a natural harmony and balance in the creation, as God created all things in correct proportion.

\(^{10}\) O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer (The Quran, 4:1).
The wide spectrum of Islam includes Sunnism, Shi’ism, Sufism and various traditional, modernist, as well as fundamentalist interpretations, depicting religious pluralism and opposing a monolithic image that is popularly associated with it. The demographics of Islam consist of a majority, about 87%, of the Sunni population. The cultural diversity of the Muslim world can be witnessed through six major cultural zones in Islamic civilizations of Arabic, Persian, Black African, Turkic, of the Indian subcontinent, as well as South East Asia. All these zones represent a variety of linguistic, ethnic, cultural, ritualistic, geographical, historical, and indigenous flavors. This diversity is bound by an underlying unity through tenants such as the doctrine of Tawhid or unity of Allah, recitation of Quran in Arabic, offerings of daily prayers in the direction of Mecca, following the model of the Prophet and Shariah (law), Sufi spirituality, and the beauty of Islamic arts. The differences of culture, traditions, interpretations, rituals, and practices are perceived as a strength rather than weakness. The omnipresence of God underlies the spiritual understanding of a Muslim. The social nature of a human being is part of the wisdom of God’s creation. The spirituality of God is all pervading and universal. Islam believes in afterlife also.

In Islam, the interrelationship between God, individual, and human society at large can be presented graphically (Nasr, 2004) through the means of a series of concentric circles. The innermost circle stands for relationship between the individual and God, followed by the circles of family, quarter of the city or town where one lives, nation, Islamic community (Ummah), and finally the entire humanity, as well as creation as a whole. Each circle has its center in the first circle, and all transactions in subsequent circles are based on the relationship between the individual and God. In conjunction with these interrelationships, there are a set of responsibilities each is supposed to perform, starting with one’s own self, followed by duty towards the society and family. The individualistic perspective regarding human body in the West that proclaims human body as entirely one’s own and at one’s disposal is not part of the Islamic belief system.
Further, in the traditional Islamic worldview, every necessity of life, including earning one’s daily bread, is sanctified (Nasr, 2004).

Nasr (2004) continues to expand on basic tenets of Muslim identity. He maintains that the secularization of the West is not particularly common in the Islamic world. Freedom is a value only so far as it does not hinder one’s belief and practice of faith. If it does, it results in considerable tension, particularly within the younger generations in the Western context.

Responses to the issue of freedom and human rights for Muslims are very different from those of the West. The primary respect by a human being is towards God. Based on universal principle of Islam, every Muslim believer is expected to be dedicated to oneness of God and committed to carrying out the will of God on this earth.

The Holy Quran is the foremost source from where every aspect of Muslim life is derived. There are several terms used for children in the Quran, such as *dhurriyya, ibn, walad, janin, tifl, saghir, sabiyy, ghulam, habab, tamyiz, farat* (Fass, 2004) and others. Based on Quranic injunctions, childhood is considered a special period in individual's life. The Quranic statements related to children are mainly around infanticide, adoption, breast feeding, and orphans (Giladi, 2001). These are expressed through a number of incidents and stories, one of them being of the sacrifice of Abraham’s son Ismail, which signifies the importance of faith and loyalty. Because the context and milieu of the Quran are the medieval society, as was the prevalent norm, there was no distinction between an adult and a child. The most powerful Islamic icon, Prophet Muhammad himself, is presented as very kind and respectful to children, particularly upholding the honor and status of a girl child (Watt, 1961). The advent of a child is considered a blessing for Muslims and supports the main function of marriages: that of procreation (Fass, 2004). In Islam faith and knowledge are interconnected. The first revelation
that came to Prophet Muhammad was “Read”\textsuperscript{11}. This laid the foundation for the importance of knowledge and learning as integrated with an engagement with society and contexts of daily living within the ethical framework of Islam (Munir & Nanji, 2002).

There have been concerns and debates on inadequate attention paid to the rights of children in Islam:

Islam has indeed been preoccupied with the duties towards both parents (\textit{huquq al-walidayn}), especially the mother. But why has Islam not paid attention to the “rights of (the) children” (\textit{huq \textit{u}q al-abna}) to a degree equivalent or approximate to the rights of both parents? With the exception of Islam’s concern for the rights of children – during breastfeeding and custody – you will hardly find that Islam shows concern for offspring beyond infancy. (Uways, 2005, as quoted in Moosa, 2002, p. 297)

While, traditional and folklore literature for in Islam such as \textit{The Arabian Nights} have been capitalized as children’s literature, theories and understanding of the notion of a child in Islam is really not available in scholarship. This lack of engagement perhaps also accounts for the underrepresentation of Muslim children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child defines a child as an individual, who has not attained the age of 18 years (Bisht, 2008; Sikdar, 2012). Interwoven within this is an understanding of children as a ‘minority social group’ (Mayall, 2002) surrounded by controlling forces of power at school and home, leading to their marginalization and subordination, as well as making them vulnerable, considering them immature, innocent, and weak in negotiation powers (Bisht, 2008). The intensity of this predicament is doubled by current appreciation of the notion of a child as being predominantly centered around the Eurocentric discourses (Raman, 2000) that originated after Rousseau's demarcation of childhood as a distinct period with clear boundaries (Arbuthnot,1964). These ideas echo Western notions of individualism and value of

\textsuperscript{11} “Read! Your Lord is full of generosity, instructing by the Pen, educating humanity about that which they do not know” (The Holy Quran 96: 3-5).
the self as autonomous (Geertz, 1984). Such an understanding may not be common in the non-secular social undercurrents silently co-existing within the larger repertoire of educational literature surrounding children. Therefore, while the essential precincts of the notions of a child align with a Muslim child also, paradigmatically, the situation of a Muslim child in the Canadian classrooms may vary substantially, owing to a difference in the cultural worldviews of the latter. Thus, within the challenges of having an identity that is entirely based on the perceptions of adults also lies the difficulty of being understood and accepted as a 'different' minority.

Furthermore, a Muslim child is brought up with the basic tenets of Islam, liberals influenced by the culture in which she lives for its practical manifestations, as well as by forces at home. The position of such a child is unique and vulnerable because of the child's constant confrontation with the secular outlook, as well as the forces of modernity (Taylor, 1991) around the teaching-learning processes, the popular image of Muslims especially after 9/11, teachers having little awareness of Muslim cultures, when dealing with such children (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009) and a lack of appropriate curriculum resources for addressing a Muslim child's needs.

1.5 Comparative, International and Development Education

Although the present research focuses on Ontario curriculum, perspectives from Comparative International and Developmental Education have provided a lens that enriches a cross-cultural, international understanding that underpins the CIDE studies. Some of the purposes of comparative education are “... to collect, summarize, and publish various kinds of educational experience, with a view to getting what is sound and true from some discrepant opinions”, as well as “... promoting as far as possible, general consent and agreement as to the wisest and most fruitful line of development in national education” (Crossley & Watson, 2003, p. 16). It applies historical, philosophical, and social science theories and methods to international
problems in education (Epstein, 1994). Additionally, it helps better our education system with a strong emphasis on reforms (Crossley & Watson, 2003).

Comparative education emphasizes the role of factors beyond school. In the last two centuries, philosophy of education has changed from teacher-centered pedagogy to student-centered due to changes in the understanding of the conceptualization of a child from evil to good, and from a creature to be dominated to one that should be nurtured or allowed to develop naturally (Ulich, 1965). Such a change in values has a long-term impact on education. The political agenda and the ensuing turmoil around the world between the (so-called) West and Islam have a direct bearing on the construction of curriculum. Historical vignettes in the comparative education field bring forth various snapshots of differentiated curriculum from early resources such as Ibn Batuta (1304-1368), a prominent name in Muslim history and tradition, bringing forth man’s curiosity to know what is happening in different parts of the world.

Sociological theories of education related to social transmission and socialization stand challenged, as even such a transmission is severely truncated, when a large chunk of Muslim populations in Canada and elsewhere in the West, particularly, in the educational scene, are missing. For the purpose of transforming education, it is critical to discuss themes such as the present research and bring it to the forefront. The transformational function of education requires that minority and marginalized voices are included in the larger discourse around curriculum, teaching, and learning. Comparing voices of different authors lends meaning to the deep undercurrents that offer the prospects of cross-fertilization in our classrooms.

Critical theory and pedagogy lead us into thinking about models of curriculum that we have around us, which help maintain society’s social and economic structures. Critical theorists look for contradictions and oppressive systems that individuals are caught in, such that these
individuals can be empowered to escape and change their conditions for the better (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1990). Critical theorists ask the following questions:

1. “What are the sources of inequality and oppression in the society?
2. How do individuals experience life in social organizations?
3. How does an individual achieve autonomy in the face of societal oppression?
4. How are language and communication patterns used to oppress?

Through these questions, researchers attempt to uncover and understand the ways in which dominant ideology is translated into practice in schools, and the ways in which human agency can develop the capacity to combat the impact of that ideology. Furthermore, reproduction theory questions the belief that equity and equality are maintained, and values of democracy and social mobility are sustained. It emphasizes the fact that schools are socializing institutions, which reproduce both the values and ideologies of the dominant social groups and the status ranking of the existing class structure, consequently alienating minority representation and voices, which results in perpetuating dominant language and cultural capital, As Demarrias and LeCompte said, (1990) “Schools tend to mirror the inequalities in society at large so that children learn through both a hidden curriculum and an explicit curriculum the skills and attitudes which will correspond to their later work roles” (p. 14).

Proponents of hegemonic domination argue that economic and cultural models of reproduction need to understand the powerful political intervention of the state in enforcing policies, which lead the reproductive functions of education. The state and federal agencies also play a large role in the production of knowledge in the schools (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1990). The public school systems carry the curriculum that is created by the state. In this way, the state touches the actions and beliefs of students, as well as teachers in the state-run public schools. There is a tremendous potential in such a curriculum to set a sound foundation in the young
citizens of the values and ethical premises that the country stands for. Therefore, the state-approved curriculum must acknowledge of all the voices within it. Creating a balance of serving its pluralistic communities and maintaining its core integrity is a challenge that states will be expected to maintain. For instance, immigrants from non-secular countries may find it difficult to adjust to personal freedom that Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Case, 1989) affords to Canadian citizens. In traditional non-Western cultures, patriarchies reign high also. These aspects are crucial for an educated understanding, as schools significantly control socialization of children, sometimes even more than the family or church. The Western mass schooling represents this socialization along with a presence of Western ideals of rationality, meritocratic opportunity, and equality (Fuller, 1991). These economic and social ideals, in turn, prepare youth for better opportunities in the modern society.

Education, culture, and class in every society are interlinked. It is essential to keep the context in mind before studying any text because the relation between culture and education is deep and critical (Altbach & Kelly, 1986). The middle-class students in schools are treated as if they are not really being controlled, and are socialized into believing that they have the freedom to choose their destiny (Bernstein, 1974). This assumption is forcefully denied in the case of curriculum construction, where through state curriculum dominant values are more or less imposed on a minority, and upward mobility of the dominant class is simultaneously promoted, thus offering the latter more economic and social opportunities. Socialization of children is grounded through the curriculum they are taught while growing up. The colonial experience adds complexity to this problem. Freire’s (2000) analysis presents a poignant picture of mental colonialism. He maintained that the colonized mindset was created through education, whereby the colonized judged himself per the viewpoint of the colonizer.
The multicultural classrooms that we have in Ontario represent international communities around the world, comprising of large numbers of immigrants from the developing world. They hail from different schooling systems and schooling cultures. The language and discourse used in the schools marginalize Muslim cultures by completely abstaining them from the mainstream educational discourse. Understanding Muslim representations will help us appreciate what is happening outside the school in the students’ lives, which is a very critical link to sound teaching and learning practices inside the classrooms. Such practices can only be understood in the light of understandings of culture and societies, as well as by maintaining cultural sensitivity in the classrooms. The inclusion of minority and marginalized voices such as those of Muslims are a sure way of augmenting comparative curricular perspectives. Paulo Freire (1970), through his classic example of his case of literacy for peasants, has demonstrated the need for teachers and students to engage in active dialogue using texts that are meaningful to their daily life and experiences. He viewed teachers and students as active agents in understanding, criticizing, resisting, and transforming schooling practices, which serve to maintain a society that oppresses large groups of people (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1990).

The absence of Muslim children’s literature from recommended, as well as extended curriculum, supports sociologists’ views on curriculum, whereby power and control is maintained through the way information is constructed and disseminated; the propagation of dominant curriculum at the cost of total absence of other voices prevails. One can witness ways of teaching and assessment, as well as hegemonic control of curriculum by the state at macro level and its implications at the micro level through classroom and teacher training practices. Such practices marginalize and disqualify Muslim students, many of whom are migrants from previously colonized and now developing countries. There is very little resistance in this area because of complete absence of voices and literature available for this segment. Developing
appropriate resources for Muslim children will help mitigate the situation and guide them
towards building a positive identity and developing an educated citizenry. The inclusion of
‘multiple voices’ (Geertz, 1973) in curriculum of all participants, predominantly those who are
not so powerful, makes a case for social justice in education. The latter may also work as a
model of counter-hegemonic resistance. In the globalized cosmopolitan world, it is critical to
include Muslim voices for a greater diversity and sophistication in curriculum approaches, as
well as creation of appropriate classroom, teaching, and learning resources. It is also an
opportunity to learn lessons from non-Western societies. In the words of Aga Khan, it can
combat ‘clash of ignorance’ (Aga Khan IV, 2006) as opposed to ‘clash of civilizations’
(Huntington, 2003), which is how many mainstream thinkers perceive this problem to be.
Significantly, Muslim children’s literature can provide much-needed meta-narratives (Hayhoe,
2000) that can shed light on the hushed undercurrents of Muslim traditions, which are part of
_Ahl-al-Kitab_ (People of the Book) (Awan, 2014).

Pointers from the capitalist West centered Development Studies discourse also help us
understand the silence prevalent in Muslim children’s literature. Most of the developing nations
having a large Muslim presence are economically marginalized. Muslims communities in these
countries are economically invisible, their culture and heritages imperceptible, owing to policy
and power play of the massive world market forces, aftermaths of long colonial regimes in these
countries, and the ensuing cold war. It has been difficult for some of these nations to keep pace
with sudden pace of change and capitalist production. In the last century, the British, French,
Portuguese, and other European colonies comprised of 28 % of the world population (Leys,
1996), and a large part of Muslims come from these regions. The trio of factors such as
development as growth, the state as the agent, and the macroeconomic policy instruments has
played quite an important role in such a state of affairs. The Middle Eastern countries, which are
the cradle not only of almost all the ancient civilizations but also of rising of Orientalism, were also colonized. Their history, politics, and economics started changing with the discovery of oil in the early last century, colonial freedom, and the consequences of Second World War, resulting in the Israel-Palestine conflict (Lewis, 1995). Consequently, most of the developing countries are currently in a more vulnerable state then they were during the colonial period (Leys, 1996).

The foregrounding of the market economy discourse has pushed the spirit of the shared past and history in the background. Also, the struggle within Muslim societies and culture in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs), which were at the forefront of civilizations for many centuries, to come to grips with modernity and westernization has further compounded the problem (Lewis, 2002 & 2003). Significantly, poor governance and large-scale corruption have also marred the overall economic development, further aggravating the already problematic scenario. In an age when economy decides power, naturally, Muslim people become part of the socially neglected group in the global platform. The Islamic thought, which is founded on the bedrock of a balance of *din* (faith) and *duniya* (world) (Aga Khan IV, May 2006) has no place in the current consumerist discourses.

Enrichment of curriculum resources through inclusive voices and representations of different cultures and societies are a way to improve school systems and literacy standards: the sounder the primary education, the better the chances of development of any country. Furthermore, primary education has the highest economic payoff than any level of education. The feeble presence of Muslim children’s literature as a curriculum resource is a sign of dominant ideology driven curriculum. There is a need of such a presence to balance the curricular strands, particularly, at the primary level. The Euro-centric Orientalist thrust is a major influence in this area. Notably, while Globalization has promoted a large scale movement of people, money, and ideas across the world, it has also homogenized education practices. The
trend towards becoming a “McWorld” (Anderson-Levitt, 2003) foresees loss of local cultures too quickly, which may be reflected in the way curriculums are constructed.

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

The aim and design of the present research purports a layered and multidimensional examination of Muslim representations through a critical journey into pertinent literature, examination of Ontario Curriculum Documents, having in-depth conversations with select Muslim children’s literature authors to gain their perspectives on the subject, and finally, through an analysis of select contemporary literary pieces of Muslim children’s literature dealing with Muslim cultures and character.

The present thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter One: Introduction, defines the problem, rationalizes the need for the research and sets the boundaries for the endeavor. It also briefly highlights the precincts of a Muslim child as situated in the larger canvas of Muslim cultures, beliefs, faith, and practices. Nuances from Comparative, International and Development Education are also brought in to add colors to this collaborative endeavor. Questions addressed through the project and the outcomes are mentioned as well. Here, I have also presented the mosaic of myself, and the way I see myself connected, as well as reflected in the problem.

Chapter Two: Pertinent Literature Review will outline pertinent literature in available shades and forms. It will relate to the emergence of children’s literature as a product of culture liberally influenced by historical, as well as geographical factors of the context in which it is born. The focus here will be more on the literature for elementary grades produced during the last twenty-five years. The survey will trace different types of literature available for and on Muslim children, such as art and architecture, biographies, curricular resources, digital electronic and internet resources, fiction, folklore, general references, history, geography, politics,
interreligious studies and more. Because I will analyze fictional literary resources about Muslim children, per Anderson’s (2013) definition, the focus will be more on such available resources.

Chapter Three: Theories, Concepts, Methodology, and Approaches, will be a description of methodology, frameworks and approaches that I will use for this research, which is a qualitative case study of curriculum and beyond, consisting of a combination of study of available resources, as well as interviews with five authors of Muslim children’s literature, both Muslims and non-Muslims. The major theoretical and conceptual lenses I will use for the study are based on a combined web of critical pedagogy, multicultural education, anti-orientalism, anti-racism, postcolonialism, conceptualist paradigm, and Islamophobia, which I call Critical Appreciative Pedagogy.

The next three chapters are core assessments of Muslim representations in various ways, and through diverse resources, methods, and tools. These three chapters offer a triangulated in-depth engagement with Muslim representations. In Chapter Four: The Trillium List (Muslim Representations 1), I will detail the recommended textbooks in language arts on the List as prepared by the government for Ontario curriculum. The Trillium List (www.trilliumlist.ca) contains the titles of textbooks approved by the Minister of Education for use in Ontario schools. The textbooks named on the Trillium List are subjected to a rigorous evaluation in accordance with the criteria specified in Section 4 of Guidelines for Approval of Textbooks. An examination of the recommended resources will expose the glaring absence of literature related to Muslim children. This in turn will support the claims made for the rationale of the research of the need for understanding and creation of Muslim children’s literature.

Chapter Five: Author(s) Speak (Muslim Representations 2), will collect data from interviews with five contemporary authors of Muslim children’s literature from Canada, United States of America and Great Britain are analyzed. Because there are negligible numbers of
authors in Canada writing Muslim children’s literature, I will expand my horizon to include some popular, well-acclaimed authors from the West that are read and used in Canada. The fictitious writings of these authors fall under the purview of the subject matter of the research. An examination of their expressions as related to their production will provide insights into the problem and possible solutions thereof.

It is essential to have a firsthand understanding of some of the contemporary literary expressions about Muslim children that are part of the food chain of the teachers, parents, librarians, children and a general population that is interested in reading. Chapter Six: My name was Hussein and I am a Muslim - Muslim Representations 3 will be an attempt to analyze available literary resources with the help of critical content analysis. I will explore 17 books of fiction written for and about Muslim children, some of them already being actively used as curriculum resources in the classrooms, to see the language, content, picture quality and the messages conveyed in these books. Here I will attempt dense engagement with Muslim representations in children’s literature. This data, combined with the interview responses of the five authors that I interviewed, will render a holistic understanding of the patterns and themes of Muslim children’s literature. It also includes insight into child suitability of the text. Thus, Chapters four, five and six will engage with Muslim representations and bring to the light three interrelated facets for a deeper understanding of the challenges of engagement with and absence of Muslim Children’s literature for the purposes of curriculum studies and teacher development.

Finally, in Chapter Seven: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion, I will wrap up the thesis through a discussion of the findings, its implications on curriculum studies and teacher development, and offer some recommendations that may provide a new direction for the next steps on policy, as well as curriculum approaches for Ontario classrooms. Ontario Curriculum is a rich document of resources embedded in the pluralistic, cosmopolitan values and ethics that
Canada proudly stands for. Muslim children’s literature may just be the missing piece that can enlighten the Canadian educational discourse to make it more exemplary.

As is true of all literature, Muslim children's literature is not only a mirror of the society, but also promotes bridging of cultures and creates responsiveness around Muslim students' background to alleviate misconceptions in the students in general and also promote confidence in parents of Muslim children, especially, those in Public schools.

Engagement with Muslim children’s literature will enable the students, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to reflect on subtle nuances of differences between perceptions and reality, covert and overt forms of discrimination, and draw parallels between their internal cultures with their immediate and global societies (Kassam, 2007).
Chapter 2
Pertinent Literature Review

“Muslims and culture are not always seen as synonymous.”

- Ahmed et al., 2012, p. 1

“…All cultures have myths and tales, stories and folklore – narratives that accumulate vital cultural knowledge and precepts and pass those bits of wisdom on to succeeding generations.”

- Kline, 1993, p. 77

1.7 Introduction

This literature review focuses on the subject of children’s literature reflecting Muslim cultures and societies situated within multiple thematic layers. Those layers comprise the body of children’s literature under an overarching umbrella, wherein sub-streams of children’s literature are written in the English language, especially those that are available as a curriculum resource in the West. These English resources written in the West also include literature in English that has Muslim cultures and civilizations at its center. Although I mention some of children’s literature in the world, including its history and development (Peter Hunt, 1990; Fass, 2004) leading to the present day industry of children’s publications and huge profitable productions thereof in the chapter, the primary focus of the present review is Muslim children’s literature, its availability in different forms and genres, its use and application for various educational purposes, and its usefulness as a curriculum resource for teacher development as well as for critical pedagogical engagement for Ontario classrooms (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe, 2004; McLaren & Leonard, 1993).

There are a number of reviews of the available literature in education that propose the need for educational resources on Islam and Muslims, as there is dearth of such materials for teacher training (Abbas, 2005; Hayden, 1999), as well as classroom engagement in multicultural,
multi-faith, and multilingual schools (Douglas & Dunn, 2001; Geneva, 2003-4). Some of these writings also bring out components of religious education as taught in public schools and the problems thereof (Douglas & Shaikh, 2004; Panjwani, 2004, 2005). Overall, educators have called for a systemic approach to teaching against Islamophobia (Kinchesloe, Steinberg & Stonebanks, 2010) leading towards re-conceptualizing an understanding of curriculum (Flinders & Thornton, 2004; Grumet, 1989).

A significant body of primary sources on children’s literature is available in almost all the countries of the world. These are used for variety of purposes, such as education, leisure, and entertainment. Much of the content, structure, and genres of these books depend on the social, political, historical, and linguistic contexts in which they are written. The purpose of their content is also driven by the needs of such contexts. Surprisingly, in the contemporary, free, and affluent social atmospheres, there are very few products of cultural and artistic excellence available for children (Kline, 1993).

In the present study, ‘Muslim children’s literature’ is interchangeably used here as ‘children’s literature’ reflecting Muslim cultures and civilizations, as the latter is broader and inclusive of the culture and milieu of the Muslim civilizations that exist integrally within the stories of Muslim children. Additionally, if the title names the literature in context as Muslim, then there may be a threat for it to be understood and labeled as ‘only’ of relevance for Muslim children or only talking about them, thus, negating the purpose of the research of engaging with such materials in the context of critical pedagogy and multicultural frameworks. A general perception regarding the discourse on ‘Islamic’ education is that the term denotes education, which is intimately related to Islam and God (Ould Bah, 1998).
1.8 Children’s Literature: History and Context

Botelho & Rudman (2009) have mapped the historical construction of children’s literature in great detail. It is traced back to the Renaissance period, when early books appeared, followed by William Caxton’s printing press in the late 1400s. In the 1500s, chapter book stories were written in the form of legends, ballads, and brief histories of the times. As early as 1811, *The Juvenile Magazine* appeared which did not continue for long. At that time, Puritan primers taught children religious beliefs and morals. Amidst industrialization, the condition of the working poor worsened, leaving children with only the availability of Sunday school literacy modes.

Children’s literature as a genre developed only after the seventeenth century, owing to the multiple factors of printing press, development of educational theories by Rousseau (Arthbutnot, 1964) and the understanding of a child as a separate entity. The development of children’s literature from the nineteenth century onwards stemmed from the idea that children have individual needs. This approach is very different from the one in the medieval times, when children’s literature was an offshoot of religious and moral instruction. The latter was also aimed at domesticating children, thereby producing books, which were written at children rather than for them. The rapid growth in fantasy and pleasure literature was also an indication of the changing conceptions of childhood in the last four centuries. As Kline (1993) said, “[a]dults were clearly gatekeepers to the domain of children’s literature, and independent publishers published with the parent in mind” (p. 90). Postman (1992) considered the print media invention integrally tied with the invention of modern childhood, saying “[l]iteracy not only represents a radically different sensibility but also a departure in organizing acculturation of the child and, implicitly, of organizing social consciousness itself” (as cited in Kline, 1993, p. 81). The production upsurge also raised the level of literacy, consequently becoming a catalyst in bringing social
change (McLuhan, 1962). Significantly, a difference persists in how the boundaries of this segment are defined (Rose, 1984). Many such literary products are deceptively targeted at the child, although their focus is the adult audience, for instance, *Gulliver’s Travels* (Swift, 1960) and *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1946). However, in all the literature written for children, there is a universal understanding on the focus of the target audience being the child.

Children’s literature as a written genre may be comparatively new, but as folklore and oral literature, it has been a part of the repertoire of many families’ source of guidance and rooting of values for children. Such a tradition has existed in the form of fairy tales and adventure stories, which has also been recorded, used, and analyzed by writers like Grimm. Children’s literature written in the English language holds critical importance in the large body of English literature.

English literature developed substantially since the renaissance and reformation age. The development of English literature and literature written in the English language in the British colonies, in conjunction with the establishment of English language educational institutions, proved to be a catalyst for the birth and development of children’s literature in English.

The last century gave birth to children’s literature, which is more diverse, multicultural, and age specific. A popular genre of children's literature still remains the series in which a story, setting, or characters appears repetitively in consecutive publications (Susina, 2004). The didactic undercurrent, however, has given room to more humorous and child-oriented matter. Contemporary children’s literature has turned out to be a highly innovative, challenging, and financially profitable field (Fass, 2004), making it alluring even for the established adult literature writers. Significantly, the way a society perceives childhood is what constitutes the gist of subject matter prevalent in the juvenile books. Children’s literature ties up with the power of

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storytelling, which cannot be undermined. Stories root human beings in the collective unconscious and provide much-needed experiential ground to build on. They define our lives, organize our world, offer to teach, help us preserve what is important, entertain and stretch our imagination, hold a promise of creativity, and connect us with the humanity as a whole (Slan, 1997). Children’s literature helps us remember the role stories play in our lives.

1.9 Children’s Literature Reflecting Muslim Cultures and Societies

There are several resources that address the literature related to Muslims as one of the world traditions. As part of this tradition, there is literature that expresses particular understandings of nature and value of children, many of which are derived from the Quran and the prophetic traditions. These represent religious and ethical perspectives, as well as Muslim beliefs and practices. There are also resources having Islamic and Muslim content currently available and being used in classrooms in the faith-based schools, as well as in schools where one or two classes are assigned to faith-based subjects. However, educators have expressed a need for more fiction and folklore, and books that examine Arab-Israeli relationships objectively, analyze the status of women and focus on artistic and intellectual achievements of Muslims (Hayden, 1992, p. 20).

Furthermore, a major stereotype persists regarding the image of a Muslim, much of which is paralleled with that of the image of an Arab. This stereotype is also extended in the Muslim literature, leading to a generalized understanding of all Muslim literature having Arabs at its center. The Arabs conquered a substantial amount of land in the aftermath of the rise of Islam, but not all of these were arabized. For instance, the Persians (today Iranians), even after becoming the followers of Islam, retained their unique flavor of culture and identity. The Arabs
constitute only one-sixth\textsuperscript{13} of the world’s Islamic population, though “as the originators of the faith, Arabs consider themselves at its core, and seldom distinguish between the two” (Hayden, 1992, p. 19). Al-Hazza and Lucking (2007) maintain:

One of the most persistent points of misunderstandings is that all Muslims are Arabs and that all Arabs are Muslims. The two terms are not interchangeable. The majority of Muslims are from Indonesia…Arab communities also contain a significant population of Copts, Melokites, Christians, Jews, Druze, and Maronites. (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007, p. 132).

This is an insight into both understanding of Muslim representations and multicultural literature. Muslims do not live in silos within their cultures and societies.

There are several books written for children and young adults that have ‘Muslim’\textsuperscript{14} content ranging from an understanding of religion, beliefs, practices, celebrations, aspects and struggles\textsuperscript{15} of daily living and the like. These offer an insight into Muslim cultures and societies\textsuperscript{16}. The semantic ambiguity related to the notion of ‘Muslim writing’\textsuperscript{17} may also follow suit while examining Muslim children’s literature. The writings under study here also suggest a segment of diasporic writing, whereby Muslim writing represents refugees, migrants, guest workers, expatriates, the exiled, and the self-exiled. For the Canadian milieu, such Muslim voices are accountable also. These works are available in different genres, but are generally considered as part of the larger repertoire of children’s literature (Wolf et al., 2011).

\textsuperscript{13} According to Suleiman (2000) only 20 percent of world’s Muslim population is Arab.
\textsuperscript{14} This connotes those works that have Muslim characters and cultures as one of its theme. I have used the word ‘Muslim’ for the literature understudy throughout my research project, as opposed to using the term ‘pertaining to Islam’ or ‘Islamic’, as is the general norm in literature, as I think ‘Muslim’ represents the lived experiences of the followers of the faith of Islam and is inclusive of the cultural nuances of the milieu from where such literature hails. In addition, the use of term Islam or Islamic is problematic as there are multiple interpretations as well as connotations of both – ‘Islam’ and ‘Islamic’ (Panjwani, 2004, 2005).
\textsuperscript{15} A (non-exhaustive) bibliography of fiction pertaining to elementary level is attached herewith (Appendix A).
\textsuperscript{16} Those resources that have cursory mention of some Muslim element are not part of the present research.
\textsuperscript{17} For instance, there are a variety of perspectives on defining such boundaries from comprehension of Muslim writing to be understood as the preserve of those authors self-identifying as Muslim, or those for whom the rituals and inner promptings of faith are at the heart of their sense of identity (Ahmed et al, 2012, p. 3).
There are several resources having Islamic and Muslim content currently available and being used in classrooms. My research focuses on literature that is fictional, imaginative, and literary, which is different from the non-literary texts. Engagement with the responses to such a text is different from the non-literary texts (Quinn, 1992). Its primary purpose is not necessarily dissemination of information, but sharing of experiences between the author and the reader, within the context of feelings and attitudes invoked through its content, thus, sparking the readers’ imagination (Northrop Frye, 1970, p. 46).

1.9.1 Development of Muslim Literature

As the message of Islam spread outside the perimeters of Arabia, it embraced many nations and people with diverse beliefs and practices. Consequently, over centuries, Muslims have woven a rich tapestry of literature in different languages in different times and lands. In the first few centuries of Islam, Arabic and later Persian, were the two main languages influenced the formation of Muslim Culture and Civilization. Gradually, Muslims produced literature in many other languages such as Turkish, Malay, Bengali, Urdu, Gujarati, Swahili, and others. The variety of Muslim literature includes philosophical and historical writings, poetry, stories, fables, folk tales, songs, and many other sub-genres. A cross-sectional study of this literature written in different languages would broaden the learners’ concept of Islam, as well as provide a window to the thought, cultures, and civilizations of the Muslim people.

Presently, writings about Muslims and by Muslims have gained momentum in North America through the platform of the Islamic Writers Alliance (www.islamicwritersalliance.net)\(^\text{18}\). This body nurtures Muslim talent and enables networking (Ahmed et al., 2012). Successful writers have presented a diversity of religious and political

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perspectives and have won prestigious awards in the fields of faith-based and fictional literature. The success of these writers in North America has evolved a neo-orientalist perspective that identifies a strain of exoticism coloring Western readings of the Muslim Other. As Ahmed et al (2012) write:

…a fission of fear caused by difference, but also comfort in the idea that ‘they’ can be made more like ‘us.’ This neo-Orientalist perspective strives for the establishment of a corpus of images, standing for true knowledge, which can legitimize repressive legislation and surveillance of Muslims… overseas (Ahmed et al., 2012, p. 6)

Thus, while the paradigmatic framework of my research traces orientalist perspectives in the children’s writings, the Muslim literature for adults in the West promises an emerging vista for a more inclusive body of Muslim literature.

1.9.2 Development and Availability of Muslim Educational Materials

Until the 1980s, there was a noticeable absence of materials related to Muslim children that could be used for educational purposes. Subsequently, through an awareness of the need for such materials in lieu of the growing Muslim populations, some consciously developed the needed resources. Such curriculum sources, when developed, were targeted towards the Arabs or Persian Muslims, conveniently situating Muslims in either of the two major ethnic groups. A majority of these resources also possessed indicators of anything Muslim or Islamic as Middle Eastern, fuelling the popular image of Muslims around the world. Such a framing leaves the majority of Muslim people outside these two ethnic arena and geographic locations, further aggravating stereotypical understanding.

Additionally, the available resources do not consist much of the fictional or poetic works that may enhance the imaginary world of the Muslim children. Rather, most of them are non-fictional books either explaining some aspect of Islam or simply introducing some cultural component of the Muslim world. The latter are sometimes used for the sake of bringing
multicultural approaches in the classrooms of North America. Moreover, the word ‘Muslim’ more than often is associated with religious connotations; Islam and Muslims in literature are not associated with a secular image. Therefore, a large section of the curriculum resources that the educational literature speaks of have religious underpinnings. These resources are either designed to address the religious education component mandatory in some of the countries (Panjwani, 2004), or are meant solely to address the needs of Islamic and faith-based schools.

The curriculums of these syllabuses have many problems regarding conceptual and empirical weaknesses of the Islamic vision of education, thus, predicing a need for reconceptualization (Panjwani, 2004). Contextualizing Muslim experiences of Islam is an approach recommended by Asani (2009). Said’s (2002) expressions also resonated the same:

The problems facing anyone attempting to say anything intelligible, useful, or accurate about Islam are legion. One should, therefore, begin by speaking of Islams rather than Islam…, and then go on to specify which kind, during which particular time, one is speaking about…once one gets a tiny step beyond core beliefs (since even those are very hard to reduce to a simple set of doctrinal rules) and the centrality of the Koran [Qur’an], one has entered an astoundingly complicated world whose enormous—one might even say unthinkable—collective history alone has yet to be written. (Said, 2002, pp. 69-74)

The breadth, depth and varied complexity of Muslim realities are not captured in the available curriculum resources.

Islam as a historically rich and diverse tradition has much to offer to the world, as it has done in the past through its many conversations and interactions with different cultures and societies. As Noor (2002) maintains:

…in reality the history of Islam, like the history of other religions such as Christianity, is fundamentally a history of interpretations. Throughout the development of Islam, there have been different schools of thought and ideas, different approaches, and interpretations of what Islam is and what it means. (Noor, 2002, p. 15-16).
He continues to say that there is no such thing as a “pure” Islam or an a-historical Islam that is outside the process of historical development. The actual lived experience of Islam has always been culturally and historically specific. This experience is also bound by the immediate circumstances of its location in time and space. Snapshots of Islam as it is lived today would reveal a diversity of lived experiences which are all different, yet existing simultaneously. Both Said (2002) and Noor (2002) point out the complexities and depth required to deal with Muslim themes.

There are a few examples of curriculums specifically designed for Muslim children, such as in the case of Madrasas in East Africa. A retired teacher initiated this educational model in 1986, through a loan from the Aga Khan Foundation. For twenty years now it is running successfully across many areas (www.akdn.org). This program has catered to early childhood education, ensuring “children’s sense of cultural and religious identity” (Munir & Nanji, 2002, p. 234) through a balanced curriculum, resulting in ‘reimagining’ Muslim childhood. The Madrasa curriculum constitutes all three spheres that influence the identity formation of Muslim children: Islam, the tradition of Swahili culture, and the broadly emergent values of the modern nation state of Kenya (Munir & Nanji, 2002, p.234). The Madrasa uses traditional spaces of learning, which helps preserve the religious and cultural identity of the Muslim children, thus safeguarding a purely secular approach. Innovative approaches to the curriculum are utilized in the program. As Munir and Nanji (2002) write:

Learning aids are developed out of local, low-cost materials such as sea-shells, seedpods, and coconuts. The curriculum includes Swahili stories and motifs from local culture as well as English, numeracy, and other interactive, child-centered forms of learning. Thus, the whole range of cosmopolitan learning – Muslim, local, and international – has found a place in the developing curriculum to inform the children’s sense of self and preparation for the changing environment in which they will have to compete and function. (Munir & Nanji, 2002, p. 234)
In the developmental context, the model promotes the view that cultural resources can be effectively used for educational, child, and community development.

Another community-based religious education program is the Primary Ta’lim Curriculum created by The Institute of Ismaili Studies (www.iis.ac.uk) for international Ismaili communities. This curriculum is available to the worldwide Ismaili children between the ages of three to twelve, and rests on the approaches of Islam as a faith, humanistic, and civilizational venture. It is available in nine languages and includes literary pieces\(^{19}\) as well. The Ta’lim program comes with complete curriculum resource packages for grades pre-nursery to grades six, and consists of textbooks, activity books, teacher’s and parent’s guide, as well as posters and charts.

There have been improvements in the educational spheres regarding availability, understanding, and usage of Muslim children’s literature through efforts by organizations such as such as the Council for Islamic Education (CIE) (Douglass & Dunn, 2001; Douglas & Shaikh, 2004; Ouselati, 2008). Amidst the general air of racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia, there are also patterns, where a reductionist and generalizing approach towards Islam is not maintained (Abbas, 2005; Sarroub, 2005; Cristillo, 2008). Also, there are instances of Muslim representations as glorious and problem-free by some faith-centered, multiculturalist, and anti-racist educators, which is unrealistic and problematic (Sewall, 2003).

1.10 A Survey of Children’s Literature with Muslim Content

The present survey focuses on available educational resources for elementary classes that have Muslim content and can be used for Muslim children, as well as for teaching and learning in multicultural Canadian classrooms. It is by no means exhaustive, but a suggestive compilation of available curricular resources in English directed toward young Muslims for educational aims,

particularly in North America. These resources can also be used for creating general awareness and curricular engagement for teacher training and teacher development purposes. My particular focus is on the books that are literary and have a fictional element, which is also the primary approach of my research.

The present survey section is divided into two parts. The first is a general survey of the resources that have Islam and Muslims as subject matter. The next section is more directly related to my research, and discusses fictional literature available for classroom purposes, which can be recommended for Elementary Language Arts curriculum in Ontario with some adjustments from the guiding parameters outlined by the Ministry of Education.

1.10.1 General Curricular Resources

As discussed earlier, a general understanding of anything Muslim and related to Islam has a perception as being Arabic. Thus, I begin this survey with a mention of Arab literature for children.

Arab children’s literature is substantially rich, and can be divided into traditional literature, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, folktales, and so on. These are invaluable sources for teaching children about the Arab culture and tradition (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007). *Bibliographical Guide to Arab Children’s Books* in three volumes by al-Hajj (1990, 1995, & 1999) give insight into available children’s literature in the Arab world from the 1950s to 1999. This list consists of fictional and non-fictional genres including the Prophet’s biography, general biographies, religious fiction, scientific/science fiction, children’s literature of all genres, plays, historical fiction, poetry, and rediscoveries.

In general, the major themes of Arabic children’s literature are morality and didacticism (Mdallel, 2003), which are not so common in the children’s literature in the West. In the context of the present research, this segment is recommended for reconceptualization as an inclusive category consisting of a content of these resources as they relate to the populations residing in the Arab world, not just Muslims.

In *The World of Islam in Literature for Youth* Garcha and Russell (2006) presented an annotated bibliography of five hundred and thirty-six resources that can be used for K-12. These consist of various types and forms of resources available for young Muslims²¹, and the collection highlights resources that address Islam and Muslims. Its scope includes resources on topics such as art and architecture, biographies, readymade curricular resources to be used in lessons, digital electronic resources, fiction and folklore, general reference resources, geography, history and politics, interreligious studies, resources on Islamic faith and practice, major contributions by Muslims, Muslims in the West, Nation of Islam, understanding terrorism, Women in Islam, as well as internet resources. This bibliography covers North American, as well as international publications over a period of the last twenty-five years.

Representations of Muslim cultures, societies, and histories are available through glimpses of art, architecture and biographical resources. Materials related to art and architecture describe mosques (Khan, 2003; Macaulay, 2003) and buildings from contemporary, as well as early Islam (Leacroft & Leacroft, 1976) through a journey of the Muslim world (Laurence, 2002). Such works bring out the aesthetic and spiritual beauty that Islam offers, which is part of the daily lives of Muslims. There are several books on the life of Prophet Muhammad (Al-Gailani & Smith, 2002; Azzam & Gouverneur, 1985; Betty, 1975; Demi, 2003; Marston, 2001),

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²¹ All the educational resources mentioned in the dissertation as Muslim children’s literature and Muslim educational resources can be used for general classroom teaching, learning and teacher development purposes also.
the most important figure in Islam. Owing to His central position in Islam, a majority of the available literature is directly or indirectly centered on Him. Muslim literature and civilizational ventures are inspired by the Prophet; hence his biographies are important expressions of Muslim history and culture. Biographies of other prophets like Musa (Khan, 2001) are also available, which help situate the Muslim world of faith in the context of sister faiths of Judaism and Christianity.

Biographical accounts of exemplary historical figures from the time of Prophet Muhammad and after (Al-Basha, 1997; Azzam 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1998; Marcovitz, 2004; Stanley, 2002) are a good source of education for an insight into the development of Islam and Muslim civilizations in various parts of the world. Books on prominent, as well as controversial figures from the contemporary Muslim world, including Khomeini (Gordon, 1976), Muhammad Ali (Haskins, 2002), Iqbal Masih (Kuklin, 1998) and Osama bin Laden (Landau, 2002; Loehflem, 2003), are part of the biographical repertoire as well. Resources on Muslim perspectives on crusades (Agahie, 1998) and women in the history of Islam (Agahie, 1998) speak of the expanse of attempted themes in Muslim children’s writings. Teachings of the Quran (Ghazi & Ghazi, 1996; Hashim, 1990; Hussaini, 1990; Islam, 2000) and hadiths are yet further essential streams for Muslim children’s education. Many of these resources also come with audio cassettes and CDs.

There are several sources that can directly assist parents, teachers, and librarians in creating lesson plans and helping students engage with educational activities about religious education and culture for Muslim children. Teaching about Islam and Muslims in the public school classroom: Handbook for Educators (Author, 1993) is a rich source for educational resources, including activities, handouts, supplemental textbooks, and other relevant materials for teaching about Islam and Muslims. Similarly, Islam, a Pictorial Guide: A Resource Book for
Teachers (Lynch & Houghton, 1990) offers illustrations for teaching world religions. Some volumes such as Children's Book of Islam (Ahsan, 1979 & 1993) and My Book of Islam (Kay, 1988) also come with a workbook and have three different translations.

Curricular resources for understanding faith of Islam (Arquilevich, 1995, 2002; Emerick, 1998; Knight, 1998; Sarwar, 1997), its symbols (Chebel, 1999), its universal tenets (Fannoun, 1994), and its beliefs and cultures (Mantin & Mantin, 1993; Tames, 1996) are also available. Genres of manner guide (Abdulla, 1996; Al-Kaysi, 1986; Azami, 1990), narratives of Muslim celebrations (Al-Gailani & Smith, 2002), and some positive Islamic themes (Ameen, 2002) can lead to rich discussions in classrooms. There is a sizeable amount of literature available on Muslim festivals (Al-Gailani, & Smith, 2002; Kindersley, 1997) and holidays (Winchester, 1999), such as Eid (Kerven, 1997), and Ramadan (Salah & Lewis, 2000) that come with suggestions for relevant activities also. The Ramadan video (Schlessinger Video Productions, 1996) is a complementary resource for an engaging understanding of the Muslim holy month.

Hajj: One American’s Pilgrimage to Mecca, Friday, April 18, 1997 (Wolfe & Koppel, 1997) can be used as a primary source to teach children about Hajj, one of the pillars of Islam.

