

**Continuities and Transformations in the Practices and
Narratives of Religious Identities and Literacy
Development: Bangladeshi Hindus in Canada**

by
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Abstract

Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora in Canada is a new phenomenon that requires careful observation to learn about their identity formation and literacy practices in relation to their religious affiliations and practices. Identity formation, and literacy and integration practices of diasporic communities have been the focus of multiple studies for some decades. Past social, ethnic, and literacy experiences of immigrants significantly influence their integration in a host society. Drawing on theoretical concepts such as religion-as-social-capital, the role of religion in identity formation, New Literacy Studies, and the Continua of Biliteracy, I document the relationship between religious affiliations and language and literacy practices of seven recruited Bangladeshi Hindu families in GTA (Greater Toronto Area) Canada. This is an ethnographic interpretative study that employs multiple data collection and analysis approaches. Interviews, observation, photography, and reflective tasks were used to collect data. For the analysis of multi-layered data in this study, a combination of analytical approaches was used: grounded theory, narrative inquiry, Critical Discourse Analysis, and situational analyses. The findings suggest that religious affiliations and practices shelter and bind the participants in their new country, contribute to their overall integration into the host society, and work as resources for their literacy development. The findings should not be generalized as the number of participants is very small and individual stories might vary. This study aims to empower language and social studies teachers to initiate dialogues on cross-cultural and cross-religious issues to promote democratic citizenship in public school and adult learning systems in Canada.

Keywords: Diaspora; identities; integration; religious affiliations and practices; language and literacy practices

Dedication

Without whose tremendous sacrifice and help, the completion of this study report would have never been possible – my wife – Sadia Banerjee

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Enrolling to the PhD (Languages, Cultures, and Literacies) program at Simon Fraser University was both challenging and exciting for me. When I was teaching at a University in Bangladesh, I never thought of pursuing a PhD. I thought that was out of my reach and imagination. However, when I started doing some small-scale research, presenting findings in international conferences, and publishing in some national peer-reviewed journals, I found interest in doing further research. With tremendous encouragement from my wife, I applied to some universities for PhD admissions in Canada. I also applied for immigration to Canada at the same time. Fortunately, my application for immigration was accepted, and I was offered PhD admission at two universities. Though I had PhD admission offer at Lakehead University with full funding, I opted for Simon Fraser University without any funding as Dr. Danièle Moore, one of the world-renowned researchers in immigration, integration and literacy studies, agreed to supervise my research. Then, my journey towards Canada and to SFU started in Summer 2011.

Though my classes were supposed to start from September 2011, my wife and I came to Canada at the end of May 2011 hoping to get used to the environment, culture and surroundings. The first experiences were very sad; we used to cry almost every day as we did not know anybody to talk to in Vancouver and we had been going through some culture shock. We were certain that we would go back to Bangladesh as soon as possible. Furthermore, once the classes started, we went through financial hardship; we were running out of our savings very fast as I did not have any funding, and my wife was doing her MA at UBC without any funding. Life gradually started to settle down when we started living at the university residence. I also got some teaching assistantship at SFU.

Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank professor Danièle Moore, without whose tremendous encouragement, guidance and patience, I would never be any close to defend my thesis. She has always been supportive to me irrespective of many inconveniences. At some points in my life in Canada, I thought of quitting my study; however, Dr. Moore

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Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Ethics Statement.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures.....	xi
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Research Questions and Their Justification.....	4
1.2. The Purpose of This Study.....	5
1.3. Significance of this Study	6
1.4. My Position as a Researcher.....	7
Chapter 2. Background and the Context of the Study	10
2.1. Bangladesh: East Bengal Phase: British Rule (1757-1947).....	11
2.2. Bangladesh: Pakistan Phase (1947-1971).....	13
2.3. Bangladesh Phase	16
2.4. Bangladeshi Immigrants in Canada	18
2.5. Immigration and Integration	19
2.6. Bangladeshi Muslim Diaspora and Their Integration Practices	21
Chapter 3. Literature Review	23
3.1. Diaspora, Migration and Transnationalism	23
3.2. The Role of Religions in Diasporic Communities.....	27
3.3. Immigration and Diasporic Communities.....	28
3.4. How Do Religions Interact with Cultures?.....	32
3.5. Religion as Social Capital.....	33
3.6. The Relationship Between Religions and Literacy Practices	34
3.7. Multiliteracies and New Literacy Studies.....	36
3.8. New Literacy Studies: Home and School Literacy.....	37
3.9. Limitations of NLS	39
3.10. Multilingualism and Biliteracy	42
3.11. Hybrid Identities among Multilingual People.....	47
3.12. Multilingual Literacy Practices: Resources for Integration	50
3.13. Summary.....	51
Chapter 4. Methodology	52
4.1. How did I recruit the study participants?.....	54

4.2.	Profiles of the Recruited Participants	57
4.3.	Qualitative Methodology	62
4.4.	Why Ethnographic Narrative Inquiry?	64
4.4.1.	Observation and Field Notes.....	69
4.4.2.	Interviewing	71
4.4.3.	Photography	73
4.4.4.	Visual reflection.....	74
4.5.	Data Analysis	74
4.5.1.	Grounded theory	75
4.5.2.	Situational Analysis	76
4.5.3.	Narrative Inquiry.....	79
4.5.4.	Critical Discourse Analysis.....	79
4.6.	Ethical Considerations	80
4.7.	Summary	82
Chapter 5. Findings.....		83
5.1.	Continuities and Transformations in the Practices and Narratives of Religious Identities.....	83
5.1.1.	Narratives of Diaspora Living	83
5.1.2.	Religious Identities that Bind Participants.....	94
5.1.2.1.	Saraswati Puja	95
5.1.2.2.	Kirtan/Worship of Lord Krishna	99
5.1.2.3.	Pahela Boishakh/ Bengali New Year	101
5.1.3.	Diasporic Consciousness and Sense of Belonging	105
5.1.3.1.	Household shrines at home.....	112
5.1.3.2.	Diasporic religious practices: Identity fastening and transfer	113
5.2.	Diasporic Consciousness and Social Integration in Canada.....	114
5.2.1.	Diasporic Consciousness and Developing a Sense of Belonging to Canada	115
5.2.2.	Intersectional Stories: Developing a Sense of Belonging.....	119
5.2.3.	Political Consciousness, Phobia and Religion as Social Capital	122
5.2.4.	Challenges to Integration	126
5.3.	Diasporic Living and Language and Literacy Practices	129
5.3.1.	Literacy Practices and Religious Identities of the Study Participants	130
5.3.2.	Language and Literacy Practices of Adult Participants	133
5.3.3.	Children’s Language and Literacy Practices	139
5.3.3.1	Emphasis on Children’s L2 Literacy.....	140
5.3.3.2	Devaluation of L1 Literacy	143
5.4.	Summary	148
Chapter 6. Discussion, Implications and Conclusion.....		150
6.1.	Religious Affiliations, Diasporic Consciousness and Sense of Belonging	150

6.1.1.	Religious Affiliations and Social Networking	150
6.1.2.	Religious Practices as Resources for Integration.....	152
6.1.3.	Religious Identity and Socialization within the Mainstream Culture	153
6.2.	Religious Affiliations, Language, Literacies and Integration.....	155
6.2.1.	Languages Used in Everyday Lives.....	157
6.2.2.	Literacy Practices: Mainstream and Home Literacies	158
6.2.3.	Religious Consciousness as Resources for Literacies	160
6.2.4.	Literacy Practices for Integration.....	160
6.3.	Implications	162
6.3.1.	Creating Alternative Discourses	162
6.3.2.	Cross-Religious Awareness and Trans-religious Story-telling.....	164
6.3.3.	Dialogues in and outside Schools	167
6.3.4.	Issues of Adult Language and Literacy Practices	170
6.3.5.	Bilingual or Translingual Storytelling at Schools.....	171
6.3.6.	The Missing of Family Members: Barrier to Attaining Full Membership .	172
6.4.	Conclusion	173
6.5.	Drawbacks and Further Possibilities.....	175
References.....		177
Appendix A.	Questionnaire	198
Appendix B.	A sample Interview Transcription in Bengali (English Script) ..	200
Appendix C.	A Sample Mid-Mapping Task	203
Appendix D.	Example of Situational Analysis Used in this Study	204
Appendix E.	Example of Coding Used in this Study.....	205

List of Tables

Table 1.	Profile of the recruited participants.....	58
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List of Figures

Figure 1.	Hornberger's Continua of Biliteracy Framework.....	45
Figure 2.	Abstract Situational Map <i>and</i> Ordered Situational Map.....	78
Figure 3.	Celebration of Saraswati Puja at a Hindu temple in Toronto.	97
Figure 4.	Bengali New Year rally in Toronto.	103
Figure 5.	<i>Hatekhor</i> i preparation of Sanjit's son during Saraswati Puja.....	132
Figure 6.	A religious newspaper found at Sanjit's house.....	138
Figure 7.	Bengali children's books sent from Bangladesh to Sanjit's children	145

Chapter 1.

Introduction

An aim of Canadian multiculturalism is to promote racial and linguistic diversity. Because of widespread immigration, people from various religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds are pouring into major metropolitan cities in Canada (Giampapa, 2010; Hiebert, 2005). This diverse population speaks more than 100 living languages and represents almost all the world's major ethnic and religious groups (Statistics Canada, 2016). Although the major language spoken outside the home is English or French, almost half of the transnational population speaks languages that are neither English nor French. Census data show that about 7,321,065 residents in Canada and 1,186,885 residents in the Toronto metropolitan area have mother tongues that are not official languages of Canada; many use more than two languages in their everyday lives to live in a large metropolitan city like Toronto (Statistic Canada, 2016).

Toronto is one of the most multicultural and multilingual cities of the world; one-fourth of the population was born in a foreign country. Anyone visiting the city center and the Greater Toronto Area will see thousands of people of Latino, Filipino, Indian, Asian, and Middle-Eastern ancestry, as well as many other ethnic, cultural and religious groups. A number of these people may also have experienced torture and persecution in their home countries because of their religious beliefs or different political views. The most significant part of studying these groups of people is the distinct variation in language forms and practices that they use in relation to their languages and literacies. The individual ways of using language and literacy are so distinctively identifiable that they require analysis from multilingual/plurilingual perspectives (Moore & Gajo, 2009; Sarkar & Low, 2012). This diverse linguistic and cultural landscape provides the context for this study, which seeks to understand how a small immigrant group from Bangladesh negotiate their religious identity, language and multiliteracy practices with their affiliation to Canadian society in their daily lives.

Canada became an immigration option for Bangladeshis in the 1970s, though wide-scale immigration to Canada from Bangladesh only started in the 1990s and 2000s. When there was only 0.6 percent Bangladeshis in 1970s, the number raised to close to 5% Bangladeshi in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2005). Currently, there are 50,000 Bangladeshi immigrants living permanently in Canada while the majority lives in Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2016). Though Bangladeshi immigrants are not huge in number compared to European groups who immigrated earlier, they hold a particular language and cultural heritage. Within this ethno-linguistic group, there are two historically warring religious communities. Though most Bangladeshi immigrants are Muslims, there is a sizeable number of Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants in Toronto with different social and community engagements. Even though a few studies have been conducted to understand the identities of Bangladeshi immigrants, specifically Muslims in a few cases (Ghosh, 2007; Halder, 2012), research on how Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants negotiate their identities and affiliations in Canadian society have been underreported. In Bangladesh, Hindus are identified as a minority group in the constitution, social and political structures, and many of them experienced discrimination, torture and trauma (Guhathakurta, 2012), which is why they bring very different life experiences as immigrants to Canada from those of Bangladeshi Muslims. Therefore, their affiliation with Canada and their overall integration processes in this country require more critical investigation.

Studies suggest that background experiences related to education, economic status, social and religious identities of immigrants are influential factors in their integration into the host society (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009; Cummins, 2000; Moore & Gajo, 2009). In some studies, immigrants' ethnic and religious associations have been identified as both positive (Hopkins, 2011; Huang, 2001; Knott, 2009; Vertovec, 1997) and negative (Guo, 2009; Massey & Denton, 1987; Murdie & Ghosh, 2010) influences on their sense of belonging to the host country. To enhance immigrant affiliation with Canada, Canadian multicultural policy promotes an inclusive environment for immigrants while simultaneously encouraging their social, political and cultural integration into the society (Garcea & Hiebert, 2011). However, as Giampapa (2010) claims, multilingual

and multicultural practices are still devalued in mainstream society, and immigrant communities are often powerless in many contexts.

Studies suggest that religion and literacy practices can both be resources in promoting social affiliation (Hopkins, 2011; Street, 1984, 2003). Religious identities may boost self confidence among immigrant populations, and they encourage networking in the host society through religious affiliations (Cohen, 1995, 1997; Hopkins, 2011). Furthermore, immigrants' home language and literacy practices have been investigated as important catalysts in immigrant children's academic success (Blackledge, 2006; Cummins, 2010; Hornberger, 2000). A few studies also highlight the relationship between religious identities and the literacy practices of immigrant children, demonstrating how they negotiate between the two, which may have various influences on their literacy practices in their target language (Barrett, 2009; Sarrroub, 2002; Skerrett, 2016).

In this study, I look into the multilingual literacy practices and processes of integration of seven Bangladeshi Hindu immigrant families in Toronto, Ontario. My research participants belong to a religious minority group—the Hindu diaspora in Canada—that migrated from a predominantly Muslim Bangladesh. Drawing on theoretical concepts such as religion-as-social-capital (Alexander, Chaterji & Jalais, 2015; Hinnels, 2005; Knott, 2009; Putnam, 2000; Vertovec, 1997, 2008), the role of religion in identity formation (Jackson, 2014a, 2014b), the New Literacy Studies (Gee, 1996; Street, 1984, 2003), and the Continua of Biliteracy (Hornberger, 2003, 2006), I document the relationship between language, literacy and religion-based identity-positions of the recruited participants as they integrate in Canada.

This research study reports findings related to the following issues: 1) how participants who I describe as members of the Hindu diasporic community in Canada experience/ explain/develop affiliation with Canadian society; 2) how their religious identities interact with their social integration; 3) how their multi/bilingual language practices may work as resources for integration; and 4) how the relationship between religious and literacy practices can be explained in terms of participants' social affiliation

with Canada that can be realized through the multicultural and multiliteracy policies operating within educational institutions. The major drawbacks of this study include the limited number of participating families, individual subjective stories, and historical religious tension and conflicts. The study argues that initiatives should be taken to encourage meaningful dialogue in and out of schools regarding multilingual literacy practices and cross-cultural /religious differences to build a cohesive society in Canada.

1.1. Research Questions and Their Justification

I aim to answer one major question in this study: How do the religious identities, language and literacy practices of the recruited Bangladeshi Hindu participants relate to their sense of belonging to Canada?

I have two sub-questions to justify how and why I aim to explore the daily life trajectories of members of the Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora:

- 1) How do the recruited participants of the Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora use their religion and religious affiliations to develop a sense of belonging in Canada?

To answer this question, I will present and analyze interview and observational data that represent the influence of religion and religious affiliation in the daily life practices of the recruited participants. I will particularly focus on learning i) how participants use their religion and their affiliations to expand their network, and ii) how participants use their identity and experiences to socialize in the mainstream culture.

- 2) What everyday language and literacy practices of the participants may influence their sense of belonging in Canada?

To answer the above question, I aim to document and analyze i) what languages the recruited participants use in their everyday lives, ii) what literacy practices the recruited participants are involved in, iii) how mainstream language and literacy practices interact with the language and literacy practices of the recruited participants, and iv) how the participants explain those practices in relation to their sense of belonging in Canada.

1.2. The Purpose of This Study

There are three major purposes of this study: 1) to explore daily life trajectories of the recruited participants in relation to their socialization and integration in Canada, 2) to document how the recruited participants use their religion and religious affiliations to develop a sense of belonging in Canada, and 3) to explore and document how they use their linguistic and cultural backgrounds to develop literacies in Canada. My recruited participants are seven Bangladeshi Hindu families who are living in Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Very little attention has been given to the life stories and psychology of Bangladeshi Hindus who are living in Canada. I have not been able to find any literature focusing on the language and literacy practices of Bangladeshi Hindus in Canada. I also did not locate any literature addressing how Bangladeshi Hindus use their religion and religious affiliations to integrate or not into Canada. Bangladeshi Hindus constitute a distinct diaspora because of their experiences of living a minority life in a pre-dominantly Muslim majority country. Bangladeshi Hindus represent a religious minority in Bangladesh and in Canada. Most share a history of violence, intimidation, and political, economic and social marginalization. By documenting daily life stories of the recruited participants, I aim to identify how and why they develop certain types of identity traits in Canada and how they use their religion, religious affiliations and literacy practices to successfully integrate into mainstream Canadian society. I will discuss my personal interests in this study later in this chapter.

It is noteworthy that the participants' diasporic identities have been strongly influenced by their previous experiences of living as minorities in Muslim-majority Bangladesh. Therefore, their narratives include tension regarding their relationships with Bangladeshi Muslims. Some of the participants' comments may also express strongly the past religious traumas experienced in their home country, and subsequent long-lasting inter-religious anxieties and hostility towards Islam and Muslim people. It is not the intention of the author to offend any specific religious group in this thesis. My intention is to give voice to personal stories of migration and integration, without passing judgment nor silencing what may be uncomfortable to hear. This journey should be an opportunity to understand how religious consciousness impacts members of diasporic communities

who may not have mitigated their inter-religious feelings and conflicts after immigrating to a secular country like Canada and fail to appreciate its diversity (Begum and Khondaker, 2008). Furthermore, presenting such contentious issues for “academic attention is necessary to understand the nature of challenges” (Gawlewicz, 2016, p. 28) diasporic communities may face in Canada, and foster tolerance and social change. The inter-religious tensions, if gone unnoticed, as is evident in this study, may also result in segregation of immigrant communities. Therefore, a major aim of this dissertation is to stress the need for Canadian society and educational institutions to engage seriously with religious differences while promoting inter-religious understanding and tolerance within educational settings.

1.3. Significance of this Study

The significance of this study is threefold: 1) it may provide some guidance for developing literacy activities for new immigrants who hold diasporic consciousness; 2) it may help curriculum developers design materials and texts for school/adult literacy acknowledging religious diversity and long-lasting inter-religious anxiety; and 3) it may impart important information to immigrant service providers. Adult immigrants, generally called first-generation immigrants, seem to suffer the most in immigrant countries because of challenges they face in communicating in the target language and integrating into the labor market. Though officially their education and experiences are evaluated as part of the immigration process, their education and work experiences seem to count less in the job market. Furthermore, religious pluralism is hardly addressed in public education. Even though religious education is controversial, recent studies suggest that limiting religions only to the private realm may marginalize learners with strong religious faith (see Anwaruddin & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2015). Thus, the understanding of the complex identity negotiations of diasporic communities may provide insights into the ways in which they negotiate literacy practices in educational institutions. This study may provide insights for educators to acknowledge the religious identities the learners belonging to diasporic communities bring with them and the influences those have on their literacy practices. This may also help them plan lessons and activities that are sensitive to various religious faiths. Likewise, pre-service and in-

service school teachers will be able to use this research to develop material for their classes with students from various ethnic and religious backgrounds. Immigrant service providers in Canada can use this study to learn how they can provide psychological and educational help to immigrants who experienced trauma and persecution in their home countries. They will also be able to design short-term training on citizenship and diversity so that people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds can develop a healthy co-existence with diverse cultural/religious groups in their new home.

1.4. My Position as a Researcher

I became interested in exploring ethnic, religious, and linguistic identity positions and literacy practices of a group of Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants in Canada as I am an immigrant and I may share some historical and experiential realities with the participants in terms of negotiating identities and literacy practices. My interest in this area also corresponds to my personal experiences of living as a member of a religious minority in my country of origin. Born and brought up in a community where religious belief is a major identity trait, I always felt that I was not treated in the same way as the members of the majority Muslim group. Muslim children of my age would make fun of my religion. They sang “Hindu Hindu Tulshir pata, Hindura khai Gorur matha” in Bengali, which translates “Hindus Hindus, you worship Tulshi plant, You eat heads of Cows” in English. I used to cry when I got home. My parents told me not to listen to them and ignore them. Even my high school gym teacher was astonished when I ran faster than all the other boys in an annual competition; he asked me without expecting any answer, “How could you run so fast? You were born in a Hindu Brahmin family. You are supposed to be soft and humble.” I understand that not all my teachers and friends discriminated against me, and not all members of Muslim society in Bangladesh were antagonistic to all Hindus; however, the experience of oppression did not end in my childhood; it continued through my adulthood, even when I took the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exams after my university graduation. I was asked questions about how many houses I had in India and how often I visited India in the BCS viva voce, or oral exams. I took the BCS viva voce five times unsuccessfully though I passed preliminary and written exams. It is notable that thousands of university graduates sit for the BCS preliminary tests every year in

Bangladesh and only a few hundred are selected for the viva voce. Thus, the dominant culture and attitudes of people always indicated that I was not one of them in schools, in social situations and even in playgrounds. I would also like to share one traumatic experience that I had in 1990. I was a Higher Secondary student and was living in a hostel at a Hindu religious compound in Faridpur, Bangladesh. There were approximately 25 students residing in the facility. At that time, some extremist Hindus in India started plotting to destroy Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh to build the Rama Temple in its place. Though the mosque was demolished in 1992, there were some sporadic riots in parts of India and Bangladesh in 1990. One night when I was asleep, my friends woke me suddenly around 2 AM. They were saying “get up, get-up, run if you want to save your life. They [some Muslims who were looking for some Hindus] are at the gate.” The priest of the temple was also there; everyone was so terrified that no one knew what to do. He told us that “everyone will be beheaded.” We also heard banging sounds on the gate. I was just half-awake and did not realize what was happening. I started shaking so much fearing for my life that the priest took me to his comparatively well-protected two-storied compound. One of my friends was planning how to get out of the complex by using a bedsheet from a wired wall in the back. I spent the whole night without sleep and went back home the next day. I had nightmares of being beheaded for more than six months. Of all the traumatic experiences of living a religious minority life in Bangladesh, this was the one that I still remember most vividly.

The situation did not change when I came to Canada as an immigrant; I am still part of a minority group in terms of my brown complexion, Bangladeshi accent, not having a local education, and my South Asian way of behaving. I, sometimes, feel excluded in Canada too. I have also observed through my experiences attending parties with both the major religious groups from Bangladesh that some Bangladeshi Muslims and Hindus adopt different identity positions in Canada and do not engage in common social and cultural interaction, though they share the same linguistic and cultural tradition. Thus, the hope of living a life without religious tension I immigrated to Canada with was shattered just after a few months.

In my pilot study that I completed in Vancouver with two Muslim Bangladeshi families, I never saw any Hindu Bangladeshis attending their family events. Likewise, I attended many family, religious and social events with Bangladeshi Hindus and I did not see any Muslims attending the programs. Even at picnics, Bangladeshi Muslims and Hindus arrange and participate in different programs based on their religious affiliations. Based on my observation and experiences of working with Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants, I wanted to know how the recruited participants of Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora use or do not use their religious and cultural heritage and multiple literacy practices to integrate into mainstream Canadian society. I was particularly interested to learn which cultural, religious and literacy practices and resources they used to become full functioning members of the host society.

In the following chapters I will first explain the background and the context of this study. Then I will discuss relevant literature that inform this study. In the fourth chapter, I will explain the methodologies that I have used to collect and analyze data for this study. In chapters five to six, I will analyze the findings and discuss challenges and prospects of this study.

Chapter 2.

Background and the Context of the Study

In this chapter, I will explore the history of Bengal, a region that includes Bangladesh and northeastern India, from the British Rule to the modern state of Bangladesh. This history is of relevance as it has positioned Bangladeshi Hindus in specific ways and shaped their minority identities at home and influenced their migration to other countries. I will also discuss the historical background to their emergence as a diaspora in Canada. Though this chapter presents a partial representation of the history of Bengal and Bangladeshi Hindus, my focus is on major historical events from the British Rule in Bengal to the current independent Bangladesh to explore the socio-political issues that conditioned the psychological positioning of Bangladeshi Hindus.

Religion and social identities are synonymous to people of the Indian subcontinent. Torri (2014) discusses how Indian history was shaped by a periodization based on rulers' religious backgrounds. Hindus in Bangladesh are not different from Hindus in other parts of the world in terms of worshipping various Gods and Goddesses, and they display many variations in their beliefs and religious practices. They worship the Goddesses Durga, Kali, Saraswati, Lakhxmi, and the Gods Shiva, Krishna, Vishnu, and many others. Though the main tenets of Hinduism are to believe in the existence of God among all living creatures (Vivekananda, 1893, September 11), most Hindus worship idols of various Gods and Goddesses.

Hindus from Bangladesh and Hindus from other Hindu-majority countries like India and Nepal appear to develop different identity positions. Though they share very similar religious practices to other Hindus from various parts of the world, Bangladeshi Hindus' religious and literacy practices are significantly influenced by their historical experiences as a minority religious community, and their ethnic and linguistic heritage. The major characteristic of the Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants in Canada lies in their experience as a persecuted minority group in a Muslim-majority country. Hindu immigrants from India and Nepal have the experience of living as a majority group in the

countries they come from. Thus, Hindus from Bangladesh possess, develop and maintain a very distinct Hindu identity compared to other Hindus who come from Hindu-majority countries even though there might be individual differences among the group of people. Furthermore, the Hindu-Muslim conflicts are deeply rooted in the Indian subcontinent, and the common daily practices of most members of both groups are very different from each other. From education to family events, most Hindus and Muslims follow very different ways. Though there are many people who are truly secular in their treatment of people of different faiths, most Hindus believe in a multiplicity of Gods and Goddesses, and these practices are against the core belief of practicing Muslims, who are deeply monotheistic. For historic reasons, Bangladeshi Hindus and Muslims in Canada form two divided diasporic communities with very little interaction between them. Therefore, because of their unique experiences of living as minorities in a predominantly Muslim-majority Bangladesh, Bangladeshi Hindus may have a distinct identity and sense of belonging to the host country, which Vertovec (1997, 2008) and Hopkins (2011) have described as a social capital towards integration.

2.1. Bangladesh: East Bengal Phase: British Rule (1757-1947)

Before the British rule, Muslim Mughals invaded Hindu India and ruled it for almost 300 years. The Empire became fragmented as Marathas and Rajputs of India fought frequently with the Mughals. It was reported that some Mughal rulers, such as, Akbar (1556-1605) and his son Jahangir (1605-1627) wanted good relations with Hindus; however, others, such as Aurangzeb (1658-1707) did not want to include Hindus in their administration. Aurangzeb was even reported to have destroyed Hindu schools and temples. The enmity between these two neighboring cultures and religions dates back to the Mughal empires when minority Muslim Mughals started ruling Majority Hindu India (Hallissey, 1977). The almost 200 years of British rule that followed the Mughals was a critical period for the shaping of Hindu-Muslim identities in the Indian subcontinent.

British rule began after the British won the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The British East India Company started controlling businesses, military and state power. Travers (2007) states that Britain mostly relied on the local people to control Bengal. Like

Edward Said's arguments, Travers says that the British ruling class assumed that the population of Bengal would be easy to control and that the political atmosphere at the end of Mughal period in India was so volatile that the East India Company under the leadership of Robert Clive had to take up arms to take power. It was evident that there were incidents of tyranny, corruption, and rule of force "all over India" (Travers, 2005, p. 12). In these circumstances, the East India Company fought against and won territorial occupation of Bengal from the last independent emperor of Bengal Siraj-ud-Doula in 1757. Bengal fell into the hands of the British at that time although Mir Quasem Ali Kha was in power till 1763. After getting permission to collect revenues in Bengal in 1765 (Travers, 2005), the East India Company started ruling Bengal.

The most significant events in British-occupied Bengal (Marshall, 2006) were:

1. The Bengal famine (1769-1770): One of the most significant incidents of British Bengal was the famine. Some historians suggest that one-fifth of the total population of Bengal may have died of famine. The British government and the East India Company blamed local traders for this. However, the ruling class was blamed for not doing anything to save people, remit revenue or provide food aid (Travers, 2005). During this time, many Hindus were part of the ruling class as many of them were landlords and business people. Muslims tended to be the subjects who worked for the Hindu Jaminders and British rulers. This Hindu-Muslim social disparity played an important role in the division of India in 1947. This ruler-subject relationship among Hindus and Muslims in British India was one of the ways in which the Hindu-Muslim relationships were partly formed throughout the history of Indian subcontinent. In another significant Bengal famine (1943), the people worked for communities based on their religious affiliations (Batabyal, 2005).

2. Riots between Hindus and Muslims were common in British Bengal. Das (1991) analyzed how the Hindu-Muslim relationship in Bengal was important to explore the religious affiliation and communal politics in the subcontinent. Riots between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal occurred several times during the Mughal and British rule, as well as in current-day Bangladesh. Hindus in Noakhali, Khulna, Jessore – three Bangladeshi

districts – suffered the most during communal riots in undivided Bengal and after independence (Das, 2000). The 1946 Noakhali massacre of Hindus was so horrifying that Mahatma Gandhi was compelled to visit the region after thousands of Hindus were brutally killed, scores of Hindu girls and women were raped, and Hindu houses and business establishments were vandalized and looted in the Muslim majority areas (Das, 2000; Ghosh, 2011). Many Hindus and Muslims in present-day Bangladesh still attend to this history because the relationship between the groups has led to the partitioning and breaking apart of families (Alexander et al., 2015). The gradual deterioration of the relationship between the two groups has “produced a politics with religious difference as one of the key praxis” in present Bangladesh, and Hindus have become minorities in the constitution, ideology and demography of Bangladesh (Guhathakurta, 2012, p. 288). This also has led to, as I discuss later, mass outmigration of Hindus at different moments over the years and influenced the emergence of Hindu diasporic communities.

2.2. Bangladesh: Pakistan Phase (1947-1971)

In order to understand the history of immigration of Bangladeshis to Canada and the importance of religion as a critical identity trait, we must consider Pakistani rule after the partition. At the end of the British colonial rule in India in the middle of the 20th century, there was a move among some Hindus and Muslims for two separate countries based on their religions. Halder (2012) writes:

the permanent land settlement of Bengal in 1793 (Chirosthayi Bondoboasto), the two-tiered education system [for Muslims and Hindus], the Bengal partition [East Bengal and West Bengal - based on the religious majority population], and the partition between India and Pakistan (1947) constructed two separate and antagonistic religious and political identities between Hindus and Muslims. (p. 38).

The division between Hindus and Muslims was so strong that Mohammad Ali Jinnah (the father of the nation of Pakistan) identified them as two separate *civilizations*: They “belong to different religious philosophies, social customs, and literatures. They neither intermarry nor dine together. They belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions” (Islam, 1981, p.55). With the division of

India, the present Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) fell under Pakistani rule even though almost half the population was non-Muslim (Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and Others) living in that part of Bengal (Halder, 2012). Hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Muslims were killed on both sides of the border during the time of partition (Das, 1991). Hindus and Muslims who had been living together for hundreds of years got two nations: India and Pakistan.

After the separation of India in 1947, East Pakistan felt the colonial attitude of West Pakistan when its founder Mohammed Ali Jinnah, in his first visit to Dhaka, the then Capital city of East Pakistan, said Urdu shall be the only language of Pakistan. Jinnah endorsed a two-nation theory, which was the foundation of the partition of India based on religion. The Urdu-Bangla controversy emerged from the ideas that Bengali language and culture are overwhelmingly influenced by Hinduism (Toor, 2011). Toor (2011) also notes that, later, the protest against Urdu as the only state language was said to be a Hindu conspiracy, and there were complaints that Hindus were seen as not particularly loyal to Pakistan. Such discourses are still evident in the independent Bangladesh as examples from studies of minorities living in Bangladesh suggest that Hindus are often labeled as *agents of India* in Bangladesh (Goswami & Nasreen, 2003). Goswami and Nasreen (2003) discuss three specific discourses about Hindus in Bangladesh. First, Hindus are considered as admirers of India; second, it is believed that they consider India their motherland; and, thirdly, they are believed to be illegally transferring money to India.

For thousands of years, Bengali language and culture were mostly secular in nature, though politics-influenced religious riots were experienced (Das, 2000) at different times. While political riots have opposed two rival political parties in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Awami League (BA) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the country has experienced many religious conflicts. Religious riots have been threatening to minorities, notably Hindus, to the point that many left for India, which resulted in powerful local leaders capturing their lands (Guhathakurata, 2012, Barakat, 2008). Likewise, people in West Bengal (of India) have experienced many political secular riots and religious riots over time (Das, 2000). Therefore, Jinnah's two-nation

theory was a major area of concern to the Hindus of East Pakistan. It is noteworthy that the partition of India in 1949 was done by keeping masses in ignorance of what the political leaders were doing. So, when India was divided, many Muslims in India did not opt to move to Pakistan, and many non-Muslims, particularly Hindus in the British East Bengal, stayed in East Pakistan. So, the dream of building a nation-state based on state religion and language—Islam and Urdu—was in jeopardy from the very beginning (Toor, 2011). Among the minority groups, Hindus were the largest in Pakistan, and they were identified as second-class citizens like other minority groups (Guhathakurta, 2012). The marginalized lives of Hindus in the Pakistan state, as Guhathakurta notes, led to outmigration of 5.3 million people in 1964 that gradually increased to 703 persons per day by 1971.

In March 1971, Sheikh Mujib, the founding father of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, announced that Bengalis needed to prepare themselves for the liberation war, as they had been continuously denied the rights they deserved (Toor, 2007). Sensing tough time ahead, the Pakistani military government started taking steps to eliminate the dissident leaders of East Pakistan. They mostly blamed India and Hindus in East Pakistan for the upheaval. It was also evident that they planned to silence protesting voices with bullets. March 25 is now "Genocide Day" in Bangladesh to commemorate the massacre that the Pakistani military committed on 25 March 1971, the beginning of a nine-month struggle for liberation. Thousands of people were killed in many parts of East Bengal that night. While the Pakistani military thought that they would be able to stop the movement very quickly, people from all walks of life joined an all-out war against the Pakistani occupation forces. On December 16, 1971 Pakistani forces surrendered to the combined force (Bangladesh-India) at the Ramna Race Course grounds (Saikia, 2011). More than 10 million people left the country for India as refugees (Alexander et al., 2015).

Among the people killed in that struggle for the liberation of Bangladesh, Hindus appeared to suffer the most (Ahmmed, 2013). Once the liberation struggle started in East Pakistan, West Pakistan accused Hindus of conspiring to divide the Islamic nation. The property and lives of Hindus were targets of atrocities. Though Hindus suffered the worst in the liberation war, they were again discriminated against in 1988 when the military

ruler of Bangladesh made Islam the state religion. In the first constitution of a free Bangladesh, secularism and democracy were the main principles. Under the regimes of two military rulers, Ziaur Rahman and Hussain Muhammad Ershad, Hindus were cornered, as rulers wanted to woo Islamic-minded people so that they could remain in power (Guhathakurta, 2012). The silent exodus of the Hindu population to India continues to this day, as they are still prey to verbal and physical humiliation, as the persecution of religious minorities remains an unfortunate reality in Bangladesh (Ahmmed, 2013).

2.3. Bangladesh Phase

Once Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan, there was a movement to create a secular democratic country under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with a secular constitution in 1972. However, the journey to establish a secular democratic country was interrupted after his assassination along with most of his family members in 1975. The next consecutive military governments set the groundwork for an Islamic Bangladesh with the defeated forces of 1971 for the following fifteen years (Guhathakurta, 2012). Guhathakurta explains that the inclusion of “Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim”/ *In the name of Allah- the most merciful* in the constitution and the declaration of Islam as the state religion in the 6th Amendment are two examples of how military rulers of the late 1970s and 1980s brought Islam back into the constitution to identify the Bengali nation state. Through this process, Hindus started feeling the same oppression that they felt during Pakistani rule. Though the severity of torture and oppression was not the same, many Hindus of Bangladesh felt like they were living a foreign life in their homeland as evidenced by the fact that millions of Hindus left Bangladesh for India in the 1980s (Ahmmed, 2013; Riaz, 2010). Statistics show that the outmigration of Hindus, which is often undocumented, has been steady since then: about 2.8 million Hindus have not appeared officially in any Bangladeshi documents between 1991-2001 (see Guhathakurta, 2012).

Hindus in Bangladesh have been the scapegoats of political struggles and historical events, whether at the time of an undivided Bengal, during the Pakistan regime,

or in current-day Bangladesh (Guhathakurta, 2012; Halder, 2012; Raghaban, 2013; Riaz, 2010; Travers, 2005, 2007). They have been subject to religious persecution, torture and political struggles (Das, 2000). Guhathakurta (2012) discusses how Hindus are considered a vote bank in present Bangladesh, and after every election, the Hindu majority areas experience political violence including attacks, rape and abduction of women, looting of property and intimidation. Though there was always a political agenda and the involvement of some anti-social elements in Bengal (Das, 2000), segregated and concentrated religious practices and associations have also been leading to civil unrest and reciprocal hatred fueled by different practices and beliefs.

Goswami and Nasreen (2003) discuss how minorities including Hindus in Bangladesh experience bullying and aggression every day based on historical representations of Hindus by Muslims. Hindus are represented in an inferior way in Muslim poetry and jokes, and the authors suggest how these epithets are applied to tease Hindus in some contexts. The authors provide examples of how hate speech was carried out in some Islamic religious sermons that were played on microphones overnight, which psychologically affected their study participants. Recent news in national and international media report how minorities and secular bloggers, scientists, and academics in Bangladesh have been victims of daytime attacks, which have been directly linked to the global spread of terrorism in the name of Islam. The most notable attack was on July 1, 2016 at the Holy Artisan Bakery in an affluent area in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. The terrorists killed 23 people, most of whom were foreigners. It was widely reported that the terrorists asked people who were taken hostage to recite from the Quran. Those who could not recite some verses from the Quran were brutally killed. This raised tremendous fear among the religious minorities in Bangladesh. Hindus' mass outmigration to India and other safer places for them has directly been linked to the physical and psychological trauma Hindus experience in Bangladesh.

All the above social and political events have contributed to the making of fearful lives for many Hindus in Bangladesh; their identity has become fragile, and they have dreamt for a secure life for years. These particular circumstances and the intensity of the silent exodus of Bangladeshi Hindus to other places in the world (Riaz, 2010; Ahmmed,

2013; Raghaban, 2013) have contributed to the making of the Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora.

2.4. Bangladeshi Immigrants in Canada

After the introduction of the multiculturalism policy of Pierre Trudeau's government in the early 1970s, immigration to Canada was open to people of color (Abu-Laban, 1998). In the 1970s and 1980s, a small number of rich, educated Bangladeshis traveled to major European and North American cities for higher education and business. In addition, prior to Bangladeshi independence in 1971, a very few Bengalis (those native to the Bengal region) had come to Canada from what was then East Pakistan (Halder, 2012). Educated Hindus in Bangladesh saw new opportunities when they discovered that they could move to Canada and secure a better life. Hindus from Bangladesh found renewed hope that they could escape religious persecution after coming to Canada.

At present, most Bangladeshis come to Canada in the "skilled worker" immigrant category, and some through family reunion or sponsorship. For example, twelve of the fourteen adult recruited participants of this study came to Canada through the skilled worker category; the other two came through the family sponsorship program. As mentioned, I will draw on their experiences to explore how the Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora in Toronto uses their religion and multiple literacy practices to integrate into their new cultural and linguistic environment.

The context of my research is Hindu immigrant families living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA); all the participants have been living in Toronto ranging from six to ten years. More specifically, Toronto's Danforth and Victoria Park are known as *Bangla Town* to Bangladeshis (Halder, 2012; Subhan, 2007). The number of Bangladeshi immigrants has increased considerably during the last decade or so; for example, a 2007 study reports that there were around 18,000 Bangla speakers in Toronto (Subhan, 2007), and 70% of them live in the Danforth and Victoria Park areas (Ghosh, 2007). Other studies report that high rise buildings near Victoria Park and Main Street subway stations are home to many Bangladeshis in Toronto (Ghosh, 2007; Halder, 2012; Subhan, 2007).

