

WHO AM I?: THE EMOTIONAL SITUATIONS AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTIONS OF
CANADIAN-BORN ISMAILI MUSLIM YOUTH

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the inner work of identity formation as it takes shape for minoritized, and often marginalized, Shia Ismaili Muslim adolescents. Through the use of psychoanalytic theory and qualitative research methods, including focus groups and individual interviews, the emotional world of adolescents is analyzed to foreground conflict, difficult feelings and intergenerational memories. Identity markers of faith, culture, race, and citizenship are explored through the psychoanalytic concepts of anxiety, loss, melancholia, guilt, and ideality. My analysis focuses on how social contexts of prejudice and stereotypes relate to inner experiences of isolation, loneliness, and feeling misunderstood. Focusing on the emotional dynamics of faith identity, the dissertation offers an account of the creative and at times defensive processes through which adolescents navigate relationships with teachers, parents, peers, media, and school in a Canadian context that meets, but also fails to meet, their efforts. While highly attuned to the ways Islamophobia operates in public discourse in Canada, the participants have difficulty acknowledging their distress, struggle to find hope and spaces of inclusion, and take on the weighty responsibility to educate others in an effort to reduce the hate projected onto them. The result is a painful split between their faith and their secular selves.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Although the majority of Muslims would claim that acts of terrorism are contrary to the teachings of Islam and do not view these acts as an expression of their religion (Shingler & Smith, 2017), powerful political leaders and Western public media more often than not tend to link Islam and terrorism together, particularly after the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States (Shingler & Smith, 2017). This one-sided representation has exacerbated the development of persistent negative perceptions of Islam in North America, and now dominate discussions of religious tolerance and political affairs. This hypersensitive, apprehensive, and often hostile disposition towards Islam has put undue onus on Muslims themselves to educate their neighbours, peers, and communities about their faith in ways that counteract these stereotypes. In some cases, Muslims may disguise their religious affiliation from the society in which they live in order to avoid possible misunderstandings or marginalization (Nagra, 2011). Indeed, many North American Muslims live with “the perceived and sometimes real threat of discrimination, especially after the September 11 tragedy” (Hamid, 2008, p. 18). A recent quantitative study carried out by Litchmore and Safdar (2015) in Ontario, Canada with young adult first and second-generation Muslims showed a strong relationship between religiosity and their experiences of discrimination. In fact, Muslim participants of this study reported higher levels of discrimination against their religious group membership (i.e. Islam) than personal discrimination (Litchmore & Safdar, 2015).

Many studies of Canadian Muslim youth have discovered that Muslim youth are remarkably resilient: they show the ability to reconstruct their religious identities in ways that manage external pressures of discrimination (Eid, 2002), as well as identify proudly with their Muslim identity (Nagra, 2011). Muslim youth have shown that they are able to resist negative

interactions and perceptions from others in political spaces (Bullock & Nesbitt-Larking, 2013) and resist assimilation by establishing strong bonds with other Muslims (Zine, 2001). These studies tell stories of resistance, and yet, my interest is also to shine a light on adolescent experiences, conflicts, and concerns that speak to difficulty and are themselves difficult to represent (Pitt & Britzman, 2003). Like Zine, I examine how youth call on resilience as a creative strategy, but with a view to speculate, too, about how this response may conceal and carry experiences that might be read as inconvenient, untimely, fragile, and/or subject to break. At a time when the identity marker of Islam is so precariously embodied due to the tensions and misunderstandings that have been attributed to Islam, the question of how one negotiates the religious aspect of identity cannot be taken lightly. Religious identity may carry different connotations, but broadly speaking it can be understood to be the affirmation of one's membership to a particular religious group, usually developing through a process of socialisation from one's community (Arwick & Nesbitt, 2010). For Muslim youth in particular, religious identity is perhaps more challenging given the current societal context of discrimination, and even xenophobia (Bell, 2017; Brait, 2017).

Adolescence is, arguably, already a developmental stage of difficulty and a time marked by feelings of love and hate, anxiety and anticipation, as well as uncertainty and conviction. In this context of emotional extremes, adolescents also display the capacity to participate in “seemingly endless abstract discussions, philosophical arguments and debating, and tedious arguments with family and school disciplinary figures” (Young-Bruehl, 1996, p. 305). Emerging from a time of relative latency (Waddell, 2000), the adolescent confronts identity conflicts related to the meaning and expression of self in relation to others (Reay, 2010; Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001). But what happens when these emotional extremes, philosophical

discussion, and argumentation meet an external world of intolerance? How do social contexts of migration, xenophobia, and intergenerational conflict shape the inner work of identity, particularly for Muslim youth? Hamid (2008) asserts that for many first and second-generation Muslims living in North America, the act of “navigating their belief system and dominant cultural norms can be both challenging and stressful” (p. 18). A careful study of how Muslim youth embody a sense of belief in Islam in relationship to contemporary social and political discourses is needed if we are to better understand and support this group of young people through a time of religious intolerance and emotional instability. This study seeks to explore the way in which Canadian-born Shia Ismaili Muslim youth in Toronto, Ontario construct and understand their faith identity in relation to their Canadian identity.

Prominent identity scholar Erik Erikson suggests that the time of adolescence is one of ‘psychosocial moratorium,’ where the adolescent is faced with the task of separating herself from others, asking key questions such as ‘who am I’ and also ‘who am I not’ (Briggs, 2008). This moratorium of identity discovery is a stage of great difficulty and tension, as the adolescent is likely to “suffer more deeply than he ever did before or ever will again” (Erikson, 1968, p. 167) with respect to identity formation. Although Erikson worked with a wide variety of adolescents across the United States, including indigenous children on their reservations, we can speculate that the adolescent he envisioned was contextually situated; that is, since his work was conducted during the mid-1900s, his subjects did not have access to an unlimited technological social media platform, and in most cases, a child’s development took place in one geographical region, usually without interference from other worlds and realities external to this localized region. Today, however, the adolescent has the added pressure of experiencing her ‘moratorium’ within the contemporary realities of the early 21st century; increased globalisation trends have led not

only to an increase of engagement across space, but also of diversity, density, frequency, and speed, often leading to pressures of consumerism, virtual self-representation, invasions of private space, and, at times, the distortion of information (Briggs, 2008). This unique information explosion can create a great deal of confusion, but also pleasure, particularly for adolescents who are experiencing a phase of uncertainty and difficulty.

From a sociological perspective, the youth of our contemporary moment have been characterized either as ‘Millennials,’ or Generation Y, that is, belonging to the generation born between 1980 and 1995, or as Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2010 (Igel & Urquhart, 2012; Nilson, 2010). Although belonging to two different generations, researchers have suggested that Millennials and Generation Z, share some common characteristics, such as a reliance on technology, a pressure to succeed in school and life, an ambition to resolve problems, and a strong relationship with their parents. The youth of today have often been referred to as “the anxious generation” (Markowicz, 2016; Schroeder, 2017), with some scholars arguing that technology and increased virtual interactions have increased the amount of physical isolation youth face in their lives, possibly leading to more cases of depression and anxiety (Singal, 2016; Twenge et al., 2010). Although the experiences of youth are always more nuanced and delicate than can be captured inside these types of categories, I cite them here to note the pervasive force of technology as a factor influencing how youth understand themselves, others, and how the world works. For Muslim adolescents, there is an added layer of having to encounter and work through negative and false representations of their faith that are not only spread over social media, but also at school, community events, and in public spaces in which they look for belonging (Ackerman, 2017; Bell, 2017; Brait, 2017). To make matters more challenging, Hirji (2019) points out that Canadian students are rarely offered curricula that embrace “the plurality

of the world's histories, cultures, faiths and traditions, including Islam and Muslims" (para. 5), which, if offered, could arguably help reduce rates of Islamophobia and hate crimes in the country. Similarly, Watt's (2016) study discovered that although not present in the official curriculum, "the unofficial curriculum represents Muslim women as the cultural 'other' sustained through the unofficial school curriculum and media portrayals" (p. 21).

Because my research study examines the life worlds of second-generation Ismaili Muslim youth whose parents and grandparents have origins in East Africa and South Asia, the issue of ethnic identity is a factor that influences youth articulations of identity. In Canada, being Muslim is often associated with individuals of colour, which often links issues of religious intolerance with racism. In the public domain, then, race and religion are frequently conflated, which can create an overly simplistic prototype of the label of "Muslim." Although these two concepts are different aspects of one's identity, they are connected and intertwined in the context which this research study takes place. As we will see, the youth of my study themselves conflate race and religion as they likely have experienced this intersection in their interaction within their societal context. According to Briggs (2008), "ethnic identity is formed in a context of racism, so that the experience of negative encounters in social contact has a dynamic effect on process[es] of assimilation and acculturation, which are internalized" (p. 53). Identity, then, is understood within existing power relations, often related to issues of sameness and difference; that is, identity rests on an externalizing logic; there must be something external or distinctly different (who I am not) in order to form parameters to identity (who I am). Furthermore, racism often demarcates identities because of the racist subject's intolerance to difference, where sameness and difference acquire parallel meanings of goodness and badness. In racism, both difference and

badness are projected outside the self, and become mistaken *as* the other¹, racialized subject (Briggs, 2008). Young-Bruehl (1996) agrees that children “use prejudices existing in their surroundings to sign over the unacceptable feelings” (p. 308). She further notes the social effects of this psychical process: “The result is a great deal of intolerance for other people and indignation at their attributed faults” (p. 309). Adolescence, then, is a time when prejudices become more pronounced and often perpetuated in a community or society. But while Young-Bruehl focuses on how adolescents use prejudice to defend against their own emotional extremes, my study adds a discussion of how adolescents make sense of, respond to, and defend against these racialized projections.

Context of Study

This dissertation is a qualitative study that investigates the identity formation of Shia Ismaili Muslim² youth born in Canada, with a focus on children of immigrants who arrived to Canada from East Africa and South Asia. My study begins with a paradox: these youth were born and raised in Canada, participate in Canadian social and political life, and often have only experienced political and social complexities within Canada. And yet, they carry ties to the culture and religion of their parents or grandparents, all of whom often seek to bring together aspects of their Muslim faith with their Canadian identity. Despite the fact that global and digital forces allow youth today to form virtual connections outside of their material space, the identity formation of these youth warrants exploration given that their understanding of self is rendered

¹ The *other* is someone who is seen as an inferior individual and “is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way” (Melani, 2009, para 1).