For elementary language arts and social studies, picture books are one of the most popular curricular sources. Picture books for young children from Kindergarten through first grade, such as Allah is Al-Khaliq and Allah is Ar-Rehman (Ameen, 2002) and Allah Gave Me Two Eyes to See (D’Oyen, 1998) provide a basic vocabulary for comprehension and articulation of large, as well as subtle concepts including the attributes of Allah. Some of the books for young children are also in the form of coloring books (Qazi, 1985), containing Islamic terms, and creations of Allah (Sardar, 1997). Here children can learn while engaged in coloring exercises.

In the contemporary age of techno-communication, audio visual aids are equally important for teaching, learning, and training purposes. They augment differentiated learning as
well. A substantial number of such aids are available that can be adapted to classroom purposes. These materials also cover a range of Islamic understanding, from history, biographies, understanding of principal tenets of faith, and other arenas. PBS documentaries such as *Empires of Faith* (2000); *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*\(^{22}\) (2002); *Adam’s World Series*\(^{23}\) (1991);\(^{24}\) *Arab Americans*, *Islam: Faith and Nations*\(^{25}\) (1983); *Living Islam: Foundations* (1993); Understanding Islam and the American Muslim Community: A visit to a Mosque in America (2002); and *Islam in America*\(^{26}\) (1992) are some excellent color videos that can be used for classroom purposes. *Colors of Islam*\(^{27}\) (2000) is a sound recording available through compact discs that contain children’s songs.

Video programs such as *The Koran: The Holy Book of Islam*\(^{28}\) (1995) traces the origins of the Quran and discusses five pillars of Islam. Videos dealing with Muslim culture and customs such as *Arabs, Muslims and Islam*\(^{29}\) (2002); *Hijab: An Act of Faith*\(^{30}\) (1998); *Islam with David McCullough*\(^{31}\) (1991); *Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way*\(^{32}\) (1997); and *Muslims* (2003) describe, in different ways what it means to be a Muslim in the twenty-first century. These works also suggest diverse interpretations of Islam. African American encounters with Islam are expressed through the birth of *Nation of Islam in America. This Far by Faith: African-American Spiritual Journeys* (2003) offers insight into leaders and beliefs of the Nation of Islam.

\(^{22}\) Alexandria, Virginia: Unity Productions Foundation (116 minutes)
\(^{23}\) Chicago: Sound Vision (14 videos of 30 minutes each)
\(^{24}\) Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania: Schlessinger Video Productions
\(^{25}\) United States: MPI Home Video
\(^{26}\) Boston: Christian Science Video (60 minutes)
\(^{27}\) Chicago: Sound Vision
\(^{28}\) Chicago: Britannica Films and Video (1995)
\(^{29}\) Auburn Hills, Michigan: Teacher’s Discovery (40 minutes)
\(^{30}\) Chicago: Sound Vision (38 minutes)
\(^{31}\) Washington, D.C.: PBS Smithsonian World
\(^{32}\) New York: Wellspring Media (26 minutes)
Reference materials such as *Historical Atlases of World Religions* (Farrington, 2002); *Pakistan* (Greenberger, 2003); *Iran* (Ramen, 2003) *Saudi Arabia* (Stair, 2003); *United Arab Emirates and Yemen* (Romano, 2004); *Children’s Encyclopaedias* (Beardwood, 2001; Khan, 2003); *A Basic Dictionary of Islam* (1992); and *Picture Dictionary* (Turhan & Hagin, 2003) are some of the important references recommended for schools and libraries. Educational resources on geography of the Muslim world (Rahman & Rahman, 1997) including *Egypt* (Cross, 1982); *Syria* (Beaton, 1988); *Jordan* (Foster, 1991); *Malaysia and Brunei* (Major, 1991); *Bahrain* (Fox & Fox, 1992); *Lebanon* (Foster, 1992); *Indonesia* (McNair, 1993); *Qatar* (Augustin & Augustin, 1997); *Iraq* (Foster, 1998); *Kuwait* (Foster, 1998); *Oman* (Foster, 1999); *United Arab Emirates* (Augustin, 2002); *Saudi Arabia* (Foster 1993; Heinrichs, 2002); *Afghanistan* (Englar, 2003; A. Heinrichs, 2004); *Iran* (Greenblatt, 2003); and *Turkey* (Orr, 2003) are necessary reference materials.

*Islam: Faith, Culture, and History* (Lunde, 2003) covers geographical, historical and cultural aspects of Islam through color pictures, maps and an index. Resources on slices of Muslim history are also available in the accounts of *The Rise of Islam* (Child, 1993; Powell, 1980); *Development of Islam* (Editors of Time-Life Books, 1998; Faqih, 1979; Swisher, 1999); *The Crusades* (Biel, 1995; Cartlidge, 2002; Jessop, 1990; Millard, 1990); *In the Medieval Times* (Corsbishley, 1992; Gregory, 1993; Mantin & Mantin, 1993), as well as *The Ottoman Empire* (Author, 2003).


1.10.2 Fictional Literary Resources

The following section outlines available fiction for Muslim children with Muslim content. It is divided into three sub-sections, where in I mention available fictional resources in
different genres. This is specifically done to highlight the difference between various fictional
genres in the available resources. Stories from the Quran and the life of prophets, traditional and
historical stories, as well as popular Muslim folklore and the fictional literature, are the three sub
sections through which I have briefly highlighted the subject matter. These demarcations are
specifically made because my focus in the present research is contemporary fiction as a
curriculum resource for elementary students.

I made mention of the print forms of the available fiction, but the popularity of electronic
media has influenced the format of available resources, chiefly, the fiction. There are several
books by well-acclaimed Muslim children’s writers such as the Canadian author Rukhsana Khan,
the British author Naima Roberts, who have their story books and novels for young Muslims, as
well as other writings available on Kindle and eBooks.

1.10.2.1 Stories from the Quran and the Life of Prophets

The Quran is the foundational source and an inspiration for the development of the
majority of Muslim literature. Quranic (Khan, 2002, 2008, 2009) and the prophetic stories are a
staple for Muslim children all over the world. Many such stories are popularly retold to convey
important messages (Al-Gailani & Smith, 2002; Aygun, 2002) related to Islam. These stories
also include those told by the Prophet himself like The King, the Boy and the Sorcerer (1997)
and those directly retold from the Quran, including Al-Khidr, the Green One: At the Place Where
the Two Seas Meet and the Hidden Treasure of Mercy of Allah (2000); Goodnight Stories from
the Lives of Sahabah (2013); Goodnight Stories from the Life of the Prophet Muhammad (2006);
My First Quran Storybook (2014); My Quran Friends Storybook (2006); Just for Children
Quran Stories (2005); and More Quran Stories for Children (2004). Stories from Sirah (1988-
1999) booklets contain stories from the life of Prophet Muhammad and His time. Stories of the
Great Prophets (Ibrahim & Musa, 1992) gives perspectives on different religions and commonalities between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

1.10.2.2 Traditional, Historical Stories and Popular Folklore

The worldwide popularity of The Thousand and One Nights as literature representing Muslims is unprecedented. This single most popular work is widely recognized, used, translated, and interpreted variously as work of entertainment, as well as education. Also known as Arabian Nights (Payne, 1901), they have been all time favorite stories from the Muslim world. Its popularity from the classical literary sources to those of Disney versions has been unmatched. The stories from this collection are re-written and retold with several modulations even today. For instance, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Manning, 2011) is retold with interesting dialogues, and is part of the Arabian Nights series of Stone Arch Reader. Different retellings of these stories in various historical periods all over the world have not only lulled and amazed the readers, but have continuously been a repertoire of Muslim cultures, societies, and civilizations. Arabian Nights: Their Best-Known Tales (1909), Tales from the Arabian Nights (1985); Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Casper, 1996; McVitty, 1989); The Shadow Spinner (1999); and Wishing Moon (2004) are some interesting examples available in this category. There are problems too within the perception and fame of The Arabian Nights. Hayden (1992, p. 20) offers that there is a general agreement scholars that the core of the collection of nearly two hundred tales known as The Thousand and One Nights were of Indo-Persian origin. However, these stories reflect the life and attitudes of medieval Arabs and reinforce the colorful and exotic image of the culture. Hayden maintains that these magical tales deserve to be as well-known as Grimm’s Fairy Tales but they should be balanced with works that portray the modern Arab experience, which may be difficult to find. Hayden is making an important observation about the popular stories like The Arabain Nights that perpetuate stereo-types and fuel medieval values, as well as images.
Interestingly, equally admired folklore of the famous character Nasiruddin Hoja is not as popular as the Arabian Nights, but is available as children’s literature in titles like *Nearly Nonsense: Hoja Tales from Turkey* (Singh, 2011). Stories such as *The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story* (1999); *Cinderella – An Islamic Tale* (2010); and *Snow White: An Islamic Tale* (2013) are drawn from the fairy tale genre retold with Muslim touches. Just like *Arabian Nights*, there are several classical Muslim annals that contain stories written and rewritten with different interpretations in various periods. *The Island of Animals: Adapted from Arabic Fable* (1994) is one such illustration. *Arab Folk Tales* (Bushnaq, 1987) and translations of folklores are made available through the prolific author-translator David Johnson-Davies (1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997, 2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d).

Stories from Muslim history, of different historical figures (Khan, 2002, 2003) covering wide geographical expanses of Muslim civilizations are quite widespread as well. These include stories adapted from the writings of the great Persian poet Farid Al-Din Attar (Attar & Abdus Salam, 2000), Jalaluddin Rumi (Nadimi, 2007; Shah, 2003), various Sufi traditions (Shah, 1998), tales of Muslim Princes (Baker, 1977), slices of inspiring folklores (DePaola, 1993; Domm, 2000; El-Magazy, 2000), prominent historical Muslim figures (Grougan, 1983), and scholars from the golden age of Islam such as Thumama ibn Uthal, Umar, Al-Tufayl Bin’ Amr (Murad, 1983, 1984, 1985), Ishaq bin Hunayn (Parry Heide & Heide Gilliland, 1999) and stories from folktales of the land like *Forty Fortunes: A Tale of Iran* (1999). *Mythical Stories from Seven World Religions* (McFarlane, 1996) lend an understanding that there are many paths to truths.

### 1.10.3 Fictional Literature

This section of literature review enumerates fictional works directly pertaining to my subject of research, such as novels, short stories, children’s stories, picture books, and famous Muslim folklores retold within the contemporary context. Rhymes and poems for Muslim
children (Ghandchi, 1990; Khan & Gallinger, 2002; Kishta, 1984; McDermott, 1981; Nye, 1998) are also quite important literary, educational resources. Most of them come with colorful illustrations.

Muslim children’s literature with Muslim characters and cultures is generally woven around the basic tenets of Islam (Ghazi & Ghazi, 1992). It teaches universal messages, and values of patience, compassion, love, sacrifice, charity, kindness (Khurram, 1982; Rae Norridge 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2007a, 2007b), understanding, respect for everyone (El-Magazy, 1999) and tolerance. Any student in the classroom can relate to these cultural, ethical, and moral values. Some of these stories can be acted out in the classrooms as well. There are also stories that render understanding of Islam (Khan & Gallinger, 2002), talk about Muslim history and heroes (Khattab, 1996), describe Muslim festivals (Merchant, 2001), narrate tensions of settling down in the West (Wolf, 2003) and the struggle to preserve their identity and culture (Abdel Fatteh, 2005; Iqbal & Iqbal, 1976; Kyuchukov, 2004; Morris, 2003), as well as fictional narratives of Muslim culture (Hutchinson, 1995).

There are some touching stories about human life and relationship that transcend all the boundaries of religion, politics, history, and geography, such as Grandfather’s Orchard (Ghazi 1993); The Hundredth Name (Oppenheim, 1995); A Day in the Life of a Muslim Child (Mujahid, 1997); A Gift of Friendship (Intiyaz, 1997); I Want to Talk to God (Z’eghidour, 1997); Maariyah’s Day (Kibria, 2000); Samir and Yonatan (Carmi & Lotan, 2000); A Boy from Makkah (Yamani, 2002); A Stone in my Hand (Clinton, 2002); Storia di Iqbal (D’Adamo, 2004); and The Flame Tree (Lewis, 2004) to name a few. These also offer insight into Muslim ways of life and cultural value systems attached to their beliefs and practices. There are experiences of Muslim children vis-à-vis tensions of identity in fiction as well. Dinner Time (Ghazi, 1992); Jamal’s Prayer Rug (Fannoun, 1993); I am Muslim (Chalfonte, 1996), Nadia’s
Hands (English, 1999), I am a Muslim (Aggarwal, 2001), My Name was Hussein (Kyuchukov, 2004) are some such stories. Concerted efforts have also been made to create Muslim stories for classroom purposes in the USA, like The Children’s Stories Project (1995), which is a collection of thirty-six illustrated short stories grouped by reading level for grades 1-6. It contains stories of a Muslim family living in a small American town.

Stories of Ramadan (El-Moslimany, 1994; Ghazi, 1996; Hoyt-Goldsmith, 2002; Mathews, 1996; Zucker, 2004) and Eid (Akhtar, 2000; Gilani-Williams 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 20006d, 2010; Hughes, 2003; Jones-Bey, 1996; Khan, 2005; Zucker, 2004) play a very important role in Muslim children’s literature. They form the popular repertoire of holiday literature for Muslim children. They also support the universal identity of Muslim children, all of whom, no matter what historical, geographical, political, or cultural background, associate with festivities of Eids. There is also fiction from different Muslim countries depicting characters and a milieu of these countries. Muslim cultures and societies reflected in these works offer educational opportunities into cultures of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Israel, Palestine, Morocco, the Arabic world, and others. Books such as Nadia the Willful (Alexander, 1983); Abdul (Wells, 1986); The Persian Cinderella (Climo, 2001); Camel Bells (Carlsson, 2002); Persepolis (Satrapi, 2003); The Carpet Boy’s Gift (Shea, 2003); What’s the Matter, Habibi? (Lewin, 2004); Salaam: A Muslim American Boy’s Story (Brown, 2006); One Green Apple (Bunting, 2006); My Father’s Shop (Ichikawa, 2006); A Little Piece of Ground (Laird & Nimr, 2006); Broken Moon (Antineau, 2007); Ziba Came on a Boat (Lofthouse, 2007); Rickshaw Girl (Perkins, 2007); The Complete Persepolis (Satrapi, 2007); Four Feet Two Sandals (Williams, Mohammad & Chayka, 2007); Camel Rider (Mason, 2007); Beneath My Mother’s Feet (Qamar, 2008); and Where I Belong (Cross, 2011) are rich expressions of Muslim experiences. Every fictional piece offers a peek into represented Muslim cultures and
civilizations through the subject matter. Some fictional videos are also available as audio-visual aids for classroom purposes. *Muslim Scouts Adventures*[^33] (1997) is a color video about a Muslim scout group traveling to different countries, solving mysteries, and learning about Islamic history and cultures on their way.

### 1.11 Contemporary Writers of Muslim Children’s Literature

Although Muslim children’s literature has a little presence in Ontario curriculum resources, there are several writers worldwide who are currently venturing into the field. Some of the well-acclaimed contemporary authors of Muslim children’s writing in North America[^34], both Muslim and non-Muslim, are Canadian authors such as Deborah Ellis, Rukhsana Khan, Ludmila Zeman, and Michelle Khan. Naomi Shihab Nye, Suzanne Fisher Staples, Asma Mobinuddin, Abidullah Ghazi, and Judith Heide Gilliland are some of the active writers of Muslim children’s literature in the US.

In addition to many writers writing for Muslim children in North America, there are several writers in the UK, who have won accolades for Muslim children’s writing. Notable among them is Naima Roberts, a Muslim convert female author and editor of a women’s magazine. Islamic Foundation in Leicester, England is also very supportive of writing for Muslim children.

The works of the authors briefly described here lend insight into the subject matter, reach, recognition, and general acceptance of Muslim Children’s literature written in English in North America and Europe. Notably, most of the writers venturing into Muslim children’s writing are women.

[^33]: Herndon, Virginia: Astrolabe Pictures (78 minutes)

[^34]: Since there are limited Canadian writers of Muslim Children’s Literature, I have extended the list to include the few American authors also. Biographical details in Appendix D.
1.12 Conclusion

Although the majority of Muslim children’s literature produced in English in the West is limited in number as well as variety and depth of content, there are several contemporary authors who have ventured into the field, enriching vistas of Muslim children’s literature. These materials are gradually gaining momentum in educational discourses, as more and more publishers and librarians see the importance of such educational resources. With cross-border business linking of many of the prominent publishing houses, the availability and reach of such books are gaining momentum also. Also, international schools all over the world, with a variety of popular Western curriculums, are also working as a catalyst in understanding, producing, and dissemination of Muslim children’s literature.
Chapter 3
Theories, Concepts, Methodology and Approaches

Cultural products should be taken as rhetorical artifices and not as depositories of data from which a factual truth may be construed.
José Rabasa (1993, p.9)

1.13 Introduction

The present research on Muslim representations in curriculum and beyond is a qualitative case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) that describes the world of human experiences (Myers, 2000) with the specificity of Muslim lives. It is framed through qualitative method of critical content analysis (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017; Raina, 2009) that explores textual data. This textual data consists of analysis of the curriculum recommendations through the Trillium List, the interviews with the authors and select literary works. My own Muslim subjectivities run simultaneously in the study such that generalizability of the findings becomes negligible, particularly, because of the uniqueness of cultural contexts of the Muslim subject and because of the small sample size of both the interviewees, as well as texts of Muslim children’s literature. To offset this limitation, of qualitative research, an in-depth understanding of the theme of Muslim representations is attempted as a marker of contribution to the broader framework of social life. The engagement with Ontario curriculum documents, conversations with the various authors and an analysis of literary works for elementary classes offer ways to understand Muslim cultures and contexts.

This chapter describes various theories, concepts, approaches and methods used to examine the subject of Muslim representations in children’s literature. It is divided into two sections. Section one defines theoretical grounds and conceptual tools used to arrive at the required understanding of the subject. These are clustered under Critical Appreciative Inquiry.
(Appendix F), which serves as conceptual map (Grant & Osanloo, 2014) and an approach to find positive spaces for robust curriculum and teacher education. The second section describes the qualitative case study methods of critical content analysis and the process of interviewing the authors. These theories, concepts, approaches, and methods put together offer a foundational understanding of curricular strands explored in the research. They form a complex web of intertwined and mutually overlapping theoretical, as well as conceptual threads applicable to the study.

1.14 Section One: Frameworks of Study

1.14.1 Naming the Frameworks

The study of Muslim Children’s literature and its need as a curriculum resource is informed by several theories that indicate the multilayered nuances that the subject holds. These layers are unfolded through the frames of Postcolonialism (Young, 2003), Multiculturalism and Orientalism (Said, 2003).

Within Multiculturalism (Banks & Banks, 2004; Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Geneva, 2004; Naseem 2011; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), I cluster Critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1983 & 2002; Gutierrez, 2005/6; Kincheloe, 2004; Leonardo, 2002; McLaren & Leonard, 1993), and Anti-Racism (Ng, 1993; Sleeter, 1998). This clustering is done per theorization of Multiculturalism by Sonia Nieto (Gaedke, & Shaughnessy, 2002; Nieto, 2000). Nieto explains that Multicultural literature in the United States emerged out of racialization and marginalization of African Americans. Later this literature also included class, ethnic and linguistic minorities. Similarly, critical pedagogy is situated within Multicultural education as it values diversity, encourages critical thinking, as well as invites students to take risks, to be curious and questioning.
Together with Reconceptualist Curriculum perspective (Grumet, 1989) these constructs are clustered from the historical to the most specific and work together to unpack the multi-level complexities surrounding the theme of Muslim Children’s literature. Reconceptualist curriculum serves as the backdrop to these constructs. It is what emerges as teachers engage with these layers of inquiry. It is what brings these theories together.

These theoretical frames provide tools for looking at how Muslim communities are represented and rendered invisible. Orientalism and post colonialism as theoretical concepts offer insight into the historical and cultural roots of what is now widely known as ‘Islamophobia’ (Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Stonebanks, 2010). While Critical pedagogy and anti-racism within critical multiculturalism and reconceptualist perspective furnishes thinking tools for considering teaching practices and priorities vis-à-vis Muslim representations. They also guide the choice of curriculum and pedagogy for teaching at the elementary level. I call this framework *Critical Appreciative Inquiry* (Appendix F) as together these theories and concepts indicate the promises and prospects contained in discussing little Muslim representations as a means of promoting inclusive curriculum and informed teacher development practices.

### 1.14.2 Critical Appreciative Inquiry

This framework is rooted in empowered perception of appreciative inquiry (Coghlan, Preskill & Catsambas, 2003; Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008) that leads to a powerful engagement with the subject rather than leaving it as a punitive and reductionist analysis. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the process of search for the best in people, organization and their environments. It vouchsafes a non-deficit paradigm of viewing development and change.

AI was constructed as a research method and an organization development intervention by David Cooperrider for his doctoral research (Bushe, 2012; Cooperrider, 1986). It gradually gained fame such that in 1998, newsletter *AI Practitioner: The International Journal of*
Appreciative Inquiry evolved. Many books, papers, and training courses also developed for an enhanced application of the approach (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000; Elliott, 1999; Hammond, 1996). Since 1980s, when it first emerged as a way of thinking and approaching organization development, it is used in a variety of contexts and situations such as evaluation, development and research to ignite change (Cooperrider & Serkerka, 2003). Various studies indicate its great potential to create impact. It is often considered as an underused method (MacCoy, 2014).

Appreciative Inquiry uses methods of appreciative inquiry questions, reframing and generative features. Through these methods AI looks for powerful solutions that augment success, values and dreams (Moore, 2008). The inquiry questions are used to evoke positive images and reframing looks at things another way (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). It has the capacity to generate new understandings of problems. The generative capacity of appreciative inquiry is based on assumptions that conversations about strengths themselves are transformational. Such a view generates new understandings of problems (Bushe, 2001). AI is criticized for its focus on positivity and of presenting an unrealistic view at times completely ignoring the negative experience. Proponents of AI express that it is erroneous to think it only focuses on positive. They maintain that AI focuses on positive more.

Critical Appreciative Inquiry is a holistic framework that focuses on the potential of availability of Muslim children's literature in the Canadian context to work toward further strengthening of the understanding and engagement with the same. Appreciative Inquiry recognizes that human systems are constructions of the imagination and are, therefore, capable of change at the speed of imagination. Once organization members shift their perspective, they can begin to invent their most desired future (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011, pp. xxxi-xxxii). Post colonialism, Multiculturalism, Orientalism and Reconceptualist perspective overlap to bring out
certain broad, as well as subtle nuances related to Muslim representations, which I will explain below one by one.

I use the critical appreciative inquiry framework to disclose the layers of injustice inherent in Muslim subject as experienced by me as a Muslim minority woman. It is an attempt, in a positive spirit, to unfold various angles of injustice as created around minority and people of color, particularly, women. In this way the framework is an iconoclastic mosaic that is critically constructed to enrich some of the existing educational processes. The framework builds on recommendations and a way forward. This approach is a process of restoring justice through enriched pluralist Muslim representations. Although ideas and insights from critical appreciative inquiry are used all over the place there are certain strands that are particularly guided by specific theories and concepts. Post – Colonialism and Orientalism as theoretical concepts offer insight into the historical and cultural roots of what is now widely known as ‘Islamophobia’ (Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Stonebanks, 2010). These theoretical frames provide tools for looking at how Muslim communities are represented and rendered invisible. While p critical multiculturalism and reconceptualist perspective furnishes thinking tools for considering teaching practices and priorities vis-à-vis Muslim representations. They also guide the choice of curriculum and pedagogy for teaching at the elementary level.

Critical appreciative inquiry framework directs my research’s three main signposts (Appendix G) that explore Muslim representations each using several threads from each of the guiding theories and concepts. Examining The Trillium List (Chapter Four - Muslim Representations 1) links different angles of post colonialism, orientalism, and racism to show that the State Curriculum recommendation has negligible representations of Muslim children. The Authors’ voices (Chapter Five – Muslim Representations 2) continue in the same vein to bring forth first hand observations related to the creation of Muslim representations. These
voices once again affirm orientalist, colonial, racist and anti-multicultural forces that are affecting Muslim representations in whatever little form they are available. The Muslim children literature writers’ voices are voices of engagement and opposition to these forces.

Finally, the last segment depicting the third dimension of Muslim Representations (Chapter Six) through an analysis of contemporary and popular Muslim children’s literature using critical appreciative inquiry shows largely one dimensional Muslim portrayals. Muslim children are underrepresented, misrepresented, racialized, as well as stereotyped. These representations fall short of rich pluralist reality of the Muslim world. This framework attempts to restore justice through a call for inclusion of pluralist Muslim representations within Muslim children’s literature.

Orientalism (Said, 2003) and postcolonial theory run simultaneously throughout Muslim content as historical offshoots of oriental and colonial legacy. Critical pedagogy questions the injustices of a lack of Muslim representations or understandings within teaching resources. Multiculturalism and anti-racist paradigms allow for Muslim Children’s literature as curriculum resources. Additionally, a multicultural and anti-racist paradigm facilitates teacher development in order to bring Muslim children from the margins to the main classroom floors. Critical unpacking of under and misrepresentations of Muslims through questions of race, gender, and diversity is attempted through critical deconstruction. The reconceptualist framework supports the idea of developing Muslim content as a movement away from the margins. This framework guides my recommendation for curriculum and teacher development. Thus, the critical appreciative framework not only explains the gaps but, also a solution.

The following is a brief overview of each of the theories and concepts as I have understood them for the purpose of their application to my research:
1.14.3 Post-Colonialism

Postcolonialism or Postcolonial studies is a study of dominance of Western powers of the Eastern world through colonial legacy of imperialism. It denotes resistance to such legacy of difference. Young writes, “Postcolonialism names a politics and philosophy of activism that contests that disparity, and so continues in a new way the anti-colonial struggles of the past” (2003, p. 4). This disparity also opposes the dominance of male perspectives. It engages with a conceptual redefining of perspectives of knowledge and needs from outside the West, thus, exposing the politics of exploitation and poverty that much of the non-western world is condemned to live in.

Postcolonial framework makes effort to shift the dominance of white power through continued and informed conversations. The (mis)representations, control and silence of the colonized peoples is recognized through Postcolonial discourse. Amidst the existing reality of inequality between the West and the East Young (2003), argues, “…it claims the right of all people on earth to the same material and cultural well-being” (Young, 2003, p. 2). In the contemporary complex world of large scale mobility, the consequences of these inequalities are compounded by the immigration of the eastern peoples to the west resulting in obliteration of a distinct boundary between them. The amalgamation of cultures and attitudes in such a situation adds yet another layer of complexity to the situation.

Postcolonial understanding attempts to bring to the fore the subjugation and suppression of indigenous cultures, economy and voices that are always positioned outside the mainstream through continued neo-colonial forces. In this way it creates empathy for Asian, African and Latin American peoples that form colonized groups. Postcolonial theory systematically studies and opposes forces of power and authority in various forms perpetuated by the imperialism that pronounces everything as subordinate to Europe (Said, 1978). In this opposition it
simultaneously negotiates “…indigenous local and hybrid processes of self-determination to defy, erode and…supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006, p. 3). It includes the ambiguity and complexities of various cultural experiences of migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses that it tries to represent through influencing of master discourses of various disciplines of study. This discipline extends to history, anthropology and cultural studies in order to record the nature and practice of colonial rule that was perceived as "the extension of civilization" (Renan, 1967) signifying self-proclaimed racial and cultural superiority of the colonial rulers to take on the intellectual and moral reformation of people of color.

Postcolonialism is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept representing time immediately after independence (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996). As an epistemology it addresses the politics of knowledge and cultural identity to expose the binaries created by the western world to indicate the non-westerners as ‘others’. It denotes a systematic process of dehumanization of colonized people through physical and mental violence, as well as inculcating servility amongst the colonized people (Fanon, 1963).

Postcolonialism is a historical phenomenon having large scale aftermaths in the form of discrimination at several levels, which raise questions of ideology and representations, particularly, in literature. A literary text can be understood as a site of cultural control and a way of fixing the Other (JanMohamed, 1983; Lamming, 1960). Therefore, literature an also be understood as an instrument of control of imagination, as well as aspirations of the colonized people (Bhabha, 1985a; Said, 1978). The book is seen to have a greater control than the lived experiences of the people themselves. Some of the proponents of postcolonial theory are Fantz Fanon (1963), Homi Bhabha (1983a, 1983b, 1984a), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988; 1988b). Postcolonial theory has been critiqued for essentializing cultures, painting them as fixed,
as well as depicting the gap between East and the West as unbridgeable (Chibber, 2013). It appears to be an endorsement of orientalism rather than being an antidote to it.

Postcolonial studies is an academic discipline that questions and responds to the legacy of colonialism and imperialism in order to develop perspectives of reviewing and reinventing cultural narratives left over by the colonial powers. Though the western civilization has come a long way in creating powerful democracies and educational systems, there is still is large scale marginalization of non-white people in their absence from key areas like curriculum and teacher development. The unmasking of various unequal relations is one of the aims of the study of literary pieces done in the present research.

My study is an attempt to create empathy in the educational stakeholders about willful negligence and absence of Muslim children’s Literature. Dangers of essentialism, while explaining subaltern knowledges in oversimplification of subaltern voices such that it leads to stereotyped representations of different identities (Sharp, 2009) comes out quite distinctly in the discussion and analysis of Muslim representations in chapter five and six. Literature as an agency to develop postcolonial perspectives through teaching and learning is considered in the present research. The author voices and writings discussed here challenge the western cultural authority. As well as, prevalence of racism and Orientalism in education through curriculum studies and teacher development is also challenged. It invites stakeholders to create healthy spaces for Muslim children in education in order to bring them from the margins to the center in the classrooms, engaging in the process of decolonization.

1.14.4 Multiculturalism

The definition and perception of multiculturalism depends on the context. In general, it is an understanding of the human diversity. It maintains that several cultures co-existing simultaneously are strength rather than a means for strife. In the Western World Multiculturalism
is a political and social movement having its marks in education too as an important principle in the teaching and learning practices. It values different viewpoints emanating from: racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and class difference that exist in our society. Through the latter it upholds ideals of equity in schools, as well as educational processes. Students are lead towards knowledge of other cultures as one way of being tolerant and accepting of the difference. The chief proponents of Multiculturalism Bhabha (1994), Giroux (1994), Goldberg (1994), hooks (1994), Kincheloe (1997), Steinberg (1997), Carby (1982), Gilroy (2000), Banks & Banks (2004), Parekh (2006) and Hall (Dibb, Duran & Jaggi, 2009) are from the field of cultural studies and education faculties. Peter McLaren (1997) has categorized multiculturalism into conservative, liberal, left liberal and critical.

My research uses the matrix of critical or resistance multiculturalism influenced by postmodernism, which affirms that signs and significations, including racial ones are unstable and shifting: “Representations of race as well as class and gender are understood to be the result of larger social struggles over signs, meanings and institutional structures (Jacobs & Hai, 2002, p.176). It is concerned with the removal of barriers around existence of difference and is attuned to transnational and trans-ethnic identities, as well as those that have been discussed using the notion of hybridity (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002, p. 13). Critical multiculturalism helps engage with the difference without having to formalize them in a way that the ‘other’ becomes an image of the self that operates within our frame of intelligibility (Mohan, 1995). Botelho and Rudman (2009) theorize, critical multicultural analysis, which contributes to our understanding of what to read and how to read.

The task of critical multiculturalism is to confront social, cultural and economic relations of exploitation, while shedding new light on the construction of difference (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). It is a call to engage teachers to confront the dynamic, context-specific intersections of
race, culture, gender, and sexuality (Asher, 2007). This matrix can be used to test the common ways of attempting children's literature like resorting to didacticism or to romantic concepts of child "...neither of which had much to do with the realities of reading” (Hunt, 1990, p. 2).

Interestingly, while Muslim children’s literature broadly falls under multicultural umbrella there are contestations at both ends. This literature is not part of many of the multicultural booklists for children and the authors of this literature themselves view their writings sparingly as multicultural. For instance, Rina (Personal communication, August 21, 2014) and Nina (Personal communication, December 7, 2014), two of the Muslim authors that I interviewed maintain that their books do fall under Multicultural literature but they want to now move away from such a label to write Muslim stories. These nuances indicate there’s more to multicultural education than just changing the curriculum (Gaedke & Shaughnessy 2002).

Multiculturalism is critiqued on the basis of its soft tolerance towards different cultures, cultural relativism (Jacobs & Hai, 2002), as well as ignoring the institutional and economic-political parameters (Mohan, 1995; Yudice, 1995). The Muslim children’s literature authors interviewed for the present study also critiqued multiculturalism in Muslim children’s literature as a mere showcasing of diversity without depth and engagement.

1.14.4.1 Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2004) is an educational paradigm that questions the status and the power relations amongst various stakeholders. It aims at understanding and exposing the vested interest that these powers have in the field of education. It keeps the underpinning values and principles of education, such as: equity, social justice and agency. Critical pedagogy is often

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used to fight discrimination, based on racism, gender, class, and age bias. The dignity of human beings as well as the individual’s agency to combat oppressive powers is promoted and upheld through this framework, thus making human beings agents of change and negotiation rather than passive recipients of unjust policies and procedures. It encourages the understanding of ideologies in an empowering way as not be subjugated to them. The framework seeks to question aspects related to the perpetuation of the interest of the dominant power structures.

Critical pedagogy is grounded in a social and educational vision of justice and equality. It promotes the human capacity to achieve great heights and recognizes the role that culture, society and political structures play in shaping the human identity. Further, it acknowledges the power discourse in western education such that the difference in association with knowledge of both the students and teachers is understood. Critical pedagogy also considers the effect of schooling structures on students from marginalized groups and takes into account organizational structures around schools. It understands education to be inherently political (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 8). Critical Pedagogy acknowledges that the repertoire of teaching and learning are premised on a political vision enacted by teachers through their pedagogical choices; including the use of critical pedagogy, because, as Kincheloe says, “to refuse to name the forces that produce human suffering and exploitation is to take a position that supports oppression and powers that perpetuate it” (2004, p. 11).

Further, Critical pedagogy challenges the authoritarian position of published texts, wherein the people, places, and experiences described in a book hold more power than the actuality represented by such books (Said, 2003). It recognizes that “knowledge production and curriculum development are always and forever historically embedded and culturally inscribed processes” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 98). In addition, it leads to an awareness of the existence of distorted knowledge within the curriculum sources created by specific groups to achieve
particular purposes bringing out the perspective of social construction of knowledge (Burr, 1995). Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of ‘cultural capital’ that enables the members of the dominant culture ways of knowing, acting and being that can be “cashed in” in order to get ahead in the lived world (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 100) can also be situated within the broader nuances of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy is dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 11) through an engagement with the lived experiences of everyday life. It brings to the fore suffering of people, who are discriminated against. It also recognizes the hegemonic and ideological forces that are at the root of these sufferings. The proponents of critical pedagogy, for example; Paulo Freire and Herbert Marcuse propose that human suffering is created and, therefore, can be eradicated. Critical pedagogy prevents students from being hurt (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 13) and safeguards their interests. It also helps students connect ‘the word and the world’ such that all knowledge is brought to the center to be engaged with for joy of creation and recreation rather than being just the knowledge propounded by the dominant powers (Horton & Freire, 1990). In this way critical pedagogy opposes empire building and neo-colonial forces.

Freire’s problem posing concept makes a case for including the issues of teachers and children in the curriculum that promotes teachers as researchers and analytical thinkers. In this way critical pedagogy raises teachers from passive recipients of orders in the school system to that of active research agents. It aims at bringing social change and cultivating the intellect (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 21) through teacher and student empowerment. The recognition of Eurocentric, patriarchal, elitist and positivist ways of seeing is questioned, which leads to developing multiple perspectives, as well as an understanding of the context. The latter is critical in the present electronically connected world, where students are constantly bombarded with every kind of knowledge.
The framework of critical pedagogy is situated within discourse analysis (Gee, 2005).

### 1.14.4.2 Anti-Racism

Racisms operate in the form of class and gender related subordination and exclusion. Lloyd explains, “They entail subject positions, inter subjectivities, discourses, practices and outcomes” (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002, p. 18). Racism in the present research is understood as a universal phenomenon evident throughout the world in social structures and institutions. Recognizing racism is part of critical pedagogy in classrooms in particular, and in teaching and learning practices, in general. The theoretical debates related to citizenship, multiculturalism, hybridity, diaspora and social movements are also connected with anti-racism (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002). Racism is closely linked with identity politics, which can be both affirmative as well as exclusivist (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). Anti-racism is used in the present research to understand how power is socially distributed to include complexities arising out of class and gender discrimination. The ultimate aim of anti-racism is to “develop and maintain … a truly multicultural society” (Solomos & Back, 1996, p. 113).

Muslim teachers can be an authentic source of teaching race offering personal consciousness of individual oppressions and lived experiences (Fuss, 1989, p.116). At the same time minority teachers may not feel comfortable teaching race as they may feel ghettoized (Jacobs & Hai, 2002, p. 182). This situation is further complicated by the fact that authenticity stems from one’s own experience and may not be representative of others’ experience, excepting the collective experience of the community and groups. Miles (1989) vouchsafes that teaching of ‘race’ must contain a historical dimension, which is generally neglected by cultural studies oriented courses.
As a critical pedagogue I understand that both anti-racism and multiculturalism are contested (Jacobs & Hai, 2002).

1.14.5 Orientalism

In the aftermath of 9/11 attacks in New York in 2001 and very recent international terrorist attacks the word 'Muslim' has gained more suspicion, disgust and confusion in the minds of people around the world. Anything related to Islam generally evokes derogatory feelings as witnessed through media reports. Such a response is not a decade or so old. It is rooted in centuries old historical and academic tradition of orientalism. Said, 2003 writes:

Orientalism…is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness… (Said, 2003, p. 4-5)

This systematic theory about the East and Muslims has created racial and prejudicial distance with Muslims making their balanced portrayal difficult.

The analysis of Muslim Children’s literature under discussion in the present research uses the framework of anti-orientalism. This framework recognizes orientalist attitude, a paradigm operational for more than two centuries now. This paradigm views the East in general and Islam in particular as the 'other' in need of reform and control. Such a framework has guided the European scholars of pre and post Napoleon era and their legacy has continued into modernity, only the imperialist scene has shifted from Britain and France to America.

The orientalist attitude views the people, culture, history, economy and politics of the Middle East and Asia with sweeping general strokes of 'white supremacy' lenses. Since Islam was at the center of European activities from its birth this perspective is now extended to Muslims in general, particularly after 9/11. This is argued by Said, who says,
There has been so massive and calculatedly aggressive an attack on the contemporary societies of the Arab and Muslim for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women's rights that we simply forget that such notions as modernity, enlightenment and democracy are by no means simple and agreed-upon concepts that one either does or does not find, like Easter eggs in the living-room. (Said, 2003, p. xix)

Such sweeping generalizations about Muslim cultures and societies depict ignorance that needs rectification through educational endeavors.

According to Said (2003), Orientalist tendencies support the idea of imperialism even much after the colonial powers receded from the colonies. In this context anti-orientalism intends to encourage a discourse based on humanistic critique and thoughtful analysis as an antidote to ‘short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate’ (p. xxii – xxiii).

1.14.6 Reconceptualist Curriculum Perspective

The Reconceptualist curriculum paradigm is one of the two major perspectives in the curriculum field (Reid, 1998), the other being the dominant one. The debate between the dominant and reconceptualist perspective in curriculum lies within the objectives that curriculum is attempting to achieve. The former focuses on European notions of what it means to be an educated person and follows scientific empiricist approach that lays emphasis on acquisition of knowledge, skills, objectives, testing, evaluation and the like. The reconceptualist thinking believes, Reid says, “Thorough going empiricism in curriculum making destroys the idea of education. Education is about people: their histories, their destinies, their identities, their possibilities” (Reid, 1998, p. 289).

While both the perspectives on curriculum have merits, the reconceptualist curriculum paradigm gives freedom to examine as well as expand the theory, practice and nuances related to curriculum to its fullest empowering capacity. In addition, reconceptualist curriculum theory is
important for intellectual preparedness of the teachers and is also in sync with the reconceptualist teacher education that opposes the ‘deskilling’ of teachers and ‘dumbing’ down of texts, curriculum and children (Grumet, 1989). It offers a reflective pause into the mechanized practices of teaching, learning and teacher education to “…to restore the contemplative moment” (Grumet, 1989, p. 13-14). It draws our attention to different ways knowledge is understood and practiced through human relationships. Grumet (1989) maintains: “What we know becomes incorporated in our identities. It is connected to what we can do and who we are, to what, at any given moment in our lives, we care about” (p. 14-15). The reconceptualist understanding of curriculum and teacher education encourages ownership; as well as, inclusion of personal knowledge, thinking, reflection and expressions. The knowledge specific to biological and cultural context is considered important in such an understanding.

In reconceptualist curriculum, teaching is understood not only as a mastery over content and method but also as an aesthetic act, each one unique and full of curious participation, interpretation, variation and wonder that routine classroom situation has to offer (Grumet, 1989, p. 16). Similarly, the teacher is not a conservator, custodian or dispenser of knowledge. The reconceptualist concept of curriculum elevates the study of education to honor the human dimension and promotes ways of knowing such as analysis, comparison, critique, interpretation, resymbolisation, thus making teaching rich and multi-dimensional (Grumet, 1989, p. 16).

Finally, reconceptualist curriculum viewpoint offers space for inclusion of periphery and subliminal voices, as well as seemingly non-utilitarian components of education. In this way, while reconceptualist curriculum framework is critiqued for being individualistic it has the potential to offer a balance to the dominant curriculum approach. The reconceptualist ideal is also critiqued for its emphasis on individualism almost to the detriment of the collective ideals of education.
1.14.7 Application of Meta-narratives

Muslim children’s literature and Muslim representations touches several angles of theories and concepts described above. Since the themes deals with literature, aesthetic dynamics of literary pieces discussed here form an important cog-wheel. Along with this critical pedagogy is used to bring out depth of language used as a social tool to create identities. It also shatters some of the associated stereotypes and assumptions. Muslim identities are critiqued through anti-orientalist lens. Anti-orientalist perspective help unpack these knots. Too, anti-racism deconstructs race, class and minority biases in classroom teaching and learning situations. Multicultural framework facilitates understanding of diversity and lends a pluralist approach to teaching and learning processes. Combined together insights from all these theories and concepts, sometimes one at a time and occasionally all at once, influence the understanding of my subject of research and also assist me in finding viable responses for curriculum studies and teacher development.

1.15 Section Two: Methodology

The present qualitative case study uses critical content analysis and critical discourse analysis of available resources and field work consisting of interviews to find responses to my major research question: "How can Ontario curriculum be enriched with curriculum resources comprising of Muslim children's literature?"

The following subsets of the major research question are also explored through these methodological approaches:

1. What is the status of children’s literature representing Muslim cultures and societies in the available curriculum resources for children?
2. How are Muslim identities represented in these resources?
3. What do authors of children’s literature, as one of the stakeholders, think of the availability of such materials and projection of Muslim identities?
4. How are Muslims represented in the available curriculum resources that are potentially used in curriculum and teaching?

1.15.1 Data Collection Practices

The following section describes data collection practices that I followed for my research. The data resources that I have used for my research comprise of archives, library data on Muslims, available multicultural children’s literature, curriculum recommendations, as well as interviews and conversations with various stakeholders.

To answer my sub-question of obtaining an understanding of available resources related to children's Literature reflecting Muslim cultures and Societies I examined various electronic and print sources on Muslims. Archives of some institutions such as the Institute of Ismaili Studies (www.iis.ac.uk)\(^{36}\) and the Aga Khan Foundation (www.akdn.org)\(^{37}\) were explored. Within various library databases I searched for literature that represented Muslims. These included general curricular sources, fictional works and different electronic, as well as audio-video materials. Since my chief research focus is on contemporary fiction, I looked for these more consciously. This also helped me build the bibliography (Appendix A). From this list I then chose those fictional pieces that are readily available and have the potential to become classroom materials for Critical content and discourse analysis. As a former teacher of Toronto District School Board (TDSB), I was familiar with the Trillium List. Thus, it became an important data resource. I used the online version, as well as library copies to look for multicultural representations in Language recommendations for elementary grades of the Trillium List. Interviews with Muslim children’s literature authors was a major source of data to seek answer to my research questions.

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1.15.1.1 The Interviews

Interviews are tools for eliciting information on the given subject from the participants. The perceptions, feelings and viewpoints of the participants on a particular topic can be captured through this method (Turner, 2010). Feedback and voices from key stakeholders that have relevance to the topic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) are important to have a rounded insight into the problem understudy. I have used ‘standardized open-ended interviews’ (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Turner, 2010) for my research.