There are considerable numbers of Bangladeshi-owned grocery stores and restaurants in this area where many Bangladeshis are located (Hader, 2012). Halder (2012) also reports that most Bangladeshi Muslims and Hindus attend their own social and religious celebrations, such as *Eid* for Muslims and *Puja* for Hindus. There are four Bengali Hindu temples in the Greater Toronto Area, and Bangladeshi Hindus regularly visit these temples to celebrate religious festivities. It is noteworthy that both in the pilot study in Vancouver and in my PhD research in Toronto, I observed that Muslim and Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh do not usually attend each other's social, cultural, and religious programs. Though both the Muslim and Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh share the same linguistic and geographical backgrounds, they appear to be engaged in different social, cultural, and integrative practices in Canada in relation to their religions. As mentioned, these differences are partly influenced by inter-religious tensions between Bangladeshi Hindus and Muslims and often result in segregation of the two communities in Canada. Drawing on examples of deeply rooted inter-religious hostility, as expressed by some participants in this study, I will emphasize the importance of promoting inter-religious understanding within Canadian public education.

2.5. Immigration and Integration

Research increasingly focuses on how immigrants view their identities, how they develop their language and literacy practices, what factors they consider effective for their integration, and what challenges they face in their host countries (Baubock & Faist, 2010; Knott, 2009; Madokoro, 2011; Munz & Ohliger, 2003). The economic, social, religious and educational backgrounds of various ethnic groups may influence their struggle and success in developing a sense of belonging in their new linguistic and cultural environment (Coste et al., 2009; Cummins, 2000; Moore & Gajo, 2009). Social integration may also differ across genders and generations. Though a number of studies report that visible minority and religiously concentrated immigrants may remain impoverished in their new country (Guo, 2009; Massey & Denton, 1987; Murdie & Ghosh, 2010), studies have also pointed to how religious and ethnic links and associations, such as those that have been observed within Chinese diaspora and British Muslims and Hindus, help immigrants to psychologically and economically sustain and

improve in a foreign land (Hopkins, 2011; Huang, 2001; Knott, 2009; Vertovec, 1997). Religious ties, thus, may play a significant role in social networking (Knott, 2009; Vertovec, 1997) during the settlement phase of immigrants' lives.

To understand the needs and expectations of visible minority immigrants in Canada, we need to understand the policies and expectations regarding immigration in Canada. The main goal of Canadian multiculturalism policies is to establish a society where all individuals irrespective of their racial and linguistic identities enjoy freedom to practice their cultures while respecting diversity by participating in multicultural activities. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act (passed 1985 and amended 2003) encourages all residents to respect the cultural diversity of Canada. The most prominent clauses of the Act ask that Canadians:

- i. encourage and promote exchanges and cooperation among the diverse communities of Canada
- ii. facilitate the acquisition, retention and use of all languages that contribute to the multicultural heritage of Canada and
- iii. assist ethno-cultural minority communities to conduct activities with a view to overcoming any discriminatory barrier and, in particular, discrimination based on race or national or ethnic origin.

Yet, policies as such may not be appropriately implemented if new Canadians' daily language, literacy and identity practices remain unexplored or poorly understood. The overarching goals of multicultural policies, as explained by Garcea and Hiebert (2011) are "a) creating warm, welcoming, and inclusive communities, and b) maximizing the economic, social, cultural and political integration of immigrants" (p. 48). To achieve these goals, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) funds community-based non-profit organizations to help building "a socially cohesive society" (Government of Canada, 2012). But how effectively are government decisions implemented by taking the practices of common people into accounts? Further, how well do service providers communicate their policies to immigrants? This study, though a small effort to understand these problems, may provide perspectives on the views and practices of an immigrant group in Canada so that their affiliation with Canadian values can be explored in relation to their religious and linguistic identities.

2.6. Bangladeshi Muslim Diaspora and Their Integration Practices

The focus of this study is to document and interpret the literacy and integration practices of the Bangladeshi Hindu Diaspora in Canada. Nevertheless, Hindu Bangladeshis are not the only communities that have fled the country. An important Muslim diaspora also moved to the Western world. The complex integration practices of Bangladeshi Muslim diaspora in the UK and USA have been the focus of many recent studies. For example Rahman (2011) uses an ethnographic lens to discuss how Bangladeshi Muslim diaspora in the USA negotiate, transform, and mediate their identity and religion post 9/11. He documents how his research participants negotiate and transform their identity from multiple perspectives, as Muslims and Americans. While retaining strong *Muslimness* in their identity positions, most do not identify with African and Middle-eastern Muslims. Rasinger (2012), in another study with 48 educated Bangladeshi Muslims in East London, reports how second-generation Bangladeshi immigrants prefer to use English in all domains of interaction. Using indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality (EV), Rasinger concludes that Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK may experience linguistic loss, as parents do not pass on their language to children in homes.

Studying the religious influence on the literacy and integration practices of Bangladeshi Muslim diaspora in Tower Hamlets, Birmingham, Oldham, and Borough areas in the UK, Eade and Garbin (2006) and Garbin (2005) report how Bangladeshi Muslim diaspora is divided between two categories: i) secular and influenced by Bengali-nationalism and ii) Islamic, influenced by global Islamic Umma. Eade and Garbin discuss how the growing influence of religion, Islam in this case, is impacting the psychological upbringing of the young educated Bangladeshi Muslims in the UK who align themselves more with global Islamic groups. Many of them have strong influence in the politics of their home and host countries (see also Mcloughlin, 2016).

From the discussion above, we see that Bangladeshi Muslim diaspora in the western world perform very complex identity formation and religious practices.

Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora, likewise, develop a sense of belonging to the host nation while retaining a very strong religious identity. Studies also point to different identity and integration practice patterns between Bangladeshi Muslims and Hindus. Muslims tend to align themselves more with global Islamic movements or political Islam. Hindus live around their community members and continue and transform their religious identities and practices. Though both the religious groups have multiple identity positions in relation to their religions, most of them cherish their ethno-linguistic heritage. A few families prefer English learning to Bengali or bilingual education for their children, which this study showed as well.

My study also focuses on the literacy practices of the Bangladeshi Hindu community in Toronto. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, home literacy practices of immigrants are important influential factors to their social affiliation, and these can be used as resources in developing new literacy skills to integrate into the mainstream society. Therefore, how the participants of this study use their literacy practices along with performing their religious and linguistic identities is also important. I specifically explore how religious beliefs may shape participants' perspectives on language and literacy practices and the processes of integration in Canada. As the recruited participants are religiously and ethno-linguistically distinguishable, exploring the language and literacy practices of these participants is significant to understand various ethno-linguistic practices of children and adult learners.

In the following chapter, I review literature on the diasporic lives of religious communities in the host country to understand their identities, literacy practices and social integration. The findings of the review will be applied to understand how the recruited Hindu minority immigrants from Bangladesh may or may not have different literacy practices and integration success in Canada. Documenting the language and literacy practices of Hindu immigrant families in their everyday life, thus, might shed light on how religious beliefs shape their perspectives of such practices and the processes of integration.

Chapter 3.

Literature Review

In this research study, I adopt a critical lens toward issues of diaspora, multiliteracies, identity and integration to understand how diasporic communities' religious practices may relate to their literacy practices and social integration. My objective is to account for the social complexities of multilingualism and multiple literacies as social practices and resources (Dervin, Gajardo, & Lavanchy, 2011; Grosjean, 2010; Herdina & Jessner, 2002; Migge & Léglise, 2012; Sarkar & Low, 2012; Street, 2003). From multiple theoretical perspectives as discussed below, I specifically aim to understand how and why the recruited members of the Bangladeshi Hindu immigrant community in Toronto perceive and use their religious, multilingual literacy resources in their everyday lives to integrate into Canadian society. In this chapter, I will discuss the key terms and relevant literature of this study - diaspora, immigration, the role of religions in developing diasporic communities, the relationship between religion and culture, and the connection between diaspora identities and literacy practices.

3.1.Diaspora, Migration and Transnationalism

One of the major concepts of this research is the integration of a diasporic community. In this section, I will discuss who constitute a diaspora, how diasporic communities integrate into the host society, and what challenges they may face in their new country to explain why I consider Bangladeshi Hindus a diasporic community in Canada.

Diaspora is commonly understood as groups of ethnic or religious people who are currently living in a land where they did not originate (Vertovec, 1997). Studies on diaspora and transnational communities have been very popular since the 1990s because of the emergence of a new global situation where people from various beliefs, religions and ethnicities live and work in the same vicinity in a foreign land (Bauböck & Faist, 2010). The term diaspora was initially linked to the Jewish population who experienced

forced deportation from their historical homeland, and subsequently from other lands. According to Vertovec (1997), academics and socio-cultural researchers study diaspora as a “social form, type of consciousness and mode of cultural reproduction” (p. 278). By diaspora, Baumann (2000) refers to dispersed immigrant groups who maintain their geographical and historical ties with their homeland and community while living in a foreign land. Geographical ties with their homeland are maintained through their extended family members who still live in their ancestral homes. Some of them may keep close connections with family in their homeland by using the internet, particularly, social media. Many first-generation immigrants read newspapers that are published in their mother tongue in their homeland and the host country. They may use various apps, such as imo, WhatsApp, and Skype to connect to their family and friends back home. Members of a diaspora also maintain historical ties by celebrating and remembering major cultural events, notably as a religious minority group.

For Bauman (2000), members of diasporic communities differ from other transient groups in the fact that they live in or around their community and maintain their ancestral social and religious customs. Many people under a diaspora banner live in a neighborhood where they would find people who have shared experiences and who celebrate the same historical and religious events. Diasporic communities develop organizational settings, and religious institutions such as temples and mosques to be in touch with members of their own communities (Cohen, 1995, 1997). Vertovec (1997) gives the example of South Asian religious groups in the UK who remain involved in political and financial negotiations and cooperation with parties in their homelands as well as influential lobbying groups in their new land to patronize like-minded religious and political groups. Members of a diasporic community may live between “loss and hope” (Clifford, 1994, p. 312). In this regard, Cohen (1997) argues that “identification with a diaspora serves to bridge the gap between the local and the global” (p. 516). It may also help minority communities who were subject to persecution “be active in human rights and social justice” (Cohen, 1995, p. 13) in their new country.

Diasporic communities are also considered to be a mode of cultural reproduction of transnational communities (Vertovec, 1997). Hall (1990), however, argues that we

should not categorize diaspora as ethnic enclaves or in terms of ethnicity: the identities of diasporic communities are multiple and changing. For Hall, “Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (p. 235). By “producing and reproducing themselves,” Hall argues, members of a diasporic community take up their identity positions according to the needs of the contexts. However, their identity positions are not static; rather, they are fluid – constantly changing to serve their purposes: sometimes, they align with religious groups, at other times, they may participate in activities that are associated with the mainstream culture. In this context, the study of the literacy practices and integration process of the Hindu diaspora from Bangladesh should illuminate detailed structural, institutional, familial and social components of integration.

Critiquing Putnam (2000) who says that religious diaspora may weaken social cohesion, Hopkins (2011) argues that religion may work as social capital for diasporic communities. She, for example, reports how female Muslim activists in the UK developed self-confidence through their interaction and arguments with conservative Muslims and non-Muslim mainstream political establishments. Religion for them, according to Hopkins, works as a resource to develop relationships with the mainstream culture or group and other inter-groups.

Based on the above discussion three major features of diasporic communities are evident among Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants. First, many of these immigrants have been subject to discrimination, torture, and displacement in Bangladesh (Halder, 2012) as studies identify these as major reasons why Hindus leave Bangladesh (Raghaban, 2013; Riaz, 2010; Guhathakurata, 2012). Thus, their identities are related to the socio-political and religious context of Bangladesh. Second, like other diasporic communities, Hindu immigrants in Canada have been observed to maintain geographical and historical ties with their home country while maintaining social and religious affiliation (Halder, 2012). Halder discusses how Bangladeshi diasporic communities, including Hindus, negotiate these multiple identities through everyday practices. Next, Bangladeshi Hindus also develop an organizational setting in Canada, as Halder observes in his study that they develop social networking based on Bangladeshi Hindu temples. Yet, it is noteworthy

that the aim of this discussion is not to generalize the identity categories for all Bangladeshi Hindus in Canada. Instead, I explore how understanding of the diasporic living of this community may inform on-going studies on immigration, diaspora and transnationalism.

Diasporic communities are sometimes referred to as ethnic diaspora or transnational communities. By transnationalism, researchers refer to cross-border human mobility and their social, political, economic and ideological affiliation with people and organizations in their homeland and new society. The term *transnational* was first used by Bourne (1916) to refer to people who came to America for work, study, and business. He described those transnational people as having dual loyalties, such as their homeland and America, as an asset to build an *international* America. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) report how transnational communities build and keep connection between home and host societies. With specific focus on migration and transnationalism, Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt (1999) propose research on “occupation and activities that require sustained and regular social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation” (p. 219). However, their emphasis on quantitative approaches to explore migrants’ distinct activities do not provide a clear picture of why they maintain ethnic and religious ties with their ancestral home; neither does it demonstrate how they use their ethnic and/or religious resources. As there are significant differences in the daily life trajectories of transnational communities in terms of their religious, educational, social, historical and ideological backgrounds, “in-depth and comparative empirical studies of transnational human mobility, communication, social ties, channels and flows of money, commodities, information, and images – as well as how these phenomena are made use of” (Vertovec, 1999, p. 456) can provide effective information for immigrant integration and social ties.

Marcus (1995) proposes ethnographic studies of transnational diaspora in various sites to document daily life trajectories, histories, biographies, and contested public or political issues. Waldigner (2013) says that studies on transnationalism should also look into the “prevalence, persistence and variation by gender, social class, place of origin, type of migration of each form of cross-border involvement” (p. 770). Davies (2000) informs that “diaspora stand out as one of the ‘awkward’ collective identities [in a nation

state] which are ‘neither here nor there’, which may “further engender group cohesion and a sense of difference within the host society” (p. 26). My study will contribute to such understanding of alienation in the participants’ lives, hence providing analysis of how they negotiate the sense of alienation through their religious identities, language and literacy practices. This will also contribute to the understanding of their views and practices that they may use to gain access to, and/or voice their opinions about social values and political system in Canada. Aspects of separation from most of the mainstream social and cultural practices for the recruited participants do not necessarily hinder their integration to the host society; rather, their sense of belonging to the host society may increase due in part to the freedom of religious practices. The bond between the members also tightens as they come closer through their religious community practices and through sharing their experiences of discrimination in their homeland.

3.2. The Role of Religions in Diasporic Communities

Following Knott (2009), in this study, I adopt religion as an ideological perspective on social and familial issues in a specific historical context. Some scholars, in the fields of sociology and philosophy, argue that religions and cultures are sometimes very much inter-related, and that the term *culture* should be used instead of religion when talking about specific daily-life practices of a specific group of people. For Hinnells (2005), however, the term *religions* should not be replaced by *cultures* as different religious groups within the same culture might have various ways of interpreting their ways of life based on their religious backgrounds. Hence, many intra-groups can co-exist in a given religious community. All the believers of a religion do not practice or follow their scripted guidelines in the same way.

Religion, culture, and identity seem to be an integral part of human history and civilization. Though there have been conflicts and wars in line with ethnicity, religions, and identities (Hinnells, 2005; Hopkins, 2011), the importance of religions and religious education in and outside of schools draws the attention of researchers in liberal democracies, especially in multilingual societies (Jackson, 2014a, 2014b). With the reality of growing migration and the emergence of intercultural/multicultural Western

cities, there has been a growing call to study religious views in identity formation and education in order to build a society where members of various religious and ethnic groups will respect each other. For this research study, I have focused on Jackson's (2011, 2014a, 2014b) religious education for plural societies and van der Veer's (2002) study of South Asian religious groups and their national and international associations. As this research study focuses on exploring daily life trajectories of a South Asian religious community, understanding the influence of religion in identity formation for this community is essential. Van der Veer (2002) says "religion is one of the defining elements in the politics of belonging and identity in modern South Asia" (p. 7). He suggests that studying the role of religions in identity formation among South Asians would provide effective information to understand the psyche of these people. Likewise, Jackson (2014a) argues that researchers should document the relationship between personal identity, social identity and the identities of others to see how a plural and diverse society emerges (p.1). Regarding these perspectives, the role of religious consciousness in the participants' lives in this study has been documented as the identities of Bangladeshi Hindus in Canada have, at least partially, been influenced by their religious minority experiences in Bangladesh (see chapter 2).

3.3. Immigration and Diasporic Communities

Diaspora members use religion and religious affiliations to (re)construct collective and personal identities in ethnic migrant communities and as resources for integration in host societies (Vertovec, 2008). My study partly sheds light on the understudied Bangladeshi Hindu minority in Canada as a lens to interrogate the structuring role of religion in shaping the experience of settlement and identity, and how, in turn, the experience of migration and settlement transforms religious relationships, affiliations, linguistic identities, literacy practices, and the diasporic imagination of selves that produce locality (Appadurai, 2010).

Almost one-fourth of the total population of Canada today is foreign-born. The number of immigrants from Bangladesh increased by 110% between 2001 and 2011, and is constantly rising (Statistics Canada, 2016). About 90% of them identify as Muslims,

and close to 70% of them live in the Greater Toronto Area. Bangladeshi families tend to cluster in close-knit communities, highly mobilized around various community associations, and treat religion as a performance of “diasporic non-territorial form of essentialized belonging” (Alexander et al., 2015, p. 19). To explore the religious aspects of diasporic experience (Vertovec, 2008), my study gives voice to participants, their family histories and personal lives while accounting for how these intersect with transnational and local contexts. The transformative affiliations of members of a diaspora may fuel diasporic consciousness and participants’ sense of belonging as symbolic, emotional and imaginative resonances (Alexander et al., 2015). Alexander et al. (2015) conducted an extensive historical analysis of how Bengali Muslims became a diaspora; in doing this, they also investigated the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in the Bengal Delta and its consequences relating to mobility and immobility in the past and present.

Boyarin (2015) explains that diaspora identity formation is very complicated and fluid. All diaspora population may not have the shared experiences of torture and trauma from their native countries; however, they may develop very similar group identity based on their religious affiliation. The behavior of diasporic communities should not be generalized; there might be numerous members of religious-based communities who may not affiliate with their religions or religious group behavior or attitudes. For example, Iranian diaspora in London, Sydney, and Vancouver appear to have developed multiple identities and affiliations that are not particularly religion-based (McAuliffe, 2016). However, as discussed above, because of the minority-living experiences of Bangladeshi Hindus in Bangladesh where many Hindu communities experience social and political violence based on religious differences, religion plays a very important role in this community even though not everyone practices religion in their daily lives.

Boyarin (2015) suggests that diasporic identity is hybrid and continuously being made and remade. On the other hand, Habib (2004) says that diaspora, with a reference to the belief of North American and European Jews who believe Israel is their homeland, is “...not a geographical location but rather...a practiced relationship to homeland’ (p. 10). She argues that North American Jewish people will continue believing Israel is their

homeland even though they would never live there permanently or even visit Israel often. The same might be true of many diasporic groups who are living in foreign lands to avoid discrimination and persecution in their homeland. Though these groups do not live in their homeland, one of their daily life activities is centered around learning about their homeland and the well-being of their relatives back home. My study partly focuses on the daily life trajectories of the recruited participants to look into how much they are engaged in discussion about their religions, religious identities and imagined homeland/hostland.

Within diasporic communities, parents' religions might shape the identity of young immigrants. In their study with 1.5 and second-generation immigrants in Israel, Zubida, Lavi, Harper, Nakash and Shoshani (2013) reported that both generations overwhelmingly identify themselves with the religions of their parents. The researchers examined the role of social structures, such as culture, religion and language in identity formation of the selected adolescents. With the conceptual framework of De La Rosa (2002), the researchers concluded that identity formation is a continuous process, and the religion and language of their parents' origins play a very significant role in these youth's identity formation. De La Rosa (2002) argues that there are four types of identity positions that immigrants can take: neither here nor there; here and not there; there and not here, both here and there. The findings of the study by Zubida et al. (2013) indicate that adolescent 1.5 and generation 2 immigrants are closely associated with religious and linguistic organizations of their parents' origins. Miedema (2014) suggests incorporating religions and worldviews as part of curriculum and public debates so that people in general and students in particular can form their identities in relation to their religions and other world views. He points to three reasons to talk about religions in identity formation: one, to create an open public space for discussion about religions and worldviews; two, to help students develop their identities in relation to their religious views and world views; three, to use religions as a tool to form identities in relation to world views. He recommends that educators and policymakers should foster discussion on religious and world views to help students form their identities. My study also informs how generation 1.5 and 2 immigrants among the recruited participants fasten, unfasten, and refasten their identities in regard to their religion.

Appadurai (1995) argues that it is important to initiate multiple anthropological studies to determine the identity formation of some “trans-local” (p. 204) communities who are “deterritorialized” (p. 213). Clifford (1994) says that members of diaspora who maintain very close connection to their home country and culture may form identities that may counteract the political and social culture and organizations of the host nations. Van Dijk (1997), however, reports that Ghanaian Pentecostal immigrants develop their sense of belonging in the Netherlands by using their religious views and associations. While Ysseldyk, Matheson and Anisman (2010) state that strong religious identities may result in intergroup hostilities, studies such as Randhawa and Neuberger (2016) report how various South Asian religious communities, such as Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Christians were engaged in dialogues for community services such as organ donation. Churches, gurudwaras, temples and mosques were used to develop consciousness about organ donation.

Considering such roles of religions, the international human rights organization the Council of Europe (2008) recommends that religious education should be imparted to all students to encourage democratic citizenship and respectful coexistence of different religious and ethnic communities. Jackson (2014a, 2014b) reports how religious education can help build a respectful society in the context of diverse religious groups in schools. He also argues that there might be some pupils, parents, and teachers who might not feel comfortable to provide impartial religious education; the significance and relevance of having dialogues has never been more important than post-9/11. Documenting how the state and Muslim diaspora in Finland came to an agreement to work together for the betterment of the society, Martikainen (2007) says that the approach to develop mutual understanding between religious communities in Finland taken by the state has helped Muslim communities in the process of integration. He reports how inter-religious dialogue in public and private domains made the negotiation between the State and religions possible in the wake of the 9/11 attack and of recent widespread immigration and human mobility, particularly from the troubled Middle East and Africa. Garnett and Hausner (2015) stress the need for more empirical studies to document diaspora living in this ever-changing world to build a more caring and respectful society for multiethnic, multicultural, and multi-religious people who are living

in metropolitan cities in the Western world. My research contributes to this line of research by documenting the religious and linguistic identity negotiations of the Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora in the process of their social integration.

3.4. How Do Religions Interact with Cultures?

In this section, I will discuss how religions and cultures are “part of an intricate network” of meaning-making (Hinnells, 2005, p. 7). Dawson (2013) defines culture as an “...organized way of life which is based on a common tradition and conditioned by an environment” (p. 35). He further explains that a culture cannot and should not be determined by the race and ethnicity of a particular group of people though there are many cultures that are race based. He also argues that religions cannot be seen as a separate entity from culture. Dawson says, “...the relation between religion and culture is always a two-sided one. The way of life influences the approach to religion and religious attitudes influence the way of life” (p. 70). With the example of Islam, Dawson reports how various races and cultural communities embrace Islam and how Islam has become a part of those cultures. In this research, I have observed that both religion and ethno-racial culture are intertwined with the identity formation of the recruited participants.

The relationship between culture and religion is sometimes inherent and sometimes contradictory. Beyer and Beaman (2014) state that few researchers discuss religion when they study globalization and its influence on culture and civilization. The authors note, "Like capitalism and the nation-state, religion and religiousness are an integral aspect of whatever we mean by globalization . . . and have been since its inception, wherever and whenever this is located" (p. 5). Cohen and Belzen state, “...religion is inherently cultural in nature” (as cited in Cohen, Wu & Miller, 2016, p. 1). Cohen, Wu and Miller (2016) analyze how Eastern and Western religions are interconnected. By contrasting what they see as traditional collective social and religious culture of the Eastern countries with mostly individualistic Western culture and religious views, they report how Chinese and South Koreans are converting to Christianity and how many Westerners still feel affiliated with their ethnicity, culture and religious groups though they are not inherently religious. The authors further illustrate that the study of

culture and religion is very important to understand the psychology of various peoples. Though these researchers find a very close relationship between religion and culture, it could be fluid and complex. For example, my research participants hold traditional Bangladeshi culture with very distinct Hindu identity. Though their religion is a part of their culture, they cannot be identified as individuals holding Bangladeshi culture as the culture of majority Bangladeshis is oriented towards their Muslim identity. As my research study revolves around documenting daily life trajectories of a South Asian diasporic community, it is significant to explore how the recruited participants use their religion and religiousness to integrate into the host country. This study will help clarify what collective or individualistic cultural and religious ways of life the participating members follow, and how they use their tradition, culture and religion to adapt to the new society.

3.5. Religion as Social Capital

One of the theoretical concepts that informs this study is Vertovec's (2008) analysis of how diasporic communities use religion to socialize and expand their network in the host country. Using this conceptual framework, Hopkins (2011) argues that religious groups may form identities which might help them integrate into the host society. His research on some recruited Muslim activists in England shows that religious affiliations helped his recruited participants to expand their social network in the host society. He argues that the widespread intra-group works as 'social capital' for the participants' sustainable development. Hopkins (2011) suggests that "this social capital can take various forms: 'bonding' capital typically refers to the close relationships between people within close-knit groups; 'bridging' capital to connections between such groups; 'linking' capital to relationships cutting vertically through status hierarchies" (p. 530). In Putnam's (2000) words: "whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 19). Social networking through religious ties as such has been observed in Hindu communities in Toronto (Halder, 2012). Halder reports how Hindu

parents in his study engaged their children in cultural activities organized by Bangladeshi Hindu temples that were also places for social gatherings for Hindus in the area.

Some believe societal diversity impacts social capital so as to undermine social cohesion (Putnam, 2007). Some scholars are wary that religion as social capital is creating inter-group tensions undermining social cohesion. It has been reported in Europe that it is quite challenging to accommodate multicultural and multireligious perspectives in dominant school systems (Bander-Szymanski, 2012; Scalvini, 2016). Nonetheless, researchers also suggest that accommodation of bilingual/multilingual learners and multicultural and multireligious people may help promote the integration of newly arrived immigrants (Scalvini, 2016). There are also controversies around how much religious freedom host nations should allow immigrants, notably Muslims (Caldwell, 2009; Meyer, 2011; Scalvini, 2013). Hence, it is important to explore whether segregated and concentrated immigrant living creates inter-group tension among religious groups in a liberal democratic country. Through the lens of *religion-as-social-capital*, I argue that accommodation for diversity and religious freedom might encourage immigrants to develop a sense of belonging toward the host nation; however, excessive freedom to practice and preach an ideology that may widen inter-group distance would be counterproductive to nations like Canada.

3.6. The Relationship Between Religions and Literacy Practices

Although studies on the relationship between religions and literacy practices are not many in number, a few studies suggest how the relationship can be strong, particularly among people of immigrant backgrounds. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) explain how literacy practices of minority language speakers could be multiple. They term the literacy practices that are influenced by ethnic, religious and social backgrounds “multiliteracies.” Some studies also report that religion may have strong influence on literacy development and integration of members in diasporic communities. Daniel and Eunbae (2014), for example, report that three Karen brothers maintained their ethnic and religious friendship within their diasporic community and developed digital literacy to better their living in Canada, while Hones (2001) reports that religion plays an important

role in literacy development of Hmong Christians in Michigan. Some studies, however, show how fundamentalist and conservative religious groups may have comparatively lower scientific literacy than those of secular people (Sarroub, 2002). On the other hand, examples from Sherkat (2011) and Homan (2004) suggest that young children may negotiate and resist their religious identities to engage in secular literacy practices for the purpose of fitting into the dominant culture.

Sarroub (2002) reports that Yemeni immigrant school children in the US negotiate between their Arabic religious text and secular school texts. Adkins (2011) reports that the Amish community in Pennsylvania experienced detrimental effects of the English-only school environment on their religious language that was High German. In a case study, Skerrett (2016) reports that an adolescent developed her religious literacies in relation to secular school texts. She also examines how her recruited participant negotiated her religious identity and literacies within the mainstream secular school practices. Barrett (2009), in his study with some selected Black youth living in extreme poverty in the US, reports that religious involvement and identity positively impact the literacy practices of the recruited participants.

Another qualitative study on the influence of religious affiliations to develop literacies among 59 young learners in the USA reports how learners with strong religious faith develop reading skills through religious texts (Rackley, 2016). The study concludes that the participants not only developed complex reading skills by reading religious texts but also developed some social, personal and practical skills, such as connecting religious knowledge to lives, overcoming stressful times, and being patient. Owodally (2011) reports how multilingual language and literacy practices are informed by religious and social identities of the participants in two Sunni madrassahs in Mauritius. In a study on the participants of a Christian faith-based school and a number of randomly selected Christians, Eakle (2007) maps out the importance of faith-based education that brings people together and helps people to “resist and transform” (p. 478) others’ perspectives. Jensen (2015) reports that religious and cultural literacies play significant roles in shaping knowledge of the participants in a class of American religions. To my knowledge, there is only one set curriculum and instruction to teach elementary school children about

religious differences in Quebec, Canada, as an initiative to promote democratic citizenship for a pluralist society through religious education. The Ethics and Religious Culture program, as part of Quebec Education Program, aims to help students “[construct] their identity, empower them to live and interact in a pluralist society, and construct their world view” (p. 294). The main objectives of the Ethics and Religious Culture program are “[t]he recognition of others and the pursuit of the common good” (p. 296). Quebec’s Ethics and Religious Program is an excellent example of a pedagogical initiative to raise awareness of religious diversity through the introduction of “sacred texts, rituals, teachings, places of worship ...”. The program does not seem to include a historical approach to explain inter-group tension and hostility, nor stories of persecution and trauma through individual story-telling. Evidences of religion-based violence are not rare in history and current geo-political contexts, so incorporation of texts in curricula on how people could be discriminated against, persecuted, and traumatized because of their faiths may help students understand the depth and importance of developing democratic citizenship through religious literacy.

3.7. Multiliteracies and New Literacy Studies

A major concept that is relevant to understanding the language and literacy practices of immigrant adults and children is the pedagogy of multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996). In my study, I investigate the relationship between home and community literacy practices of a religious minority group and their institutional, community and interactional literacy experiences in Toronto. As my research participants are both adults and children from a diasporic immigrant community, learning about their home and community literacy practices appears to be important as they are, very often, labeled as unsuccessful in academic discourse (Gunderson, 2007). The existence of diverse populations in the Western world as a result of immigration and globalization and the influence of technology in people’s daily lives encouraged the New London Group to think about an educational perspective which would be inclusive of learners’ lived experiences (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The main arguments of the New London Group involved using learning materials that are familiar to learners. By *familiar texts*, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) referred to materials that represent the lived experiences of diverse

learners. In addition to familiar texts, they recommend using various technological or visual tools that learners use in their everyday lives. The group argues that traditional modes of educational practices, which only value print literacy, such as reading and writing, need to be changed. Text types such as images, text messages, interactions on social network sites, artistic expression, and other non-verbal modes need to be included in institutional practices as people from diverse social backgrounds use different modes for meaning-making and communication. In a recent interview, Cope and Kalantzis (as cited in Smith, 2017) argue that the importance of multiliteracies in educational practices is greater now than any time before. Cope (as cited in Smith, 2017) argues that the practice of “anti-human teaching” should be abandoned. By anti-human, he means rule-bound, norm-focused teaching and learning. He suggests that:

Rather than learn the rules, you learn the processes of re-application in every context where the learner is a transformative agent in the process. One of the consequences of that is that every text that is constructed is actually always new. And when text is always new, it expresses individual interest and identity. (as cited in Smith, 2017, p. 10)

To illustrate Cope’s idea, Kalantzis (as cited in Smith, 2017) argues that mainstream teaching and learning do not represent human ways of learning. She explains “Let’s consider that when a child is born they look, they touch, they feel. They are multimodal; that’s how they make meaning. And what do we do to them? We put them in school and as they go through the grades we strip all that out” (as cited in Smith, 2017, p.10). She added that by doing so, we follow an “anti-human” and “anti-meaning making” process to educate our students. Instead of teaching how to reproduce literacies, educators need to engage learners to experience “the known and the new,” to conceptualize the theory/content by critically examining its form, to analyze the concepts “functionally and critically,” and to apply learning “appropriately and creatively” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 187).

3.8. New Literacy Studies: Home and School Literacy

My study is informed by the pedagogy of multiliteracies that takes learners’ lived experiences into account and is closely connected to the approach of New Literacy

Studies (NLS). NLS (Gee, 1996; Street, 1984, 2006) came to theory and practice in the wake of sociocultural approaches to literacy research in different parts of the world, particularly in Europe and the US. Literacy had been primarily considered to compose a set of cognitive skills learned in institutional settings with the help of teachers. Sociolinguistic and sociocultural studies of literacy, on the other hand, focus on learners' social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Cummins, 2000; Toohey, 2000) and out-of-school literacy practices (Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Street, 2003). I am particularly interested in the ways in which the educational perspectives of NLS may help minority learners engage in public, community and economic life. NLS may give hope to visible minority learners who may experience isolation and shame, and consequently, become underachievers in educational and/or employment settings if their linguistic and cultural practices are devalued.

Street's (2000, 2003) argument on learners' out-of-school literacy practices and literacy events is relevant to my research because he emphasizes that the practices should be documented and examined from a social perspective that provides *meaning* and *effects* to them. This perspective will help me understand how social practice "provides a way of making sense of variations in the uses and meanings of literacy" (p. 23). By explaining *literacy events* as situations to document what and how people read and write in everyday contexts, he argues that the reports of literacy events might look like mere description. Rather, he finds *literacy practices* to be a real concept as it looks into the social and cultural perspective of literacy events and "patterns of activity" (Street, 2003, p. 21). Using ethnographic literacy data collected from Persian villages, he states that "social practices are deeply associated with identity and social position" (Street, 2003, p. 23). One of his studies highlights how less skilled and religiously educated people were able to get jobs because they had more respect and trust in villages than commercial education students, which is why they were trustworthy to village people to do business with.

With the emergence of critical discussions of NLS, Street (2003) addresses some of the limitations and practical implications of this *new* approach. In this study, I adopt Street's definition of literacy as "a social practice" (p. 77) because this concept relates literacy to learners' cultural, traditional, social and religious beliefs. This also sheds light

on how Westernized institutional approaches to teaching literacy, which Street terms an *autonomous model*, may appear counterproductive or destructive to the culture, tradition and beliefs of multilingual learners in various contexts. In this regard, research reports that the autonomous model of literacy has devalued aboriginal languages and cultures in Canada and Australia (Hare, 2005; Nakata, 2000) in terms of power relations and language use.

Street (2003) emphasizes an “ideological model” (p. 77) of literacy, which is an inclusive and integrated approach to incorporating learners’ home, cultural and community literacy practices. The two major critiques against NLS, according to Street, are the limitations of the local and the reliability of ethnographic research findings. To answer some of those concerns, Street (2003) states that there might be some gaps in bridging home and school literacy practices. He cites Muspratt, Luke and Freebody, who report that inclusion of out-of-school literacy practices in curricula and assessment have helped tremendously in educating Aboriginal communities in Queensland, Australia. He himself (cited above) documents how competency in religious literacies has helped his participants gain trust among locals. For my participants, developing religious literacy and expanding social networks in line with their religious affiliations, seemed to have bolstered their integration experience in general and labour market integration in particular. Thus, following Street, in my study, I investigate what, why and how minority learners in their home, cultural, and community environments develop literacy.

3.9. Limitations of NLS

Though there are some limitations of NLS, the implementation of the concept should be seen as effective for minority language speakers. Some of the challenges to NLS were critically addressed by Carrington and Luke (1997) who call for a broader understanding of diverse literacy phenomena by community, politicians and private stakeholders. They discuss Bourdieu’s sociological model of literacy in terms of “literacy-in-use within the social world, and of the particular field specific functions and local consequences of literacy” (p.100) rather than literacy in terms of individual success. By explaining Bourdieu’s *practice* (everyday social interactions), *fields* (contexts of

interactions determined by the power structure), and *habitus* (physical and psychological dispositions of individuals within their social environment), they have proposed a detailed model of Bourdieu's conceptualization of *capital*, which tends to play the most important role in an individual's growth in a society. The three main branches of their capital model are: cultural, economic and social. By cultural, they refer to institutional and culture-specific rules and behaviors; by economic, they mean the financial distribution of goods and property; and, by social, they indicate symbolic and linguistic representation of social interactions. The authors suggest a public pedagogy so that different social, community and private stakeholders become aware of the existence of various ethnic and cultural literacy practices in the society.

van Enk, Dagenais and Toohey (2005) also shed light on out-of-school literacy practices and their possible inclusion in the school curriculum. By referring to Brandt and Clinton, who critique the limitation of social, cultural and linguistic resources of various locals and the use of ethnography as subjective narratives, van Enk et al. (2005) state that literacy is shaped by historical and traditional influences and shared by people in social practices. The authors argue that there might be some limitations of out-of-school social and community practices, but they cannot be ignored. They also believe that solely promoting out-of-school literacy events and practices may create chaos; rather, they suggest schools should develop learning materials that include home and community literacy practices and texts of diverse learners and the social and cultural texts of the mainstream society. They further emphasize the need for more studies on school literacy practices. This, in turn, according to the authors, will give more opportunities to look for approaches, materials and techniques effective for literacy development that eventually will give non-mainstream students a 'safe' classroom to have their voices heard. In my study, I have collected and analyzed data that are related to the daily life conversation and practices of the recruited participants. After analyzing the importance and effectiveness of the everyday literacy practices of the recruited participants, I focus on the common expectation and goals of the participants that can be enhanced by school practices.

The above theoretical perspectives help us understand minority learners' interests, strategies, and techniques of learning. Practices of incorporating multilingual and

multicultural resources in classroom settings are called *inclusive practice*. Anderson, Smythe and Shapirro (2005) look into how family literacy initiatives may help the literacy development of children. In their study in two inner-city schools in Vancouver, they report that some parents found school initiatives of literacy practices, such as, bedtime storytelling, nurse-instructed guidance of how to take care of babies, contradictory and sometimes ineffective in relation to their social, practical and traditional literacy experiences. For example, reading story books to children appears to be a disconnected practice to some parents as storytelling rather than story-reading would be the cultural practice in their household. Another example was a lecture given by a nurse on good practice for rearing children. The instructions or ways prescribed by the nurse did not appear to be practical to most parents as some could not look after their children always (the nurse said they had to), and some were very busy making ends meet. Such cultural disconnects tend to be significant in terms of parents' inclusion in their children's literacy. Although the two schools involved in the study did not provide the same data, the findings suggest that incorporating intercultural and interreligious texts in schools is essential for sound academic development of minority school children. Using the above perspectives, the collected data of this study report how the recruited participants negotiate their identities and traditional literacy practices, and how they use religious affiliation to develop a sense of belonging in the host society.

My ethnographic study may help identify resources that members of the Bangladeshi Hindu community employ for their personal and social affiliations within the host society. For example, stories from Hindu religious scriptures such as Ramayana and Mahabharata are part of everyday reading habits for many Bangladeshi Hindus. I have also observed that some of these families share stories about their past minority experiences with their children at home. These texts - oral and written - are powerful sources of their home literacy practices that may have strong influences on children's school literacies.

3.10. Multilingualism and Biliteracy

Edwards (2007) describes multilingualism as “a powerful fact of life around the world, a circumstance arising, at the simplest level, from the need to communicate across speech communities” (p. 447) while Cenoz (2009) considers multilingual contexts as “individual and social phenomena” (p. 2). The European Commission defines multilingualism as “the ability of societies, institutions, groups, and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007, p. 6). Recognizing the existence of multilingual communities as resources, the Commission of the European Communities (2005) states:

It is the diversity that makes the European Union what it is: not a melting pot in which differences are rendered down, but a common home in which diversity is celebrated, and where our many mother tongues are a source of wealth and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding. (p. 2)

The main aim of multilingualism researchers is to document what ethnolinguistic minority people do while communicating in different languages in different social contexts (Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000). Martin-Jones and Jones argue for the need and importance of conducting studies on literacy practices of minority language speakers because “[t]he home-school boundary is frequently a site of struggle over linguistic and cultural rights” (pp. 1-2) in multilingual settings like Britain.