² The Shia Muslims differentiate themselves from Sunni Muslims by their belief in the line of Imams, or spiritual leaders, that began with the leadership of Hazrat Ali, Prophet Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law, after the Prophet’s death. The Shia are a minority community within Islam. Ismaili Muslims are the second largest Shia community, after the Ithansharis, but are still a minority within the Shia Muslim community. Ismailis follow their present living Imam, His Highness the Aga Khan, who is the forty-ninth Imam tracing a direct hereditary, lineal descent from Prophet Muhammad. The Ismailis are currently settled in over 25 countries. (Nanji, 2012). For more information, see <http://iis.ac.uk/shi-ismaili-muslims-historical-context>

in Canada, and their experiences of living are within its national boundaries. Furthermore, because Muslims are often misunderstood and misrepresented in Canadian society, this negotiation of identity has arguably become more challenging in recent times, raising new questions and conflicts yet to be explored. I am particularly concerned with the question of how youth understand themselves as Canadian citizens, impacted by both contemporary discourses of the nation and the “hybridization” of identity experienced by their first generation parents (Bender & Kagiwada, 1968; Sundar, 2008). The terms “hybrid” and “hybridity” as applied to identity have been critiqued and challenged. For Indigenous scholar Dwayne Donald (2012), hybridity is dangerous because “it allows for the lumping of all colonized peoples in categories of analysis in relation to colonizers, refusing to consider them in depth” (p. 541). Within post-colonial and cultural studies, too, hybridity has been accused of being ahistorical, limiting identities to stable and unchanging markers (Shohat, 1992), and aligning too closely with “neocolonial discourse complicit with transnational capitalism” (Kraidy, 2002). However, I position myself with scholars who read hybridity as a form of resistance to dominant discourse. As a descriptive term, hybridity denotes the effects of being influenced by multiple cultural and social forces, as well as the process by which one creates one’s identity from multiple discourses available in society (Bhabha, 1994; Donald, 2012; Wang, 2005). Donald (2012) reclaims the notion of hybridity, renaming his theoretical framework as “Indigenous *Métissage*,” to underscore the need and benefit of using this term to hold European settler histories alongside Indigenous value systems, without collapse. In a similar way, I frame the idea of hybridization in my research as a term that acknowledges the Ismaili Muslim adolescents’ interactions with Western ways of living and knowing that are dominant in Canada, even as they are influenced by their faith, their parents’ migration experiences, and other identity markers such as culture and

ethnicity. In my study, hybridization of identity will entail the adoption of multiple identities, creating a hyphenated identity of two or more identity markers (Briggs, 2008), such as Canadian, Ismaili Muslim, and South Asian, as in the case of the second-generation youth of this study.

The culturally and ethnically diverse context of Toronto, Canada presents a contradictory state of risks and hazards but also opportunity (Briggs, 2008). Given the white colonialist history of Canada, social norms continue to uphold a legacy of white privilege and marginalize individuals of colour (Logie & Rwigema, 2014). As a result, non-white cultures are often tokenized and received superficially in society, creating a patronizing and intolerant background for people of colour (Parker, 2000). The youth population that I work with in my study are from a South Asian origin, and visibly not white – an identity marker that influences adolescents’ understanding of the self. However, despite this difficulty, studies have shown that youth are able to navigate between both their personal culture and the dominant culture, “neither torn between two cultures nor simply one or the other, but [are] complex dynamic fusions” (Bhattacharyya and Gabriel, 1997, p. 64). That is, youth are able to create hyphenated or multiple positions of identity: a hybrid identity (Briggs, 2008). Yon’s (2000a) study of culture in a multi-racial and multi-ethnic school in Toronto conceptualizes the creation of identity on precisely these terms. His research examines how youth in diverse spaces connect with multiple identity markers and create hybrid identities made from fused, if ambivalent, signs of culture. However, although the state of hybridity can be generally interpreted as a positive constellation, Bhabha (1997) cautions that the process by which an adolescent engages this position can be filled with anxiety as “hybridity represents that ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification – a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 162). Hybridity, while creative, implies also an

identification with values, ideas, and classifications belonging to the very dominant culture from which one is excluded. Even more, hybridity is hard emotional work, involving the revision of personal values, customs, and systems of reference, which can be accompanied with feelings of loss, ambivalence, and sometimes antagonism. Also impacting the biopolitical location of the child (Lemke, 2010), hybridity for the Ismaili Muslim youth in this study suggests a conflict: although the adolescent is regulated by the state via her Canadian citizenship, her body may also be governed and regulated differently as a Muslim, and person of colour. Thus, individual and cultural identity are both decentered in the process of hybridization as the adolescent struggles to adapt and assimilate within a host culture that is not her own.

In this study, I examine the inner work of identity formation through the use of a psychoanalytic frame in order to speculate about the emotional situation of processes such as hybridization in the work of negotiating a sense of self. Psychoanalysis will provide a conceptual reference point by analyzing the concepts of loss, anxiety, the Oedipus complex, and idealism/nihilism as they take shape in the narratives of Muslim adolescents. My analysis deepens understandings of the emotional connections and ruptures between adolescents and their parents' and grandparents' cultures and ways of life that were themselves revised – and forever changed – upon migration to Canada. Psychoanalytically, migration is read not only as a physical move and/or cultural transition but as 'cultural bereavement' (Eisenbruch, 1990) insofar as it can be accompanied with feelings of loss, anxiety, and disorientation. Important to my study, Bains (2001) adds that feelings of loss are experienced across generations, impacting adolescents as they struggle to find a sense of belonging in their societies and communities.

The question of how Canadian Muslim adolescents make sense of their emotional worlds while they forge an identity has not yet been addressed, nor has there been a study on young

Canadian Shia Ismaili Muslim adolescents in particular. Given that Canada's Muslim population is growing steadily (Statistics Canada, 2011) and is predominantly but not only Sunni Muslim, a Shia perspective would contribute to a more wide-ranging understanding of the experiences of Muslim youth in Canada. The study responds to an increase of Islamophobia in the Western world, which often flattens out Muslim identity as one-dimensional. Along this single axis, it is difficult for a Muslim to be recognized by any other identity markers and she is instead solely seen as a believer of Islam. We are living in a time where "politics has truly become personal," where ideologies "are at the forefront of critical consciousness" (Frosh, 1991, p. 1). In this context, it is increasingly the case that "ideas, personal meanings and interpersonal relationships determine our experience and interpretation of the world" (Frosh, 1991, p. 1). At a time when Muslim subjects are continually judged by outward signs of potential violence, taking shape in discourses of national security and terrorism, a psychoanalytic study of the emotional world may help break down stereotypes and grant subjective complexity to the individual more often collapsed with hostility within the political sphere. Psychoanalysis, then, will help to offer an anti-racist, and anti-essentialist discourse to the study of Muslim identity.

In this study, I examine the meanings of adolescence itself as impacted by the aforementioned social context. Frequently described as a period of struggle, angst, and becoming, I consider how faith and belief intersect with social discourses of Islamophobia and nation, with a view to examine how adolescent narratives of identity articulate and work through this tension. The data gathered in this study aims to help educators deepen their understanding of Ismaili Muslim youth and add complexity to their understanding of the general notion of a Muslim identity, while supporting them in their endeavour to create supportive and encouraging educational spaces for their students. Another hope is that my study can give expression to felt

but largely unspoken conflicts among youth with a view to support youth themselves. Narrating the emotional labour of *becoming*, I think, can offer a life raft to young people navigating a complex social world of too much hatred.

Research Questions

My research adds to current studies of Canadian youth by investigating the work of the internal world of second-generation Shia Ismaili Muslim youth. My aim is to broaden, nuance, and supplement the cultural studies of identity with a focus on the emotional significance and function of faith and culture as taken through a psychoanalytic lens. Given that the research discussed above has suggested possibilities of anxiety, defense, and feelings of loss associated with adolescence, particularly with minoritized adolescents who are children of immigrants, a closer look at the internal worlds of Shia Muslim adolescents can support the construction of a more complex narrative of Muslim youth in Canada. This study addresses the following questions:

- 1) How do second-generation Canadian Shia Ismaili Muslim youth construct their identity and understand their faith, culture, and citizenship in Canada?
- 2) What is the emotional significance of identity in relationship to histories of immigration and loss?
- 3) What internal mechanisms do Muslim youth mobilize to embody a sense of self? How might a study of these mechanisms help us to understand what it means to become a Muslim subject in an Islamophobic world?

Self-positioning

I arrived at this research through my own identifications in the questions I pose. I identify as female, and like my participants, I am a second-generation, Canadian Shia Ismaili Muslim and

have often reflected upon the intersection of identities in my own life. During my adolescent years, I frequently struggled with the articulation and acknowledgement of my “Muslimness;” I know what it is like to be misunderstood, dismissed, and isolated, and was often able to relate to many of the participants’ narratives that describe similar feelings. There were a number of instances when a participant’s response would remind me of a difficult experience from my youth, including times when appearing conflict-free. These moments allowed me to listen more closely to the words that were being used, repeated, or perhaps avoided. All research is subject to the researcher’s personal experiences and tinted lenses, and this study is not an exception. While a source of potential bias, they are equally a source of insight. Precisely because I felt unacknowledged in my youth, I suspected that there was more beyond the happy narrative of resilience in youth. I am also a professional educator who teaches within the Ismaili community. I have been teaching in classroom spaces for 10 years and the many encounters with my students inspired me to listen and represent narratives of Ismaili Muslim adolescents, in the hopes that their personal, and often vulnerable, stories will complicate the worn-out perspective – and implicit demand – that Muslim youth in particular, and minoritized young people in general, are resilient at whatever cost. I wanted to grant space for Muslim youth to narrate experiences of difficulty that are both under-represented or taken-for-granted.

As I conducted the interviews and focus groups, I was aware that the participants’ responses were likely easier to access because they saw me as an ally, or someone who was like them. They seemed to be more open to exploring difficult encounters as our conversations unfolded, possibly because they felt that I, more than those outside of the community, would more easily understand them. As an indicator of participants’ perceptions of my insider-status, a good number would ask me to remind them of a name of a particular event that took

place in the community, which they assumed I would know. Often, they would share with me details of personal experiences that they admitted they had not shared with anyone else. A sense of trust and familiarity permeated the interviews and focus groups. While I believe this type of environment created the conditions needed for the participants to share their raw experiences so openly, it also left me with a sense of deep responsibility and, at times, great anxiety. I worried that, unless I got it ‘right,’ my interpretations would intensify participants’ feelings of being misunderstood. At other times, I carried this same worry as a researcher, in particular, that my interpretations may themselves be misunderstood – or misread or misused – to justify the very Islamophobic discourse that I hoped my study would counter. I often struggled to remain unaffected at times when their responses were heartbreaking or carried unrealized shadows of pain or difficulty. In most of these instances, I stayed quiet and asked to hear more of how they felt about their experiences. However, sometimes I felt compelled to console them, assuring them that they were doing the best they can, or simply acknowledged that a situation must have been difficult for them. Looking back, given that my participants were essentially, still so new to the world, I wanted to ensure that they felt heard, understood, and respected when they shared their stories.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter two situates my study within the fields of school ethnography, psychoanalysis, and adolescence and explores the findings of past studies on Canadian Muslim youth. These studies point to the ways youth utilize defense mechanisms to construct their identity, thereby hinting at an understudied emotional world of Muslim adolescence. Grounding my perspectives in psychoanalysis, I elaborate on the emotional dynamics of Muslim identity through concepts of loss, hybridity and anxiety, guilt, and ideality and nihilism. I also offer a theoretical discussion of

the overarching claims of my study which form the basis of the analytical discussions of my findings that are detailed in chapters four, five, and six.