The preparation for the interviews with the writers of Muslim children’s literature included constructing effective research questions with a view to its implementation in the actual scenario (Creswell, 2003; 2007). The open-ended research questions (Appendix B) were asked to elicit maximum information regarding perspectives on Muslim Children’s’ literature. They were designed keeping in mind the following guidelines described by Carter McNamara, 2009:

- “wording should be open-ended (respondents should be able to choose their own terms when answering questions);
- Questions should be as neutral as possible (avoid wording that might influence answers, e.g., evocative, judgmental wording);
- Questions should be asked one at a time;
- Questions should be worded clearly (this includes knowing any terms particular to the program or the respondents’ culture);
- Be careful of asking "why" questions” (as quoted in Turner, 2010, p. 758).

These questions offered space for me to go deep into participants’ experiences and knowledge of the topic (McNamara, 2009).

Required prompts, follow-up questions and reconstructing questions (Creswell, 2007) to obtain optimal responses was also done as part of the process. I tried to be as open minded and non-judgmental as possible (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011).

The interview questions were provided to the participants beforehand and informed consent (Appendix C) was also taken from each one of them.
1.15.1.2 The Interview Process

My search for authors of Muslim children’s literature began through a study of Muslim children’s writers, who have substantial publications to their credit and are popular in the field. I looked for writers, who had won some awards and are recognized by various academic, civil society and governmental organizations. I initially focused on getting Canadian authors interviewed for my purpose but availability of such authors and their publications was not substantial. Moreover, not all were available for a conversation. Thus, I expanded my territory to include popular authors in North America and the United Kingdom. My sample includes both Muslim and non-Muslim authors of children’s literature.

The participants for the interviews were chosen using critical case sampling method such that qualified candidates were able to provide most credible information relevant to the research study questions openly and honestly (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). The chosen authors are important stakeholders in making curriculum decisions, implementing the curriculum, teacher development, as well as receiving the curriculum. The interviews were conducted in an environment, which the interviewees had accepted and consented to. The interviews were recorded and transcribed appropriately.

The interview processes were conducted differently with authors located in several geographical locations and different time zones. Technology played a big role in identifying and contacting the authors. It also helped me in conducting the interviews to collect the required data. All the interviews were recorded and scripts were duly shared, and approved by each of the authors. I also re-consulted a couple of authors for further clarification on some of the conversations, when I started writing Chapter Five. They were very supportive and forthcoming. After completing the thesis, I shared chapter five, which consists of interview data, with all the writers for their feedback and to gauge their comfort in my interpretation of data.
1.15.1.3 Approaching the Authors

At least fifteen authors of Muslim children’s literature were contacted both Muslim and non-Muslim, some directly through email contacts and information available on the web. A few of them were approached through their publishers and various web resources. I followed up with some of these publishers for a very long time to get access to the authors. In many of these attempts I was unsuccessful. The authors interviewed here are mostly the ones that I was able to contact personally. Three out of the five interviewed authors were approached directly through various web contacts. One of the author’s contact was made through the publishers. For the fifth one, in absence of any other contact clue, I wrote an email to the author’s thesis supervisor to get her details.

Five prominent contemporary authors of Muslim children’s literatures from North America and Britain were finally interviewed to gauge perspectives on Muslim children’s literature. All of them are women. For the purpose of confidentiality they have been given pseudo names of Rina, Nina, Dina, Fina and Aina. Four of them are Muslim and the fifth one is a white protestant Christian writer. All the Muslim writers mark their works and responded to my questions as ardent Muslim believers. The Christian author, although was not very explicit about faith perspectives in her writings, was certainly very clear about her protestant Christian identity. All of them were quite cooperative and forthcoming for the cause.

My journey with the authors and spending time with them through internet and in person was very fulfilling, as well as an enriching experience. Their passion and commitment humbled me. Their acknowledgment of my work and support thereof was quite touching, as well. As a woman I connected very well with all the authors and their special traits. A couple of them were very vivacious while others quite critical and intellectually sharp in bringing perspectives on
Muslim children’s writing. Interestingly, except one (Nina) all of them have some connection with Pakistan.

Since only one of the author, Rina lives in Toronto she is the only one that I met in person. Nina and Aina were interviewed on Skype, while Dina was interviewed over phone. Fina expressed that she is not comfortable talking on Skype. This interview therefore was a written one, wherein she responded to my questions in writing. During the transcription process, when I did not understand a particular aspect, I followed up with Fina. She was very kind to respond quickly. After her responses I edited the script and sent her with some minor questions. This way I was able to complete my data collection.

1.15.1.4 Asking Questions

All the interviewees were asked the same set of questions as recorded in the interview guide and approved in the ethics protocol. The sequencing of these for each of them was also almost the same. The questions posed to the authors were aimed at understanding their background; their understanding of a Muslim, Islam and Muslim child; their motivation to become a Muslim writer, as well as the motivations behind representing Muslim characters, cultures and societal contexts; their understanding of the significance of the nomenclature of “Muslim writing”; their experiences from the reception of their work and their observations on the understanding of criticality of Muslim children’s literature in teacher development, as well as curriculum resources. Most of the conversations generated around these points, only very rarely being tangential in the way of my relating and connecting personal experiences to some of the things they expressed.

A couple of authors were surprised by the question: “Why did you represent Muslims the way you did (What were your goals and objectives behind such representations?)?” They took a pause before responding even when I had sent the questions in advance. Another question that
made at least two authors reflect is: “Why did you become a Muslim author?” These are instances of these writers reflecting on the purposes of their writing.

All the conversations were interesting and engaging. I felt at times that the questions were repetitive and I indicated to the authors that there are overlaps as some of the aspects covered in the responses were automatically covered in the previous answers. For instance, the question related to their introduction also covered how they consider themselves as authors of Muslim children’s literature. In all such instances, I still posed the questions with the hope and in order for them to share more nuances on the said question. All these questions in every instance (except in one, where the author wrote the responses) generated some more discussion around the topic and brought more richness to it.

I also had the opportunity to ask clarifying questions and elaborations on certain aspects. Depending on the situation and author personality, such probes varied. Although, the interview process with all the authors went very smoothly, I still feel students like me should get some more training in interview skills as I think such opportunities are infrequent.

Most of the authors were happy to be part of the research and offered continuous support to this important cause in some way. Some of them said it’s an honor to be a part of the communication that is meant for children. As Nina said: “I feel it is a bit of privilege to be in the position that you get to be part of people, who are hoping for a better world, and the betterment of our people” (Nina, interview dated December 7, 2014). She feels it is a blessing for her if children read her books and get a sense of belonging or appreciation of their culture and identity.

My face to face interview with Rina was quite informal and I was able to converse with her on a lot of different things related to Muslim writing besides my interview questions. Each time I had an interview it brought new learning and perspectives to the fore. It also enriched my
lenses of looking at the subject. While talking to the authors I felt I had many more companions on the same road and the same journey.

1.15.1.5 The Authors

All the authors interviewed are recognized with various awards and have penned a range of literary genres from picture books, rhyming books, poems, rhymes, novels for young adults, as well as newspaper and academic articles. One of the authors is the editor of popular British magazine, who brings a lot of experience to the writing. All these authors bring in a variety of voices on Muslim representations in children’s literature as they are not only from different geographical locations and related challenges, but also from different cultural, as well as faith contexts. Most of them are Muslims either born or brought up in the West; therefore, they share Muslim experiences of their upbringing in the West. Two of them are full time writers, while the other three, besides writing, are also engaged in various full time professions such as teaching, medicine and media. Together these women represent a mix of authors – Muslims, non-Muslims, converted Muslims, Canadians, Americans, British, and having multicultural upbringing and experiences.

1.15.1.6 Analytical Practice

Grounded theory (Martin & Gynnild, 2012) was used to code and cluster the data into categories, themes and discourse models (Gee, 2011). These helped surface simplified story lines of Muslim communities. They also rendered visible some of the invisible, hidden and silent discourse models related to Muslim representations in the context of curriculum and teacher development specifically in Ontario, Canada. The theoretical frames of orientalism and post colonialism helped unmask some of the undercurrents of injustice.

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38 Biographical details with pseudonyms in Appendix E.
The data collected from interviews with five female authors of Muslim children’s literature was categorized and analyzed thematically by theoretical coding procedure (Dey, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and followed inductive approach that identifies “patterns, themes and categories of analysis” (Patton as cited by Bowen, 2005, p.217) emerging from the interviews. Coding and analyzing the data to make meaning of the collected information through consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that are common amongst the research participants (Kvale, 1996; 2007) was also part of the process. This data is envisaged to be ‘transferable’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) to a large extent as against generalizable.

Critical Content analysis and Critical Discourse analysis are also part of analytical practice. I apply them to analyze and make sense of the overall data sources that I use. The literary texts, in particular, are analyzed through these methods. Together, these two methods aim to make readers as agents of the texts rather than victims of the texts. They help in creating awareness around systems of meanings that operate within the text and connect them with larger themes, as well as research questions. My own knowledge as Muslim teacher, my background, my position, my experiences from the East and the West, and finally my situatedness as a Muslim minority woman play a critical role in this analytical practice.

1.15.1.7 Critical Content Analysis

A review of pertinent literature is conducted in the present thesis signifying forms and availability of Muslim children’s literature for curriculum studies and teacher development purposes. Offering illustrations of understanding and use of such materials in different teaching and learning contexts is the aim of this exercise. Next, a thorough investigation of the recommended Ontario curriculum resources under the umbrella of the Trillium List is done to investigate presence of Muslim children's literature. Lastly, select literary pieces are analyzed for triangulated understanding of Muslim representations. Critical Content analysis (Johnson, Mathis
& Short, 2017) is used to analyze all the above data. This method explores what the text is about through tools of critical discourse, postcolonialism, women’s studies, queer studies and childhood studies. My framework of Critical appreciative inquiry offers insight into value systems, paradigms, worldviews of authors, as well as works under study. Together these strands warrant a holistic engagement with expressions of Islam complicated by historical forces of colonialism, orientalism and globalization. They also delve deep into textual and visual elements of children’s literature.

The ‘critical’ in Critical Content analysis helps understand procedures for locating power in social practices by understanding, uncovering and transforming conditions of inequality (Johnson, Mathis & Short, 2017; Raina, 2009). Critical Content Analysis of children’s literature does not as much focus on the literary qualities of the text to see what authors have done in the text. Instead the text is considered from theoretical perspectives of socio-historical, gender, cultural or thematic stance. Critical content analysis covers sub-methods of discourse analysis, social constructivist analysis, rhetorical analysis and content analysis. Thus, a text can be studied from multiple angles using method of Critical Content analysis. For instance, Beach et al (2009) have analyzed *The Day of Ahmed’s Secret* (Gilliland & Lewis, 1990) through different theoretical lenses of post-coloniality and inquiry based interpretative reading. The postcolonial reading of the text brings out stereotypical and exotic images of the little boy, Ahmed. Such analysis help understand how space, as well as personal and cultural identities are negotiated. It also highlights how representations of others are distorted by dominant cultures.

1.15.1.8 Critical Discourse Analysis

Along with Critical Content analysis, I have used discourse analysis method to analyze various data sources. This tool dissects intertextuality within the texts to understand how meaning is created through different representations.
The tools of discourse analysis (Gee, 2011), to analyze meaning in the text directly relates to my research on Muslim representations. The identities building tool helps in understanding that through the language we use, we build different identities in different contexts. By enacting identities, we are also building others’ identities and building our identities further. A person enacts several identities at the same time; each of these identities influences the other. There is a core identity that each person has under the multiple overlaps of social and cultural identities. For example, I may see my core self as a human being created by God with a purpose under the multiple social layers of: a mother, teacher, and daughter (Gee, 2011, p.106).

Yet another tool of discourse analysis is the relationships building tool, which helps understand that the language we use helps us build and sustain relationships, which in turn is also connected with identity creation. It is also important to understand that creating identities and sustaining relationships are two different things. The politics building tool in discourse analysis within critical pedagogy indicates how society takes ‘social goods” as worth having, while the connections building tool helps realize how language we use helps connect or disconnect things, as well as makes them relevant or irrelevant to each other (Gee, 2011, p. 126).

1.16 To Conclude

The theories, concepts, methodology, and approaches outlined above complement the design of the present research. Whereby, the major question of ‘ways to enrich Ontario curriculum with resources comprising of Muslim children's literature’ is investigated through a combination of analysis of documents, literary texts, as well as interviews. The next three chapters offer application of these approaches as a way to respond to the research questions.
Chapter 4  
The Trillium List - Muslim Representations 1

“Linguistic and cultural diversity is an asset, not a deficit, for young children.”

- National Association for the Education of Young Children, Many Languages, Many Cultures: Respecting and Responding to Diversity, 2005, p.9

1.17 Introduction

Ontario’s public schools cater to approximately 1.4 million elementary students. The focus of Ontario education as outlined by the Ontario Government is, to build foundation in key areas that help unlock each student's potential with strong literacy and numeracy skills. The government's goal is to have 75 per cent of students achieving the provincial standard (equivalent to a ‘B’ letter grade) in reading, writing and mathematics.\(^39\)

To achieve these goals the Ministry of Education has created extensive policy and guideline documents. These documents are available on the Ministry of Education portal.\(^40\) Ontario Curriculum documents, guidelines and policy are available on Ontario Ministry of Education website too. All of these documents are available in print for free at designated outlets in Toronto per the need of educators. This site also contains Curriculum Documents on all elementary subjects and topics, descriptions of the curriculum expectations of each subject and every grade in Ontario public funded schools, implementation guidelines, as well as additional support materials. In addition, this corpus of information includes critical foundational information about the curriculum and how learning outcomes are connected to the Ministry of Education policies, programs, and priorities.

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For the purpose of examining Muslim representations in the approved available education resources I have chosen for my research the Trillium List recommendations for elementary language arts subjects. The Trillium List consists of the approved and official textbook recommendations from the government for schools in Ontario. Before attempting an examination of the Trillium recommendations, I have outlined a brief history and scope of the Trillium List in order to weave perspectives around this list and its connection with the topic of my research.

1.18 The Trillium List: Historical Perspectives

1.18.1 Circular 14

As stated on the Ministry of Education archives, since 1846 Ontario Ministry of Education has been following an authorized list of textbooks in schools called Circular 14. The idea of having an authorized list of textbook was first introduced by Educator Egerton Ryerson, who developed and oversaw the publication of a centrally mandated list that provided consistent Canadian content in school courses. This list also helped control the price of textbooks across the province. Ontario teachers chose textbooks for their classrooms from this approved list called Circular 14. This list was previously included in the Department of Education’s report to the Ontario legislature and later in Education Journal (Fraser, 1979).

The system of getting approved books published through the publishers was further strengthened and streamlined, when the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario created textbook review procedures in 1950. This newer system added significantly more books to the list, providing more freedom of choice to teachers and school boards.

Circular 14 collection is a unique primary source for understanding the historical trends in curriculum development in Ontario including some critical representations. For example: race, gender, French-English relations, representations of war and peace, notions of “official”
knowledge or histories, multiculturalism, indigenous representations, relationship of science to technology, trends of print culture, as well as publishing history in Canada. Circular 14’s historical education collection is available online and fully searchable at Canadian Government’s Publication portal and Canadian libraries. This collection contains resources from 1887 to 1996, which provides valuable insights into educational publishing and policy, as well as curriculum materials evaluation and development (Parvin, 1965).

Circular 14 was critiqued by teachers and school boards for being restrictive. Its prescribed process also influenced the Canadian publishing community. Complaints were raised against the outdated or biased pieces recommended in the list. Consequently, several research studies were commissioned. This lead to the following report: Race, Religion and Culture in Ontario School Materials: Suggestions for Authors and Publishers (1980). The report called for informed and inclusive curriculum materials for Ontario students.

The choosing textbooks through Circular 14 came to an end in 2002, when Circular 14 was replaced by the Trillium List. An online list of approved textbooks aligned with Ontario curriculum expectations with a streamlined approval process. The Trillium List now works as a repository of the titles of English and French-language (la Liste Trillium) textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education for use in Ontario’s classrooms. This list helps teachers fulfill the teaching requirements under the Education Act. Teachers and principals are expected to ensure that approved textbooks are used in their classrooms.

The Trillium List supports teachers in identifying the books required to fulfill curriculum expectations. There is a rich choice of textbooks for teachers to choose from. The list is

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rigorously checked by the experts to ensure it meets ministry standards in such areas as: bias, language level and durability, and is also regularly up-dated and kept current.

1.19 The Trillium List

The Trillium List is outsourced by the Ministry of Education for preparation of appropriate materials to meet Ontario curriculum expectations. This list consists of high quality print and non-print materials that can be directly used by teacher and students for classroom purposes. It consists of recommendations for elementary grades for subjects, such as: the Arts, French as second language, Health and Physical Education, Language, Mathematics, Native Languages, Science and Technology, and Social Studies, History and Geography.

Clear guidelines are provided for understanding of how the recommended materials are approved and how they can be used for teaching and learning purposes on Ontario schools:

- Textbooks\(^{43}\) used for teaching are either approved by the Education Minister or recommended for approval by the concerned Principal. They must be accompanied by teacher’s guide\(^{44}\).
- The textbooks and supplementary resources\(^{45}\) must have Canadian orientation and should be a Canadian product.
- “Preference shall be given to books that have been written by Canadian authors and edited, printed and bound in Canada\(^{46}\).”
- The approved material should be appropriate for students from diverse backgrounds and at different levels of physical ability\(^{47}\).

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\(^{43}\) “Textbook is defined as a comprehensive learning resource that is in print or electronic form, or that consists of any combination of print, electronic, and non-print materials collectively designed to support a substantial portion of the Ontario curriculum expectations for a specific grade and subject in elementary school or for a course in secondary school, or a substantial portion of the expectations for a learning area in the Ontario Kindergarten program. Such a resource is intended for use by an entire class or group of students


\(^{45}\) “Supplementary resource is defined as a resource that supports only a limited number of curriculum expectations, or the curriculum expectations in a single strand, outlined in the curriculum policy document for a specific subject or course, or a limited number of expectations for a Kindergarten learning area. Such a resource may be intended for use by an entire class or group of students. Examples are readers, novels, spelling programs, dictionaries, atlases, and computer software and instructional guides”


Textbooks must be intended primarily for use by students, rather than for use by teachers. The organization should be logical and easy to follow to promote ease of comprehensibility. These guidelines indicate key criteria for choosing textbooks and supplementary curricular resources for Ontario classrooms. Canadian orientation and recognition of diversity are important hallmarks of these.

As my research is on Muslim representations in children’s literature, I have delved into Language resources available for Ontario elementary grades 1-8. The only other segment relevant to my research area in the Trillium list is the subject of Arts and Social Studies, which does not have any recommended entry. The schools are left to choose from the available resources per their learning needs and contexts. The purchasing considerations for relevant and required curriculum resources are prescribed by the Ministry are as follows:

Textbook components are collectively required to meet the Trillium List curriculum correlation requirement. While some components are required by each student, others, such as CDs/DVDs, posters and videos can be shared by students as a classroom resource. Accordingly, prior to purchasing, school boards must determine the appropriate quantities of each component of the textbook that they require for classroom use (www.trilluimlist.ca).

Freedom to choose and purchase the required teaching and learning materials is quite apparent in the Ministry guidelines. There needs to be awareness of the diverse needs of the students and communities that the school districts serve in order to buy relevant materials.

1.19.1 Curriculum Review Process

The curriculum review process as prescribed by the Minister of Education includes several levels of research, technical analysis, and focus group feedback. It is simultaneously followed by consultations with various educational partners and stakeholders, such as: students, parents, educators, colleges, faculties of education, other ministries and branches, workplace employers, Universities, NGO’s, FNMI’s (First Nation, Métis, Inuit) and MACSE (Minister’s
Advisory Council on Social Education). A third party check is also part of this stringent process, whereby, perspectives on FNMI, Academics, Equity and Inclusive education, as well as environmental education and other relevant checks are conducted. The final round of editing consists of revision and writing before approvals are given for the materials to be released.

The purpose of curriculum review is described by the Education Ministry as follows\(^{48}\):

The review is not a development of a completely new curriculum, but is intended to ensure that the curriculum remains current and relevant and is developmentally appropriate from kindergarten to Grade 12 in all subjects...The review supports students, teachers, schools and boards by identifying targeted areas in need of support and allows lead time for development or updating of related support materials as required.

Thus, the review process ensures continuous validity and relevance of recommended curriculum sources for Ontario schools.

1.19.2 Understanding the Processes Related to Textbooks Approval

In order to understand curriculum processes better, I visited the Curriculum Assessment Policy Branch, of Ontario Ministry of Education in August 2014 at 900 Bay Street, Toronto, with prior appointment. The personnel there were very helpful in explaining some of the nuances related to the curriculum development, approval, as well as it’s dissemination within the school boards and at individual teacher and class level. These processes are very well structured and operated with clear policy regulations.

The evaluation criterion used for each of these structures relates to the understanding of curriculum development. The approval of textbooks is based on the above guidelines to choose books. The evaluation work has been outsourced by the Ministry\(^{49}\). An outsourced team from

\(^{48}\) http://mettoas92:8880/curriculumreview/process.html

\(^{49}\) Textbooks submitted for inclusion on the Trillium List will be evaluated by an independent evaluation corporation commissioned by the ministry for this purpose. The corporation will evaluate the textbooks in accordance with the
Curriculum Services Canada\(^{50}\) does the evaluation of the recommended sources. Subsequently, suggestions are made by the same Curriculum Services Canada (CSC) team members on textbooks and curriculum resources to be used in Ontario schools in order to meet Ontario curriculum expectations. These cyclical processes are followed on a continuous basis.

The Ministry of Education allocates budgets to school boards based on the funding formula determined by the number of students the school or school board has within its jurisdiction. A part of the funding allocated to schools is used to buy educational resources for teaching and learning purposes. It is expected, as part of the funding allocations that the boards will choose books recommended by the Trillium List, which is approved by the Ministry.

The status of school boards is of independent corporations having their own directors and trustees. Since Schools are separate corporations from the school boards, they make their own decisions. If the boards decide not to use textbooks from the Trillium List for whatever reason then, per the policy, they are expected to set up a committee at their respective board level to evaluate resources that they need that are not on the list. The chief aim of these committees is to make sure that required curriculum expectations are met by the recommended book(s). Upon review the required textbooks are ordered for purchase by the boards themselves. In some instances, for example: the subject of Art for elementary grades, there are no recommended textbooks on the Trillium List. In every such case the boards use the prescribed process, mentioned above to review the needed textbooks and educational resources to make sure that such textbooks and supplementary resources recommendations meet the curriculum expectations before they are approved for purchase. This is the procedure that the school boards follow at local level for approval of relevant textbooks for their schools and classes.

The processes outlined here for textbooks approval imply the Ministry of Education’s policy and directional approach on ‘what to teach’. At the same time there is a lot of room and freedom given to the school boards and the teachers to decide on ‘how to teach’ depending on each one’s unique context and communities that they serve. Curriculum policies are created by the Ministry, but not the curriculum resources. For instance, the language curriculum needs stories. These resources can be decided by the teachers depending on their requirements.

Curriculum Policy and the procedures thereof, implores the School Boards and teachers to choose and satiate their curriculum needs but also mandates informed choices. It is implied that the teacher uses a variety of resources to support diverse needs of her students. For instance, if the teachers were teaching a topic related to family, it would be desirable that five to six different resources or books are referenced to bring out stories about different kinds of families as invariably in a class of 22 students there will be different families. To give every child coming from a different family background the same book or story is not a desirable standard of teaching and learning. Therefore, for each of such teaching and learning instances at the micro level the role of evaluation committee for approval of textbooks plays a very important role. Once the evaluation committee at the School Board level makes a decision and recommends a particular resource, the School Board then approaches the publishers about the purchasing of the book. Similarly, purchasing of the Trillium List books is also done by the School Board on their own by contacting the recommended publishers directly with the needed order.

The Ministry website instructs the School Boards to take the responsibility for selecting textbooks from The Trillium List and approving them for use in their schools with the assurance that these textbooks have been subjected to a rigorous evaluation in accordance with the criteria specified in the policy document *Guidelines for Approval of Textbooks*. 
The next important stakeholders in this process are the publishers themselves. They pay the independent reviewers to make sure the books are appropriate. Given that the publishers know the policy guidelines on curriculum development and processes they make sure the books are aligned with the prescribed requirements. Before moving in to the next section to look at the Trillium list components, it is critical to mention that there are several educational resources available for Ontario students that can be used for classrooms’ teaching and learning purposes such as:

- Tumble Book Library (http://www.tumblebooklibrary.com) consisting of story books, read alongs, non-fiction, videos, and the like;
- OISE library collection of graphic novels, dual language and Braille format books;
- Database of award winning Children’s Literature (http://www.dawcl.com/introduction.html);
- Toronto Public Library’s (http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/) Osborne collection of early children’s books; and
- Children’s Book Bank (http://www.childrensbookbank.com/).

These resources can be used by the Boards as textbooks if the Principal and the teachers see a need or a gap to be filled. The inclusion of educational materials to be used as textbooks in schools requires stringent procedures to be followed under Section 7 of Regulation 298 of the Education Act, which is described as follows on the Trillium List website\(^5^2\):

(2) Where no textbook for the course of study is included in the list of the textbooks approved by the Minister, the principal of a school, in consultation with the teachers concerned, shall, where they consider a textbook to be required, select a suitable textbook and, subject to the approval of the board, such textbook may be introduced for use in the school. (3) In the selection of textbooks under subsection (2), preference shall be given to books that have been written by Canadian authors and edited, printed and bound in Canada.

These processes not only describe ways to fill the gaps and curriculum needs at the school board level but also indicate freedom accorded to school boards in making the curriculum choices.

Similarly, for the educational materials to be used as supplementary resources by the School Boards also need a proper procedure to be followed as outlined in the same Ministry document. Approvals for every such materials is given by the Ministry subject to the evaluation criteria in congruence with the Curriculum policy consisting of parameters related to content, bias, and format.

1.20 The Trillium List: An Examination of the Elementary Language Components

The following section presents a brief analysis of elementary language recommended textbooks for each elementary grade level. The Trillium List recommendations for language consist of high quality teaching and learning resources.

1.20.1 Determining Representations in the Text

To explore Muslim representations, I browsed through the entire Trillium List recommendations with all the sources in different available formats in their online electronic and print versions. I read their descriptions and supplementary sources. From the library collection of the Trillium recommendations, I read several books, as well as related teacher’s guides. I particularly searched for Muslim cultural and identity markers in each of these texts. I also looked for pictures and content structure in several of these texts.

The elementary language titles range from grade 1 to grade 8. The details of these recommendations are available on The Trillium List website; therefore, I have not enlisted all of them here. A summary of all the recommendations are represented in Appendix H. Some grade 3, 4 and 5 titles are mentioned here to give a flavor of the variety of subjects and resources that come with the Trillium List recommendations for each grade level. These titles are a sample of the quality and quantity of the available educational materials in each of these grade level categories. My aim is to look for Muslim representations in these resources.

1.20.2 Grade 1 Language

The following textbooks and accompanying resources are approved for Grade 1 language: Alpha children Grade 1 (2001), Collections 1 Student Package (1999), Cornerstones Grade 1 (2000), Literacy Place for the Early Years - Grade 1 (2006), Momentum 1 (2001), and Nelson Language Arts Grade 1 (1999).

Alpha children Grade 1 (2001) consists of 170 Small Books with titles such as A Pet for Me; Alphabet Party; Animal Diggers; Animal Skeletons; Animals That Sting; Art; Balls; Beaks and Feet; Big and Small; Billy Banana; Birthday Cakes and 108 more components.

Collections 1 Student Package (1999) package consists of a variety of components totalling to a 50, while Cornerstones Grade 1 (2000) has four student anthologies: Out on the Playground
(anthology 1a), Look Around (anthology 1b), Busy Days (anthology 1c), and Ride a Rainbow (anthology 1d). Literacy Place for the Early Years - Grade 1 (2006) has 65 components in all. These consist of shared reading and guided reading books in small and big book versions along with accompanying CDs.

The last two collections of Momentum 1 (2001) and Nelson Language Arts Grade 1 (1999) have a variety of small books, big books and student activity books.

1.20.3 Grade 2 Language

The following textbooks and accompanying resources are approved for Grade 2 language: Alpha children Grade 2 (2001), Collections 2 Student Package (1999-2000), Cornerstones Grade 2 (2002), Literacy Place for the Early Years - Grade 2 (2006), Momentum 2 (2001), and Nelson Language Arts Grade 2 (1999). Nelson Language Arts textbook package consists of four anthologies and level texts entitled: Step Out; Reach Out; Leap Out and Write Away. These anthologies are correlated to Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001) Leveling Criteria for literacy corresponding to curriculum. They consist of poetry, stories, collages and diagrams to achieve the targeted literacy level.

1.20.4 Grade 3 Language

Like all the other grade level textbook recommendations, grade 3 language also has a wide variety of curriculum resources to provide different, as well as differentiated learning experiences to the students, thus, augmenting literacy standards. This student textbook package consists of Collections 3 (2004), Cornerstones Grade 3 (1999), Literacy Place for the Early Years - Grade 3 (2007), Momentum 3 (2001), Nelson Language Arts Grade 3 (1999), and Nelson Literacy 3 (1999).
1.20.4.1 Collections 3 (2004)

Written by various authors, this Pearson Education Canada publication consists of five anthologies, nine novels, eight genre books, four Reaching Readers Information Texts Lap Books and nine Reaching Readers Canadian Biographies. A teacher’s guide is also available with the collection. This textbook supports *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Language, 2006 (revised)*.

The titles of the 5 Anthologies are as follows:

1. Spreading My Wings
2. Tales - Princesses, Peas, and Enchanted Trees
3. Beneath the Surface
4. Super Senses!
5. Carving New Frontiers

The 9 novel titles are:

1. That's Enough, Maddie!
2. Harold and Harold
3. Genies Do not Ride Bicycles
4. The Nutmeg Princess
5. Hide and Sneak
6. Dinosaurs Before Dark
7. The Cherry Pit Princess
8. Alcock and Brown and the Boy in the Middle
9. Pioneer Sisters

There are 35 more components in this textbook collection, consisting of the following 12 Reaching Readers Information Texts as well:

- Days to Remember
- The Mystery of Magnets
- It's All in the Soil
- People on the Move
- A Year in Antarctica
- It's a Mammal!
- Island Life
- All About Bikes
- At the Root of It
- Look Up
- Robots
- Bridges Across Canada

Reaching Readers Canadian Biographies, Genre Books and lap books are also part of the recommended collection. These are respectively 9, 8 and 4 in numbers.

1.20.4.2 *Cornerstones 3* (1999)

This student textbook package consists of Student Anthology 3a and Student Anthology 3b, which has 18 components in all. A Gage Learning Corporation publication, this package comes with teacher’s guide as well. It supports *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Language, 2006 (revised).*

1.20.4.3 *Literacy Place for the Early Years - Grade 3* (2007)

Authored by Anne Brailsford and Tony Stead, this textbook package consists of 8 Shared Reading Titles with Teaching Plans, 3 Overhead Sets with Teaching Plans, as well as 44 Guided Reading Packs with Teaching Plans and overhead sets. This package comes with 22 more rich resources. Specific kits for particular reading levels are also part of this collection. These materials come with Magazines, CDs, big book small book versions, brochures, a binder with 15 overheads and reproducible, as well, as Teacher’s Guide. This textbook also supports *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Language, 2006 (revised).*

1.20.4.4 *Momentum 3* (2001)

This student textbook package consists of 32 Small Books, as well as 20 more components, and comes with teacher’s guide. It’s a Scholastic Canada Ltd. Publication authored by various authors. It supports *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Language, 2006 (revised).*
1.20.4.5 *Nelson Language Arts Grade 3* (1999)

The student textbook package is authored by various authors and consists of *Keepsakes and Treasures, Hand and Hand*, and *Write Away*. It’s a Nelson Education Ltd. Publication that comes with a teacher’s guide, supplementary reading, audiotapes and audio CD package. This textbook also supports *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Language, 2006 (revised)*.

1.20.4.6 *Nelson Literacy 3* (2009)

The student textbook package consists of 3 student instructions books - Nelson Literacy 3 Student Book 3a, 3b and 3c. Nelson Literacy 3 Guided and Independent Reading Kit and 25 more components such as 1 resource overview, 1 teaching strategies DVD, 1 guided and independent reading teacher’s resource, 1 teacher eSource CD-ROM + transparencies for modelling and shared reading model, 9 teacher's resource volumes, 1 transparencies binder and 216 guided and independent readers are also part of this collection. This textbook supports *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Language, 2006 (revised)*.

1.20.5 Grade 4 Language


1.20.6 Grade 5 Language

1.20.7 Grade 6 Language

Grade 6 language materials continue with almost similar titles and sequence recommendations with developmentally, as well as literacy appropriate materials. *Collections 6* (2004) student textbook package consists of a variety of literary pieces such as anthologies, novels, genre books, Reaching Readers Information Texts and Reaching Readers Canadian Biographies. Altogether this package has 39 components. Similarly, *Cornerstones 6* (1998) carries the same structure as previously established for earlier grades. It contains student anthologies. In the same way *Literacy in Action 6* (2007) includes student instruction and assessment books, magazine and lap books, literature and information circle packs. In all there are 23 components in *Literacy in Action 6* student textbook package.

*Momentum 6* (2001) of Grade 6 language textbooks recommendations holds 32 small books. Yet another textbook package entitled *Moving Up with Literacy Place, Grade 6* (2008) consists of 3 self-monitoring units, 3 analysing units, 4 sequencing units, 4 making connections units, 4 predicting units, 4 inferring units, 4 evaluating units, 4 synthesising units and 17 grade 6 guided reading packs. All these units come with a rich selection of curriculum resources in the form of books, articles, brochures, magazines, audio CDs, overheads, guides, posters, newspapers, sheet music and the like. In all, *Moving Up with Literacy Place, Grade 6* has a total of 49 components.

*Nelson Language Arts, Grade 6* (1998) contains three titles: *Going the Distance*, *Choosing Peace* and *Writer's Express*. The last two textbooks packages recommended for grade 6 Language Arts are *Nelson Literacy 6* (2008) and *Power Magazine – Grade 6* (2005). The former textbook package consists of 3 Nelson Literacy student books and 6 literacy guides, 6 guides and independent kit containing 38 components. 8 components and a Power Magazine
Audio CD containing 6 items are part of the *The Power Magazine Grade 6* (2005) textbook package.

### 1.20.8 Grade 7 and 8 Language


*Stepping Up With Literacy Place, Grade 7* (2010) offers higher level educational resources and pedagogical recommendations. It comes with 6 strategy units with a variety of titles and genres to support teaching and learning. This range includes audio CDs, newspapers, articles, brochures, blogs, press releases, how-to-articles, flow charts, documentaries on DVD, search results, true stories and posters. In all, this pack has about 26 components. 6 units of this textbook package were revised in 2010 including 3 inquiry units, 3 Book Club Units and 8 components of environmental choices.

*Nelson Literacy 8* (2009) is more recent publications that build on literacy levels established in early elementary grades. They deal with various environmental issues and different magazines. Altogether, there are about 39 components in these textbook packages. *Sight Lines/Resource Lines 8* (1999) is the last textbook package consisting of resources with the same titles as those of *Sight Lines/Resource Lines 7* (1999).
1.21 Discussion and Conclusion

The differences that students bring to the classroom are not simply individual differences; they represent the rich diversity that is the Canadian social fabric. These diversities depict deep and complex undercurrents, as well as products and constructions of the complex and diverse social learning from the community cultures and sub-cultures, where children grow, live, interact and are socialised. As Gregory (1997) writes about the dynamics of the diversity in Ontario classrooms:

They are dynamic and hybrid – mixing, matching and blending traditional values and beliefs, children rearing practices and literacy events with those of new, post-modern popular cultures. (Gregory, 1997, p. 6)

Teaching such a diverse and multicultural student population predicates a level awareness and belief in the notion of diversity as asset. The educational resources used in the classrooms reveal choices the teachers and various stakeholders make about knowledge and what each key stakeholder, particularly, the teacher thinks is important for our children to know. The role children are expected to play in partaking this knowledge through pedagogical choices indicates the role children will play in their own learning (Cuffaro, 1995). These materials become the tools with which children give form to and express their understanding of the world and the meanings they have constructed. If materials are anti-discriminatory and representational then a positive school climate is fostered, which encourages all students to work to high standards, as well as develop a strong sense of identity and positive self-image, thus, promoting overall school climate that respects, promotes and values diversity and inclusiveness (Ontario Ministry of Education, The Kindergarten Program, 2006, p. 71).
Selecting appropriate and relevant materials helps families to be able to “recognize” themselves and relate to the school environment. Some indicators for such an inclusion as outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education are:

What image of the learners is conveyed throughout the school? How do the materials on display contribute to a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere? How can the school environment reflect the lives, families, and interests of the learners? (Ontario Ministry of Education, The Kindergarten Program, 2006, p. 71)

The school environment and choice of displays are important markers of inclusiveness premised on the Canadian multicultural ethos.

The Trillium List recommendations for language arts at elementary level, as explored above, contain developmentally rich and literacy level appropriate educational resources. For instance, Nelson’s Language Arts publications have their textbooks for all the elementary grades spirally built up with relevant grade level expectations. These materials are created by third party curriculum developers and published by Canadian publishers per the guidelines provided by the Ministry. As per the policy requirement, all of the above mentioned resources come with teacher’s guide and similar relevant support educational resources such as overheads, audio, video and reference materials. Most of the textbooks packages are by famous Canadian publishers and come in sets. Most of the Canadian publishing houses that are part of the Trillium List publications have international spread too. Their contact details are available on the site. Many of these materials are available in French as well.

I browsed through 100s of titles on the Trillium list including different audio, video resources. There is quantitative, as well as qualitative richness in the approved resources for elementary language subject. In my exploration of the titles and content I found one title that has

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53 All the Trillium List elementary Language textbook recommendations are published and distributed by Nelson Education Ltd, Pearson Education Canada and Scholastic Canada Ltd. except Language 7 and 8 which are published by Oxford University Press Canada.
direct link with one of the common Muslim identity markers like a Muslim name. *Literacy place for the early years* – Grade 2 (a Scholastic Publication) contains a title that has, Ali. The title of the story is *Ali Runs with the Pack*. It’s about a young boy named Ali, who is not interested in playing football with his friends and shies away from everyone during recess and playtimes. One day things change for him and he joins the pack of boys, who are in the football team. This reconciliation is like home coming for Ali. This story has a very basic Muslim representation.

Admittedly, the limitation of my exploration comes with my understanding of Muslim identity markers such as, dress, culture, language, food, rituals and practices that are overtly ascertained as those belonging to Muslims. There may be several characters in these curriculum resources that may not have been represented with such markers. For instance, a character not having a seemingly Muslim name may still be a Muslim. Similarly, there may be cultural representations in the texts which may not be explicitly Muslim but can have the possibility of it being Muslim. An illustration of this can be cited with a story from grade 3 language, *Deepa’s Special Day*. This story describes Indian milieu depicting special Diwali celebrations. Characters in such a story are assumed to be Indian or Hindu but they can easily be Muslims because Muslims are a big part of the Indian nation and society. Further, understanding Muslim identity is a complex and dynamic undertaking. Muslim identities are fluid, contextual, incoherent, contradicting, and unstable. There cannot be one fixed or essentialized entity. The tensions of representing at times fixed and fossilized identity makes me rethink of the identity markers.

The identity conceptualization and framing done by Moje et al (2009) through five metaphors of identity as difference, identity as self/subjectivity, identity as mind or

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54 India has 176 million Muslims (http://indianexpress.com/article/india/by-2050-india-to-have-the-worlds-largest-muslim-population-study/)
consciousness, identity as narrative and finally, identity as position remind me of the complex fluidity inherent in this marker. I also understand that it is not important what we read but how we read. My own position affects the way I read. This position gets further complicated with the understanding of identity as a social construct. Within these identity webs I vouch for cosmopolitan ethics and identity through inclusive curriculum, confirming what Amartya Sen (2000) argued for moving beyond closed or limited identities (p. 23).

In creating curriculum resources for developing language literacy the Trillium list makes certain assumptions about representations in these texts. The Canadian orientation in State curriculum is mandated in the policy. The diversity and richness of the Canadian society is represented through white, First Nations, Inuit and Métis representations. The rich plurality within the immigrants, refugees and visible minorities are either under represented or completely absent. In the developmental discourse such an education through curricula, textbooks and pedagogical practices disempowers the visible minorities such that they are excluded from the development and citizenship realms (Naseem, 2010).

The near absence of Muslim characters and representations from the Trillium List seems quite unreasonable as the textbook production and approval guidelines provided by the Ministry clearly states: “It should be appropriate for students from diverse backgrounds and at different levels of physical ability55”. The guidelines also suggest: “The textbooks and supplementary resources must have Canadian orientation and be a Canadian product56”. The question is how does one define ‘Canadian orientation’ and whether Muslim children or Muslim communities will ever fit into this definition.

Further, the guideline also says: “Preference shall be given to books that have been written by Canadian authors and edited, printed and bound in Canada⁵⁷”. In spite of these apparent policy guidelines it is clear that Ontario curriculum has some implicit and explicit ideologies about who should be represented, as well as what children should know and not know. Critical reading of textbooks and supplementary resources at elementary level holds the promise of decolonizing children’s perceptions and negotiating identities. Children's books are resources for identity making and remaking.

For acknowledging the shortage in availability of relevant Muslim content the first recommended step can be to invite Muslim content as supplementary curriculum resources. The latter will cover some of the curriculum expectations. While efforts should be made to integrate such materials within the textbook package, the textbook development will require a higher level of understanding and engagement, as well as skills and content base to produce materials that are inclusive and representational of Muslim characters, cultures and communities. Development of Muslim children’s resources will also entail creation of high level of accompanying classroom resources, samples and benchmarks of which are provided on the Trillium list.

The problem of non-availability of Muslim children’s literature is quite pressing perhaps because we do not have enough curriculum developers, who have sufficient information on Muslim communities and characters. The literature review and subsequent interviews conducted for the purpose of present research affirm lack of Muslim writers writing for Muslim children. The same gap also persists, as we see in the present chapter, amongst curriculum developers. This situation becomes even more acute because presently the education system is devoid of such information. The educators undergoing training and education may also suffer this gap.

because of reasons highlighted above. Thus, this is a vicious circle feeding on itself and a remedial action at several levels is required.

Further, general perceptions regarding Muslims denote faith based images and a theological association even the art created by Muslims including that of a secular nature is taken as part of Islamic architecture without explanation of its secular and non-religious connotation (Raina, 2009, p.17). Muslim children are perceived as primarily religious or concerned with how their religious identity affects their behaviour. This perception is also affirmed to a large extent with many of the Muslim communities preparing their children within Muslim orientation. In such a scenario it is possible that educators and curriculum writers stay away from Muslim representations lest the educational resources may appear to have religious connotations. Such an approach may result in cosmetic multicultural ethos and dichotomous secularism as religion has been part of all the civilisations. The rupture created between the lived experiences of Muslim children and their curriculum experiences betrays the cosmopolitan values that we need to promote. Interestingly, there are several stories and resources in the elementary language approved list that have characters such as Sebastian, Ben, Beatrix, Eva, Matsumura, Oscar, Kim, Harold and the like. If these names are not demarcated as Christian or Jewish or First Nations names, then Muslim names should be also treated in the same way for an inclusive representation.

Apart from representations of Muslims and other minority communities out there, the Trillium list pays good attention to first nations, Inuit and Métis representations. For instance, in Collections 4 (2004) there are nine Reaching Readers Canadian Biographies containing the following titles: Pitseolak Ashoona: Inuit Artist, Catriona Le May Doan: Fastest Woman on Ice and Susan Aglukark: Arctic Rose. This signifies the understanding created by key educational stakeholders for such an inclusion for a robust and balanced curriculum. Attempt is also made to
bring diversity pertaining to different aspects of Canadian life, in general. *Circle of Life: Learning from an Elder* (2013) are packs of stories published by Nelson Education for students of K-2, which are a part of Trillium List for elementary language. These are created in collaboration with Indigenous Education Coalition (IEC) and contain first nation stories.

Similarly, *Alpha children* (2004) for grade 1 and 2 have various stories that represent diversity in the form of costumes and people. This learning pack also contains value stories that speak of values for children. For instance, *Grandma’s Visit* (Prince & Vane, 2001) and *My Baby Sister* (Stein, 2001) are good stories about family relationships. *Can you See Me?* (Lee, 2001) is about different parts of the body. The pictures in this book represent some children having golden hair. There are a group of children in the book that consist of two white boys, one white girl, one black boy, one Chinese or first nation appearance child and yet another picture of a child who looks different, perhaps an Indian or south Asian.