In my study, I adopt Hornberger’s (2003) perspective to literacy practices in multilingual contexts because she emphasizes how the language and literacy practices in multilingual contexts are complex, as people speak not only different languages but also their own varieties. It has also been reported that many people use different spoken and written languages based on contextual needs (Blackledge, 2006). Martin-Jones and Gardner (2012) identify two recent approaches to study multilingualism: one is to document “social, cultural and linguistic changes ushered in by globalization, by transnational population flows” and another is “critical and poststructuralist perspectives on social lives” (p. 1). The first approach has been drawn on in various literacy studies. Heller (2006), in her ethnographic study in a French high school in Toronto, reports that

French language speakers shift from their traditional ethnic and linguistic identity positions to communities of economic participation and citizenship. She shows how legitimacy and authenticity of language use change in a hyper-modern world characterized by the global flow of people and money. Heller reports how marginalized multilingual people such as speakers of French vernaculars from Quebec and French-colonized Haiti can also occupy positions through the use of linguistic and social space that have often been held by majority bilingual people. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) report that individuals take agentive roles to change their condition while giving up their traditional identities if those are undesirable in a given context. Blackledge and Creese (2010), similarly, show how minority speakers become successful with their linguistic resources that are mobilized by social agents, such as school teachers who help children develop literacy through bilingual practices. From this perspective, I find learning about literacy practices and identities of a multilingual diaspora invaluable, as it provides new insights to learning about the agentive actions and identity formation and negotiation of the Bangladeshi Hindu religious minority who experienced discrimination and trauma in their home country. In my data analysis chapters, I will present data that are pertinent to these theories of bilingual education and its probable connection to the recruited participants' language practices within their own community and in Canada, in general.

Following Hornberger (2000, 2003) and Ruiz (1984), one of the major concepts within a multilingual approach to language education, I adopt in this study is the *language-as-resource-orientation*. Hornberger (2003) proposes a Continuum of Biliteracy framework, which has been widely used and criticized in the field of language and literacy education throughout the world in the last few decades. Hornberger (1989) argues through her extensive literature review on literacy, bilingualism and language education practices around the world that minority or bi/multilingual learners' academic performance will be enhanced if school literacy practices accommodate continua between mono and bilingualism, oral and written languages, first and second language use, and micro and macro social practices. Rather than identifying bilingual and literacy educational practices as "polar opposites such as first versus second languages (L1 and L2), monolingual versus bilingual individuals, or oral versus literate societies" (Hornberger, 1989, p. 273), Hornberger (2003) depicts biliteracy as continua of all these

aforementioned dimensions while emphasizing their interrelations and the fact that they extend across *contexts, media, time and space* (p. 273). The figures below are used in this study with permission from Dr. Nancy Hornberger.

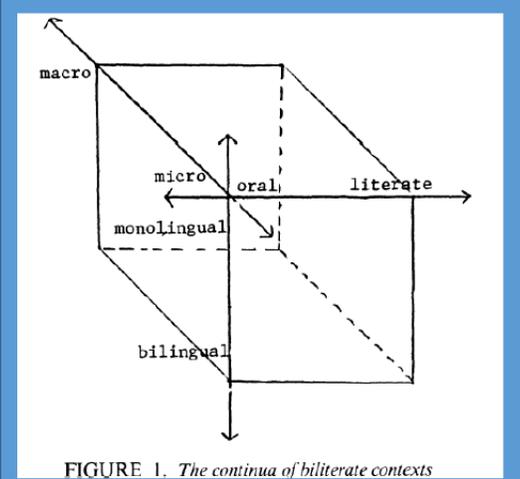


FIGURE 1. *The continua of biliterate contexts*

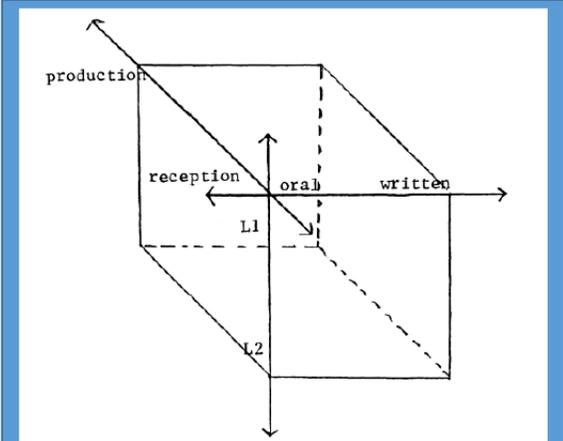


FIGURE 2. *The continua of biliterate development in the individual*

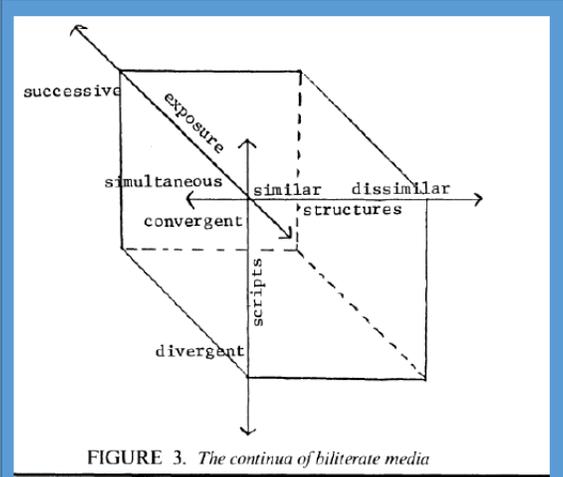


FIGURE 3. *The continua of biliterate media*

(Hornberger, 1989, p. 273-274)

Figure 1. Hornberger's Continua of Biliteracy Framework

The above figures depict Hornberger's framework of continua, which looks like rectangular boxes where lines of continua of differences crisscross; however, the lines do not stop at the corners of the figures. To me, they appear to be extending towards their unlimited advancement and opportunities. I find the continua of biliteracy theory very relevant to my study seeking to understand how and why my research participants may or may not use their multilingual and multiple literacy practices and how their religions may relate to these practices. I, however, argue, that the continua of biliteracy could be very challenging to implement if parents of minority children do not see any benefits of using their mother tongues in school. The continua framework would be of little use if immigrant languages are devalued in public spaces and the labor market.

The challenge to following the continua framework might be most profound in the mainstream public school. Hornberger (2000, 2003) argues that language and literacy practices of multilingual people follow a "continua of features," which include a continuum between mono and bilingual, L1 and L2, literate and oral, and so forth. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) argue that educators ought to consider "social possibilities" (p. 12) of everyday trajectories of new people, particularly young adults, while designing curriculum. Early (2005) suggests we follow pedagogical techniques based on the multimodal and multimediated ways with which diverse people lead their lives. As religion was overlooked in documenting minority literacy practices of immigrants in Western countries, the overall picture of community literacy practices of diasporic communities seemed to be partially presented. I believe that the reports on minority multilingual literacy practices (Cummins, 2000; Giampapa, 2010) seem to be incomplete, as they underreport religious practices, and often try to be politically correct by putting those data under a cultural heading. There are many diasporic communities in Toronto whose literacy practices could be very different from those of the mainstream school-based literacy. With a picture of how religions and religious practices influence literacy practices of diaspora, curriculum developers will be able to understand what texts and practices they can incorporate to help the most students in classes.

For Heller and Martin-Jones, educational institutions in the West are more likely to accept linguistic and cultural resources that have power. They argue that discourses

within institutions exclude resources of “social groups who do not possess the right forms of capital and literacy resources” (as cited in Giampapa, 2010, p. 409). Immigrants’ native languages are among the devalued resources in mainstream educational systems. Lack of linguistic competence in the majority language is one of the major challenges that immigrants, particularly adults, face in integration. Children of immigrant families may also experience dilemma with regards to using their mother tongues in various formal or informal contexts, such as in schools and parks. In a quantitative study with 22 respondents (school principals, teachers, staff and students) at two Quebec secondary schools, Bakhshaei (2013) reports that children of South Asian origin have been losing out in terms of developing academic performance and language proficiency. Bakhshaei argues that French language school system is devaluing the linguistic repertoire of students of South Asian backgrounds who learn French as a third language after their mother tongue and English. These students are, sometimes, labelled as “under-educated” (p. 87) as they do not perform well in French. Many of them either dropout from the education system, or they move to English-medium provinces. The major challenge to fill in the gap, as Bakhshaei suggests, is the need to develop a relationship between the school authorities and parents of South Asian backgrounds by various means, such as parenting instructions in various languages. Bakhshaei, Georgiou and Mc Andrew (2016) claim that the Quebec education system, which focus on French language instruction, fails to accommodate students from South Asian backgrounds, a particularly vulnerable group in terms school dropouts and lower integration ratio. As the research participants for this study are intergenerational, I have discussed literature that reports language, literacy, and integration practices of immigrant adults and children. In this setting, we cannot ignore the religious, social, racial, and cultural baggage today’s learners bring into classrooms. We need to know what they are doing, how, and why so that we can address their needs by creating critical discussion.

3.11. Hybrid Identities among Multilingual People

One relevant area of research for my study is the poststructuralist approach to hybrid identity formation among multilingual people. Critiquing Ortiz’s explanation of transculturation as a process of abandoning one culture to gain membership of another,

Kumaravadivelu (2008) sees cultural hybridity, or hybrid identities as a form of expanded transculturation, considering the daily life trajectories of multilingual and multicultural people. For Hall (2000), hybridity “neither remains within one boundary, nor transcends boundaries” (p. 226). He exemplifies how a Muslim student in Britain wears “baggy, hip-hop, street-style jeans, but is never absent from Friday prayers” (p.226). This idea can help us understand how religious identities of Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants in Toronto may interplay with other subject positions, and how and why they play those roles, particularly with regards to language and literacy practices.

Blommaert and Velghe (2014) argue that people do not learn a language; rather, they learn “specific and specialized bits of language sufficient to grant them voice” (p. 137). Gaining this voice does not seem to be easy because learners may experience a struggle between present selves and their alter egos (Kramsch, 2011). This struggle is between the identity of learners in relation to their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and an imagined identity of the host nation in terms of its culture and language. Learners may feel that their language and culture do not hold any value in the host country, and they are forced to learn the language of the powerful. Kramsch also states that learning a language does not only refer to attaining a communicative competence, but it also requires the ability to act and speak like *Others* as a language comes with its “social, historical and cultural existence” (p. 26). To make their voices heard, foreign language learners are expected to speak like *Others* to avoid oppressive subject positioning. When people try to *insert* and *internalize* the dominant discourse (Weedon, 2004), they are considered successful subjects in a particular discourse community. Weedon (2004) also says that minority language speakers may suffer from *disidentification* if they fail to adapt to dominant discourse. Weedon (2004), in a similar vein, states that “identity is made visible and intelligible to others through cultural signs, symbols and practices” (p. 7). For instance, gays and lesbians, use “common signs and symbols” (p. 7) to signify their different voices from heterosexuals. Norton (2000) writes that *voice* has a political and subjective identity in terms of speaking about the self with confidence. She explains how her research participant Martina, after taking an ESL course, argues with her landlord over the landlord’s unethical contract proposal. This was possible, according to Norton (2000), because of Martina’s “sense of self” (p. 124) in relation to the outside world

which was dominating. Martina took on her identity position as a mother that enabled her to speak the target language. Identity to language learners seems to be a very complex issue as it is multiple, changing, and *a site of struggle* (Norton, 2000). From the above perspectives, the identity positions taken on by my study participants may also be negotiated within specific social contexts.

To understand the multiple voices of language users and their identity positions, we need to understand the poststructuralist notion of language learning. Bakhtin (1981) focused on the performance of language use in various social situations. Language is seen as the point of struggle of participating in the speech community (the target language community for foreign language learners). This discards the notion of performance in a particular language as a sign of developing competence in a set of rules of a language; rather, it deals with the struggle, negotiation of identities, and successes in using a language with its variation and deviation in social contexts. Bourdieu (1977) took this poststructuralist idea of language as reflecting a position of power and politics, emphasizing that the dominant culture and linguistic practices define and accord value to speakers' utterances. Foreign language learners may experience situations when their utterances would be categorized as "legitimate" or "illegitimate" based on the power structure of the dominant society (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648). Heller (2006) argues that minority people enjoy rights to use meaningful resources if their language, culture and traditions gain acceptance by the dominant social practices. If the dominant language and culture reject the linguistic and cultural resources of minority learners, this may lead to unequal distribution of power and resources between the dominant and minority language speakers. When the linguistic and cultural resources of the minority language speakers are not accepted, they cannot compete with the dominant language speakers on a level-playing field. As a result, the status and resources are not equally shared by the dominant and minority language speakers.

According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), language and identity are "mutually constitutive" (p. 24). Thus people, on the one hand, use linguistic resources to construct and negotiate their identities, and on the other, they use linguistic resources to "index their identities" (p.24). These constructions, negotiations, and indexing of

identities using linguistic resources, call for agentive actions on the part of users. By documenting and interpreting data, I aim to analyze how my recruited participants negotiate their hybrid identities, including religion, in the processes of multilingual and multiliteracy practices and how those relate to their affiliation with the host country.

3.12. Multilingual Literacy Practices: Resources for Integration

Multilingualism is an important concept in the literacy practices of immigrants, and I will use this concept to draw on the data that represent the multilingual repertoire of the recruited participants. Minority languages and cultures are suggested to be used as resources of orientation by many researchers (Blackledge, 2000; Cummins, 2001; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Hornberger, 2000; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000; Street, 1984, 2000, 2003, 2006). Giampapa (2010) claims that “multilingual and multicultural communities are devalued and peripheral” (p. 410). She claims that the literacy and language practices of the center, which symbolizes mainstream literacy practices, do not include minority languages and cultures that are peripheral. Because minority language speakers are often fewer in number and they do not hold any social or political power, they seem to be discriminated against by powerful language and literacy practices.

In their recommendations for designing European language policy, Castellotti and Moore (2010) argue that schools should incorporate linguistic and cultural resources of the learners from migrant backgrounds. They suggest that the practice of giving voice to the minority languages and cultures stimulates minority learners to perform better in academic life. An example of such empowering activities was found in Prasad (2013) in her ethnographic study of thirteen fifth-graders, some parents, and a teacher in a French immersion school in Toronto Canada. The study suggests that the multilingual children were proud of publishing stories in their home languages. They felt that they were valued as they worked as co-researchers; they also appreciated the research project that respected individual pluralism that students bring in the classroom where the dominant language and cultures were English and French. Initiatives as such, however, require rigorous planning and time. Although Castellotti and Moore (2010) recommend partnering with parents and grandparents to design and deliver pluri-literacy lessons, this may be very

ambitious in a context in which multiple ethnic, linguistic and religious groups gather in a classroom. It may also be very difficult to organize and use religious and cultural texts effectively in a classroom for a short period of time.

3.13. Summary

In the above sections, I have discussed the major concepts that are relevant to understanding the emerging data on Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora in Canada. I have looked into the major theories and their drawbacks to see the interrelations between language, literacy and culture of diasporic communities. This informs my study, as I will show in my *findings chapters*, by providing insights into the language and literacy practices of the members of an underrepresented diaspora in terms of their socio-cultural-historical backgrounds and the effects on their integration and literacy development in Canada.

In this chapter, I have drawn on multiple theories related to religious identities, multilingualism, multiliteracies and identity formation of multilingual communities to understand how language, literacy and culture may be interconnected in regard to the integration of the recruited Bangladeshi Hindus. My discussion in the upcoming findings and discussion chapters will shed light on the educational practices in relation to ethnic and minority community needs in Canada. It is also important to address the negotiation of language, literacy, culture and identity of immigrant children who are at their early stage of literacy development in English-speaking Canada (Roessingh, 2011). The theories will also help explain how my study participants take agentive roles to develop a sense of belonging in Canada, and how their language, culture and literacy practices complement this process of integration.

Chapter 4.

Methodology

My study focuses on the everyday lives of seven Bangladeshi Hindu families (these include several generations of families living together) concentrated in an urban neighborhood in the GTA. In particular, I have documented the multilingual literacy practices, religious affiliations and practices, and processes of integration of the recruited participants in Canada. This chapter discusses the profiles of the recruited participants, data collection methods: interviews, observations, photography, and data analysis approaches: situational analyses, critical discourse analysis, and narrative inquiry.

A previous pilot study I carried out with four adult Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh living in Vancouver in British Columbia informed this current study. I selected the participants for the pilot study through my personal acquaintances. To build rapport with my recruited participants for the pilot study, I invited the participants to my apartment for lunch; they also invited me for dinner. We went to different parks for small walks and shared our common experiences of immigration, integration, literacy practices and the like. However, I was not invited to many family and religious occasions possibly because of our religious differences. For example, they never asked me to go to mosques with them. Therefore, it became clear that working with Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants would only give me a partial picture of their integration and literacy practices in Canada not associated with their religious practices. That is why I decided to refocus my study on Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh. There are three benefits to this approach: a) as a Hindu immigrant myself, I enjoyed the position of an insider that could help me better understand their experiences and practices in Canada and Bangladesh; b) sharing the same religious practices, I could join them when engaged in their traditional and religious programs and practices; c) I would be able to participate fully in their daily activities. All these have helped me better grasp the everyday language and literacy practices of a minority immigrant group who were a minority in their homeland as well, and the effect of these practices on their processes of integration in their new homeland, Canada.

I moved to Toronto from Vancouver for family reasons, and I decided to conduct my research in Toronto. Another reason also triggered my decision to change my research setting: there are very few newly-arrived Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants in Vancouver who I am acquainted with. On the other hand, after arriving in Toronto, I met a Bangladeshi Hindu immigrant I knew from home, and who had been living in Toronto for almost eight years. Some participants were thus recruited through my personal acquaintance, and the others following a process of snow-ball sampling (Creswell, 2013). Snowball sampling refers to recruiting new participants through the previously recruited ones. Some of the participants who I had known before introduced me to their friends.

The reasons why I chose Toronto as my research context are multiple: Toronto is the first choice as a destination to most Bangladeshi immigrants and large Bangladeshi communities can be found in the neighborhoods of the Danforth, Victoria Park, and Mississauga (Halder, 2012; Murdie & Ghosh, 2010). It has also been reported in other studies that ethnic minority immigrants start living in a neighborhood where they find people of their own culture and tradition (Massey & Denton, 1987), and thus Toronto appears to be a very good site for my research with a fast-growing population of Bangladeshi immigrants.

It is important to mention that my wife was with me almost every time I went to collect data. There were two specific reasons for that: 1) it was easier for me to access the recruited families. Though there have been many developments in terms of women empowerment and gender equality among Bangladeshis, there are still many conservative perspectives among them. For example, an adult male is not welcome at a house in the absence of other adult males of the family. As an adult male, it would have been very difficult for me to gain access to Bengali families if my wife did not accompany me. Having my wife with me made my access to the research sites easier and more comfortable for me and for the participants as well. 2) She took photographs and talked with the study participants when I was busy collecting observational data or taking interviews. She also played with the children while I was talking to the adult participants. As I collected, analyzed and presented ethnographic data of the Hindu diaspora in Canada, there were some risks of bringing in psychological and emotional aspects of

historical and experiential factors in terms of being the subjects of religious persecution in their home country. I preserved confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants throughout my research process. I did not discuss who my research participants were with anyone else, or what I was documenting in the houses of the recruited families. The signed informed consent forms were stored in a secure place, and only I have the access to them. Some participants shared traumatic experiences of being psychologically tortured while talking about their experiences; I was concerned about the situations, and I provided them contact addresses for psychological help in immigrant service centers if they felt it was necessary.

4.1. How did I recruit the study participants?

I recruited the study participants through two means: personal acquaintance and snow-ball sampling (Creswell, 2013). I drew on ethnography as a methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of the multi-layered strategies the culture-sharing participants use to integrate into the host society (Bruner, 1986). The methods used for this study include interviewing, participant observation, the use of visual materials, and the use of personal experiences through narrative inquiry. In the paragraphs below, I will explain how I recruited the study participants.

I met Sanjit and his family in late 2013 in Toronto when I moved to Toronto from Vancouver. I also met Sanjit and his newly married wife Latika once in Bangladesh. He was the elder brother of one of my very good friends from Bangladesh, and we had had telephone conversations before I moved to Toronto. After moving to Toronto, I called him, and he invited me and my wife for dinner in August 2013. Sanjit drove for almost 45 minutes to pick us up from our residence. Later, I invited him and his family over for dinner in November 2013. Since then, I invited him and his family more than 20 times either for lunch or for dinner, and my wife and I had lunch and/or dinner numerous times (more than fifty times). After getting approval for my research from the SFU Research Ethics Board, I sent an invitation letter to Sanjit to participate in my study in early 2014. He agreed to participate and informed me that he knew other Hindu families who might be of my interest.

I recruited Kanti, Ashutosh, and Murali through snowball sampling. Sanjit gave me their phone numbers, and he introduced me to them over the phone, first Ashutosh in the Spring of 2014, the others in the Spring of 2015. All agreed to participate. I met Kanti and his family at a birthday celebration at Sanjit's house. Ashutosh, Murali, and their families (including their wives and children) also invited me to their homes to discuss the goals and methods of my research.

After initial phone conversation with Ashutosh, I was invited by Ashutosh in early Summer 2014 to his house. During this meeting, we had a long conversation about his life in Canada. I met his wife and daughter later. Since then, we have developed personal relationships and we have visited each other's homes several times. In the spring of 2015, I called Murali and expressed my interest in meeting him. As he was very busy working 54 to 62 hours a week, it was very difficult to make time to see him. Later in mid-May 2015, he asked me to visit his place around noon on a weekday as he had to work in the afternoon. I met him in his rented apartment in the Danforth-Victoria park area. I also met his wife and three-year old daughter. I recruited them at that time and talked about my study briefly.

My fifth participant was Bisheshor who I met through my wife. Bisheshor was taking a diploma course at the college where my wife worked and was taking academic help from my wife. I thought he would be a good recruit for my research as he was a new immigrant and interested in developing his skills. Then, I requested my wife to introduce me to Bisheshor. Once we had phone communication, I expressed my interest in meeting him at a suitable time. He said that the college would be good place to meet as I was working at the same college at that time. Later on, I was invited to his house to attend a religious sermon in November 2015.

Two other focal participants are Prashanta and Atinder whom I met in Toronto more than twelve years after I had seen them in Bangladesh. We went to a high school together in Bangladesh. I met Prashanta accidentally in a subway station in late 2014. We visited each other's residences several times since then. I recruited him and his family in

May 2015. I got Atinder's contact from him, and I called Atinder on a weekend. He was so excited to know that I lived in Toronto. I saw him in July 2015 after twelve years.

As evident from the above account, the recruited families started participating in this study at different times. During this time, I attended numerous Bengali social/cultural and religious festivals, programs, parties and family occasions with them, and we shared our stories and experiences with each other on multiple occasions. I met them at different places, including their residences and temples over the data collection period. Many of these events were recorded through various methods and tools with prior permission of the participants. The following is a discussion of the data collection methods used in this study.

Though there are many streams of qualitative research, their characteristics overlap in terms of data collection methods and analysis approaches. For example, I have used ethnography for my research, and I explored, identified, and interpreted many turn-taking moments (describing phenomena) from the life stories (narratives) of participants through interpreting interviews, observational field notes and photographs. Furthermore, while interpreting observational field notes, I also took into account the influences and significance of non-human actors (furniture, interior setting of the home, appliances and other household items). Ethnographic qualitative research usually focuses on human participants, their everyday lives, and various social and political actors. The influence and significance of non-human actors, such as the participants' dwelling places, household furniture and decoration, and other material and symbolic possessions may also reflect meaningful aspects of their lives. In this study, I documented different non-human actors and their significance in the daily lives of the participating families. In one case, for example, I found how a household shrine at one of my participant's home influenced their daily practices. It was also observed that the temple became a part of the children's home literacy practices.

4.2. Profiles of the Recruited Participants

All names used in this study are pseudonyms. The following table offers some descriptions of the recruited families. Detailed description of the family members is given below the table.

Table 1. Profile of the recruited participants

The families	Recruited members	Duration of stay in Canada	Data-collection period	Socio-economic status in Canada	Family-ties in Bangladesh	Reasons for immigration
Sanjit Family	Sanjit-1.Husband (around 50 years old) 2.Latika-wife (around 30 years old): 3.Kobi-elder son: (six years old) 4.Kankan: four years old 5.Anna -3 years old	Sanjit-nine years, Wife- six years, all the children were born in Canada	April 2014 to February 2019	Sanjit is the only earning member of the family. Others take care of children, and do other household work.	Sanjit has three brothers and a sister living in Bangladesh.	Better economic opportunities, religious freedom, and security
Ashutosh Family	Ashutosh (around fifty years) 2. Nuri (40 years) 3. Champa (14 years)	eight years	From April 2014 to December 2017	Both work: wife at a food chain shop; husband at two restaurants. The daughter goes to a nearby public school.	Ashutosh's relatives have immigrated/moved to India. Nuri's relatives are still living in Bangladesh.	Economic prosperity and freedom of religion
Murali Family	Members: Murali (45 years) Kuntola: 35 Years Daughter: Seven years Son: two years	Six years	May 2015- December 2018	Murali is the only earning member; worked at restaurant; 54 to 72 hours a week. Now, works at Canada post during week days, and at restaurant on weekends.	Murali's mother (father deceased in 2017) and siblings live in Bangladesh; Kuntola's relatives live in Bangladesh and India.	better future for children; and security
Kanti Family	Kanti (around 50 years), Kunti(around 40 years) , Bipul (eight years), Sutopa (two years)	11 years	May 2015-May 2017	Both Kanti and Kunti work at factories	Kanti's distant relatives and in-laws live in Bangladesh	Family sponsorship, freedom of religion
Bisheshor Family	Bisheshor: (42 years) Maloti: 33 Years Prakash: 10 years	Seven years	September 2015 to December 2018	Both worked at minimum wages jobs; recently, the male participant joined a bank	Parents, siblings, in-laws in Bangladesh	Better Future, child's education, security
Prashanta Family	Prashanta: (45 years) Nalini: (37 Years) Piyush: (10 years) Putul: five years	Fifteen years	September 2014- August 2018	Both work at their professional fields	Some Relatives live in Bangladesh	Education, healthcare, security
Atinder Family	Atinder: (45 years) Payel: (40 years) Ovik: (11 years)	Thirteen years	September 2014-August 2018	Both Atinder and Pael are income earners	Parents and siblings live in Bangladesh	Security, healthcare, freedom of religion.

Sanjit Family. This family consists of seven members. The main adult male participant works as technical help in a telecommunication and media company. He also drives a taxi whenever he gets opportunities to make some extra money. He has a master's degree from Bangladesh and a two-year diploma in telecommunication from Australia. He has been living in Canada since 2008. His wife, Latika does not earn any income; she takes care of her children, cooks for the family, does other household chores. She has been in Canada for more than seven years. She completed a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Bangladesh. This couple has three children: two boys and a girl. At the time when I started collecting data, the eldest son was two years old. Their second and third child were born during my data collection. Their family was extended when the parents-in-law of the male participant joined them in October 2016. They own several houses in Toronto Canada; they live in one of them.

When I asked the adult male participant about his ideas about life in Canada, he said that he went through a serious economic crisis when he was young. He said that his elder brother and a younger brother suffered from thalassemia, a blood disorder, and he wished that he could have helped them better if he had had enough money. He also wished that he would have donated a piece of land for the Bengali Hindu community in Toronto if he could. His wife, on the other hand, seems to be overwhelmed by the work she has to do every day. The data collection with this family started in April 2014 and continued till February 2019. Most of the data were collected at Sanjit's home, my home, two Toronto temples, two parks in Toronto, Kanti's residence, and my residence. I usually visited his home twice a month, and once a month during the summers of 2014 and 2015. Sanjit and his family also came to my house several times in 2016, 2017, and 2018 to participate in family and religious programs. I documented their daily life trajectories through participant observation, and I conducted interviews to discuss specific aspects of their life in Canada and back home. Most often, I took notes of various turn-taking moments while observing the participants. I took extended fieldnotes while revisiting the families at home.

Atinder Family: *Atinder* works in an information technology company in Toronto, owns a house in the GTA, and lives with his wife and their only son. He has

been living in Canada for more than thirteen years. He worked as a faculty member at an Engineering university in Bangladesh. He came to Canada for higher education and opted to live permanently in Toronto once he completed his education. He completed his PhD from a reputed Canadian university, and he did his post-doc at a university in Toronto. Though he was looking for a tenure-track position in a research university, he could not manage that. He does not want to go back to Bangladesh. The last time he went to Bangladesh was in 2008. His wife Pael moved to Canada with him. She works at a chain superstore in an Assistant Managerial position. She completed her BSc in Electrical Engineering from the same university where she met her husband. She did not earn an income from work outside her home in Bangladesh, but perhaps she did unpaid work as a homemaker. She does not want to live in Bangladesh. Ovik was their 7-year-old son when I started collecting data. Ovik was born in Canada. According to his parents, Ovik used to be bilingual, and used many Bengali words when he was a small child. However, in the last couple of years, he seems to prefer speaking English only. Ovik usually responds in English when addressed in Bengali. His reception skills in Bengali are high. However, he prefers to respond to queries in English and to use English for conversation. I collected data with this family during a period of three years; I started collecting data of this family in July 2015 and continued till September 2018.

Proshanta family: Proshanta came to Canada in 2003 to do his PhD. He later applied for immigration thinking about a “secured, comfortable, and free” life in Canada. He works in a commercial bank as a consultant in information technology. His parents live in Bangladesh with his younger brother and sisters. His wife Nalini started working as a physician in Canada last year. She came to Canada in 2008 on a spousal visa. She completed her Bachelor of Medicine from Bangladesh. However, she had to do two years of medical study in a university in Canada before she started her residency at the University in Toronto. She has recently started working as a physician in a medical center in the GTA. Their children are Piyush (10 years: Grade four) and Putul (five years). Both children were born in Canada. Proshanta and his family were participants in this study from September 2015 to August 2018.

Bisheshor Family: *Bisheshor* has two Master's degrees in Forestry: one from Bangladesh and another from Germany. He completed certification in information technology from a college in Toronto. He came to Toronto approximately eight years ago. He had two jobs: a security guard and a part-time information technology technician. He lives in a neighborhood where many Bangladeshis live. He is not very happy in Canada in terms of his labor market integration and cultural differences; however, he said he would never opt for living in Bangladesh. Maloti, his wife, works at a grocery store chain in Toronto. She completed college in Bangladesh. She did not attend any school in Canada to upgrade her education or skills. She is happy with her life in Canada. Their son, Prakash, is eight years old. He goes to a public school in Canada. He was in grade two when I started data collection with Bisheshor family. According to his parents, he is bilingual, though he feels more comfortable speaking English.

Ashutosh family. Ashutosh came to Canada in 2008, claimed refugee status, but was rejected, and finally obtained Canadian permanent residency in 2009. He took some courses in social sciences and psychology at a university in Toronto. He applied to many positions, but he did not get any jobs he wanted. He works at two restaurants as a server. Nuri, his wife, works at a coffee shop chain in Toronto. She did not earn an income from work outside her home, but perhaps she did unpaid work as a homemaker. She completed her BA at a college in Bangladesh. Charu is their 13-year-old daughter. She was born in Bangladesh and goes to a public school in Toronto. She is bilingual and shifts between Bengali and English frequently. For the last couple of years, she has been communicating in English with very little to no use of Bengali. However, it was evident that she has receptive skills in Bengali. Ashutosh, Nuri, and Charu participated in the study from April 2014 to December 2017.

Murali Family: Murali has been living in Canada for almost six years. He has been living with his wife and two children: one girl and a boy. I recruited this participating family through Sanjit, my first recruited participant who was the brother of my friend from back home. He was a college teacher in Bangladesh. In Canada, he works in a restaurant 54 to 72 hours a week. His wife is a homemaker and does not earn an income from work outside her home. She takes care of the children and does the

household chores. The family has two children: one daughter aged six and a boy aged two. He bought an apartment in 2015 in a Bengali-speaking neighborhood of Toronto. Murali did not attend any educational institutes that offer certificates or diplomas; he only attended some LINC classes, which he said, did not help him in real life communication.

Kanti Family: Kanti was recruited through snowball sampling. I recruited him when I was acquainted with him in a program arranged by Sanjit. He has been living in Canada for more than eight years. He lives with his wife and two children: an eight-year old boy and two-year old girl. He lives in the basement of his own house and rents out the upper floor of his bungalow residence. He said that he rented out the above floor to manage his mortgage. Both Kanti and Kunti work in factories at minimum wage. None of them attended any school or educational institutes in Canada.

4.3. Qualitative Methodology

My research methodology is qualitative in nature, using multiple methods to “make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). I used a qualitative approach to collect and analyze my research data as I aimed to document how and why the recruited participants undertake specific tasks in their daily lives and what is their experience of integration. I used a qualitative approach to navigate the insider and outsider perspectives that my position brings to this research study. Though most qualitative approaches overlap in terms of collecting and analyzing data, I used ethnography. Ethnographic approaches explore cultural, linguistic and social experiences and perceptions of particular communities (Creswell, 2013). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995),

Ethnography is a particular method or set of methods that... involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. (p. 1)

I used ethnography as I collected data for almost five years on a group of people who share historical, religious, ethnic, and linguistic experiences. It is also noteworthy

that I, as a researcher, share many of the cultural and linguistic experiences with the recruited participants (see chapter one for detailed discussion). As qualitative researchers “...seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3), I documented why and how the recruited Bengali Hindus partake in certain activities in their daily lives. Denzin and Lincoln define qualitative research as a:

multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena, in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 2).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further argue that qualitative studies look into *how* and *why* languages (with linguistic variation/deviation) are used in different contexts, and the researchers “embrace two tensions” at the same time: one is to “draw a broad, interpretative, postmodern, feminist, and critical sensibility”; and the other is to draw “humanistic and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analysis” (p. 4). Thus, “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 5). In contrast to quantitative inquiry that report “causal relationship between variables”, qualitative research analyzes the “processes” (p.5) of some actions and their consequences. Edwards (2013) argues that qualitative researchers need to look into the underlying factors such as emotion, feelings, ethnic and religious affiliation and influence while documenting the language and literacy practices of individuals and/or groups.

Data for qualitative studies are collected through multiple methods, such as participant observation, interview transcription, and represented through detailed description and analysis. Moreover, qualitative researchers, in most cases, tend to play an active role in the process of data collection, analysis and reporting. Interview, participant observation, photo/video analysis and artifacts (institutional, private, and public) analysis are very common methods of qualitative data collection and analysis. Based on the above scenario, my doctoral study embraces the qualitative approach to investigate the daily-life

trajectories of the recruited participants through an active process of data collection and in-depth analysis.

4.4. Why Ethnographic Narrative Inquiry?

I used ethnographic narrative inquiry as I documented daily life trajectories of a group of culture-sharing people (see chapter one for detailed discussion). I wanted to document participants' daily routines and practice, and understand why the participants do certain things at a given time and place. I also wanted to know what they say about their immigration, integration, and literacy experiences in Canada. Through a longitudinal study, I documented the daily life practices of the recruited participants in relation to their religious affiliations, identities and literacy practices in natural settings. For the last century, ethnography has been one of the most utilized methods in qualitative research for exploring the cultural and traditional practices of various social, political, economic, and religious groups. The term ethnography emerges from two Greek words: *ethnos* and *graphia*: *ethnos* refers to people, folks or culture, and *graphia* means writing (Walford, 2008). Therefore, ethnographic study refers to the study and writing about a culture-sharing group of people (Creswell, 2013). For Fetterman (1998), "ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture" (p.1). Hammersley (2014) explains that researchers, by employing ethnography, a) study people's behavior in *everyday contexts* (in natural setting); b) collect data *from a range of sources* (interviews, field notes, observation, photographs); c) use informal methods (semi-structured interviews, informal conversation); d) focus on usually a *small number of cases/participants* (a group of people who self-identify themselves as a culture-sharing group); and, e) analyze data by *interpreting the meanings and functions of the human actions* (the meaning and significance of non-verbal cues, and non-human actors) (p. 19).

The root of ethnography lies in social anthropology. In the early 20th century, researchers presented data that seemed to be valid and scientific; they were concerned with reporting original, unbiased data. The participants were objects and the researchers played the role of a superior talking about a distant culture and people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). However, over the years, the goals and objectives of ethnographers have

changed significantly; many ethnographic researchers take subjective positions and present data from a specific point of view. Through rigorous fieldwork and participant observation, ethnographers explore ideas, beliefs and practices of a culture-sharing group by using a “story-telling approach” (Creswell, 2013, p. 96). Though the subject-matter of the stories are real, the wording of arguments and emotion might be subjective from ethnographers’ points of view. Blommaert and Dong (2010) argue for a “humanist-functional approach” (p.7) of ethnography where they emphasize language over all other forms, such as ideas, beliefs, and tradition. Like Hymes (1986), they see language itself as culture and context as individuals’ or groups’ social behavior. They further argue that other performances of the participants are identified by languages they speak. According to them, studying language does not merely mean to analyze participants’ use of a language/s; it, rather, analyzes how the usage of a language impacts their non-verbal and non-linguistic social behavior.

The major question I seek to answer in this study focuses on the participants’ beliefs and everyday practices of religion and literacies, so the ethnographic narrative inquiry is the ideal approach to adopt in this study. Recent years have seen a huge volume of ethnographic studies on immigrants and their integration processes in Canada. Baffoe (2011) reports, through her ethnographic study with African Youth immigrants in Montreal and Toronto, how African Black youths are influenced by the dominant culture and language and create a distance between family and themselves. In another ethnographic study with a Filipino immigrant family in a Prairie Canadian city, Li (2000) identifies the struggle to preserve home and dominant literacy practices among the intergenerational members of the participant family. Roessingh (2011), on the other hand, addresses the struggle and need for negotiating the language, literacy, culture and identity of immigrant children who are at their early stage of literacy development in English-speaking Canada. In her ethnographic study with immigrant families and children in Alberta, Canada, she proposes a framework for early language and literacy development of English language learners. The framework, a dual-language book *Family Treasures*, appears to help children negotiate meaning in their first and second languages and their home and Canadian cultures. These ethnographic studies of immigrant communities

and/or diaspora have encouraged me to take on a study to document the daily-life trajectories of a Hindu diaspora in Canada.

Though there is not a large amount of research literature on Bangladeshi immigrants in Canada, I found three significant studies on them. Halder (2012), Ghosh (2010) and Subhan (2007) studied stories of immigration and integration of the Bangladeshi community in Toronto. Halder (2012) discusses how most Bangladeshi immigrants lead a dual life—home and away from home—in Toronto. He adds that most Bangladeshi immigrants—Muslims, Hindus and Christians—are religiously affiliated, and they celebrate their own religious programs at their respective prayer houses. Ghosh (2007), and Murdie and Ghosh (2010) report that Bangladeshi immigrants live a concentrated and segregated life in the Danforth-Victoria Park area of Toronto. Subhan (2007) documented how Bangladeshi immigrants created a “little Bangladesh” in the Danforth-Victoria Park neighborhood, which worked as a catalyst for their integration in Canada.

In this study, I adopted the seven features of ethnographic inquiry identified by Hammersley (2018):

- relatively long-term data collection process,
- naturally occurring settings,
- participant observation, or personal engagement more generally,
- a range of types of data,
- documentation of what actually goes on,
- emphasis on the significance of the meanings people give to objects, including themselves, in the course of their activities, in other words, culture, and
- holistic in focus. (p. 4)

My research was carried out over five years during which time I built up very close connections with the participants to document their lived stories in natural settings. I had access to their residences and the places they visited, while they were always welcome to my home. As a participant myself in their lives, I was careful and respectful in observing

them so that I could understand their feelings and emotions about the topics we discussed. In terms of following Hindu religious customs and attending religious programs, I observed and documented what the recruited participants did in certain situations. As a participant observer, I was one of them; I did what they did, and I helped them do things whenever they asked me. It is also noteworthy that I shared similar experiences of being discriminated against as a religious minority with the adult participants. I shared my stories with them so that they would open up. As I experienced social and psychological trauma of living a Hindu life in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, I was very careful to avoid reporting anything that did not correspond with what the recruited participants said.