In chapter three, I outline the theoretical framework and methodology of my research as informed by both psychoanalysis and cultural studies of identity, and thus falling into the realm of the psychosocial (Gadd & Jefferson, 2007; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This chapter suggests the possibilities and benefits of integrating psychoanalysis in the study of cultural identity, one being that it offers a form of inquiry into the conflicts and crises of the human condition, without seeking absolute certitudes in its findings. I elaborate on my use of Pitt and Britzman's (2003) qualitative study, with a focus on their uses of psychoanalysis to speculate about the emotional significance of participants' articulations of difficult knowledge. This grounding sets the stage for my research design, which includes focus groups and individual interviews. I discuss the benefits and challenges of insider research in more detail in this chapter, as well as the psychoanalytic concept of transference and counter-transference as a quality of research. I offer a discussion of researching vulnerable populations about sensitive topics and argue why it is, in fact, our duty to learn more about them rather than avoid the difficult knowledge they often represent and experience (Sieber & Stanley, 1988). Lastly, this chapter presents the roadmap of my research design by indicating how each methodological tool builds upon the last, starting with the focus group, leading to the first interview, and then the final interview as a culmination of the narrative experience.

Chapters four, five, and six present the findings of this study. Chapter four suggests that Arendt's concept of natality – or, newness – so often attributed to adolescence is not available to the Ismaili Muslim youth in this study. In light of this condition, my analysis focuses on the ways they struggle to find newness, or hope, in others they encounter. The obstacles to natality

for these youth are represented by their experiences at borders and state boundaries, in unfriendly interactions, and interpretations of media stereotypes. The participants share their experiences and feelings of being mislabeled, denied entry, and their encounters with prejudice. This chapter presents the strategies and defenses that participants use to navigate these uncomfortable situations and how the world meets, and fails to meet, their efforts.

Chapter five examines the complex emotions and defenses that participants employ when managing various parts of the self, such as race and religion. I explore the concept of hybridity as a source of anxiety, as well as the feelings of loneliness and isolation. I identify a prevailing defensive strategy in “the impulse to educate” those who mislabel, misunderstand, and outright discriminate against the youth of this study. Taking the position of teacher, the participants of this study stave off an overwhelming sense of anxiety that is almost always felt in public spaces.

Chapter six analyzes how the psychoanalytic concepts of mourning and melancholia take shape for the Ismaili Muslim youth from this study, with a focus on how they internalize the struggles of their parents, both past and present. This chapter also explores the close attachment of the youth to their parents, and their frequent encounters with feelings of guilt and powerlessness as impacted by this melancholic bond. This chapter provides an example of one participant, Jenna, who I suggest is actively working through loss and shows instances of Freud’s concept of mourning, which allows her to detach her own identity from her parents’ identities.

The final chapter offers a discussion on the work of qualitative research and the possibilities of psychoanalytically-informed research studies. I offer a reflection on the dissertation research and the meaning of the omission of the topic of sexuality, particularly since this idea tends to be so closely associated with adolescence in Western contexts. I also discuss how spaces of education can better understand and encounter youth from various cultures and

races. I suggest a re-consideration of how positive spaces are formed and developed in education, and the necessity of acknowledging the emotional world in schools and communities. I conclude with some final thoughts on the significance of utilizing a psychoanalytic lens to better understand and acknowledge the often untold stories of Ismaili Muslim youth.

Definitions

Throughout, I frequently refer to particular concepts, identities, and ideologies; there are many that the youth bring up on their own, and others that I employ in various areas of the research. Although I acknowledge that some of these terms are slippery and can vary in their meaning depending on where and by whom they are used, I offer meanings of the terms below as they are represented in my dissertation in order to provide clarity and consistency for the purposes of working with this research.

Canadian: For my research, the legal understanding of this term guides my usage. Thus, anyone who was born in Canada, immigrated to Canada, or has been legally accepted to permanently reside in Canada is a Canadian. For many participants, however, this term is additionally populated with their understanding of Canadian values and Canadian culture, to which not everyone has equal access, despite the legal definition.

Emotional world: Drawing from Deborah Britzman's (2015a) work, this object-relational psychoanalytic term refers to the inner states of an individual that are impacted by the outside world and interactions with others. I use this term to indicate that the pleasures and harms experienced in the outside inevitably end up on the inside, and are subsequently reconstructed, filtered, and changed by the unconscious desires and defenses of the mind. This emotional world, then, impacts how an individual responds and interacts in the world, adding an unconscious

fantasy (phantasy) structure to conscious efforts, beliefs, and pursuits. That is, the emotional world affects and is affected by the world in which one is situated.

Second-generation Canadian: I refer to a second-generation Canadian as an individual who was born in Canada but whose parents were born elsewhere and immigrated to Canada (Perez & Padilla, 2000). For my study, participants were selected as second-generation Canadian only if they were born in Canada (not the US) and whose parents immigrated to Canada. All selected participants' parents were born outside of Canada and later immigrated to Canada (at various ages).

His Highness the Aga Khan: The Aga Khan became the spiritual leader of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims on July 11, 1957, following his grandfather (Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan). Ismaili Muslims believe he is the direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammed and the 49th hereditary Imam of the Ismaili Muslims (Islamic Publications, 2019). The Aga Khan is referred to with great admiration, love, and respect by Ismaili Muslims, and provides both spiritual and worldly guidance to his followers. The Aga Khan is also the founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which provides support to many individuals in need around the world (Aga Khan Foundation, 2018). In 2014, The Aga Khan opened a new museum (The Aga Khan Museum) in Toronto dedicated to the arts of Islamic societies and civilizations (Aga Khan Museum, 2018). Many participants of this study refer to this museum in their responses as an iconic building that helps to represent their identity in terms of culture and faith.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

School Ethnography and Psychoanalysis

This research draws upon the field of school ethnography in that I study the culture and emotional worlds of Shia Ismaili Muslim youth through the use of case studies to access the personal narratives of each participant. Conducted over a three-month period, this research offers a close study of the narratives of adolescents with a view to identify particular struggles, patterns, and emotional processes. Particularly since schools and communities in urban Canadian contexts tend to be culturally diverse, Zou and Trueba (2002) assert that educational ethnography carries a responsibility in this context. The researcher “must recognize the intrinsic difficulty in making sense of the world of other peoples whose languages and lifestyles are different from ours” (p. 2). Doing so can allow the development of new pedagogies that are “based on principles of equity, justice, fairness, tolerance, and multiculturalism” (Zou & Trueba, 2002, p. 2). School ethnographies can thus offer us insight into worlds otherwise unnoticed and ignored. However, ethnographical research cannot promise a seamless narrative. In fact, it has the potential to create more questions (Britzman, 2003b). Indeed, the stories that educational ethnographies reveal to us are partial and can even be contradictory. My study brings the lens of psychoanalysis to the study of adolescents to highlight contradiction, complicate seamless narratives (Taubman, 2012) and find meaning in narratives that may be incomplete, in-process, and often uncomfortable.

Education and psychoanalysis are fields that are not easily brought together (Britzman, 1998). In fact, Taubman (2012) shows how, historically, there has been a general “disavowal of the unconscious” (p. 8) in education. Rather, the dominant tendency of education has been to construct the inner world as something to measure, rendering irrelevant and irritating the

unconscious remainders of classroom life. However, Britzman (2003; 2009; 2012; 2015a) has made significant inroads through this impasse. Her research reveals the close connection between education and the emotional world, arguing that we cannot ignore the disappointments, conflicts, desires, fears, aggressions, hopes and aspirations that affect students and teachers. Ignoring these dynamics has consequences. My study acknowledges the emotional worlds of participants and makes a case for the import of studying the unconscious in education. Given that the data shows that many participants feel disheartened, attacked, and discounted, educators have an opportunity to reflect on the significance of emotional life beyond what can be directly represented or measured. Psychoanalysis is not about mastery but the inevitable failure of it as the ground of learning (Britzman, 1998). It invites teachers to be curious about what is difficult to know about the self, and why this knowing is difficult, as the condition of education and humanity itself.

A Note on Adolescence

The period of adolescence in the Western world is typically understood as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, marked by experimentation and self-determination; however, this construction is not consistent through time and place (Esman, 1990). Rather, the classification of adolescence as a developmental phase is a cultural artefact of the industrial revolution, one that supported the training of young people to successfully join the labor force (Esman, 1990). In the twentieth century, G. Stanley Hall significantly contributed to the current understanding of the adolescent that is commonly accepted today: one that is “torn by unmanageable passions, impulsive, rebellious...given to florid swings of mood” (Esman, 1990, p. 22). However, Hall’s ideas were also steeped in the scientific racism undergirding the notions of development. In relation to this last point, Lesko (2001) offers a compelling critique of the

modern view of adolescence. She argues that “the modern project to develop adolescence was and is simultaneously a construction of whiteness and masculinity as central to the citizen” (p. 11). Lesko (2001) argues that, due to the effects of colonial relations, adolescence idealizes young white men as rightly on their way to a disciplined, rational, and dominating position, while simultaneously casting racialized youth *and adults* on lower rungs of growth. As Canadian youth of colour, the participants of this study inherit this highly gendered and racialized construction of adolescence, including the particular set of assumptions and ideas – about growth, learning, and success – it endows.

While the data carries traces of the influence of this dominant construction, the narratives of this study also push at, deepen, complicate, and broaden the way in which adolescence is embodied and understood from their own racialized and gendered experiences. For instance, although sexuality tends to dominate Western narratives of adolescent identity, the adolescents of this study do not explicitly address this idea, an observation to which I return in the conclusion. That adolescents themselves challenge the category of adolescence is a core assumption of the field of critical youth studies. Ibrahim and Steinberg (2014), for instance, remind us that youth are active and “cultural agents capable of desire, love, hate, hopes, struggles...” (p. xvi). But also, because the “the study of youth is political,” they add, “the context of being a youth has everything to do with how agencies of power work” (Ibrahim & Steinberg, 2014, p. xvi). From a critical framework, adolescence is, then, a social relation and agentic experience made from a push and pull of social and subjective forces. Although youth are active agents of their life, their efforts are often mediated and sometimes thwarted by political situations created by adults.

If critical youth studies focuses on the political forcefield within which young people make sense of their lives, then psychoanalysis offers a view of adolescence as an emotional experience comprised of change and maturation, passionate searches for ideals, experiments with success and failure, and taking risks in love and hate. Adolescence symbolizes, as Britzman (2015) suggests, “the sharpest exaggerations of the mind’s wishes and defenses” (p. 54). However, from a psychoanalytic point of view, adolescence is also seen as one that forever remains a part of the adult unconscious; it is a psychical position marked by conflicts that return at any time in one’s life, even when one is past the teenage years (Britzman, 2015; Deutsch, 1967; Gilbert, 2014; Kristeva, 1995). On this point, Winnicott (1984/2011) reminds us that, “no adults are all the time adult...they are to some extent every age, or no age” (p. 137). Thus, although my dissertation is a study of adolescents who are literally undergoing conflicts during their teenage years, the emotional situations, issues, and difficulties I sketch in the pages to come may also be read as symbolic of dynamics that remain forever with us, coming into the foreground and receding to the background depending on a range of internal and external factors.