It would be interesting to meet curriculum developers to understand how decisions are taken in curriculum development as to what is to be included and what omitted. Are Muslims involved in this process? Who is involved? Muslim representations are almost nil in the resources recommended in the Trillium List. This absence can be discussed with Curriculum Services Canada to get an insight into the processes that encourage inclusive curriculum perspectives. Some factors that can promote inclusive perspectives are creating awareness, developing appropriate resources and motivating writers to write on the subject. Considering the little availability of Muslim children literature and other relevant educational resources for and on Muslims, there is a possibility that whatever is available in the market in a standard way is included or recommended.

The Ontario Library Association is also one of the key stakeholders that play a role in recommending books for the libraries that is available for classroom and reading purposes in
school libraries. The Ontario library association can be consulted to comprehend some of the nuances related to choosing and recommending books for school libraries. It would be insightful to know how they decide to select books for the school libraries.

The next chapter continues to explore Muslim representations in the available educational resources through select author voices.
Chapter 5
Author(s) Speak - Muslim Representations 2

“*You can’t truly look at Muslims as a monolith*”.

- Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014

“*…what you want to convey is the beauty, the rich culture, the depth of experience, the diversity and the beauty of certain cultures in Islam. This way they can be invited to be open to the basics and then they can be introduced to Islamic books and teach them to appreciate the amazing beauty and depth of our cultural experience…*”

- Aina, personal communication, March 17, 2015

1.22 Introduction

In this chapter, I have delineated author voices through a thematic coding of the interviews conducted with five prominent contemporary writers of Muslim children’s literature primarily from Canada, the United States of America and Great Britain. These interviews are an attempt to uncover some of the complex multi-layers associated with contemporary Muslim children’s literature.

The chapter describes the process of thematically grouping some of the chief strands from the authors’ expressions on Muslim representations in contemporary Muslim children’s literature, thus offering one more dimension of a rounded study of the subject of my research. The interviews also offer unique insight into various positions in Muslim children’s writing, as all of the authors come from a very unique position: as women reared and lived in different parts of the world, having Western education, writing in the Western world, and presenting a very specific understanding of Muslim children’s literature. All of the authors generously shared their life-changing experiences with me. Out of the five women authors interviewed, four—Rina, Nina, Aina, and Fina—are Muslim women practicing Islamic dress with the Muslim veil (*hijab*). Three of them—Rina, Aina, and Fina—were born into South Asian Muslim families and have Indian sub-continent backgrounds. Rina identifies herself as a Sunni Muslim also working with
Shias. Aina is a Sunni but maintains that, in the American spirit, denominations do not matter much. These women provided insiders’ outlooks on the density of Muslim children’s literature. The fourth one is a British author and a Muslim convert who wears the niqab\(^{58}\). She brought her experiences of growing up in a very different environment and was able to compare both objectively and subjectively nuances pertaining to my research. The images that these Muslim authors evoked offer counter stereotypes to the popular perception of women in Islam—particularly, images inherited through orientalist perspectives. The fifth author, Dina, is a White Canadian Protestant claiming an objective view of Muslims. She admitted missing insider perspectives on Muslim cultures or faith but sincerely hopes she has done justice to Muslim representations in her works.

The motivation of Muslim writers to create literature for Muslim children is quite different from that of non-Muslim authors. Their viewpoints as insiders, as practicing Muslims, and the viewpoint of Dina, the non-Muslim author, are thematised to engage with different dimensions of Muslim representations in Muslim children’s literature in general as well as the literature they created in particular. In my conversations with the authors, I tried to engage with their query of how they understand and attempt Muslim representations. I also made sure that I picked chords of concerns and differences within these talks that would enrich curriculum studies and teacher development processes.

The interview conversations were mostly spiral as the questions and their responses coincided at several points. For instance, Muslim representations included identity, as well as Islamophobic undercurrents. The thematic codification of the interview data also created a spiral understanding of Muslim children’s literature and its appreciation as a curriculum resource, as

\(^{58}\) Muslim veil covering entire face—only showing eyes.
well as a tool for teacher development. The interview data sheds light on patterns of motivations and approaches that guide the Muslim writing under scrutiny.

The writers have expressed their views on their motivation behind the creation of Muslim children’s literature; their understanding of the notion of childhood in creating such resources; the problem of the near vacuum in the availability of Muslim children’s literature; the quality and content of Muslim children’s literature; the challenges of creating high-quality Muslim children’s literature, the role of publishers in the production process; the public reception of and response to such works; Muslim representations in such literature; and the use of such creations as an educational resource for curriculum and teacher development. Each of these themes is discussed here through the lens of five different women authors with their unique personalities, their motivations, the corpus of their work, and their presence in the literary world.

The categories presented here do not necessarily represent any hierarchy. The coded responses presented here are the authors’ answers to framed questions (Appendix B) created for the purpose of my research project and posed to them during the pre-determined interview conversations. The writers’ indications of the problems and prospects related to the subject of my research are analytically described here.

In section one, “Inside and Outside Voices: The Struggle and Promise of Muslim Representation(s),” I have captured nuances of author voices and clustered them under identity, Islamophobia, and sacred narratives in Muslim children’s literature. The Muslim authors’ desire for a movement toward the center, and the relevance of Muslim children’s literature for curriculum and teacher development are also addressed in this section. This discussion brings the debate on insider-outsider voices to the fore and asks, “who can write about Muslims?”

Section two, “Discussion: Universal vs. Particular in Muslim Representations,” is my interpretation of the nuances gathered from the conversations through a critique of multicultural
literature that is attached to Muslim children’s literature. It also calls attention to the complexities of writing Muslim children’s literature based on the authors’ experiences.

1.23 Inside and Outside Voices: The Struggle and Promise of Muslim Representation(s)

The genesis of writing for Muslim children, as the authors expressed, is derived from multiple chords of the need for such books, the popular image of Islam, and problems associated with it both from within and outside. Personal identity and a calling, as well as desperate attempts to be a part of the solution and the need to be heard are reasons that motivate the authors to write. The authors’ personal life experiences have left indelible marks in their writing. Their scripts in a way are responses regarding how to mend some of the problems associated with Islam and Muslim identities.

The issues of inside outside voices and their representations came out quite distinctly in the interview conversations. This debate is intertwined in the discourse of otherness. The view that insider views are more authentic tends to maintain essentialist view of culture negating the role of histories, power relations and discourses. However, inside voices are important for character depictions, their language and power in the text (Botelho, 2015). Dana Fox and Kathy Short (2003) have further considered this debate in their book. Teachers’ engagement with these issues help students navigate through complexities of identity (Curt Dudley-Marling, 2003).

59 “Muslims are losing face. They are so scared of being perceived in the negative manner that they are stiff” (Rina, personal communication August 21, 2014).
60 “…I went through so much torture, while growing up and now I really do not care…” (Rina, personal communication August 21, 2014).
61 “I grew up as an easterner in western society” (Rina, personal communication August 21, 2014).
1.23.1 Thresholds of Identity: Islam and Muslims

Muslim children’s literature needs to be written and understood in terms of the complexities that surround Muslim cultures around the world, particularly in the West. Nina, in my interview conversation with her, pointed out the layered nuances that the subject holds:

Muslim themes and Muslim children’s literature are full of minefields. It is no longer about easy ‘this is haram\(^{62}\) and this is a halal\(^{63}\)’ conversations. It is much more nuanced, it is much more difficult. (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014)

What Nina really means is that simplistic assumptions regarding the lived experiences of Muslims stand challenged.

The Muslim authors brought up in the West share a particular relationship and understanding of Islam. For these authors, the Canadian, British, and the American value systems are important signifiers. Within this, they see Islam as something that needs to be safeguarded. As Muslims, they carry a certain responsibility and accountability\(^ {64}\). Rina (personal communication, August 21, 2014) expressed that she does not look at Islam the way the Western culture looks at it. The West has a certain perception about Islam and fails to understand the beauty of it. Rina finds logic even in the restrictions within Islam as she grew up with them:

. . Like, I do not drink alcohol. I do not date. I do not go on clubbing or anything like that. I do not think I even desire to because I do not think they are Islamic principles. (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

The writings of these Muslim authors are inspired by a deep sense of purpose of who the authors are deep down. Nina said:

...being Muslim gives you a sense of purpose and focus that would not be there necessarily if I wasn't Muslim. As a Muslim, I want my work to be good and a

\(^{62}\) An act that is forbidden by sharia (Muslim law).

\(^{63}\) An act that is permissible by sharia (Muslim law)

\(^{64}\) Rina said she checks her writing to see if the Prophet would find it appropriate if He were to read it.
source of good. So I am very conscious of that. I will be writing what needs to be written. I believe that my writing must have a purpose and intention. There are certain things that I avoided writing because of my Muslim beliefs and because of my values and the direction that I have chosen to go in because they are more in line with Muslims...This is a calling for me because I do not think I would be writing books if I wasn't a Muslim. (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014)

In the same vein, Rina said:

First of all, I try to write a good story. And it just happens because I am Muslim. I always think of it as Islam and Muslim as wallpaper. It’s where the story is set. It’s part of the wallpaper. I do not try to make a story directly about Muslims because it’s not a textbook. These are stories about being Muslim from a kid’s point of view, and each of the stories is a major aspect of Islam. So by the end of it, you get an idea exactly of what it is about to be Muslim. But it’s not didactic. I didn’t want it to be preachy. I am not interested in converting anybody. I am just telling a good story. (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

Essentially, Rina is affirming that her Muslim representations emerge out of her own Muslim identity and experiences. At the same time she is careful not to make her stories only about Muslims.

Rina’s writing is inspired by her experiences during her childhood, which was full of challenges and bitter tribulations. Peer pressure and bullying had at times led her to think of killing herself, but her faith and her books gave her the courage to continue. Writing is her way of making up for all of the silences that she willingly or unwillingly suffered while growing up. Her Canadian childhood and public school education lend an insider perspective to her expressions:

...I have seen it all, and because of that, I can write with authority about what it is like growing up in Canada. And the thing is that writing about that is not any different from all around the world. Because of childhood and emotions are universal. So you tap into the emotions of the child growing up. (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

Rina’s stories, colored by her Muslim identity, are an attempt to universalize Muslims such that they are humanized “making it difficult for them to kill us” (Rina, personal
communication, August 21, 2014). Notably, there is a contradiction in Rina’s expressions, as at one point in the interview, she admitted that she does not write Muslim stories due to the nepotism of publishers. She has learned that established publishers may stay away from Muslim stories due to the serotypes attached.

1.23.2 In Defense of Islam: Confronting Islamophobia and the Need to Write

All four Muslim women writers took to writing because they saw a huge gap in this field: “I saw so many young Muslims leaving their culture and faith as they had nothing to validate it” (Rina, personal communication August 21, 2014). These authors are mostly inspired by their personal and social situations. In their deepest depression, books were able to revive them, offered resolutions to their problems, and furnished them with the necessary spirit to continue. Their writings in a way are an attempt to fix things and bring a sense of justice. In this way, they are therapeutic, too.

Nina is a convert who brings the rich perspectives of both an insider as a Muslim and an outsider. She said:

If I had been born and brought up as a Muslim I do not think I would have gone out and felt wrong about the fact that I can read beautiful books on, Snow-white and eleven dwarfs for my children but I can’t find any from Muslim. So when I noticed the problem, when I saw the problem as a human being, the woman, as the mom I felt I can do something to change this. I am capable, Insha’allah, of making the change. (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014)

Nina feels that Muslim children are deprived of the wonder, beauty, and pleasures of quality reading at a young age. They are wronged in some way because of the intellectual poverty that they suffer while growing up. Furthermore, the quality of available Muslim children’s literature is very weak regarding the content, variety, treatment of subjects, language, aesthetics, and illustrations. The available Muslim children’s literature is also not child friendly,
as there is a lot of text in the books. Muslim children miss the sensual experience that the books provide. They need good-quality books published through prestigious publishers.

Rina maintained that her major inspiration for writing stories came from the fact that she is a Muslim:

…because we are from a culture that is so misunderstood I try to write stories that will help people understand us. Actually to even go further than that – because a lot of the government forces and a lot the media forces are trying so hard to demonize Muslims and are trying to ‘other’ them so that it is easier to launch wars - I am trying to humanize Muslims. This is my agenda to humanize Muslims and to make it harder for them to kill us. (Rina, personal communication August 21, 2014)

According to Rina, Muslim representations in her stories offer a universalized face of Muslims that is familiar and easy to recognize.

Aina started writing when her daughter was born:

…I also wanted to write books for American children, who are Muslims. When I was growing up in Ohio, I never read a book in my entire life with a Muslim character in it – ever in my whole life…understanding Muslims is so crucial. (Aina, personal communication, March 17, 2015)

Fina has been a teacher for a long time and initiated her writings through her observation as a teacher. She saw that Muslim children had no literary visibility. To address this gap and give her students a sense of place, belonging, and visibility, she started writing. Fina submitted that the production of Muslim children’s literature in the West is a relatively new phenomenon. She said:

Western Islamic children’s literature is a result of cultural and religious hybridity. Western Muslims, the first and second generation Muslims have been the pioneers in developing this field which situates Islam in the West and not just the East. (Fina, personal communication, December 5, 2014)

The big gap in the availability of Muslim children’s literature is also because of the class structure of the society from which Muslims originate. Working-class or lower middle-class
people do not have a reading culture. Furthermore, most of the Muslim populations have the legacy of an oral culture, which is vastly different from the high-literacy and written cultures of Western society. Non-English education systems have not yet developed the culture of high-quality publications. Thus, the Muslim children’s literature movement or publications have taken flight only in the past 10–12 years.

Rina shared her experiences of book sale and talk events; during one event, the audience did not buy one of her books because it has the word “Muslim” in the title. She said this about her book with the word ‘Muslim’ as part of the title:

...many schools are scared to have it. Maybe they think people will complain so they do not order it. Especially in the States, it’s like that. When I was in Wisconsin people were buying my books, but they didn’t buy … because they probably thought it’s only a Muslim book but it’s not. (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014).

Interestingly, the 9/11 incident that evoked heightened Islamophobia also offered an opportunity to engage with Muslim people in writing.

1.23.3 Representations: Muslim Authors, Characters, and Stories - from Periphery to Mainstream (‘Are you a Muslim?’)

In the conversations with the authors Muslim representations emerged in a threefold way: through the authors’ understanding of the subject, through their works, and through their own representations as Muslim personas.

Although the genre of Muslim children’s literature is catching up, Muslim images are problematic on several fronts. The depiction of Muslim characters is either a reaction or an antidote to the type of image of Islam currently prevalent. Muslim characters in their literature reflect some of the writers’ own life experiences. In addition, Islam as a problem is reflected in

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65 Rina was asked this question by one of the students in a Toronto school in spite of her veiled (hijabi) appearance (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014).
some of the writings of non-Muslim authors, where Muslim girls are disguised as boys and run away to find escape routes from Islam. Furthermore, the characters and themes of the available Muslim children’s literature are very limited and repetitive. The problematic formula of Muslim = Ramadan is often the norm. Rina (personal communication, August 21, 2014) expressed her disgust of this overused image of Muslims: “as if Ramadan is the only thing to be a Muslim”:

At the same time, Eid is a standard marker that everyone recognizes. Therefore, it is easy to evoke familiarity through the subject amidst the scarcity of such materials and representations.

Interestingly, while Rina writes as a Muslim writer she does not think of her characters as Muslims. She simply looks at them as characters. The depiction of Islam is more important to her:

The characters are the way they are. I wasn’t thinking about Muslim representations. I think of Islam and I make sure I represent Islam correctly. Because I feel like I am going to be liable and judged by God for that. That’s what I am accountable for. Regarding representations of Muslims – Muslims are all kinds of people. They are good; they are bad, or whatever. So when it comes to the characters, I have much more leeway. This is the character, the person. It’s not Islam. There are all kinds of Muslims - the good and the bad. You have to be real. If you try to make it goodie, goodie then it becomes propaganda. (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

Rina repeatedly maintained that Muslim characters are not equivalent to Islam and should not be viewed as such. Islam is different from Muslim. The characters are different from Islam. Islam is a sacred theological concept that cannot be equivalent to Muslims, the followers of Islam, because Muslims are flawed. Only the Prophet Muhammad is perfect (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014). Nina’s expressions provide a critical insight into perceived Islamophobia.

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66 “You can’t be all the things to all the people” (Aina, personal communication, March 17, 2015).
A feeling of marginalization and struggle for recognition in the mainstream “where it counts” is yet another cause of concern for authors. The marginalization of women authors in the big arena of writing and publishing are some of the experiences shared in the prevalent publishing culture. Nina also maintained that Muslim niche books are not in mainstream libraries, but now, the industry is changing and growing, leaving behind the traditional approach to writing that writers who grew up in small Muslim communities developed. Additionally, the problem of Muslim depiction is associated with genre-related expectations, too. If a particular picture book or chapter book is successful, then the authors are supposed to play by the same rules.

The representations of Muslims by non-Muslims do not do Muslims justice many times. Aina narrated her experiences of reading books on Muslims, where there were glaring misrepresentations, such as children eating during Ramadan and then lying about it; a grandfather’s allowing them to break their fasts at 3 p.m.; families dancing at untoward instances, and the like. These, she maintained, are some very erroneous representations and against the cultural heritage of the immigrants:

…some of these books were about immigrants in America, and some of these were trying very hard to show that Muslim children in America are just like others. They are trying hard to be Americans. I just felt that the cultural heritage of the people and Muslim child was missing. Many immigrant families – like my family – value their traditional heritage. The cultural traditions that they bring when they come and they celebrate these. , They also bring new traditions that they learn in the new country. They seem to have an emerging cultural identity in the country that they live – they maintain the balance of the past and their present. (Aina, personal communication, March 17, 2015)

Muslims are not the same everywhere, but the solutions presented in the books are not something that all Muslims would have generally emphasized. The problem of misrepresentation also stands in the case of illustrations. It is not possible for illustrators to be familiar with all of

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67 Rina (personal communication, August 21, 2014)
the different Muslim cultures in existence. Also, not all illustrators are educators. The problem of representations with regard to illustrations stems from the fact that there is very little literature in picture books. Thus, the content in these books seems to be repetitive and lacking in diversity.

When there are very few books with Muslim characters, they become specimens of Muslim images because that is all there is:

If you have more voices, people will feel comfortable in talking about what they want to. They can have their representations in the literature books. You will read those books to feed the literacy but at the moment it’s just that there’s not much literature out there…. (Aina, personal communication, March 17, 2015)

To sum Aina’s claim, unless there is more Muslim writing available, the dense cultural experiences pertaining to Muslim cultures and societies cannot be tapped in.

The authors insisted that Muslim characters should be realistically portrayed such that Muslim children can be comfortable with being who they are. The field of Muslim children’s literature is huge, so more books and more people writing to cover wide range diversity are required.

1.23.4 “What Kind of Muslims Are You”68? Sacred Narratives and Inspirations

Faith plays a critical role in the creative inspirations that inform Muslim children’s literature: “You have to be careful. On the Day of Judgment your words are either going to be a witness for you or against you” (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014). Each of the Muslim women interviewed here articulated that she is telling an Islamic story with Islam as the chief backdrop. The expression of their Muslim identity and being true to it is a major concern.

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68 Rina exclaimed this when she was appalled by a certain misrepresentation of Muslim characters and practices by one of the Muslim authors.
for them. The “correct”\textsuperscript{69} and “authentic” representations of Islam and Muslims in English through faith-based compunctions, as well as the need to belong to and to be faithful to the Muslim community came up repeatedly in the conversations. As Nina explained:

… I try to achieve two things with my characters. One is realism, and the other is *haq*\textsuperscript{70}. So realism means that the characters are flawed in some ways – they are not perfect. None of us can achieve perfection. Only the Prophet was perfect. What it means is that even when they are flawed, they get there in the end. You can find the strength, and you can make a connection with God and get through this, and you can come back from the edge. (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014)

The character portrayals are informed by the author’s understanding of what is true and real.

The concern about inauthentic representations is related to things that do not resonate with the authors’ notion of Islamic culture and beliefs. Some of these authors insist on a certain baseline understanding or denotation of what it means to be a Muslim in their representations, with which even non-Muslims can identify:

I just want to be authentic… I just want to be true. I want the children to see over these books and say ‘ya, this is me’. I hope American children can recognize that and I want that. You can see this is the person that I connect with, and be inspired by … at a level of it being a human experience and human character. To be able to connect with them, regardless of their faith background and cultures. (Aina, personal communication, March 17, 2015)

Aina shares the same concerns as those expressed by Nina about Muslim characters. She feels the need to defend Islam with correct representations. Misinformation about Islam has the potential to mislead people against it.

Rina is apologetic and protective of her faith, as Islam is misunderstood due to the behavior of Muslims too:

\textsuperscript{69} Rina used “correct” six times, and Aina used “authentic” 18 times during the interviews. In a continued conversation, Aina replaced “forced” (as in “forced representations”) for “inauthentic” and offered that she does not claim to be an authority in the interpretation of Islam but wants children to relate to the Muslim American experiences that her stories portray.

\textsuperscript{70} Truth
…sometimes people are in fear because they do that - they blame the religion. When they meet a Muslim, and he is a horrible person, a creep, they will blame Islam for that. And you can’t do that. It’s not fair because Islam didn’t do that. So I try to make sure that Islamic information in my books is correct. There can’t be any inaccuracies in there. The characters on the other hand – they would do all sorts of things. They will do good things, they will do bad things, all kinds of stuff but that does not affect the Islamic character of the book. (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

The inaccuracies, misinformation, and correctness that are a cause for concern for the authors are born out of their personal interpretations of their lived experiences. The appreciation and representation of diversity within Islam appears to be quite limited in this sense. At the same time, a deliberate attempt has been made to portray diversity within the Muslim ummah of languages, cultures, classes, characters, and ethnicities. These narratives are driven by an islamically appropriate response to situations and problems.

The Muslim authors do not have a “modern writer’s neutral stance” but rather a clear sense of Muslim identity that they reflect in their characters with a clear message about how “Islam liberates them” and offers solutions to their problems. Although Nina maintained that Muslim children need stories that are not dry and didactic, this redemptive approach is didacticism of a different kind. The Muslim writers write their stories keeping the Muslim audience in mind, but non-Muslims can also appreciate them because universal messages are at the heart of them.

71 “I do not want to introduce any misinformation according to my own understanding of Islam and that goes by the Quran and the Hadith. Basically I am very wary of cultural baggage that passes as Islamic instruction. I read a lot of books that contain cultural references that have very little to do with the actual teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. This is very confusing for non-Muslims. But then that’s because Muslims are not a monolithic entity. We are incredibly inconsistent, but that said our literature should at least try to make it clear when people are behaving in a personal way even if they’re violating their own principles and precepts of their faith” (Rina, personal communication, June 14, 2016).

72 Nina (personal communication, December 7, 2014)

73 Nina (personal communication, December 7, 2014)
Rina expressed that much of her inspiration comes from the *hadiths*\(^{74}\) of the Prophet Muhammad. She also included notions of *Ahl-al –Kitab*\(^{75}\), i.e., sister communities, which are a Quranic concept of the inclusiveness of the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Significantly, although all of the Muslim authors maintained certain views about Muslims, and even though their representations emanated from their own versions of lived Islam, none of them claimed expertise in Islam.

### 1.23.5 Curriculum and Teacher Development

The Canadian classrooms comprise students from different cultural and religious backgrounds coming from different family situations, refugee camps, and immigration and violent situations. Muslim children’s literature has the potential to offer voices to these students such that they become part of the mainstream discourse. Dina offered:

> I come across teachers, who have children from different parts of the world. They read my books and those children begin to share their own stories. This helps the children, who are born here, to relate to what they have been going through. So they have been using the books as a stepping stone to some of the bigger discussions like war, family and all the violence, and what we can do to make it better. (Dina, personal communication, October 14, 2014)

An understanding of diversity within the classroom is critical for a healthy identity development. The curriculum needs to validate the experiences of Muslim children:

> I think that it’s important that people realize that there are ways behind every understanding and there are Muslim Americans and Muslim cultures, and you have to realize that there are so many children and so many families. I think they can see themselves into books that are popular and they can be comfortable in that. If there are no books about Muslim Americans or Muslim Canadians then where do I start? (Aina, personal communication, March 17, 2015)

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\(^{74}\) *Hadith* means “report” in Arabic. It is a collection of literature that narrates the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime.

\(^{75}\) Meaning people of the Book – the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
The prospects of including voices in Canadian classrooms offer the promise that these will be extended to the students’ families with bigger discussions on important issues such as war, family values, social justice, and the like, and the role that children can play in making things better.

Muslim children’s literature is required as a curriculum resource for teachers to attend to the needs of students from different communities. These books also need to have glossaries of terms and ideas, explanatory notes for teachers, and pronunciation guides, which teachers can use when preparing themselves to educate the children in their classrooms. Reading Muslim children’s literature is critical for understanding the beauty, the rich culture, the depth of experience, and the diversity in Islam. Both teachers and students can be invited to open themselves to the basics of Islam and can then be introduced to Islamic books. Being exposed to authors’ representations of Islam and meeting them will especially help people who have never seen a Muslim or who do not know Muslims. These books have the potential to validate and enlarge the experiences of Muslim and non-Muslim students, and teachers.

All of the authors interviewed have websites that provide introductions to their lives and works. Some authors, such as Rina, are very conscious about the use of their materials in schools as teaching resources. She has posted teacher resources on Teacher Tube and You Tube along with lesson plans to augment engagement with the subject. In the conversations the authors underlined the difficulty of developing teaching and learning resources. Rina stated that it is very hard for her to produce teacher resources, as she has to think in terms of student engagement. However, it is her attempt to support teachers who are ready to use her materials, with teaching resources increasing the marketability of her works. She wants to make sure that teachers understand her perspectives and characters. The teacher resources are also developed keeping in
mind the difficulty that the teachers face in finding appropriate classroom resources amidst the lean repertoire of Muslim children’s literature.

Rina’s experiences of her Canadian childhood and of attending public school can be used as stories and autobiographies for discussing some of the ways in which Muslim children perceive themselves in terms of their identity in school. Her know-how about visiting Canadian schools in general and Canadian Muslim schools in particular, provides latitude for how teachers perceive and receive writers in their schools. She shared her experiences of visiting schools, where she was judged by her appearance, but she was able to overcome the Muslim stereotype placed upon her through her funny stories and Canadian accent.

New publishers are emerging with Western aesthetics, which carry good prospects for Muslim children’s literature. A more narrative-style storytelling approach is seen in these published works. Earlier novels for Muslim children did not exist. Now, new genre novels for Muslim young adults are available. Muslim children’s writing is now coming out of the grooves of islamically didactic stories, which mostly conveyed religious beliefs, religious lessons, and Prophetic stories.

The need exists for educational institutions, teachers, and various stakeholders to prioritize these materials. Some publishers, such as Penguin, have announced awards for Muslim writing due to the strong need felt for Muslim books or books featuring Muslim characters. These publishers are now also trying to partner with the Muslim community to produce more diverse books. There has been a shift in the United Kingdom (UK) around the awareness of these publications and the lack of Muslim representations. The children’s publishing industry is still a very White, middle-class field, but change is occurring gradually.

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76 Nina (personal communication, December 7, 2014)
77 Nina (personal communication, December 7, 2014)
The need for an enriched and inclusive curriculum in the classroom for teaching and learning purposes applies to the education of teachers as well. As Rina said:

The curriculum aspects also apply to educating of teachers because sometimes teachers could have their biases and their own misconceptions about Islam. This affects the whole school. It affects the administration as much as the children. (Rina, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

The teachers play a critical role in developing inclusive perspectives and cosmopolitan ethics.

A curriculum that has a balanced representation of the community it serves has the potential to engage educators. Muslim children’s literature holds the promise of playing a vital role in mitigating the prejudice propagated by 9/11, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), and other such factors. They validate the experiences of children from different places, and they enlarge the experiences of non-Muslim children so that they can have a better understanding of the world, global cultures, and Muslims. This is true for homogeneous schools, too, where everybody is White or Muslim. Eventually, students from these schools will have to learn how to deal with different people and expand their horizons. Significantly, Muslim children’s literature may do more good for homogeneous White school populations than for multicultural children because White children perhaps have never seen a Muslim or read a Muslim writing.

It is not that general populations and educational stakeholders do not want Muslim children’s literature. Information about what would be appropriate, be effective, or appeal to children is simply lacking. The decision-making bodies have not been approached to communicate the shortcoming in this field. Building trust with these bodies is important, and efforts should be made to structurally induce such resources in the curriculum through official channels.
1.24 Discussion: Universal vs. Particular in Muslim Representations

The five different women writers are differently inspired and share a variety of nuances related to the understanding of Muslim representations in their works, as well as in Muslim children’s literature, in general. Their diverse responses and reflection on the subject depict the complex layers contained in the genre. These responses also speak of the wide expanse of shared and differentiated experiences that exist out there, which can be tapped as curriculum resources for teaching and learning purposes.

The conversations with Muslim writers highlight the debate around curriculum as driven by secular and non-secular thrusts. Most of the public schools in Canada and elsewhere in North America prefer having a curriculum and relevant accompanying resources to be non-biased from religion, social and ethnic point of view. Anything related to Muslim generally carries faith-based or religious connotations for general populations and readers due to the historical legacy that the world shares with Muslims.

The identity and situatedness of these five women authors within the Muslim context and writing is varied. Dina is not a Muslim, but her books having Muslim characters and milieu are hugely popular. She admits her books are a reconstruction of reality from her experiences of meeting people in a refugee camp in Pakistan and not driven by faith or beliefs. This adds a very interesting layer to our understanding of Muslim representations vis-à-vis their credibility through non-Muslim voices. It would be valuable to further understand if all Muslim writers have a preference of such a thrust over secular approaches.

The diversity of the Muslim world is explored within a universal understanding of the religion by these authors. Their understanding of Islam seems to be a standard template within which different types of Muslims live:
Muslim culture is actually pretty, pretty standard. Like you got the prayer, the fasting, the five pillars and everything like that. I set the stories all over the world because I wanted to show the Muslims are not just from the Middle East. The whole poem on the question of what does your bright eye see is about having different colors. My eyes are not only black. Sometimes they are blue; sometimes they are blue as the tropical sea and brown as trunk tree, and every shade in between. So I am trying to show that Muslims are not just one people. So the stories that I write are about Muslims and faith. There are cultural differences. I do not think I represent all the Muslims. (Rina, personal communication August 21, 2014)

All the authors offer that they have tried to maintain a nondidactic stance, but their belief in their way of Islam comes out very specifically in their writings. Dina’s focus is less on the religious details, but her view too presents a particular kind of understanding of Muslims. Each of the authors talked about an Islam that they have understood and lived. This is the Islam they owe their fidelity to and try to be true to it. They measure the Muslim depictions against their interpretations of their personal faith, beliefs and cultural interpretations, although, all of them do refer to the basic tenet of belief in one God and Prophet Muhammad.

The difference in approach of the Muslim and non-Muslim writers interviewed in this chapter is vast. Everything from the selection of a story, the narratives, the characters, the conflict and resolution by these writers are motivated by their faith-based understanding and interpretations. For the non-Muslim writer, Dina, it is a distanced illustration of Muslim milieu and characters, where she is not emotionally attached to either the problem or the solutions thereof. Her narratives are outside the sacred arcade. She is not motivated by faith but by the depiction of deprived people and characters in need of remedy and voice. Dina recognizes she is not the only one in Canada to write books for Muslim children. She feels honored by the fact that her works are included in the body of Muslim writings. Her writings depict her experiences of Muslim children in real situations, which speak volumes of the actual condition of Muslim children in several parts of the world fighting war and poverty. She draws her inspiration from the real life young characters that she saw in refugee camps in Pakistan and wrote her books
from the perspective of a white Protestant Canadian. She is unaware of many of the things happening in the larger Islamic world and feels she could have done better as an author writing about Muslims if she was from the part of the Muslim world that forms the backdrop of her works. As a result of all these reasons, Dina does not see herself as an author of “Muslim genre” writings. She writes her books because of the situation in a particular Muslim country not because it was Muslim. She is clear about her target audience, who are Canadians and not Muslims in particular. Dina said:

I was writing for an audience, but I thought it would be Canadian. I didn’t know how to go beyond Canada. So I knew that children in Canada knew by and large nothing about that part of the world or about the Muslim child so why do not we include something very universal - about the family and love, arguments with their older sister and those kinds of things. So it seems like children, who are not Muslim could see themselves in the book. (Dina, personal communication, October 14, 2014)

In all these portrayals created by the authors, the assumptions related to Muslim representations are somewhat affirmed: Muslims are deprived, poor, as well as marginalized. It is difficult to separate Muslims from the religious image associated with them.

The struggle for socialization by the Muslim children is experienced by the authors while growing up or living Islam in daily life. These authors have expressed such experiences in their writings that also reflect the presence of Islamophobia. The importance of having good childhood and schooling is emphasized both for Muslims as a foundation for strong identity and for the authors writing for Muslims as representative authors. Their writings are an interpretation of Muslims from their personal lens. Notably, understanding of a Muslim child depicted in their works is their interpretation of what a Muslim child is.
1.24.1 Multicultural Literature?\textsuperscript{78}

While I have used Multiculturalism as one of the theories to situate Muslim children’s literature, Rina and Nina both denied their literature was multicultural. For Rina, multicultural literature is a very restricted category, and her works do not fit into this mold. She said:

I am not trying to write a multicultural story, where I am trying to kind of show case Muslim culture. I am trying to write a story that everybody likes, and it happens to be about Muslims. The general idea of multicultural is like a cute little story that just partially does the job but isn’t good. Canadian multicultural literature is pretty boring and a 'showcase.' Like they’re saying, “Oh look at these interesting people. We should accept them. Shouldn’t we?” It’s very condescending. (Rina, Personal communication August 21, 2014)

Just like Rina, the other Muslim authors that I interviewed also challenged multiculturalism as expressed through Muslim stories. Nina began writing in the multicultural vein but now solely focused on writing Islamic stories.

Significantly, these authors view multiculturalism as a restricted and ‘feel good’ category that does not do justice to Muslim representations (Dudley-Marling, 2003). They vouch for a more rigorous division for Muslim children’s literature rather than merely bracketing it with the Multicultural label, which is a contested tag for them. This offers insight into the way multicultural literature is produced, distributed and used even with the merits that it brings of asserting diversity as strength. There is an apprehension of misrepresentation and misinformation about Islam in the minds of Muslim authors, which is a big indicator of mistrust that Muslim authors have as far as justice to Muslim content is concerned. It also demonstrates ignorance on the part of educators, who may treat any multicultural representation with the same brush stroke.

Such a scenario begs these questions: Can multicultural children’s literature and Muslim children’s literature category be mutually exclusive? How much leeway will Muslim children’s

\textsuperscript{78} Rina, personal communication August 21, 2014
literature have as curriculum materials with such exclusivity? Would it matter? Is multicultural literature necessarily devoid of faith connotations? Wouldn’t a representation devoid of faith and culture of Muslims, in general, be a superficial engagement with Muslim people? These are the questions that critical multicultural framework raises. As stated in Chapter Three, critical multiculturalism helps us engage with the difference without having to formalize them in a way that the ‘other’ becomes an image of the self that operates within our frame of intelligibility. The trepidation of being submerged further in the folds of non-entity in the multicultural garb is what these authors are anxious about. But can books with Muslim characters and milieu be branded solely as Muslim books? The writer’s orientation, intention and subject matter are important parameters to determine this.

It is important to note that Dina, the non-Muslim writer, does not express such concerns. She was not as vocal as the other three Muslim authors Rina, Nina and Aina on the subject. When questioned about Islam and Muslims representations, she was cautious about not using terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islam.’ She restrained her expressions on Muslims as she admitted she doesn’t know much about it.

Instead, Dina talked about human suffering, courage, action and universal family messages in her works. She is happy that children are reading and getting assurance and courage from her characters, who live a dissimilar and difficult life in different parts of the worlds caught in war. Dina’s motivation behind Muslim presentations in her works is different from the other authors. She acknowledges being inspired by the anti-Muslim feelings and propaganda that is prevalent in Canada, and how it is very easy to fall prey to such a feeling and environment:

One of the things that guided me was the fact that in Canada, in my part of the world, it is very easy to be anti-Muslim. There’s a lot of anti-Muslim propaganda out there. So I wanted to represent Muslim children in my books just as the other, just as human, just as brave, just as wondering and just as fabulous as Muslim
children everywhere in the world (Dina, Personal communication, October 14, 2014).

Thus, Dina’s representations are an issue based and not identity-based.

On the other hand, in many of the writings ‘being Muslim’ and Islam is perceived as a problem, which sends a very negative message to the children. Nina maintains that this problem is further aggravated when:

…those non-Muslim voices are preferred by the publishers and educationally over all the Muslim voices. Because it is familiar and because the publishers know them, I think they cause a problem. It may cause a barrier to the entry for Muslim writers come and tell their stories. (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014)

Such a preference of non-Muslim voices sheds light on the debate over inside-outside voices in Muslim children’s literature. Both Rina and Nina are confident about creating strong realistic Muslim female characters rather than drawing upon popular funny heroines that place girls in an unrealistic situation.

1.24.2 The Complexities of Writing Muslim Children’s Literature

There are multiple complexities involved in writing and publishing of Muslim children’s literature such as lack of readership, finding publishers, shortage of writers who believe in the need and can write a quality product that is fit for libraries, as well as fit to be used as educational and curriculum resources for teaching and learning purposes. The acceptance of these resources and criticality of their presence is yet another layer that goes hand in hand.

There are very few Muslims that venture into this field, so there is limited availability of stories and subject matter. Muslims come from an oral culture, which is very different from the western culture of high literacy. Reading culture is not very prominent amongst Muslims due to existing class structure to a great extent. Many of the Muslim populations come from a lower middle class or working class background, where reading is a luxury. Also, traditional Muslim
education based on scripture is very different from the popular western models. Too, there are language challenges as all the Muslim countries do not have the same level of expertise in the English language. Further, there are problems of being an immigrant:

If only you did a comparison between the lives and situation of natives – working class or sub-working class communities, you might find the Muslims are just like them only in this respect. There aren’t a lot many discrepancies that are not actually a result of Islam or Muslimness or even our otherness regarding being immigrants or bilingual. It’s just the function of that stratum of society. That is how people, who are not at benefit – people who do not finish school, people whose parents are illiterate, that is, how they live (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014).

There is a kind of paradoxical situation prevailing in much of the Muslim majority countries. There are more books available in Canada, USA and Britain on diverse characters than in the Middle East. Muslims in Muslim and Muslim-majority countries, it seems are not interested in Muslim or multicultural characters. An English book should only have English people in it (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014).

Living in a new context has brought awareness in Muslims to create appropriate literature, which presents Muslim beliefs, oral transmissions, prophetic stories and the like, for their children to enjoy and grow with. At the same time it is very challenging for Muslims to sustain the spirit because of language barriers, time issues, and time constraints. As Nina expressed:

It just comes to differences between children, who are being raised in a written culture in a few schools in the society and then their parents come from an oral background and oral culture back home. For many, many Muslims still, books are not a huge part of their children’s life, which is a shame because it is the cultural thing. So books and literature, meeting through children, with children, is very much a middle-class educational ideal (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014).

This reality of many Muslim immigrant families draws attention to complexities of developing Muslim perspectives in the curriculum.
The subject matter of the Muslim writing is now more complex with the complex dynamics that Muslim communities are undergoing, particularly in the West. It is no longer something about a *haram* or *halal* conversation but is much more nuanced. Further, publishing is an industry in itself, and if nobody is buying the Muslim children’s literature, then the publishers do not want to print them.

Rina brought to the fore issues of belonging and acceptance as authors by the Muslims when Muslim publishers did not publish nor pay attention to her works. Also, Canadian publishers were smaller, and they were being outnumbered by the American publishers. These factors add to the complexities of availability, production, and quality of Muslim children’s literature.

The Muslim female authors, during their interview conversations, expressed concerns regarding the presence of familiar but culturally insensitive and flawed voices that may be accepted as Muslim. They shared examples of instances where the whole cultural procreation of Muslims is done in a fanciful and disrespectful manner. Aina maintains that writing for Muslim children is hard because from within the Muslim communities there are not enough people focused on doing that. She said:

> …we have many generations of people who are all on being doctors or engineers. There are very few people who will take writing as a career, as a profession. It’s not something that traditionally may be there. So I think we need to change that and develop that attitude. We should encourage them to be an author. It’s really important to do this. (Aina, personal communication March 17, 2015)

Rina also opined that she hadn’t been recognized as much by the Canadian establishment, which is opposite to Dina’s experience, who feels humbled by all the recognition. This may reflect the common psyche prevalent amongst teachers, students, and readers at large of accepting a common turf i.e. trusting something already established and considered as safe. In this case, Dina as an established white Canadian writer commands more respect and
acceptability. Dina’s popularity reflects the confidence people have on the voices that are non-Muslim either because of her credibility or because of the reliability of certain established authors. It also speaks of the thin trustworthiness that Muslim authors may have regarding their production and quality of work.

1.25 Conclusion

The majority Muslim female authors interviewed here are from the subcontinent attempting to gain space in the west through their writings and in the field of publications. The desire to move from the periphery is their subconscious post colonial effort to reclaim the lost voices and spaces. Themes and approaches discussed in the conversations and in their works may be an attempt to create the East from their position in the West in order to confront some of the orientalist tendencies. It is also a resistance towards factual and cultural inaccuracies regurgitated in oriental literature. The cultural binaries developed by colonialism seem quite prevalent in the way Rina talks using ‘us’ and ‘them.’

My conversations with the Muslim authors helped me revisit some of my thoughts and perceptions about the subject. It was an engagement in critical identity discourse. I was able to completely relate with Aina when she described her childhood experiences of growing up as the lone Muslim girl in a white school and the struggle of understanding her own culture amidst the diversity that she witnessed around her. As the only Muslim girl growing up in a Jesuit convent, I had assimilated into prevalent Hindu, as well as Christian cultural and religious practices. I used to find it strange that the mother in my English textbook wearing a smart dress was very different from my mother, who was always clad in a sari. I too never read a book with Muslim character in my whole life, like Aina. Thus, my connection with the research theme and related subjectivities also came up in these conversations. They aroused me to my biases towards my
faith and way of life. Expressions by the Muslim authors seemingly verged on a monolithic understanding of Islam. They were honest in admitting they abide by the faith traditions they have been brought up in but also recognize and respect the many Islams that co-exist side by side. Their intention is not to judge anyone.

As a critical pedagogue, these lines forced me to think how much of the role my faith plays in talking about Islamophobia. Is it only about my faith or also about my fidelity towards my students as a teacher? Can these biases ever be eliminated or negated or neutralized? These conversations gave me time and space to be engaged in critical reflection on the theme, particularly, Dina from her non-Muslim stance provided me a window to look out for third spaces that can bring balance to my loyalty towards the subject as an educator. As well, I was struck by the humility and commitment of the authors to the cause of Muslim writing, which resonated with my research objective so much that I was constantly struggling to overcome my easily established connection and loyalty towards them. Authors such as Rina and Nina are ambitious on a human level and wish to become world class and world famous writers. This is unique in their capacity as Muslim women of attempting to break the established mold.

It was difficult for me to be detached from the Muslim authors both during the interview and while analyzing the data. Their passion and commitment reverberated very closely to some of the strands of motivation leading to my present research. The anxieties of being relevant, being accepted and being a faithful Muslim all struck chord with me, and I questioned the meeting points of my identity as a teacher, a critical pedagogue, and a Muslim. Their empathy and understanding of my subject quickly helped make connections with them. While analyzing the data, I was very conscious of critically questioning their position.

With Dina too, I was able to connect as a woman and was drawn by her calm voice and concern for not misrepresenting Muslims. When the difficulty of correct or authentic
representation of Islam came up, I questioned the nuances of authentic Islam and Muslims and who decides.

I would like to conclude with a note on promises and prospects that area of Muslim children’s literature offers that resonated in the author’s voices of their works being well received. The authors’ optimism can be read in these lines:

It’s been amazing. It’s so well received. Both from within Muslim community and outside the Muslim community. Within the Muslim community it has been nice because there are many organizations that really recommended. That’s what I wanted to achieve. That’s what the community and the children liked, and they won so many awards. And then when a reader says “can I just give you a hug for writing such a wonderful book” – that’s something very rewarding. (Aina, personal communication, March 17, 2015)

All the five writers interviewed here are positive that the scenario of lack of availability of materials for Muslim children may change in next 5 to 10 years as Muslim parents of the second generation have gone through the Western education system and value literacy, as well as reading culture. Most of them have a clear picture of how important reading is to children and about their Islamic identity:

It’s a remarkably growing industry, and I am very positive about it. I think a lot of progress has been made and I think a lot of progress will continue to be made, Insha’allah! So it’s exciting, exciting times! (Nina, personal communication, December 7, 2014)

Admittedly, within these acknowledgments lies the undercurrent of lackadaisical promotion of such materials by key stakeholders in Canada as pronounced by Rina quite vehemently. This also affirms our findings from Chapter Four of examination of the Trillium List.