I, however, also experienced many challenges while conducting this study because of the drawbacks any ethnographic research brings in. Though ethnography is a common methodology in social sciences and inter-disciplinary studies, some limitations should be noted. Hammersley (2018) identified five major difficulties with ethnographic studies: 1) outside pressures (e.g., funding organizations) to do studies “to meet the needs of the organizations” (p.3) ii) increased funding for and emphasis on quantitative research as government direction, iii) limited timeline for completing research in universities , iv) challenges to gaining access to research sites, and v) fulfilling the requirements of ethics committees in universities. For this study, the major challenge I had to face was related to research ethics. Even though I had full access to numerous resources and sources of information, I was unable to utilize many of them because of ethical dilemmas. Even though the participants’ identities were confidential, I was unable to fully describe all of their narratives when they were deemed extremely sensitive. Furthermore, I could not use some relevant visual data as they could compromise the participants’ confidentiality.

Besides these, I also had challenges regarding *naturally occurring stories* – a major critique of ethnography identified by Hammersley (2018). The three major questions raised by Hammersley were:

1. How far can an ethnographer document the “naturally occurring” stories of the participants?

2. How are various data sources combined?
3. How can an ethnographer document what participants really do or think?

Although I focused on naturally occurring data in my study, I found some of the participants occasionally felt uncomfortable to discuss their past experiences as they carried negative attitudes about a specific religious group. Therefore, it was hard for me to understand what exactly the participants' true feelings were at certain times. On the other hand, some of the participants expressed strong Islamophobic comments, which is why I had to address the data with caution so that my data would not be misinterpreted and offend specific people or groups. Hence, this dilemma affected the processes of data analysis and reporting.

One stream of ethnographic research uses photography as an important method of data collection. Photographs were used in anthropological studies in the early 20th century and they have been used in ethnographic studies from the mid-20th to the present time. Visual ethnography as such refers to the use of photos, videos, CDs, and various visual artifacts. Berg (2008) says that many ethnographers use visual materials such as photographs to support their written documentation though some scholars consider the use of visual materials as “too subjective, unrepresentative, and unsystematic” (Para. 3, Visual Ethnography). Visual ethnography has partly been used in this study to document and describe the significance of places and artifacts in the participants' lives, especially in relation to their influences on religious practices. I will discuss this later in the methods section.

Because I used ethnography to collect the research data for this study, there will be many narratives that I will discuss in detail. As I am exploring stories of immigration and integration of the recruited participants, I will use narrative inquiry as an approach. To explore and identify complex, ambiguous and multi-layered life-stories of recruited participants (Bruner, 1986; Riessman, 2008), researchers use the narrative inquiry approach.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), drawing upon John Dewey's theory of experience, say that narrative inquiry is a collaborative research between the researcher and the participants, which takes place over time and, thus, experiences are unfolded through the process of social interaction. They also focus on three areas and their relationships: interaction, continuity and places. Narrative researchers document participants' personal, familial, and social interaction including historical past, present and imagined future at different contexts. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) argue that narrative researchers do not *bracket* themselves out in the inquiry; rather, they become a part of the inquiry. De Fina and Georgakoupoulo (2008) propose an interactional approach to narrative inquiry that analyzes talk-in-interaction, and views interactional storytelling as a "social practice" (p. 379), which emphasizes "reflexivity in the process of data collection and analysis" (p. 385). Like other methodologies, this also has limitations. Narrative inquiries may fail to grasp the complex layers in stories and experiences if researchers do not explore the ambiguity in the stories that is subject to participants' subjective construction of truth. Narratives might also be influenced by researchers' interpretation as they might impose meanings on the participants' stories, which raises ethical issues (Bell, 2002). Stories are often constructed through the research process and the researchers might find it difficult to *disengage* themselves from the process of interpreting the stories.

Ethnographers in language education research often use narrative accounts of their participants to identify the patterns of language use (Toohey, 2000). In this way, this becomes one of the methods of data analysis. Though I am not using narrative inquiry as my sole methodology, I drew it on as a method to solicit and analyze participants' voices and stories.

4.4.1. Observation and Field Notes

The data collection for this study took almost three years. Each family, however, took part in the study at different times and for different durations of time. Over this period, I frequently visited their houses/apartments, invited them to my place, and joined them to celebrate cultural and religious festivals. I also took field notes as a participant

observer to document linguistic, ethnic and religious practices. Specifically, I observed how participants used language in their social, familial, and cultural gatherings; how they engaged in literacy practices; whether and how religion and religious practices influenced these activities; and, how they participated in social and cultural (Canadian and Bangladeshi community) settings/environment. I observed both inter-generational (different generations of a family) and intersectional (gender-based) interactions. The activities were recorded with field notes.

In earlier ethnographic research, the focus was placed on participant observation to explore the daily life trajectories and the meaning-making processes in the living world of the people studied (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). Researchers immersed themselves in the culture of the participants and wrote the stories for others. Geertz (1973), however, sees the role of an ethnographer as an inscriber who “inscribes social discourse” (p. 19). Later, the focus was shifted to field notes and their significance in documenting social, cultural, and familial lives of the participants. Therefore, following Atkinson (1990), I focused on taking extended field notes and extracts. As Atkinson argues, field notes may not provide a complete picture as researchers might ignore or miss out on some moments that could be of invaluable significance. Keeping this in mind, I used my field notes as working hypotheses that evolved over time through the data collection and analysis process (Lynch, 1996).

Current researchers suggest that field notes should not only be notes of rigorous observation to record every detail of the daily life of the participants but should also document the interaction between the researcher and the participants. Thus, field notes helped me record the “running description of events, people, things heard and overheard, conversation among people, and conversation with people” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 93). One of the limitations, however, as Van Maanen (1988) argues, is that field notes “only provide surface meaning” and are “constantly reexamined and reinterpreted in the light of new concerns and understandings” (p. 118). In this regard, ethnographic researchers not only represent what “informants” or participants do and say; they also interpret voices that carry meaning in a given context. Therefore, I kept in mind that in the *field* to be observed, there will be, as Malinowski puts it, a “chaos of facts....in this

crude form, they are not scientific facts at all; they are absolutely elusive and can only be fixed by interpretation...” (as cited in Geertz, 1988, p. 81).

4.4.2. Interviewing

Interviewing has been one of the major methods followed by ethnographers. Researchers use varied ways to interview participants: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews, though semi-structured interviews are mostly chosen. In my research, semi-structured interviews about perceptions and experiences of integration of the research participants were audio-recorded at scheduled times with prior permission from the adult participants. These conversations focused on “routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual’s lives” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). This method is very important for my research to understand the world from the participants’ perspectives and “to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 1).

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) describe interviewers using the two metaphors of *miners* who “unearth” (p. 48) the untold stories, such as hidden talent, strategic plans and activities taken by participants; and, *travelers* who go through unexplored “domains” (p. 48), and tell the world untold stories of historical, cultural, linguistic and political experiences and perceptions of the people studied. I also adopted Corbin and Strauss’s perspective (2008) that considers the interviewing process a method of developing a *discourse* between the interviewer and interviewees. This discourse is co-constructed through active participation of both parties involved. In this process, interviewing becomes a technique through which the interviewers and interviewees interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) each other in terms of their shared cultural, religious and political beliefs. Thus, the method is relevant to my research in constructing discourse-as-knowledge that is relational, contextual, conversational, linguistic, narrative, and pragmatic.

All the adult participants took part in one scheduled interview in the beginning of the data collection process. This interview specifically focused on profile questions, and

some primary questions about the participants' views and perspectives on immigration, sense of belonging to Canada, social and religious identities and their religious and home literacy practices. These interviews took place at the participants' convenience. Each interview took about an hour. At other times, the participants took part in informal interviews before, during, and after different social and religious activities. The child participants also participated in these interviews. Most of the interviews were audio-recorded with prior permission of the participants.

While transcribing the interviews, I made notes of non-verbal cues as Mishler (1986) stresses the significance of head nods, facial expressions, pauses in understanding interview data. Solely relying on word-by-word transcription and interpretation of interviews may limit the opportunity to see significant interplay between the spoken words and unspoken worlds. In this regard, identifying and analyzing silence in interview can help researchers understand complex biographical matters (Riemann, 2003). I focused on the co-construction of knowledge with my research participants by discussing and analyzing follow-up questions and answers during scheduled meetings after the first recorded interview.

Original data for this study were recorded and transcribed in Bengali (see Appendix B for a sample of a Bengali transcription of data). Later, the data used in this dissertation were translated to English. Data translated by bilingual or immigrant researchers may affect meaning and knowledge production (Pavlenko, 2006b). Edwards (1998) suggests that bilingual researchers can use *back translation* to minimize the deviation from original data; immigrant researchers who converse in one language with participants and present data in another language should translate back to participants to validate their data. Temple (2006), however, argues that back translation goes through a retranslation process which may reproduce or deviate from the original data on another level. She, rather, states that "When the language used in the interviews is not that of the transcripts, researchers have a responsibility to investigate how they are representing people in the translation process" (p. 360). Keeping this in mind, I did my utmost to ensure that my translations were as close as possible to the original utterances in meaning. I investigated very carefully what the participants actually intended to mean

and presented the data in an acceptable manner with the most efforts not deviating their meaning, sometimes asking the bilingual participants themselves if the translation seemed correct to them.

Talmy (2010) proposes to view the *interview as social practice*, not as a research instrument in terms of its conceptual understanding. Talmy's concept is synonymous to Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) *active interview*, which considers the ways in which knowledge is produced through *interactional narrative procedures*. This helped me "problematize the assumptions that constitute the research instrument perspective, and [treat] interviews themselves as topics for investigation" (Talmy, 2010, p. 131). As a researcher, I always kept in mind all these perspectives while constructing, presenting and analyzing interview data.

4.4.3. Photography

Another method I employed was the use of reflective photography (taken by the participants, myself and my wife) of key activities/situations representative of moments when participants needed to overcome linguistic and intercultural challenges during the research period. Reflective photography and photo-elicitation interviews (Schulze, 2007) are used to elicit linguistic and literacy practices and to stimulate participants to critically analyze their own situations. Pink (2007) argues that images "are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, space and truth" (p. 21) and are important data for an ethnographer. Using reflexive photography as a method, I investigated how my research participants described their own photographs that are a testimony to their moments of struggle and success that are crucial to understanding their literacy and integration process. Twine (2006) describes how photo-interviews of interracial families have helped her interpret data and theories with visual presentation. Since the mid-1980s, numerous ethnographic researchers have used photographs or photo elicitation as a method of collecting data (Gold, 1986; Harper, 1984; Twine, 1998). They argue that their studies, through photo elicitation, have had stronger grounds. While using this method, I acknowledged that this method may bring some ethical issues as it risks damaging the social reputation and

status of participants by revealing personal and family moments. I will blur the faces of the participants to maintain the confidentiality of the participants' identities.

4.4.4. Visual reflection

Visual mind mapping or drawing what the participants do on daily basis in terms of social, cultural and linguistic participation in the new society was collected at the beginning and at the end of the study. I used this method in my pilot study to make my observation and interview process interesting, so that the participants would not get bored with the same process. I was inspired by Harper (2005), who emphasized using visual images to stimulate participants' memories. This made me realize that bringing such visuals while visiting participants for data collection purposes also brings variation to the methods and helps engage participants by addressing their diverse skills and interests. Later, I discovered that visuals such as visual mind-mapping could be an important method of data collection if it is utilized properly and at appropriate times. An example of a reflective mind-mapping used in this study is presented in Appendix C.

4.5. Data Analysis

The analytical approach I used in my research embraces different approaches of qualitative interpretative data analysis. The major analytical approaches I used were grounded theory, narrative inquiry, situational analyses and critical discourse analysis. Though it may sound overwhelming to have many analytical approaches to analyze data, I used bits and pieces of the said approaches to make sense of what this research data present. I used grounded theory only to select data that I analyzed by using narrative analysis and situational analyses. I did not do rigorous coding: line by line or word by word; rather, my coding was theme-based after identifying the most frequent topics of their discussion. I read interview transcriptions several times and identified the most common features of the conversation to do narrative and situational analyses (see Appendix E for an example). For example, in one excerpt (see chapter 5 for detailed explanation), one of the female adult participants, was speaking against the political decision of receiving "too many Syrian refugees". When I asked supplementary questions

to know why she was against the move, she started to unfold her own story of suffering discrimination as a member of a minority religious group in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, which led to her current attitude towards Muslim migration in Canada. So, through coding, I identified the themes, and through narrative inquiry, I discussed individual stories behind what they are saying or doing. I also identified some significant or turn-taking words/phrases that were used by the participants. I used Critical Discourse Analysis to discuss the literal, interactional, and contextual meanings of those expressions. In the sub-sections below, I have discussed why I used multiple approaches to analyze my data.

4.5.1. Grounded theory

The basic aspect of this theory is coding data word by word, identifying categories from various data sources, and finally identifying theme/theory by comparing categories. Grounded Theory (GT), as a method of data analysis, is extensively explained in Glaser and Strauss's (1965) book titled *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. They propose rigorous systematic coding procedures to identify emerging themes. Though it is the most read book in terms of critiquing and using GT, Bryant and Charmaz (2007) say that the basis of this type of qualitative data analysis came with prior and contemporary research. Goffman's (1959) study on the self, identity and social organization were compelling to understand the depth of qualitative research methods. Glaser and Strauss's studies (1965, 1967) with terminally ill patients were the foundational studies of GT. By identifying the process of thinking of those they studied, they suggested a systematic coding procedure to theorize patterns. Though the main argument of GT advocates the approach that "theory emerges from data" (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007, p. 31), the authors argue that the systematic data analysis procedures and theory construction suggested by Glaser and Strauss appear to be a different type of quantitative approach. Glaser (1992) later disagreed with Strauss in terms of following a rigorous process of analyzing data and coding themes. He emphasized identifying themes, turns, and moments of inquiry during the process of collecting and analyzing data. Charmaz focuses on the flexibility of the process to learn about "diverse local worlds, multiple realities, and complexities of particular worlds, views and actions" (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 87). Despite its

earlier suggested analytic procedures, GT is used by numerous qualitative researchers nowadays to categorize and identify themes through constant comparative data analysis. Recent grounded theory proponents emphasize a constructionist approach of grounded theory, which analyzes the daily life experiences of human participants (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992). Charmaz (Britsoci, 2013, January 8), at the conference of the British Sociological Association, says that grounded theory is an interactive, iterative, and comparative method in which researchers compare “data with data, data with code, codes with codes, codes with data, codes with categories, and categories with categories”, interact with the “voices of the participants”, and go back to the field to check identified categories. For my research, I used an *abductive constructionist grounded theory approach*, which analyzes data by revisiting and explaining *surprising points*. The major focus of this analysis is to answer the *why* questions of *what* and *how* participants perceive and experience situations. Gubrium and Holstein (1997) argue that most qualitative research describes *what* and *how*, but it should focus on answering *why* to identify the relation between *what* and *how*. In this regard, Charmaz (Britsoci, 2013, January 8) says that researchers need to engage in coding line-by-line, incident by incident, and situation by situation to answer *why* questions. This approach is relevant to my study because I am interested in the *why* to document the *whats* and *hows* of my research question. I also emphasize the process of sharing experiences and identifying themes. There are critiques that grounded theory is not scientific and does not follow any particular theory to conduct research; rather, it focuses on the themes that emerge from data. However, the systematic coding approach suggested by Grounded Theory, along with qualitative interpretative approaches, helped me identify themes from the multiple data sources that I employed.

4.5.2. Situational Analysis

In addition to applying Grounded Theory, I also used situational analyses (Clarke, 2005) to help me analyze complex data of social and familial lives of participants. According to Clarke, situational analyses will “supplement basic grounded theory with situation-centered approaches that can enrich research by addressing and engaging

important postmodern theoretical and methodological concerns about differences and complexities of social life” (Clarke, 2005, p. 558).

I used a situational analysis approach in order to help me understand observational data. Here, the situations in the research settings “[are] a key unit of analysis” (Clarke, 2005, p. 559). Situational analyses explore and interpret not only persons, but also their individual and collective actions and, situations and contexts where actions happen. Situational analyses focus on three main areas: first, situational analyses identify and analyze the influences of human and non-human elements in a research setting and present them through situational maps; second, they interpret how human and non-human actors of a research site are interrelated; and finally, these situational maps help interpret various situations that are contested and negotiated. There are three maps suggested by Clarke: *Abstract Situational Maps* (messy), *Abstract Situational Maps* (working version), and *Ordered Situational Maps*. In this study, for example, I spent more than five hours a day as a participant observer at one of the participants’ residence. I noted how human participants are influenced by non-human actors such as a couch, a portable temple and other living-room and bed-room elements. The notes were represented through maps. By opening up data using grounded theory, I followed narrative inquiry and situational analyses to analyze them. Some examples of the maps provided by Clarke, Friese, and Washburn (2018) are presented below.

<p>INDIVIDUAL HUMAN ELEMENTS/ACTORS Participants in Shim's research: 1) People of color with CVDs; 2) Key social epidemiologists: Krieger, Cassel, Syme, Susser, Berkman, Kawachi, Diez-Roux</p> <p>COLLECTIVE HUMAN ELEMENTS/ACTORS US Congress; US FDA; US NIH and its Offices of Minority and Women's Health Research; ICD of the WHO; Epidemiology As discipline: mainstream and social segments; Professional Organizations: APHA, ACE, NMA, ABC, AMA, ACC, AHA, SER; Patient Care Institutions: Local hospitals, FRs, HMOs, clinics, private physicians' offices; Big Pharms; Big Biomedicine; Civil rights, women's health, and HIV/AIDS movements</p> <p>DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL AND/OR COLLECTIVE HUMAN ACTORS Racial and ethnic stereotypes; Sex/Gender Stereotypes; Class/SES Stereotypes; Stereotypes of patient care</p> <p>POLITICAL/ECONOMIC ELEMENTS US health care politics; Medicare and Medicaid policies; Health insurance politics; Concepts of citizenship</p> <p>TEMPORAL ELEMENTS: U.S. NATIONAL, HISTORICAL FRAME Histories of race, sex, and class and (bio)medicine; Tuskegee research abuses; Histories of routine exclusion of women and minorities from health research; Histories of scapegoating</p> <p>MAJOR ISSUES/DEBATES (USUALLY CONTESTED) Focus on meanings and consequences of race/ethnicity, class/SES, and sex/gender vis-à-vis CVDs and CVD epidemiology</p>	<p>NONHUMAN ELEMENTS ACTORS/ACTANTS Computers (hardware, software, & databases for epidemiology); Reports: prior clinical trials/studies, e.g., Framingham community studies; CVD procedures, drugs and devices; Data collection instruments; Key epidemiological concepts (see below)</p> <p>IMPLICATED/SILENT ACTORS/ACTANTS People of color with CVDs</p> <p>KEY EVENTS IN SITUATION NIH Revised Human Subjects Rules (1993)</p> <p>DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF NONHUMAN ACTANTS Concepts of Race/ethnicity, Class/ Socio-economic status; Sex/gender; Sameness/Difference(s); Statistical significance; Correlation; Correlation is not causation; Multifactorial causation; Measurability; Standardization; Environment; Individualism</p> <p>SOCIOCULTURAL/SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS Symbols of health and illness, esp. of CVDs/heart diseases</p> <p>SPATIAL ELEMENTS Local and regional variations, esp. re race/ethnicity and health care</p> <p>RELATED DISCOURSES (HISTORICAL, NARRATIVE, AND/OR VISUAL) Public service health education; Media coverage of health; Marvels of modern medicine; Identity politics discourses; "Minority" discourses; Women as reproductive bodies; Victim blaming discourses; Duty to be healthy</p>	<p>INDIVIDUAL HUMAN ELEMENTS/ACTORS e.g., key individuals and significant (unorganized) people in situation</p> <p>COLLECTIVE HUMAN ELEMENTS/ACTORS e.g., particular groups, specific organizations</p> <p>DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL AND/OR COLLECTIVE HUMAN ACTORS As found in the situation</p> <p>POLITICAL/ECONOMIC ELEMENTS e.g., the state; particular industry/ies; local/regional/global orders; political parties; NGOs; politicized issues</p> <p>TEMPORAL ELEMENTS e.g., historical, seasonal, crisis, and/or trajectory aspects</p> <p>MAJOR ISSUES/DEBATES (USUALLY CONTESTED) As found in the situation; and see positional map</p> <p>OTHER KINDS OF ELEMENTS As found in the situation</p>	<p>NONHUMAN ELEMENTS ACTORS/ACTANTS e.g., technologies, material infrastructure, specialized information and/or knowledges, material "things"</p> <p>IMPLICATED/SILENT ACTORS/ACTANTS As found in the situation</p> <p>DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF NONHUMAN ACTANTS As found in the situation</p> <p>SOCIOCULTURAL/SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS e.g., religion, race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, nationality, logos, icons, other visual and/or aural symbols</p> <p>SPATIAL ELEMENTS e.g., spaces in the situation; geographical aspects; local, regional, and/or global issues</p> <p>RELATED DISCOURSES (HISTORICAL, NARRATIVE AND/OR VISUAL) e.g., normative expectations of actors, actants, and/or other specified elements; moral/ethical elements; mass media and other popular cultural discourses; situation-specific discourses</p>
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Figure 2. Abstract Situational Map and Ordered Situational Map

"From Adele E. Clarke, Carrie Friese and Rachel Washburn (2018). *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Interpretive Turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, page fixated.

These maps introduce details about the settings, participants and researchers involved, and create a strong foundation for analyzing my research data. Clarke states that though it is not possible to list all the elements present in a research setting, "[we] should at least start out erring on the side of inclusivity" (p. 563). My research setting and participants are both complex in terms of their relation and affiliation to historical, ideological, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds; situational analysis maps enable data analysis through multiple lenses. It also helps to conduct systematic coding to identify categories and themes from raw data. I also believe that the participants, with whom I planned to co-construct knowledge through their active participation in the data analysis process, gain a clear picture of the situations by looking at the organized maps. Situational analysis approach is also drawn upon to analyze the photographs and visual maps following the same process, although critical discourse analysis is combined with it in this instance. Appendix D provides an example of situational analysis used in this study.

4.5.3. Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry, as discussed earlier, is used as a powerful research method in ethnographic studies. Following this method, researchers collect data using tools such as diary/journal studies (Numrich, 1996). I used this as a method to understand the participants' stories that are shaped by personal and community practices over time and across space. My research participants were asked to share their past and present stories of literacy events and practices that were and are significant to them in terms of their identities, immigration, and integration process. Drawing on this method often highlights important aspects of lives that might not be reflected in the conscious interview responses. This also helped me understand how experiences might change over time depending on the socio-cultural environment. Please see Appendix A for interview questions.

4.5.4. Critical Discourse Analysis

To critically interpret the meaning and purposes of words in context in order to understand the interview data, I used Critical Discourse Analysis to identify and interpret the relationship between interaction and social practicality (Fairclough, 2001). Arguing that discourse is a form of social practice, Fairclough defines it as an embodiment of “text, interaction, and context” (p. 21), and explains that there are three dimensions of discourse analysis: description, interpretation, and explanation. *Description* refers to the exploration of the “formal properties of the text” (p. 21); *interpretation* aims to examine the “relationship between text and interaction—with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation” (p. 21); and *explanation* analyzes “the relationship between interaction and social context” (p. 22). Blommaert (2005) criticizes traditional CDA because it confines analyses to only the moments of producing a text or discourse and limits the understanding of the social conditions and factors in which power is produced. His *ethnographic approach to discourse analysis*, on the other hand, complements CDA, taking “difference and inequality as points of departure” (p. 236), by researching the stratified social conditions in which power is produced, and how it affects society. Disparity is considered to be

represented through multiple modal resources such as speech, writing, images etc., which widens the definition of texts. Thus, the transcribed interview data; situational maps of house environment, and non-living objects; and other observational data such as non-verbal cues all become discursive texts that explain how power is produced in everyday contexts. The data drawn from the use of photographs, narrative inquiry, and visual mind maps are also considered discursive texts from this perspective. This approach is relevant for analyzing and interpreting my research data because it allows me to look beyond the moments of interviews and other data collection moments mentioned above. This also helps me understand the experiences of a diasporic community, Hindu Bangladeshi immigrants in this case, who might have experienced overt and/or covert discrimination and trauma in their home and host country as minorities.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethics in qualitative research is very complex. Miller, Birch, Mauthner and Jessop (2012) discuss that researching private lives in qualitative research is so complex that abstract rules or guidelines cannot address the ethical issues. There are six major ethical considerations that I had to make when I collected and analyzed data.

My first ethical concern was whether I would expose the personal lives of the participants to the public. As my research focused on exploring daily life trajectories of the research participants, it was obvious that I would talk about their social, economic, political, and ideological perspectives, which they might not want to make public. To make sure that I only present what they consent to, I read out my transcription to the research participants, and edited my text based on their feedback. Whether the participants wanted their names and photos to be used, I used pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. I also blurred the faces in the photographs so that people cannot recognize them. Though I took all the measures to maintain the confidentiality of the recruited participants, I was still concerned people might recognize participants by their social and familial information that was presented in this research study. I was very careful about using language that might uncover the identity of the research participants.

The second ethical issue I faced was interviewing children. Though I got informed consent signed by the parents of the recruited children, I was concerned whether the recruited children had developed an understanding about religion and its impact on people's lives. When I conducted the interview, I, most often, avoided the term "religion"; I only focused on documenting what they do in schools and at home on a daily basis.

Besides bringing private lives to the public and describing children's perspectives about life in Canada, there was another ethical issue regarding how the research benefitted the participants. I was wondering what benefits my research would bring to them. Though there were no direct financial or material benefits, the participants appeared to become more aware and informed about their rights and privileges in Canada, as well as of other ethnic and religious communities.

The fourth ethical matter regarding this research study was my relation to the participants. Though I had developed very good relations with all the participating families, I was concerned my frequent visits had interrupted their daily lives. To minimize the interruption, I used to phone them well in advance of meeting them. In most cases, either I invited them to lunch or dinner at my house or they invited us (me and my wife) to family or religious programs.

Recording unstructured interviews and everyday activities without direct consent was the sixth major ethical issue. Though I got signed informed consent from all the adults and children participants, I recorded daily life incidents on many occasions that they might not have permitted if asked at the time of recording. When I transcribed the recorded unstructured conversation and analyzed my field-notes, I was careful to ask myself whether I was presenting personal information or biased opinions. I took these data sets to the participants to make sure that I did not use any data they would disagree with.

The final ethical issue is my position as a researcher. As a Bangladeshi Hindu immigrant, I share many of the historical, social, and linguistic experiences with the

participants. I was careful while presenting data. Through member-checking, I made sure that I was not biased in presenting the participants' opinions.

4.7. Summary

In this chapter, I have described what methodology, methods, and analytic tools I have used for my research. I have also explained why I used those tools to carry out my study. I have used ethnography as my methodology and interviews, participant observation, and photographs as data collection methods. I have used an interpretative qualitative approach to analyze the collected data. I identified the themes by following Situational Analyses (Clarke, 2005) and exploring multi-layered data through critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001). Though I identified some themes based on coding, there were many turn-taking moments that stood out, and I identified and explained them with critical analysis. I termed my data analysis procedures multi-layered, as there were many layers of a particular data source which could not be analyzed under one specific umbrella term.

Chapter 5.

Findings

In this chapter, I will report major findings of my study. I will present data that complement the daily life stories of the recruited participants who are members of a Hindu diaspora in Canada. I discuss my findings in three major sections: i) minority experiences of diasporas may create inter-group tension and hostility among diverse population; ii) participants' religious affiliations and practices work as resources for developing a sense of belonging; and iii) language and literacy practices of a diasporic community may be devalued and the community may experience linguistic loss in the mainstream society.

5.1. Continuities and Transformations in the Practices and Narratives of Religious Identities

In this section, I present data based on three major themes. The three major themes focus on i) how the participants' narratives represent diasporic consciousness; ii) how transnational religious affiliations shelter and bind communities of faith as a preservation of identity that is influenced by the experiences of immigration and past living; and iii) how participants' religious affiliations fuel diasporic consciousness and sense of belonging as symbolic, emotional, and imaginative resonances (Alexander et al., 2015). Each of these themes is discussed in detail below.

5.1.1. Narratives of Diaspora Living

The stories of the adult participants in this study reflect a type of consciousness toward their minority experiences and immigration that can be identified as diasporic consciousness (Vertovec, 1997). Drawing on the transnational and diasporic identity formation and religious affiliations (Appadurai, 2010; Vertovec, 2008; Cohen, 1997), in this section, I will analyze how this diasporic consciousness, evident in their narratives of

immigration and integration, daily-life practices and religious affiliations, shelter and bind them to (un)fasten/refasten or hybridize their identity and integration in Canada.

The participants' narratives of their minority experiences were evident in the interview data collected from all adult participants. Whenever I visited the families, whether to attend a party or to take notes about their daily life activities as a participant observer, or to record interviews, most adult participants shared their experiences as minorities in Bangladesh. Though the narratives of minority experiences varied considerably among the participants, the issue appeared to be very significant for each adult participant in terms of immigration and settlement in Canada.

The reasons they immigrated to Canada among the recruited participants were multi-faceted. Some of them came to study first as a gateway to immigration; some came for a better and secured life; and some came by fulfilling criteria of the skilled worker category. The common pattern that was identified from interview and observational data was their interest in living in a country where they will not be discriminated against, humiliated, or persecuted for their religious beliefs and practices. The experiences that they had had as minorities in their homeland played a significant role in their decision to leave the country. For the recruited adults, getting out of their home country and having an immigrant or study visa to a North American country was like a dream come true.

The first interview excerpt presented below is an example of how the adult participants expressed their experiences of living a minority life in Bangladesh and their urge to leave their homeland. Whenever I asked adult participants to share their stories of immigration and life in Bangladesh, they detailed how they felt in Bangladesh in terms of negotiating their identities and practicing their religion. The following informal conversation excerpt explains why this recruited adult and his family will never go back to Bangladesh. The conversation was recorded when I met Kanti, an adult male participant, at Sanjit's house on June 11, 2017 to celebrate a birthday ceremony.

My wife and I were invited to a party at Sanjit's house in the afternoon. Kanti came to the party with his wife, son, and daughter. We were talking about how everyone was doing. Kanti sat on a chair near me with his new born daughter on his lap. We started

talking about how his life was going. I knew that he had recently visited Bangladesh. I was interested in learning how his visit went. The conversation below presents Kanti's perspectives.

Interview Excerpt:1

Sanjoy: Why did you immigrate to Canada?

Kanti: At first, I did not want to come. My sister [a Canadian citizen who sponsored her] told me "come, spend some days; if you like, stay; if you don't like, you can always go back".

Sanjoy: Then, you came?

Kanti: Yes, and then, I felt good, and decided to stay.

Sanjoy: You liked Canada at the very beginning?

Kanti: No, at the beginning, I did not feel good; I did not like Canada for a year.

Sanjoy: Were there any particular reasons for immigration?

Kanti: What are the reasons? Do we [Hindus] have to have any reasons for leaving Bangladesh? Do we have anything in Bangladesh? There is no security of life [for Hindus].

Sanjoy: What do you like here?

Kanti: I enjoy the weekends after working five days. I can go out anywhere and have fun all day long. This is not possible in Bangladesh. I like it [weekend parties] the most.

Sanjoy: How do you feel being a Hindu in Canada?

Kanti: This is the best thing in Canada. There is no discrimination against anyone's religious beliefs –whether you are a Hindu or Muslim or Christian, there is no discrimination. Whatever work you do all day long, whether you wear a rugged shirt or a new shirt, no one cares. The rules here are: You have come to work, work, and go back home after work. This is very good. No one gossips over others, which is common in Bangladesh.

Sanjoy: How did you feel when you came here for the first time?

Kanti: ...umm, [I] felt like I would go back home right then; I thought I would not stay here more than a week.

Sanjoy: Then, why did you continue living here permanently?

Kanti: How would I go? The way Muslims [in Bangladesh] torture Hindus, the ways they [referring to some opportunist Muslim extremists] destroy Hindu temples, and then what I saw after the General election in Bangladesh in 2001 [referring to widespread rape of Hindu girls and women, damage and looting of Hindu properties, and exodus of Hindu population to India when extremist? Islamist parties came to power] are unexplainable.

Sanjoy: Yes, I know, but are you good here?

Kanti: [umm], ... Good and bad, definitely much better than living in Bangladesh.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, Kanti came to Canada in 2008 when his eldest sister, a Canadian citizen, sponsored him. Later, he went to Bangladesh in 2009 to get married. Although Kanti owns a home in Canada, they live in the basement and rent out the main floor of their bungalow to pay their mortgage. As evident in interview excerpt 1, Kanti was not comfortable with his changed living condition in Canada in the beginning. Kanti reported in this study that he was not a college graduate and owned a small business back home, and his everyday conversation in Bangladesh was in Bangla and mostly with lower middle-class business people in Bangladesh. Consequently, he struggled to communicate with English-speaking Canadians in the early months/years, and still faces problems in understanding Canadian accents. However, when I asked why he did not leave Canada, he answered “How would I go?”. He connected his immigration and settlement to the minority living of Hindus in Bangladesh. It is noteworthy that Kanti did not personally experience the violence against Hindus he described in the interview excerpt, but his perspectives represent his disillusionment with the condition of Hindus in Bangladesh.

He also confirmed in the data that he would never go back to Bangladesh to live there. The original Bengali phrase he used was “proshnoi ashe na”, which translates as “no way” in English. This “never-to-Bangladesh” mindset has made him content with his current living conditions in Canada. Though he does not have a secure job or the life he expected in Canada in terms of his income and social status, he does not want to go back to Bangladesh because of his deep-seated fear of the torture and trauma Hindus experience in Bangladesh. His own narrative of minority living, and immigration echo

other stories of discrimination, trauma and exodus of Hindus in Bangladesh (Guhathakurata, 2012; Raghavan, 2013; Riaz, 2004, 2006, 2010). In this sense, his diasporic consciousness is a binding force to identification of communities of faith in the host country (Alexander et al., 2015).

The participants' stories also demonstrate that their previous experiences influenced their decision to settle in Canada even though their socio-economic status deteriorated in some cases. Atinder, for example, came to Canada to pursue higher education and decided to stay as he thought he and his family would have a better and secure life in Canada. The following excerpt of my recorded conversation with Atinder, an adult male participant, will shed light on why he decided to apply for permanent residency in Canada. The following conversation was recorded on October 14, 2017. It was a weekend telephone conversation with Atinder. As I discussed earlier (see chapter 3), Atinder was my high school friend. We have telephone conversations every now and then. On that day, he called me to invite me and my wife to a religious program he was planning to arrange at his home. We had some conversation about our life, family, and work in Canada and Bangladesh. The excerpt below is selected to discuss how his minority experiences have influenced him to live in Canada permanently.

Interview Excerpt 2

Atinder: It is not that we had very strong reasons to apply for immigration to Canada

Sanjoy: Then, why did you decide to live permanently here?

Atinder: You know, a problem, in general, is always there. Hindus in Bangladesh are living in jeopardy. People called me names several times because I was a Hindu; classmates, colleagues, and who not.

Sanjoy: Was that the main reason?

Atinder: Yes; for example, if I were an Indian, I would probably go back home.

Interview excerpt 2 reflects Atinder's discomfort with being a Bangladeshi Hindu. Atinder was a professor at one of the reputable universities in Bangladesh. In our informal conversation, he said that he got an excellent remuneration from the university.

However, in Canada he could not get into any teaching or research positions in any educational institutions even after completing his PhD from a famous Canadian university. He worked for industry for several months after the completion of his post-doctoral research but was laid-off during the time of data collection. He clearly stated in the interview that he would go back home if he was an Indian. However, his minority experiences influenced his decision to settle in Canada.

The adult participants in this study, thus, expressed a strong diasporic consciousness which framed their narratives, sense of self, and life trajectories and decisions. Their affiliation with their religious identities were also evident in their daily-life and community practices. I observed the family for more than three years after first meeting them at the Bangladesh-Canada Hindu Cultural Society temple in Toronto. I also observed them participating in the programs of family and friends who were members of the same religious community.

The diasporic consciousness that some of the participants exhibited also created some inter-group tension. As discussed before, some of the participants showed strong Islamophobic feelings. I have selected one such excerpt that demonstrates a female participant's extreme opinions about Muslims. The purpose of presenting this excerpt here is to show how some members of a diasporic community may carry on strong inter-religious hostility even after becoming a citizen of a secular country because of their past religious minority traumatic experiences.

I recorded this conversation in Latika's home in May 2017. Latika, an adult female participant, came to Canada in 2011 on a spousal visa with a hope that she would be a mathematics teacher. However, after spending almost seven years in Canada, she became a home maker and raise her three children. Her parents also immigrated to Canada in 2016 and gained refugee status after arrival. It was a regular visit to Latika's home for us as we (my wife and I) used to go to Sanjit's house two/three times every month. His home is only 10-minute drive from my home in Toronto. Before the interview, my wife informed me that Latika had had an argument with her next-door neighbor. This was surprising because Latika's family had always had a very good

relationship with this neighbor, so I asked about the argument. The following conversation took place following my inquiry.

Interview Excerpt 3

Latika: No, no it was nothing like that. We had some arguments about refugees and taxes in Canada

Sanjoy: About what?

Latika: No, umm, you know, she [the neighbor] was saying that Canada should take more refugees [from Syria and Iraq].

Sanjoy: What did you say?

Latika: I said that the government is spending our hard-earned money onto people who did not contribute to this country [referring to Syrian refugee intake to Canada]. They [the Trudeau government] are increasing taxes and spending money on refugee.

Sanjoy: But, they are helping all refugees [referring to the refugee status of her parents]

Latika: She admitted that we also took benefit of refugee-friendly policy [referring to her parents being granted refugee status in Canada].

Sanjoy: Oh!

Latika: Then I said that we paid taxes and all fees for them. We are also keeping them in our house and feeding them. On the other hand, the government is just giving them [Syrian refugees] money for nothing. They are sitting idle and taking advantages of our liberal policy.

You know what, these people [some extremist Muslims] are very bad. They harassed me in many ways. When I was staying at the college hostel [in Bangladesh], one of my friends used to ask me "why don't you believe that Islam is the only religion of the world?" What you are doing is nothing. You worship some idols (deities) that do not have any power". It was very humiliating for me.

Sanjoy: That's true.

Latika: And, there are many news of young Hindu girls being kidnapped, raped and sometimes forced to convert to Islam [referring to newspaper reports of forced conversion, rape and torture of Hindu girls in Bangladesh].

[a guest said that the Syrian refugees also faced similar situations]

Latika: May be. But, spending our hard-earned money on people who do not do anything is bad.

Interview excerpt 3 reflects Latika's political perspectives to the refugee intake policy in Canada. Latika expressed several times in the study that she was not satisfied with the way the Liberal government was bringing in Syrian refugees to Canada. She justified her opinions saying that she was concerned about the taxes her family had to pay every year. During this meeting and other conversations, I reminded her that her parents had also been accepted as refugees from Bangladesh. She then switched the conversation back to her previous experiences of being intimidated by Bangladeshi Muslims. Latika appears only to see Muslims as oppressors, which is why she ignored the fact that Syrian refugees were also an oppressed group. Her over-generalizations are a direct result of her previous experiences of being a minoritized Hindu in Muslim-majority Bangladesh. Her resentment towards Muslims seems to be a response, first, to Muslims as the dominant religious group in Bangladesh, and later, to Muslims in general. Thus, her statement, on the one hand, is an example of how diasporic consciousness may sustain inter-group tensions that are carried on in host nations despite experiences of displacement (Clifford, 1994); on the other hand, it coincides with the "global articulation of ideas, fears, moral panics and stereotypes of the 'Muslim threat'" (Abdel-Fattah, 2017, p. 181). Such rhetoric was evident throughout my data and reflects a socially constructed fear about Muslims anchored in an essentialized understanding of Islam.

During informal conversations at different times, Latika, her husband Sanjit and a few other participants shared their concerns about increasing accommodation to Islamic religious schools in Canada as they believed that some Muslims preach "hateful" ideology through schools and mosques. They, like many other recruited adult participants, expressed deep concern about their perception of increasing Islamic activities in Canada. As they had experienced how religions, in the Indian sub-continent, had created divisive communities between Hindus and Muslims that resulted in persecution and trauma, they were scared that religious schooling and conservative religious practices in Canada would induce the same risks in Canada in the long run.