Identity Narratives of Canadian Muslim Youth

Research on Canadian Muslim identities, particularly the second-generation, is limited. Although the field is very small, studies that have been conducted yield a variety of results in the areas of religious, cultural, and civic participation. Eid’s (2002) study of second-generation Arab-Canadian Muslims in Montreal found that youth consciously participated in the reconstruction of their religious identity, re-appropriating and transforming their parents’ identity markers of ethnicity and religion (Eid, 2002). Eid discovered that instead of following the rituals and prescriptions that Islam offered to them, these youth experienced religion in a more general way, often incorporating the label of ‘Muslim’ into their identity. Here, religion is constructed as

‘a group boundary marker,’ and not necessarily limited to of a system of beliefs and practices (Eid, 2002). Moreover, Eid (2002) discovered that “religion and ethnicity are intertwined within these youths’ identity structure” (p. ii) and that second-generation Arab-Canadian youth “often downplay the Arab component of their identity as a way to ward off prejudice and discrimination” (p. iii). This finding is consistent with studies which have identified that, particularly for youth, ethnic and racial identities can be fluid: underemphasized or foregrounded, depending on the circumstance (Ajrouch, 2000; Lewis, 2000). In Canada, Sundar (2008) discovered that second-generation South Asian students also have a remarkable ability to engage and disengage with their cultural heritage, depending on the context and what kind of response is required from them.

Research conducted on political identities by Bullock and Nesbitt-Larking (2013) document active participation in the public sphere. While Muslim youth “noted the impact of negative public discourse about Muslims as well as experiences of racism, the research results revealed an overwhelming commitment to Canada and political engagement among Muslim youth, evidenced most fully by a high level of civic engagement” (p. 185). Somewhat paradoxically, this same study found that Canadian Muslim youth tend not to be involved in formal politics, preferring to participate in non-traditional ways, “such as demonstrations, signing petitions, and boycotts” (Bullock & Nesbitt-Larking, 2013, p. 192) while also identifying strongly and proudly with their religious identity. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that all 20 Muslim youths of their study were “able to transcend feelings of being negatively perceived by others... [and have] ...deep affection and attachment to Canada” (p. 201). Bullock and Nesbitt-Larking (2013) also note in their conclusion that it is especially significant that these youth have been able to successfully “separate a sense of being misunderstood from their own

sense of identity and commitment to Canada” (p. 201). This study is telling and its major finding creatively ironic; Muslim youth display a resilience or response to prejudice through an increased level of civic participation or volunteerism, instead of retreating into isolation or displaying signs of being silenced.

Similarly, in her study of multi-faceted discrimination faced by young well-educated Muslims in Canada, Nagra (2011) finds that Muslims tended to assert their identity strongly rather than shy away or hide from their religion. For Nagra (2011), this is particularly the case after 9/11. In this context, she notes that Muslims have turned to a ‘reactive identity formation’ in order to respond to the negativity directed toward Islam. Nagra theorizes that this reactive form of identity-building is a protective psychological mechanism, suggesting that Muslims increase their interest in religion as a way to “resist the negative images of Islam” (p. 433) and to participate in a ‘reclaiming of Islam’. Turning toward religion, sometimes in extreme ways, defends the subject against the threat of erasure in the political world. Somewhat ironically, however, this defensive strategy works on the logic of radicalization or fundamentalism that fuels stereotypes and volatile splits between Muslims and non-Muslims. Zine’s (2001) study tells yet another story of resistance. She examines the narratives of University-level first-generation Sunni Muslim students and parents, with a focus on the ways in which “they attempted to negotiate their religious identities within the context of a secular school system” (p. 418). Her study found that despite dealing with many instances of Islamophobia and discrimination, Muslim students were able to resist assimilation by associating with other Muslims to forge boundaries of religious identification. Here, strong affiliations with Islamic religious practices helped them maintain their religious identity marker.

The Emotional World

All of the aforementioned studies focus on youth performances of identity, including their commitments and uses of social contexts to embody a sense of self in the social and political world. However, the findings also indicate that there are *emotional* responses experienced by Muslims which impact the way in which they express or engage with their identity. Defense mechanisms, such as the one Nagra describes above, imply an emotional world to protect, but also to investigate as a central part of how Muslim youth construct identity. From a psychoanalytic perspective, a defense mechanism can be defined as “an automatic, unconscious mental operation, taking place in the ego, which has the function of helping the person to retain a psychic equilibrium” (Milton, Polmear, & Fabricius, 2011, p. 23). The ego seeks to protect itself from displeasure and anxiety. One of the earliest formulations of the ego put pleasure at the centre; in the words of Anna Freud (1966), “the sovereign principle which governs the psychic processes is that of obtaining pleasure” (p. 7). Sigmund Freud identified repression as the first line of defense, employed by the ego to push unacceptable feelings and thoughts away from consciousness. However, repression is also a clue for what it pushes away. Repression can be read as a passionate sign of the very desire it seeks to do away with, as Freud (1936) writes, “to keep the contrary attitude suppressed” (p. 30). Because repression risks a dissociation of desire from the ego, A. Freud (1966) cautions that “repression is not only the most efficacious, [but] it is also the most dangerous mechanism” (p. 50).

A. Freud elaborated her father’s discussion of ego defenses, adding an expanded set of processes. Included among them is reaction formation, a complex response through which a repressed feeling finds conscious expression as a contrasting idea (Freud, 1936; A. Freud, 1966; Milton et al., 2011). In this defense, A. Freud (1966) states that “the ego has intervened and has caused the affect to be transformed” (p. 39). Under the condition of reaction formation, repressed

ambivalence, for instance, can take shape in claims of certitude or unshakable belief.

Interestingly, the state of reactive identity formation in Nagra's (2011) study draws parallels to Freud's (1936) idea of "reactive ego-alteration," insofar as it suggests a similar claim of certainty to protect the ego from the vulnerabilities of belief in a complex world (p. 111). From the vantage of reaction formation, the Muslim who overly defends ego borders on the basis of faith may actually feel under siege, uncertain, disconnected, ambivalent, or confused by the meaning of her religion in a political context that renders it suspect at best and dangerous at worst.

Zine's (2001) study provides a layer of nuance to this discussion, noting how Muslim students were able to cultivate protective connections *and* repeat exclusionary logics. In her study, Muslim students "were able to negotiate the continuity of their Islamic identity and practices within schools despite the challenges that they faced" (p. 399). For example, they shared narratives of how they were discriminated against at school which included being treated as intellectually and/or socially inferior because of the colour of their skin or their wearing of a hijab, and how they were able to resist and rise above the challenges faced in their lives. Their resistance took the form of the "maintenance of strong links with fellow Muslims both inside and outside of school in order to develop a social network that supported the continuity of their religious practices" (p. 419). However, this resistance required students to also resist particular social interactions and create social distance between themselves and their peers, and thus reinforcing the boundary of religious identification. Ego defenses, when overly rigid, can repeat the very problem from which the ego seeks protection, in this case possibly further ostracizing youth. In response to exclusionary practices and behaviours at school, the students of Zine's study created their own borders in order to feel safe themselves.

In contrast to Zine's findings, Yon's (2000a) study of adolescent identity in Toronto schools, noted above, finds how youth complicate and even resist rigid identity borders; Yon finds that "identity is a process of making identifications, a process that is continuous and incomplete" (p. 13). Yon uses the concept of identification to refer to the open-ended and dynamic nature of identity, rather than fixing identity to an essentialized and inflexible origin. Yon (2000a) acknowledges the discursive nature of identity construction, yet at the same time discovers that youth often oppose "the discourses and the structures, the procedures and the orientations, of much of what goes on under the names of multiculturalism and antiracism" (p. 26). Yon's interpretive discussion of identification captures the complexity of identity as an emotional situation, where an individual seeks to modify one's self to resemble the other, and where identity boundaries are more like outward reaching hands seeking multiple and contradictory objects (Olds, 2004). Yon utilizes the concept of identification to interrupt commonly held notions of identity, tracing the complex and conflictive voices of the adolescents he interviews. His research exposes essentialisms in identity research, and in everyday ego defenses, such as those noted by Zine above. However, his work also challenges an overly powerful theory of the social world as determining the meaning of identity; instead, he affirms that adolescents are internally modifying the meanings of the social world through multiple and contradictory identifications with its signs.

My research builds upon Yon's (2000a) study of identity by acknowledging the work of the internal world, taken through key psychoanalytic concepts. Thus, my study engages explicitly with a psychoanalytic perspective that posits a view of identity as an "emotional situation" (Britzman, 2012, p. 273). I create a depth psychology of Muslim adolescence by providing insight into the emotional world as impacted by social contexts and relations. This

study aims to unearth the creative and protective inner processes that adolescents use to work through and within the third space between inner and outer worlds theorized in social and cultural studies (Bhabha, 1990). My turn to psychoanalysis will allow for an in-depth, layered, and complex portrait of the inner lives of second-generation Ismaili Muslim adolescents as they are impacted by, navigate, engage, and resist social and political contexts. Because psychoanalytic concepts ground my theoretical frame, I begin with the experience of conflict as the basis of identity. In so doing, I push back against the tendency to assert the ‘resilience’ of Muslim youth, taking shape in a narrative that, despite struggle, young people overcome adversity and discrimination with the ‘right’ attitude and ‘positive’ outlook. My focus is rather to represent the emotional world, without value judgements that coax, instruct, and/or hold up ‘good’ versions of becoming against those that should be corrected or avoided.

Loss

One particular topic of analysis in this study concerns the experience of loss, which I argue is tied indelibly to migration. As the first-generation Muslims from Zine’s (2001) study have arrived from another place, their participation in Canadian society is arguably filled with loss even as they find a sense of belonging in their new country. Although this is not a concept interrogated deeply in her study, loss can stem from a “severing of family ties, secure jobs, friendships, and even pets” (Lee, 2010, p. 160). There is also loss of language, ethnic customs, food traditions, or climate conditions (Bains, 2001; Lee, 2010). Indeed, such loss that immigrant families experience is layered upon the inevitable loss that individuals face as part of the human condition. The loss of language, for instance, may amplify the earliest loss of the other, even while it also signals the ultimate loss in the form of death. From a psychoanalytic perspective, loss can lead to states of mourning and melancholia. And loss, in turn, refers not only to the

actual loss of a person, but to ideals and beliefs we associate with them, or in Freud's (1917) words "an abstraction taking the place of the person, such as fatherland, freedom, an ideal and so on" (p. 243). Mourning involves the "accepting and overcoming [of] this or that loss, which is not always related to the death of an object, but frequently with the loss of a special relationship with it" (Green, 2005, p. 152). In the state of melancholia, however, the subject seeks to retain the lost object by repeating familiar dynamics associated with the loss. In mourning, the subject relinquishes the lost object by representing it in the symbolic realm, where it can be engaged through the work of memory (Green, 2005). Melancholia, by some contrast, carries loss forward through generations, and enables a "continuous engagement with loss and its remains" (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003, p. 4). Freud (1917) admits that the definition of melancholia can be broadly understood. However, he argues that melancholia is often represented as a worry that doesn't subside over time, where the subject unconsciously holds on to the pain of a lost object, without knowing about the effects of the loss. This intensity of anguish can greatly influence and impact the way in which an individual interacts in the world and articulates her sense of self.