The rich exchanges with the authors on Muslim representations can be leveraged to extend such dialogues for a continued and informed curriculum and teacher development efforts.
Chapter 6
*My name was Hussein and I am a Muslim* - Muslim Representations 3

“*Through early exposure to the stories, children gain their first intellectual framework within which they can integrate experience and perception. Such stories appear to be the primary means by which fundamental psychological and cultural values and needs are crystallized in every society*”.

- Kline, 1993, p.77

1.26 Introduction

The present chapter continues to explore Muslim representations. Here I first give a short account of the wide array of authors represented through select literary pieces in the order in which their works appear in the chapter. This is followed by critical content analysis and discourse analysis of the literary pieces. This analysis offers a flavor of the wide variety of cultural and thematic representations in the chosen works.

The selected literary pieces also proffer a variety of forms, themes, and formats from picture books to chapter books and novels for young adults covering the age range of elementary students. I have deliberately chosen books published approximately within the last decade such that nuances of post 9/11 Muslim children’s literature can be explored within the context of Islamophobia, which is one of the purposes of my research. The selection and inclusion of children’s books here broadly follow procedures set down by the Ontario Ministry of Education, where the content criteria broadly pursue the following guidelines (Hayden, 1992, p. iv):

- “Look for a quality of reality that gives the reader a chance to experience something.

- Try to determine the author’s commitment to cultural groups accurately.

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79 The title of this chapter is a combination of two titles of Muslim children’s literature both representing identity struggle that Muslim children face. This challenge is depicted in My Name was Hussein (2004) and I am a Muslim (2001) in different ways both also signifying the general subject matter of Muslim children’s literature.
• Avoid materials that sensationalize, enumerate unusual customs, or practice reverse stereotyping.

• Be sensitive to emphasis on cultural differences at the expense of similarities.

• Whenever possible, use the same critical criteria appropriate for all types of literature – distinctive language and appropriate dialogue, style, relevance and potential interest, clear-cut plots, and believable characterizations.”

Since there are very few precedents of Muslim children’s literature, the analysis attempted is a unique exercise in engaging with deep chords related to curriculum and teacher development. It is situated within the umbrella of basic questions of curriculum studies: What do schools teach, and who should decide? Is the primary aim of education to instill basic skills or foster critical thinking (Flinders & Thornton, 2004, p.1)? As well, it is inspired by Dewey’s ideas of school as an integral part of the community life and an instrument of social reform.

The chapter ends with a discussion and implications of the understanding gathered through the process on curriculum and teacher development processes.

1.27 Prologue to the Authors

1.27.1 Naomi Shihab Nye

Naomi Shihab Nye was born in 1952, in St. Louis, Missouri. She is the daughter of a Palestinian father and an American mother. During her high school years, she lived in Ramallah in Palestine, the Old City in Jerusalem, and San Antonio, Texas. She received her BA in English and world religions from Trinity University. Her young adult novel Habibi (1999) discussed here is largely an autobiographical account of her growing up in Jerusalem. The Turtle of Oman (2014) is yet another interesting book having Aref Al-Amiri, an elementary school boy at the center. She was awarded Jane Addams Children’s Book Award for The Turtle of Oman (2014).
She is lauded for her literary works and has won many awards for her poetry collections as well. William Stafford notes: “Her poems combine transcendent liveliness and sparkle along with warmth and human insight. She is a champion of the literature of encouragement and heart. Reading her work enhances life”.

Her poems and short stories are published in various journals and reviews throughout North America, Europe, the Middle and the Far East. She is a champion of promoting international goodwill through the arts. She was elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2009. She currently lives in San Antonio, Texas.

1.27.2 Rukhsana Khan

She is one of the most well-known and accepted award-winning Muslim woman writers of Canada currently living in Toronto. She has several titles of Muslim children’s literature to her credit. As a children's author and storyteller, Rukhsana Khan is very well traveled in Canadian and the U.S. schools to connect with schools and teachers. To make her works classroom and teacher friendly, she has created teaching resources (www.rukhsanakhan.com) to accompany her books. These are age-appropriate materials on Muslim themes to be used by students in schools. Her books depict a sharp sense of humor. She migrated from Lahore, Pakistan with her family, when she was three. Her struggle as an immigrant child is very aptly captured through the family dynamics depicted in her stories. She has produced children's literature based on "...what demanded to be written at the time I was writing them" as well as “…and now, at a time when

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there is so much conflict in the world, I hope my stories help create some cross-cultural understanding.81

She has been writing since 1989. Presently, she is a member of Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI), The Writers Union of Canada, Canadian Society of Authors, Illustrators and Performers (CANSCAIP), and Storytelling Toronto. She has to her credit the following stories: Bedtime Ba-a-a-lk (1998), The Roses in My Carpets (1998), Dahling if You Luv Me Would You Please Please Smile (1999), King of the Skies (2001), Muslim Child (2002), Ruler of the Courtyard (2003), Silly Chicken (2005), Many Windows (2008), A New Life (2009), Wanting More (2009), and Big Red Lollipop (2010).

1.27.3 Rae Norridge

Rae Norridge82 is the author of Hilmy the Hippo juvenile picture book series. Her love of nature, wildlife, and natural habitat are driving force behind her works. She spent considerable part of her life in Africa which captured in her oil paintings. Through her painting and writings, she hopes to create awareness and passion in others for nature. She has had many exhibitions in the United Kingdom as well as South Africa. Recently she has ventured adult fiction through The Apricot Tree (2014).

1.27.4 Marjane Satrapi

Marjane Satrapi is an Iranian-born French author, graphic novelist, director, and illustrator. She attended the Lycée Français in Tehran, where her family was involved with communist and leftist political groups partly responsible for the 1979 Iranian Revolution. In 1983, Satrapi was sent to Austria by her parents, where she attended the Lycée Français de

Vienne. She returned to Iran after graduating high school, where she attended university. She received her diploma and a Masters degree in Visual Communication. She is famous for her novel *Persepolis* (2007). An animated film version of *Persepolis*, which debuted at the Cannes Film Festival in 2007, was co-directed by her. In 2008, the film was nominated for an Academy Award as well. Satrapi continues her animation and film-making work at her home in France.

1.27.5 Na'ima B. Robert

Naïma Robert, born Thando Nomhle McLaren on 19 September 1977, is a convert Muslim woman writer, also the founding editor of SISTERS Magazine for Muslim women. She is of mixed descent of Scottish Highlanders on her father's side and the Zulu people on her mother's side. She was born in Leeds and grew up in Zimbabwe. She has a first-class degree from the University of London, experience in marketing, performing arts, teaching and the travel and tourism industry. She lives in Egypt with her family and travels to South London often for her work. She has authored picture books such as *The Swirling Hijab* (2002) and *Ramadan Moon* (2009). Her chapter books *From Somalia, with Love* (2009), *Boy vs. Girl* (2010), *Far From Home* (2011), *Black Sheep* (2013) and *She Wore Red Trainers: A Muslim Love Story* (2014) have won many accolades.

1.27.6 J. Samia Mair

J. Samia Mair is a freelance writer of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry with publications in magazines, books, and scientific journals. She writes on a variety of topics, including Islam, public health, and law. She has a column in the SISTERS magazine "Tea Talk." Mair was on the faculty of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School and practiced law for eight years. She has written two children’s books. Her book *Amira’s Totally Chocolate World* (2010) written for children in the age range of 5-8 years is discussed here.
1.27.7 Michelle Khan

Michelle Khan is an award-winning Indian-Canadian writer famous for *The Hijab Boutique* (2011), which is her first chapter book for young-adults. She got her start at a University of Toronto student paper and became famous thereafter. Michelle Khan wrote an internationally syndicated youth advice column for six years. She lives in Toronto with her parents and younger sister.

1.27.8 Deborah Ellis

Deborah Ellis (www.deborahellis.com) is the award-winning author of the international bestsellers of *Breadwinner* (2000) trilogy that was inspired by her visit to the refugee camps in Afghanistan is very well acclaimed with awards and bestseller recognition. These books trace the story of an Afghan girl Parvana and her struggles in the transition of her family from an educated well-established stronghold into their becoming refugees. The third book in the trilogy *The Mud City* (2003) retells Parvana’s best friend Shauzia’s struggles and their bleak existence. These are very insightful books depicting daily existence and humane struggles of a population desperately trying to survive amidst tough Taliban regime.

Ellis’ most recent book is *The Cat At The Wall* (2015). She has more than twenty books, as well as several awards to her credit including the Ontario Library Association’s President’s Award for Exceptional Achievement. She has been named to the Order of Ontario. Deborah Ellis is an advocate of the disenfranchised and has donated a large sum for Afghan cause from *Breadwinner* books. Her website provides teacher resources for classroom purposes.

1.27.9 Karen Katz

Karen Katz (www.karenkatz.com) has written several picture books for very young children. Her books also consist of descriptions of festivals such as Kwanzaa, Chinese New year
and *Ramadan*. She is of Armenian descent and lives in New York. She enjoys designing and takes special interest in folk art from around the world. She has enjoyed various careers as a costume designer, a quilt maker, a fabric artist, and a graphic designer. She was inspired to write stories for children after she adopted her daughter, Lena, from Guatemala. Her book *My First Ramadan* (2007) is discussed here.

1.27.10 Fawzia Gilani-Williams

Fawzia Gilani-Williams is a famous author of Muslim children’s books, particularly, those written on *Eid*. She has worked in the field of education as a principal, librarian, educational consultant, head of department, teacher, writer, researcher, and visiting author for over 20 years in the USA, Canada, and the UK. She was born in England. Her Ph.D. is in children’s literature and Character Education from the University of Worcester.

1.27.11 Hena Khan

Hena Khan (www.henakhan.com) is a Pakistani Muslim-American writer, who has written numerous books for children. She lives in Rockville, Maryland. She grew up reading books, and that passion left a lasting impression on her mind, as well as inspired her to become children’s author. She is widely traveled and Spain is her favorite destination. She also spends time writing and editing for international organizations that work to improve the health and lives of people around the world. She has beautifully illustrated picture books such as *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns* (2015) and *Night of the Moon* (2008). The latter is discussed in the present chapter.

1.27.12 Asma Mobin-Uddin

Asma Mobinuddin (www.asmamobinuddin.com) is a Muslim American writer and a practicing pediatrician. She was born and raised in the United States. Since her parents migrated
from Pakistan. She had connections with Pakistan, while growing up. She acquired her undergraduate education and medical degree from Ohio. After her child was born, she took off from her practice to be dedicated mother for her child. This pause also inspired her to write books for Muslim children as she found a gap in the availability of Muslim-American experiences for young children. Her first book was *My Name is Bilal* (2005), followed by *The Best Eid Ever* (2007). Her latest publication *A Party in Ramadan* (2009) is discussed here. All of her books have been recognized with awards.

1.27.13 Hena Islam

Hena Islam is an American writer. She has written *Eid* picture book entitled *An Eid for Everyone* (2009). Not much information is available on her on the publisher’s website except ‘author bio coming soon.’

1.27.14 Reza Jalali

Reza Jalali, an Iranian Kurd, is an award-winning American writer of children’s book. He hails from Iran, holds an MFA and has taught at the University of Southern Maine and Bangor Theological Seminary. He is currently a community organizer and an administrator at the University of Southern Maine. His latest book, *Homesick Mosque* (2013), a collection of short stories, is about Muslim immigrants in the post-9/11 America. Jalali is the Multicultural Student Affairs Coordinator at the University of Southern Maine and Muslim Chaplain at Bowdoin College. His picture book *Moon Watchers: Shirin’s Ramadan Miracle* (2010) is discussed here.

1.28 To Be or Not to Be: Muslim Identities and Fidelities

All the stories examined here primarily talk about Muslim identities and narrate the merits and challenges of developing, maintaining and asserting a Muslim individuality amidst the counter waves of confusion and frustration resulting from an encounter with the West. The
latter is in most cases the new home of Muslims. In some examples, the Muslim characters struggle with change is a reverse movement from West to the East. Within the context, as well as milieu described and used in the backdrop each of the books is created an assortment of images from Muslim lives. The Muslim characters in these stories, particularly the children, are torn between the two seemingly dichotomous identities and ways of life through their experiences of being Muslim in a different cultural milieu. Within these broad strands are smaller streams of cross-border multicultural experiences, Muslim faith, rituals, beliefs and practices, as well as tales of Ramadan and Eid. Eid is a very important celebration for Muslims all over the world. Many fictional books for Muslim children have Eid as the subject and can be segmented into holiday literature for Muslim children. Although there are at least three different Eids that Muslims celebrate – Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha, and Eid Milad un Nabi - most of the authors have only taken Eid-Al-Fitr as their theme. This is the Eid that is observed after the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. A lot of literature is available on this holy month.

The following section is divided into two parts: Being Muslim: Dilemmas of Growing Up and Being Muslim: Ramadan and Eid. Both the parts deal with identities through a negotiation with culture and context. The first one has stories that primarily employ dilemmas of growing up and the second one focuses on Eid and Ramadan stories. Admittedly, there are overlaps in the sections like in Rukhsana Khan’s Muslim Child: Understanding Islam through Stories and Poems (2002) two stories I Love Eid and Azeeza’s First Fast have Eid and Ramadan at their center. Amira’s Totally Chocolate World (2010) also mentions Eid towards the end of the story. All the stories are presented in chronological and ascending order of their publication
1.28.1 Being Muslim: Dilemmas of Growing up

1.28.1.1 *Habibi* (1999)

*Habibi* (1999) is narrated from the point of view of a teenage Arab girl Liyana Abboud. This award winning novel written by Naomi Shihab Nye, narrates the story of an Arab-American family residing in St. Louis in which the father Dr. Kamal Abboud, whom the children call poppy, decides to go back to Jerusalem so that his children can be brought up in their Arab culture. He also wants to give back to his motherland as a doctor, whatever he has earned and learned in the United States of America. The American Christian mother of the family, Susan, consents, as Jerusalem is a holy place for her too. She says:

“Our family has reached crossroads. You” – she opened her hand toward Liyana – “are going to high school next year. You” – she pointed at Rafik – “Are going into middle school. Once you get into your new schools, you will less like moving across the ocean. This is the best time we can think of to make the big change”.

(Nye, 1999, p. 2)

The parents think this is the best time for them to move to Jerusalem.

All this happens the day after Liyana got her first real kiss. Her life is going to change forever. Liyana knows very little about her family's Arab heritage. Her comfortable and settled world starts changing when the father announces his decision to move to Jerusalem. While Liyana’s parents are inspired by deep sentiments of beliefs and value system, and her little brother Rafik looks forward to having fun time in their fatherland, Liyana struggles to give up her newly developed crush for a young man in her school. As a teenager, she is torn between helplessness in following the family’s decision, as well as her difficulty of deciding what she can expect from the future. For her, it’s an identity crisis with a difference as she is trying to come to terms with cultural nuances of both her father’s Arab descent, her Catholic mother’s submission and her combination Arab American way of life that she has lived so far. She has a generous and
accepting view of a young American girl, who is generation next and who wants to see things differently. Liyana also has amicable solutions to offer to even the most difficult things in life.

The novel gives a detailed and sensitive account of Abboud’s selling their estate in St. Louis for the move. The children feel emotional about leaving their precious things and say sorry to their neighbors for the small mishaps that had occurred between them. Although mother Susan is in agreement with the father for the move, she too gets emotional when playing Mozart for the last time on her piano that was already sold off.

Unlike their mother Susan, their maternal grandmother, Peachy Helen, is furious that the family is leaving America. She sees no sense in the decision. The portraits of paternal and maternal grandmothers of Liyana are distinctly created to bring out the differences in each of their personalities. Peachy Helen and her relationship with the Abboud family is described thus:

… (She) lived by the Forest Park in a high-rise apartment. Peachy wore flowery dresses and high spots of blush on her cheeks, and she couldn’t stand it that they were leaving. She was addicted to their after-school phone calls. She was used to dropping in at a moment’s notice. She stayed with Liyana and Rafik when their parents went out of town. She and Liyana often ate lunch together on Saturdays at fancy ladies’ tearooms. (Nye, 1999, p. 15)

Kamal Abboud has sensitized children to his experiences of growing up in Jerusalem some of which brought ache and anguish to their hearts even today – like the loss of dear ones. He always called himself a Palestinian and had a hard time using the word Israel. Liyana thinks this is a moot point: “Too bad the country names couldn’t have made some awful combo word from the beginning, like Is-Pal or Pal-Is, to make everybody happy” (p. 34). The novel offers some critical messages to young readers on politics of difference, religion, and hatred. Liyana thinks: “Isn’t it dumb to want only to be next to people who are like you” (Nye, 1999, p. 27)?

Although the Abbouds are Arabs, Liyana has not witnessed some of these things practiced by the family in America. These combined with differences in infrastructure make life
challenging for the Abbouds. A simple thing like a home phone would take one year to be installed and activated in Jerusalem. Liyana is irritated that boys did not do much work and girls are expected to be present where women are attending daily chores. Her experience of buying chicken at the meat shop, where the chicken is butchered in front of her own eyes, shatters her: “She had eaten chicken hundreds of times, but she had never witnessed this scene before. She thought, *It happens over and over and over*” (Nye, 1999, p. 106). This experience makes her quit meat.

Liyana’s struggles to accept cultural norms of the new land. For instance, her father does not allow her to wear short dress. She notices that Arab-Israeli conflict pervades even the most mundane aspect of their lives. Gradually, Liyana starts settling and is ready to forget Jackson and his kiss: “On the twenty-ninth day of school, Liyana decided she could forget about Jackson of Atom, the boy who sat across the aisle from her regular class, smiled at her a little more” (Nye, 1999, p. 114). Liyana is gradually accepting the change brought through their move to Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, both Liyana and Rafik get admission in different good schools. Liyana goes to Armenian school and is immediately interested in knowing about Armenian culture, even though she is an ‘outsider’ to the Armenian culture. This attitude of Liyana is applauded by the author: “Above their heads invisible angels started clapping” (Nye, 1999, p. 73). Liyana meets a boy that smells cinnamon, Omer, at Sandrounis shop and starts liking him, while being intensely conscious that her father would never approve of this relationship, particularly, in this land of dignity “…where a girl was hardly supposed to THINK about a boy” (Nye, 1999, p. 143). Liyana, nevertheless, continues to develop bond with him and informs her mother about a date that she had with him.

The novel gives interesting accounts of cultural, geographical and emotional landscapes of two very different worlds that the family lives and shifts between. Liyana thinks “their family
is half and half, like a carton of rich milk” (Nye, 1999, p. 15). The identity affirmation of the characters, particularly, the two children in the family are done not so much as Muslims but as Arabs with subtle undercurrents of Muslim practices. Liyana’s attempt to reach out to Sitti\textsuperscript{83} maturely to develop bond with her is very delicately portrayed. Even when she does not understand Sitti’s language, Liyana respectfully engages in her grandmother’s wishes such as staying overnight with her and participating in all the activities that the latter suggests. Sitti’s home-remedy cure for Liyana’s fever, in spite of the fact that her father is a doctor, brings her a little closer to believing in Sitti’s Secrets. When visiting a Bedouin village, she learns about Bedouin way of life, which does not need money to live. She at once decides she will be a Bedouin when she grows up! She is also surprised to discover that most people in the Bedouin village are used to disasters and are not upset when these occur. The novel gives some important messages to the young readers throughout the story that relate to the family’s multicultural experiences. For instance, Liyana realizes: “The worst foolish thing is when a religion wants you to say it’s the only right one. Or the best one” (Nye, 1999, p. 169). There is subdued humor in the incident of American reverends visiting the Abboud family.

The Abboud family shares a loving and respectful relationship with each other, and is a model of a multicultural family abiding by both the American and the Arab values. The picture of each of them creating a balance between the two worlds conveys the message that it is possible to navigate through the differences in beautiful and amicable ways. Liyana and Rafik share two very different cultures, faiths, families, histories, and geographies from their mother’s and father’s side. This does not in any way mar their identity or confuse it. In fact, Liyana’s alliance with Omer, an Israeli boy, adds a further dimension that enriches the already rich and complex tapestry of culture and values that surround the Abboud siblings. Liyana thinks:

\textsuperscript{83} Means grandmother in Arabic
That day her geography teacher had said Arabs and Jews should trade places for a while and see what it felt like to be each other. But Atom said it would be too hard to do. She wondered. Could she even imagine exactly what it would feel like to be her brother? (Nye, 1999, p. 202)

Liyana’s musings offer insight into identity dilemmas that young adolescents face in the current multicultural mobile world.

When their friend from the tents, Nadine’s brother Khaled is shot, and her father is jailed, Liyana shows strength. She goes inside the prison against the odds to meet, as well as support her father, Dr. Kamal Abboud. Her loud plea as a young girl sets the tone for the young readers to have courage of conviction: “You do not have to be so mean! You could be nicer! My father is a doctor! My friend you shot is a gentle person! YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY” (Nye, 1999, p. 221-2)

Liyana is inspired by her father’s activism to bring peace, camaraderie, and justice in the land. She also feels homesick a great deal but is not sure for what. Her dilemma is stated thus:

What was the real reason for my homesickness? Those ugly green signs marking exits off the interstate? The sports sections of American newspapers that she never glanced at anyway? The chilled tapioca puddings in little tubs at the supermarket? What was she missing anymore? (Nye, 1999, p. 234)

Such dilemmas present a very interesting perspective on young readers’ ways of negotiating identity and spaces. As an Arab American she felt closer to everything in the USA than Jerusalem but did not feel like a stranger in the old city anymore. Rafik, on the other hand, does not miss anything. He was having fun with too many things to waste his precious time in missing home. The viewpoints of a teenage girl and a young boy are juxtaposed here. The novel ends with Omer’s visit to Sitti’s village, where Liyana’s extended family lives. Their acceptance of his presence and the father’s hospitable welcome affirm possibility of hope and change on the horizon even if it’s by inches. Liyana thinks:
Maybe this close feeling was a gift for growing older. Maybe this was what you got in the place of all the things you lost…Could things still be simple? She didn’t need everyone to know her – just a few people. That was enough. She needed her family, two countries, her senses, her notebooks and pencils, and her new devotion to – trade. (Nye, 1999, p.254)

Liyana’s reconciliation is a sign of the potential that cosmopolitan ethics hold for an educational and informed understanding of multiple identities.

The book is critiqued for its predictable plot. It does not concretely propose any resolution to the Arab-Israel conflict but offers a humanist lens of accepting and celebrating differences. While Nye ventures into describing experiences of Arab American teenager, she leaves it to the parents to show much of the way for the kids.


This is a hardbound picture book written by Rukhsana Khan to “…correct the misconceptions regarding Muslims, and to show the personal side of Islam by telling stories of everyday Muslim children and their struggles with faith” (Khan, 2002, p. 5). It highlights the beliefs and practices of Muslim Children through stories woven around the five pillars of Islam depicting different landscapes of realities in which Muslim children live. The book speaks of some of the common signposts of being Muslim: Islamic dress, dietary restrictions, celebrations and Islamic history. These are illustrated through a few poems, a few Quranic verses, the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, some facts regarding Muslims being part of *Ahl-al-Kitab* (people of the book) along with Jews and Christians, little history of Islam and even some popular recipes such as that of the *samosas* (written along with a story of the same name).

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84 Shahada (recognition of Allah and the Prophet), Fast, Prayers, Almsgiving and Pilgrimage
First three stories of *The Muslim Child* are narrated in the third person. The book was written after 9/11 to mitigate some of the hatred and fear aroused against Muslims throughout America, which resulted in increasing concern regarding: “…racial profiling, the criminalization of social policies, multilayered systems of social control and surveillance, and the ongoing attacks by the police against people of color” (Giroux, 2002, p.2).

The first story *Fajr* is about a young boy Jamal, who struggles to maintain his Morning Prayer offerings and the related rituals. It is set in the USA. *The Black Ghost* has Canada as its milieu and brings out the popular perceptions of *hijab*-wearing Muslim women as ‘walking ghosts.’ It is based on the first-hand experience of the author's extended family in Ottawa, Canada detail of which is mentioned in the teacher's guide: “A big black ghost!” said Danny. “It floated down the sidewalk after me. All I could see were its hands and slits where the eyes should be” (Khan, 2002, p. 21)! … “Your mom’s a ghost” (Khan, 2002, p. 25).

The third story is entitled *Azeeza’s First Fast*. It depicts Azeeza, the young girl’s attempt to start fasting and an account of her first fast. It brings out the mercy of Allah as He forgives those, who err unknowingly. In the story Azeeza accidentally eats something while fasting.

*I love Eid* is a descriptive account in the first person of a young girls’ excitement of *Eid* celebrations and *Samosas* is about Ahmad, the young orphan boy who is adopted and finds a family. The last story in the book is *Lost at Hajj*, the story of an American boy Bilal, who is separated from his parents while at Hajj and is reunited with his parents at the end.

The book is meant for grades 2-6 according to the teacher's guide. The latter has some activities that bring out comparative perspectives on religious rituals of different faiths and
conveys a limited sense of some of the nuances like 'Mecca'. It also has a list of related recommendations.

1.29.1.1 Ruler of the Courtyard (2003)

This is a colorful picture book also written by Rukhsana Khan telling the story of a little girl Saba in Pakistan, who bravely confronts a snake in the bathhouse only to discover that it was a rope. She is the ruler of the courtyard for being brave and earns the right to cross the courtyard: “And now the chickens know I’ve got a right to cross the courtyard and walk wherever I may wish to go.” The verse-like structure of the story conveys its suitability for very young children. The pictures depict a rural landscape with frugal settings.

1.29.1.2 Hilmy the Hippo: Learns not to Lie (2004)

Written by Rae Norridge this book is meant for children ages 5-7 years. This book is one of the seven Hilmy the Hippo book series, wherein the chief character Hilmy’s encounters in different forms are narrated through various hard cover editions such as *Hilmy the Hippo: Learns to be Grateful* (2002), *Hilmy the Hippo: Learns about the Creation* (2003), *Hilmy the Hippo: Becomes a Hero* (2003), *Hilmy the Hippo: Learns about Vanity* (2004), *Hilmy the Hippo: Learns about Death* (2007), and *Hilmy the Hippo: Learns to Share* (2007). Each of these stories has a moral lesson for the children in the end.

*Hilmy the Hippo: Learns not to Lie* is about Hilmy, a young hippopotamus, who is pictured as an endearing little child curiously learning through various experiential encounters. He is fond of boasting about qualities he does not possess and about things he has never attempted. He is looking for new friends and wishes to gain popularity through his many far-fetched tales and swanky personal qualities that he spins before his animal friends: “I am a

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special hippo,” said Hilmy, trying his utmost to impress Mina. “I can fly. All my friends call me Hilmy the flying hippo” (Norridge, 2004, p. 5).

When his lies are put to the test he learns not to lie. He learns to be humble by the end of the story. Hilmy is happy to understand that friends will like you unconditionally for who you are. His name Hilmy comes from the Arabic root ‘Hilm,’ which is used at several places in the Holy Quran. Haleem comes from the root "hilm," which has the following classical Arabic connotations: to be forbearing, mild, lenient, clement, to be forgiving, gentle, deliberate, to be leisurely in manner, not hasty, to be calm, serene and to manage one’s temper or to exhibit moderation. Hilm is an essential attribute of any good human being according to the Holy Quran. Prophet Muhammad is considered as an epitome of haleemi, which means humility. One of the ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah is Al Haleem. Having "hilm" can be understood to have wisdom and a forbearance that allows a person to control their anger. It is intelligence that allows one to control his/her anger. These are the ethical qualities Muslims aspire for. Since it is one of the beautiful names of Allah, any variation of the word becomes one of the desirable names for the Muslims to have. Hilmy appears to be one of the probable variations of the same. The story is written within the overarching umbrella of the spirit shared in general by the Muslims universally, which indicate belief and submission to one Allah.

Hilmy is a Muslim character, and the story uses common features of everyday Muslim culture such as greeting each other with As-Salāmū ‘Alaykum, which means ‘Peace be upon you’ are used by the characters. The response to this greeting is Wa ‘Alaykum as-Salām meaning “Peace be upon you too.” The latter is an expression of mutual love, sincerity, and best wishes (Norridge, 2004, p. 25). The characters in the story meet and greet each other in this way. The greeting exchange in this story is a mark of good manners in the young ones. Besides this, the young characters also use Insha’ālāhu, which means “If Allah so wishes”: “Used by Muslims to
indicate their decision to do something, provided they get help from Allah (Norridge, 2002, p. 25). It is a common practice amongst Muslims, and a sign of humility to say *Insha’allah* before committing to anything in future as whatever may happen in future is only in the hands of Allah. This utterance also signifies faith in God. Hilmy’s friend Mina uses *Fi Amanillah*, which is equivalent of Muslim good bye meaning ‘May Allah protect you’ or ‘In the safe custody of Allah’: …tomorrow, *Insha’Allah*, you fly over to the river where I live, and you can meet all my friends. *Fi Amanillah*, Hilmy, I will see you tomorrow (Norridge, 2004, p. 5).

Besides this, Hilmy uses *Subhan Allah* meaning ‘Glory be to Allah.’ The Jackal in the story uses *Masha’Allah*, indicating ‘God has willed.’ Hilmy says *Al-Hamdulillah*, ‘praise be to Allah,’ when he learns the valuable lesson of humility. When Hilmy is sorry and feels he was wrong, he exclaims *Astaghfirullah*, meaning ‘Allah forgive me.’

The story *Hilmy the Hippo: Learns not to Lie* belongs to the genre of Islamic manners. This book is an easy read and developmentally appropriate. It can be easily read by children themselves. It can also lend itself to interesting curriculum resource for classroom purposes through puppet show and dramatic presentation impersonating different animal voices from the story. The book is tastefully illustrated by Leigh Norridge Marucchi and has a balanced juxtaposition of pictures. The cover page of the book and the inner pages are artistically designed and have an appealing quality for children of the age. It contains a glossary of Islamic terms used in the story with an explanation of how they are used. There is also a description of different animals present in the book for children of the age. It depicts an innocent world consisting of child characters in the form of different animals true to their age range. They are gullible, friendly and admit mistakes easily.

*Hilmy the Hippo Learns not to Lie* is an allegory, where the animals represent young children. Through animals, the author has created a little child’s world. All the familiar animals
in these stories stand for human characters. It captures tensions of creating and maintaining friends. A child’s strong need of being loved, cared and belonged is captured through this simple story. The cover page resembles a scene from *Panchatantra Tales* famously attributed to India, which is also a collection of animal stories. The animals in these well known Indian stories represent different peoples or segments of society.

The tradition of writing in allegorical forms is not only famous in *Panchatantra*, but within Islamic annals too it is well-known through “The Debate between the Animals and the Humans” in *Ikhwan Al- Safa* (Callatay, 2005). This story is rewritten by Johnson-Davies (1994) in *The Island of Animals*. The origins of these traditions of writing have been attributed to India but adopted in the 10th century for specific socio-political purposes existing in the Islamic lands at that time. Cross-cultural, cross-historical exchanges of literature and values can be surmised through the adaptation of *Panchatantra* tales in the famous stories of *Kalila was Dimna* (Suleman, 2006). The narrative of the story creates significance (Gee, 2005, p. 11) for morals and ethics as embedded in Muslim understanding gained from culture, scriptural interpretations and lived experiences. The density of the term ‘hilm’ is indicated by the character of the young hippo, who is, pictorially very large, even though in the story he is a child. This significance is further highlighted by the use of words *Insha’allah, Masha’Allah* and the like, which are ordinarily part of a Muslim’s conversation with each other. Such a conversational language evokes identity of the characters, here all of whom are animals, as Muslims. When Hilmy wishes Mina *As-Salamu ’Alaykum*, the readers identify Hilmy as a Muslim and assume Mina also to be a Muslim. Similarly, when Mina responds with *Wa ’Alaykum as-Salam*, the author confirms her belonging to the same socio-cultural circle.

Notably, in Muslim societies greeting of *As-Salaam ’Alaykum* is not only exchanged between Muslims but by almost the entirety of the population. These exchanges enact
relationship of brotherhood that is shared within the *ummah*. Further, through language in communication, the author creates Muslim identity of the characters in the story. For instance, when Bill Hornbill utters *Insha’allah* (Norridge, 2002, p. 15), and the Jackal says *Masha’Allah*, this identity is affirmed. These Muslim terms also privilege Muslims, who use such language regularly over those, who may not be very familiar with their usage owing to the cultural differences. Through a representation of a variety of animals, Rae Norridge has created diverse *ummah* of Muslims globally. *Ummah* in Arabic means ‘nation’, ‘community’ or ‘the people’, which denotes the collective community of Muslim peoples. It is used in the Quran to signify a community of believers. The term is commonly used in Muslim countries to differentiate universal brotherhood of all men and women as well as specific brotherhood shared by the commonality of the faith of Islam. As opposed to what is commonly perceived *ummah* is an inclusive term used for the community of Medina at the time of Prophet. It included Jews, Christians, and Sabians (Quran – 2:62) as well. *The Charter of Medina* drawn by Prophet Muhammad in Medina also indicated this inclusive understanding (Firestone, 1999, p. 18; Serjeant, 1964, Watt, 1956). This appreciation is emphasized through the variety of animals in the story. Having good manners, being ethical, polite and admitting to mistakes is upheld through the story. This way through language in use, politics (Gee, 2005, p. 12) of having normal, right, good and correct identity is maintained.

1.29.1.3 *Silly Chicken* (2005)

This picture book penned by Khan carries almost the same landscape as *Ruler of the Courtyard* (2003). A little girl, Rani, is the central figure here, who is jealous of her mother’s favorite chicken Bibi, which is the silly chicken in the story. As in *Ruler of the Courtyard* (2003), this story also has two female figures at its center. It depicts the young girl’s struggle to come to terms with the chicken as well as gain her mother's approval. When the chicken is lost
she is blamed for it: “Then we saw the dog prints in the dirt and a few of Bibi’s feathers. The gate had been shut. I was sure I shut it. I even locked it. But Ami still blamed me. I felt bad.”

The teacher’s guide for the book contains exercises that attempt to familiarize children of K-3 with South Asian, especially Pakistani, culture through introduction of their dress and food. It also indicates the inclusion of multiple bits of intelligence in these activities, as well as developmental aspects of children at this particular age. The author has introduced some words very commonly used in the South Asian milieu such as Tonga, Lussi, Buchi, and the like. There is also a list of other related books recommended for student engagement.

1.29.1.4 Persepolis (2007)

Persepolis is a graphic novel by the French-Iranian writer Marjane Satrapi. It is a memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution and is subtitled “the story of a childhood.” Winner of New York Times Notable Book, Time Magazine’s “Best Comix of the Year,” San Francisco Chronicle and Los Angeles Times Best-seller, it offers a rare insight into Iranian culture before the revolution and uprooting of the Shah government from the point of view of a young girl Marjane. It is a heavily autobiographical novel for young adults. Its graphic presentation is interestingly drawn in the form of animated drawings in black and white ink, tracing the story in a different shade. Through its title, the book evokes a classical image of Iran as a backdrop to bring the current political and cultural perspectives into the fold of review and discussion. As well, as is the case with many authors and works discussed in this chapter, Satrapi’s effort is to create a picture of Iran and Islam that is contrary to what is depicted in the popular media.

The plot of the book is set in the times of revolution and change of power in Iran. The rise of revolution in Iran and a whip of public fancy are succinctly delineated in this ‘story of a childhood.’ The novel begins when the orthodox Muslim regime is gaining its hold, and the
educated Iranians feel pressure to submit to archaic ways. Ten-year-old Marjane observes her progressive parents stressed about changes in their life and her school bringing in veil for young girls. Within this turmoil, Marjane expresses interconnected dilemmas of her traditional religion of Iran and its fire rituals, as well as Navruz celebrations.

Marjane’s innocent world revolves around a book of rules derived from various structures in which she has ideals for her world: “Rule number eight: No old person should have to suffer” (Satrapi, 2007, p. 7). She has very personalized image of God, and this God is very close to her. She is able to relate to this God and share her dilemmas that she experiences in her interaction with the adult world. The Iranian context at this time is when counter Marxist influence is gaining hold. Marjane has imaginary conversations with Marx and God together and finds it interesting that both of them look alike. However, when her favorite uncle Anoosh is executed on false charges of being a Russian spy, she abandons her God friend forever.

The book tells the story of a Muslim girl in a Muslim country, but it is very different in its approach. The haloed image of God as it appears in all the other books discussed in the present chapter is not the case in Persepolis. In this story, God is physically brought in Marjane’s presence, where she is able to converse with him just as she would do with a friend. Significantly, this Muslim family is used to smoking and drinking. After the Islamic regime takes over and there is a raid by the police at Marjane’s house, the father does not have any remorse in lying about the wine that they have in the house.

The story also brings the politics of education, as well as curriculum to the fore. It discusses how these things influence young children. Marjane believes in everything that is given in the textbooks. When the Shah is the ruler, the books praise him and even say he is appointed by God. After the revolution it is the other way round. Marjane surprisingly notes:
The Ministry of Education has declared that the universities will close at the end of the month. The education system and what is written in school books, at all levels, are decadent. Everything needs to be revised to ensure that our children are not led astray from the true path of Islam. (Satrapi, 2007, p. 73)

Ironically, even the patients who died of cancer during this period are hailed as ‘martyrs’ (Satrapi, 2007, p. 34)! The imagery of the slogan “To die a martyr is to inject blood into the veins of society” (Satrapi, 2007, p. 115), particularly, strikes Marjane’s imagination. Marjane’s parents attempt to play the role of critical thinkers to make her understand the role of human agency and political manipulation in these matters. She shares a very open and honest relationship with them. Her upbringing in this family has made her question things around her including the position of God. She is not convinced by the social class’s strata and supports her maid in writing love letters for latter’s servant boyfriend.

Iranian landmarks such as the Baheshte Zahra Cemetery (Satrapi, 2007, p. 34) provide a historical touch to the story. President Jimmy Carter, President Anwar Sadat and other such political figures along with their responses at that time are mentioned in the story. Marjane learns from her father the cause of turmoil in their land: “…As long as there is oil in the Middle East, we will never have peace” (Satrapi, 2007, p. 43). The end of Shah’s regime brings even more trouble in the country in general and for the family in particular. The atrocities experienced by Marjane’s close family members and friends families are difficult for her to digest. She tries to experience for herself how thorny it is for each of those people to undergo the pain and torture. For instance, when her uncle reports that he was locked in a water cell, Marjane immerses herself in the bathtub with cold water for very long to experience the same. She also engages in other firsthand accounts of political connections with Russia, Azerbaijan and the like (Satrapi, 2007, p. 55) and is fired with a sense of pride. She tells her friends in school: “There are lots of heroes in my family. My grandpa was in prison, my uncle Anoosh too; For nine years! He was even in the
U.S.S.R. My great uncle Fereydoon proclaimed a democratic state …” (Satrapi, 2007, p. 64).

Marjane struggles to make sense of these seemingly contradicting facts before her.

The tale of power, as well as political and social turmoil, and its painful effect on young children is highlighted through instances, where Marjane suffers anger and anguish. When her favorite uncle Anoosh disappears all of a sudden, without saying good bye to her, she is very sad. She refuses to accept the comforting excuses given by her parents. When Saddam Hussain attacks Iran, Marjane exclaims: “The second invasion in 1400 years! My blood was boiling! I was ready to defend my country against these Arabs who keep attacking us” (Satrapi, 2007, p. 79). Marjane’s fidelity to her Persian background, which is different from the general Muslim identity as emanating from Arab background, is presented here.

After the revolution when things change, with her liberal education and family environment, she ridicules the outdated norms in the school such as weaving sweaters for the troops. Marjane and all her friends are punished for not following the rules, but they are united in opposing the new power effects in their school. They often pretend to be revolutionary figures such as Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. She is a well-read kid as her parents gift her lot of books. Her favorite is a comic book called *Dialectic Materialism*, in which Marx and Descartes argue over the validity of the material world. The Islamisation of the country and the war with Iraq leads to situations, where Iran’s borders are closed. Thus, when Marjane’s uncle requires heart surgery and needs to go to England, they are not given passport authorization. Marjane and children of her age suffer a stifling environment created under the new regime. The girls now have to wear *hijab* compulsorily; they cannot have any music or fancy things labeled as western, like posters. Marjane is searched and humiliated by a committee of women, who are guardians of the revolution. Her jacket, sneakers and badges, all the nice gifts that her parents brought from Istanbul are scrutinized and labeled as un-Islamic. In this situation, she is supported by her father.
to continue to believe in honest critical opinion, but her mother is scared of the consequences it may bring: “You know what they do to the young girls they arrest...You know that it’s against the law to kill a virgin. So a guardian of the revolution marries her and takes her virginity before executing her” (Satrapi, 2007, p. 145).

Marjane is further horrified when young male children are each given keys by their schools. These keys represent their ticket to heaven if they are martyred during the war. One of Marjane's friends is given a key, and Marjane's mother tries to tell the boy that this is nothing but nonsense.

Finally, a day comes when Marjane’s parents decide she will have to leave the country for best education and safety. The whole family is sad. The grandmother advises her ‘always to be true to yourself (Satrapi, 2007, p. 151)’, which Marjane promises she will abide by.

The book is divided into small chapters per the chief incident mentioned in that particular chapter; For instance, “The Veil,” “Moscow,” “The Letter,” and the like. It ends when Marjane leaves the country. It is very painful for the mother to part with her only child.

Mehdevi’s Parveen (1969) also offers insight into Iranian culture in a different way through Parveen’s visit to Khurasan, a province in Iran. Here she feels lonely and alienated until she meets Javad, an England-educated young Persian landlord. Together, the two explore the beauties of their culture and country. This way Parveen appreciates her ancestral land and culture. This plot is similar to Habibi (1999).

1.29.1.5 From Somalia, With Love (2009)

This chapter book by Naima B. Roberts tells the tale of a Somali-British teenage girl Safia Dirie, from her own point of view, in the first person. It is meant for children of grade six and up. Safia is typically torn between her culture, tradition and her newly found love. Her autobiographical introduction is an insight into how faith is an integral part of her identity:
I couldn’t tell anyone what it’s like to be a Muslim: it was all I had ever known. It was also a part of me, just like eating and sleeping. I had always been aware of the existence of Allah. I had been learning about the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, since I was knee-high and, while other children had nursery rhymes, my mother recited Quran to get us to sleep. Praying five times a day, fasting in Ramadan, going to duksi to learn how to read and recite the Qur’an, wearing hijab, not eating ham sandwiches – all these things were all second nature to me now. (Roberts, 2009, p. 13)

Safia’s last name Dirie is a part of the Somali tradition, whereby, children are known by their grandfather’s name. She is steeped in the Muslim culture and way of living. She prays to Allah for almost everything, even for peace, when her two brothers are fighting! She has a close friend Hamida, who is from Pakistan and is the daughter of a local Imam.

Safia Dirie’s life is as normal as any teenage girls could be until one day her mother announces that her father Hassan, who was supposedly killed in civil strife in Somalia, is returning after twelve years: “Last weekend Hoyo, my mum, gave me the best news ever and the most shocking news ever” (Roberts, 2009, p.5). This news changes the entire family’s life. As a teenage Safia finds her personal freedom, her relationship with her mother, Nawal, and everything around her are changing because of the news of sudden arrival of her father:

My family has always been my mom, Hoyo, and my two older brothers, Ahmed and Abdullahi. I do not remember Somalia - I’m an East London girl, through and through. But now Abo, my father, is coming from Somalia to live with us, after 12 long years. How am I going to cope? (Roberts, 2009, p. 10)

She is confused at the possible expectations from her in her father’s presence. There is excitement in the family and her mother, particularly, is delighted, but Safia finds it hard to situate her identity and experience in the newly developed situation. Safia’s friend Hamida asks: “So, what is it like having your dad home” (Roberts, 2009, p. 83)?

Lots of changes start occurring in their daily routine once her father arrives. Her mom cooks elaborate meals and applies henna on her finger tips: “She is over the moon” (Roberts, 2009, p. 88)! Safia resents her mother’s jubilation as she misses sharing things with her mother
like before. After the arrival of her father, she is irritated that her mother would not let her father do any chore. Her elder brother comes closer to dad, and her younger brother Ahmed has stopped talking to her.

Safia’s father’s unexpected encounter with his family’s hybrid British-Somali culture causes a great deal of conflict in the family and Safia is caught up in it. At an incident, her father slaps Ahmed, which makes Ahmed leave the house. Safia resents all this deeply and misses her brother a lot: “The house was like a morgue without him: his laughter, his jokes. But then, even those had been in short supply since Abo came back” (Roberts, 2009, p. 99).