The participants, having experienced discrimination, intimidation, and, in some cases, trauma, have developed a specific understanding about *Muslims* that helps them define their “own sense of identity” (Abdel-Fattah, 2012, p. 156). Islamophobia is not just their fear of Muslims, but what Abdel-Fattah (2017) calls “emotional discursive practices and structures of feelings” (p. 129). In her study on Islamophobia and multiculturalism in Australia, the author describes how Islamophobia is an “active doing of emotions” (p. 153) in response to past experiences that are influenced by pre-existing narratives in dominant discourses. The participants in this study, for example, narrated their experiences of intimidation while living in Bangladesh and were afraid that Muslims may create similar situations in Toronto. Latika’s stories of Muslims to be *proselytizers* and Sanjit’s fear of “increasing Islamic activities in Canada” reflect the same fear of Muslims to be the *transformers* of the secular world found in dominant political discourses. The discourses view Islam as transgressive and a threat to the secular world (see Abdel-Fattah, 2017). Like the comments of Abdel-Fattah’s participants, the fear that Islam will take over is also found in some of the comments of the participants in this study. Thus, the fear can be understood not solely in terms of what the participants experience, but as a *learned habit* (Scheer, 2012) that they mentally organize and articulate through narratives that have been rehearsed over time. Through these narratives they reproduce the discourses, and their diasporic consciousness, that have been shaped by their long-term relationships, both personal and imagined, with Muslims in Bangladesh.

When the adult participants in this study compared their lives in Bangladesh and Canada, they insisted on religious freedom and the enjoyment of religious practice without any fear. Sanjit’s story of immigration is noteworthy here. Sanjit first went to Australia for study and to financially secure a better life. In various informal conversations, he admitted that he had dreamed of moving to a developed country ever since he experienced severe economic hardships with his family. After spending four years in Australia, he moved to Canada as getting permanent citizenship in Australia was very difficult. During an interview in which Sanjit and Latika participated together, they described what they considered the key differences between living in Canada and in Bangladesh.

The excerpt below was an interview transcription that was recorded during the summer 2014. Sanjit and his wife Latika were invited to my home. They were very excited to come and see us in our new home. They came with their two sons. I had planned to record a semi-structured interview with them on that day. Once they settled down on the sofa, I asked my wife to take care of the children in the basement so that I could record the interview without any interruption. After some initial conversation about our lives in Canada, I asked them questions related to their daily lives, religious freedom, and opportunities in Canada. My first question was (to both Sanjit and Latika) how life was in Canada for them. The conversation below then ensued:

Interview Excerpt 4

Sanjit: What strikes me the most [in Canada] is the maintenance of minimum standard of living; whatever you do, you would not starve to death or suffer from the shortage of food and shelter.

Sanjoy: Yes, and, what about the freedom of speech and religion?

Sanjit: Oh, yes, actually, there are unlimited opportunities here which you could not get at home. Here, whatever, you do, you can own a home.

Sanjoy: And, your identity and practices as Hindu- do you feel any differences between Bangladesh and Canada?

Latika: Yes, there are many differences. There are many problems in our home country. For example, we had hesitation [in celebrating rituals].

Sanjit: Here, we do not have that fear. Back home we had that fear...As we celebrate Durga Puja [the major Hindu religious festival] here, but

Latika: Everything is safe here

Sanjit: In homeland, we had to inform police, local councilor, and so forth for protection. Here, we do not have that feeling of fear.

Sanjit's statements suggest that he is comfortable living in Canada for two specific reasons: one, for having unlimited opportunities such as owning property and two, for religious freedom. These are the two positive aspects that contribute to his settlement in Canada. All the participants linked their religious affiliations and their minority experiences in Bangladesh as points of comparison to their newly acquired

positions and perceptions of their new life in Canada. Latika's identity position and her strong opinion about Muslims are associated with her experiences at home. Sanjit, on the other hand, seems to be happy with the opportunities he is getting in Canada. While he enjoys the absence of fear or intimidation in his religious practice, he is most stimulated by the "unlimited opportunity" open to people in Canada. Kanti and Atinder also expressed their happiness with permanently living in Canada because they did not feel secure and respected as minorities in Bangladesh. In the following sections, two major characteristics of the diasporic life of the participants are analyzed: how the participants' life trajectories revolve around their past minority experiences that also shelter and bind them together, and how their sense of belonging to the Hindu community represents, what Alexander et al. (2015) calls symbolic, emotional and imaginative consciousness.

The diasporic consciousness of the participants is strongly reflected through their discontentment about Muslims who they viewed as the previous oppressors. I, however, acknowledge that not all the participants carried the same degree of resentment towards Muslims, and there was a wide variety of emotional responses towards them among the participants. I include a few participants' comments that illustrate their anger towards the Muslim community in Toronto because, as they believed, Muslims in Toronto held the same attitudes towards them as before. The participants reported that religious identities are important identity markers in Bangladeshi society. In Canada, even though other people do not care about their religious identities, they still experience discomfort around Bangladeshi Muslims. Bisheshor, an adult male participant, for example, said "They [Bangladeshi Muslims in Canada] still consider us minority here... you know, the neighbor at the front, did not seem to be very happy when we moved to this apartment. They expected a Muslim family." This magnetic excerpt was picked from a recorded conversation at Bisheshor's (an adult male participant) home when I went there to celebrate a religious kirtan in summer 2016. At the same time, Bisheshor's wife, Maloti, added to his remark "... the other day, we went to a house, they offered us pizza. When I inquired about the meat used, they told us it was beef. I got very angry. I asked why they did not let us know before. They said many Hindus ate beef then; so, they did not bother informing us. This is their attitude."

The conflict with food is common between Muslim and Hindu communities in Bangladesh. The cow is considered a sacred animal to Hindus, and this is sometimes mocked by many Muslims in social gatherings in Bangladesh. The conflict with beef is symbolic of the historical tension between Hindus and Muslims. The inter-group tension is also evident in Canada since most of the adult participants complained about some sort of problems with beef-eating in social gatherings where both Muslims and Hindus were present together. Atinder said, “I used to attend some programs with ex-Bangladeshi engineers in Canada. However, I stopped going with them. They [Muslim engineers] are fundamentalists in root. They do not change. They do not respect Hindus. They make fun of our beliefs and practices.”

Such tension resembles common conflicts between Bangladeshi Muslims and Hindus, in which they carry a “pre-existing and rehearsed narrative” (Abdel-Fattah, 2017, p. 132) of victimization. The conflicts get fueled by other global discourses of Muslims as the transformers of Western secularism, with the whole world a victim. Thus, the participants, leaving their minority status far away from Toronto, still feel similar intimidation in a multicultural context where they moved for a supposedly improved life. The religious tension, thus, intensifies their diasporic consciousness while reinforcing their sense of belonging and contributing to binding them to the Hindu community in Toronto.

5.1.2. Religious Identities that Bind Participants

Immigrants from a particular ethnic and religious group may develop strong group identity though they may not share the same experiences of trauma and torture (Boyarin, 2015). The following selected interview excerpts and two participant observations showcase how the recruited participants form a diasporic consciousness that binds them together. Most of the recruited adult participants shared stories of violence, intimidation, and political, economic and social marginalization in their homeland. Their diasporic identities seemed to have merged them together in close-knit communities, around various community associations, including religious, as a performance of a “diasporic non-territorial form of essentialized belonging” (Alexander et al., 2015). Most

of the research participants in this study shared stories and their experiences as members of a minoritized group. These stories and experiences strongly influenced their diasporic affiliations in Canada and shaped their sense of belonging and their resilience. In this section, I will discuss the role of their religious practices in their identity formation, and their use of religion as social capital (Hinnels, 2010; Hopkins, 2011; Knott, 2011, Vertovec, 1987).

Interview and observational data suggest that the daily and weekend social and community activities of the recruited participants revolve around meeting and visiting familiar Bangladeshi Hindu families, and participating and engaging in Hindu religious practices and festivities at temples. The participants were often observed arranging religious programs with Hindu friends and families. The major Bengali Hindu traditional religious and community events that the study participants attended were Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja, Kali Puja, Janmastomi (the Birthday of Lord Krishna), and Bengali New Year. These events are celebrated following the Hindu lunar calendar; majority of Hindus irrespective of their caste, social status, education attend these festivals. Over the five-year period of my study, all participants attended these programs at four Bangladeshi Hindu temples situated east of Toronto. I was able to visit three of these temples and could meet all participants on different festive and religious occasions. Besides these, there were also social get-togethers for birthday parties and baby showers. Irrespective of the type of occasion, each of these gatherings constituted an important event for the participants to socialize with the Hindu community and to participate in close-knit networks. I have selected three events that I attended with the participants: a major Hindu religious festival - Saraswati puja [Worship of Goddess of Education], a small religious event – Kirtan [worship of Lord Krishna], and a celebration of Bengali New Year- Pahela Boishakh. Though celebrating Bengali new year is not necessarily religious in nature, I observed significant religious influences in the activities.

5.1.2.1. Saraswati Puja

Saraswati puja is one of the major Hindu worshipping ceremonies celebrated every year and is widely celebrated across the world. Saraswati or Sarasvati is the goddess of learning, wisdom, aesthetics and music. She is also known as the goddess of eloquence

and speech and the inventor of Sanskrit. In some religious texts, she has been identified as the patron of the arts and sciences who provided Ganesha with pen and ink (Cartwright, 2015).

Saraswati puja is “worshipped to pursue the wealth of knowledge” (ndtv.com, 2018). *Saraswati puja* is also celebrated as *Vasant Panchami* in many parts of India on the first day of Spring between early morning and noon. On this day, adults and children visit temples and pray to Goddess Saraswati by wearing colorful dresses. In Bangladesh, *Saraswati puja* is celebrated in schools and colleges where Hindu students study. This is an annual celebration particularly significant to students. As Saraswati is considered the Gooddness of knowledge and fine arts, children worship this goddess to get rid of ignorance and darkness. Goddess Saraswati is also called the goddess of enlightenment. Children hope that they perform well on tests if they get blessings from this goddess. Young children and adults alike take showers early in the morning and fast till the end of the puja. On the altar where the idol of goddess Saraswati is established, children and adults offer books that they study. It is believed that they get blessings from the goddess if their books are there. After the puja, children take prasadam (food) and visit every temple in their locality to see the images of the goddess and share food that is offered to the goddess.

Like Hindus in Bangladesh, Bengali Hindus in Toronto celebrate *Saraswati Puja* with very similar rituals and festivities. Though they cannot celebrate the day according to the Hindu lunar calendar, as it is not a school holiday, they celebrate it on a weekend close to that day. The participants were observed visiting temples to worship Goddess Saraaswati with their children. They reported in this study that they wished they could celebrate the day on a school holiday so that their children could relate more to the roots of their culture. Next is observational data that represent some of the activities participant members engaged in on a *Saraswati puja*.

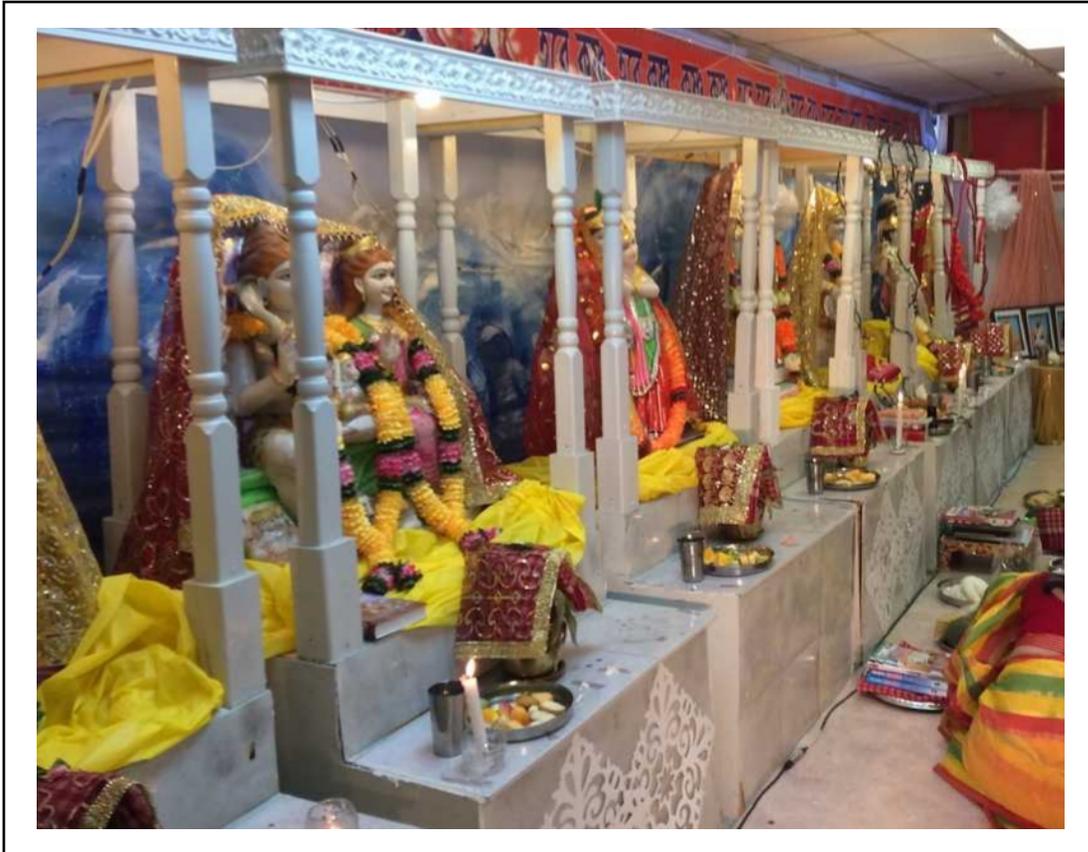


Figure 3. Celebration of Saraswati Puja at a Hindu temple in Toronto.
Photograph taken by me in 2017.

In the photo, a glimpse of Saraswati puja celebrated in 2017 is presented. The participants visited the temple to take part in the puja. Bisheshor, one of the adult male recruited participants of this study, phoned me in the morning on February 4, 2017 to ask if I was interested in going to the temple. I said “yes” as I thought that attending the celebration with a participating family would be a good opportunity for participant observation and to collect data. I went to the temple around noon. I met him in the hall and exchanged greetings. I came to know that he came with his son. In a few minutes, I met another recruited family at the same temple.

There were around 150 to 200 people in the temple. Half of the attendees were children. After the priest completed his puja or rituals, he asked all the attendees to offer their prayer to the goddess. He particularly asked the children to worship the goddess by repeating religious mantras after him. One of the program organizers requested the parents to move their children to the front so he could explain why this puja was special

for the kids. The priest explained how important it was for the kids to study more. He said that Mother Saraswati would help them reach their goals if they studied hard.

This specific event has been selected for discussion here because it provides examples of how the study participants used this religious occasion as an opportunity to socialize with the Hindu community in Toronto. The photo in Figure 2 was captured on February 4, 2017 at a Hindu temple in Toronto. Most of the participants went to attend the puja at different temples. The participant families came with their children as this ceremony was important for the children's education. For instance, I saw Atinder with his wife at the temple. While conversing with them, I noticed that their son was not with them. When asked, they said that they wanted their son to learn about Hindu culture and religious practices, so they pushed their son to "take a seat in the front row" to worship Goddess Saraswati. Atinder's wife added that she wanted her son to worship the goddess of knowledge with due devotion, which is why she pushed her son to the front. Furthermore, my observations and field notes from the event also suggest that the religious event was significant in bringing the study participants together with others in the Hindu community. The temple provided them a space to develop social networking. The following conversation with Bisheshor is an example of how the religious event was accessed by the participants for socialization with the Hindu community.

At the end of the scheduled puja/worship and prasadam/feast, children were called for a drawing competition. One of the recruited child participants, Prakash, who was there with his father Bisheshor participated in the competition. I asked Bisheshor if his son was good at drawing. The conversation followed:

Interview Excerpt 5

Sanjoy: Is he [the son] going to draw something?

Bisheshor: Yes

Sanjoy: Is he a good painter? Does he practice [at home]?

Bisheshor: Oh, no, this is for socialization [with the Hindu community] which is better than playing video games on computer and ipads.

Sanjoy: Yes, that is good

Bisheshor: Yes, this is also for socialization with people from our religion- talking to them, making friends and have some chats about us.

Sanjoy: Oh, yeah, that is very important to keep in touch with tradition and cultures.

Bisheshor's explanation suggests that the ceremony was not only a religious event to them, but also served the purpose of community building with people from the same religious background (Baumann, 2000; Cohen, 1995, 1997). The above excerpt also suggests how Bisheshor got psychological comfort and group association by bringing his young son into the temple and encouraging him to participate in activities with other Hindu children. The participation in the drawing competition for his son was a way to develop communication with other children from the same religious background. Bisheshor expected that his son would socialize with others participating by being engaged in conversation with them. The religious practices as such had strong influences on the participants' community living in Toronto.

5.1.2.2. Kirtan/Worship of Lord Krishna

Kirtan was one of the religious occasions regularly celebrated by some of my study participants. This event was not a part of the Hindu religious calendar. Kirtans or sankirtans are ways to chant the divine god in various names. According to the Divine Life Society, kirtans have been a religious and social program among Hindus in Bengal since the fifteenth century. There are several kinds of Kirtan in Bengal: Paalaa Kirtan, Shyama Sangit, Parvati and Nama Kirtan are the important ones. Kirtans are generally sung with string and other musical instruments like the Khol, Jhaj, Vina, Pakhvaj, Mridanga. Paalaa Kirtan is the most ancient Kirtan in Bengal. They are written in verse with rhythm. Most of them deal with the life-history of Lord Krishna.

Hindus in various neighborhoods in Bangladesh arrange kirtans/religious chants at various times of the year, especially during the spring and winter months. In some neighborhoods, people arrange kirtans for a week or two. Thousands of men, women, and children attend these kirtans with festivity and devotion. In Toronto, kirtans are arranged

two or three times a year in most Bengali Hindu temples. Though it is very difficult to find people who are experts in singing kirtans in North America, I have observed that the temple authorities invite people from various US states to perform kirtans in Toronto. Some temple-based kirtan groups have also been established recently. It has been noticed that there are some social and community groups who arrange kirtans in their homes, and chant religious songs with their family and friends.

Bisheshor's family celebrates Kirtan every month with a group of Bengali Hindus in Toronto. The group consists of about 20 families with 40-50 people, and each family hosts the program, rotating over the year. The program includes lunch or dinner, and everyone brings some food to help the host. New families may join them anytime and become part of the community. As a participant observer, I was invited by Bisheshor to a Kirtan at his residence. People of all ages were there to sing praising songs to Lord Krishna.

I joined the singing. The main program was arranged in the living room. The room seemed to be approximately 15 x 15 feet. There was a sofa set with five seats in one corner, and a dining table at another corner of the room. There were also some chairs and a wide rug. According to the estimate of the host, there were almost 40 to 45 people to chant religious songs. Half of the attendees were children between 2 to 17-year-olds including Bisheshor's son.

The puja started around 11 AM and continued until 3 PM. There were two parts of the program: the Puja and the Kirtan. After puja, everyone was offered prasadam, or food, which was offered to Lord Krishna. As the hosts, Bisheshor's family offered puja to Lord Krishna. There were solo and chorus songs praising Lord Krishna for his love to the devotees. Bisheshor and his wife were busy entertaining people by offering them whatever they needed that they could afford. At one point, Bisheshor, the adult male participant, brought his six-year old from the bedroom so that his son could offer his prayer to Lord Krishna. Half the children appeared to be in the bedroom playing games and talking to each other. Some other children were at the main religious program and offered their prayers and sang songs. It was notable that there were booklets for almost

everybody with written religious songs in Bengali. After the kirtan, lunch was offered to everybody. Children and elderly people were given the opportunity to have lunch before everyone else. There were many vegetarian and sweet dishes.

Hence, the religious event became more like a community event. Because there was no strict schedule of events, the attendees comfortably took part in the chorus while switching to other routine activities such as eating or chatting with others. In between singing and recitation, people were chatting about everyday lives such as their jobs, families, and the importance of having that type of get-together. When I asked Bisheshor if he had attended such kirtans in Toronto before, he replied in the affirmative. He added that there were 25 to 30 members in their group, and each one of them arranged Kirtan every month by turn. I was surprised by the idea and praised their initiatives to keep in touch with their religious and traditional roots. He said that he liked the idea as it helped them socialize in a foreign land. Thus, the event simultaneously became a religious and community gathering while providing opportunities to the attendees for integration and social networking. Events as such reflect their diasporic living, which is maintained through a close in-group network and their conversations about their religious lives at home and in a foreign land (Abd-El-Aziz et al., 2005).

5.1.2.3. Pahela Boishakh/ Bengali New Year

Pahela Boishakh is celebrated on the first day of summer following the Bengali lunar calendar. Mughal emperor Akbar started Bangabda (the counting of Bengali months) in 1584. Businessmen, landlords, and zaminders/owners of farm lands used to open new books to collect dues, rents, and taxes from their regular customers, tenants, and subjects (The Daily Star, April 14, 2018). The present day of celebration started flourishing after the independence of Bangladesh. The Daily Star reported, “Since the liberation, Pahela Baishakh has become a national festival for all Bangladeshis irrespective of all religions and castes.” Though the first day of Bengali New Year used to be celebrated on different days based on the lunar calendar, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah fixed April 14 every year as the first day of Bengali New Year. Now, it is a government holiday in Bangladesh, and people from all walks of life enjoy the day with festivity and fun.

Bengali Hindus, on the other hand, celebrate Pahela Baishakh on a day according to the lunar year. It means that the day can be any other day in mid-April, not necessarily April 14. Hindus also worship various gods and goddesses starting from the day before the first day of Bengali New Year. They also celebrate “Choitra Songkranti,” which is the day before the first day of the Bengali New Year. They worship God for giving them a year of health and prosperity and wish for another year of health and life. They also thoroughly clean their homes as a symbol of cleaning out all the bad things of the previous year. Parents and children buy new clothes, and they exchange greetings and sweets with family and friends. Special dishes, such as khichuri (a combination of rice and lentils), fried Hilsha fish, payesh (rice pudding), various types of fried vegetables are also prepared on the day of Pahela Baishakh. In the evening, some parents take their children to shops and marketplaces where they did business in the previous year. The salespeople offer sweets to their year-long customers. Young children also bow down and touch the feet of the elderly family members to get their blessings for success and health in the new year.

In Toronto, some members of Bengali Hindu and Muslim communities celebrate Pahela Baishakh. Most Bengalis greet their family and friends on this day to wish for a better year. Close friends and relatives meet in restaurants or homes where hosts entertain all the guests. Though there are some cultural programs that are attended by both the religious communities from the same ethnic background, Hindus celebrate it in a different way. Hindus arrange a rally on the day at the Danforth-Victoria Park intersection under the banner of the Hindu Cultural Society. They sing Bengali traditional songs, Rabindra Sangeet [songs written and composed by the Nobel Laureate Bengali Poet Rabindranath Tagore] and Hindu religious kirtans while attending the rally. They also use various instruments, like the Dhol, Jhaj, khol, and kortal while singing religious chants.

I attended a Bengali New Year celebration arranged by the Bangladesh-Canada Hindu Cultural Society in 2014. The organization, based at a major Bengali Hindu temple, organizes the festival every year, and the rally shown in Figure 3 is part of the celebration. I went to the rally with Ashutosh and his daughter. There were

approximately 200 to 250 Bangladeshi Hindus participating in that rally. People had various colorful masks, festoons, and musical instruments, such as the Harmonium, Dhol, Jhajz, Shongkho, and so forth. These musical instruments are mostly used for Kirtans (religious chanting praising Lord Krishna) in many parts of the world including Bangladesh. Most women wore sarees and some male participants wore traditional panjabi (a long traditional clothing for men).



Figure 4. Bengali New Year rally in Toronto.

[Banner reads: Bangladesh-Canada Hindu Cultural Society and Bangladesh-Canada Hindu Temple; Happy New Year, 1421]. Photographed by me.

The rally started around 11 AM and ended around 1 PM after a joyful and exciting Kirtan –chanting the glory of Lord Krishna. We went to the intersection of Victoria Park and Danforth Avenue. At the corner of the parking lot, there were men, women, and children with colorful dresses. When I joined them, I observed that people were greeting each other; those who knew each other continued talking about health, family, jobs, and conditions of Hindus in Bangladesh. The adult male participant, Ashutosh, found some of his friends and started talking to them. He also introduced his daughter, a child participant, to them. The gathering seemed to be a get-together of old friends. In the banners, festoons, and head bands, it was clear that that they wanted to show that they were representing Hindu community in the celebration of Bangla New

Year. At the end of the rally, the participating members embraced each other and wished each other a happy, healthy, and prosperous new year.

Even though Bengali New Year is celebrated by Bangladeshis in almost the same way irrespective of their religious backgrounds, Bangladeshi Hindus were observed to celebrate the occasion separately in this study. For example, in the event above, there were no Bangladeshi Muslims. I asked Ashutosh about this, and he replied that many Bangladeshi Muslims consider “celebrating Bengali New Year is a part of Hindu religion”, which is why they don’t attend the rallies organized by Hindus. Ashutosh’s statement, in fact, emerges from a popular discourse in Bangladesh where many religious fundamentalists believe that the New Year celebration stems from Hindu culture, so Muslims should not attend (Garbin, 2005; Eade and Garbin, 2006). The study participants were very aware of these discourses. They pointed out how many Islamic preachers through their YouTube videos and social media comments state that celebration of Bangla New Year is anti-Islamic. They comment that the Bangla New Year rituals are dominated by Hindu cultures and should be celebrated by them alone. It is, hence, noteworthy that the major rallies and New Year programs in Bangladesh are organized and celebrated by diverse religious groups in coordination with each other, and the segregation observed in the rally in Toronto is not representative of what traditionally happens of Bangladesh. Hindu-Muslim segregation seems to be stronger in some cases in Toronto as it was observed in many of the religious and non-religious programs celebrated by Hindus. It is the diasporic consciousness among the immigrant Muslims and Hindus in Toronto that seems to influence the segregation that excludes them from each other’s life trajectories.

Such segregation was also evident in other family, social and religious gatherings of Hindus in Toronto. I attended about 30 events including birthday celebrations, funerals, baby showers, and housewarming parties organized by the study participants over the 3-year study period, and most of these events were only attended by Hindu families, with a very few exceptions. Some families invited Anglo Canadians to their parties, but none of the invitees were Muslims. In an interview, Atinder said, “They [Bangladeshi Muslims] still consider us minority and look down on our practices.” He

said he did not attend any programs with Muslims and did not invite Muslims to their family programs in Toronto. The complex religious and cultural differences between Muslims and Hindus seemed to have informed the diasporic consciousness among them after immigration, which made the two religious groups more segregated from each other. As I discussed above, the level of segregation between Bangladeshi-born Muslim and Hindu communities in Toronto is higher than before. Thus, the Hindu community in Toronto seems to have become more dependent on their religious practices and organizational settings, as they become sites of community living, networking and resources for other important aspects of life.

In addition to the above festivals and cultural programs, I attended many different social and family programs arranged by Hindu participants. All the data suggest how Hindu religious flavor is important for social and family programs for these participating families. They seem to feel at home by celebrating family and personal events with friends of the same religious backgrounds and by following religious customs associated with it (Cohen, 1995, 1997; Knott, 2011; Vertovec, 1987). This co-existence with people from the same background helps them live happily in a foreign land (Hinnels, 2005; Hopkins, 2011; Putnam, 2005). They also develop reciprocity and trustworthiness through these gatherings (Hopkins, 2011). I have met Dipti, Kanti, their son, and daughter four more times in Latika's and Sanjit's house. Sanjit told me that Kanti used to drop him and his family off to the airport whenever they went to Bangladesh. Sanjit reciprocates and takes Kanti's family to the airport in his car. I have also observed that Sanjit's family played a major role when Kanti arranged a program to pray for his deceased mother-in-law. Kanti and his wife invited almost 150 people to the program, and the program was arranged in one of the most well-known Bangladeshi temples in Toronto. Thus, reciprocity and trustworthiness among the recruited participants were evident (Cohen, 1995, 1997; Hopkins, 2011; Waldigner, 2013).

5.1.3. Diasporic Consciousness and Sense of Belonging

Empathy, or fellow feeling, is another form of social capital that the adult recruited participants expressed to each other during the data collection. I would like to

cite three particular events that I observed when the research participants were supporting each other during challenging times. One of these crucial times was when Sanjit went through a family crisis; I will skip descriptions of the crisis as it may compromise the participants' identity. My wife and I visited them every other day and spent two to three hours every visit. The family was in a state of mental breakdown. I observed people from the Hindu community and religious associations were visiting them to help them with the crisis. Towards the end of data collection for this study, I observed that with the emotional support they received from their relatives and friends from the Hindu community, Sanjit and his family were gradually becoming more accepting of their situation. They started attending all social and religious programs. Sanjit's religious affiliations and beliefs appeared to help him overcome the initial shock of the crisis.

Another event was the loss of Kanti's father-in-law. When Sanjit learned that Kanti's father-in-law passed away, he called Kanti and Kunti and expressed his deep condolences for the loss. I also called Kunti to express my condolences and told her to remember good things her father did for them and society. In a couple of weeks, they arranged a remembrance and religious rituals at one of the big temples in Toronto. Kanti and Kunti invited around 150 people to the event. As invited guests, my wife and I went to the temple around 7 PM. We found that Kanti and Kunti were not there yet. I was sitting in the temple area where all the deities were placed on an altar. Around 8 PM, Kanti, Kunti and their seven-year old son came. Kanti's brother was there beforehand; he was looking after the cooking and transporting guests. He was also responsible for transporting guests who would be singing religious songs in the evening. This event was very touching for Kanti's family, particularly for Kunti who had lost his father. They were visibly lost at the beginning of the event, but they were talking with the guests with due attention. As they were able to see many people with similar linguistic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, they seemed to feel better.

Another event that I want to portray here, has to do with dealing with job loss. One of the recruited participants who earned his PhD in Canada got laid off in the middle of 2016. I knew that he was working in a telecommunication company. However, I was not getting a hold of him. I phoned him several times. I also asked one of our mutual

friends about him. However, no one seemed to know anything about him. I learned that he was not even attending any socials. After three months, he called me, and we had a long conversation for an hour and half. He eventually told me that he was laid off some months ago and he stayed at home. He also said that he had some family problems which he could not overcome. He said that his in-laws, particularly, his father-in-law interfered with his family. He added that his father-in-law disagreed with his decision to look for jobs outside Toronto. I realized that this participant needed mental support at that time. I invited him, his wife and son to our house to attend a party and they agreed to come. I also invited our other mutual friends to the party. All the people came to my home on that day were Bangladeshi Hindus and some Anglo Canadians. During and after the party, he seemed to feel better. He was talking to other invitees in the party and told me that he would try to get a job in Toronto.

Besides such sense of belonging to each other in Toronto, the participants also showed fellow feelings to the Hindu community in Bangladesh. The following is an excerpt that represents one of the participants' fear of Islamic extremism and its effect on Hindus in Bangladesh. There were reports of minority torture and persecution in a southern district in Bangladesh. The news of looting of Hindu properties, beating Hindu men and women, and burning down the houses of Hindus in the area were widely reported in National and International media. Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants in Canada were also concerned about it. The conversation below was a recorded telephone conversation with Prashanto, an adult male participant.

Interview Excerpt: 6

I: Hello, friend! How are you doing?

Prashanto: umm, not bad. "Did you see what they [extremist Muslims in Bangladesh] are doing in Nasirnagar [a small town in Bangladesh] and other parts of the country?"

Sanjoy: Yes, I did. It has become a common phenomenon all around the world.

Prashanto: Yes. These people are evil. They cannot tolerate differences.

Sanjoy: Yes, but everybody is not the same.

Prashanto: Yes, may be, some are good; however, most of them hold and preach hatred towards others. This practice has risen in recent years.

Sanjoy: Yes, probably. But there are many factors. Some Western countries try to influence politics and businesses in the Middle East, some people use propaganda in the social media to take advantages on minority neighbors, and so forth.

The above conversation took place in November 2016. The same month, hundreds of Muslims attacked Hindu temples, homes, and people to terrorize Hindu minorities in Nasirnagar. According to a report by The New York Times (November 2, 2016), based on an alleged Facebook post of a Hindu male about the appearance of the Hindu God Shiva in the Islamic holiest mosque in Mecca, Islamic fundamentalists organized a rally to protest. The New York Times also explains that speakers from the rally and the imams from the nearby mosques incited hatred against Hindus and asked thousands of people to attack Hindu villages. Getting instructions from the fundamentalist and extremist forces, some Muslims attacked Hindu neighborhoods. They damaged temples, destroyed idols, burnt Hindu houses, and tortured and traumatized hundreds of Hindu men, women, and children. One of the Hindu community organizers said that Hindus in Nasirnagar experienced the worst enmity by their Muslim neighbors in decades; he said that they did not experience such level of hatred and oppression even during the time of the war of liberation in 1971.

Interview excerpt 6 above presents a telephone conversation with Prashanta in mid-November of 2016. After the initial greetings, I asked how he was doing. Prashanta was so upset about the Nasirnagar incident that he did not respond to my question. Instead, he asked me if I had seen the reports of the incidents. He seemed to be very agitated and concerned about what was happening with Hindus in Bangladesh. Like Prashanta, other participants also showed their concerns about the incident as many of their relatives lived in Bangladesh.

One of the major ways in which the study participants demonstrated their diasporic consciousness was through their psychological ties with the socio-political incidents in Bangladesh. Most of the participants kept themselves apprised of the news

and situation in Bangladesh. The conversation I had with Prashanta presented above shows his concerns about the ongoing aggression against minority groups in Bangladesh. This also suggests how he felt a part of that minority group even though he had left Bangladesh long ago. Prashanta's concerns for minorities is indicative of his strong religious affiliation with Bangladeshi Hindus that, in turn, informs his diasporic consciousness (Bauman, 2000). Similar concerns for minorities were evident in other participants' statements at different times as presented in the excerpt below. The following excerpt is from Sanjit's comments on an upcoming election in Bangladesh. Two guests at his residence were talking about the election while expressing their concerns about a possible future political situation in Bangladesh. It is noteworthy that the current government in Bangladesh is constituted by the political party who self-declare as a secular party while the opposition party is known to be as supportive of Islamist groups. The guests at Sanjit's house were worried that the opposition party might come to power in the following election because it was assumed that the supposed Islamist party would be more aggressive against the minorities, especially Hindus. The chunk below was identified from a conversation at Sanjit's home in Fall 2018. Following his concerns, Sanjit said:

Interview excerpt: 7

You know what? Awami league (the so-called secular party who is in power now) is better among all the parties [for the Hindus]. If BNP comes to power, the condition of Hindus will be devastating. Once, an application for an office clerk post was recommended to a BNP Minister [from the opposition party when they were in power], the minister looked at the name, and asked the lobbyist why he was advocating for a Hindu. This is the mental state of the people [who support BNP].

Similar to Prashanta in interview excerpt 6, Sanjit also showed strong affiliations with the Hindu community in Bangladesh. This also shows his religious and historical ties with the Bangladeshi Hindu community. The above interview excerpts also point to the symbolic and emotional connections the participants have to their homeland, while their diasporic consciousness partly relates to their romanticized ideas about the country they had formerly lived in. The idealized notion of Bangladesh being vulnerable at the hands of political parties based on their religious affiliations also influences the

participants' views to the political parties in Canada. They fear that people from various faith groups in Canada may also become violent towards each other if some political leaders accommodate organizations, associations or religious establishments that may promote inter-faith distance or tension for political gains. This fear stems from their past experiences of living a minority life amongst Muslims as well as the socio-political discourses of a stereotypical Muslim identity that is seen as a threat to the secular world. As discussed earlier, some of the participants viewed Muslims in Toronto the same way they considered them as the majority religious group in Bangladesh, which is why they became segregated from Bangladeshi Muslims in Toronto. The segregation is not only present in the participants' lives, but also between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Toronto as evident in the following data excerpt.

I was invited to Atinder's house for lunch. After lunch, Atinder played a video to show his son's performance on a program arranged by *Bangladesh Engineers Association Canada*. However, I was surprised when I saw that the banner in the program read *Bangladesh-Canada Hindu Cultural Society*. I asked Atinder about this, and he said the program was organized by Hindu Engineers in Toronto in association with the Hindu Cultural Society. I asked if any Muslims were invited to the program. The following conversation took place between us:

Interview Excerpt: 8

Atinder: No, that is the association of Bangladeshi Hindu engineers who are living in Toronto.

Sanjoy: What about Muslims?

Atinder: They have a separate association.

Sanjoy: How so?

Atinder: We [Hindu and Muslim Engineers] were together. Then, in every program, they had to have beef. Without beef, they did not want to arrange any program. We requested that we should have Mutton/lamb and chicken; however, they were not interested in changing their decision. You know what, they do not consider us [Hindus] equal to them [Muslims].

Sanjoy: oh, that was the reason?

Atinder: Yes, which is why we have been having separate get-together and events for almost seven years.

From the above data, it is evident that the same linguistic and ethnic identities of Bangladeshi Muslims and Hindus are not adequate to keep them together. Having beef in the menu at programs attended by both Muslims and Hindus is one of the conflicting issues to develop antagonism against each other. Some Hindus may feel insulted by this because of the symbolic connotation of beef discussed earlier. On the other hand, seeing Hindu Gods or Goddesses also conflicts with the monotheistic beliefs of Muslims. Many of the participants experienced derogatory remarks against their Gods and Goddesses expressed by some Muslims in Bangladesh. Thus, the small conflicts regarding food and other daily practices became major issues among the two groups because of the long-term conflicts they experienced before. Furthermore, some previously traumatized Hindus gain strength in a Western liberal country like Canada. They do not feel intimidated in Canada and protest against any sort of discrimination based on religion. The conflicts become bigger issues as a consequence of immigration. Having a different association based on the members' ethnic and religious lines, on the one hand, gives them a sense of identity in a secular country, and on the other, reaffirms a strong diasporic consciousness based on emotional, symbolic and imaginative resonances. Hindus in Toronto, thus, show a strong connection to each other by engaging in associations that uphold their tradition and culture (Cohen, 1997; Vertovec, 1987). These associations and religious affiliation empower them by giving them strength to live with courage and freedom (Knott, 2009; Vertovec, 1987).

The religious segregation from other faith groups has influenced the recruited participants' lives in and around a neighborhood where they find people who share the same religious and linguistic background. Sanjit, Ashutosh, Murali, Kanti and Bisheshor, for instance, live with their families in a neighborhood in the GTA where significant numbers of Bengali Hindus live. They also maintain a social life mostly around these people. This helps them reinforce their religious identity (Cohen, 1997; Vertovec, 1987) through practices of Hinduism and Bangladeshiness. Their sense of belonging to Bengali Hindus is evident in their conversations in family, social and community events, their religious practices, their interests in the condition of Hindus in Bangladesh and beliefs

about what Muslims, if lived as a fundamentalist ideology, might pose to world civilization.

Besides the imaginative aspects of diasporic affiliations, the participants' symbolic and emotional attachment to their religious practices were visible in two major practices in this study. The first practice was their strong dependence on a makeshift temple at home that became a part of everyday life events and the second was the adult participants' attempts to pass on their religious affiliations to their future generation.

5.1.3.1. Household shrines at home

The household shrines are one of the non-human actors (Clarke, 2005) in this study that provides insights into the participants' symbolic and emotional affiliations to Hinduism. Having make-shift home temples is common among Hindus. I have seen this type of small temple in every Hindu home I have visited. If families cannot afford a small area to turn into a small temple, they hang pictures of Hindu Gods and Goddesses that they worship. Though they visit bigger temples in the neighborhood during annual celebrations, they usually worship Gods and Goddesses at home in the evening. They also pray before going to work, school, or leaving for errands. The practice is daily, and sometimes several times a day. The most common Gods and Goddesses that they keep in their home temple are Krishna and Radha, Goddess Durga, Kali, Saraswati, Laksmi, Ganesh, and Shiva. They also keep a copy of Gita, one of the holiest scriptures to Hindus. Keeping a temple at home also demonstrates that they are conscious about their religious identity, and they want their offspring to follow their rituals and cultures.