Extrapolating from Freud's work, melancholia may be read as an attempt to retain something that is missing, such as a memory, or even a parent's memory. The children and grandchildren of immigrant parents undergo a double displacement of loss: the first from their individual experience of detachment from their parents as love objects (McGinley & Verchevker, 2010), and the second from cultural ties, felt in interactions with parents and grandparents who may or may not directly speak of losses experienced from emigration.³ In this research, participants

³ Eng and Kazanjian acknowledge that the ego is "constituted through the remains of abandoned object-cathexes...[and thus]...as a psychic entity, the ego is composed of the residues of its accumulated losses" (2003, p. 4). Melancholia is inseparable from the ego, and as a result, identity development is inevitably made up of experiences of loss and mourning. Thus, when the first generation participants in Zine's (2001) study sought to actively associate with other Muslims and maintain a strong religious connection, it is possible that the participants

remind us that both loss and melancholia refer not only to traumatic events. Even when speaking of racisms and deep prejudice, they rather articulate and experience a type of ‘ordinary melancholia,’ where loss is somewhat commonplace, like a dull ache that is experienced and felt throughout their lives.

One of the central claims of this study is that loss is a relevant concept for thinking about the construction of identity, particularly among Muslim youth. As noted, the parents of the adolescents of my study have connections to religion and culture that extend beyond their life in Canada. Implied in the social fact of migration is an emotional narrative of loss: new bonds forged to religion and culture inside Canada also imply the loss of pre-immigration bonds. My interest is in how youth make sense of, identify with, and/or transform the inherited⁴ experiences of loss implied in their parents’ migration experiences. My focus is on how this intersection may shape the ways in which youth find meaning and express their embodiments and understandings of faith. As Eng and Kazanjian (2003) argue, loss is not only located within individuals’ subjective states; rather, loss may be “melancholically materialized in the social and the cultural realms and in the political and the aesthetic domains” in which people live (p. 5). Loss is an emotional situation impacted by social events and experiences such as war, genocide, neocolonialism, and immigration. But also, the ways youth embody social identity, engage culture, and describe political commitments are themselves tinged with and filtered through loss. A fundamental premise of Eng’s (2000) work is that individuals from non-majority groups, such as racial minorities, experience loss differently. As so many losses of racially minoritized people

were experiencing a sense of loss and were in the process of mourning and re-establishing, or replacing, their loved objects.

⁴ I use the word “inherited” in this instance to denote the passing down of the often unresolved experiences of difficulty and loss from parents to children because children usually become bearers of the stories of their parents as they seek to understand and learn about their family heritage.

remain unrecognized and because those losses continue in the form of racism and exclusion, melancholia is an understandable response that involves the internalization of the un-mourned injury and/or un-grieved lives (Butler, 2008; Eng & Kazanjian, 2003; Sarigianides, 2017). In other words, the ego internalizes, in order to preserve and protect, disavowed losses in the social and political world.

While a good number of scholars highlight the ethical importance of melancholia, there remains a question, particularly for the adolescent, of how one may represent a relationship to historical loss without the future being over-determined by it. For Britzman (2009), the challenge is how to sit with absence and the anxiety of loss. In her words, “a great deal of the ego’s work will be a working through or tolerating both the loss of the world as it wished it to be and feeling the anxiety that signals absence...” (p. 14). Mourning allows for the slow acknowledgement of loss and gives symbolic distance, meaning that the ego, in remembering the loss, does not feel overwhelmed and overtaken by it. And, despite the arguments above, in melancholia, there is not necessarily an acknowledgement of the loss. For example, for Freud (1917), melancholia can also be expressed symptomatically as its opposite; that is, an excessive talkativeness or excitement - a state of mania (p. 253). This fraught relation between melancholia and mourning, and how these are embodied by Muslim youth is an important topic of enquiry in my research. My aim is to document the ways youth articulate the meaning and significance of loss and how mourning and melancholia may influence their identity as they try to find connections between their cultural traditions and their Canadian environment.

Hybridity and Anxiety

Van Meijl (2014) proposes that the innovations in global exchange and communication technology place young people in a plethora of complex, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural

spaces, thereby situating youth in a liminal position requiring “the mediation of multiple identifications within their self” (p. 205). Mirroring the claims of cultural studies theorists, he asserts that biracial or mixed culture adolescents are able to manipulate the best of both worlds, and thus can be regarded as “motors of change and perhaps also as flywheels of cultural continuity” (van Meijl, 2014, p. 205). Van Meijl’s perspective embraces Bhabha’s view of hybridity; that is, hybridity comes into existence when one is no longer able to locate the two original movements from which the hybrid, or the third movement, emerges (Bhabha, 1990). Bhabha refers to hybridity as a ‘third space,’ asserting that this third space is not simply an additive concept made from the amalgamation of two histories, nor is it a state of deficiency, rather, “the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). Similar to Bhabha, Bakhtin (1981) describes the hybrid cultural state as “pregnant with potential for new world views” (p. 360), but at the same time liminally located between differing points of worldviews.

As noted above, previous identity research regarding hybridity has shown that youth embody hybrid forms of faith in the negotiation of their religious and/or cultural affiliations, particularly in environments which require them to participate more fully in the dominant culture that is not their own (Eid, 2012; Sundar, 2008). However, what remains to be examined are the ways in which the creative aspects of the third space may be linked to instances of personal difficulty, struggle, or anxiety. Here I am thinking about theorists such as Bhabha (1997) who have postulated anxiety as common when adolescents are faced with the task of transformation and shifting social contexts. Transformation, while creative, is difficult to bear, in large part, because its shifts, turns, and avenues are not predictable. Bhabha (1997) claims that “we have

entered an anxious age of identity” (p. 35) caused by attempts to reclaim what we may feel we have lost. Given this, change can be felt as a demand or as a loss of who one once was because the process of becoming requires the subject to “relinquish its own unconscious desires and drives...in a struggle to negotiate with what is always necessarily outside and other to the subject itself” (Todd, 2003, p. 10). This may be particularly so among adolescents of immigrants, who are also the focus of this study, since second-generation Ismaili Muslim adolescents operate within a third space and locate and construct their personal identity within this new and different space. However, my question is, how is the creation of and existence in this third space mediated by the emotional world of the adolescent? Why think of the transformative qualities of hybridity as a psychical event? What is the relationship between hybridity and anxiety?

Psychoanalytic theory suggests that our conscious mind, the ego, has the primary responsibility of “preventing the buildup of excessive excitation” (Eagle, 2011, p. 31), which can also be understood as anxiety. Freud’s (1926) work indicated that “every inhibition [such as repression] which the ego imposes on itself can be called a symptom,” and thus that “symptoms are created in order to remove the ego from a situation of danger” (p. 143). Beyond a sign of illness or pathology, symptoms are largely protective, even creative. The connection between anxiety and trauma was first identified by Freud, who recognized two possibilities of this relationship. The first situation is when anxiety is experienced automatically as a reaction to a trauma. Automatic anxiety, then, is an immediately felt “experience of helplessness on the part of the ego in the face of an accumulation of excitation, whether of external or of internal origin, which cannot be dealt with” (Strachey, 1959, p. 7). The other possibility is when anxiety takes the form of an anticipatory signal, warning of the danger or threat of a traumatic situation (Freud, 1926). In relation to this second form, it is the *anticipation* of danger that triggers this signal

response, and generally always involves the separation from, or loss of, a loved object or a loss of its love (Freud, 1926).

Psychoanalysis can offer a lens through which to investigate the immediate and anticipated anxieties that accompany adolescents' internal struggles and difficulties that underwrite efforts to re-appropriate religious and cultural markers in relationship to parents and the social world. That is, implied in the creation of hybrid spaces of identity are also anxieties and emotional conflicts at work. The Ismaili Muslim adolescents of this study often experience anxieties in moments and spaces where the different parts of their identity are forced to come together, as a hybrid as it were, leaving them with no choice but to manage pieces of themselves at once, which creates discomfort for them. They often seemed to prefer splitting parts of themselves rather than engaging in the process of hybridization, which raises questions about how anxiety is both an effect and instigator of processes of engagement and/or disengagement with their religion and culture.

Overcoming one's Parents

The concept of attachment offers another frame to understand the emotional world of the second-generation adolescent. This idea takes as foundational that all human beings are inherently social, and thus inherently object relational; we need objects of attachment for the purposes of "ego support and in order to avoid the ultimate psychological disaster of an empty inner world with no connections to objects" (Eagle, 2011, p. 161). Object-relations psychoanalysis "rests on the assumption that in our relationships we react according to the internal representations we hold of people important to us in the past as well as to the person actually before us now" (Kroger, 2004, p. 57). Melanie Klein is foundational to the object-relations turn in psychoanalysis (Britzman, 2015b). Where Freud focused on the drives, Klein

held that, “there is no such thing as an object without a relation to something or someone” (Britzman, 2015b, p. 7). The attachments of early life are persistent, migrating to shape the climate of later relationships. This migratory foundation of object-relations resonates powerfully with the phenomenon of transference: a clinical concept that refers to the process by which the patient redirects past feelings and desires to the present situation of the analysis (Freud, 1940). The implication here is that adolescents hold in mind key object-relations of their past, which define and shape the boundaries of both personal identity and social relationships with parents, but later, with others. The very first objects are most often the parents, consisting of some combination of mothers and fathers (Karme, 1979). During adolescence, the attachment to parental figures shifts while the adolescent attempts to create their own identity and separate from her parents. In fact, this struggle to create a distinct identity, or to overcome one’s parents, is a central task for adolescents, even while it begins in infancy and extends into adulthood. Depending upon the contextual relations of the family, this task may prove to be more challenging for some adolescents than others. As the youth of my study are children of immigrants, the task of overcoming one’s parents is further complicated; they must also seek to separate themselves from their parents and manage their parents’ narratives and effects of loss while also experiencing a process of cultural hybridity.

Mann (2004), whose research examines the experiences of multi-ethnic immigrant parents and their American-born children, discovered that, “a well-consolidated sense of identity is more complicated for these types of multiethnic immigrant families” (p. 143). She noticed that second-generation adolescents are unable to receive the assistance needed in order to address and overcome their anxiety, which is usually a process that occurs at this age. Mann (2004) suggests this disconnect occurs because their parents are themselves struggling with the loss of what they

have left behind and their own identity formation due to the intra-psychically taxing process of immigration that they have experienced. From the vantage of this social context, the process of overcoming one's parents in order to create an autonomous self becomes increasingly difficult for these adolescents, in part, because overcoming may feel as if the parents were destroyed. As we will see in the context of this study, the work of separation, when coupled with anxiety and loss, can trigger the opposite response of staking out deep, unwavering parental ties.