Safia’s relationship with Ahmed is delicately drawn and brings out the sensitive elements of family life. She is furious with her father for taking one-sided decision against Ahmed. Safia suffers much anguish because of this change in the family and also loses her position as a star pupil in Miss Davies’ class, as well as loses score in every course. She wants to rebel against the situation but is only able to express her ache in her poetry:

Sometime, it felt like squeezing blood from a stone, painful and fruitless. But most of the time, it came out by itself: everything I wanted to say to Hoyo, Abo, Ahmed, but knew I never would because that was not our way. (Roberts, 2009, p. 120)

Safia’s pain of understanding herself vis-à-vis her context is expressed here.

The Muslim characters in the book all use traditional verbiage used by Muslims across cultures such as *Bismillah, Masha’allah, Wallahi, Asalaamu Alaikum, Allahu Akbar, Insha’allah* and the like. The author provides an extensive glossary as well at the end of the book defining the Arabic and Somali words used by the characters. A lot of Somali words such as *Hoyo* (mother), *Ayeyo* (maternal grandmother), *Habaryero* and the like are used along with Somalian food, beverages (*qahwa*) and dress code to create the ambiance of Somali culture.
Muslim cultural values described and displayed by the characters are brought to the fore from the conversations within the family and from the way characters dress up. Safia always dresses up modestly and is compared with her cousin Firdous, who is accused of abusing her freedom and has forgotten her limits. Firdous introduces Safia to Fuad, who likes Safia and vice-versa. This is a big breach for Safia, who is very clear about the boundaries created by her family and faith. She is advised by Hamida not to cross this line. In spite of this warning, Safia proceeds with Fuad. She strongly feels the relationship is wrong but continues because it feels good to be liked by a young man. The situation offers a perspective, especially, when she is at a movie theater with Fuad, where she walks out because she feels it is not right. When her father finds out the matter, she asks for Allah’s forgiveness as he is Ar-Rahman, the most merciful. The resolution of the story brings Safia closer to her father. She discovers that her father writes poetry just like her. He was considered one of the finest Somali poets before the war.

*From Somalia with Love* (2009) is the story of a Muslim teenager’s coming to terms with her identity as a Muslim, Somali, a daughter, a friend and all the various layers arising out of cultural expectations. The story emphasizes the practice of veil as a legitimate way of modesty amongst Muslim girls. Safia observes:

I saw a group of Muslim girls walking together, their arms linked. I could see from their bags that they were in high school like me, but they were all wearing *abayas* and long *hijabs*. One of them was even wearing a *niqaab* that covered her face. They chatted together as they waited for their bus, their faces smiling and joking. Even the one whose face was covered was smiling – I could tell from her eyes. One of them glanced across at me and her smile broadened. (Roberts, 2009, p. 126)

Firdous pronounces girls practicing veil as stupid: “…Why they got to be so extreme? As long as you are a good Muslim on the inside, why should you have to be all covered up like the women in Saudi Arabia” (Roberts, 2009, p. 132)?
There are lessons on personal hygiene for girls, such as *wudhu* and *Istinja* (washing after toilet) according to *sharia*. These are moral lessons for the teenagers in particular and appear to be a guide on how to live life in inner city London. It is easy for Muslim teenage girls to relate to Safia with her struggles, dilemmas and Muslim practices. She represents Muslim children growing up in the West struggling to understand their Muslim and indigenous cultures like Safia struggles with Somalian, Muslim and the Western culture. She also tries hard to weave pieces of her family and their close bond together within the process of finding herself. It speaks of common mindsets of people where others’ lifestyles and belongings are always better and desirable. Safia gives voice to a Somalian Muslim minority group. The book familiarizes the readers with richness and positive images of Somali culture, which is very different from the popular media images of the worn torn zone.

1.29.1.6 *Big Red Lollipop* (2010)

*Big Red Lollipop* (2010) is Rukhsana Khan’s the most recent publications chosen by the New York Public Library as one of the 100 Greatest Children’s Books in the last 100 years. This too portrays an all female household of three daughters – Rubina, Sana, Maryam, and their mother. It is a story of little girl Rubina growing up and coming to terms with her younger sister. This circular story is narrated in the first person by Rubina, who is invited to a birthday party, where her mother wants her to take her naughty little sister Sana too. Rubina has to oblige but feels miserable and let down by her sister’s actions at the party. She also harbors a sense of embarrassment for asking Sally’s favor and for a very long time thinks she has been left out of the birthday parties because of the latter.

Sana is a bullying younger sister, who also eats Rubina’s big red lollipop. Rubina is left with bitter feelings and a sense of injustice inflicted upon her by her own mother. The story ends with reconciliation between the two sisters when Sana is invited by her friends, and Rubina
forcefully convinces their mother not to let Maryam, their youngest sister accompany Sana. In between a series of mishaps and another invitation for birthday party, this time to Sana, the story ends with both the sisters reconciling with each other by sharing the big red lollipop. The change of heart is reciprocal as Sana brings a big green lollipop back for Rubina from the party.

The author has used cultural symbols such as the dress of the mother, and she is addressed as Ami, which is a general address for the mother in this cultural context. She is a strong mother having a full control over her children but also being fair in her decisions for all her children. The role of the mother in this way is fore grounded: “Well…it’s only fair. You went to Rubina’s friend’s party, now Rubina and Maryam can go to your friend’s party”. She is depicted as a South Asian mother, who does not know what a party is:

“Ami! I’ve been invited to a birthday party! There’s going to be games and toys, cake and ice cream! Can I go...Ami says, “What’s a birthday party?” “It’s when they celebrate the day they were born”. “Why do they do that?”“They just do!”

For Rubina and Sana both, this party renders a sense of acceptance and belonging, a way of obliterating their difference amongst their peers. This is presented by Rubina’s love for the lollipop and how she guards and cherishes it: “I put my big red lollipop on the top shelf of the fridge to have in the morning. All night I dream about how good it will taste”. The big red lollipop represents Rubina’s longing for acceptance and belonging from both within the family and outside. Fear of social failure looms large in Rubina’s struggle, but her generosity gains ground as a cultural mediator. The two discourses of a distinct Muslim culture and values, as well as the need to belong to the larger peer, mainstream group run simultaneously within the actions and conversations in the story through language constructions. The story is universalized through rooting it in sibling rivalry and at the same time particularized through South Asian immigrant experience. This tale of clashing cultural customs has autobiographical elements
emanating from Khan’s own Pakistani background. These cultural nuances are very well captured in illustrations through expressions of the characters and their body language.

1.29.1.7 *Amira’s Totally Chocolate World* (2010)

Written by J. Samia Mair and illustrated by Craig Howarth, this picture book was inspired by her young niece Alyssa, when: One day, we were talking about the things that we like, and Alyssa remarked: “a totally chocolate world would be fun.”

It is appropriate for age 5+ and has a young girl of this age named Amira at the center, who dreams of having the world full of her favorite chocolate:

One day while Amira was sitting in her garden and eating a chocolate candy bar she had an idea – great idea! Wouldn’t it be wonderful if the whole world were made of chocolate? Wouldn’t it be wonderful if it were a totally chocolate world! (Mair, 2010, p.6)

This love of chocolate is used as normalizing, universalizing agent for Amira, a Muslim kid. She dreams of everything chocolate and wishes for Allah to make it so: “Every night before she went to sleep, Amira closed her eyes and asked Allah for a totally chocolate world” (Mair, 2010, p.8). One fine day everything turns chocolate per her wish and Amira is delighted to live her dream only to recognize the pleasure of it is not long lasting. She realizes this is not what she would permanently want. Fortunately for her, what she had experienced was only a dream. She is happy to go back and enjoy the bounties of Allah:

Amira closed her eyes and made another *du ‘a*, this time asking Allah to return the world back to the way He had created it...Amira realized that she had had only dreamt about a totally chocolate world. She thought, “Today is a very special day, indeed. What a beautiful world I live in – a world of different colors.” (Mair, 2010, pp. 18-19)

The author has beautifully described a child’s world turn into chocolate and the excitement she experiences on having that. The vivid details regarding chocolate with its various
shades and shapes are akin to a fairyland made of chocolate forests, gardens, sand dunes and oceans, which may be deliciously interesting to young children in love with chocolate.

The story has a moral lesson based on faith perspectives for young children of being thankful to Allah and appreciating the gifts of nature bestowed by God on all of us. There is an element of humility in Amira as she has been taught to ask God for wish fulfillment. It is also aimed at instilling a sense of appreciation in young children. The plot of the story is taken from the famous myth of King Midas and his golden touch with almost the same message. The ambiance of the story also has touches of *Hansel and Gretel* (Lesser, W. Grimm, J. Grimm, Zelinsky, Dodd, Mead & Company, & South China Printing Co., 1984) with a Muslim bent. The moral and religious arch of the story begins with the author’s acknowledgments: “All praise belongs to Allah alone, and may Allah’s blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and upon his family, descendants, and companions.”

The author brings this story close to a holiday story by mentioning *Eid*: “One night, Amira felt excited when going to bed because the next day was *Eid ul-Fitr*. This was the first *Ramadan* that Amira had fasted for a part of each day” (Mair, 2010, p. 9). Amira’s image as a Muslim girl is highlighted by her dress and her *hijab*. Besides this, the familiar Muslim world with a recall of Quranic *ayat* on many colors created by Allah is also invoked. The glossary explains words such as *du’a*, *ayat* and the like.

Although it is meant for children of age 5+, each page of the book has a lot of text and may not be suitable for children to read without assistance, but it may be appropriate for a read aloud. The language generates a world familiar to Muslim believers having faith in god’s creation and expressing gratitude for all His beautiful creations. The dress, attitude, approach to the situation and conflict thereof, are all addressed within this faith paradigm. It is indicative, in general, of Muslim way of approach to life.
1.29.1.8 The Hijab Boutique (2011)

This is the first chapter book written by Michelle Khan meant for children aged 10+ i.e. elementary and middle school. It has pencil sketches as illustrations for various situations. The plot of the book is divided into five chapters. It is set in Los Angeles around a Muslim family of mother and daughter, Farah, who undergo struggle after the man of the family passes way unexpectedly. It’s a first person narration of Farah’s experiences and challenges during the three weeks that the class was given the assignment to mark International Women’s Day.

Farah studies in a covetous English school named Miss Peabody’s Academy, which girls of the rich and the famous families attend. Admission to this school is very difficult, and every student aspiring to study here has to go through interview and entrance processes. Those who are admitted to this school are lucky to be there, even if it costs them hefty tuition fees. The plot of the story revolves around an assignment given by the English teacher Ms. Grant to all the girls of grade five. The girls are expected to bring interesting artifacts related to their mothers that may add value to the other students’ knowledge and highlight the contribution each woman can make.

The teacher instructs the students:

This Thursday is International woman’s day…people from around the world will be celebrating what it means to be a woman. I’d like you to bring in something that symbolizes your mother. You’re all expected to present one item over the course of three class periods. (Khan, 2011, p. 1)

This assignment seems impossible to Farah Khan, the protagonist. Compared to the mothers of her classmates, who all are fashionable and stylish, and who boast of having interesting collections of various embellishments to their credit, Farah’s mother is an austere *hijabi* Muslim woman. Farah does not find anything that would interest or excite other people in her mother. She is embarrassed and considers this assignment impossibility.
The story continuously juxtaposes popular chic world of Los Angeles full of rich glitterati in the form of dresses, fashion, and media attention. The austerity of a Muslim life and Muslim values create a stark contrast to the world that Farah inhabits. Her friend Ashanti too represents this difference. The close and genuine friendship between these two young girls is an attempt to create a bridge between two cultures. Through this relationship, the author invokes the universal human values and sentiments that normalize the Muslim family presented in the story. The movement and interplay of characters, as well as incidents depict a paradox that Farah lives and observes. She attends a high-end English academy but abides by the beliefs nurtured by her faith and the cultural background. Farah’s mother, throughout the story, and Farah occasionally, are depicted wearing hijab. Such a representation shows the difference in the Western values and Muslim values, as well as constant negotiation of these two world views by the Muslim characters. For instance, everything in Farah’s house is simple and different from her friend Ashanti’s house:

There aren’t any snazzy portraits of people or funky posters in this section of our house either. From across the room, I see stained glass artwork that Ashanti and I made together. Its cheerful colors mock me. Why does this school assignment have to be so difficult? Is it so hard for my family to be like everyone else’s? (Khan, 2011, p. 10)

The Muslim way of life is also presented through the halal (Khan, 2011, p. 10) food that the Khan family eats and daily verbal exclamations that are uttered such as Alhamdulillah, bismillah (Khan, 2011, p. 10), as-salamu alaykum (Khan, 2011, p. 10), Insha’Allah, masha’allah (Khan, 2011, p. 36) and the like.

The author brings out the identity crises that young children generally confront in western contexts, where they attend schools as an exceptional minority when they do not see anyone around following their rituals, beliefs, and practices they see their family members following. Farah confronts such dilemmas at school and thinks of herself as the ‘invisible girl (Khan, 2011,
p. 12)’. The uncertainties that such children face when confronted by the questions related to their faith is depicted through the tension felt by Farah. She attempts to find solutions through the chapter “My mother’s secret life” (Khan, 2011, p. 18).

The mother’s character is described at length to show she is a normal human being with academic credentials and ambitions. She just looks different because of the way she dresses. Her attitude to life is premised by her faith, Islam. Farah’s mother went to UCLA but stopped working because she wanted to give complete attention to her family:

It was a personal choice… (I) stopped working because your Dad made enough money to support us without an added paycheck from me…I felt it was more important that I devote myself to your needs than to build a career for myself. Work was a great challenge, and fun, but it also required a lot of long hours away from home. I didn’t want to come home exhausted every night, too tired to give you and your father enough love and attention. So I became a stay-at-home-Mom… (Khan, 2011, p. 23)

The mother continues to affirm that this should not be perceived as a sacrifice. She is a good cook too: “Ashanti pats her empty belly. I may have a housekeeper with a fancy cooking school degree, but I love your mom’s home-cooked food…Mrs. Khan makes awesome shish kebabs…” (Khan, 2011, p. 23).

The mother’s choice of wearing hijab was also entirely her own, which she started practicing much later when Farah was seven years old:

…your dad wasn’t enthusiastic in the beginning…he was afraid for me – afraid that I’d be discriminated against…Non-Muslims interpret hijab in different ways. Some think that it has to do with politics; others believe that it is a sign of women being oppressed. Some people feel that it is the duty of foreigners to fit in, or they may even feel a bit threatened by hijab. They haven’t read the Quran or teachings of our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) and simply do not understand. Or they may not understand the importance of religious freedom, and its tradition in this country. Your dad didn’t want me to experience any more racism or Islamophobia than necessary. (Khan, 2011, p. 27)
Such rationales justify the mother’s difference and less glamorous identity. It also defends _hijabi_ women’s position in Islam. The mother’s entrepreneurial debut – “The Hijab Boutique” is a way of building up her image such that it amalgamates with the other mothers that Farah sees around her. It’s a confirmation for Farah that her mother may look different and have a different way of living and approaching life but it’s perfectly normal or rather glamorous to have a mom like her. The balance of living a Muslim life, as well as being able to run her household in the absence of a husband is the solution that the author provides for girls such as Farah.

Farah’s mother takes up a unique business. This business also is _halal_ for a widowed woman. It represents attempt at normalization of Muslim entrepreneurial women and at the same time try to create a balance and a niche for them in the western context. The _hijab_ boutique offers lots of styles of _hijabs_ such as Kuwaiti _hijabs_, square _hijabs_, Shayla _hijabs_, and the like, which holds educational value for those, who do not know much about them. It also offers a sense of aesthetics that is an attempt to bring Muslim _hijabi_ women into fashion conversation. The latter also endeavors through a mention of several fashion magazines that talk about different styles and fashions in _hijabs_, including _hijab_ accessories from the under caps to pins. The image of women created through the use of these fashionable _hijabs_ is that of a “Muslim princess” (p. 36).

The story ends with Farah’s completion of her impossible assignment through a presentation on different _hijabs_ from her mother’s boutique and showcasing her mother as an entrepreneur, which makes her extremely proud of her mother:

“This may have been the toughest assignment of my life, but it has also been the most eye-opening,” I explain, with my head high. “I have learnt a lot in the past last few days about my mother. I see her under a new light now. Yes, she’s ‘different’ – but those differences make her unique. Without them, she wouldn’t be the person that I love.” (Khan, 2011, p. 42)
She finds strength from her mother’s venture and attitude and confidently gears up to support her mother. The author concludes with the message that, if understood properly, “difference” can be respectful and cherishable rather than disdainful. This experience gives Farah a renewed confidence that inspires her not to live for other people’s approval. It also makes her grow mature enough to have her opinions and ideas (Khan, 2011, p. 52).

The story gives message of respecting differences and rethinking stereotypes. It is also a defense for all the hijabi girls and women, who are encouraged to don hijab, particularly, in the month of Ramadan and who live in communities, where Muslims are a minority. Out of the two parallel strands running in the story of mother-daughter pair trying to come to terms with the loss of their only man in the family and Farah’s impossible assignment, the latter seems to be foregrounded. The social languages of business and success are interplayed with the idea of Muslim way of life and beliefs. Hijab is a symbolic non-linguistic identity building discourse used by the author to justify some of the Muslim norms such as austerity, simplicity and the hijab itself. Thus, two discourses run simultaneously in the book.

1.29.1.9 *My Name is Parvana* (2012)

*My Name is Parvana* is the fourth novel after the *Breadwinner* (2000) Trilogy by Deborah Ellis. Besides acknowledged through many accolades, it is also winner of Kirkus Best Teen Book of 2012 and Newberry Medal. It is meant for readers between grades 6-10. Parvana continues to be the protagonist with same Afghanistan scene occupied by the Taliban. The story continues to narrate the heroic struggle of Parvana from Deborah Ellis’ first book *Breadwinner* (2000). It is narrated in third person keeping Parvana in the center with flashbacks and the present interwoven in movements backward and forward. Such storytelling techniques with an instinctive sense of place, loss, distrust, and hope form part of the plot. This time again the family is full of females – the mother and her three daughters – Nooria, Parvana, and Maryam.
Parvana seems boyish in her demeanor as well as appearance, particularly, after cutting her hair off to look like a boy.

Parvana’s adventure in this book begins when she is arrested by Taliban from the ruins of the school her group used to run. She faces their inquiry very cleverly and is locked up in the prison because she refuses to speak. Later, she is rescued by a Member of Parliament, Mrs. Weera.

Amidst the life-threatening situation of war and tortures of Taliban, she has become strong to sustain her spirits and trust herself: “Afghanistan already had plenty of lost minds, floating like invisible balloons in the air above the land, leaving behind empty-minded people moaning and lonely in the dirt” (Ellis, 2012, p. 35).

Parvana has now lost all tears and can withstand names of all her friends, who died in the bomb blast. She recalls how her mother was able to establish a school for children with the help of some aid. Once, when her mother does not return from a meeting, she had taken charge of the whole school. This school was a beacon of hope for the Afghan children, and Parvana is proud to have been a part of it. The young children in the book such as Asif, Leila, Hasan and Ali, all are very brave and have desirable qualities to balance the group. For instance, Asif is an engineer. He can repair things efficiently.

The foreign invasion has left everything human out. There is no food, water or even safety. The fighter planes and grenades fly around throughout the night such that small babies cannot sleep:

All Parvana felt was a loss. The loss of her mother, the loss of her job, the loss of her school. Even the loss of her friend, because although Shauzia was right there in the room with her, the Shauzia she had been having conversations with in her head and in her notebook was the Shauzia who was sitting in a field of lavender and planning a trip to the Eiffel Tower (Ellis, 2012, p. 329).
The school and Parvana’s interaction, as well as reactions with it speak of the notions, philosophies, and purposes of education as understood in the east and the west. For instance, the first aid manual that Parvana is reading says you need to have running water to clean the wounds, and Parvana thinks: “If that was the only way to clean a wound, all of Afghanistan was doomed to die of horrible infections” (Ellis, 2012, p. 126).

Parvana wants to be like a boy always so that she can escape. Rina, the Canadian author I interviewed on August 21, 2014, expressed thus on girls becoming boys in Deborah Ellis’ novels:

…because really being Muslim is a problem and these are written by white women and the only resolution they come up is that the girls dress up as boys and run away, and I am thinking what does that tell you? That Islam is a problem? They cannot overcome the problems that these girls are facing in Islam that they have to run away? And I think that is your limitation to your imagination.

The letter of scholarship for the USA is also in line with this idea of escape, but there is no possibility of escape for the protagonist. Her elder sister Nooria is chosen to go to the US. Parvana is mad at this but understands her position as the boy in the family: “Parvana always felt more powerful with a bit of money in her pocket” (Ellis, 2012, p. 95). Later, she asks Nooria to make arrangements for their youngest sister Maryam to go the US, which seems to be a solution for their difficult lives.

The story in many instances pitches children against the adults. Parvana expresses that adults are unpredictable and prone to trouble making. The picture of child characters in the novel is very pitiful and sympathy inspiring. Badria is blind, Asif is lame, Kinnah is illiterate, and Ava and Hassan are maimed in the war experiences.

The discourse produced through the narration of the story somewhat centers around: “Afghanistan still had to prove itself” (Ellis, 2012, p. 56); “This is Afghanistan,” her friend Shauzia says. “What do you want—a happy ending?” Such a view is voiced through Parvana,
who has already become famous through other Parvana novels. The contrast between the educational expectations of the locals versus those who have come from other lands and culture is quite glaring. When Parvana is giving a tour to the parents highlighting hygiene and basic literacy as part of the curriculum, a local man asks if they will be taught to pray. The school runs on donations in kind and cash brought from the West. The books that come through this route are all in English. While it is desirable that children learn English, due to war situation they haven’t been to school in a while and hence struggle to follow English books: “Between the soviet occupation, the civil war, and the Taliban, probably none of them had ever gone to school” (Ellis, 2012, p. 78). The parents feel advantaged to have such an education: “We are lucky to have any books at all” (Ellis, 2012, p. 62). Parvana feels privileged to be a teacher and partners with her mother in running the school amidst all odds. They are at the mercy of various charities that the foreigners give. The picture of the school is that of an ideal school that anybody can have anywhere: “No one yelled inside the school unless it was to cheer someone on at games. There was always the sound of singing, and the walls were quickly covered with the students’ artwork” (Ellis, 2012, p.78).

The discourse here alludes to people, who are suppressed and suffering through the atrocities of people, who have replaced the Taliban as redeemers. This is a control of a different kind by donors and civil society members from the West. Entire Parvana trilogy and the present novel centers around people who show remarkable courage amidst oppression. There is no mention of the perpetrators of these injustices or any solution around them. It appears that the innocent people of Afghanistan are doomed to this destiny, and they have no choice but to respond with courage.
1.29.2 Being Muslim: Ramadan and Eid

1.29.2.1 *My First Ramadan* (2007)

*My First Ramadan* is written by Karen Katz and almost has the same story line as *Night of the Moon* (2008) by Hena Khan. This is an informative multicultural picture book about celebrations with artwork and friendly faces. It narrates *Ramadan* and *Eid* rituals through the eyes of an American or Western young boy in the first person, who attempts to fast for the first time as he feels he is now grown up enough to abstain from food or drink during the day. The book has illustrations, language, and prints suitable for a young kid of about five: “For one month Muslims will fast from sunup to sundown. That means we will not eat or drink anything all day long”.

Descriptions of what it means to fast, some other religious and cultural beliefs of Muslims are described in simple language: “We pray five times a day. Muslims follow a religion called Islam. That means “peace” in Arabic”. A lot of emphases is on values of fasting, *Ramadan* and Muslim way of life: “We fast because it helps us to concentrate on our faith. It also reminds us to be thankful for all we have”. Further:

Before we sit down to eat, we wash our hands and eat a sweet date just like Muslims did almost 1,400 years ago. That is when the Prophet Muhammad first taught his followers to break their fast with a date and a sip of water.

Images of the Muslim family in context represent popular picture of a father wearing a cap, mother with a *hijab*, two young siblings and son standing for prayers in the front and, mother and daughter standing behind. Young girls wear *hijab* in schools. Per Muslim practice “Daddy leads us in a morning prayer called *Fajr*” (*Fah-jar*). On *Eid* day: “Mama and my sister pray together in a different room”.


The story tries to create a balance through an amalgamation of Occidental ways of living and Muslim observations. For instance, *suhoor*, the morning breakfast before the commencement of *Ramadan* fast is American or Continental: “We share buttery eggs, toasts, fluffy pancakes, fresh berries and orange juice.” The story also depicts a variety of Muslims living in America from all over the world: “I see Muslims from Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, North America, and South America.”

Like all holiday stories, this one too ends with parties and presents. The colorful imagery on each page, especially the page where mosque is drawn with twinkling stars, appears like magic.

1.29.2.2 *Husna and the Eid Party* (2007)

This story written by Fawzia Gilani-Williams is one of her *Eid* collection stories. It is meant for children aged 7 – 11 years. The author insists on filling the vacuum that exists out there for Muslim children in the area of holiday stories. *Eid-Al-Fitr* is an instance for young children to attempt to fast and be prepared for abstention from food. It is training to be pious.

The place of the story is not clear from the pictures but from the school setting and the festoon saying “Happy *Eid*,” we can assume it is in some part of the western world. Muslim representations here are done in the form of young *hijabi* girls mostly having dark skin and wearing a uniform to attend what appears to be a Muslim school. The teachers are called sisters here such as sister Khadija, sister Sarah and the like. All the characters in the story have Muslim names and utter Muslim exclamations such as *Subhanallah, Ana Asifa, As-Salaam ‘Alaikum, Wa ‘Alaikum as- Salam, Barak Allah fi-ki, Insha’allah, Jazakillahu Khairan, Al-Hamdulillah* and *La ilaha illallah*, which gives it Muslim touches. In this way, Muslim social languages are created by the use of traditional Arabic utterances while telling a story set in an English setting.
Several other words such as *Du‘a*, *hadith*, *haram*, *jama‘at*, *niyyah*, *sabr jamil*, *salat-ul-fajr*, *salat-ul Maghrib*, *sujud*, *sunnah*, *wudu* and the like are also used in the text and explained in the glossary. Interestingly, some of this vocabulary, such as, *mithai* and *ras malai* is not Arabic. They are borrowed from Indian milieu and are Hindi words signifying sweets, thus, alluding to Indian or South Asian background. Friday *Khutba*, the equivalent to Sunday sermons is an interesting compound made up of both English and Arabic words. Identities and activities in the story are created by such usages within the Muslim story to render a Muslim flavor. It familiarizes and connects with the stories written for Muslim children on *Eid*.

The discourses around *Eid* in such stories create Muslim identities situated in universally accepted rituals, values, beliefs, and symbols. In the present story, it gyrates around a puritanical sense of Muslim moral values that Islam propagates. Whereas Asma Mobinuddin in *A Party in Ramadan* (2009) has created a parallel discourse of an American and a Muslim way of life by balancing both the depictions simultaneously, Gilani-Williams has created an all Muslim world, where perhaps Muslim children do not have to struggle for their identities signifying possibility of an all-Muslim discourse.

Although, this is called an *Eid* story, it only talks about a supposed party that Husna’s friend Maryam has organized. Husna is not invited to this party. This absence of invitation is a cause of distress for Husna as she values Maryam’s fun loving ways a lot. *Eid* had already passed a week ago, and nothing related to *Eid* is present in the story. It’s a story of small conflicts that children confront at this age, and the author has tried to bring a Muslim solution to it.

The book is illustrated with bright colors by Kulthum Burgess making it attractive for children. It’s an all Muslim women character book. They are either young girls or women all wearing the *hijab* and having Muslim names such as Muslimah, Rahimah, Hajrah, Hafsa, Afia, Nabilah, Tahirah, Hala, Zahirah and the like. There are no pictures of men’s active character but
allusions to Maryam’s brother and a school bus driver called brother Umar, a boy Muzzamil in her class, sister Hafsa’s son Munim and Husna’s dad. Husna, her mother, and all the other characters greet each other with Muslim greeting As-Salamu ‘Alaikum. Some of the exclamations appear quite peculiar such as Subhan’Allah, meaning glory be to God, is uttered by Husna, when she did not receive any letter of invitation from Maryam. Generally, Subhan’Allah is spoken when something positive happens. Maybe the author wants to express that whatever happens is for good.

There is a kind of code for Muslim girls, where they seek permission from their elderly before answering the phone and talking to strangers:

Just then the phone began to ring. “Ooooooooooooh!” squealed Husna. “Insha’allah, it’s for me! It’s Maryam! She wants to invite me to her party!” Husna ran to the phone. “Can I answer it, Mum? Please?” begged Husna. Mum thought for a moment, wondering who it might be and then nodded. (Gilani-Williams, 2007, p.9)

This Muslim Eid tale bears a familiar format of parties, invitations, and excitement related to it. The constant allusion to Eid party communicates importance of parties around Eid time and that Muslims also have fun celebrations around their festivals. Husna’s anxiety is expressed in the following popular way:

As Husna climbed the staircase to the bathroom, she chanted, “She will invite me, she won’t invite me, She will invite me, she won’t invite me,” until she climbed to the top step. “She won’t invite me!” Husna’s face fell into a grimace (Gilani-Williams, 2007, p. 12).

The story seemingly propagates Muslim beliefs and particular ways of following rituals and practices. For instance, Husna does wudu before offering Maghrib prayers, Maryam offers Sunnah prayers in a different spot and during Friday khutbah one of their teachers instructed “…no one was allowed to talk during the khutbah, or they might lose their blessings from Allah and get a detention” (Gilani-Williams, 2007, p. 18), and finally, Husna’s mother advises her to
ask Allah for patience: “Mum always was so good at giving examples of the Prophets of Allah and talking about their hardships and patience” (Gilani-Williams, 2007, p. 22). There is also a mention of different types of prayers and rituals ablution. The book ends with the much alluded party finally happening at the mosque after Friday prayers with families, pizza, and games.

1.29.2.3 **Night of the Moon (2008)**

This colorful picture book with high level of aesthetic graphics and pictorial menagerie on each page, suitable for young children, is written by Hena Khan and illustrated by Julie Paschkis. A receiver of Parents Choice Approved Book and 2009 Booklist Top 10 Religion Book for Youth, it is meant for children aged 4 – 8 years. This vibrantly illustrated story narrated through the eyes of a seven-year-old Pakistani-American girl Yasmeen. It narrates the story of the night before the month of *Ramadan*, whereby Muslims wait to see the moon and start fasting from the following morning. This story of *Eid* and *Ramadan* begins with the onset of *Ramadan* and continues to build anticipation of *Ramadan* for young children: “Yasmeen had been looking forward to *Ramadan*. It was a time filled with delicious foods, new clothes, lots of parties, and her favorite things ever- presents”.

The arrival of this auspicious night is declared by her mother to Yasmeen, who awaits her ritual bed-time story:

It was bedtime, and Yasmeen waited for her mom to read her a story as she did every night. But this night was different. Mom came into her room and pulled back the curtains that hung over the window. “Come and take a look at the moon.”

The mother then explains how the Muslim calendar works in simple terms to little Yasmeen:

“A new month?” Yasmeen asked. “But it’s only the seventeenth.” “It’s a new month in Islamic calendar, which is based on the moon,” Mom explained. “Long
ago, people used the shape of the moon to keep track of days. They’d watch the moon grow bigger till it was full, then smaller till it disappeared. When the moon reappeared, a new month would begin.”

The story gives an inclusive picture of children in the school, where the first day of *Ramadan* is discussed in the class by the class teacher Mr. Sanchez with a banner that says “Happy *Ramadan.*” The teacher then brings out the meaning of fast. This makes Yasmeen very proud: “It means you do not eat or drink anything all day long,” she shared. “You wake up before sunrise to eat, and then you do not have anything else until the sun goes down.”

Yasmeen’s classmates have many questions on fasting and want to know if children fast. Yasmeen decides to attempt at fasting even though little children do not fast. The Muslim values of patience, sharing, and gratitude related to fast are conveyed to Yasmeen by her mother. The importance of charity is highlighted by the family cooking huge amounts of food and taking it to the mosque. Her Grandma models appreciation for beautiful creation of God by uttering *Subhanallah* each time she sees something wonderful. The rituals of preparing food by the day with dates; milk and traditional foods; breaking the fast together with the family; offering special prayers of *Ramadan* in the evenings and having a rich dinner together are all *Ramadan* signifiers. *Ramadan* also promises meeting with extended family and friends.

Yasmeen’s relationship with the moon is expressed through her sentiments gathered from images and experiences of food and fasting related to *Ramadan*. On the first day of the month, when she saw the moon, it was ‘little line’, which she could ‘hardly see’. After the first day of *Ramadan*, when the family had had a hearty feast the moon looked like “…it was stuffed with good food, too, since it was now a thick crescent”. On the weekend it appeared like a ‘half eaten cupcake,’ and when she went for a walk with her Grandma, they saw that it was a ‘brilliant circle.’ Finally, “the full moon meant that *Ramadan* was already half over,” and thus, “Every night, Yasmeen looked for the moon.” Later, when the month is coming to an end, “a real half
moon shone in the sky,” and gradually it dwindled back to a thin line, and finally disappeared completely. Yasmeen waits for the Night of the Moon, which is the night before Eid holiday that is when the month of Ramadan ends. When it appears again, it is like ‘a faint line of chalk in the sky.’ Yasmeen gets a telescope as an Eid gift from her parents to help her watch for Ramadan to come again next year.

Celebrations of Eid are described through family shopping and henna painting. The author describes everything related to Ramadan and Eid in simple terms. For instance, what is fasting, what is meant by night of the moon, what is Islamic calendar, and what is the meaning of henna: “Yasmeen had her hands painted with henna paste, in a beautiful pattern with moons and stars. The paste left a dark orange dye on her palms that would last for about a week and then fade away”.

The author and the illustrator have both beautifully created pockets of gorgeous vignettes on each page, which every child can associate with very easily. The intelligent use of aesthetic space to delineate a Muslim tale of Ramadan is delightfully illustrated in prominent indigo colors. All this gives the story book a fairy tale ambiance having a combination of a Ramadan and an Eid story. It traces the story through the moon that is waxing and waning throughout the month. Hena Khan carefully builds up narration through a young Muslim kid Yasmeen and offers Ramadan, as well as Eid experiences through her eyes. The beauty and innocence of a child, combined with Ramadan and Eid narratives make this account child-centered. Yasmeen’s association with the ritual moon of Ramadan is aesthetically delineated, which lends a rich universal aura to it. The American Muslim family in the story brings out family and traditional values in the backdrop of Ramadan story. There is a glossary of Muslim terms at the end of the book to explain expressions such as Mubarak, creating a familiar contemporary Muslim world through the verbiage and making it reliable.
1.29.2.4 *A Party in Ramadan* (2009)

*A Party in Ramadan* (2009) is a picture book illustrated by Laura Jacobsen and written by Asma Mobin-Uddin. It is meant for children aged 5-8 years. The story narrates the challenges of a young girl Leena, whose attempts to fast for the first time in *Ramadan* is challenged by a pony party thrown by her school friends. Leena is determined to have both - going to the party and fasting in *Ramadan* but realizes during the day how difficult it is to balance the act without food or drink. Her triumphant persistence wins respect and accolades from her family and friends.

Through language and accompanying illustrations, Mobinuddin creates a Muslim American family scenario during the month of *Ramadan*. The story depicts a balance between American way of life and Muslim values. Fasting in *Ramadan* by Muslims is one of the important signifiers of their beliefs, faith and their way of life. It is also one of the pillars of Islam. When talking about fasting and preparing for *Ramadan*, a general aura of the Muslim way of life and Muslim identity is created. Mobinuddin has carefully juxtaposed American values of freedom and choice for children, parties, celebrations and games along with Muslim family life, importance of prayers and value for extended families. Leena’s dilemma in choosing the party or fast is a balanced by her not compromising on either.

Although Leena’s age is not disclosed a general reader may get impression of the Muslim way of life as harsh and imposing for young children. Leena’s *hijab* is part of her identity, which makes her very different in appearance. The story does not indicate any kind of discrimination experienced by Leena; nevertheless, she is embarrassed that her friends may hear about fasting and how Muslims are different from others.

Muslim representations are fore grounded by the scenario, where Leena has only female friends to play with. The importance of family life is depicted by both American and the Muslim families having both parents involved in the activities. The Muslim family has extended
members such as aunts and uncles, who are also invited to be part of the family gathering. These relatives are an integral part of the social fabric of Muslim lives. In this picture book, a lot of significance and symbols are covered through warm, colorful illustrations that exemplify significant Muslim representations. In this way, the mood of *Ramadan* and the pony party are distinctly created.

The language of the story evokes the notion of camaraderie and represents a relationship of Muslims with the Americans as ‘normal.’ The family and friends’ exchanges represent the connections between the two segments of the American society. Admittedly, though both the families are American, the differences in the relationship of each are shown as different through language, activities, pictures and other such signifiers.

The author has tried to normalize Muslim ways by balancing it with the American non-Muslim family and their ways. The seemingly abnormal streak of a Muslim child fits promotion of fasting at a young age, its approval by the parents and its normal acceptance by the Bernard family. These are acts of normalizing something that seems odd or out of the way. Mobinuddin through juxtaposed family situations attempts to normalize Muslim identity, which appears to be very different in appearance, customs, as well as social interactions. This endeavor also makes connections between two American identities from two different races and ethnicities relevant to each other.

*A Party in Ramadan* (2009) illustrations of social and family landscape represent general American or western society. Details such as a fire hose on the street with back and front yards having lush green grass, the kitchen with a can of milk that can be bought at any grocery store, the invitation for the party, and the mailboxes are some of the signifiers of the American way of life. Within this American milieu, although it is not stated directly but presumably, is situated the

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86 The book does not have page numbers.
Muslim family with females in hijab, a father with a beard, the importance of Friday in Ramadan, cooking meals together for iftar, dates, the traditional prayers before and maghrib prayers after breaking the fast. The family also uses Arabic terms in their daily parlance. In this way, the author has tried to validate the Muslim presence and identity to be in sync with the American identity. The story exemplifies this integrated canopy by introducing both the upcoming party and Ramadan, which is also how the challenge of being a Muslim in a non-Muslim context is highlighted. The Muslim American mother suggests: “Leena, I know the party means a lot to you. Do you want to fast on a different day? That would be okay. You are still too young to fast every day.” Later, Leena is supported by her friend: ‘Mrs. Bernard called the girls to the kitchen for cake. Amy stood by Leena’s side. She said: “I’ll stay with you. I am not hungry anyway”.

Leena’s successful attempt at fasting is a confirmation of belief of Muslim way of life and upholding it in an American society and at a young age\textsuperscript{87}, particularly, when you are not supposed to fast. The Ramadan discourse also includes the family encouraging, patting and hugging Leena for bravely withstanding all the tests and trying hard to please God. It highlights the cultural aspects and foregrounds the differences in food such as Baklava, a popular Middle Eastern dessert, and Muslim rituals such as fasting: “Amira, I was fasting today,” Leena told her sister. “I didn’t get to eat all day.”

Universal values of sharing are emphasized to demonstrate how Muslim children are similar to other children. The author has provided a detailed foot note on Ramadan and Hijab: “Not even water?” asked Mrs. Bernard. Her voice seemed very loud to Leena, who was embarrassed to think her friends might hear”.

\textsuperscript{87} According to Sharia Muslim children are not expected to fast until they reach adolescence.
The author, Asma Mobin-Uddin, has included plenty of information and signals for non-Muslims to have an understanding of Muslim beliefs and practices, as well as be comforted in understanding that it is normal for Muslim children to make an effort at fasting from an early age. The story is carefully constructed literary piece. There's plenty of information for people who do not identify as Muslims, embedded in the text, illustrations, and author's note, as well as plenty of encouragement and comfort in the message for children celebrating Ramadan among those of other (or no) faiths.

1.29.2.5 An Eid for Everyone (2009)

An Eid for Everyone (2009) is yet another Eid story in the repertoire of Eid stories penned by Hina Islam and illustrated by Roseanne Lester. It is a small picture booklet containing ten colorful pages describing Eid celebrations. It’s woven around two siblings Saara and Esa, who are excited about celebrating Eid with their families and friends. Their friends Maryam, Yasmeen, and Ayesha, are also a part of these celebrations.

Festivities are indicated by colorful decorations and dresses. The excitement of this holiday is delineated regarding the traditional value it brings: ‘Eid is a time for being with family and helping the poor. Eid is also time for giving and receiving gifts’. The pictures and the background are created to communicate social ethos amongst Muslims for Eid celebrations. However, the signs, the tools and the language used for this depiction seem to have resonance in general western celebrations. For instance, Yasmeen wears a gown as well as a tiara on the Eid day and admires herself in the mirror for a long time. There is no mention of specific Muslim cultural symbols except prayers. The author has made an Eid story using the popular holiday and celebration repertoire.

88 There are no page numbers in the book.
Unlike several general *Eid* stories that are written for *Eid al-Fitr* and *Ramadan*, this one has in its introduction a mention of both the *Eids* i.e. *Eid AL Fitr* and *Eid Al-Adha*. The *Eid* celebrations mentioned here do not tell us, which specific *Eid* is being referenced. As this book is for pre-schoolers, the emphasis is on some key messages related to the celebration. The pictures in the story portray young children with different dress ups. While Saara is depicted with *hijab*, Maryam does not wear *hijab*. The latter can be an attempt at a representation inclusive of all kinds of Muslims. Showing Saara, a pre-schooler in *hijab* is not a norm as according to *Sharia* (Islamic Law) girls are expected to wear *hijab* once they age into puberty. Girls, can practice wearing it much before that age. The festivities of *Eid* and its ethos are depicted through the cooking, gift wrapping and general excitement the children share with each other. These draw parallels between popular holiday festivities of Christmas and New Year. Therefore this story can be used as an educational resource to talk about cultural diversity.

The story also contains several Muslim cultural icons such as decorating hands with henna, offering special *Eid* prayers and hugging each other after prayers to mark the celebration. The story attempts to universalize *Eid* celebrations by ending it with children visiting some poor children in the neighborhood to share gifts. The children are proud to have done this.

The women in the story are shown as both with and without *hijab*. In this way, Muslim identities are built on a variety of levels: on the level of faith, and at the same time connecting with universal values of caring and sharing such that Muslim children can become part of the larger humanity.

### 1.29.2.6 Moon Watchers: Shirin’s Ramadan Miracle (2010)

*Moon Watchers: Shirin’s Ramadan Miracle* (2010) is a picture book by Reza Jalali on *Ramadan* and *Eid* narrated from the point of view of a nine-year-old girl, Shirin. It is a holiday picture book portraying a Muslim holiday in an American context. Shirin lives with her family in
Maine, United States of America. Her family constitutes: her parents, her older brother Ali, their cat Pishi and her grandmother ‘Maman Bozorg,' which literally means the elderly one. Shirin watches the moon with her father when *Ramadan* is about to start. She observes the waxing and waning of it throughout the month until the *Eid* is announced. Her experiences of watching Ramadan moon with her father are memorable. Shirin says: “I lean up against my father as the sky gets darker around us. Way above our heads, tiny stars start to appear. We search for the new moon”.

Throughout the book beauty of the moon is captured vividly:

By the next night, the moon is completely round. I go out to the pond in back of our house and see the moon’s trembling reflection in the water. When Pishi dips her paw in the pond, the moon breaks into hundreds of tiny silvery pieces. It’s so beautiful!

The plot of the story revolves around Shirin, who desires to observe fast during *Ramadan*: “Shirin, you’re too young, but remember there’s more to *Ramadan* than fasting. Why do not you think of some good deeds to help others in our family? You could take care of Pishi or weed in the garden”.

Shirin feels left out when the others break their fasts to have their meals after dark and in the early morning before it is light again. Maman Bozorg tells Shirin story of a boy, who fasted part time and his offering was also accepted. Shirin is curious to know if her part-time offering would be accepted or not: “Of course, Allah would like such an offering!...your part-time fasting would be beautiful and precious – the way quilt is beautiful – all different pieces becoming one gift”.

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89 The Book does not have page numbers.
This way Shirin is encouraged to fast and realizes that the little boy in the story was her
dad. Her family advises her to wait for some time as fasting is difficult for young children. Shirin
is jealous of her brother Ali, who can fast. Ali takes this opportunity to tease and sneer at her
younger sibling. During the course of the month-long fasting, Shirin discovers that her brother is
cheating on his fasting. Twice she catches hold of him breaking the fast in the middle of the day.
Shirin has been taught by her parents that Ramadan just doesn’t mean fasting and staying away
from food. It also means doing good. While Shirin is struggling to pick up something meaningful
and challenging for doing good, she catches her brother cheating in Ramadan. Ali also knows
Shirin is aware of the truth. Shirin does not tell on him, and it’s a miracle for her as she learns to
keep others’ secret and do good deeds. She has grown up this Ramadan and gets a gift from her
elder brother too! Ramadan for Shirin brings the reward of an improved relationship with her
brother.