All the participants' homes in this study had small household shrines where they put images and idols of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. The places where some of the recruiting families set up the household shrines were mostly closet (either in the living room or the bedroom) or in the corners of bedrooms. They offer *pujas* to the Gods and Goddesses every day at least once, as do many Hindus in Bangladesh. I observed in several instances that children were asked to bow their heads to those deities of Hindu Gods and Goddesses once the daily *pujas* were over. On April 28, 2017, I invited Sanjit and his family for dinner; I arranged a *puja* in the basement, and all three children of

Sanjit and Lalita – Kankan, Vabani and Tonni – went to the basement and bowed their heads to the altar. Other than the makeshift temples, pictures of Hindu Gods and Goddesses and philosophers, Hindu religious books, calendars with the photos of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, the Vedas, the Gita were present in most homes. I saw two books “Children’s Ramayan” and “Mahabharat” in Sanjit’s house. Vermillion, white bangles, incense sticks, flames created from burnt oil and thread, *prasadam* after Puja everyday are other major non-human actors that were present in almost all households.

These makeshift temples at home and the associated practices demonstrate the participants’ desires to continue their beliefs and practices in Toronto even though not everyone practices the religious rituals regularly. By having a sacred space, the participants symbolically live in a sacred house (Mazumder & Mazumder, 1994). The make-shift temple is also a symbol of the religious identities that they want to hold onto. This is also a way for them to show a sense of belonging to the religion and to each other. In Toronto, having a home temple symbolizes that they are bound to their Hindu identity and community. It was a common practice among the participants to visit the temple when they visited each other’s house. I observed several times that they wanted to show their respect to Hindu Gods and Goddesses when they went to their friends’ homes.

5.1.3.2. Diasporic religious practices: Identity fastening and transfer

I attended a religious occasion of blessings of a new home at Atinder’s house. Atinder family sought blessings and welfare for the family and the home from God. I found that the parents and their son were busy preparing puja instruments. There were also two video cameras that were recording the event. On one cell phone, the parents of Palita were watching the puja from Bangladesh. After the puja, the mother brought the pancha pradip, a divine fire used at pujas, to her son, and he took blessings from the fire and touched his head. The devotion to the parents’ religion was strong for this child. Atinder invited some of his close friends to his home for this religious program. All of them were Hindus from Bangladesh except the priest who was from West Bengal, India.

Atinder and his family arranged this religious program at his home to offer prayers to the God who is believed to look after the wellbeing of the home and the

members who live there. This type of puja is generally offered when someone moves to a new place or buys a new house. As they could not arrange the puja when they bought the house in 2015, they arranged the program in 2017. After the priest had completed his tasks, he offered holy water and blessings to the attendees. Atinder and his wife called their son several times whenever they needed to pray to the God. Their son was playing video games in the family room and was attentive on and off to the program that was being held in the living room. He was following all the instructions that his parents were giving him. It was also observed that the parents made sure that their son was following all the religious rituals. By doing so, the parents were transferring identity and religious practices to their offspring.

Digital technology is another important element that binds the recruited participating families together. In the religious program at Atinder's home, I observed how Atinder helped connect with his relatives at home. I observed that Atinder had set up two digital devices so that his in-laws can watch the religious rituals from Bangladesh that they were performing in Canada. I observed that there were two purposes of doing this: to make the family happy, and to show their sense of belonging to their Hindu identity and culture. Another time, Atinder asked his son to bring the home phone and call his grandmother. This was done to bridge Generation 2 and Generation 0. The transfer of religious identities to the next generation and the bridging between different generations through religious practices and digital connections are, in fact, examples of how religious communities such as Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists develop a sense of religiosity in the West as observed in other studies (see Mann, 2013).

5.2. Diasporic Consciousness and Social Integration in Canada

In Interview excerpt 4, I showed how Sanjit had developed specific affiliations with Canada, as he thinks it offers better opportunities. Like Sanjit, most of the participants, despite having a comparatively lower socio-economic status, believe that they live a comparatively better life in Canada. The participants have shown strong connection to Canada that has partly emerged from their diasporic consciousness as Hindus who experienced many difficulties in celebrating their religious practices back

home. This has contributed to reconstructing their identities (Alexander et al, 2012; Vertovec, 2008) as Canadians to some extent. The following discussion shows how their religious affiliations and practices have influenced their sense of belonging in Canada and helped them in the process of integration in a specific way.

5.2.1. Diasporic Consciousness and Developing a Sense of Belonging to Canada

“Living as Hindus in Bangladesh and Canada are two different stories” (Sanjit, personal communication, August 15, 2015). Sanjit described religious identity as one of the markers of social identity in Bangladesh. He exemplified it by saying that people would be identified as a Hindu or Muslim by their names. However, in Canada, very few people care about their names or religious identities, which makes him very comfortable. He does not feel like he is “looked down upon” because he is a Hindu, which was “common” back home. Like Sanjit, most adult participants in this study expressed how the “freedom of practicing religion” in Canada puts them in a better position. Although half of the adult recruited participants in this study were involved in jobs with minimum-wage jobs, they described themselves as very happy living in Canada. The experience of minority living in a Muslim-majority country, thus, was very significant for these recruited participants in order to develop a sense of belonging in Canada.

The participants were given a mind mapping exercise to describe their different identity positions with brief explanations in words/phrases (see Appendix C). Most of the participants described themselves as Canadians, Hindus and Bangladeshis, but with a different hierarchical prioritization. The participants also expressed in follow-up interviews that they were happy in Canada because of several reasons, one of them being their freedom to practice their religion without any fear. Sanjit was one of the male participants who strongly described himself as a Canadian before all the other identity positions: “First, I am Canadian, then, a Bengali, then a Hindu, and then a Bangladeshi.” In the mind-mapping exercise, Sanjit depicted himself as a Canadian as his first and foremost identity because of the “equal treatment”, “freedom of expression”, “unlimited opportunities”, “freedom to practice Hindu dharma [religion]” in Canada. He explained

that he did not face “religious discrimination,” which he experienced frequently in Bangladesh. Here, it is evident that one of the main factors that helped develop his sense of belonging to Canadian society was the opportunity to practice and uphold his religious beliefs and practices without fear. This has become paramount because of his experiences of being discriminated against for his religious beliefs in his native country.

Furthermore, most of the adult participants reported that they would never go back to their country of origin to live permanently. Ashutosh and Murali, for example, strongly opposed the idea, saying that they would stay “whatever happens in Canada.” These two participants showed much dissatisfaction about the labor market in Canada while pointing to the challenges they faced with financial security. They simultaneously emphasized their affiliation to the Canadian society, emphatically exclaiming that they would “live and die in Canada.” Likewise, when asked the same question, Bisheshor responded with exclamative phrases that translate into “No way”, “Never”; “Are you crazy?” in answer to whether he had any plan to go back to Bangladesh.

The participants’ responses are related to the past experiences of living in Bangladesh as minorities. Many immigrants in Canada would possibly think the same way and would like to live in Canada for a safer and more secure life, but the Hindu participants’ migration to Canada is also related to their religious identities that influence many Hindus to leave Bangladesh every year (Guhathakurta, 2012). With the stories of religious riots and experiences of religious discrimination in mind, none of the adult recruited participants would like to go back to Bangladesh to live. Some of the recruited participants said that they went to Bangladesh every five to seven years to see their relatives. Five of the adult participants said that they only went to Bangladesh when close relatives were very sick or had died. The following conversation took place in late 2016 with Bisheshor, who explained why he felt Canada was his home.

2016 was the year that Bangladesh experienced one of its worst terrorist attacks in history. With the expansion of global terrorism after the violent extremist group ISIS swept over swaths of Iraq and Syria, many young radicals in Bangladesh seemed to show allegiance to an orthodox form of Islam. I have elaborately discussed in Chapters One

and Two how the image of a new-born secular Bangladesh was turned down by the preaching of an extremist view of Islam in the late 1970s and 1980s and patronage of successive military rulers during that period. Though many of these extremist forces were dormant or working under various political banners for three decades, they had new-found hope with the rise of violent extremism in the Middle East. The killing of secular bloggers, many of who were Hindus, was an expression of such extreme thoughts and actions that shook most people in Bangladesh irrespective of their cast, creed, and religion. There were also reports of killings of Hindu priests, a Hindu tailor, and bomb threats against Hindu religious institutions (The New York Times, The Editorial Board, Nov 16, 2016). It was also widely reported that hundreds of Hindu homes were destroyed, and scores of Hindu temples were damaged by the extremists in Nasirnagar on October 30, 2016. During this time, I had a conversation with Bisheshor, and the following excerpt is derived from that.

Interview Excerpt:9

Sanjoy: Then, all is good, isn't it? How are things going in the home country?

Bisheshor: [surprised] In the country? Slaughtering [referring to the killings of Hindu, Christian and Buddhist priests by Islamic militants in Bangladesh].

Sanjoy: Then, you are not going to Bangladesh again, are you?

Bisheshor: What? In Bangladesh? To be chopped by Islamic extremists? The situation is terrible. [Islamic extremists are] killing all the priests [referring to national and international reports that Hindu priests are victims of targeted killings in Bangladesh].

Sanjoy: Yes, they [Islamic extremists] probably do not want Hindus to practice their religion in Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

Bisheshor: Oh, yes. These types of killings have never happened in Bangladesh, even during the time of BNP government [the current opposition party].

Sanjoy: Yes, I was also wondering...

Bisheshor: Yes, there were torture and oppression of Hindus, but, what is happening now is unbelievable.

Sanjoy: Is everyone [among your relatives] in Bangladesh safe?

Bisheshor: Not bad.

Sanjoy: Tell them to keep their eyes and ears open and be careful.

Bisheoshor: Oh, yes, in Bagerhat [his home town], people [Hindus in the locality] made groups and they are guarding every place with sticks and flutes.

Sanjoy: oh, that is interesting.

Bisheshor: Oh, yes. The groups are guarding Hindu temples and houses 24/7.

The above excerpt offers insight into the everyday lives of many Hindus in Bangladesh and the worries the Hindu participants have about their families in Bangladesh. Bisheshor fears that if he went back to Bangladesh, he would be in trouble. Religious fear as such make the study participants vulnerable, but at the same time, they expressed their gratitude for living in Canada as they could freely practice their religion without such fear.

However, exceptions were also observed in some cases. Latika told me in 2014 that she was a Bangladeshi first before being a Canadian. Latika described her identity positions as 1) Canadian-Bangladeshi 2) Hindu and 3) Bengali Hindu. She said that she did not completely belong to Canadian society as “her relatives are back home and the language she speaks is not a language of power and value in Canada.” She, however, liked “the health-care and communication systems” in Canada. She had a dream “to be a teacher”, but she could not fulfil her dreams here in Canada as she “has to learn the language and take further education” to compete with others to be a teacher. She spent most of her time with family, friends and neighbors. She said she speaks Bangla all the time except when she speaks to her neighbor. Thus, her sense of belonging to Canada seems to be affected by her stay-home status and language skills. She said “I do not go outside that much. I do not work outside. I only stay at home; I do cooking, cleaning, rearing children. How would I feel for this country?” Her beliefs, however, changed over time because in October 2017, she said she was more than 75% Canadian. This, on the one hand, suggests how affiliation with the host society may significantly change over time based on the participants’ social status in the country of immigration. While, on the

other, there could be gender differences in how one expresses their feelings towards the host society. I will analyze in the following section how narratives of being a Canadian were different between male and female participants and how that reflects diverse positionings of the Hindu participants in relation to their gender.

5.2.2. Intersectional Stories: Developing a Sense of Belonging

Responses to questions about how the recruited participants developed a sense of belonging in Canada varied significantly in relation to their genders. One of the significant reasons the female participants provided for having strong affiliation to Canada was that they could contribute to their family income in Canada. Nuri, one of the adult female participants, said: “For women, Canada is like heaven.” Nuri works in a chain restaurant in Canada, but she was a homemaker in Bangladesh. Similarly, Nalini described how independent she felt working in Canada. This was also very empowering for her as she contributed to the down payment of their first house in Toronto. Below is my conversation with Latika, an adult female participant, in 2014.

Interview Excerpt 10

Sanjoy: How much Canadian are you?

Latika: I think I am still 50-50[50% Bangladeshi and 50% Canadian].

Sanjoy: Why?

Latika: Language barrier, missing close family members, celebrating religious festivals – are the reasons why I still do not feel that much association for Canada yet.

Sanjoy: So how do you pass your time here? what do you do at the weekends?

Latika: I look after my sons and daughter, cook, that's it.

Sanjoy: What do you do on weekdays then?

Latika: Do I have any weekdays? To me, weekdays and weekends are all the same.

Sanjoy: what does it mean?

Latika: I do the same things on weekdays and weekends. I am in the house 24/7.

Sanjoy: Is it?

Latika: Yes, previously we used to go shopping at least. Now, he [my husband] does not even do that now.

Sanjoy: Brother [in-law], did you hear what she said?

Sanjit: [gazes with a smile]

Latika: He only thinks of buying houses. [Her husband owns five detached houses and an apartment]. Any other women would have left you if they were me [laughter].

Latika's situation in Canada was different from the other female participants in this study. She landed in Canada in 2011, and since then, she has been a stay-home mother. In the beginning, she wanted to get a higher education, but after giving birth to three children, she became involved with them. She said that she went to a language school for several weeks at the beginning; however, everything stopped when she became pregnant with her first child. At different times, she described how she had to be socially and financially dependent on her husband. She could not independently visit any places; nor could she get involved in any out-of-home activities because of her responsibilities at home. She also expressed in interviews and at other occasions that she did not have any opportunities to do anything as she had three children in five years. She was very upset when she conceived a third time in five years. From observational and field-note data, Latika was seen literally upset when she stopped communicating with family and friends for four/five months when she could not tell others that she was pregnant with her third child. She also felt ashamed of the news that she would give birth to her third child when the first and second ones needed her care all the time. Her husband wanted her to take care of the family and children as they did not have any other help. Latika expressed her dissatisfaction towards her husband several times in interview and field-note data that he did not help her go to school or do any other things other than taking care of the family, cooking, and rearing children. She said several times "your brother does not take me to school." Around 2017, she became interested in taking the driving test; however, she was complaining, in the presence and absence of her husband, that her husband did not take her to a driving test. Challenges such as this confined her to routine work at home.

Latika's situation, thus, was similar to many other immigrant women who were poorly integrated into the labor market (Boyd & Pikkov, 2005). Similar to the findings of other studies, the major reasons that made her comparatively less integrated than other female participants in this study seems to be her language (Creese & Kambere, 2002), religion (Persed & Lukas, 2002), and traditional role in family care and child rearing (Donkor, 2005; Khan & Watson, 2005).

Yet, Latika's sense of belonging to Canada was not static throughout the study period. By 2017, Latika believed that she was a 75% Canadian. One of the contributing factors to her transformation could be her next-door Canadian neighbors, an elderly couple, who helped her with her English skills and many other daily activities, such as baking and sewing lessons. Latika expressed her gratitude to the couple saying that they made her and her children feel at home. She said, "the way they look after us, take our babies to their residence, come to our house whenever we need, take me to places when your brother is not at home....is unforgettable." I have observed that Latika's children call their elderly neighbors *grandma* and *grandpa*. In all the programs at Sanjit's home that I attended, I saw those elderly neighbors. Latika also told me that her neighbor took her to the hospital and the tailor's training center and looked after her children when she went for appointments. This mixed-culture neighborhood, particularly their affiliation to this particular Anglo-Canadian family, has been a resource for this participating family, in terms of their language development and integration to mainstream society. Thus, despite the obstacles of their socioeconomic status and residential concentration and segregation (Halder, 2012; Massey & Denton, 1994; Murdie & Ghosh, 2010), for Latika, she seems to have overcome some of the challenges by getting access to the small available resources such as communication with native-speaking neighbors.

Sanjit, Latika's husband, on the other hand, showed a strong sense of belonging to Canada since the beginning of this study. As discussed earlier, his sense of belonging was related to his comfort in practicing his religion in Canada. Latika, however, gave a different explanation about her husband's identity saying that he is "very much Canadian" because he goes out to "meet many people from various backgrounds and work with them." It is, however, noteworthy that he had been living in Canada for almost

five years before this study began. He was very optimistic about the possibilities and the happy future in Canada as shown in interview data 4. Later, he explained: “you can do whatever you want here.” By “whatever”, he meant “working opportunities for everyone and, by “want”, he meant owning “a house/apartment of your own.” From conversational and observational data, I learned that he owned four houses and an apartment in the GTA; he had two cars, and he worked at a telecommunication company. Except the one he lived in, all his other houses were rental properties. His economic status, however, was not very affluent as he had several mortgages. Some non-human factors in his house also indicated their living condition. Most chairs, tables, the TV, dining table and other daily utensils were used and collected from various sources. Yet, he was very optimistic that he would have a big house and savings in ten years’ time.

The above excerpt presents a partial picture as both the husband and wife appeared to be very much Bengali and Bangladeshi in their home and community environment. The only difference was their attitude toward financial matters. Sanjit praised the opportunity that Canada provides for hard working people. Though Latika believed that people can have their own happy lives in Canada, she did not feel the charm of it as she was not able to experience it.

5.2.3. Political Consciousness, Phobia and Religion as Social Capital

The adult participants, especially the males in this study, showed strong consciousness about Canadian politics. Their political views mostly represented the progressive conservative ideology. The participants stated that they liked the conservative tax-cut policy; however, data reflects that there were other major reasons why they were inclined to support the PC party. One of the factors that influenced them was the supposed *anti-Muslim rhetoric*, such as banning the niqab by the Harper government and limits on the intake of Syrian refugees proposed by the conservative party.

The following telephone conversation was recorded in 2016. The conversation was ensued at the backdrop of Syrian refugee intake in Canada and wide-spread terror activities of Islamic State against minority religious groups in Iraq and Syria.

Interview Excerpt 11

Sanjoy: How are you doing, friend?

Atinder: Not bad. How about yourself?

Sanjoy: Doing good. How is everything going in politics [in Canada]?

Atinder: Very bad. [I am] worried about refugees. They [the Trudeau Government] are doing too much!

Sanjoy: in terms of what?

Atinder: Didn't you see how many Syrian refugees they are taking? It is all a burden on us.

Sanjoy: yes, but, they [those refugees] are also suffering.

Atinder: that's true. But, what can you do if they created their own problem? And, many of them are very conservative.

Sanjoy: Yes. That might be true. However, you cannot solve the problems of all other countries. You do what you can.

Atinder: Yes, but you cannot take all the people who are facing problems all over the world. It would be on us while we have so many problems: tertiary education of children is extremely expensive, first nations are suffering, health-care is not for all. Why would you help others when you have many problems to be fixed in your country?

Sanjoy: Any other issue that you disagree with the refugee in-take?

Atinder: Yes, I am also worried to see too many conservative Muslims around me. What's the point of leaving our home country if Canada is the same [as Bangladesh]?

Sanjoy: What do you mean by that?

Atinder: To be honest with you, we have left the country to get rid of intimidation and torture by the Muslims. Here, we see the same situations; the same religious groups are rising, and I am afraid that Canada would face similar situations in near future where we will be intimidated again.

Sanjoy: Is your fear based on your experiences? All are not the same!

Atinder: They are always like that. They only want to show that they are superior.

Atinder has developed his political affiliations in Canada based on his experiences living a Hindu minority life in Bangladesh. Although he did not identify himself as Islamophobic, he was afraid of the increase and accommodation of Islamic practices in Canada. His comment “What’s the point of leaving your [my] home country...?” demonstrates his frustration, fear and stereotypes of Muslims. To him, many Muslims could potentially mean more Bangladesh-like situations where minority Hindus were discriminated against and persecuted (Ahmeed, 2013; Raghavan, 2013; Riaz, 2010; Toor, 2011). When the new liberal government started bringing Muslims refugees here from the Middle East, the participants seemed to be very critical of the move. Many, particularly, the male participants, commented that Trudeau was doing “too much” – (Prashanta, Sanjit, Atinder, Bisheshor, interview data). By “too much”, they meant what they perceived as the indiscriminate entry of Muslim refugees from the Middle East. They were also optimistic when Donald Trump won the US presidency. Though they did not agree with many of his deeds and words, they liked when he announced his plan to ban Muslims from some countries entering the US.

This political perspective of the recruited participants shows that their experiences of living a minority life in a Muslim-majority Bangladesh, at least to some extent, impacted their choices of being conservative supporters in Canada assuming that the PC party is against what the participants described as “extremist practices” accommodated by liberals. By accommodating extremist practices, they meant “allowing Muslims to have their own schools, allowing them to pray during class hours and having a prayer room for them, bringing in Arab Muslim refugees who are thought to be extremist Islamic (Wahabi) practitioners” (Sanjit, personal communication, June 22, 2017). When confronted with the argument that all other religious people are similarly given opportunities to practice their religions whatever their faiths are, they sounded Islamophobic. They argued that conservative Muslims hate believers of other religions and they preach hatred among themselves through their scripture and prayers. What follows is an example of some of the participants’ beliefs that Muslims use their scriptures to preach hatred.

The backdrop of the conversation below is the rise of Islamic State (IS) in the Middle East and terror-activities of like-minded extremist Islamists in many parts around the world. I thought I would ask Bisheshor about his job and life in Canada; however, he started talking about his worry about Hindus in Bangladesh. The interview was recorded at a college campus in Toronto during the Summer 2017.

Interview Excerpt 12

Sanjoy: How are you, dada,

Bisheshor: We are doing good; [we] are a little bit worried about our relatives back home.

Sanjoy: Why? What happened?

Bisheshor: They are scared; worried all the time, worried about what happens, when.

Sanjoy: yes, I know.

Bisheshor: Yes, they [Muslims] are always looking for chances [to harm us]. Some imams [Muslim priests] and some Hujurs [Islamic preachers] explain their Quran and Hadith in a way that creates division and hatred towards others.

Sanjoy: yes, they do that for political reasons.

Bisheshor: Yes, I know; but, then, common Hindus suffer [in Bangladesh].

Sanjoy: That's true. We need good education to stop this type of hate preaching.

Bisheshor: But, the question is *who will do that*. All parties think about going to or remaining in power, and they use religion for that.

The above anti-Muslim or anti-Islam perspective among the recruited participants demonstrates that they carry on the grudges in relation to their experiences they had when they were discriminated against. They seemed to generalize or stereotype all Muslims under the same name; they believe that Islam, as a religion, hates the believers and practitioners of other religions. Thus, a diaspora, who have experienced discrimination and trauma by a majority religion or culture, may develop antagonistic perspectives towards that culture and religion.

As all the recruited participants have similar political, religious and social perspectives, they use this like-mindedness to come closer to each other. They develop networks and help each other through negotiating and doing business with Hindus from Bangladesh. For example, Sanjit submits his tax return with a Bangladeshi Hindu accountant, buys property with a Bengali Hindu realtor, invites only Bangladeshi Hindus to his family events, and attends socials with Bengali Hindus, particularly, Bangladeshi Hindus. This illustrates that this participant uses his religious affiliation and association as social capital to gain access to social and structural spheres of the host country (Cohen, 1997; Leglise, 2011).

5.2.4. Challenges to Integration

“How could I be one of them [a Caucasian/European Canadian]? I can’t caress dogs in the streets, I do not drink beer.” - Bisheshor, an adult male participant, Interview data, mid-2016.

The comment was in response to my question on how Canadian Bisheshor was. Despite having psychological comfort in living in Canada, some challenges to the integration of the study participants were identified in this study. The participants reported some cultural conflicts they experience in Canada, which also included some religious dissatisfaction. In the interview excerpt above, Bisheshor referred to social behaviors of Canadians, such as drinking and petting dogs, that he was not comfortable with.

Some of the participants also referred to their economic status as an obstacle to their full integration with the Canadian society. What follows is an interview excerpt from Murali’s [an adult male participant] interview that was recorded at his home in summer 2016. I was invited to his home after our first telephone conversation in Toronto. I knew Murali from Bangladesh, but I was introduced to him by Sanjit in Canada. There were no religious or family programs at Murali’s home; I was invited as he was very happy to know that I lived in Toronto, and he wanted to talk about his life in Canada. He was working 52 to 72 hours a week during that time. To him, survival was the most important thing after leaving Bangladesh.

Interview Excerpt 13

Sanjoy: How much do you think you are integrated into mainstream Canadian culture?

Murali: Integration? Alas! [I] Just work and eat.

Sanjoy: Have you ever attended a concert or went to see a drama in theatre?

Murali: What are you saying? Do we have time to do that? It is also very expensive. Umm...there was a Beyoncé concert; the lowest ticket price was \$150. I don't afford that.

The conversation above with Murali points out that he could not participate in Canadian cultural activities because he did not have enough time to enjoy mainstream culture and he could not afford to do so. Murali worked 54 to 72 hours a week in the kitchen of a downtown restaurant. When I first saw him, he looked tired, but very joyful. Similar to immigrants in other studies that identify economic hardship, language barriers and labor market integration as major challenges to participate in social and cultural activities in the host society (Biles et al., 2011; Garcia & Hiebert, 2011; Giampapa, 2010; Guo, 2009; Kramsch, 2011; Moore & Gajo, 2009), some of the participants seemed to be stuck with survival jobs that became the only way to make ends meet. Latika, on the other hand, raised a significant issue while discussing her own integration into Canadian culture. As discussed before, she was one of the participants who had difficulties with integration because of her status as stay-at-home parent. Later, she pointed out other problems specifically related to religious customs. The excerpt below was taken from a long interview recorded at my home in the Summer of 2014.

Interview Excerpt: 14

Sanjoy: How Canadian are you?

Latika: I am afraid what my children would learn from schools. They will learn everything about the culture, religion and social perspectives of this society. They will not learn anything from our culture, language, and religion.

Sanjit: I am 100% happy. You know what, you can do whatever you want here in Canada. For example, whatever jobs you do, you can buy a house.

Sanjoy: ohh, yes, anything else? [that concerns you]

Latika: Yes, I wish we could have holidays during our festivals like the way we get holidays during Christmas.

In the above excerpts, gender differences in understanding immigration and settlement is noteworthy. The male participant Murali was concerned about earning money whereas as a woman, Latika is concerned about the mainstream cultural impact on her children. To her, the influences of Canadian culture on the future religious and social customs of her children are worrisome because she thinks that the dominant mainstream cultural practices will minimize the children's associations to their own customs. She also pointed to the fact that Hindu religious festivals are not considered to be eligible for statutory holidays in Canada. It seems that this concern about her religious customs not being fully acknowledged by government policies keeps her from social integration to some extent. She doesn't feel part of this culture. The major areas that Latika is unhappy about, in terms of mainstream culture, are 1) her children will learn about sex and sexual behavior at an early age, and 2) her children will not enjoy and learn their cultural and religious practices (Interview data, August 2015).

Similar views were identified among some other participants' discussion. The interview below with Bisheshor (recorded at a college campus in Fall 2016) shows his dissatisfaction over performed religious practices that Bengali Hindus do in Canada. Bisheshor responds to my question about the differences between Canada and Bangladesh, in terms of religious practice:

Interview Excerpt: 15

Bisheshor: We cannot celebrate our religious and traditional programs with family and friends.

Sanjoy: oh, yes, that's true. This is one of the major sorrows we have.

Bisheshor: You see, what we do [cultural and religious celebrations] here appears artificial, artificial; nothing seems natural.

Sanjoy: Nothing seems natural! What do you mean by that?

Bisheshor: How? Everything is inside; nothing is outside. If things [religious festivals] do not occur in open fields, what I have

been observing since childhood [referring to Hindu religious celebrations in Bangladesh]

Sanjoy: oh, yes, I got it.

Bisheshor: yes, everything is enclosed. Often times, celebrations [according to Hindu lunar calendar] are done on weekends because people do not have time. Puja's date and other programs are arranged in line with the availability of people. ...people [The celebration committees] change the dates of religious events by changing the status of Planet and stars [not following the specific dates on Hindu calendar].

This idea of not celebrating religions and customs with due festivity was echoed by other recruited adults who miss the sights and sounds of Bengali Hindu celebration. Bisheshor, like most other adult recruited participants, misses religious holidays and social celebration that they enjoyed in their home country. As Bisheshor explained, he did not enjoy the celebrations because they were not organized on the days according to the Hindu lunar calendar. To him, celebration is artificial here, and people do it without due religious tone and fervor. This feeling of exclusion from mainstream culture, as other studies (Massey & Denton, 1987; Murdie & Ghosh, 2010) suggest, influences further concentration in areas with people from the same religious and ethnic backgrounds.

5.3. Diasporic Living and Language and Literacy Practices

The language and literacy practices of the recruited participants - for both adults and children - were multi-layered and complex. There were no clear patterns that can be identified; however, adults' and children's language and literacy practices were very different from each other in terms of their goals and objectives. Nevertheless, three major trends were identified in the participants' understanding and practices of languages and literacies that were in some way related to their diasporic consciousness. I will discuss these in three sections: i) how participants view literacy practices through religious lenses; ii) how adult participants' language and literacy skills and practices are maintained/devalued in everyday life in Toronto; and iii) how participants view and adjust their children's language and literacy practices in relation to their religious consciousness as well as to the Canadian society.

5.3.1. Literacy Practices and Religious Identities of the Study Participants

As discussed before, Hindus in Toronto worship Swaraswati or the Goddess of knowledge every year following the Bengali lunar calendar. This is one of the major religious celebrations for Bangladeshi Hindus. The worshipping ceremony is symbolic to the devotees. They believe that they will have a strong academic life if they are blessed by Goddess Saraswati. As I have described before, Saraswati is the goddess of knowledge who removes darkness from life and leads people to enlightenment through knowledge.

My study participants all celebrated this ceremony every year over five-year period of data collection. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Bisheshor was present at a temple to celebrate the Saraswati puja in 2017. He was with his family, including his 5-year old son. His son was taking part in one of the competitions arranged by the temple. Literacy events, such as drawing, recitation, singing and dancing competitions were common during this specific ceremony as they all symbolized important literacy skills to Hindus (Narayanan, 2000).

Bisheshor said that he engaged his son in the drawing competition because he wanted his son to be involved in communications skills through taking part at the competition (see interview excerpt 5). At the same time, he was also enhancing his drawing skills. His two comments in the interview excerpt are noteworthy. He believes that participating in a drawing competition at a temple is better than playing video games on a computer or iPad and 2) his son benefits from the socialization with people from the same religious background. The first statement identifies a very common problem that recruited parents faced, which is excessive use of iPads or computers by their children. I have observed at several occasions in all the homes that all recruited children aged two and up were spending significant time on computers or laptops or iPads. Bisheshor was, thus, happy to bring his son to the temple for a drawing competition so that his son could get a break from using digital media. Thus, the religious ceremony provided him opportunities to engage his son in a literacy event that he thought was appropriate for his

son. The literacy event also became a way to socialize with people that he believed to be important for his child as a Hindu descendent.

Saraswati Puja is also significant for another literacy ritual for Hindus. Hindu children are introduced to literacy through religious rituals that take place during the Saraswati Puja. Any children who are ready to go to school have to go through this ritual called *Hatekhori* [to hold a pen in hand] before the first school year. Hatekhori is usually celebrated with family members and relatives when four/five-year-olds are blessed by elders for their upcoming academic performances. In this ceremony, the would-be school going boy or girl is blessed after performing a short puja to the Goddess Saraswati. The boy or girl who wishes to attend school the next academic year places some books, exercise-books, and some pencils at the altar where the idol of Saraswati is set up. During the ceremony, the priest asks the boy or girl to draw something or make a line on a blank slate. This is the beginning of a journey for academic life. The parents and the elders of the family in the neighborhood also bless the boy/girl on this day. These are the common rituals that are performed during a *hatekhori* ceremony. The significance of this program is tremendous to the parents as they prepare themselves to send their children to school. The parents believe that their children will go to school with the blessings of Goddess Sarwaswati, which are an added strength for their children.

In February 2016, I decided to celebrate Saraswati Puja at my residence. Usually, if anyone decides to celebrate this prayer at home, they call a Hindu priest and prepare for the Puja following all the rituals. I also invited all of the participants to the Puja. After hearing about the ceremony, Sanjit told me that he was planning to give *Hatekhori* to his eldest son Kobi that year as preparation for his pre-school; therefore, we decided to include his son's *Hatekhori* in the ceremony.

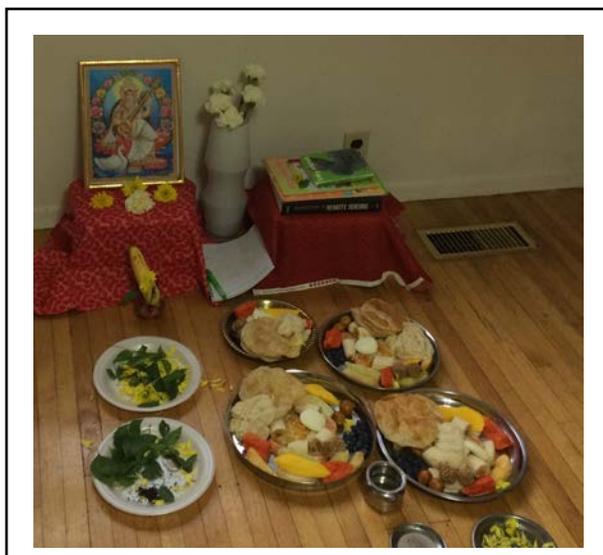


Figure 5. *Hatekhori preparation of Sanjit's son during Saraswati Puja*

Sanjit brought some children's books, a blank slate, and a piece of chalk [top left-hand corner in the photo]. There were also some rice seeds, milk butter, honey, curd, and grass heads. The priest then recited some holy mantras from the Veda, Gita, and some other Hindu scriptures and prayed to Goddess Saraswati to bless Kobi. The priest also asked him to write some letters on the slate with a piece of chalk. Kobi wrote A, B, C, and his name in English. After that, all other elder participants also blessed the child with rice seeds and grass heads. Among other participants, there were two Canadian-born elderly people who were Sanjit's neighbors. Sanjit proposed that he would pay for the priest, and I accepted. It is noteworthy that Kobi was asked to write English script during this ceremony. As it was evident in the study, none of the participant children born in Canada learnt Bengali literacy even though they had Bengali children's books at home. Some of the parents read with them when they were young, but they were not interested in teaching their children to read or write in Bengali after they started going to school. I will discuss this later in a separate section.

Religious influences on children's literacy practices as such are significant in my study participants' lives. To have religious contacts with family and friends seems to be very encouraging and satisfactory to the participants as observed in other studies (Cohen, 1995, 1997; Vertovec, 1999). Their religious association is, thus, very important in terms of their literacy practices, be it academic literacies or other home literacy practices. Some

participants expressed happiness in 2017 when they found out that some schools in the Bengali-dominated area of Toronto arranged Saraswati Puja. Sanjit, for example, was excited about this as his eldest son could take part in the religious literacy event at school. As I described above in this chapter that Saraswati puja is celebrated in all Bengali medium schools in Bangladesh, Hindu parents expect their children to be a part of that culture.

5.3.2. Language and Literacy Practices of Adult Participants

As all the adult research participants were first-generation immigrants, the target language seemed to be a barrier for them to integrate into the job market. Their accented English with some grammar mistakes may have restricted their opportunities to get into the labor market of their interest. Another major literacy gap that most adult recruited participants faced was between their past education and experiences and the present expectations. Without having Canadian education and experiences, some of them believed that they would not have jobs in the fields of their interest and education. According to most adult participants, the Canadian labor market does not value the literacies that they had from their home country. Very few of the recruited participants who completed education in Canada were working in relevant fields.

Ashutosh's situation is used here as an example. Ashutosh works at two to three restaurants to make ends meet. He explained how he could not find a job aligned with his education and experiences. Data from interviews and personal recorded communication shows that his prior language and other skills were not evaluated in the mainstream society. In Fall 2014, I used to go to Ashutosh's home two/three times every month. He was repairing the basement of his house at that time. I used to help him with some work. He asked me to hold on a plank so that he could nail it at a perfect place. I also helped him cleaning rubbish and preparing garden beds. While we were working in the basement, I asked him how he was improving his language proficiency in English and the results of some job interviews he was attending. He replied: "Language is culture. I do not get good jobs because I cannot speak English like them [Canadian-born English speakers]." He elaborated why, "language is culture" by reiterating he "could not fit in

with the mainstream culture and job market because [his] language [accented English and often times, with grammar mistakes] was not as good as [his] employers' expectation." He also added: "they [Canada] do not want us, they want our children. They [Citizenship and Immigration Canada] brought us so that we [adults] work very hard, and our children would learn the language and culture and have a better life." Following is a follow-up conversation with Ashutosh on the same day:

Interview Excerpt 16

Sanjoy: Did you face any problem in language use?

Ashutosh: Oh, yes. I do not understand what they say; and, they do not understand what I say.

Sanjoy: why?

Ashutosh: This is because of pronunciation.

Sanjoy: any examples?

Ashutosh: you know, the words and phrases they use [colloquial language] are unfamiliar to me. Also, the pronunciation. The way they pronounce the words is not comprehensible.

Similar data was found in the conversation with Murali as well (recorded at his home in summer 2017):

Interview Excerpt 17

Sanjoy: Did you face any problem in understanding people?

Murali: Do not talk about that. [We] did not understand anything at the beginning. What they said did not make any sense to us.

Sanjoy: Do you understand them better now?

Murali: A little better; we [he and his wife] still do not understand a lot of their pronunciation.

Sanjoy: Did you take any lessons?

Murali: Yes, I took some classes at LINC. It does not help. They only teach grammar; they do not teach communication what we need the most.

Latika, on the other hand, said: "Reading [I am good at reading]. I am afraid of speaking. I do not know a lot of vocabulary. Before, I used to answer phone calls; I did

not understand anything. Later, your brother [her husband] told me not to answer phone calls. I do not do it now.”

The excerpts above illustrate how the recruited participants face problems in integrating into mainstream society and the labor market because they do not understand the English language spoken by most Canadians. From the above excerpts, we see three distinct points that hinder their language integration: Canadian English accent, dialect use by various groups of Canadians and native phrases, and lack of effective English language training. Devaluation of their skills was common like immigrants in other studies (Biles et al., 2011; Fleming, 2007; Guo, 2009) as some participants worked for minimum wage even though they had university education and many years of experiences in different sectors. In terms of literacy practices, five of the seven female recruited participants did not go to schools in Canada. Two went to schools for further development; however, only one landed a professional job. Though the recruited females did not have any education in Canada, five of them worked in supermarkets or chain food restaurants. They had adequate literacies to work in those places and did not face any problems getting the jobs. In fact, they were capable working at their fields of education as they had previous education and experiences. All the recruited female participants were either college or university graduates from Bangladesh. They had basic knowledge of Math, Science, English and social science. Though they faced problems in understanding Native English accents, they worked at places where English conversation was not a major requirement.

The male participants, such as, Ashutosh, Bisheshor, Atinder, and Murali, who went on to develop their skills further, found the process of earning relevant credentials in Canada too rigorous and uncertain. Murali asked me in an interview if there was a guarantee of a good job after two years of study. He further asked what the point was if he had to study two to three years again and then might have to come to work at the same restaurant where he had been working before he joined any college or university programs. He further commented, “as there would be many candidates with the same qualification, why would people hire a person of color with accented English?” These were the common perceptions of most adult participants.

Different literacy skills were evident among the participants, and they successfully used those in their everyday lives, although they were not recognized by the Canadian labor market. For instance, all male participants had a good sense of financial literacy; they were very keen to learn how they could make and save more money. Six out of seven participating families owned houses in the GTA, and one of them had multiple properties. The participants described themselves as hardworking and motivated to make their new country feel like home as soon as possible through developing financial stability and attachment to the country. Regarding this, they keep in touch with financial advisors, small business owners and realtors. Female participants, likewise, were found to work at home and outside to support their husbands either financially or to make their living at home comfortable. Their major responsibilities included taking care of children for a better future in Canada. One of the two stay-at-home mothers, Latika, had three growing children in a seven-member family. She insisted on how she worked very hard to maintain the family. She cooked for the family, reared three children aged 5, 3 and 2, did cleaning and some other household chores. Although she worked at home, she had tremendous enthusiasm to attain further education and work outside home. She complained several times (interviews from 2016 and 2017) that she could not yet upgrade her social and educational status because of the excessive burden on her. Another recruited female homemaker, Sutopa, Murali's wife, took care of her two children and did household chores. Her husband worked 54 to 72 hours a week in a restaurant in downtown Toronto. Though Sutopa did not contribute to family income, both Murali and Sutopa were happy with Murali's income.