Of course, before adolescence, children will have participated in a process of socialization as they develop their understandings of the world from their parents, basing their interactions with the external world by adopting "the norm of the other...thereby becoming normal" (Verhaeghe, 2009, p. 78). In adolescence, however, this process shifts to one of becoming different, or, one's own person. Where the same parent who had been, for the child, a reliable object to internalize, the parent now becomes the object that one seeks to *replace* as the adolescent endeavors to overcome the dependency of the initial bond on the way to finding her own understanding of the world and establishing her own norm which she thinks she makes with relative independence. Adolescents undergoing the process of overcoming often "rebel against parental social and cultural values" (Mann, 2004, p. 152). This narrative of overcoming one's parents is referred to in psychoanalysis as the Oedipus complex, which Freud postulated begins in early childhood (although for Klein, in infancy), and then re-appears with new force in adolescence (Eagle, 2011; Green, 2005). Mann (2004) further suggests how social context impacts the Oedipal process of overcoming. For instance, she finds that immigrant parents "who have an unresolved Oedipal complex contribute to the problem of their adolescents' identity formation and further complicate the struggle in mourning for their exclusive relationship" (Mann, 2004, p. 152). This idea is not unrelated to melancholia. Immigrant parents may retain a

continual bond with their own parents, and thus may be less understanding of the idea of their children rebelling and detaching from their norms, customs, and values. There may be a demand resulting in imposed prohibitions and strict parenting of the adolescent. The present study inquires deeply into precisely these issues and nuances of overcoming one's parents as experienced and articulated by Ismaili Muslim youth; I ask, how do Ismaili Muslim adolescents express and represent their autonomy and separation from their parents in matters of faith and culture? How is the work of separation affected by familial experiences of immigration, and the losses this carries forward?

Ideality and Nihilism

Part of the process of expressing autonomy also means experimenting with absolutes of knowledge. Adolescents, in the words of Britzman (2012), are greatly drawn to the “belief in perfection: in an ideal object that is totally satisfying and therefore must be true and unchanging” (p. 279). Thinking back to the theme of Oedipus, Kristeva (2007) underscores a kernel of aggression⁵ when she asserts that the “adolescent Oedipus complex is *violent* because it operates on the carrier wave of idealization” (p. 718, emphasis added). This intensity in feeling and search for the ideal object replaces the child's insatiable curiosity for knowledge with the desire for certainties. As Kristeva (2007) writes, “the adolescent is not a researcher in a laboratory, he's a believer” (p. 717). Young-Bruehl (1996) notes, too, that adolescents relate to ideal objects by a process of assimilation, “taking on everything from manners and gestures to habits and emotions” (p. 307). This identification process is extreme and imitative, driven by the desire to consume the ideal, or “*become* who they love” (Young-Bruehl, 1996, p. 307, original emphasis).

⁵ In psychoanalysis, the emotional world is necessarily filled with extreme emotions, including aggression, depression, pleasure, and desire; indeed, aggression is within the ordinary parameters of understanding the emotional situation of all individuals. However, this discussion is distinct and different from the extremist expressions of aggression sometimes seen within radical religious groups.

Adolescents enjoy, but also struggle with absolute concepts, believing strongly in the “object relation and/or of its impossibility” (Kristeva, 2007, p. 718).

Kristeva (2007) describes this condition as the ideality syndrome, which she argues often takes hold as the adolescent wishes to replace his parents with a new object. This process summons the most idealist and narcissist qualities of the adolescent’s ego taking shape in the (unconscious) need to believe in an absolute and perfect object. This ideality can be interpreted as a defense against object loss (Britzman, 2012), where belief replaces the abyss. Through belief, the adolescent unconsciously asserts that “an absolutely satisfying other must exist-and does exist” (Kristeva, 2007, p. 720). However, in the case of minoritized and/or hybrid cultures, the question may be asked: what becomes the ideal object for the adolescent who is actively attempting to craft an identity that is influenced by the family’s minority culture (including ethnicity, religion, language)? One possibility could be that belief is changed and re-shaped by the secular discourse that often denies and dismisses religion; this is often the milieu in which Canadian adolescents form new attachments to peer groups. On the other hand, Kristeva (2007) argues that adolescent ideality is always at the risk of being disintegrated into the ultimate diffusion of no meaning at all. In her words, “adolescent belief inexorably mixes with adolescent nihilism” (p. 720). Kristeva (2009) takes as her example the nihilism displayed by youth from immigrant families in France. Nihilism, she argues, “grapples at a deeper level with the inner workings of civilization” and that it is a “battle against discrimination” (p. 22). Giving up is, in this context, a way of fighting back by becoming unreachable, unable to be affected. Nihilism can thus be an effect of feeling that one’s religious belief system is under siege.

In the context of my study, I consider how ideality takes shape for Muslim adolescents, expressed potentially in extreme attachments to faith or by contrast in a passionate devotion to an

anti-faith attitude. I examine how adolescents mobilize faith (whether it be belief, religion, religious institutions or another aspect of faith) in emotional, complex, and sometimes contradictory ways in the process of embodying a differentiated sense of the self. I am also interested in how ideality is expressed across generations. How do the adolescents of this study understand faith in relationship to their parents' religious identifications? Inspired by Kristeva, I consider how faith is affected by the social contexts in which adolescents live. In what ways can we understand the relationship of faith to community, to gender and culture, and to becoming in contexts of Islamophobia and discrimination? For me, faith is also an emotional resource, one that holds meanings that are deeply personal and sometimes unconscious. In this study, for instance, adolescents use faith to represent both wishes and worries that are at times rigid but at other times, become softened, transitional, and affected by all that impinges on its certitudes.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Theoretical Framework

My study begins with the idea that identity consists of the multiple “meanings people hold for themselves that define ‘what it means’ to be who they are as persons, as role occupants, and as group members” (Burke, 2004, p. 5). Drawing on cultural studies, my research examines identity as a malleable reference point; it can be modified and adapted in contexts that face an individual with events and interactions that challenge her sets of meanings (Burke, 2004). Youth identities can be particularly dynamic, slippery, and contradictory, as they seek to identify with and/or disidentify themselves from a multitude of signs denoting culture, ethnicity, and other forms of belonging (Yon, 2000a). Like Yon (2000a), my research is grounded on the idea of identification; that identity is a process of ‘becoming’ rather than of already ‘being,’ with a focus on the processes and conflicts at play in the construction of the self (see also Hall, 1996; Jenkins, 2008). Adolescence is particularly relevant for a study of identity shifts and conflict, insofar as it is a position that consists of thought experiments, emotional extremes, and testing boundaries (Britzman, 2006); it is at this time that schools encourage students to reflect upon their interests, envision a future profession, and engage in the critical analysis of societal issues and worldly challenges, even while adolescents, in the context of this study, are not yet able to vote (Reay, 2010; Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001).

Although this research uses a cultural studies frame of identity and identification, as noted in chapter two, I also integrate a psychoanalytic lens in order to inquire about the emotional world of the adolescent. A psychoanalytically informed view of identity asserts that “the construction of a self is a struggle at best won only provisionally and always entailing expenditure of considerable amounts of psychological energy” (Frosh, 1991, p. 187). Both

schools of thought serve to be complementary in my study by helping to provide a more holistic picture of the life of the adolescent. As Gordon (2008) asserts, sometimes in order to confront the unspoken, hidden, or ghostly aspects behind what is commonly acknowledged and accepted in social life, we must be willing to “fundamental[ly] change...the way we know and make knowledge, in our mode of production” (p. 7), such as by engaging in interdisciplinary research. Taking up Gordon’s invitation, my research draws on both cultural and psychoanalytic studies to examine the interactions between the psychical and social forces affecting adolescent identity. Thus, my research falls into the realm of the psychosocial, defined as a framework that “conceptualiz[es] human subjects as, simultaneously, the products of their own unique psychic worlds *and* a shared social world (Gadd & Jefferson, 2007, p. 4).

However, Frosh (2010) cautions that taking psychoanalysis outside of the clinic is not a simple task because psychoanalytic knowledge “arises from, and refers back to, a very particular situation specially created to be different from the normal environment of everyday life” (p. 1). It is not appropriate, therefore, to psychoanalyze subjects in research without deep knowledge of a person’s emotional history and without a psychoanalytic education in the clinic. However, there are possibilities nonetheless. In relation to this last claim, Hollway and Jefferson (2013) suggest that in research settings, methods and concepts can be “psychoanalytically informed” (p. 150) in order to allow for speculation about emotional influences in a given situation, while taking into account the contextual environment of the research setting, as well as cultural and social meanings made there. My use of key psychoanalytic concepts, noted in the previous chapter, is intended to make the “psychoanalytic paradigm... relevant and practicable” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p. 150) to a research setting beyond the specificities of the clinic. My turn inward in the present research, I suggest, is important to better understand how outside

influences impact the way an adolescent thinks and feels about her identity on the inside, including possible discomforts, discontinuities, and discontents. Thankfully, I am not alone in this methodological turn inside.

Pitt and Britzman (2003) take a psychoanalytic orientation in their qualitative study of the narratives of university teachers and students through their creation of a “thought experiment” that explores the emotional worlds of teaching and learning (p. 757). They discovered that while speaking and representing “difficult knowledge” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755), individuals “were offering stories of their identity and experience” but at the same time, “the narratives resisted the coherence brought by their identity claims because, in stories of breakdown, the ideal self cannot be represented” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 763). When meaning broke down, there seemed to be an intrusion of emotion due to the internal conflict that influenced participants’ attempts to represent their experiences. Pitt and Britzman (2003) interpreted their narratives using the psychoanalytic concepts of deferred action, transference, and symbolization, which they find helped to “characterize this more ordinary yet ubiquitous trauma of having to learn” (p. 770). Phillips (2004) agrees that, “trauma is the name we give to experiences that we find most difficult to learn from; and which hinder learning in the future” (p. 796). Pitt and Britzman’s (2003) study offers a model of how to structure and interpret a psychoanalytically informed study that will serve as a guide to my own. Asserting the viewpoint that learning is provoked by conflict, they specifically focus on accessing content more often repressed in idealized narratives of teaching and learning. They are interested in times when emotion breaks the usual signposts that moor autobiographies of the self, and probes for inner dynamics of unconscious fantasy and desire that contradict, refuse, and radically depart from something called social reality. For instance, their questions ask participants to think about “breakdowns with others, fights with

knowledge, experiences of influence, aloneness, hostility, anxiety, and confusion in teaching and learning” (p. 762). I utilize this study as a guideline for my study of the emotional worlds of Ismaili Muslim youth as I seek to understand times of uncertainty, struggle, misunderstanding, and displeasure. My interview questions are inspired by their open-ended wording and also include questions that address times of conflict and/or difficulty (see appendix A-3).