The Muslim culture is depicted through the traditional Persian style food, through the
dressing, the chadors, prayers, henna hand painting, the observation of Ramadan rituals and the
like. The grandmother and dad educate the children on Ramadan values at different instances in
the story:

You know that Ramadan starts with the sighting of the new moon…Muslims use
the lunar calendar. This is the holy month to pray more, to help others, and to be
an especially good person...We go without food and water during the daylight
hours of the month…Fasting teaches us what it means to be hungry, to be
thankful for what we have.

Shirin is learning to follow prayer actions through the observation of her family praying
in a ritualistic way. After prayers dad advises Shirin to ask something from Allah: “With eyes
shut, I pray for straighter hair and better grades.” This is a very realistic portrayal of a nine-year-
old Muslim American child. She also learns from her mom that “…not every Muslim woman
covers her hair.” Mother’s fatigue and headaches for lack of tea, as well as father’s low energy bring forth realistic aspects of the rituals and practices. All this makes fasting more humane.

This story is little unusual than the other Ramadan and Eid stories discussed here. It has the approval of elders for children to fast as long as they wish to when they are young. It is alright for them to offer a mosaic of gift in bits and pieces to make a complete carpet. In my discussion of the story with authors Rina (Personal communication dated, August 21, 2014) and Aina (Personal communication, March 17, 2015) both the authors were appalled by such a twist in the story that allows children to fast as long as they can. They considered it is a gross misrepresentation of Islam.

The pictures in the book are aesthetically done to attract children and give readers a sense of pleasure. The approach to fasting, and Ramadan created by the author throughout the book represents a different voice and a diverse perspective within the repertoire of Ramadan books.

The connected activities in the story are a reaffirmation of Muslim identities and milieu. The author has created a portrait of a close-knit Muslim family through Shirin’s family during Ramadan with an attempt to normalize it. Such a view point creates a different voice within the Ramadan literature. Significantly, there are no Arabic words used in the book, yet another way of propagating that it is normal to deviate from the popular norms of being Muslim, particularly, where children are concerned. It is reflective of contemporary multi-cultural American lives.

1.30 Discussion: Implications for Curriculum and Teacher Development

The literature examined in the present chapter has an overlapping of similar themes, patterns, challenges and responses within expressions and experiences of Muslim children. The stories discussed here are from different historical and geographical backgrounds. The books are snapshots of: Arabian, Persians, South-Asian, Near eastern, far eastern and western ways of life,
as lived by Muslims. The characters were vividly presented. An understanding of these vignettes leads into charting the ways of addressing Islamophobia and creating vistas for discussions to bring Muslims into classroom and teaching-learning paraphernalia. Significantly, Muslim representations in these books are primarily done through female protagonists.

1.30.1 Currere and Reconceptualist Critique

Many of the stories discussed here such as Habibi (1999) and Persepolis (2007) have an autobiographical element. They can be categorized to a large extent with the understanding of curriculum as personal and autobiographical process (Aoki, 1993; Grumet, 1989; Pinar, 2004). As Grumet (1989) writes:

Autobiographical writing invites those who would teach to recover the world within which they came to be knowing subjects. Reading autobiography invites its writer to discriminate the particular from the general in her account. (Grumet, 1989, p. 15)

The stories discussed here embody diverse snapshots of Muslim life, cultures, and characters viewed through different personal lenses of different authors, both Muslim and non-Muslim. All, except one (Reza Jalali) of the fourteen writers, are women who confirm Hunt’s (1990) proposition that children’s literature is mainly a female enterprise. Interestingly, most of the stories also have female protagonists. This denotes their comfort as well as association with women as female writers. It also signifies what Spivak notes as, ‘The position that only the subaltern can know the subaltern, only women can know women and so on … predicates the possibility of knowledge on identity’ (Spivak, 1987, pp. 253–4).

Similarly, all of them write from their situatedness in the western world (North America, France, and UK) and are widely recognized for their works in the form of awards that are mostly given on the literary merits of their works by different agencies. The perspectives expressed by these authors through the choice of content, their moral and cultural worldviews, their secular
and faith-based outlooks all lead us towards asking a basic question: How does anyone define what Muslim is or can there be one definition of being Muslim? What makes a person Muslim – rites, rituals, beliefs, ceremonies, *hijab*, fasting – or there is something beyond? Can identities be cast into watertight compartments? How do identity, race and ethnicity labels operate, particularly, in Muslim children’s literature produced in the West, where a lean understanding of Muslims themselves prevails? Significantly, Muslim values, beliefs, traditions, and practices are continuously juxtaposed against the ‘western’ interpretations of these signifiers. It is also important to deconstruct the ‘west.’ In the post-modern, a neo-colonial world that we live in the West is everywhere. The colonial and orientalist dichotomies of east and west, as well as of the orient and the occident do not anymore exist in a compartmentalized way as one may imagine. In the flat world (Thomas Freidman, 2008) the mental and educational landscapes are in dire need of reconceptualisation.

Muslim representations in children’s literature discussed above include some of the common ways of attempting children’s literature of didacticism or to romantic concepts of a child. It represents a combination of several of these threads of racism, multiculturalism and critical discourse through some common and not so common images of Muslim characters. It has both internal and external landscapes that signify Muslim identity and way of life in different shades.

The themes of struggle for identity and assimilation in an immigrant, foreign and western environment within a looming fear of social failure are very well captured by the authors through expressions and body language of the characters in the picture books. These signifiers subtly depict the social awkwardness of the non-whites to conform to the norms of the whiteness, which is a hallmark of behavior for the non-white (Gutierrez, 2005/6), as in *Big Red Lollipop* (Khan, 2010), when Rubina is forced to take her naughty sister to her friends’ birthday, where the latter
is not invited. Rubina tries to convince her mother and seeks her permission for not taking her younger sister with her, particularly because the latter is not invited: “I beg and plead, but Ami won’t listen. I have no choice. I have to call. Sally says, “All right.” But it doesn’t sound all right. I know she thinks I’m weird”.

Rubina is very happy to get an invitation for the birthday party, which perhaps is not part of the culture of the Muslim immigrant family, which she belongs to, but she desperately wants to be accepted by the white position.

The universal tenets of Islam and its inclusive elements are highlighted in many of the stories. The diversity within the Muslim communities is fundamental in understanding Muslim representations. Rukhsana Khan maintains that Muslims are one amongst the Ahl-al-Kitab, people of the Book (along with Jews and Christians):

“People of all colors – brown, white, beige, and black – get out of their shiny cars and head for the prayer hall. So many colors of Muslims, all coming to thank God for a wonderful Ramadan.” (Muslim Child: Understanding Islam through stories and poems, 2002, p. 42)

The descriptions of celebrations are a combination of traditional Muslim ways, as well as contextual western festivities. For instance, the Eid celebrations and decorations comply by the popular descriptions of such occasions:

Then my cousins and I go into Grandpa’s old shed, our secret clubhouse, and have a meeting of our secret club. We sneak food from the table and carry it to the clubhouse, and while we laugh and tell secrets and jokes and riddles, we munch on candies and cupcakes and chips and pretzels. We wash it down with some pop. And everyone admires the way grandma has decorated the house, with balloons and streamers and signs saying “Happy Eid!” (Muslim Child: Understanding Islam through Stories and Poems, 2002, p. 46)

Interestingly, almost all of these authors work within the so-called sacred narrative and a faith based paradigm. This is yet another element perhaps fettering the quality of Muslim representations concerning critical pedagogy. Attempts are made by Nye and Satrapi to question
faith-based stances in their books *Habibi* (1999) and *Persepolis* (2007) respectively. Satrapi’s personal encounter with Marxism during the Iranian revolution played a big role in such questioning.

The writers’ attempt at generating understanding of Islam in many of the stories discussed here fall short of critical multicultural approach (Asher, 2007; Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006; Geneva, 2003-4) and are repetitive such that an engagement with a few books may bring forth the same concepts over and over again, for instance, the *Eid* and *Ramadan* stories. Understandably, the questions and problems related to multicultural approach may vary according to contexts. Nevertheless, the task of multiculturalism needs to be about challenging social, cultural and economic relations of exploitation while, shedding new light on the construction of difference (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995) and a call to engage teachers to confront the dynamic, context-specific intersections of race, culture, gender, and sexuality (Asher, 2007).

The Muslim children’s literature discussed here does not directly deal in depth with how their identity markers such as fasting and following Islam makes their characters better person or helps them recognize inequity and injustice. Submission and meek following of the given cultural and religious traditions are the trends seen in almost all them except a few. These authors in attempting to find a niche in depicting Muslim children, “... repeatedly drew on traditional patterns and images, not knowing how to abandon them or how to find alternatives” (Davies, 2003, p. 6). For instance, *Ruler of the Courtyard* (2003) consists of a framework of *Red Riding Hood* (Muller & Kronheim & co., 1875), where the girl, Saba, is finally able to cross the courtyard. Further, *I Love Eid’s* (*Muslim Child: Understanding Islam through Stories and Poems*, 2002) description for me had resonances from my childhood readings of Enid Blyton (1897-1968). Some of the stories although rooted in Islamic repertoire maintain what we have understood to be ‘whiteness’ (Leonardo, 2002; McCready, 2004) as a position of superiority that
attempts to normalize other minority realities. It indicates a power system, where simply being born with white skin will make the difference in your life story.

1.30.2 Multiple Islams

The appraisal of these stories through multiple theories of anti-racism, multiculturalism, critical pedagogy, postcolonialism and anti-orientalism opens horizons for understanding complex historical, geographical and cultural realities that this offers. They also confirm the range and propensity of multiple Islams existing out there. For instance, Marjane in *Persepolis* (2007) not only believes in her Muslim God but also invokes the traditional Zoroastrian God of Persia, as well as Navruz celebrations during her most intimate conversations on her personal dilemmas. Understanding of Muslim representations without an understanding of its loaded plurality will comply by the dominant discourse even to the extent of supporting the "banking theory of education", whereby curriculum as dialogue is "...reduced to the act of one person’s “depositing” ideas in another" (Freire, 1970).

In Islam, like in any other faith (Fakhry, 2011), there are several strands and belief systems followed by Muslims living in different cultural contexts across the globe. Geertz' (1971) account of the diversity of Muslims in two separate contexts of Indonesia and Morocco supports the dynamic pluralist reality of Muslim populations. Within the main umbrella of doctrines are two major sects - the Sunnis and the Shias. The latter are a minority and comprise of twenty percent of the world's total Muslim population. Within this minority stream, there are several communities of interpretations (Daftary, 1996). The viewing of different faith communities having various interpretations is to see it as a diffusion of tension points between making universal truth claims and subjective choices. The underlying philosophy of critical pedagogy is the idea that both or multiple claims are valid, and the importance of having the perspective of the other is vital.
The conversation around content and Muslim representations in the present chapter shatters the stereotypical images of Muslims belonging to two broad ethnic groups of the Arabs and the Persians. The Muslim representations here include: Pakistani, Palestinian, Somali, British, Afghani, and French-Iranian milieus. We come across a wide variety of Muslim cultures and characters from first generation immigrants struggling to come to terms with the new land that they have migrated. We also have Muslim children from troubled lands of Afghanistan to native Iranians negotiating identities within the turmoil and turbulence of their lands. All these collectively signify dilemmas within movements of identity as chiefly confronted by children of elementary school age.

The primary purpose of the present thesis is to find spaces for an enriched teacher and curriculum development through a healthy amalgamation of Muslim children’s literature in the educational repertoire. There are signs of such an inclusion in some of the books such as *Night of the Moon* (2008), which offers ways of combating Islamophobia. The dynamics of an intellectually and culturally vibrant civilization like Islam can be capitalized for the production of Muslim children’s literature to work as an antidote to the fossilized images in popular media, as well as literature.

The range of books presented here speaks of some trends that co-exist within Muslim children’s writing. There is a promise of inclusive dialogue and engagement through these works as they bring a richness of perspectives. Many of them also bring out the repetitiveness of subject and patterns implying a dearth of deep and comfortable representations of identity and its signifiers. In such a scenario, whatever is popularly available becomes the only version of looking at Muslims. For instance, the popularity of Canadian author Rukhsana Khan may be articulated as the accepted face of Muslim women in the multicultural Canadian ethos. Such acceptance may promote reverse stereotyping as well (Hayden, 1992, p. iv). Also, her personal
storyline amounts to narratives of the American dream of 'rags to riches.' Such a projection need
to be located within a recognition of her contribution in the face of her double struggle as a
stereo-typed Muslim woman, as well as the challenge of overall writers of children's literature in
situating themselves in the larger repertoire of literature (Hunt, 1990, p. 4). She represents the
Canadian model of accepted diversity, which at best may just be the superficial face of
acceptance (Pinar, 1978).

The Muslim representations also need to be understood through their creators. Almost all
the authors of the books discussed here are Muslims except the Canadian writer Deborah Ellis.
She is a major writer and a recipient of prestigious Governor General’s Award. She writes within
the multicultural spirit and with a non-sacred paradigm. Her Muslim characters and milieu are a
representation of the suffering through a war trodden zone. On the other side of the scale of
select authors is Naima Robert, who is a convert. Her young adult novels are about Muslim
teenage struggling with identity and trying to find a solution within Islam. The focus of these
authors in representing is very different and offers an interesting dimension of inside-outside
perspectives. Not much information is available regarding the identity of Karen Katz and Rae
Norridge. I contacted Islamic Foundation and Kube Publishing in London, UK, to get more
information on Rae Norridge but did not succeed. It is quite possible that some of the authors
having Muslim names may not identify themselves as Muslims. In such instances, my
assumptions stand corrected. Motivations behind Muslim representations by such authors can be
studied to gain insight into Muslim representations.

Many characters and milieu examined in this chapter, like the Eid stories, extent embody
institutionalized aspects of religion, which mainly work to uphold patriarchies. The selection of
texts discussed here is an attempt to recognize the meta-narratives of diverse Islam including
multiple traditions and perspectives, lived in various communities throughout the world. This is
in keeping with the fundamental spirit of "reconceptualisation of what curriculum is, how it functions, and how it might function in more emancipatory ways" (Pinar, 1978, p. 211).

1.30.3 Critical Pedagogy: Diving Deep into Muslim Representations

The stories discussed here raise and substantiate familiar Muslim images, beliefs and practices. Traditional images such as that of the mother in *Big Red Lollipop* (2010, p. 10), invocation of *Eid*, appearances of characters, mention of the Quran and fasting as in *Amira's Totally Chocolate World* (2010) are some of the illustrations of these. Creation and perpetuation of Muslim cultural and value system such as *taqwa* (God consciousness), non-acquiescence of dating for Muslim girls, remembering Prophet Muhammad, legitimizing veil (Roberts, 2009, p. 14) and juxtaposing ‘approved’ norms of behaviors particularly for young girls with that of general acceptance of such norms is done in *From Somalia with Love* (2009). In the same novel, Roberts attempts to create a syncretic notion of Muslim life by juxtaposing Somalian Muslim image and acceptable values to those not tolerated through characters of two young girls Safia Dirie and her cousin Firdous. The intelligent triangulation of British, Somalian and Muslim values by Roberts (2009) convey one kind of solution needed for a robust assimilation of Muslims within their selves. This complex entanglement is also portrayed through the young Muslim girls’ Liyana (Nye, 1999), Parvana (Ellis, 2012), Safia (Roberts, 2009), Marjane (Satrapi, 2007), and Farah’s (Khan, 2011) dilemmas and longing for solutions. Such density is illustrated through Liyana’s (Nye, 1999) homesickness; where she is unable to name what is she homesick for. It is also created through tensions of not being invited to a party in books for young readers (Gilani-Williams 2007; Mobinuddin, 2009; Khan, 2010).

The books for lower elementary age are stylistically simple to justify its presentation of narrative discourse to be suitable for a child's consumption. These stories also have an element of challenge that the growing Muslim child faces. In *Fajr, (The Muslim Child, 2002)* the little boy
exclaims: “It’s so hard being Muslim. It would be easier being something else” (Khan, 2002, p. 10). This little boy finds getting up in the morning for prayers, tough. It is also an expression of perhaps the agony of abiding by the rules and regulations prescribed by his faith. In the same story, when Azeeza is fasting: “Why do we have to fast anyway?” It makes you feel lucky.” Azeeza grumbled, “I do not feel lucky” (Khan, 2002, p. 37). Again, Ahmad’s ordeal in Samosas (The Muslim Child, 2002) makes him exclaim: “Being good is so hard” (Khan, 2002, p. 53). I wonder if the author intended to bring out the heroic quality of Muslim children or is this simply being apologetic or defensive, two popular positions taken by the women writers.

Within these depictions is also located the predominant ‘being Muslim’ sacred narrative that is mostly a legacy of the scriptural vocabulary and adages. Muslim characters constantly struggle to navigate between this legacy and coming to terms with their post-modern western lives. This tension renders a double movement of looking into the past for legitimacy and living successfully in the present. It sometimes results into bondage with the past and at times liberates the characters to come to terms with the present and their identity.

Amidst these mazes of movements emerge the image and construct of Islam, a religion and a faith, which is always good. Since Islam is good, being Muslim is always reverting to good. While some stories have strongly vouchsafed for Muslim solutions to all the problems (Robert, 2009; Khan, 2011, Mobinuddin, 2009), others have offered universal resolutions based on human values (Nye, 1999; Satrapi, 2007). Books such as Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle (2010) talk about aesthetics of Ramadan moon and good deeds, remarkably linking universal values to particular Muslim setting. This is a broad way of looking at Muslim lives and characters outside of Muslim signposts. At the same time, the Islamic realities outlined by some of the authors may be representative of the dominant discourse that may ignore or silence the minority within the Islam.
Intertextuality is apparent in all the stories through a use of common parlance in Arabic. For example: *Insha’allah*. The themes and motifs in almost all the stories revolve around affirmations of Muslim identity through finding *halal* solutions or seeking answers from faith-based rituals. They follow the code of similar faith practices that unanimously evoke a familiar Muslim world with recognizable and available characters and situations. Situated meanings and values are attached to written and oral expressions to create connectedness with different cultural discourses within the Muslim milieu. For instance, saying *Subhan-Allah* – glory be to God or sharing *suhoor* – the morning meal before the commencement of fast, and the like.

*Eid* and *Ramadan* are discussed and expressed as a common lingo and a way of life all over the world for Muslims. Connections are made to previous or future interactions, to other Muslims, ideas, Quran, Muslim beliefs and institutions such as mosques and prayers, throughout the stories, particularly *Eid* and *Ramadan* ones. The Muslim characters in the book all use traditional verbiage used by Muslims across cultures such as *Bismillah*, *Masha’allah*, *Wallahi*, *Asalaamu Alaikum*, *Allahu Akbar*, *Insha’allah* and the like. Many of the books provide an extensive glossary at the end of the book defining the Arabic, South Asian, Somali or other culturally relevant words used by the characters. A lot of Somali words such as *Hoyo* (mother), *Ayeyo* (maternal grandmother), *Habaryero* and the like are used in *From Somalia with Love* (2009) along with Somalian food, beverages (*qahwa*) and dress code to create the ambiance of Somali culture.

Reference to common discourses outside the current situation is made in stories such as *Habibi* (1999) and *Persepolis* (2007). In *Habibi* (1999) the word ‘Muslim’ is negligibly mentioned as compared to Arabs and Israelis. A vivid picture of Arab culture and Arab ways of life is depicted through swarms of relatives that the Abboud family has, the traditional meals, the
collective family prayers, their village and above all from Sitti, the paternal grandmother, who calls Liyana Habibi and Habibti, both the words meaning ‘darling’ or ‘dear one’ for female.

In *My name is Parvana* (2012) intertextuality within the Parvana novels builds the milieu in an attempt to create a reliable aura. Parvana’s friend Shauzia from earlier novels is mentioned quite frequently. In Rukhsana Khan’s stories some words very commonly used in the South Asian milieu such as *Tonga, lussi, buchi*, and the like are used. There are South Asian motifs, ranging from bedspread designs to clothing that communicates the cultural richness of the family’s home life, as well. In *Hilmy the Hippo: Learns not to Lie* (2004) the narrative of the story creates significance (Gee, 2005, p. 11) for morals and ethics as embedded in Muslim understanding gained from culture, scriptural interpretations and lived experiences. This significance is further highlighted by the use of words *Insha’llah, Masha’Allah* and the like, which are ordinarily part of a Muslim’s conversation with each other. Such a conversational language evokes identity of the characters as Muslims, here all of whom are animals. These exchanges enact relationship of brotherhood that is shared within the *ummah*. Further, through language in communication, the author creates Muslim identity of the characters in the story. For instance, when Bill Hornbill utters *Insha’allah* (p. 15), and the Jackal says *Masha’Allah*, this identity is affirmed. These Muslim terms also privilege Muslims, who use such language regularly over those, who may not be very familiar with their usage owing to the cultural differences. Thus, a discourse of “…coordinated patterns of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places and in the here-and-now as a performance that is recognizable” (Gee, 2004, p. 28) is created.

Some stories like Khan’s *Silly Chicken* (2005) ends with a relationship reversal, when Bibi Ki buchi, the little chicken is born: “Ami says I love Buchi even more than I love her.” The
chicken here is presented as a sibling. The relationship between Rani and Bibi rivets around sibling rivalry. Rudd writes:

…such a depiction of children consciously or unconsciously addresses particular constructions of the child, or metaphorical equivalents in terms of character or situation (for example, animals, puppets, undersized or underprivileged grown-ups), the commonality being that such texts display an awareness of children’s disempowered status (whether containing or controlling it, questioning or overturning it). (Rudd, 1996, p.39)

In short, in Muslim children’s literature, there seems a constant juxtaposition of a child or an individual against something bigger, older, past, and normative as truth and sacred; as standards and ideals.

Books that offer an expanded horizon to engage with for children both Muslim and Non-Muslim are needed. For instance, Maha Addasi’s *Time to Pray* (2010) is a colorful narration of a young girl Yasmeen’s, initiation into a spiritual journey interwoven with granddaughter and grandmother relationship. The story evokes familiar sounds of the call to pray and the rituals surrounding prayers at the same time maintaining a childlike perspective (CCBC, 2011). In the same way, *Celebrating Ramadan* (Hoyt-Goldsmith, 2001) makes human connections with the readers. It is the story of Ibraheem and his family following the rites and rituals of the holy month *Ramadan*. It connects readers with this family following and observing the austerity of the month (Hadaway et al., 2002).

*The Day of Ahmed’s Secret* (Gilliland & Lewis, 1990) makes human connections with the readers. It effectively narrates a day in the life of a young boy, who travels on a donkey cart with his grandfather in the streets of Cairo to deliver gas. This colorful picture book brings to life the hustle and bustle of Cairo (Al-Hazza, 2006). Beauty in Islam and a general aesthetic approach to storytelling such as the one shown in *Moon Watchers* (2010) is also desirable.
1.31 Conclusion

From the analysis of the select stories we can surmise the following:

There is full possibility that writings depicting Muslim children will lend itself to multicultural and critical pedagogy discourse even if nobody has ever attempted them in that spirit. Literature labeled as multicultural may not necessarily provide experiences of non-white. Further, Islamic education component in Muslim children’s literature can be dealt educationally without bringing in religious connotations within the classroom situation. Even more important, the Western nuances of understanding children’s literature are different from the (so-called) Eastern perspectives on the subject. Finally, the genre of children’s literature can be broadly inclusive of a sub-strand of minority literature i.e. that of Muslims.

The promises and prospects of having Muslim children’s literature for deepened classroom experiences for Ontario children has resonances in Banks' framework of cosmopolitan spirit and attitude (Banks, 2008) that is desirable for an enriched citizenship education and training in our schools. This negates the "zero-sum conception of identity" (Kymlick, 2004, p. xiv, in Banks, 2008, p. 133). Banks' idea of transformative citizenship propounds the framework of multicultural citizenship and affirms that "identity is multiple, changing, overlapping, and contextual, rather than fixed and static" (Banks, 2008, p. 133). Cross-cultural understanding is essential for a peaceful and amicable co-existence in multi-cultural societies that we live in. Also, "...People move back and forth across many identities, and the way society responds to these identities either binds people to or alienates them from the civic culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 112 in Banks, 2008, p. 133).

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90 Cosmopolitans view themselves as citizens of the world who will make decisions and take actions in the global interests that will benefit humankind (Banks, 2008). Their "allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings" (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 4).
Inculcating Cosmopolitan ethics in our students through dialogue, action, and inclusion of possibilities is an appropriate response to lead all of us towards transformative citizenship (Banks, 2008, p. 134). When students are aligned with the improvement of larger purposes of humanity, it enables their liberation from narrow, divisive boundaries of 'colonial tendencies': “An important purpose of transformative knowledge is to improve the human condition” (Banks, 2008, p. 135). Within this appreciation is the paradigm of inclusion, which is also a model of hope and possibilities (Aga, 2008). As well, it offers prospects of holistic knowledge and education (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006, p. 172).

Admittedly, the nomenclature and the values denoted by pluralism and cosmopolitanism are contemporary expressions of the ideals of (any) civilization, particularly, the Western. These ideals also symbolize deep-seated humanism that has been part of all human endeavors and civilizations. For Muslims, these are informed by sacred narratives and archetypes, and thus, their expressions may not seem neutral. Does this mean we will have two or several sets of values and their appropriations running simultaneously and applicable in teaching-learning situations? The response to this question is an indication of the complexity of Muslim representations that I have discussed in the present thesis.

My case as a Muslim can be one of the tests to the apparent dichotomy. I believe in pluralism and cosmopolitanism as a Canadian Muslim educator but also realize the resources that I analyzed may not exude the same spirit in the way that I understand them. The interpretations and representations through different Muslim contexts are diverse. The elements of diversity, equity, critical thinking, transformation and social justice are intricately connected with issues of Muslim identity. These values are not obviously or heavily present in each of the works analyzed here but are important for development and assertion of Muslim children’s literature.
For teachers, the areas of teacher development and teaching engagement with Muslim children’s literature offer both challenges and opportunities. The challenges are of navigating and negotiating spaces with the particularity of identities and cultures, as well as situating them within the transformative paradigm of education. It is also an opening into ‘reading the word and the world’ (Freire & Macedo, 1987) with a promise of becoming a conscientious teacher. For Muslim teachers, it is a treasure chest waiting to be discovered for critical self-examination into prospects of not just contributing to the enrichment of the genre of Muslim children’s literature but also to be able to bring to the classroom floors tensions of monolithic misrepresentations. This engagement is a commitment on the part of teachers, which comes with a caveat that such a critical journey may usher fear and insecurity, particularly for Muslim educators because it may entail questioning some of the deep-seated ideals as related to identity. While the genre is developing, the teacher education endeavors can train the teachers to use Muslim children’s literature as curriculum sources to infuse the missing pieces or lean presence of critical thinking, equity, diversity and social justice to fill the gaps.

Increasingly diverse interpretations of beliefs and Islamic history will inevitably be proposed in the coming decades, as traditional culture distinction between East, West, North and South continue to dissolve, as the population of the Muslim world continues to grow, as early historical sources continue to be scrutinized, as feminism meets the established patriarchy and as diversity meets normalization and standardization. The diversity of the interpretations, if not dealt with broad educational understanding, will bring increased fractiousness, perhaps intensified by the fact that Islam now exists in a great variety of social and intellectual settings – Bosnia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the United States, and so on. More than ever before, anybody wishing to understand global affairs will need to understand Islamic Civilization, in all its permutations (Lester, 1999). Such acknowledgments stand in critical need
of deconstruction, as well as engagements through the stories analyzed in this chapter, particularly, when stories like *The Muslim Child* (Khan, 2002) is considered by reviewers as a children’s guide to Islam and its five pillars of faith. In one of the stories in this book the dress is corresponded with the 'core' teaching of Islam in the teacher's guide of this book\(^91\).

Lastly, the selection of literary pieces presents here for analysis is deliberately done to show diversity in Muslim representations, which helps break the Muslim stereotypes and engages us with several normal facets of Muslim cultures and societies. The label of Middle Eastern stereotype in Muslims is also busted to a large extent as a majority of works under consideration does not have the Middle East as its milieu, or the Middle East is not very frequently mentioned in the stories at hand.

Another strand that comes out of this rich tapestry of literature is a confirmation that all Muslims are not Arabs and all Arabs are not Muslims (All-Hazza and Lucking, 2007, p. 132). This depiction is very lucidly highlighted in Nye's *Habibi* (1999). The orientalist vision of Islam, in need of reform and control, is not maintained by Muslim writers writing from the West. Nevertheless, postcolonial marginalization of Muslim content, as well as neo-colonial centripetal tendencies are observed in a selection of teaching and curriculum processes. The publishing structures, as well as a negligible presence of such content in official Ontario curriculum resources also speaks perhaps of deep oriental psyche operational even in teaching and learning. It begs the question: How much are we comfortable in bringing Muslim content and people to the center to critically engage with these? Muslim children’s literature, probed here, offers a peek into the wide vistas of potential and possibility of not just a genre to be fully actualized but also of the opportunity for education. As we move towards production and proliferation of this literature, the thinly addressed areas of the portrayal of complexity, humanity, diversity, as well

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91 http://www.rukhsanakhan.com/teacherguides/Muslim Child Teacher's Guide.PDF, p. 5
as issues of justice and equity within the Muslim communities will require more center stage.

Muslim children’s literature, when developed, understood and engaged with for curriculum and teacher development, will add a rich layer of cultural and communal understanding of the multicultural fabric of Canada.
Chapter 7
Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

This last chapter sums up the journey of my investigation of Muslim children’s literature as curricular resources for Ontario curriculum, and makes policy recommendations for a robust repertoire of Muslim children's literature for Ontario schools. It connects three dimensions of Muslim representation that include snapshots of the lives of Muslim children from different Muslim cultures and societies, which add shades of humanity to the “other”—an idea absolutely critical to the spirit of the pluralistic Canadian society. Engagement with curriculum recommendations, interview data, and critical content analysis of literary texts calls attention to some of the deep colonial undercurrents that render communities invisible. Critical pedagogy unleashes the power of reading that comes with an understanding of what we read and how we can decolonize.

The study is a response to my major research question: "How can Ontario curriculum be enriched with Muslim children's literature as curricular resources?" The enrichment of Ontario curriculum will accompany an in-depth engagement with materials like those discussed here. It will also be accompanied with a rounded and comprehensive understanding of the roles variables such as the position, attitude, and inclusion of stakeholders’ voices play. The representations and identities of Muslims are just as varied as the different cultures, histories, and geographies existing anywhere else in the world. Portrayal of these identities depends on who is writing and from where. The definition of a Muslim will shift from person to person and place to place. With such complex webs of awareness created by the application of critical appreciative inquiry, it makes sense that Muslim children’s literature be introduced into the Ontario curriculum.
The very limited availability of rich resources for and about Muslim children can be traced to historical and colonial supremacy. With Muslims’ loss of economic and political presence in different historical and cultural spaces also passed the ability to construct a mainstream intellectual and cultural heritage. Similarly, the confidence of Muslims to proclaim themselves the chosen innovators and the definers of the future of human discoveries also suffered, particularly because of colonial strife, which has led to the present stunted intellectual landscape. This is especially true for Muslim children’s literature (Garcha & Russell, 2006). However, with the constant flux in the international geo-political situation by the mid-twentieth century, the Muslim world has again entered into the calculations and decisions of Western political and economic planners due to factors like dependence on oil reserves in the Persian Gulf, the harvest of the tropical rainforests of Indonesia and Malaysia, the reinvestment of petrodollars in western economies by wealthy Arabian sheiks, and the outsourcing of low-paying manufacturing jobs to Pakistani and Bangladeshi child labor (Garcha & Russell, 2006, p. xi). Thus, the West, it seems, is now engaged in love-hate relationship with Muslim civilization.

1.32 Key Findings: Muslim Children’s Literature... or is there...?

After walking through the labyrinths of Muslim children’s literature and investigating different shades of Muslim representation, I asked a basic question: “How does one define Muslim children’s literature or Muslim content?” As a critical pedagogue, I question the genre or the way it is labeled. Is it categorized as “Muslim” because the works are mostly produced by Muslims, or produced for Muslims? Who decides what constitutes “Muslimness,” and how it is decided? What about writers that hail from Muslim cultures and societies, yet describe

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92 This stagnation can also be traced back to 12th-13th centuries, when doors of *ijtihad* were closed (Hallaq, 1984, 2013), innovations were banned as Abbasid rule declined, sufi and theocratic rulers took over, and internal fighting between Muslim rulers peaked.
themselves secular Muslims? Writers claim that any work can be for Muslim children, so can any literature labeled as Muslim actually be thoroughly Muslim? According to the reader response theory (Champagne, 1984), readers can just as easily make that distinction as an active participant in the reading process.

My journey of engagement with Muslim children’s literature as a critical pedagogue has helped me to question the basic tenets of Muslim children’s literature as a genre. This realization is not iconoclastic, as Muslim children’s literature is not a fixed concept. It is a contested notion that means different things to different people. Any literature that deals with Muslim names, peoples, issues, characters, events, religion, culture, or history can be called Muslim. Even though these are common threads, within each of these categories could be tremendous diversity, complementarity, and contestations. My learning also suggests that many of these categories are self-proclaimed. Such insights have profound impact on the knowledge and understanding of Muslim education and Muslim literature.

The triangulated study of Ontario curriculum documents, the stakeholders’ voices, and the analysis of fictional resources of Muslim children’s literature has all led to the following key findings:

First, despite the common perception, there appears to be plenty of fictional and non-fictional resources such as books, textbooks, reference materials, and videos that address the Muslim questions of culture, life, faith, history, issues, tensions, and more. Since my focus was on fictional materials produced around and after 9/11 for elementary students, I focused on content and the depth of these types of fictional works.

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93 In the YouTube show Let the Quran Speak episode “‘It was pretty Horrendous!!’ Discussing Muslim Children's Literature – Rukhsana Khan” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2B6u8bDnmqg). Khan here disapproves of Muslim authors such as N.H. Senzai (www.nhsenzai.com), who claim to be secular Muslims.

94 The number of available resources is now quite substantial. The bibliography of fictional materials attached here (Appendix A) alone consists of about 300 works for elementary age children. Total, there are approximately 1500 items available in different formats for Muslim children of all ages.
The production and availability of literature about Muslim children is rapidly increasing. The general curricular resources, including audio and video materials on the history, art, and culture of Muslims, are good quality and readily available. Accessible fictional (literary) resources include stories from the Quran and the life of Prophets, as well as traditional historic stories and popular folklore. These materials are also available in the form of electronic books, videos, audio books, picture books, storybooks, chapter books, and novels for young adults. All of these genres are quickly catching up to mainstream resources in the Western publishing industry and elsewhere. Experiences of Muslim children as captured in these works primarily depict Muslims as believers adhering faithfully to the basic tenets of Islam. Holiday reading for Muslim children in the form of Eid stories is quite popular, too.

Second, there is very little awareness regarding Muslim representation in curricular resources used in Ontario elementary classrooms. Admittedly, Canada is a secular country, so sectarian or faith-based material may not be in the forefront for classrooms and teacher development purposes, but Muslim children’s literature is not just about the religion or faith of Islam, but is also an engagement with Muslim cultures from different geographical and historical spheres of the world that form the multicultural mosaic that Canada represents, and which is a core Canadian value.

Third, it is erroneous to think that Muslim children’s literature only discusses Muslims or Muslim issues. As data indicates, Muslims cultures and societies are part of larger complex contexts. Every society is represented by different faiths, cultures, and traditions in various proportions, shapes and sizes. For instance, in Habibi (1999), the experiences of an Arab-American family also features glimpses into Jewish life, people, and culture in Jerusalem. For
example, in the story, Liyana’s boyfriend Omer is Jewish. Hybridity as a cultural effect of globalization on identity and as a postcolonial anti-essential understanding of cultural imperialism provides a lens in which to view Muslim representations through a trans-cultural understanding. As Marwan Kraidy (2005) maintains, traces of other cultures exist in every culture. Muslim lives cannot remain unaffected by global cultural trends, and therefore, we see Muslim children such as Marjane (Perspolis 2003), Liyana (Habibi, 1999), Safia (From Somalia with Love, 2009), and others struggling to come to terms with a synthesized Muslim identity that accepts global cultural trends while remaining respectful toward religious tradition. Muslim children’s literature that was written in the West is mostly produced by Muslim women who grew up there, and will naturally show the effects of hybridity on culture and identity (Bhabha, 2004).

Fourth, though Islam is not a monolith, the works cited here certainly do represent a limited vision of diversity of traditions, cultures, and practices. The people of six major cultural zones in Islamic civilizations, Arabic, Persian, Black African, Turkic, Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia (Nasr, 2004), are not captured by the literature discussed here. The milieu of each of the works analyzed here may be different as these stories are set in various locations in the West, but the overall plot and characterization is, to a large extent, quite one-dimensional. The theological landscape of the literary works studied here is also limited. As an Indian Canadian Ismaili Muslim woman, I do not see my experiences or worldviews expressed in these books. For my son, such literature can help him relate to the diversity within the ummah. Other than that, he does not exactly see himself represented by these works, either. This may be because of the limited number of available publications and authors that produce such works.

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95 Hybridity is the philosophic condition that most substantively challenges the ideological validity of colonialism (Bhabha, 1994, p. 113). It is a way to create balance between the binaries of "us" and the "other" toward an integrated human world.
Understandably, while the fundamental tenets of Islam are same for all Muslims, their interpretation of these tenets, as well as their cultural, geographical, linguistic, and historical roots vary. Viewing these works with a critical multicultural lens helps us see how popular images of Muslims and their practices almost always comes from a Middle Eastern context, conveniently forgetting that the majority of Muslims hail from the South Asian and Asia-Pacific regions, but these types of representations are almost totally absent from popular Muslim works. Young children need to be exposed to diversity within the Muslim community so that they understand and engage with the beauty and richness that such an experience offers.

We live in a world that is akin to a global village (McLuhan, 2011). In this interlinked existence, we need to know about Muslims, as well as learn about other cultures and religions of people unlike ourselves. In order to mitigate misconceptions, prejudices, and stereotypes, it is important that this kind of engagement is promoted. At a young age, children need an understanding of and engagement with multicultural materials, so that they grow up to become informed and tolerant citizens, appreciative of religious and cultural differences. Muslim children’s literature can serve as a springboard for critical literacy. Continuous engagement with core and social identities is a sure way to develop confident and dependable identities for Muslim children.

Fifth, some authors of Muslim children’s literature interviewed in this research do not believe that the concept of multiculturalism applies to Muslim children’s literature. They think that Muslim children’s literature is not something to be “showcased” through such a label, but should be treated as a separate category of its own. One of the authors expressed the idea that a multicultural approach in writing stories is condescending, as it is a superficial and monistic portrayal of Muslims with a plea to “accept” them. It is an attempt to normalize them, and she considers such a depiction to be disdainful.
Multicultural stories attempt to show diversity, while many Muslim authors feel that there is need to write stories for Muslims that depict diversity within the Muslim community. There is also a concern that non-Muslims may not accurately portray Muslim cultures. These expressions highlight the complexities of multicultural literature that problematize contradictions within this concept at two levels: those of depicting Muslims within a multicultural framework, as well as trying to fit Muslim children’s literature in the structure of multicultural literature\textsuperscript{96} that was not written for such a purpose. The concern shared by the authors can be situated within the recent debates on failed multiculturalism that has created segregated communities, encouraged terrorism, and failed to foster shared national identities in western nations (Nagra & Peng, 2013).

A framework of critical pedagogy helped me unearth some of the crisscrossed mazes of secular and faith-based discourses, as well as a simultaneous presence of stereotypical representations and multicultural depictions in Muslim children’s literature chosen for the study. While questioning the Muslim curricular resources through multicultural, anti-racist, and anti-orientalist paradigm supported my findings, critical Islamic theory\textsuperscript{97}, when more developed, may suit Muslim resources more appropriately. This is because most Muslim children’s literature features an undercurrent of faith.

\textsuperscript{96} Scholastic’s (www.scholastic.com) guide to choosing multicultural literature has categories of Native American, Latino, African American, Jewish, and Asian American books (http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/how-choose-best-multicultural-books). Muslims are not mentioned here.

\textsuperscript{97} “Islamic critical theory can be defined as recognizing, critiquing and providing normative action on any matter that oppresses the individual or the society socially, economically, scientifically, politically, psychologically or through any other medium, idea, or field” (Gilani-Williams, 2014, p. 23). It is historically premised on Prophet Muhammad’s emancipatory and transformative approach to reform the Arab society of that time, and is based on Islamic traditions of the Quran and the Sunnah (the way) of Prophet Muhammad. Both Islamic critical and literary theory (Shukri, 2002) offer new and emerging debates in academia to better understand and engage with Muslim literary and educational studies.
1.33 Implications for Teacher and Curriculum Development: Language, Culture, Race, Class and Gender

The complexities of mores and language in Muslim children’s literature can be attributed to the variety of cultural landscapes represented in these literary pieces, as well as to different social languages adapted and used by Muslims. Such representations compound the layers of lived experiences of Muslims in English speaking countries through an English language trope, as well as challenge the authoritative position of texts. For picture books, a depiction of racial identity and class becomes a little easier.

Muslim family structures with traditional hierarchies, which feature large, close-knit families, are depicted in almost all Muslim landscapes. Even within the portrayal of small families with a mother, father, siblings, and grandparents, there is always a mention, invitation, or inclusion of other close relatives that are an integral part of Muslim social fabric. This is very different from the nuclear family structures commonly seen in contemporary societies. Usually, there is no mention of any other family structure, such as an LGBTQ family structure. These observations offer intertwined paradigmatic chains of curriculum studies and teacher development in which inequalities and oppressions move from the deep roots of class, race, and gender, and back into classrooms through curriculum, teaching, and learning, perpetuating the very same exclusivist tendencies.

Muslim children's literature as a curricular resource requires a multi-dimensional understanding, approach, and preparation by the teachers for its appropriate dissemination in classrooms, spanning cultural, political, economic, philosophical, and social matters with the caveat that it is impossible to capture cultures of other peoples. Muslim children’s literature can also be presented through captions of ethnic and cultural groups such as the Persians, Arabs, Africans, and others. Social and religious groups are the other two variants of this multicultural
resource. New debates on Islamic critical theory (Gilani-Williams, 2014) and Islamic literary
theory (Shukri, 2002) can provide some background to in-depth teaching of these works.

Educational engagement with such resources requires cultural competence (Moule &
Diller, 2012) and a paradigm of cultural pluralism on the part of educators for a critical and
balanced handling of such materials. Training in multicultural appreciation of children’s
literature is also required, not only amongst educators and administrators, but also amongst
librarians. Training in multicultural children’s literature needs to be included in teacher training
and teacher professional development efforts (Memon, 2011). Similarly, Addams maintained
“...that a one size fits all curriculum to ‘Americanize’ immigrants may not fit the needs of many
individuals” (Filnders & Thornton, 2004, p. 11). It is essential that schools be filled with
knowledgeable and responsive educators for the critical development of children in Ontario
classrooms. Such educators may be able to combat preconceived notions about children’s ethno-
cultural backgrounds, gender, abilities, or socioeconomic circumstances that create barriers,
which reduce engagement and equitable outcomes.

An absence of multicultural materials leaves an identity vacuum for Muslim children
growing up. This also means that teacher development is not reaching its full potential, as
teachers in Ontario are not sufficiently trained to bring an enriched literacy experience to our
children. Teachers that are not aware of these multicultural curricular materials could be
detrimental to the overall critical and social fabric of the society. It will also leave the
stakeholders, such as children, teachers, librarians, leaders, administrators and parents, with a
lopsided vision of cultural presence and engagement within Canadian society as a whole. A near
absence of Muslim children’s literature will also subject our children to a limited vision of white
supremacy and colonial paradigms. Racist identities do not lead to healthy, tolerant, and
inclusive classrooms, and in turn, societies. A holistic understanding of multicultural literature is essential for an enriched educational experience and upbringing for our young generation.