Despite the complex economic and social conditions, the female participants mostly said that they were more or less happy living in Canada as they could move freely and practice their religious and traditional customs. Literacies, to them, seemed to be associated with practicing religions and attending religious, social and family events. Their literacies included how to rear their children, cook food for family and friends, worship Hindu gods and goddesses, socialize with familiar and unfamiliar Hindus in the temples, and arrange programs to celebrate Hindu festivals all year round. To perform these household chores well is an important component of these families' cultural practice and cultural identities. These practices also influence children's literacy practices

and life-style. Family routines and parents' everyday activities impact children's literacy development (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2010). These observations are congruent with many other studies across various communities. For example, Gonzalez, Bengochea, Justice, Yeomans-Maldonado, & McCormick (2019) similarly report how Native Mexican parents' beliefs and practices influence children's literacy development. Ambreen and Mohyuddin (2012) report how girl children in a village in Punjab, Pakistan, are trained and prepared for performing household tasks. Zhou (2000) discusses how home-based literacy practices and household activities of adult members in families influence literacy development of children in a US state. Likewise, to Latika and Kuntola, two female adult participants, working as homemakers is not an easy job. I have seen Latika reading religious texts in the evening, and her sons were listening to her sitting beside her. I would term these practices household literacies. When and how to feed babies, how often and which areas of homes need cleaning, what to cook for a whole family, and how to pray to Gods and Goddesses – all these activities which are generally termed as household chores- are learned activities and culturally significant. I would like to argue that these works should be considered as literacy events through which participants develop skills to perform tasks efficiently and independently.

Bengali and English newspapers were found to be important reading materials for the adult participants. They helped participants keep track of the social and political situation in Bangladesh and Canada. Some of the participants said that they usually read English dailies online while they found Bengali newspapers at Bangladeshi grocery stores for free. Besides these, a religious newspaper was found at Sanjit's house.

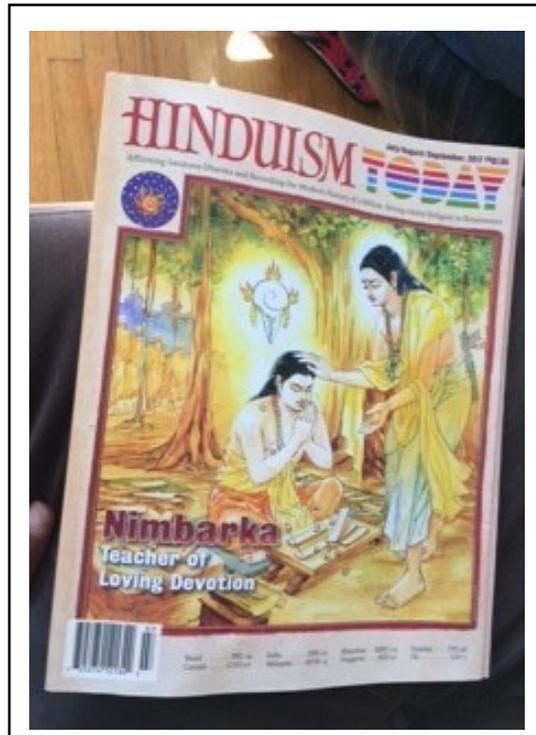


Figure 6. A religious newspaper found at Sanjit’s house

When I asked Sanjit what he was reading, he replied that he was reading news about Hindu programs, celebrations and new temples and so forth around the world. He showed me some pictures of beautiful temples in India and the US in the newspaper. It is noteworthy that Sanjit also had a small library at home, and he had various books on Hinduism and the history of the Indian sub-continent. He said he enjoyed reading about Hindu temples and celebrations around the world.

Nevertheless, because of the lack of skills in the dominant language and literacies, the adult participants experienced many hardships. Ashutosh, for example, said:

Interview Excerpt 18

I took some courses for certification at colleges and universities. I took OSAP loan; I had to go [to colleges or universities]. That does not mean I did not do anything. However, it is very difficult to get a job that goes with my previous education and experience. It is true that I can go for a second career; however, who knows what would happen later.

This echoes stories and evidence from research where immigrants with accented English and home country education face a tough time getting jobs in Canada in their line

of education and experiences (Fleming, 2007; Guo, 2011). Li (2008) reports that many immigrants have higher educational backgrounds, but they are employed in lower positions in their new countries.

Kanti, on the other hand, did not go for any further language or literacy development. Their only son speaks both Bengali and English. Kanti explained that when their son was three and half years old, he “spoke mostly Bengali; however, when he started going to school, he started using more English than Bengali.” Now he feels “comfortable in using English.” Their child is very interesting in terms of his language use. Sometimes, he uses Bengali with his friends; however, he uses English with his parents, who prefer Bengali. He also helps his father with English.

5.3.3. Children’s Language and Literacy Practices

Participating children’s language and literacy practices were varied and fluid. They mostly focused on developing literacies that were promoted in the mainstream public education system in Toronto. Though there were nine recruited children for this study, I could interview only four of them; however, all of the recruited children were observed with their parents’ consent. The adult participants in this study showed much enthusiasm about their children’s English language and literacy development that would help their children fully integrate into Canadian society. The daily worshipping to Gods and Goddesses, greetings to people, learning the pronunciation of English alphabets by following TV cartoons are some common practices observed among the child participants. The most common pattern that was identified was an emphasis on learning English. All of the adult recruited participants saw learning English as a gateway to living a better life in Canada. Two major factors influenced their attitudes: one being their own failure to have those skills and the other was more related to their previous background as minorities. Because the adult participants believed that their skills were devalued because of their accented English, they emphasized their children’s literacies in English. Furthermore, they clearly expressed that they did not want their children to live a minority life in Canada.

For the above reasons, the participants were always concerned about their children's English skills and academic progress. This also somewhat influenced how they viewed their children's L1 literacy. Even though most parents spoke Bengali with their children and believed that it would be useful to develop their oral literacy, they ignored their reading and writing skills in Bengali. They feared that their Bengali literacy might interfere with their English literacy skills.

Furthermore, some of the participants emphasized the importance of having some sort of religious education in schools to make their children aware of the diversity of religious beliefs across the globe. Sanjit, for example, said:

Interview excerpt 19

All children should learn in schools that there are different religions and different Gods. Children should not learn that there is only one way of worshipping the creator or God, there are multiple ways. One can believe in one, but others can believe in another God or ideology.

The participants, however, did not want any religious schools, as they feared that this might create extreme religious groups. They referred to the Islamic schools in Bangladesh called the Madrasas pointing to how these schools are considered to be sources of Islamic extremist practices.

5.3.3.1 Emphasis on Children's L2 Literacy

The participants put considerable emphasis on their children's English language and literacy skills. The children were exposed to English as much as possible as they were given opportunities to speak, read and write in English all the time. Even though their parents communicated with them in Bengali most of the times, the children responded to them in English. The parents seemed to be happy about their progress. One of the major sources of exposure to English was through digital media. All the children, irrespective of their age, were observed to spend much of their time at home watching TV or on tablets and smart phones.

Watching cartoons and playing with toy cars, for example, are common pursuits for Sanjit's children. I had been very close to Sanjit's family during data collection for

three and half years. I had been observing Kobi, his first-born, using a tablet and a cell phone to play games and watch YouTube videos since he was two. He was given the iPad to play with whenever he wanted. His English language and literacy development in the early years was dependent on the electronic media because he was never sent to a daycare. As the father was very busy making money through different means by working double-shifts and sometimes driving a taxi after work, he could not commit enough time to the children. The mother had to do all household chores after taking care of the three small babies. I observed her to be very tired or exhausted several times whenever I went to see them. I saw some Bengali children's books in their house; however, I never saw them reading those books to the children. Once I asked Latika about the children's literacy in Bengali, their mother tongue, but she replied that her eldest son did not want to learn those. She added that he turned away the books whenever she tried to teach him the Bengali alphabet. Sanjit's family also had a benefit of having an elderly Canadian couple next door as discussed earlier. They often visited them with books and other children's games and used to sit with the children. I found the neighbors reading books to Kobi and his younger brother many times. Sanjit's family, thus, used the available resources to give their children exposure to Canadian English as much as possible. Both Sanjit's sons picked up the English alphabet very early before they turned two years old. Sanjit and Latika also made sure that the children could recognize the alphabet and practice regularly. During one of my visits, Sanjit told me that the younger son Kashi could now recite the English alphabet that he learnt from a rhyme. The following excerpt, which was recorded in Summer 2017, shows how Sanjit pushed his son to say the whole alphabet to my wife.

Interview excerpt: 19

Sanjit: Kashi, say loud A, B, C, so that your aunt can listen to

Kashi: umm

Sanjit: Tell, tell,

Kashi: ummu-uuh

Sanjit: Say it, baba

Kashi: A B

Sanjit: Next?

Kashi: [gazing]

Sanjit: what's, next? C

Kashi: C

Sanjit: Then?

Kashi: D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z now now I know
my abc, next time won't you sing with me.

Some participants also discussed in the interviews that they sometimes spoke English with their children. They believed that Bengali was necessary as long as the children comprehended their parents. Ashutosh, for example, said that it was adequate for his daughter if she could understand the parents when they spoke English. He also said that he sent his daughter to Math and Science tutors. The conversation below was recorded during the summer 2015 at Ashutosh's residence in Danforth Area, GTA. We were talking about his daughter's literacy practices.

Interview Excerpt: 20

Sanjoy: What language do you speak with your child?

Ashutosh: Bangla; she understands everything; she communicates in English.

Sanjoy: oh! That is interesting.

Ashutosh: yes, but, sometimes, we speak English with her as well

Sanjoy: What about helping your child with homework? Do you help her?

Ashutosh: Sometimes [I help my child] with social science and other subjects; but, most often, she works on her own.

Sanjoy: Does she go to any tutor?

Ashutosh: yes, recently, we have provided her with two tutoring help: one for Math and another for science.

Sanjoy: Does it help?

Ashutosh: Yes, we cannot give her time; so, it is good for her.

Sanjoy: Do you send her for any Bangla lesson?

Ashutosh: No, we explain things in Bengali; she understands, that helps.

The reason the participants emphasized learning English appears to be due to their own experiences of being devalued because of their relatively poor English. As discussed earlier, except one, all the adult participants experienced challenges in getting hired in their line of education and experiences because of their relatively poor proficiency in English. As Murali and Ashutosh discussed, they had problems comprehending Canadian English, which made it difficult to get a good job. The participants felt that their poor pronunciation and limited vocabulary were holding them back. These experiences and feelings about English had a significant influence on their emphasis on English learning for their children. They thought that the practice and knowledge of their mother tongue would not help their children to become successful in Canada where the dominant culture and labor market are English-dominated. Their fear of their children possessing poor English skills were not unfounded as they experienced the reality by themselves.

5.3.3.2 Devaluation of L1 Literacy

The participants acknowledged the importance of their children's L1 development but sought to limit it to oral proficiency. As discussed earlier, they believed that their children's oral proficiency in Bengali was necessary for communication with their parents and relatives back home. Some mothers also emphasized that L1 proficiency was important for their children because they would like to help them with their studies, and if the children didn't understand them, it would be difficult to do that. Nalini said that their children's oral proficiency in Bengali would help them assist their children with homework and everyday communication. She said: "Prashanta [her husband] helps our son understand the scientific terms through translating them into Bengali."

The excerpt below was recorded in Fall 2017 at Proshanta's residence when they invited us (my wife and I) for dinner. They arranged a puja to pray to God. After dinner, we were talking about their children's language and literacy practices, and I recorded the conversation.

Interview excerpt: 21

Sanjoy: Would it be good or bad if your children could learn Bengali?

Nalini: Yes, it would be good

Sanjoy: How

Nalini: It would be good for me to teach them school subjects

Sanjoy: Can you please explain a little more how that would help?

Nalini: My son does not understand many things if I try to explain things in Bengali; It would be good if he knew both the languages

Sanjoy: Any other benefits [of learning Bengali]?

Nalini: He could talk to our relatives back home.

Nalini also added, “Yes, that might be helpful if they knew their mother tongue; they would be able to communicate with relatives back home. They would also better understand our culture and religion.” The same view was echoed by Sanjit and Latika. The couple expressed their concern that their children “might not be able to understand their roots and culture if they do not know [the] Bengali language and Hindu religious practices.” Sanjit reported that learning Bengali is necessary so that the children could follow religious rituals in the future. He said that he would take his son to a downtown Bengalee temple on Saturdays so that he could learn the Bengali language, and Hindu religion and its practices. He said he would do that when his son turned seven.

The participants, however, hardly focused on their reading or writing skills in their L1. Despite having literacy materials available at some of their houses, the participants ignored these resources. Sanjit’s younger brother, for example, regularly sent Bengali children’s books from home (see figure 6), but I never saw the children engaged in reading those books.



Figure 7. Bengali children’s books sent from Bangladesh to Sanjit’s children

The books above were sent by Sanjit’s brother from Bangladesh. The first book introduces the Bengali alphabet and rhymes to toddlers. The books in the second picture include rhymes and story books in Bengali. The books had been at Sanjit’s house for almost three years, but Sanjit could not use them because, according to him, his sons did not have any interest in it. He also stated that he did not have enough time to sit with his children with the books.

Other participants said that they did not see any point of teaching their children L1 reading or writing. Nalini, for example, acknowledged some benefits of her children learning Bengali such as communicating with relatives in Bangladesh, but also said: “What’s the point of learning Bengali? They will live and work here. They will not use Bengali anywhere... they will be confused.” In response to the question if his daughter learns Bengali, Murali said, “No, no need to learn Bengali. What would they do with

that? They will not use it; it might be difficult for them to do good in schools.” This is very worrisome as the first-generation immigrants do not want their children to learn their mother tongue. Rasinger (2012) similarly reports how some second-generation Bangladeshi-born immigrants in the UK do not communicate in Bengali even at home, which he links to language loss over two generations.

The data above shows that the participants do not see the effectiveness of using Bengali either in schools or in real life situations in Canada. They, furthermore, were afraid that this might slow down their children’s literacy acquisition as they might get confused with the different literacy practices. Although there are studies that show how immigrant parents’ may have very positive attitudes to the maintenance of their childrens’ heritage language as they believe that this will provide them better economic opportunities in the future (see Park & Sarkar, 2007), many other studies such as Lee (1999) and Oladejo (2006) report findings similar to this study. Lee (1999), for instance, reports that most parents want their children to be educated in the mainstream language. They think that emphasizing the first language might create obstacles to the academic progress of their children in an English-only social and labor-market environment. Oladejo (2006), in her study in Taiwan, reports that most of the recruited parents overwhelmingly support English-only education for their children. They even wanted their children to be educated in English-only school environment from the age of 4 and 5. In a study in San Francisco, Lao (2004) argues for schools to talk to parents to design bilingual curriculum. In his report, he says that parents’ response to bilingual education is mixed: some parents prefer bilingual education, and some recommend English-only classrooms.

Similar to parents in the study described above, Nalini, a female participant in this study said, “bilingual literacy would be effective for elderly learners like me”; she explained, “as I studied in Bangladesh and learned almost everything in Bengali except reading some English textbooks, I would have been benefitted largely if I were allowed to further my studies in Bengali-English literacy in Canada.” However, she did not speak to the significance of bilingual literacy among the second-generation children. Similarly, Murali said, “No, no I don’t see the purpose of Bengali literacy because, in real life

situations, she [her daughter] has to be very efficient in communication [in English]. She does not need Bengali. She will be living in Canada. What's the point of knowing Bengali?"

It is noteworthy that parents' disinterest in their children's L1 literacy practices influenced the youngsters' disengagement in Bengali literacy practices. The conversation of adults and very young children can be viewed as practices situated along a continuum of biliteracy (Hornberger, 1989, 2000). Sometimes, the parents were heard speaking with the children in English for their attention. The conversation below was recorded in Summer 2017 at the residence of Prashanto and Nalini on the occasion of their daughter's birthday celebration. I selected the excerpt to discuss as it shows how fluent bilingual practices are not taken as a resource to the next step of learning the first language. The excerpt below is an example of bilingual practices of a child participant, Piyush:

Interview excerpt: 22

Unrecruited child: what are you doing? No, no, no,... this is not the one I was asking you to play.

Piyush (the recruited child participant): Hey, Look, how big the shark is...I am not gonna let you do this (to his friend).

The fluent English conversation above turned to fluent Bengali when the child talks with his parents and his parents' friends.

Piyush: Ami vat khabo/ I would like to have some rice (to his mother).

Nalini: Ok, no worries. Ami dichhi/ I am giving; wait a bit.

Then, to the researcher:

Piyush: Tomra ajke thako na? Kal to weekend. Tomader to kal kaj nei. Sokale breakfast kore jeo./ Why don't you stay overnight at our place today? It's weekend tomorrow; you do not have any work; you can go after breakfast.

Though the conversation above shows how the child participant converses in two languages fluently, the participating adult members (parents of Piyush) do not encourage Bengali language learning at an institutional level. While some twenty-first century researchers have been advocating for multilingual literacy practices in the classroom in Europe and North America (Castellotti & Moore, 2010; Moore, 2006; Zarate, Levy, &

Kramersch, 2008), the adult participants in this study seem to be progressing towards monolingual literacy practices for their children. I have discussed above how their practices appear to be related to their past minority experiences; however, their overall perspectives on Bengali literacy practices could be influenced by their ignorance of multi-/pluri-literacy perspectives and existing practices in school as well as lack of resources for getting their children literate in Bengali. A study by Nomura and Caidi (2013) conducted among fourteen Japanese mothers who speak Japanese with their children at home in Toronto also reports similar findings. The participants in that study had difficulties with educating their children in their heritage language because they did not have access to relevant resources, and they were also unaware of the language education practices in the mainstream society. Although the participants in this study were aware of their children's oral literacies in Bengali, they did not follow any specific ways of providing language education to their children, nor did they send their children to any heritage language program in Toronto. Atinder was the only participant who used to send his son to school to learn Bengali on Saturdays for some years. Yet, he said he withdrew him because of his son's lack of interest and his own workload. Saturday heritage language programs in public schools, thus, became an optional activity that they would join only if time allowed. Likewise, the religious texts were accessed only by the adult participants, and except for some special occasions, the children did not have any activities surrounding those texts. They were only taught some oral rituals to recite during everyday prayers, but there were no opportunities to fully reap the multiple benefits those texts could have provided (see Rackley, 2016; Sarroub, 2002) to the children.

5.4. Summary

In this chapter, I have analyzed data from different sources to show how the participants' narratives and practices of religious identities have continued in their daily life trajectories in Toronto that reflect a strong diasporic consciousness. I have also discussed their affiliations with Canada and language and literacy practices in relation to their diasporic consciousness. It was evident that the participants use their religious practices as complex resources for integration, and their religious identities somewhat

shaped their views toward and practices of language and literacies, especially in their children's lives.

Chapter 6.

Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

My main research objective for this study was to learn how and why the recruited participants develop a sense of belonging in Canada in relation to their religion, language and literacy practices. I examined their everyday practices through the filters of two main questions: 1) How and why do the religious affiliations and practices of the recruited participants, as members of the Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora, bind and shelter them in Canada? and 2) How and why do the participants use their linguistic and religious practices as resources for integration in Canada?

6.1. Religious Affiliations, Diasporic Consciousness and Sense of Belonging

Section 6.1 of this chapter focuses on explaining and interpreting how a religion, in this case Hindu, works not only as social and mental capital for the recruited families, but also as a resource for diasporic consciousness and identity formation. My five years of data collection—through interviews, informal conversations, observational field notes and photography—documents how the recruited participants, particularly the adults, used their religion and religious affiliations or associations as resources for socialization, networking and integration into Canadian society.

6.1.1. Religious Affiliations and Social Networking

One of the major ways the recruited participants used their religion and religious associations is through arranging events. We have seen (Chapter Five) that the families participate in events that include kirtans (Hindu religious chants and songs), death anniversary, *Mukhevat*/ rice-eating celebration, *Hatekhor* /*puja* for the beginning of literacy development, and several religious events in temples. These events appear to provide the organizers and participants psychological well-being and opportunities to expand community networks. It was also evident that children of the participating adults

participated in those programs with their parents and relatives. These children also make friends with other children who come to the temple.

Another way the adult participants use their religion as social capital is through arranging get-togethers at homes or temples. I have observed and recorded that adult participants use these get-togethers with family and friends as a resource to share their happy and sad life news. This sharing of personal, familial and world issues with people from the same religious background energizes the participants to develop an understanding about the mainstream job market, and about the national and international politics. The most common topic of discussion is the threat of Islamic extremism in the world. At almost all the gatherings in which I participated with the recruited participants, the adults talked about the attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh and on civilians (non-Muslim) in Europe and America by extremist Islamists. They were doubtful if Islam, as a religion, teaches tolerance and acceptance of differences. Though they were very happy that they were not living in Bangladesh, they were concerned that Canada could experience similar religious and social chaos like the Indian sub-continent. They felt that the accommodation to religious schooling, and inclusion of religious demands in schools, such as, allowing, setting and preaching religions through the school system might be dangerous in the long run. Their fear lies in their knowledge and experiences about religious schooling in Bangladesh where creating divisions among children by clustering them into different religious groups is common. If Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, and other minority religious students in the Canadian school system are segregated based on their religious practices, the school districts would need billions of dollars every year to accommodate the religious practices of all various kinds of students who join schools across GTA from various backgrounds. Though most parents wanted their children to carry on the legacy and roots of their ethno-cultural-religious backgrounds, the adult participants were afraid their offspring would learn that they were different from others. Remembering their experiences of the division and bloodshed based on religion on the Indian sub-continent (Das, 2002; Riaz, 2011), they felt scared that a similar situation would be created through religious accommodations in Canada. They, instead, supported a secular education system at all educational institutions. I have observed that the

recruited adult participants, through their social and community gatherings, developed social, political, and religious consciousness in Canada.

Using community and religious affiliations to serve economic and legal purposes was another way of using religion as social capital for the recruited adults. Filing taxes, buying or selling properties, ordering catering, taking advice for family matters, and asking for legal services – all these are done with the people most of who share the same religious and ethnic backgrounds. This way of asking for favors from the same ethnic and religious group of people demonstrates that the recruited adult participants felt comfortable to work with a group of people who share similar experiences. There seem to be two basic reasons for taking help from Bangladeshi Hindus: 1) they have fellow feelings and 2) they share the same language. Hence, while diasporic consciousness helped most participants to bind strong relationships with other Bangladeshi Hindus, the same consciousness appears to have contributed to deteriorate their relationships with Bangladeshi and other Muslims in Toronto. Again, as I have discussed before, this worsening of the relations between the two Bangladeshi religious groups has been fueled by fast-spreading social and political discourses of Islam since the rise of the Islamic State (Abdel-Fattah, 2017).

6.1.2. Religious Practices as Resources for Integration

It was evident that the recruited participants arranged and participated in religious events without the fear and intimidation that they faced in their homeland. In Bangladesh, most Hindus celebrate Hindu festivals and perform daily tasks amidst fear of psychological and physical abuses by rising reactionary Islamic forces in Bangladesh (Riaz, 2009). In Canada, they celebrate all of their festivals without fear. This sense of freedom to practice religious rituals works as social capital for the recruited participants. This feeling of freedom also gives them courage to live their lives in Canada however they choose. I would like to call this feeling an *inspirational capital*. Their past experiences of living a minority life in a predominantly Muslim Bangladesh inspire them to endeavor to find different ways to build a strong base in Canada. I have identified that *being-out-of-Bangladesh* is the first form of capital for the recruited participants. The

participants celebrate religious and family programs in their new Canadian homes, and oftentimes at temples with fearless, happy hearts. I have observed that the recruited participants arranged and celebrated kirtans, funerals ceremonies, birth days, death anniversaries, friends' get-togethers and regular worship at homes and temples with festivities and fervor.

My research documents that the development of a sense of belonging becomes stronger when the recruited participants use their religion and religious affiliations as social capital. My interview, observational field-notes, and photography data show how the recruited participants of this study feel that in Canada they could freely practice their religion and could work hard to make their dreams come true. Though all the recruited adults for this study have strong feelings for their language and ethnicity, as shown through their use of their mother tongue and celebration of Bengali and Hindu traditions and festivals, they do not have any intentions to go back to Bangladesh. The most significant reason why the recruited adults feel positively about Canada is that they are not living in the constant threat and fear, which they experienced while living in predominantly Muslim Bangladesh. This fearless and free living in Canada is the strongest motivating factor for the recruited adults. I have explained with multiple data sources how the recruited participants lived an intimidated life in their homeland. Verbal abuse, land-grabbing, rape and kidnap of Hindu girls and women, forced conversion, and silent exodus to India are common phenomena to Bangladeshi Hindus. When people with these kinds of experiences get an opportunity to live in a place where they are not looked down upon because of their beliefs and daily practices, they seem to get a strong feeling of security. This mental satisfaction of living an un-intimidated life gives them the courage and feeling to develop a sense of belonging in the host country of Canada.

6.1.3. Religious Identity and Socialization within the Mainstream Culture

The participants in my study focused all their socialization practices around Bengali Hindu culture and in-group membership. However, their discourse showed they had developed a strong sense of belonging to Canada. The participants did not see

integration and developing a sense of belonging as synonymous. In their view, they could not “integrate” into the mainstream society because of three major reasons: 1) economic hardship/continuous survival jobs, 2) language barrier/not proficient in the target language, and 3) cultural differences (see chapter five for detailed discussion). In contrast, they felt very much “Canadian” because they could enjoy and appreciate religious freedom, they lived more secured lives (in comparison to Bangladesh), and they took all opportunities to work hard and lead their lives on their own.

Religious identity appears to be strong among the recruited participants. The participants have two strong identity positions: Bangladeshi-Hindu, and Canadian. Their first identity is connected to their ethno-linguistic bond to the Bengal delta on the Indian sub-continent. Though Bengali is spoken in many other parts of Eastern India, the recruited participants would mostly like to be identified as Bangladeshi-Hindu. There are two reasons that inform their identity: they are from Bangladesh with the experience of living a minority life in a pre-dominantly Muslim Bangladesh, and their ways of speaking Bengali and their daily life trajectories are different than other Bengali speakers in the region. In terms of their Canadian identity, they feel proud to be Canadians as they enjoy the freedom of religion and life. It was also observed that the adult participants were very hopeful about the unlimited opportunities that Canada provided for them in a secure environment. However, attempts to socialize within the mainstream society are notable by their absence. I have not observed at any point of my data collection (except in one case) that the recruited participants invited Canadians of different ethnic and religious backgrounds to their family programs. They were also not observed to attend any theatre, concerts or any other mainstream cultural events. They were only observed to attend programs that were related to their ethno-linguistic-religious backgrounds and some Canadian national celebrations. Integration and adaptation to the host nation are very complex and fluid. The recruited participants for this study showed various forms of negotiation, adaptation, and transformation to integrate into mainstream society in Canada. Their first major integration practice revolves around how they could intensify their religious and community identity. Their practices indicate a shift from assimilation to multiculturalism (Joppke & Morawska, 2014). However, it should not be considered that all the participating members have the same type of integration practices; there was

enough evidence of how participating members, particularly women and children, are adapting to the host culture by using the opportunities provided by the host nation (Joppke & Morawska, 2014). Some female participants such as Kunti, who might have only played the role of home maker because of limited opportunities for women in their home country and social and familial pressures to rear children at home, now experience the freedom of going out for work in Canada. Nuri was very vocal in telling me that she contributed more than two-thirds of the money they needed to buy the house. She did not work outside of the home in Bangladesh; however, she had been working as a full-time employee at a food-chain shop in Toronto for more than six years. This opportunity has empowered her by giving her financial independence and mental strength. Home makers like Latika, on the other hand, still stay at home for practical reasons but acknowledge the fact that having a career would have given her more freedom and enjoyment of being a Canadian. The children, similarly, get a lot of freedom in deciding what they want to do and how, and they can adapt to a new environment more quickly than their parents. In this research study, I have observed that all the children talk about their friends from various ethnic and religious backgrounds and seem to embrace diversity more than their parents.

Though the recruited participants mostly socialize around and within the Bangladeshi Hindu community, their sense of belonging to Canada is paramount. They love the Canadian environment, they trust the Canadian education system, they rely on Canadian health care, and they enjoy freedom of speech and religion that the Canadian Constitution guarantees to every citizen. Their identity positions are fluid, transformative, and constructive: fluid as they are Canadian, Bangladeshi, Hindu; transformative as the children of the recruited adults are more Canadian in terms of their use of language and enjoying Canadian life; and constructive as the adults and children alike develop more Canadian identity over time.

6.2. Religious Affiliations, Language, Literacies and Integration

The recruited participants are very much affiliated to their religion. Recruited adults and children celebrate most Hindu religious pujas at home or temples. They also

participate in Hindu festivals at temples with family and friends. Religion, for them, is a central part of their daily life. Ahmed (2004) argues that religious people move, live, and socialize around people who share the same religious beliefs and practices. He terms this attitude as *towardness*, meaning birds of a feather flock together.

In terms of language and literacy practices, all adults in this study, irrespective of their sexes, education, and social status, use Bengali in their everyday life, except for work affairs. None of them uses English with their children unless absolutely necessary, for example, helping them with homework. Initiatives for literacy development for the recruited adults in Canada vary significantly because of individual interests and goals. Six out of the fourteen adult participants enrolled in college/university programs to further their academic literacies; however, only four of them successfully completed the programs and have been working in fields related to their line of education and experiences. Two others dropped out because they were concerned about earning bread and butter for their families. Except three female participants, most adult participants have developed literacies, associated with shopping, ordering food in restaurants, answering phone calls, and driving. Latika and Kunti demonstrate limited literacy development after coming to Canada as they cannot carry on basic tasks outside home such as doing groceries, driving or communicating with non-Bengalis. Latika constructed her identity as a homemaker who would rear children in traditional ways, clean houses and cook for the family. Kunti, even though she works outside, has hardly any communication with English-speakers because of her limited English skills. I have met Kunti several times at different religious and family programs at Sanjit's house; I saw her avoiding Caucasian invitees on purpose. I asked her once why she was not in the living room where most people were talking to each other; she replied that she felt uncomfortable to answer questions that the Caucasian elderly couple might have asked her. Latika, on the other hand, was very fluent in communicating with her English-speaking neighbors though she did not take any formal language training. Surprisingly though, she does not feel comfortable to go out and do groceries or to see a doctor by herself.

In terms of their integration into mainstream society, however, all the recruited participants claimed to be very happy living in Canada. Children seem to affiliate more easily to a Canadian identity than their parents, which is reflected in their use of English, eating Canadian food, and playing common Canadian sports. Children prefer to speak English with their friends, and both languages are used within their families; in all cases, they often exhibit bilingual practices in their communication. They claimed to prefer fried chicken over curry chicken, and bread over rice. They also watch hockey and basketball while their parents were interested in cricket and soccer. The adults feel Canadians in terms of their affiliations with Canadian institutions and the job market; however, they put equal importance on their ethno-religious-linguistic heritage. They work hard and pay taxes to make a sound living in Canada; at the same time, they visit Hindu temples all the year round and celebrate all religious festivals.

6.2.1. Languages Used in Everyday Lives

My observational and recorded interview data show that all the adult recruited participants are multilingual: they use Bengali and English in relation to their social and professional needs. The language practice of the older recruited participants in this study is predominantly standard Bengali, except to interact with Canadian English speakers. A few participants have a dialectal accent, but they interact in standard Bengali with their children, guests and the researcher. At all family, community and social events observed for this study, all the adult recruited participants spoke Bengali, except for some code mixing with English. Their daily life conversation with family, friends, and children is dominated largely by Bengali. They even use Bengali when they talk to their children who are mostly English speakers. These oral Bengali literacy practices of the recruited adults are helping their children develop oral literacy in their mother tongue. However, all the recruited children are mostly multilingual as they use Bengali and English to fulfil their personal needs. By personal needs, I mean the use of the languages – mostly English and purposefully Bengali – to serve individual needs. Individual needs include pushing parents to speak English, showing invited guests that they could speak Bengali, and serving communication purposes whenever necessary. Their use of languages, thus, depends on the context of communication. For example, they, sometimes, were observed

responding to their parents and grandparents in Bengali while communicating with siblings and other children in English at the same time. All adult participants feel that their children need to develop skills in English to live well in this country. They do not see the merits of developing literacy in the Bengali language. None of the recruited children knows how to write in Bengali; however, they have fairly good listening and speaking skills in Bengali.

For the recruited children, some communicate with their parents in Bengali at home, but, at social gatherings, the same children respond to their parents in English although the parents always speak to them in Bengali. Some parents, nevertheless, speak English with their children in other people's presence. Though all the recruited children understand Bengali and can use it whenever they need to, all of them feel comfortable in English. It is possibly because some participating children and parents do not see any practical value of Bengali in the mainstream society. Bengali language and literacy were devalued in the children's lives similarly to what has been observed in other studies on minority languages (see Giampapa, 2010; Low & Sarkar, 2014). Hence, the ways in which religious values were transformed from the adults to the children's lives, their literacy practices were not carried on to the next generation. This, in fact, shows how the minority language and literacy practices of a comparatively small number of an immigrant population may gradually fade away as they lack representation and are devalued in the mainstream society in a supposedly multilingual context (Giampapa, 2010; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

6.2.2. Literacy Practices: Mainstream and Home Literacies

The literacy practices of the recruited participants can be divided into two major categories: intersectional and intergenerational. Through my observation and interviews, I have identified that adult males, adult females, and children have different kinds of literacy practices. Adult male participants have various types of literacy practices. Among the seven recruited adult males, two have degrees from Canadian universities, two have obtained college certifications, two others attended a few classes at a college, but did not complete any certification or diplomas, and one did not go to schools in

Canada. On the other hand, few female participants have schooling in Canada: five of the female participants have no to little schooling in Canada, one has very limited educational experience in Canada, and only one has a professional degree. Meanwhile, the participating children are all going to Canadian public schools and having bilingual literacy practices in different domains.

Literacy practices of the recruited children include watching English rhymes on iPads, through YouTube videos, playing games on tablets, attending religious programs at homes and temples, worshipping Gods and Goddesses along with their parents, learning how to respond to Bengali instruction by their parents, and reading children's books in English. Literacy development is mostly school-based, except for the extra-curricular initiatives, such as attending Saturday swimming classes, Bengali-language learning classes, and soccer club. Other literacy practices, including reading, writing, counting, greeting others, and decoding street signs of the recruited participants are developed through school practices and parental guidance. The common patterns include bilingual oral literacy practices, mono-lingual English reading and writing practices and mainstream academic literacies. Though all adult participants feel that their children should learn Bengali to be in touch with their relatives, traditions, and religions, they do not see the importance of using Bengali in school literacy practices. All the recruited parents told me in interviews that because their children would live in Canada where Bengali was not regarded as a valuable language and resource, their children needed to know proper use of English with the Canadian accent and grammar. Recruited adults also make sure that their children worship Hindu Gods and Goddesses and respect elders as traditions. Thus, although religion was used as social capital by the participants for socializing and networking, their traditional literacy practices were not accessed as capital to develop their children's multiliteracies. The idea of *language as resource* (Hornberger, 2003) hardly applies to these participants' lives because there was an absence of empowerment in their home language and a lack of consciousness of the value of their literacy practices. As Park and Sarkar (2007) suggest, community involvement in giving immigrant children exposure to their heritage languages and literacies outside of the home is necessary to make them aware of the multiple benefits of these practices.

6.2.3. Religious Consciousness as Resources for Literacies

All the recruited participants exhibited a strong sense of belonging and affiliation to the Hindu religious community and related associations. They are conscious of their religious identity, and they celebrate annual religious festivals in temples. It was also observed that most of them worshiped Hindu Gods and Goddesses daily at homes. These religious practices—at homes and temples—are related to their identity formation and transformation. They are Hindus, but they are also Canadians. Though there was no identifiable data that explained the relationship between literacy and religious practices of the recruited participants, it was evident that their literacy practices are guided by who they are and what they believe in. For example, the minority experiences that the adult recruited participants have had in their homeland have influenced them to prioritize literacy development over other activities. *Developing literacies* and *studying hard* are two major goals of most of the participating adults. The adult participants reported that their parents told them that there were no other ways to have a good and respected life in Bangladesh for Hindus other than having good education and a profession. Those experiences from the homeland have motivated the recruited adults to prioritize literacy development of their own children. Various types of children's books on the solar system, animal world, and geography were seen in family homes. Among various religious and traditional literacies, children are asked to worship Gods and Goddesses during evening prayers. They are also taught to greet elderly people with respect. Parents tell their children stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata. It has also been observed that some recruited families watch TV programs on Hindu religious TV series on Indian channels while their children are with them. These are some literacy practices that are related to the religious beliefs of the recruited participants.

6.2.4. Literacy Practices for Integration

The literacy practices of the recruited participants are three-fold: 1) survival literacy practices for adult males; 2) mainstream literacy practices for the children; and 3) independent literacy for the female participants. Adult recruited males have tried multiple literacy initiatives to survive in Canada. Only Atinder completed a university degree in

Canada. Prashanta enrolled in a degree program at a university but did not finish his university degree because of family responsibilities. Sanjit, Bisheshor, Ashutosh, Murali enrolled in college certification/diploma programs, but Murali and Ashutosh did not complete the program. Kanti did not go to any school in Canada; he has been working at a factory where he does not have to speak English or perform other literacies, such as computer literacy, reading and writing. Sanjit, Bisheshor, Ashutosh, Atinder, Prashanta, Kanti, Murali are all earning income. Atinder and Prashanta are working in well-paid jobs and in line with their certification; others struggle to make ends meet. As males are traditionally considered the breadwinners and caretakers of families on the Indian sub-continent, recruited males take jobs that would help them survive in a new country after immigration. Most recruited females, on the other hand, feel empowered and important in Canada. Though many of them did not work outside the home in Bangladesh, they are working outside now and making contributions to their families in Canada. This independence working outside the home has empowered the female participants. Except Latika, all other female participants work outside the home. In terms of their literacy practices, only Nalini has completed a university degree; no one else went to schools for certifications or diplomas. Their language and other literacies such as reading, writing, computer and internet are related to their work. They were trained for related jobs, and most are engaged in survival jobs such as working at chain restaurants, supermarkets, or factories. Their job-training is the only literacy that they are engaged with.

Children's literacies, as discussed before, are school-based; all the recruited children are developing literacies that are designed by the mainstream school system. Their other observable literacy practices are bilingual interactions with family and friends and computer games.

All the above literacy practices of the recruited participants are effective for their integration. Survival, empowering, and mainstream literacy practices that the participating males, females, and children, respectively, are helping them to become members of the host society. Whatever they are doing is a step forward to live permanently in Canada. Though the purpose of individual participants varies significantly

because of their gender, cultural influence, and goals, the main purpose of all of them is to have a happy life in Canada.

6.3. Implications

The implications of this study are manifold. Multiculturalism promoted widely across the GTA, without any doubt, plays an important role in the lives of immigrant groups as is the case of the participants in this study, which is why they seem to be successful in finding their own ways of being Canadians. While the study illuminates the ways in which some members of the Bangladeshi Hindu diaspora in Toronto use their religion as social capital in the processes of integration in Canada, it also discloses ongoing inter-group tensions among Bangladeshi immigrants of two major religious communities. Based on the serious consequences these issues may bring forth in this multicultural context, I argue that Canadian educational institutions have to play a major role to immediately address these issues. The study also presents the success and difficulties of the adult participants with multilingual literacy practices. The inter-generational gap in such practices is also evident. Following are some key factors I believe may help with initiatives to alleviate the problems.