A psychoanalytic lens therefore offers a way of approaching the research with an emphasis on the internal world that allows for contradictions and uncertainty in its findings. Because of the vast depth of the unconscious, psychoanalysis humbles the claims we can make in research. Indeed, as Frosh (2010) argues, “whenever we believe we know something...we are tripped up uncomfortably by our *wish* to know it” (p. 6). Still, Frosh (2010) asserts that a psychoanalytically informed study “can offer a ‘thickening’ or enrichment of interpretive understanding brought to bear on personal narratives, especially those arising out of interview situations” (p. 199). Furthermore, Phillips (2004) asserts that psychoanalysis “is an enquiry, an opportunity to explore the ways in which people inform each other” (p. 786). The role of psychoanalysis in my study is not to overlay certitudes or universal explanations on the narratives presented, “but rather to *disrupt* sense, to examine the building blocks out of which sense is being produced as a kind of epiphenomenon” (Frosh, 2010, p. 206, original emphasis). That is, I construct meaningful narratives after the fact; as I engage the data in this work, my aim is to represent and organize disturbances of meaning in ways that are more palatable and/or tolerable to the mind. The construction of identity is, then, “in principle. . . a *defensive* process,” (Frosh, 2010, p. 206, original emphasis) but where defense is defined as a narrative that can give some expression to the disturbing affect it also wards off. Furthermore, the main purpose of this research is to give a voice to minoritized subjects who are often ignored in society, or

alternatively, constructed as a national threat. Psychoanalysis can help uncover this voice as it seeks to embrace and nurture the internal world through its perspective of the turn inwards. This research does not seek to make any universal claims or to make assumptions and draw conclusions about large groups. Rather, this study is deeply contextual and acknowledges the specificity of the individual in relation to others. It is hoped that this research can serve as a model to educators and researchers to strive to better understand non-dominant perspectives of minoritized adolescent growth, identity, and conflict in contexts of schooling and society that too often overdetermine these meanings. As Frosh (1991) states, the question that underlines this exploration is, “what does it *feel* like to live in a world like this?” (p. 14, original emphasis).

Research Design

I utilized a multiple case study approach, involving an in-depth analysis of individual participants, with an aim to locate both prevailing motifs and contradictions within and across each example (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Data was collected over a three-month period, beginning in December 2017, through focus groups and in-depth interviews with eight Canadian-born Ismaili Muslim adolescents between the ages of 14-18 (grades 9-12). As I am a member of the Ismaili Muslim community, I located participants for my study at the religious place of worship for community members, the *Jamatkhana*. Because I was familiar with many members of the community, I casually approached youth and gave them information sheets detailing my research project. They were invited to voluntarily decide whether to participate in the research, pending parental approval for adolescents under the age of 16. Two focus groups were organized for the youth interested in participating, and individual cases were selected from these groups based upon participant interest. I sought to ensure gender equality wherever possible. Furthermore, as I teach secondary students within my community, I only selected adolescents to participate in my

research that I was not teaching at the time, so as to avoid the influence of any explicit power imbalance. In order to be selected as a research participant, the adolescent needed to meet the following parameters:

- Between the ages of 14-18 (Grades 9-12)
- Born in any city in Canada
- Parents or grandparents born outside of Canada
- Not be a student in my classroom at the time of the research

Context

I am a teacher at multiple secondary religious education centres (RECs) for the Ismaili community in the greater Toronto area. These classes are offered to grades 7-12 and are supplementary to the students' secular school enrollment. They take place on weekends and on weekday evenings. A large majority of the youth that regularly attend prayers in the *Jamatkhana* are also enrolled in a religious education class, however, their attendance and enrollment are both voluntary. All recruitment and interviews for the study were carried out in community spaces in the *Jamatkhana* (such as before and after prayer times), and not during the time that students attend religious education classes. As I am a member of the Ismaili Muslim community, my access to the community was easily obtained, and my status as a REC teacher is known by most members in the community. There is a sense of familiarity and respect that is given to teachers in the community, however, because attendance is voluntary, classes are not always taken seriously by students and their parents. Thus while I am respected as a teacher, the voluntary nature of the classes I teach might have lightened the pressure to participate, or at the very least, would not have increased it. By contrast, the experience of secular schooling is for these youth much more of a source of anxiety, as I elaborate in chapter 6.

Insider Research

Given my insider perspective into the community where my study is carried out, I have a greater understanding of the context and culture of the youth involved, making it easy to “blend into situations without disturbing social settings” (Greene, 2014, p. 3). Given my role as a teacher in the community, I also have an “established intimacy which promotes the telling and judging of truth” (Unluer, 2012, p. 1). However, I was also mindful of the challenges that insider research can bring, including the bias that can develop from the researcher’s over-familiarity and prior knowledge, possibly leading to assumptions based on subjective truth (Unluer, 2012).

Although all research, insider or outsider, is prone to bias, the insider researcher must be particularly careful to not project one’s own personal beliefs, viewpoints, and experiences onto the participants, or the data analysis (Greene, 2014). Indeed, a native or insider researcher must spend time getting to know herself and knowing when her personal history or experiences may both benefit and/or complicate the process (Chavez, 2008; Greene, 2014; Kanuhu, 2000). The struggle to balance my dual role of community member as well as researcher, if any, is made explicit in my interpretations of the data. Also subject to analysis are any potential conflicts, which I acknowledge by clarifying, where needed, my differential purpose in each role in my interaction with youth. At all times of the research, I maintained strict confidentiality of any information shared with me during my data collection. To minimize the possibility of making assumptions based on any personal bias, I asked participants to explain all their responses in detail and sought clarification if any responses were unclear.

In the field of psychoanalysis, this potential of projection onto the subject by the analyst is known as countertransference (Frosh, 2010; Hirsch, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This state can be both conscious and/or unconscious and occurs because of the very nature of an

affected humanity; that is, all of us have histories made from wishes, desires, regrets, and failures. Lapping (2011) suggests that a researcher's awareness of counter-transference and transference "might help a researcher to develop sensitivity to material that arises in empirical research" (p. 4). Instead of presuming to rid myself of this emotional situation, I often used my own personal experiences as a context for analyzing data. That is, I participated in the practice of reflexivity (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013) by being open and forthright in my data collection; in times when I found myself identifying a personal resemblance or similarity to participants' shared narratives or experiences, I immediately flagged these in my notes and ensured that I was mindful in the interview not to ask any leading questions or share personal stories with the participants so as not to project my personal views.

Price (2006) admits that giving "critical consideration of [her] own counter-transference" in her research "proved hard work" (p. 159), however, this reflective process proved also to be insightful, particularly in exploring the "more fluid nature of the emotional dynamics between teachers and pupils" (p. 159). It is clear that an ongoing practice of stepping back and analyzing one's own experience is not one that comes naturally, and must be consistently cultivated and attended to, such that it becomes a habit of mind. Frosh (2010) states that reflexivity "requires the researcher to keep an honest gaze on what she or he brings to the research process: how it is set up, what is communicated to the subject...and how her or his actions might influence the subject's own active meaning-making activities" (p. 211). To ensure I maintained an honest gaze, after the interview process and during data analysis, I sought to reflect on and analyze any memory that may have come to my mind during the interview alongside my analysis of the participant's narrative. This process is known as collecting reflective personal data, or "stream of consciousness writing" (Van Heugten, 2004, p. 207) which I used with the explicit aim of

mitigating the problem of unthought countertransference, personal bias or overly familiar attachments to the participants, to the school context, and to the community writ large (Chavez, 2008; Greene, 2014; Van Heugten, 2004).

Research Considerations

As this research investigates “difficult knowledge” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755) and topics that can be stigmatized in society, such as anxiety and loss, I explicitly told participants that all emotions and feelings are valid to acknowledge and discuss in the interview, as it is a confidential space and a welcoming environment. However, I still noticed that participants often felt the need to present their emotions and lives in a positive and favourable way. At first, I thought this might be because they did not want to confront a negative emotion, or that they had not yet explored this perspective within themselves. However, as I analyzed the data, I noticed this was itself a research finding, which I call ‘the happiness defense.’ While I discuss this concept in detail in chapter 5, suffice it to say here that I use it to denote a sense of keenness among participants to present themselves as good Canadians as well as a readiness to show appreciation and gratitude to their country, even when the circumstances they describe are not happy. As noted, I initially read participants’ happiness defenses as an obstacle to ‘real’ feelings; however, I gradually came to the view that happiness was full of significance and recognized my own resistance to hearing this narrative as its own obstacle. Happiness, I now think, was one way that the youth of the study could find a safe way into the research.

Upon this realization, I always ensured that I began the interviews with a light touch, starting with questions about the youth’s societal context and experiences of their community that could allow for the expression of happiness. Before progressing to discussions that probe into deeper layers of emotional life, I listened to their narratives of happiness, and was careful to

note any possible slips or contradictions, which I then sought to gently probe in more detail. Furthermore, I asked questions that were neutral in tone, and that were unmoored from loaded or stigmatized language too often attached to emotional experiences, including their extremes. I entered conversations with an open, de-pathologizing stance toward emotional life, raising questions that invited youth to lead the discussion with their own themes. At the same time, I was also aware that difficult emotions may travel under a defended signifier, such as idealization, happiness, mastery, or certainty. My aim was to read even the most benign or un-conflicted statements as potential sources of difficulty. The point here is that youth do not literally need to be talking about sadness or fear in order for its traces to make an appearance in the narrative. My questions focused on a wide range of ideas that invite a variety of emotional responses. Across this range, I probed layers of feeling operating underneath consciously articulated feelings and experiences. Included among these ideas are making friends, finding a voice, wanting to belong, confronting racism, making jokes, feeling socially excluded, conflicted, or misunderstood and/or being treated differently than one might want or intend.

Because the participants I interviewed belong to two vulnerable groups (adolescents [minors], and religious-ethnic minority), and because I probe emotional dynamics of identity, my study can also be classified as sensitive research. Although the topics of discussion were guided by the participants themselves, the research directly asked about instances of discrimination and discomfort regarding their identity. Liamputtong (2007) argues that one way to respond to this challenge is to undertake qualitative research instead of quantitative because “qualitative research methods are flexible and fluid, and therefore, are suited to understanding the meanings, interpretations and subjective experiences of vulnerable groups” (p. 7). In anticipation of the potential of participants to feel emotional stress or anxiety, at the start of the interviews, I offered

two options of support for the youth to access, if they so required. The first was the opportunity to speak to me about their feelings and emotions outside the interview space, either before or after, and the second was to connect with a representative from the Aga Khan Social Support Services. This support network is staffed by trained professionals and volunteers from the Ismaili community that provide assistance to any community member upon request for support with mental health concerns and other life challenges.

Qualitative research enables researchers to build a relationship with participants, hopefully leading to well-earned trust and rapport, and can often allow for misunderstood or ignored perspectives to come to light, as it “commits to seeing the world from the research participants’ own perspectives” (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 8). The benefits outweigh the risks of this research, as conducting research with this group allows for their voices to be heard and their perspectives understood, for the very reason that they are often marginalized due to their vulnerability. In fact, Sieber and Stanley (1988) warn us that “sensitive research addresses some of society’s most pressing social issues and policy programs,” however, they also add that, “...shying away from controversial topics, simply because they are controversial, is an avoidance of responsibility” (p. 55). Thus, this research falls into the realm of fulfilling a duty to vulnerable groups to help bring ethical awareness and complex understanding to their lives and well-being.