1.33.1 Muslim Children’s Literature Production

The lack of availability of Muslim children’s literature is due to the way children’s cultural industries have grown in the West. The control of commercial endeavors over creative and civilized attempts at promoting children’s development (Kline, 1993, p. viii) has been quite detrimental to the production, use, and understanding of products for Muslim children. There is no representation of Muslim children in any of the major markets around the world. This absence of Muslim representation reflects the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Muslim communities in cultural and literary products for children. It is also critical to note that the publishing industry may not have the wherewithal to bring these resources into the mainstream arena. The representations of Muslim cultures and values sometimes seem to be contradictory to general mainstream western cultural productions. Muslims themselves are not primarily engaged in the production of these materials as stakeholders, and the mainstream media might be daunted by filling this void due to a lack of cultural ability and questions of reliability of multicultural media. The privileged position that the publication industry holds undermines efforts to develop a robust engagement with the complete development of children. These mainstream commercial houses provide templates to a culture (Kline, 1993, p. 177), which is then doggedly followed by everyone, including teachers, and is evident in curriculum development efforts.

1.33.2 Promises and Prospects

Through critical appreciative inquiry, Ontario classrooms, as well as the Canadian education system as a whole, can set an international standard, all while making good use of solid foundations and structures already in place.
Understanding discourse on Muslim children’s literature and engaging with it through curriculum studies and teacher development efforts is a bottom-up approach of creating relevant Muslim voices, as opposed to depending on media images and interviews with popular Muslims that we usually see on a regular basis: 98

Such ‘Muslim representatives’ sometimes run the risk of being employed in tokenistic ways by a predominantly non-Muslim media in search of ‘authentic’ voices who will nevertheless find themselves locked into predetermined agendas in which Muslims are always being forced to respond to the charge of disloyalty or threat. 99 (Ahmed et al., 2012, p. 7)

The promise of inclusion and engagement with Muslim children’s literature stems from a wide variety of Muslim cultures that can be part of rich discussions in the classroom for teachers, educators, and younger students. The prospect of diving into these rich crevices of tradition and civilization offers a feast of creativity and imagination for students. With the growing publishing industry and awareness, there are now many upcoming writers in different countries and printing houses that are venturing into the field of multicultural literature. Increasingly, some children’s books with a high level of aesthetics, written for children as young as four, are now being translated into many languages. For instance, Naima Roberts’ The Swirling Hijab (2002) is translated into Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Italian, Panjabi, Portuguese, Pushtu, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, and Urdu. Such translations can be used to complement teaching and learning in the classroom. The use of available translated literary pieces will also augment engagement for children from different cultural and racial backgrounds.

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98 Here, reference is made to Salman Rushdie, Kaila Shamsie, and Mohsin Hamid in Great Britain.
Chapter books have also done quite well in representing a multiplicity of racial identities. Racial identity in picture books discussed in this dissertation is clearly depicted through images of children with different clothing choices and skin colors. For instance, on the cover of Hina Islam’s *An Eid for Everyone* (2009), ten dark-skinned children are happily engaged in celebrations. Safia (*From Somalia with Love*, 2009) has a Somalian background, Parvana (*My name is Parvana*, 2012) is Afghani, and Liyana (*Habibi*, 1999) is an Arab, among many others. Significantly, these young protagonists play bold roles in negotiating their challenges within the framework of a search for identity. Admittedly, most of the solutions and approaches to confrontation are within the boundaries of acceptable Islamic or cultural norms, and even with their disguise as boys (*My Name is Parvana*, 2012), they may not cross these borders as an approved marker of acceptable behavior. The women in almost all these books play a stereotypical role, except for rare glimpses of a mother with critical thinking skills, such as in *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2003).

A range of social and economic classes in Muslim cultures depicted in literature also shows the humane conditions of many different Muslim societies, such as Afghans, Iranians, Arabs, the Somalian British, and others. A conglomeration of these lived experiences help children becomes aware of the challenges of “living well together” (Aga Khan, 2015, p. 2).

Most of the families discussed here range from lower to upper middle class. Muslim children and families from war torn zones are rendered invisible in literature. More affluent and considerably well-to-do families such as those of Marjane (*Persopolis*, 2003) and Liyana (*Habibi*, 2003) are formally educated, and thus befitting of the prevalent idea of the importance of education in social development. Some disabled children are also represented in *My Name is Parvana* (2012) as lame, blind, illiterate, and maimed from their experiences in war. Many books emphasize activism on the part of children and young adults. These depictions provide children
with the feeling of power and social responsibility, which fits well into an education focused on citizenship. For young children, doing good deeds (Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle, 2010) is also a personal and social commitment.

Within the promises and prospects of inclusion of Muslim children’s literature also lies the recognized need of early learning centers for valuable identity-related and culturally sound resources with which children, parents, and various stakeholders can engage. The Western background of Muslim authors offers an amalgamation of different voices and viewpoints, so that what appears to be foreign becomes our own. These insider voices make it easier for us to embrace differences with dignity (Sacks, 2002). Having conversations about Muslim cultures and civilizations in a classroom context offers opportunities to bridge the gap between theory and practice, as well as encourages the prospects of “praxis” that affirms “knowledge as contestable” and “...stripped of its meaning when it stands alone” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 129). It is important that such materials resonate with children, and invite them to participate in an active dialogue and reflection with their teachers and classmates. The rich tradition of Muslim history and storytelling needs to be utilized for such interventions. Furthermore, Muslim literature needs to have a space in the modern day complexities of a globalized world that is making the understanding of different cultures a real possibility.

Muslim children’s literature holds a promise of ethnic and minority representation (Larrick, 1965), which is currently lacking in our teacher and curriculum development efforts. It also offers a promise of bringing in comparative, international, and developmental perspectives in literature from around the world. In addition, this literature used as a curricular resource has the potential to provide some students with their first opportunities to speak on these issues, which will enable students, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to reflect on subtle nuances of differences between perceptions and reality, as well as covert and overt forms of discrimination.
Care needs to be taken to ensure that minority students do not feel pressured to assume the role of an “indigenous authority” (Hooks, 1994), as not all students are comfortable sharing their experience. It has been observed that students can respond with silence, withdraw, or suffer from the anxiety of “being looked at” by their peers (Jacobs & Hai, 2002, p. 184). Yet another facet of the inclusion of Muslims children’s literature is engagement with diversity. Some of the social practices that immigrant communities bring with them such as gender attitudes, or more extreme, honor killings, are frequently not in sync with the Canadian value system.

Engagement with Muslim children’s literature will address prejudices and increase classroom involvement of all children. Breaking down prejudice is particularly critical in the early years and at the elementary level (ELECT, 2012, p. 12). If we want the Canadian education system to promote values of pluralism and cosmopolitanism, then frequent usage of these materials is imperative. This usage will demonstrate not only acceptance of differences, but also offer opportunities for critical engagement. As Aga Khan says:

A cosmopolitan society regards the distinctive threads of our particular identities as elements that bring beauty to the larger social fabric. A cosmopolitan ethic accepts our ultimate moral responsibility to the whole of humanity, rather than absolutising a presumably exceptional part. (Aga Khan, 2015)

The spirit of cosmopolitanism provides an ethical framework that augments broader fidelities over and above the individual, immediate family, and country. Inculcating cosmopolitan ethics into our students’ curriculum through dialogue, action, and inclusion is a viable response that can be utilized for curriculum and teacher development to lead all of us toward transformative citizenship. As Banks writes:

Citizenship education should also help students to develop an identity and attachment to the global community and a human connection to people around the world. Students can become cosmopolitan citizens while maintaining attachments and roots to their family and community cultures. (Banks, 2008, p. 134)
Muslim stories as the curriculum resource have the potential to play this role, while also forging powerful cosmopolitan identities for the multicultural Canadian society that we live in.

Canadian writers like Rukhsana Khan and Deborah Ellis have developed websites and teaching materials that can be used for classroom purposes. Teachers can engage with ready-to-use resources for a kick-start on the Muslim subject. Subsequently, research and deeper engagement with Muslim resources will help teachers build conversations around cultures, differences, and identity.

Socialization of children is grounded in curriculum when they are growing up. The power of storytelling can be used for developing awareness for creating something new to overcome what is oppressive (Wainwright, 2003). According to Freire (1970), engaging with texts that are meaningful in one’s life is very important for any learner. This is the prospect that such resources offer.

1.34 New Areas of Research

The following vistas can be explored for the future to continuously build on the critical conversation initiated through this research:

I. My research was limited to fictional materials available in Canada and the United States, France, and United Kingdom (UK) in English. This requires expansion. Muslim children’s literature has a rich inventory and a global legacy as Muslims live in every corner of the earth, some in the majority, and others in the extreme minority. Canadian demography includes Muslims from all over the world. According to the 2011 census (www.census.gc.ca)\textsuperscript{100}, Muslims are the second largest population by religion after Christianity. There has been about a 100%

increase in Urdu, Pashto, and Arabic speaking populations in Canada from the period of 2006 to 2011. All these languages are spoken in Muslim majority countries of South Asia and the Middle East.

II. The notion of childhood in Islam is not commonly discussed in educational and scholarly articles. An understanding of Muslim children is central to creating innovative works for them. It is important to appreciate the paradigm in which a Muslim child grows and builds bridges between her home and school life, rather than perpetuating dichotomies through a misrepresented and underrepresented cultural worldview that can be very different for a Muslim child in her school and home. These combinations of identities cannot be presented in only one way. For instance, an understanding of a Muslim childhood in Iran will be very different from that of India, because the cultural and historical contexts of both of these countries are very different. Political and theological realities are quite different depending on where they originate. India has the second largest Muslim population in the world, but Muslims are considered a minority there. This minority is larger than some of the Muslim majorities around the world. Thus, much of the understanding related to the subject comes from the complexities arising from the time and context of specific situations, and such complexities need to be dealt with by teachers and curriculum writers, so educators can be well informed in their teaching-learning approaches. This is an area that needs to be researched in order to create a systematic repertoire of appreciation of Muslim children’s literature. It is important that such an understanding is created through stories that combine different cultures and contexts.
III. The production of literary curricular resources for Muslim children in North America may not be very robust, but resources from different Muslim countries combined is definitely vast. A study of a bibliography of Muslim children’s literature (Appendix A) will lend insight into different types of publishers and publications related to Muslim children’s literature that are active and popular. These resources can be examined per our curriculum policy frameworks and if found reasonable, can be used by Canadian publishers as resources. There are many children’s writers writing in different countries on Muslim content that is not in English. Such works can be translated into English for our use. Maria Nikolajeva (2010) in “Translation and Crosscultural Reception” writes that translation of children’s literature is a specific art form laced with several material and ideological challenges. She describes two translation strategies of translation studies, namely domestication and foreignization to exemplify issues of translation within children’s literature texts. These issues apply in a heightened manner to Muslim children’s literature as the body of this literature is at a nascent stage. To find translators who can do justice to cultural nuances, as well as be loyal to children’s theme may be difficult. The concepts of cross-cultural reception are relatively new to the field and completely new to Muslim children’s literature. Nevertheless, authors like Johnson-Davies have made much Arabic folklore available for children through English translations. A lot of picture books from Muslim children’s literature are also translated. For instance, Naima Roberts’ *The Swirling Hijab* (2002) is translated in several languages. Some of these translated books are adapted for readership and marketing purposes. It is important to generate a creative dialogue between the source and target cultures,
as well as encourage modernization in translation (Nikolajeva, 2010, p. 409), whereby anything offensive is changed or deleted in the process of translation. Translations of Muslim children’s literature offers possibilities of further dialogues and debates on the nature, as well as purpose of Muslim children’s literature.

IV. This research includes voices of only five women authors of Muslim children’s literature from the West. A lot of representations also depend on who is writing and how the person defines their Muslim identity. For instance, the Muslim convert author expresses her identity in a different way than the non-Muslim Canadian author. Most of the prominent writers of Muslim children's literature are middle class Muslim women with different backgrounds brought up in the West. Thus, we have more female viewpoints of Muslim representations than male viewpoints. The majority of works discussed in the thesis written by female writers bring the readers up close to female protagonists’ experiences. There are very few books with boys as protagonists. A more rounded approach would include voices of publishers, international Muslim male authors, and several non-Muslim male and female authors from around the world, also writing in different languages. Future research can include a wider spectrum of stakeholder voices, such as more authors of global Muslim children’s literature and the input of teachers both Muslim and non-Muslim about these materials as curricular resources. There are a vast number of Muslim and Islamic schools in Ontario and Canada as a whole. The administrators of these schools can be interviewed to find out what they think about the issue of multicultural literature. Teachers’ use of Muslim children’s literature as curriculum sources in classrooms could be studied
to find out how these themes are taught and the impact they create. Librarians are important stakeholders in the matter, as well. Input from their perspectives may also help to gain insight into working with curricular resources at the ground level. Lastly, parents and children should also be investigated to determine their outlook on the matter.

V. The meager space Muslim cultures and societies occupy within the body of curricular resources brings the “white washed” world literature to the fore. There is a need for more fiction and folklore, as well as books that examine Arab-Israeli relationships objectively and through multiple perspectives so the readers can understand the complexities of this conflict. Analysis of the status of women, and focus on artistic and intellectual achievements of Muslims (Hayden, 1992, p. 20) is also desirable. Depicting theological diversity is just as important.

VI. The boundary of my research was drawn around juvenile and young adult fiction. It did not include non-fiction or non-verbal expressions, though there is a vast repository of non-written literary forms from international libraries and publishers that can be scrutinized.

VII. Indigenous literary criticism for Muslim children’s literature needs to develop from within the Muslim community and Muslim scholarship, initially to build and form a type of scholarship that is able to enrich criticism of children’s literature.

VIII. Most of the literature studied is diasporic and speaks of migrants. It is recommended that works that cover this topic also include the voices of refugees

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101 Most of the works cited in the bibliography are not popularly available in Chapters or other large store. They have to be ordered.
and other Muslim groups to show the cultural, as well as socioeconomic diversity of Muslim communities

IX. More Muslim resources for middle school, secondary school, and pre-elementary school students should be researched. This will add depth and variety to the subject matter, and engagement with Muslim representation.

X. Muslim children's literature produced within different Muslim societies also can be translated into English and utilized with appropriate accompanying teaching and learning resources. This with an understanding that translation is a complex activity. It is not a verbatim effort. The translator has to do literary and cultural work.

XI. An insight into resources pertaining to the sister faith communities of Judaism and Christianity can be explored to draw parallels, as well as to understand frameworks of identities and representations.

1.35 Recommendations: Curriculum and Teacher Development Policies

The present in-depth triangulated research makes the following recommendations for a thriving curriculum and teacher development efforts in the Ontario education system:

1. Policy makers and the Education Ministry need to acknowledge the present cultural gap in the availability and recommendation of materials for Ontario classrooms. It is important that the Trillium List, as well as other local recommendations made by school district administrators, feature a portion of works related to Muslim children’s literature. Since the variety of available Muslim literature is not rich, a body of curriculum developers may be assigned the specific task of producing such materials
within appropriate frameworks already prescribed and used by the Ontario Ministry of Education\textsuperscript{102}. This body could be represented by certain stakeholders, including Muslim children, so that all the voices are included in the endeavor.

2. To promote a vibrant culture of production of Muslim children’s literature, the Ontario Ministry of Education may form an alliance of writers and thinkers from different pools of creative think tanks, consisting of artists, teachers, illustrators, and others, who can be substantially devoted to the task. As an authoritative source of power, the Ministry’s endorsement will provide a much needed push to the effort. The Ministry should also supervise the production and assure that it is balanced. It is imperative that the Ministry takes this up as a priority in the modern cultural climate, considering the prevalence of Islamophobia and the trend of one-sided representations of Muslims. This research only pertains to representations of Muslims. Further examination of the Trillium List and other research is required to determine other gaps in representation.

3. Alliances with various publishing houses will be also critical, as the writers interviewed expressed their difficulty in finding the publishers who would be willing to publish their work. This difficulty is caused by the fear that the works might not be popular, and sales may not be guaranteed for literary creations of many of the writers. In order to kick-start creative publishing for Muslim children, making agreements with publishers is also an important step.

4. While the policies for the creation, publication, quality control, and dissemination of Muslim children’s literature can be validated for use in classrooms and for teacher development purposes, as a believer in reconceptualist curriculum endeavors, I recommend that this effort also be matched with a bottom-up approach taken by teachers, administrators, librarians, parents, and children. Through concerted efforts made by teaching programs at colleges, teachers can be given additional teaching qualifications (AQs) and continuous professional development seminars on Muslim children’s literature. This information can be used in turn by local stakeholders to create indigenous materials using currere methods for classroom purposes. Courses on Muslim education at pre-service and graduate levels are also desirable. The work discussed may not just be limited to written forms, but can also include various expressions emanating from cultural and educational experiences in the community.

5. A worldwide network of Muslim children’s writers needs to be developed, so that ideas and values can be exchanged. This cultural variety and dialogue will also lend richness and depth to educational ventures in general.

6. Since most of the representations popularly available are from the mainstream Sunni tradition of Islam, I recommend that we strive to include a rich variety of undercurrents of pluralist minorities co-existing within Islam historically. According to Nasr (2004), there are a variety of interpretations of Islam that have not only co-existed, but also flourished side by side. Unfortunately, prominent voices are not speaking on this matter. This silence needs to be broken to create a healthy chorus of inclusive Muslim voices, which will also promote the creation of non-Eurocentric, non-ethno-centric, and pluralist discourses that contradict age-old orientalist
perceptions. Canada, as a mosaic, is capable of making sure that different cultures co-exist peacefully to add to the richness and depth to the Canadian social fabric.

7. Muslim narratives should not succumb to the grooved canonical standards that shape the understanding and assessment of the current curriculum practices, but should put more focus on relationships and responses from teachers, students, librarians, parents and the real readers (Hunt, 1990, p. 4).

8. Muslim narratives also need to be free of assessments that perpetuate the grooved understanding of curriculum having right answers derived from canonical understanding of texts amongst teachers, students, librarians and parents, neglecting the relationship and responses of the real readers.

9. A lot of Muslim children’s literature curricular resources are available worldwide. Proper consolidation of and engagement with these works is required. Awareness also needs to be created within different stakeholders about the availability of such resources worldwide. More and more Muslim societies are realizing this need and thus, more materials are being produced, some of them in vernacular languages. Mainstream awareness of these curricular resources are very important for robust teacher development and curriculum development efforts.

10. There is a need for writers of Muslim children’s literature to form bridges of communication for more informed, enriched, and pluralistic Muslim representations. Encouraging more men to write Muslim children’s literature is also significantly important for a breadth of subjects and perspectives.
1.36 Research Contribution: Muslim Studies and Children’s Literature

The ideas of initiating critical conversations about Muslim children’s literature, including creating much needed spaces for discussion and encouraging awareness of the topic in academia, is a contribution offered by this research. As I end my journey of engagement and investigation of Muslim children’s literature, I reflect on the new types of criticism that were added to the already existing collection of children’s literature, and more specifically, Muslim children’s literature:

First, I apply critical and appreciative pedagogy simultaneously to dive deep into the machinations of Muslim children’s literature, as well as to offer an empowering approach to this discourse. A combination of these approaches is unique, and empowers both teachers and students to see the gaps in representations, as well as possible solutions, which lead to more informed actions and dialogics (Ellsworth, 1989). Together, these approaches offer tools for critical literacy.

I have used Critical Appreciative Inquiry Framework for my research as I think it best suits my research project and the way I see the problem of Muslim representations. I perceive conversations around the issue of Muslim representations as an insider and as having lot of potential to create an empowered and inclusive understanding for curriculum and teacher development. As a former Ontario teacher and coming from a developmental context, I have experienced the teaching and learning processes in the Canadian classrooms first hand. There were plenty of opportunities for teachers like me in the school to bring in varied voices through their teaching. The Canadian education system and structures are very advanced with its robust policies. These can be easily built upon to be more inclusive to promote sound teacher
development practices. I appreciate the Canadian immigration and multicultural policies that invites global cultures to be a part of the Canadian mosaic.

My major research question, “How can Ontario Curriculum be enriched curriculum sources comprising of Muslim children’s literature?” is itself a building question. My conversations with the authors were also based on the possibility of finding solutions from within. Having a clear and ambitious vision of the road ahead is the promise and the prospect that I talk about in the title of my research. This is affirming the premise of Appreciative Inquiry that every organization has something that works right (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974).

The ‘Critical’ in Critical Appreciative Inquiry is my critical engagement with the theories and concepts contained in the Critical Appreciative framework to understand Muslim representations. It is the critical application of this framework to Muslim children’s literature to examine the larger forces at play on the Canadian educational and curriculum context. Looking within the Muslim children’s literature to disclose monolithic representations devoid of Muslim minority and pluralist representation is the ‘critical’ too.

Further, the ‘critical’ is the process of naming the power, race, gender and post-coloniality in the problem of Muslim representations. It stands for criticality contained in the overlapping and interconnected threads of Postcolonialism, Multiculturalism, Orientalism and Reconceptualist Curriculum perspective that I have used to address my major research question. This criticality emerging from the theoretical concepts as applied to the research under study questions the current practices of curriculum and teacher development. It further identifies the injustices indicative of the minority underrepresentation and misrepresentations. The ‘Critical’ the critical appreciative inquiry also identifies how power is presented in the Muslim children’s texts and how can they be ruptured for informed and just curriculum, as well as teacher
development practices. Within this deconstruction I see the promise of construction through inclusion and awareness.

Second, critical theory, which is a combination of sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and political economy designed for social transformation, is applied through critical appreciative inquiry to Muslim children’s literature, which is essentially based on faith-based paradigms. Since knowledge production in the context of critical pedagogy is always evolving, it is important to constantly find new ways to irritate the dominant forms of power and to provide more evocative and compelling insights (Kincheloe, 2004). I propose the application of Islamic critical theory (Gilani-Williams, 2014) to Muslim subjects to obtain a rounded critique.

Islamic critical theory derives its basic tenets from critical theory to provide a paradigmatic parallel structure to Prophet Muhammad’s emancipatory and transformative approach to reform the Arab society. Islamic critical theory may be more authentic for Muslim studies as it resonates with sacred narratives contained within Muslim expressions. It is older than critical theory, and offers a pre-modern precursor to the modern framework of critical theory. The universal tenets of social transformation as an emanation of Islamic critical theory make it relevant for our purposes. While I do not propose precedence of Islamic critical theory over critical theory chances are that Muslim stakeholders themselves may find the latter more relevant. Since Islamic critical theory is a new and emerging concept in the West, more robust and conceptual literature is required even from the East to make it well rounded. On the other hand, critical theory and critical pedagogy should also include Islamic critical theory in their domains for a further enriched and pluralistic theoretical and conceptual framework. This mixture of critical perspectives provides an opportunity for critical pedagogy to engage with non-Western critical discourse. It is about time for subaltern streams of criticism to emerge into
the mainstream educational scene. The use and application of both critical pedagogy and Islamic critical theory are useful for teaching and learning purposes.

Third, a systematic study of Muslim children’s literature through critical appreciative inquiry offers a large repertoire of knowledge of children’s literature. The study adds a whole new segment of missing children, their experiences, their voices, and their presences. This study of Muslim children’s literature with critical appreciative inquiry framework also educates stakeholders about their responsibility to ensure a comprehensive representation of student populations in curricular resources for Canadian, as well as international classrooms.¹⁰³

The limited pluralistic representations of Muslim subjects and themes in the literary pieces analyzed here also speak of undercurrents of subliminal insecurities that need attention, particularly if we believe in critical democracy (Kincheloe, 1999). While the broader themes and motifs of children’s literature remain common, the normalization of Muslim children’s literature may help define children’s literature more generally (Nodelman 2008 & Anderson, 2013; Rose, 1984; Townsend, 1974), as well as contribute to the poetics of children’s literature (Shavit, 1986).

Fourth, engaging with both Muslim and non-Muslim authors to discuss the subtle nuances of curriculum studies and teacher development creates opportunities to appreciate Muslim cultures and contexts. It also ensures a Muslim presence in the sphere of teaching and learning. This engagement can segue into a better understanding of Muslim children and all children.

¹⁰³ Ontario curriculum is followed in many schools internationally, thus, Trillium recommendations arising from the research are valid globally.
Lastly, one of the biggest contributions of this research is the realization of the need and the difficulty of combating the detrimental yet popular construct of Islam as a monolith. As Said writes:

The term ‘Islam’ as it is used today seems to mean one simple thing but in fact is part fiction, part ideological label, part minimal designation of a religion called Islam. In no real significant way is there a direct correspondence between the “Islam” in common Western usage and the enormously varied life that goes on within the world of Islam, with its more than 800,000,000 people, its millions of square miles of territory principally in Africa and Asia, its dozens of societies, states, histories, geographies, cultures. (Said, 1997, pp. i-ii)

To draw attention to the loaded plurality within the Muslim world and amongst Muslims, particularly in the West, is one of the purposes of my study.

Much of what the world knows about Islam and Muslims is through mass media (Rane, 2008) rather than direct interaction. Fictional portrayals are, most of the time, dehumanizing (Gerges, 2003; Poole, 2002; Shaheen, 2003). Fictional Muslim children’s literature as part of curricular resources is one of the effective ways of developing positive perceptions of Islam. Muslim studies carry a huge responsibility to promote this cause, as do teachers.

1.37 Epilogue

Definitions of the terms “Muslim children” and “Muslim literature” are both contested and interpreted in different ways. Acceptance of this ambiguity was the starting point of my engagement with the materials in the context of critical pedagogy and multicultural frameworks. Promotion, creation, and active engagement with Muslim children’s literature is imperative for a valid and relevant pedagogical model that can contribute to the broader discourse of transformative citizenship, intercultural understanding, and social justice, as well as obtain a knowledge base and sense of the complexities and contradictions common to all religious and political worldviews (Moore, 2005). It promises a readiness to participate in a true dialogue with
diversity. With patience and dedicated efforts, an educational environment can be created that will encourage children to “to listen to your neighbor, even when you may not particularly like him…you listen to people you do not like!” (Aga Khan, November, 2015).

Diverse presentations of different cultures and societies have the potential to eliminate parochial approaches to understanding diversity. Education is an indispensable tool to create the opportunities that a good curriculum and teacher development promises.

Confidence and generosity in education is extremely important for individuals to achieve autonomy in the face of societal oppression (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1990), particularly when the shackles of Orientalism are weakened by a flat world (Freidman, 2008). Initiation of and engagement with conversations about multicultural literature are one of the key contributions of this dissertation.

Muslim children’s literature reflects a collective heritage of universal human values and experiences. The absence of creation, engagement, and celebration of these experiences would leave a veritable gap in the rich layers of varied universal human encounters. If introduced at an early age, these experiences will facilitate the grounding of our children in a cosmopolitan ethic and value system. It will also offer a broad spectrum of cultural diversity so they grow up with open hearts and minds.

Muslim children’s literature also offers a third front to the repertoire of popular literature, as well as folk and fairy tales. This is also a window into one more foray of contemporary literature. We definitely need more books on diverse Muslim experiences that represent multiple versions of Islam (Said, 2002, pp. 69–74). The potential of creating curricular third spaces (Oldenburg, 1989) through these materials cannot be undermined.
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Davies, J.D. (1994). The island of animals: Adapted from an Arabic fable. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.


Various authors (2001). *Momentum 1*. Markham, Ont.: Scholastic Canada.

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Appendix A

Bibliography of Muslim Children's Literature


Davies, J.D. (1994). *The island of animals: Adapted from an Arabic fable*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.


Appendix B

Interview Questions

(Where participants are individually interviewed and audio taped interviews constitute the raw data)

This study involves you participating in ONE interview with Antum A. Panjwani (the researcher). The interview will be informally structured and will last approximately 30-40 minutes.

Areas I hope to touch on are: General questions related to your understanding of Muslim children’s literature and how, when and why it was formed. Also, questions related to illustrations of each of the concept/instance, and the like of such a curriculum resource that you may wish to talk about.

Examples of questions that I have in mind but may or may not ask depending on priorities that emerge and how dialogue evolves during the interview are:

1. Tell us something about yourself (background, etc.)
2. What is your understanding of Muslim children’s literature in general? How much space does it occupy in your writing in particular?
3. What do you think created this understanding? (e.g.: books, teachers, experiences from the past, etc.)
4. How does this understanding help you in your role as an author?
5. Why did you represent Muslims the way you did? (What were your goals and objectives behind such representations?)
6. What inspires you to write on the subject?
7. How has it been received?
8. What, according to you, is the importance/role of such materials for teacher training and teacher development purposes?
9. What role do you think such a literature can play in the primary school curriculum in general and Ontario curriculum in particular?
10. Any other observations/comments?

If the interview is recorded with your consent then the audiotapes/audio files of the interview will be transcribed and the original or raw data will be stored under lock and key in a safe and private place with me. ONLY I AND (with very less possibility) Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov will ever have access to this raw data. In the transcripts, names and other identifying information about you or your organization will be systematically changed. Identifying codes that could connect you or your organization with the changed names will also be kept under lock and key in the place designated above. The timing for the destruction of the tapes/audio files and/or the raw data is seven years from now.

As interviewee, you will receive a copy of the transcript of your interview. Any section which you request to have deleted from the transcript(s) of your interview will be deleted. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and you may request that the entire transcript of your interview
be destroyed. I will be sharing major aspects of my preliminary analysis with you and you have the opportunity to provide feedback. I will be doing this by electronic mail.

If you agree, a copy of the final research will be sent to you.
Appendix C

Consent Form

Letter Introducing the Research to the Interviewees for Obtaining Informed Consent, while Ensuring Confidentiality

From Researcher:

Antum A. Panjwani
Unit 1705, 5 Concorde Place,
Toronto ON M3C3M8
(C) 001-647-292-8134
antum.panjwani@utoronto.ca

Date:

Re: My research project titled: REPRESENTATIONS OF MUSLIM CULTURES AND SOCIETIES IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE AS A CURRICULUM RESOURCE FOR ONTARIO CLASSROOMS: PROMISES AND PROSPECTS.

Dear

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information that you will need to understand what I am doing, and to decide whether or not to give consent to me to conduct an interview with you for my research project. Participation is completely voluntary, and you will be free to withdraw at any time.

I am a doctoral candidate in the department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (CTL) specializing in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development (CS-TD) at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. My supervisor is Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov, Associate Professor at department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (CTL) at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, who can be reached at sarfaroz.niyozov@utoronto.ca and/or 001-416-978-0200.
My doctoral research involves an investigation into perspectives on Muslim children’s literature as a curriculum resource for Ontario classrooms. Through this examination I will be exploring the current Muslim children’s literature as well as children’s publications to have an in-depth view on how these can be used in classroom teaching and learning purposes as well as for teacher training and teacher development purposes. This assessment will be attempted with an approach to strengthen the current classroom and teacher training practices for a robust education for our children based on the principles of social justice.

The nature and purpose of the research is qualitative, whereby I will be collecting data through mixed methods of examining primary sources on Muslim Children’s Literature as well as exploring perceptions of five authors of children’s books as one of the critical stakeholders, through interviews. The data collected through all these sources will be codified to arrive at recommendations for curriculum and policy matters.

By participating in the interview session with me for my research, you will be providing me with invaluable information towards promoting a better understanding of inclusion and representations of Muslim cultures and civilizations in the curriculum resources at the school level. You will be at liberty to ask any question related to research to me at any time during the research process. I shall respond/comply to such queries at the earliest and to the best of my ability. The interview can be either conducted in person or over Skype/telephone at your convenience. It will require between 1 to 2 hours of your time.

You can contact the Office of Research Ethics of the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 001-416-946-3273 for any questions regarding your rights as a participant.

Potential limitations in my ability to guarantee anonymity are – There is complete guarantee of anonymity (I will be using pseudonyms in presenting the data in my final dissertation and nobody else, except me, will have access to the data. Also, the data will be stored in secure server electronic files and appropriately encrypted).

Potential benefits as you might derive from participation are - Gaining an understanding on different perspectives related to Literature representing Muslim cultures and civilizations. This area of research is rather rare and, therefore, will lend a unique lens on Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development. Significantly, an informed view of diverse curriculum resources is very valuable in being conscious of power equations that revolve around us in the teaching and learning processes.

Attached to this letter you will find the informed consent form. Please make a point of reading it carefully before signing.

Thank you,
Sincerely,

(Antum A. Panjwani)
Appendix D

Short Biography of Select Contemporary Canadian and American Writers of Muslim Children’s Literature

1. **Deborah Ellis** is a prominent award winning writer of Canada (www.deborahellis.com). Her *Breadwinner* (2000, 2002, 2003) trilogy has won her many accolades. She has more than twenty books to her credit and has won the Governor General’s Award, the Ruth Schwartz Award, the University of California’s Middle East Book Award, Sweden’s Peter Pan Prize, the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award, the Vicky Metcalf Awards, and the Ontario Library Association’s President’s Award for Exceptional Achievement. She has been named to the Order of Ontario in recognition of her contribution in the form of her writings. Deborah Ellis is a passionate advocate for the disenfranchised and donates a significant amount of her earnings towards the cause of children all over the world.

2. **Rukhsana Khan** is one of the most well-known and accepted award winning Muslim woman writers of Canada currently living in Toronto. She has several titles of Muslim children’s literature to her credit and her books have won a number of awards. Her book *Big Red Lollipop* (2010) was chosen by the New York Public Library as one of the 100 Greatest Children’s Books in the last 100 years. She actively connects with schools and teachers around Canada and the US. In order to make her works classroom and teacher friendly she has created teaching resources (www.rukhsanakhan.com) to accompany her books. These are generally age appropriate materials on Muslim themes to be used by students in schools. Her works depict a sharp sense of humor.

3. **Ludmila Zeman** (www.ludmilazeman.com) is yet another accomplished Canadian filmmaker, author and illustrator living in Montreal. She is the daughter of well-known Czech film director Karel Zeman. Her *Gilgamesh* trilogy has been translated into many languages and is famous all over the world. It also received numerous awards, including the Governor General’s Literary Award. She does not claim to be a Muslim children’s writer nor is she known that way. She has authored a trilogy re-telling of the *Sindbad Story* (1999, 2001, 2003) from the *Arabian Nights*.

4. **Michelle Khan** is yet another award winning Indian Canadian writer and a journalist. Her first chapter book for Muslim children is called *The Hijab Boutique* (2011). As a journalist she is known for her internationally syndicated youth advice column and has been recognized by the Global Television Network in the form of an award. Michelle Khan lives in Toronto with her parents and younger sister.

5. **Naomi Shihab Nye** is a distinguished poet and writer born of Palestinian father and American mother. As an Arab American anthologist and author she has won many distinguished awards. In October 2012, she was named laureate of the 2013 NSK Neustadt Prize for Children’s Literature and
received the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award in 1998 for her novel for young children - Habibi (1997). This novel delineates tensions between Jews and Palestinians drawing out cultural challenges of a contemporary Arab-American family.


7. **Asma Mobinuddin** (www asmamobinuddin com) is a well complimented contemporary Muslim woman writer of Muslim children’s literature in America. She has won many prestigious awards like Parents Choice Award, Skipping Stones Honor Award, Middle East Outreach Council Award, Best Children’s Book of the Year, Storytelling Resource Award, and Patterson Books for Young Children awards for her books My Name is Bilal (2006), Best Eid Ever (2008) and A Party in Ramadan (2009). She is a practicing pediatrician by profession.

8. IQRA Foundation in Chicago is a non-profit Islamic educational establishment instituted to creatively respond to the growing needs of Muslim children, youth, and adults for sound Islamic instruction in the modern global village. Their executive director **Abidullah Ghazi** has penned two books Dinner time (1992) and Grandfather’s orchard (1993) individually and co-authored three others A true promise (1993), Ramadan (1996) and Stories of Sirah (1988-1998). Although, not directly for his children’s writing, Dr. Ghazi has won many awards like Citizenship Award in 1983 and a couple of others as a recognition by the Government of Pakistan.

9. **Judith Hiede Gilliland**, daughter of the author Florence Parry Gilliland is an award winning author having some titles pertaining to Muslim children. She has coauthored The Day of Ahmad’s Secret (1990) and Sami and the Time of Troubles (1992) for which she was recognized with Children’s Picture Book Award, Council of Wisconsin Writer, as well as, Outstanding Children's Book Award, New Hampshire Writers and Publishers Project in 1995. The Middle East Book Award was also given to her in 2000 for her The House of Wisdom (1999)
Appendix E

Biographical Details of Five Authors Interviewed with their Pseudonyms

Rina

The first author I contacted was through her email address cited on her website. I have pseudonamed her Rina. Rina is an established Muslim children’s writer in Canada. She has several awards to her credit and is quite popular in the Canadian and the US academic, as well as, publishing circles. She currently lives in Toronto. Three out of the four other authors that I interviewed identified her to be either the best or one of the best Canadian authors in the field. When I wrote to her with a request for personal interview she at once consented and gave an appointment. We met at a popular restaurant in Toronto and the meeting lasted for about two hours, which included about an hour long interview. The interview questions were already forwarded to her a week before the interview.

Rina is a hijabi Muslim author born in Pakistan. Her family moved to Canada, when she was very young. She has a variety of genres to her credit including picture books and novels for young adults. She is the only one of all the authors who is aware of the curriculum requirements of Ontario and Canada and thus, has created teacher’s guides and extensive classroom resources.

Nina

Nina is a popular British author writing for Muslim children and young adults. She is a convert hijabi and a niqabi woman now living in Cairo. She is also an editor of a well known British women’s magazine. The web contacts and her website addressees did not help me in contacting her. The editor contact of the magazine she edits, worked for me. She gave me appointment for the interview quite quickly. The interview lasted for one hour and sixteen minutes. It was very frank and open conversation. She made me feel home with her tone and approach. I was most impressed by her perspectives as she is a Muslim convert and carries a lot of beautiful experiences from her pre-convert days. Her understanding, commitment and passion towards Islam were mesmerising. Since she is a convert, she carries dual lenses to understand outsiders’ perspective and brings forth authentic voices from the inside. Intellectually, I found her to be the most impressive. She is also a well read person quite well versed in the problems that Muslim academic and creative writing is confronting today.

Dina

Dina is a famous Canadian author. She is the only non-Muslim in the group of authors that I interviewed. Her popularity rests on her creation of Muslim characters in Muslim contexts. She has won many awards for the same. She is a white protestant Christian living in Ontario. Her representations of Muslim characters are drawn from her stay in Pakistan and from observing Afghan refugee camps during the Taliban regime. She was the only author who I could ask “how much space dos Muslims occupy in your corpus of writing?” as rest of the authors are all
Muslims and are more or less inspired by their own background, faith and context making their veritably Islamic.

Fina

Fina is a British writer now living in the Middle East. She is a popular, prolific, award winning writer of Muslim children’s literature born and brought up in England. She is also a teacher by profession and has had classroom experiences across Canada, USA and England. She has worked in the field of education for over 20 years in the USA, Canada and the UK. Ethnically she is 3/4s Punjabi. Her current research interests include Islamic Critical Theory and Islamic Literary Theory. Her PhD is in Children’s Literature and Character Education.

Aina

Aina is a pediatrician by profession in the US. She took up to writing as a commitment, passion and also as a need to fill in the void of Muslim writing for children, when her daughter was born. She wears hijab and brings a very balanced view of what it means to be a Muslim in the West
Appendix F

Critical Appreciative Inquiry

Muslim Child in Western Schools

Critical Pedagogy

Antiracism

Orientalism

Multiculturalism

Reconceptualist Curriculum

Post Colonialism
Appendix G

Overlapping and Connected Threads of Frameworks

- Orientalism
- Post Colonialism
- Challenges Faced by Muslims (Islamophobia)
- Muslim Representations
- Critical Pedagogy
- Critical Multiculturalism
- Anti-Racism
- Reconceptualist Curriculum
- Muslim Child and Muslim Stories
- Situating Myself
The Trillium List Summary of Elementary Language Recommendations

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| Grade 4 | 2. *Nelson Language Arts Grade 3* © 1999  
(Keepsakes and Treasures; Hand and Hand; Write Away) | Fine Day on the Lake, etc)  
Biographies – E.g. Kay McKeever: A Friend to Owls, Donovan Bailey: Super Sprinter, Rick Hansen: Canadian Hero, etc.)  
| 3. *Nelson Literacy 3* © 2009  
(Nelson Literacy 3 Student Book 3a, Nelson Literacy 3 Student Book 3b, Nelson Literacy 3 Student Book 3c, Nelson Literacy 3 Guided and Independent Reading Kit) | 2. *Momentum 3* © 2001  
(32 Small Books – E.g. Boiled Fish and Banana Pudding, Mister Nobody, etc.)  
| **Grade 4** | 1. *Cornerstones Grade 4* © 2000  
(The student textbook package consists of: Student Anthology 4a; Student Anthology 4b) | 1. *Momentum 4* © 2002  
(32 Small Books – E.g. I Don’t Want to go to Thailand, Georgie Fills the Gap, Kallie, the Wizard’s Apprentice, etc)  
2. *Moving Up with Literacy Place, Grade 4* © 2008  
(8 Strategy Units, 8 Read Aloud Books, 30 titles with teaching plans of Guided Reading – E.g. Puppy in Training, Clever Manka, etc.)  
| 2. *Nelson Language Arts Grade 4* © 1998  
(And Who Are You?; Times to Share; Write on Track) | 1. *Collections 4* © 2004  
(5 Anthologies, 9 Novels, 7 Genre Books, 13 Reaching Readers Information Texts, and 9 Reaching Readers Canadian Biographies – E.g. Susan Aglukark: Arctic Rose, David Thompson: Map-maker, Alexander Graham Bell: Man of Ideas, etc)  
2. *Literacy in Action 4*  
(Student Instruction Books, Literacy Kids Assessment Magazines, Lap Books, Audio CD Pkg, Photo Cards, and Poster and Transparency Pack)  
| 3. *Nelson Literacy 4*  
(3 Shared Reading & Modeling Components, 13 Transparencies for Shared Reading & Modeling, 36 Guided and Independent Reading Kit – E.g. The Trojan Horse, The Sword in the Stone, etc.) | 4. *Power Magazine - Grade 4* © 2004  
(9 components and Power Magazine Audio CDs – E.g. Basketball, Water Sports, etc)  
| **Grade 5** | 1. *Cornerstones Grade 5* © 1999  
(Student Anthology 5a; Student Anthology 5b) | 1. *Momentum 5* © 2001  
1. *Collections 5* © 2004  
(5 Anthologies, 8 Novels, 7 Genre Books, 12 Reaching Readers Information Texts, and 6 Reaching Readers Canadian Biographies – E.g.  
| 2. *Nelson Literacy 5* © 2009  
(Nelson Literacy 5 Shared Reading & Modeling Components, 16 Transparencies for Shared Reading & Modeling, 36 Guided and Independent Reading Kit – E.g. The Trojan Horse, The Sword in the Stone, etc.)  
4. *Power Magazine - Grade 5* © 2004  
(9 components and Power Magazine Audio CDs – E.g. Basketball, Water Sports, etc)
| Grade 6 | 1. *Cornerstones Grade 6* © 1998  
(Student Anthology 6a; Student Anthology 6b) | 1. *Momentum 6* © 2001  
(32 Small Books – E.g. EGO Central, Rockfall! Stanley, etc.) | 1. *Collections 6* © 2004  
(5 Anthologies, 7 Novels, 8 Genre Books, 13 Reaching Readers Information Texts, and 6 Reaching Readers Canadian Biographies – E.g. Norman Bethune: Heroic Doctor, Wop May: Bush Pilot, etc.) |
| 2. *Nelson Language Arts Grade 6* © 1998  
(Going the Distance; Choosing Peace; Writer's Express) | 2. *Moving Up With Literacy Place, Grade 6* © 2008  
(3 Self Monitoring Units, 3 Analyzing Units, 3 Sequencing Units, 3 Making Connections Unit, 3 Predicting Units, 3 Inferring Units, 3 Evaluating Units, 3 Synthesizing Units and 17 titles of Guided Reading). | 2. *Literacy in Action 6* © 2007  
(Student Instruction Books, 4 Literacy Kids Assessment Magazines, Lap Books, Audio CD Pkg, Photo Cards, Poster and Transparency Pack, and 12 Literature and Information Circle Packs – E.g. Runt, The Pain Box, etc.) |
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<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
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<td><strong>1. Crossroads 7 © 2000</strong>&lt;br&gt;(A single component Student Textbook)</td>
<td><strong>1. Crossroads 8 © 2000</strong>&lt;br&gt;(A single component Student Textbook)</td>
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<td><strong>1. Stepping Up With Literacy Place, Grade 7 © 2010</strong>&lt;br&gt;(6 Strategy units, audio CDs, newspapers, articles, brochures, blogs, press releases, how-to-articles, flow charts, documentaries on DVD, search results, true stories and posters – total 26 components. 6 units of this textbook package were revised in 2010 including 3 inquiry units, 3 Book Club Units and 8 components of environmental choices)</td>
<td><strong>1. Literacy in Action 7 © 2008</strong>&lt;br&gt;(A single component Student Textbook)</td>
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<td><strong>2. Sight Lines/Resource Lines 7 © 1999</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Sight Lines 7; Resource Lines 7/8)</td>
<td><strong>2. Sight Lines/Resource Lines 8 © 1999</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Sight Lines 8; Resource Lines 7/8)</td>
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