6.3.1. Creating Alternative Discourses

Inter-religious tension is nothing new in the current geopolitical context. Ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, religious conflicts in the Middle East, anti-Semitic activities in Europe and North America, fundamental Islamist attacks around the globe, the rise of right-wing white supremacist groups in Europe and America have shaken common people with terror. Amidst all of these traumatizing assaults, some terrorist acts get special political attention while others are substantially ignored by the international media. Subsequently, terrorism has been associated with assaults done by a specific group of people in public and political narratives, which has created emotional discursive practices (Abdel-Fattah, 2017) like Islamophobia. Islamophobia has been born out of discourses so powerful that the concepts of Islamic extremism, terrorism, conversion and so forth have been accepted as *common sense*. Thus, some of the Islamophobic

sentiments expressed by some participants in this study cannot be explained as individualistic; rather, this is “ahistorical and effaces the world–historical thick contexts in which Islamophobia has emerged as a form of racism constitutive in the making of the modern world” (Abdel-Fattah, 2017, p. 184). Plus, the participants were victims of or knew first hand victims of religious extremism in their home country, which seems to have informed stereotypical views of inter-group relations. Hence, the inter-group tension between Hindus and Muslims from Bangladesh cannot just be resolved by lessons of cultural diversity and tolerance. I propose, what Abdel-Fattah (2017) suggests in her book, “to problematize taken-for-granted truth claims around ‘radicalization’, ‘racism’, ‘Islamism’, ‘democratic’, ‘secularism’, ‘freedom of religion’, ‘freedom of speech’, ‘tolerance’, ‘multiculturalism’ and so on” (p. 184). The author explains that these truth claims hold essentialized views of the concepts that are circulated without critical disputes. Using the author’s idea of *alternative language* to what is used in our daily lives, I suggest that we need alternative discourses to counter the normalized understanding of religious conflicts that are often described through a stereotypical understanding of religions. The term *alternative discourse* is used in social science research in Asia and other parts of the world to problematize Western ways of thinking, theorizing, producing, and disseminating knowledge (see Alatas, 2000). Inter-religious tensions around the globe also require alternative epistemological, methodological and analytical frameworks of investigation that will change the descriptive understanding of “violence and conflict involving Muslims” (Abdel-Fattah, 2017, p. 155) and other religious groups. Instead of attaching labels of terrorism to a specific religious group, terrorists need to be identified as *terrorists* who, although they may self-identify with a specific religion, belong only to the religion of *terrorism*. This will allow educators and researchers to go beyond identifying religious oppressors and victims with specific religion and to focus on the social, political and economic conditions that produce and uphold the conflicts.

The engagement of public language programs such as LINC is paramount here since many adult immigrants, especially women, get Canadian educational experiences only through these language programs. Instead of providing general lessons on multiculturalism and tolerance, LINC may bring forth the issues of social, cultural and

religious tensions into the classrooms to identify the problems and results of stereotyping and discrimination. As discussed in many studies on narratives (see Sharkey, 2004), personal stories can be powerful tools in the classroom to raise awareness of specific issues. Thus, adult language classrooms can be important places to initiate dialogues on alternative language to daily stereotypes or discriminatory or racist practices.

6.3.2. Cross-Religious Awareness and Trans-religious Story-telling

Volunteerism, as observed in this study, is increasing in Canada (Terrazas, 2010). People of the same faith help each other by setting up organizations and participate in many voluntary activities to influence political issues in their country of origin; examples include “direct lobbying, media campaigns, fundraising, demonstrations, electronic communication, and electoral participation. The effectiveness of these efforts is tempered by the strength of personal contacts and transnational social networks” (Newland, 2010, p. 7). This social networking is common among diasporic communities and serves as a resource to bring people closer. Yet, as this study suggests, the practices may also push people of different faiths apart from one another. The previous experiences of minority living may impact the social cohesion of a diaspora. For example, many Hindus from Bangladesh have experienced discrimination against them because of their religious identities and affiliations. Many Muslims have also suffered similar consequences during the religious disputes at other parts of the sub-continent. As I have discussed in this dissertation, the conflicts may have migrated to Canada as baggage with diaspora communities. Yet, very few detailed studies have been conducted to understand how inter-religious tension persists in Canadian society.

To mitigate inter-group tensions and encourage cohesion, schools and government/non-government organizations should initiate dialogues between faith-groups more often. If awareness is developed through cross-cultural and cross-religious dialogues, faith-based people would be able to share their experiences and find a common ground of living happily in Canada. Organized awareness campaigns in and out of schools may also help learners develop understanding of the differences and commonalities between faiths. Dialogues and awareness campaigns will also minimize

ghettoization or concentration and segregation, which keep recent immigrants impoverished for a long time (Murdie & Ghosh, 2010). Opening and creating opportunities for volunteerism among cross-religious groups will also help minimize gaps between people of various faiths. As evidenced in this study that volunteerism among faith-based intra-groups is very common, inter-faith volunteerism should be promoted at all levels. This cross-religious volunteerism would contribute effectively in developing a cohesive society in Canada.

Religion-based segregation and concentration is very common in many countries including Canada and the US (Cantel, 2005). Canada will have a “cohesive society” as suggested by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, when people of various faiths help each other irrespective of their faiths, religions, ethnicities, castes and creeds. It is true that religion-based organizations are creating opportunities for progress and happy living in Canada; however, mono-religious, mono-ethnic segregation may not help minimize gaps between faith groups, particularly, among those who have experienced trauma and persecution by the hands of some members of a majority religion.

Considering the reality of metropolitan cities, incorporation of knowledge of world religion or religious consciousness in school curricula has become an important topic of discussion in recent literature (see Anwaruddin & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2015; Patrick, 2015; Minikel-Lacocque, 2015). The study of religions and religious practices has also become important in our globalized world as people from all walks of life with various religions and cultures live in cities. It has also been observed that religions and religious identification and practices have become a major part of discussion on social problems all over the world (Hopkins, 2011). It is, furthermore, important to understand why inter-religious tensions arise in multicultural contexts. As this study suggests, diasporic communities with strong religious consciousness may keep other religious groups away from their circles. If this tension continues among the members of the public, groups will continue to be divided along lines of faith. It is, therefore, important to document religion-based segregation and concentration to analyze whether, and how, this practice may establish inter-group tensions (Sen, 2006). It was also identified that concentrated and segregated communities may lag behind in integrating to the

mainstream culture. To develop a pluralistic society, respect for and acceptance to differences are very important, and inter-cultural dialogues between different cultural groups can be effective for social inclusion (European Commission, 2018, n.d., para. 1-2). When I talk about inter-cultural dialogues, discussion on religious differences is important to be included. Canada has become a trans-religious place where religions should not be left out of personal or private discussions. It is high time that curriculum developers for school districts incorporated multiple religious texts and the stories of diasporic communities. Teachers can also use texts that report the consequences of religious intolerance from world history. Story-telling about the past experiences of young and adult learners can also be incorporated in class discussions so that students develop critical consciousness about differences, learn tolerance and strive for peaceful coexistence. They can learn from each other's stories; for example, a Hindu immigrant student might share how they were discriminated against by their Muslim neighbors in Bangladesh, and a Muslim student can also share how they were persecuted by their Hindu neighbors in Gujarat, India. On the one hand, Syrian Yazidi refugees, for example, can share how they were inhumanly treated by extremist Sunni rebels; and on the other, Sunni Syrian refugees can also share how they were brutally tortured by the minority Shi'a government forces. Through the process of sharing stories, educators can help build a common sense of belonging and a collective consciousness for peaceful living with people from various faith-based groups in Canada.

Classroom activities as such require rigorous planning and monitoring. Therefore, effective teacher education is paramount to make such activities successful. The pre-service and in-service teacher-education programs at universities should also include discussion and debates on the importance of incorporating religious texts in their curriculum so that the teachers can create an inclusive classroom environment for all the members where relationships can be built on respect. To gain maximum benefit from inter-religious education, student teachers should develop inter-faith literacy to accommodate and promote religious consciousness among students. If we ignore the inter-religious tensions that some members of our community can bring into classrooms, we will not be able to take a collective decision to build a cohesive society.

6.3.3. Dialogues in and outside Schools

Religious education in the public-school system in Canada, as mentioned, has been a controversial issue as many people are against teaching children about religions. Anwaruddin and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2015) argue that religious pluralism should be part of public-school curricula in the secondary school system in Canada despite numerous critics against religious education. In their special issue of *Curriculum Inquiry*, the authors include several studies that point to the importance of dialogues between religious faiths and public education in a pluralistic society like Canada. One of the major arguments the editorial of the journal includes is that religious education should include the understanding of what and how religions are catalysts for social change. From my data, I have identified that the adult participants have very strong opinions about a religious group. With the absence of the recognition of religious pluralism in the public education sphere, while inter-religious tensions as above divide first generation immigrants into segregated groups, this tension may extend into the life of their children, widening the inter-religious gap between groups. In fact, research suggests that children of racial minority immigrants are less integrated into Canadian society as compared to their parents (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). Researches also point to how learners may withdraw from educational practices because of conflicts between their faith and educational institutions (see Anwaruddin & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2015). While the idea of including religious education in public schools still needs much research, acknowledging religious pluralism in the social science curricula is possible through classroom discussions and dialogues, and it may promote inter-religious dialogues between groups. As the Canadian landscape is a testament of growing religious diversity (Anwaruddin & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2015), the importance of educating children about religious pluralism is also paramount.

As a country characterized by immigration, Canada remains open to accommodating various religious and ethnic practices. Its multiculturalism policies also suggest that ethnic, linguistic and religious diversities are the fabric of Canada. These multiculturalism policies and accommodation to religious associations and education are growing areas of satisfaction and concerns to many. There are diasporic communities

whose members were tortured and oppressed by the majority religious or ethnic groups in their homelands and are now living in Canada. The hatred and enmity along religious and ethnic backgrounds of immigrants need to be dealt with through careful observation and initiatives that prompt dialogues in schools, community and media. Canada has given shelter to Palestinians and Jewish refugees from the Middle East; Yazidis, Christians, and Sunni Muslims from Syria and Iraq; Hutus, Tutsis and other warring ethnic groups from Africa; Hindus and Muslims from the Indian Sub-continent; and, many other conflicting religious and ethnic groups. These contested and apparently inimical religious and ethnic communities in Canada need to sit for dialogues to give a new meaning to their previous experiences and trauma in their new country. If people from various religious backgrounds with experiences of persecution and trauma by another religious group continue carrying grudges toward each other, Canada might develop into a cluster society without respect and tolerance. Having a law that promotes multiculturalism and diversity does not mean that people will be respectful to each other. In order to develop and nurture mutual respect for various religious and ethnic communities, schools and community organizations should design curricula and programs that will incorporate history and stories of different faith-based diasporic communities. When participants will be able to share their experiences of trauma and persecution with a group of people whose intra-group members were responsible for their suffering, both groups might be able to construct a new identity based on mutual respect and fellowship. Social science, culture and world religion, and history classes in schools can be places where teachers and students can create environments for sharing stories that would help build a collective consciousness about tensions between faith-based groups.

Patrick (2015) argues that addressing the difficult issues arising from religious diversity is an essential element of citizenship education, as it involves diverse perspectives, collective well-being, negotiation and conflict resolution (p. 161). Referring to Bickmore's research that reveals how school teachers in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Ontario would like to deal with security and safety in a school environment by ignoring larger issues of peacekeeping, such as, conflicts and controversy, Patrick (2015) proposes to incorporate world religions and cultures in secondary social studies classes to develop collective understanding about differences and commonalities among multiple religious

perspectives. Tanaka (2016) says that teachers can make a difference in the lives of multicultural, immigrant, and indigenous learners by employing indigenous ways of knowing. By “indigenous ways of knowing”, Tanaka means holistic development of knowledge which requires inclusive, “supportive and encouraging” (p. 4) materials and tasks in classrooms.

If teachers accommodate discussion and debates on global religious and ethnic practices and conflicts, learners will get an opportunity to share and learn about religious differences and diversity. There should not be any specific curriculum for this subject; rather, teachers and students would co-construct curriculum and knowledge on the basis of the existence of particular religious and ethnic groups in a particular class. Students can bring in any materials related to their mono-cultural, intercultural and multicultural experiences with religion to the class and teachers can organize those artefacts in regard to the topic, sensitivity and significance. This *Intercultural and Inter-religious Studies* class should be incorporated from elementary level in all educational institutions in Canada. Although some may argue that religion and religious practices are individual matters and we should not try to incorporate religious discussion in public education system, I argue that it is high time we made sure that children of all ethnic and religious backgrounds developed respect and tolerance towards different religious and ethnic groups in schools and outside schools.

Mono-religious education, however, could contribute to heightened prejudice and may attempt to preach hatred towards believers of different religious and cultural groups. Rather than promoting religion-based education, the educational policy makers should initiate dialogues with school district boards to incorporate religious and ethnic studies into secondary and higher secondary school curricula. This subject will not teach students to ignore or avoid their religious beliefs or practices; rather, it would let students know that there are many ways that people follow to or not to worship God, and ethnic and religious diversity is a resource, not an obstacle. It is also noteworthy that students learn that almost one-fourth of the total population in Canada does not believe in God. Ghosh, Chan, Manuel and Dilimulati (2017) advocate education on religious differences to eradicate extremism from society. By analyzing recent extremist behaviors among some

Canadians, they point out the need for education. They suggest that incorporation of liberal citizenship, critical, media, and religious literacies would promote respect and tolerance towards differences in Canadian society. Moore (2006) recommends the incorporation of religious texts or discussion as social literacies in school curriculum to promote citizenship and diversity in Western liberal democracies. The monthly parents- teachers' meetings can also be a very good place for cross cultural discussion and awareness campaign. Teachers in Social Studies, History and Culture, Citizenship can bring religious texts from different religions and generate discussion on differences.

Another way of initiating dialogues about religious and ethnic diversity is to provide parental education. Workshops could be arranged for parents with diverse religious and ethnic identities. The workshops may focus on discussion and debate on religious and ethnic diversities and the universal qualities that all human beings share. As parents carry cultural baggage, they have tremendous influence on the psychological development of their children, so only educating the children will not be helpful. Through parental education or training of religious and ethnic practices, educators and policy makers can take collective actions to initiate inter-religious dialogues.

6.3.4. Issues of Adult Language and Literacy Practices

Based on the findings of this research study, adult language and literacy initiatives need to be modified to accommodate adult immigrants to Canada. The initiatives to provide language and literacy education to adult immigrants should start with identifying the individual needs and individual educational experiences of prospective participants. Based on individual needs and educational experiences, there should be *purpose-driven education* in which adult immigrant learners will have specific targets that they would like to accomplish through their language and literacy education. In this research, thirteen of the fourteen adult recruited participants were not happy with the language and literacy training that they received in Canada. Ten of these thirteen participants never pursued a long-term degree program at any universities or colleges in Canada. Only three of these thirteen pursued a university or college program; however, two of them could not complete the course requirements as they were preoccupied with surviving in Canada and were

frustrated that their previous education and experiences had almost no value in Canada. One of these three completed a two-year college program; however, he was still working as a security guard. To overcome these challenges, according to the participants, more nuanced skills-based training programs for the skilled immigrants and communication-focused language training might be more effective for adult immigrants to integrate into the labor-market. Though a focus of LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) programs is communication, Murali, who took some classes at LINC, shared that most classes focused on having simulated conversation with correct sentences. He said that he did not understand what Canadian-born people were saying on the street, at shopping malls, and at restaurants; however, the classes he took at LINC did not address those issues extensively. I understand that he did not take enough classes to learn colloquial phrases that Canadian English speakers use; from his perspective, he did not benefit as much as he expected from taking English classes, and this learning was not fruitful to better his integration into the Canadian society.

6.3.5. Bilingual or Translingual Storytelling at Schools

My research study reports that bilingual immigrant parents are happy if their children can speak and understand their mother tongue. Though there was a strong “No” from all parents to provide bilingual education to their children in mainstream classrooms, all of them said they would be happy if their children could communicate in Bengali with them and their relatives back home. Cummins (2010) said,

when students see themselves (and know that their teachers see them) as emergent bilinguals rather than as English language learners (or some other label that defines students by what they lack), they are much more likely to take pride in their linguistic abilities and talents than if they are defined in deficit terms. (p. x)

As my data represents, recruited parents do not see any benefits of learning Bengali literacy, which is why they do not support bilingual education for their children. One of the major reasons for their choice appears to be that they do not see value of Bengali in Canada. If they realized the value of multiliteracy, they would probably see the advantages of learning Bengali for their children. It has also been identified that

grown-up children of immigrants are losing interest in using Bengali in their everyday lives. I have recorded and observed that the recruited children aged 3 to 12 use English almost most often than their mother tongue. I have also identified that some children feel lost or resist the use of their mother tongue as they cannot make any sense of long conversations. There are exceptions as well. Two out of the ten recruited children understand and sometimes use their mother tongue when they speak with their parents or respond to them. Until and unless school curricula respectfully integrate learners' mother tongues in everyday lessons, minority or heritage language speakers will not find interest to continue learning their home languages. Low and Sarkar (2014), by showing the real-life multilingual practices within Montreal's Hip-Hop community, argue that school authorities should redesign their language curriculum to make a favorable classroom environment for multilingual children. They report that Montreal's mono-lingual education system is not helping children who come from various linguistic backgrounds.

Multiple studies have been presented in this dissertation to show how multilingual literacies can be promoted in schools through diverse practices, the engagement of parents in classroom/school activities and the use of texts in different languages in school projects. Such initiatives are also evident in public schools across the GTA. Parents need to be aware of the values of multilingualism and multiple literacies so that they can take agentive roles in creating opportunities for multilingual practices for their children. This may also provide further opportunities to engage parents in school projects such as creating texts and activities that can foster their home language as an asset for learning English in the classroom. Examples include creating storyboards with traditional stories such as folklore and other narratives that run in families. These can later be used for planning further lessons on language and social science topics.

6.3.6. The Missing of Family Members: Barrier to Attaining Full Membership

Strict immigration laws for family sponsorship is a hurdle for some members for developing a sense of belonging to Canada. The adult participants in this study miss their family members, particularly, their first relatives, very much. They left behind their

family and friends to come to Canada for a better future for themselves and their children. They are very happy to get the opportunity to live here; however, they miss their family members every now and then. They particularly miss their brothers, sisters and parents at times of religious celebrations. All the recruited adults hope that they could live with their immediate families in Canada. There are no laws for Canadian immigrants to sponsor their brothers and sisters; only qualified Canadians can sponsor their parents and grandparents in a lottery. The recruited families would live a more cohesive life if they could live with their immediate families. If sponsorship laws are changed for immigrants with stable income, immigrants might dedicate their life and talent whole-heartedly to contribute to nation-building.

6.4. Conclusion

This research study identified three major areas that policy makers, language planners, and literacy curriculum designers should improve to facilitate integration and literacy development of diasporic communities who are living in Canada. The number one factor that the recruited participants consider effective for their integration in Canada is religious freedom and security. They are very happy to experience an unthreatening life compared to what they had in their home country. However, it was noted that most adult participants feared religious schooling, particularly conservative Islamic schooling, which may preach hatred. The presented data urge the need to discuss religions and religious texts in and outside of schools to promote friendly coexistence between inter and intra-religious communities. These data also suggest that promoting and accommodating religion-based education might be counterproductive to the peaceful existence of multi-religious communities in Canada. With the laws of multiculturalism, Canada is providing space to every ethnic and religious group; however, policies need to be very carefully monitored to avoid the possibility of some groups taking advantage of our multicultural policies and promoting mono-cultural and mono-religious superiority among intra-group members. Separating religious discussion from state affairs might not be a good idea in this age of conflicts and the rise of the ultra-right-wing worldwide, including Western Europe and North America. Rather than sweeping the dust under the rug, we need to accept that religion and religious practices and events have tremendous

influence in shaping the everyday lives of diasporic communities. Researchers from social science backgrounds should initiate further studies to know what mono-religious education institutions are teaching students. With the prevalence and advantages of liberal and tolerant policies in Canada, we need to make sure that no diasporic communities or any majority or minority religious groups would consider promoting hatred and prejudice through their preaching. Based on reviewing multiple research reports on diaspora and religion-based schools, policy makers can take actions to modify and change the curriculum of religious schooling that might promote divisions, prejudice, and hatred. The adult participants are concerned about the fact that religions and ideological differences caused tremendous bloodshed and catastrophe for humanity in many parts of the world (Hinnels, 2011). For the last century, even after the Second World War, the world has seen how religion-based ideological differences caused conflicts and riots in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the US. As Hinnels (2011) suggests, understanding religion has a place in building a better society. But it is high time policy makers and education planners took initiatives to initiate dialogues in and outside schools to minimize religion-based hatred and violent extremism. I believe that hate-crimes or religion-based violence are based on ignorance and phobias about other religions, and these can be minimized, if not prevented completely, by educating pupils in schools and in public through discussion and dialogues about different religions and their perspectives.

For the recruited participants of this research study, the life of fear and intimidation is over when they left their homeland for Canada. They feel empowered and encouraged to raise their voices against social injustices. Giving diasporic communities voices in schools and communities may help them overcome their past experiences and integrate into the mainstream societies. Brinkerhoff (2008) says that diasporic communities develop networks and set up association that help develop both the diasporic communities and the host country. Plaza et al., (2011) describe how diasporic communities help develop trade and investment. In this research, I have documented and interpreted how the recruited participants share their financial, social, technological and political knowledge to help each other. In this way, they become a resource for

knowledge and skills for other nations (Brinkerhoof, 2008). As in Brinkerhoof's (2008) words:

A total human capital approach accounts for tacit knowledge, including interpersonal skills and self-confidence... Beyond technical knowledge and skills, then, diaspora may contribute new understanding acquired in the destination country, cultural competencies and associated intermediary roles, and tacit knowledge that encompasses hybrid identities and transnational experience.

(p. 10)

Hence, diasporic communities stand as resources for multiple knowledge for a diversified country like Canada: how they negotiate their racial and religious identities in their new country, how they develop networks of communication and survival, and why and how they reform or hold onto their daily practices in terms of developing literacies and target language competence.

6.5. Drawbacks and Further Possibilities

The major drawback of this study is the number of recruited participants. There were only seven families that were recruited for it. The second drawback is the limitation of access to data. Though I had spent many hours with the recruited participants, I generally stayed three to four hours in every visit. I had many informal conversations that were not recorded. I relied on the field-notes for the data that I wrote when I came back home. I might have lost some important details as I could not record all informal conversations. The third drawback is the individual stories of the recruited participants. Though the recruited participants share ethnic and religious affiliation with Bangladeshi Hindus, all Bangladeshi Hindus would not necessarily feel the same. The individual stories should not be generalized.

There are tremendous opportunities for further research on diasporic communities and their ways of life in a host society. One opportunity for research would be to document diaspora women's integration levels in the host country. Another research study could be initiated to learn how children of a diaspora carry out the experiences of their parents. The third research initiative could be to identify how interfaith volunteerism

may help a diaspora heal the wounds from their previous experiences. Though there are drawbacks of this study in terms of its limited number of participants and individual stories, the study is significant for understanding diasporic lives, language usage and literacy practices. This research study calls for further dialogues in and outside schools so that diaspora families and their children do not carry on the grudges of their parents. To make a cohesive society in Canada, cluster societies should not be encouraged. People of faith-based organizations should initiate volunteerism among inter-faith need-based groups. There should not be only Christians helping Christians, or Muslims helping Muslims, or Hindus helping Hindus; we need to educate our children who would be helping people irrespective of caste and creed, religion and ethnicities. If we fail to make our future generation aware of the cultural and religious differences and capable to love people who do not belong to their ethnicities and religions, we will not be able to build a society where neighbors extend their hands without considering which religion and ethnicities they belong to.

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Appendix A.

Questionnaire

Semi-structured Interview Questionnaire for the proposed PhD Study

I will be taking interviews in Bengali, the mother tongue of the participants and mine. The following is the translation of some of the semi-structured interview questions I plan to ask my participants:

How are you doing? How long have you been in this country? Did you talk to your family at home recently? Do you prefer interacting over telephone to skype? Why?

My illustrative interview questions are three different types: demographic, experiential and reflective/analytic. Here are some examples of each type:

Demographic:

1. Which university/school did you go in Bangladesh?
2. Where did you work in Bangladesh?
3. What are you doing here?
4. Why did you opt for immigration to Canada, particularly Toronto?
5. Where (which area) do you live now? Why did you choose this area to live?

Experiential

1. Did you contact anyone before coming to Toronto? Who? Tell me more about that.
2. Where do you live? How many Bangladeshi families live around?
3. What is your daily routine? What do you do after work?
4. Tell me how you spend the weekends.
5. How often do you go to local coffee shops or restaurants? Tell me more about what happens there.
6. How often do you go to concerts or events arranged in your vicinity?
7. Which school do your children go - Sunday schools or regular schools? Do they play with other children in the school?
8. What is your memorable moment in Canadian culture? Tell me more about that.
9. What have been the most useful and effective ways of becoming part of a community?
10. How do you differentiate your experiences of living in Bangladesh and Canada?

11. How often do you join religious festivals or programs? Are you personally engaged in any religious practices?

Reflective/analytic

1. How would you describe your experiences of living in this neighborhood?
2. Can you share your experiences of living as a religious minority in Bangladesh and as a visual minority in Canada?
3. Does your experience of living in Bangladesh help you integrate into the Canadian mainstream society?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living around Bangladeshi community?
5. If you lived around Canadians what advantages/disadvantages would you have?
6. What do you expect to see yourself and your family in five years of time? Where would you like to settle in Toronto? Why?
7. What experiences made you feel welcomed? Tell me more about those.
8. Would you like to live here permanently? Why?

Given the nature of a semi-structured interview, I may ask some additional questions during the interview sessions.

Appendix B.

A sample Interview Transcription in Bengali (English Script)

- R: Are boudir to weekdays and weekends bole kichu nai...na ki?
B: laughing out loud, amar to chobbish ghontai kaj.
R: boudi ki local kofi shop ba restaurant e majhe moddheye jan?
B: na, ami eka kothao jai na...
R: emnite, dadar sathe?
B: dadar sathe? Dada to nie jai na?
S: na, khaoai to, Mc d er icecream
B: ha, oi ice cream ta khai. O nie ashe, ami garite boshe boshe khai.
S: amader okhane, summer time, ekta icecream shop thake,
R: what motives you the most to take the citizenship of Canada?
S: ekhane sob cheye valo ja lag eta holo...jobone ja kichu lag eta paoa jai...jemon dhoro, tumi je kono chakri koro, tomar thaka khaoar somosya hoi na....
R: e charao, freedom of speech, religion ...
S: ha, mane ...unlimited opportunities...jeta ...deshe jeta sombhob chilo na, ba, sombhob na...
Ekhane , tumi je chakrii koro, tumi ekta bari kinte paro...
R: boudi, apnar kon jinish valo lage?
B: switching agenda...eikhane, jemon ...amder bachara je school e jabe...ekhan kar sob kichu shikhbe, amader kono kichu na..
R: dhormio boi thoi to poran(bachader).jodio ora to ekhono choto...
Ar , puja jokhon koren, o ki ekhono boshe thake...? Choto belai to dekhtam, o boshe thakto apnar pashe..
B: ekhono boshe thake
R: valoi to
B: ha, mane amader utsobor somoy school bondho thakbe...jemon Christmas e bondho thake.
R: ok, what do you like in your neighbourhood; people, culture, nature, security...what?
B: na mane , thakte thakte ekhon ar onno jaigai jete icha kore na. onno jaigai jete icha kore na.
R: kon schoole –e jabe?
B: ekhono thik kori nai...
R: acha, apni to bollen, puja chute dei na...kintu, valo lage kon bishoy gulo,,mane meye hisabe je pothe shadhin vabe cholte paren...
B: ha, sheta valoi..
R: ar ki valo lage?
B: ar valo lage nijer shadhin moto bazaar thazar kora,
R: where would you like to see yourself after 10 years?
B: ami she kotha bolte parbo na...chakri korio na...
R: school to valoi?
B: eto freedom valo lage na...ekhane onek early oi sob shekhai....eta valo na...
R: kintu ora to bole je...jehetu somaje ei sob lok asche..
B: eikhane to school thekei pakna kore dei, amar kotha hoche, ekhane khub taratari (early age) oi jinish ta mathar modheye dhukai dei...
R: How many Canadian (from mainstream culture) friends do you have?...mane friends bolte bujhachi je tader bashay jaoa, apnar bashai asha...
B: amar Canadian friend bolte ache shudhu Dolores...

R: ar dadar?
 S: ekhon hoito bangalider sathe jerokom hoi, tato oder sathe hoi na...office-e..
 R: social network?
 S: bangalider sathe dhoro maximum...80-90%
 R: boudi, ki kin a course korchen?
 B: ami linc e koekdin gechi? Tarpur to konad hoe gelo.
 R: kon skill apnar sobcheye valo lage?
 B: reading...bolte voi pai?
 R: koi? Apni to Dolores er sathe fluent kotha bolen?
 B: ha, are ami Dolores re bolchi, tomar sathe kotha bolte amar kono voi lage na...karon vul hole tumi kichu mone koro na. amader bangalira abar eshob nie kotha bole...kotha ektu ie hole (vul hole)...ha, kotha vul hole, hashbo, khali much chipe chipe hashbo...
 S; laughs
 B: tumi hasho keno? Oi dekho, o hashe
 R: uni hashche manusher kotha chinta kore
 B: na, bolar dorkar ache...ekbar na, konad er jonmo dine...lokjon ashche...ekjon ekta morich kheye feleche vegetable vebe...tarpur to chokh much lal...ami kicu bolte pari na...ektu kotha totha janle, tar sathe kotha bolte partam. Vocabulary kom jani...eijonno kotha bolte voi pai...
 R: phone dhoren na?
 B: na, ami dhori na...dhor chilam ekbariii...tarpur apnar dada mana korche, ami ar dhori na... ar ami jokhon bujhi je kono company ba kono kichur jonno, ami rekhe dei
 S: ami bolchi je , ami oke boli kotha bolte..
 B: ha ami jokhon vorti hote gichi, amake bole kotha bolte...oke bolte dite chai na..
 R: meyera to onek porishromi Bangladesher?
 B: tarporeo...shamider mon vore na..
 R: how much Canadian are you?
 S: ami feel kori...
 R: how would you identify your identity
 S: ami, prothome Canadian, pore bagali, bangladesher, tarpur hindu
 R: do you get any benefit being a hindu in Canada?
 S: social network, how much hindu, how far Bangladeshir
 R: sob...beshir vagii Hindu, muslim o ache...kom
 S: she has a Christian friend
 S: percentage...hindu beshi
 R: boudi, apnar identity
 B: ami boli, tomar dada oenk din dhore thekechi...ekhono ami nijeke Bangladeshi banglai mone kori...
 R: ar hindutto, do you feel differently : bangladsh , Canada
 B: difference to achei...
 S: deshe jeta.

Deshe amader ekta hesitation thakto,

R: emon kin am bolar khetre..

S: ekhane, oi voi ta nai..deshe, voi thakto...amra je ekhane durga puha kori, kintu

B: ekhane sob kichui safe

S: deshe , police ke jane rakhte hoi, chairman member ke Janie rakhte hoi...ekhane, shei voi feelings ta nai.

R:; leisure time, ki koren

S: shadharonoto, bou bachader satheie katano hoi.

R: did you go to any concert?

S: na

B” ami ekbar gechilam ekta melai

R: how happy are you?

S: ami 100%

B: amio khushi...kintu...miss my family. Jokhon amar shorir kharap, tokhon mone hoi, lok jon thakle valo hoto...

S: but, miss those memories....shei bari, mati....

B: acha, dada, ami Jodi notun kore shuru korte chai, ki vabe korbo?

R: credential evaluation nie, abar porben..

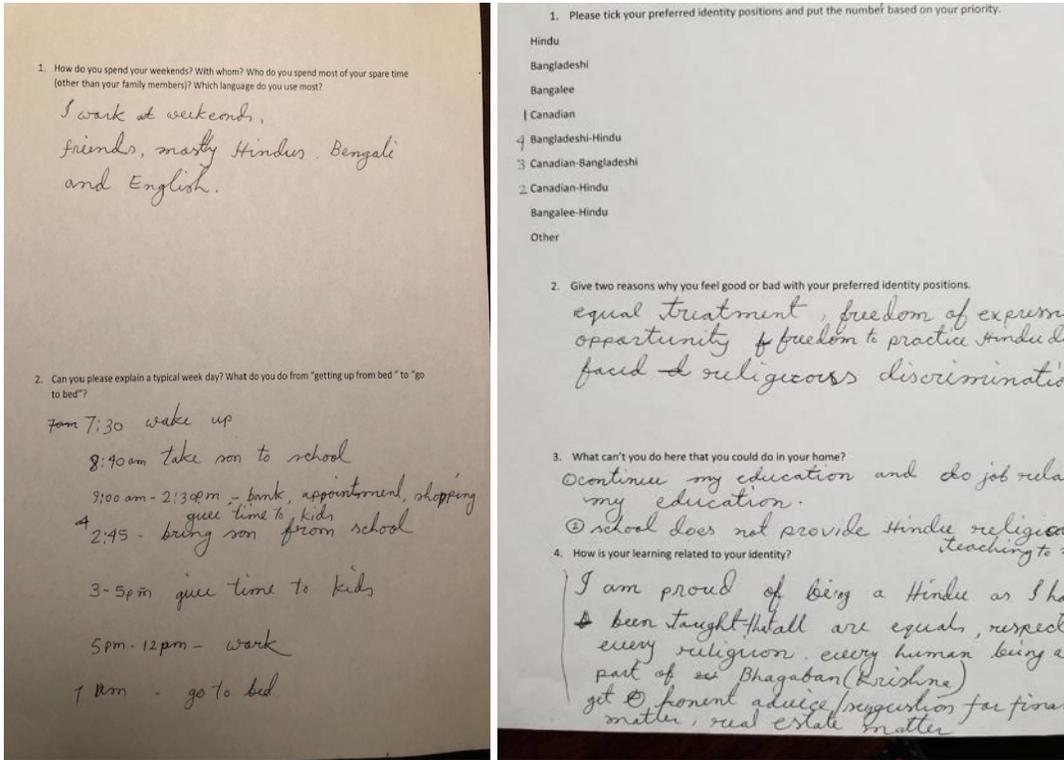
B: English ki dite hobe? Ki jeno, tolf...ami parbo na...amar ga die gham jhortiche

B: ami English pari na...

S: ora ponchash credit korle, university certificate debe..

Appendix C.

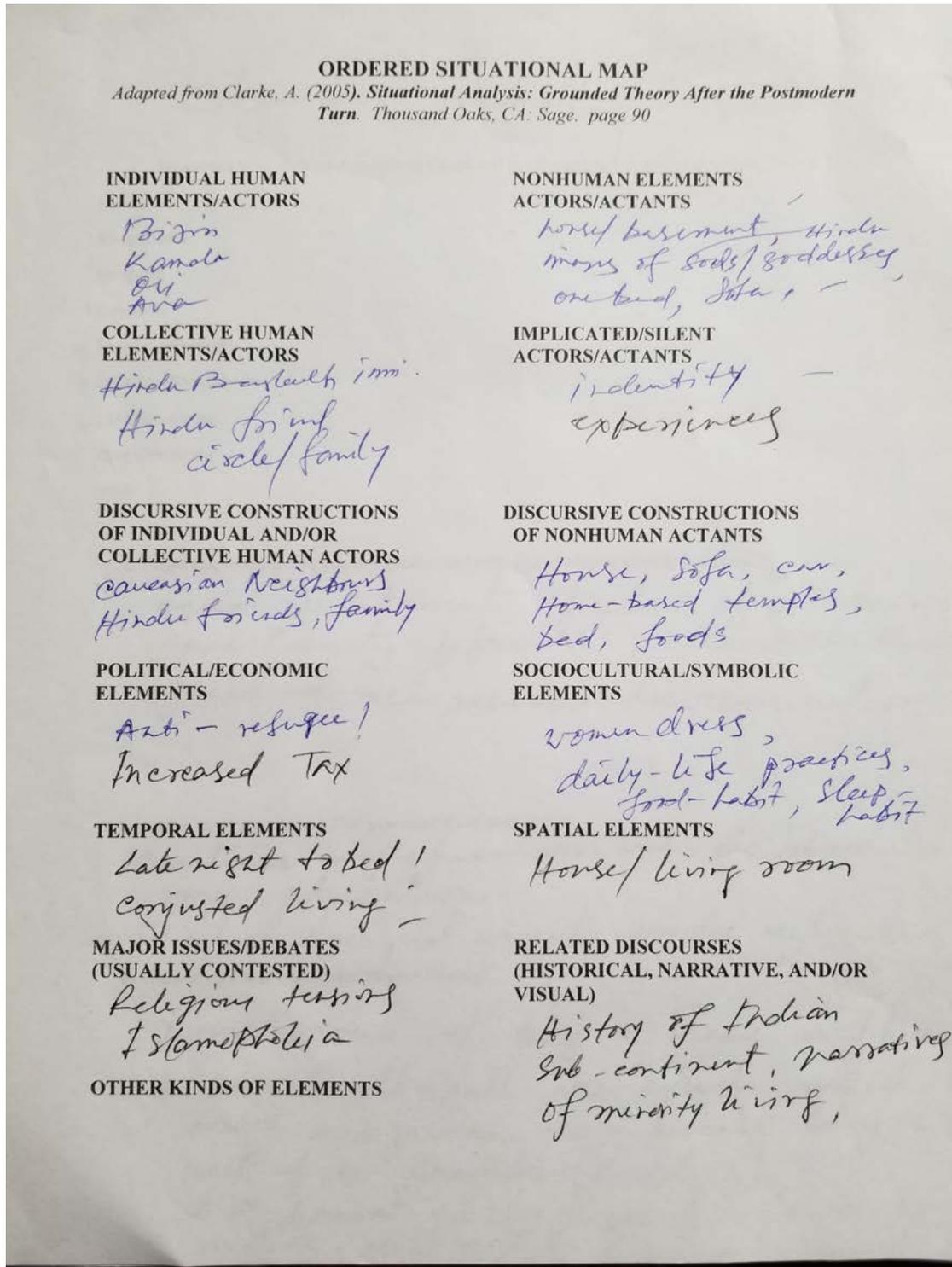
A Sample Mid-Mapping Task



Examples of mind-mapping

Appendix D.

Example of Situational Analysis Used in this Study



Appendix E.

Example of Coding Used in this Study

B: ekhane sob hoi, kintu ghorer modheye tarpor, shujog shubidha dheke, weekend e, tithi nokhostra paltai dichhe.

R: ha, ha, ha...tithi nakshatra paltai diche...

B: ha, weekend e. tarpor ababr shondhai onjoli, puja hoe jai sokale, weekende sondhai onjoli.

R: tar poreo to ek jonoo jete chai na...apni jighesh koren...bishesh kore Hinduder...

B: public ki kop khete jabe?

R: ha ha ha...kop khete jabe? Bolen dekhi?

B: Amar ek bodhu status diche..."desh chere valo korchhi, na hole kop khete hoto".

R: shei hishebe to valo achi amara, ontoto, ghare to matha ache.

B: ha, valo ar ki? Ashole sob jaigaii somosya ache. Valo dik hoche, eikhane free hoe chola jai, keu kaure nie jhamela kore na.

R: acha, dada, ar ekta proshno, apni ko kokhono discrimination er sommukhin hoeche?

B:ekhane, Canada te?

R: ha,

B: discrimination to upore upore hoi na, vitore vitore to hoi.

R: ki dhoroner, bolen to...apni ki feel korechen kokhono?

B: discrimination, ++++ feel kori, kori....pause

R: dhoren kothao chakrite gechen, interview dichen, kintu, apnake nei ni...

B: discrimination! Ashole directly, na hole, ami oi vabe feel kori nai.

Feel kori, hoito hoeche, indirectly,

R: feel korechen?

B: feel kora! Indirectly oto hoiii ar ki! Onek somoy dekha jai interview te call korche na, hoito local ekta lok-ke niog dilo.

Bilingual literacy practices

R: apani jokhon or home work e help koren, bangla na English bolen?

B: mishae boli. Bangla o boli abar English o boli. Amader sathe to bashai o banglai bole. Homework korar somoy, tokhon ar ki Engsih Bangla mixed hoi, tokhon ar puro bangla hoi na, ar ki...

R: Jodi kokhono kauke barite invite koren, kader invite koren? Sob somoy ki Bangladeshi?

B: sob somoy Bangladeshi.

Introduction to recruited Families

Shyamal Family

This family consists of five members. The adult male works as a technical help in a

Handwritten notes:

- Scarcely of persecution by extremist Muslims
- Integration
- relieved
- Sense of belonging
- Discrimination (covert)
- Indirect (not hired)
- not called for interview!