Methods

My data was collected through the use of focus groups and individual interviews. I utilized focus groups in my research because they create comfortable spaces for participants to engage in “meaningful conversations” and are “useful for hearing from groups whose voices are often marginalized within the larger society” (Morgan, 2008, p. 352). Focus groups were held as the first data collection tool and a first step to better understand the perspectives of the youth

(Morgan, 2008). Focus groups also encourage the beginning of a reflective mindset (in preparation for the individual interviews) in the case that participants are new to this type of reflective dialogue. I held two focus group sessions, with three participants in the first, and five participants in the second group. Each focus group session was approximately 60 minutes, and I followed a flow of questions for each session (see Appendix A-1). From the focus groups, seven adolescents indicated their interest in being interviewed separately. I utilized in-depth, phenomenological interviewing as a way to better understand the unique experiences of adolescents and the meaning they make of them (Seidman, 1998). This approach entailed using primarily open-ended questions (see Appendix A-2), where I sought to “build upon and explore [the] participants’ responses...” (Seidman, 1998, p. 9). I modified the three-interview series format encouraged by Seidman (1998) in order to incorporate a focus group component to the research, so participants were introduced to the research with their peers to minimize any hesitation or worry with the idea of being interviewed, and also to avoid overwhelming participants with too many interviews in case this was felt as overly taxing for them, both practically and emotionally. Thus, my interventions occurred three times: once as a focus group session, and twice as an individual interview for each of the seven participants.

There was also a reflective component to the research, which aimed to give participants space and time to gain comfort with and insight into their personal feelings and experiences. This modification was inspired by Pitt and Britzman’s (2003) study where the interview questions were given to the participants before the interview so as to prime their thinking and emotions. Mirroring Pitt and Britzman’s methodology, the final interview was guided by reflective prompts (see Appendix A-3) that were shared with participants after the first interview, which were then discussed during the second, and final interview. The first set of interviews was open-ended and

semi-structured, allowing participants to speak freely and share any thoughts that may come to mind. The research embraced a narrative design; I collected stories of individuals and documented their experiences (Creswell, 2014). Participants were invited to say what they wished in the interview and take any perspective they were comfortable representing. The second interview was organized by reflective prompts, noted above, which were distributed to participants at the end of the first interview. The aim was to offer participants some time and space to think through their thoughts without the presence of the researcher, as well as to foster deeper reflection into the discussion that took place during the first interview. To create these conditions of reflection and thoughtful distance, the time between the two interviews was approximately two to three weeks.

As I collected my data, I was listening for times when adolescents expressed emotions in their responses, either through their language, metaphor, physical body language, and in the readiness with which they provided their stories. I was also listening for narratives that expressed the experiences and perspectives that adolescents faced regularly or episodically that seemed to provide insight into their internal world, understanding of who they are, and/or how they represented themselves and were represented by their community members. Given that this research uses a psychoanalytic frame, it is important to note that I was also listening for times that I could not make sense of what was being said, or when there was ambiguity in the narratives being offered. Indeed, I would describe my position as one of being “caught between not knowing and the desire to know” (Britzman, 2009, p. viii). Also of interest were the ways in which emotion may have found expression in contradictory narratives, repeated motifs, or contrary claims.

The problem of narration and relying upon language to capture experience, as my study does, is that it is often socially saturated even while lacking and unable fully to capture the thing it describes, creating a “crisis of representation” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 756). Pitt and Britzman (2003) note in their research that “representation is a compromise...because one makes sense of new situations through imperatives of older conflicts” (p. 759). Narratives are never free from social contexts and histories even while they do not exactly represent them. Psychoanalytic inquiry therefore carries with it an interpretive paradox since “interpretation makes narrative, but there is also something within narrative that resists its own interpretation” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 759). In this study, I probed for resistance and the affect underlying it by listening for thoughts of extreme affirmation or negation, or times when participants contradicted themselves. These moments served as clues, and I used them to ‘lift up’ the emotional content underlying the spoken narrative. Further, by probing moments of contradiction or repetition, I listened for uses of defense and the inner conflicts it seemed to conceal. As stated by Pitt and Britzman (2003), “research must be understood as provoking, not representing, knowledge” (p. 769). They refer to this provocation as *symbolization*, which is not the same as claiming accuracy in representing another’s voice (Pitt & Britzman, 2003). Symbolization is, much as representation is defined above, a compromise that is thoroughly interpretive. The opposite of a billboard that broadcasts certitudes, symbolization is more like a first draft, a note to self, or preliminary thought: it is an approximation of meaning that also conveys something of its own lack (Britzman, 2006). Despite this goal to uncover the meaning behind what is represented, I also acknowledge that the interpretations are mine, that they are speculative, and that they inhere a lack of understanding or incoherence. I anticipated that my data would present contradictions, and it did, and that required my own patience and acknowledgement throughout my research.

Before sharing my findings in the chapters to come, I conclude this chapter by introducing the reader to the cast of characters⁶ that will be encountered. All participants' names, as well as any names of family members that they refer to in their responses, have been changed to pseudonyms. Demographic information is based on how participants self-described at the start of the focus group interview.

Name	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Parents' birthplace	Age of parents upon immigration to Canada	Grandparents' birthplace
Imran	17	Male	Toronto, Canada	Nairobi, Kenya	(unanswered)	(unanswered)
Sophia	15	Female	Toronto, Canada	Kampala, Uganda; Tanzania	12	Kampala, Uganda; Tanzania
Naila	14	Female	Richmond Hill, Canada	Karachi, Pakistan	28; 30	Karachi, Pakistan
Maleeka	17	Female	Toronto, Canada	Tanzania	10	Uganda; India
Nabeel	14	Male	Calgary, Canada	Congo	3	Congo
Faheem	14	Male	Toronto, Canada	Kenya; Tanzania	2	Africa; India
Jenna	17	Female	Toronto, Canada	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Kampala, Uganda	14; 4	India; Tanzania
Zahra	16	Female	Toronto, Canada	Mombasa, Kenya	17-20	Mombasa, Kenya

Imran, Sophia, and Naila attended the first focus group session, and, from my perspective, they took time to become comfortable speaking. Sophia's and Naila's responses were spoken very quietly, while Imran was louder and appeared more confident. The three participants made up a relatively small group and did not know each other beforehand. This quality of small size and unfamiliarity within the group might have affected their level of comfort, particularly for the female participants. Also, in the smaller group, there might have been more of a pressure to speak, and less of a sense of anonymity in choosing not to. The

⁶ As my research focused on Canadian-born, second-generation Ismaili youth, all participants available to me were from South Asian descent. However, a significant population of Ismaili Muslims living in Canada are from a Central Asian descent (Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Iran, and neighbouring areas). It would be noteworthy to repeat this study to include this particular population to investigate if the themes encountered in this study are also prevalent in Canadian Central Asian second-generation youth. Although they are also Ismaili Muslim, their cultural background and traditions are unique and may influence the data.

second focus group was comprised of five participants: Maleeka, Nabeel, Faheem, Jenna, and Zahra. With the exception of Nabeel, all participants had met and interacted with each other previously to the focus group. Maleeka and Zahra shared with me that they attend the same high school and it was apparent that Jenna and Zahra were close friends. In the second focus group, participants often commented on each other's responses and appeared comfortable to agree or disagree with each other's comments. I speculate that gender may have been a factor that impacted the level of participation by the young women in each focus group. Given that the girls in the second focus group knew each other and often supported each other's responses, friendship may be read as a generative variable in this context that created entry points and opportunities to speak in the group. This is in contrast to the first focus group, where the two girls were rarely the first to speak and were often timid and shy when they did. This left me wondering whether increased familiarity with each other might have better supported their participation. Interestingly, the boys seemed unaffected in their level of participation whether they knew another person, male or female, in the group.

Besides skin colour, participants did not carry any other apparent visual markers of religious identity, such as a specific type of clothing, head coverings or other symbols. In most cases, English was the only language of fluency for the participants. All participants, with the exception of Sophia and Imran, met with me for two individual interviews which were scheduled after the focus group. Imran met with me for only one individual interview and after cancelling twice, he did not end up confirming a time to meet with me for his second interview.

Chapter 4: The Closed Mind of Prejudice: Borders, Stereotypes, and the Struggle for Natality

I think in the media, um, the news tends to cover, like, the more negative side of Muslims and it's very rare that you see something good. Because you always hear about, like, the sad things that happen. (Sophia)

To be young and Muslim in Canada carries with it an inescapable weight; the utterance of the word 'Muslim' is often received with a wide range of difficult responses, be it hatred, anxiety, confusion, discomfort, or ambivalence. The attacks on the mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019 occurred during the writing of this dissertation and reminded the world of the ongoing struggle that Muslims face in being understood, accepted, and safe around the world. This general unwelcome tone is also experienced by Ismaili Muslim youth in their daily lives; it is clear from their interviews that they are constantly navigating an external world filled with implicit and explicit discrimination. Youth share that they are often called a "terrorist" by their peers 'as a joke' and try to avoid conversations where they may be judged unfairly for being Muslim. This chapter examines how adolescents of this study make sense of contexts of discrimination, how they find ways to engage and challenge it, and how, at times, they internalize and feel defeated by it. The theme of prejudice will be examined through the psychoanalytic defenses of projection, repetition, and humour. Specifically, I explore how participants in this study use repetition and irony to manage stereotypes and feelings of unwelcome. Moreover, I suggest that Arendt's (1977) concept of natality is denied to young Muslims because they are national objects of projections of hate and fear.

Arendt (1977) writes of natality as the fact that human beings are born as newcomers into the world, and as such, children are in a process of becoming; they are not finished. They bring hope to the world as they offer the capacity of new beginnings and change. On one level, this

Arendtian narrative reflects a common Rousseauian version of childhood, where the child is cast as an innocent subject needing protection from the corruptions of the social world. However, Arendt adds a narrative of adult responsibility that changes this Romantic construction and that is important to my own analysis. The child's natality, for Arendt (1977), depends on adult authority, not only for protection from the social world, but quite the contrary: to support children in encountering the world as it is, in all its failures, limits, and legacies of violence. If such encounters are meaningfully facilitated, children learn to work within these difficult realities while also retaining a sense of their own newness. My dissertation adds yet another narrative to Arendt's construction that takes the form of a question: In a world that already approaches Muslim youth with hostility instead of welcome, and sees them through the old trope of danger, where, then, can natality emerge in this context? The interviews of this study document the ways that projections of hatred and fear in the contemporary North American climate towards Muslims and Islam forecloses the natality of Muslim youth. Because they are not valued for their potential in the process of becoming, and in fact, constructed as a threat to the future of the nation, the youth of my study continually mobilize a range of defenses in response to projections of hatred and fear. As we will see in this chapter, both these racist projections – and defenses against them – collide with natality, dulling the hope of becoming and rather disavowing the possibility that they can renew the world.

Although natality is not a psychoanalytic concept, it bears similarity to the psychoanalytic argument of "childism" that Young-Bruehl (2012) brings forward in her writing. She expresses that childism occurs when "people as individuals and in societies mistreat children in order to fulfill certain needs through them, to project internal conflicts and self-hatreds outwards, or to assert themselves when they feel their authority has been questioned" (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p.

1). Although children come to the world anew, they are already victims of prejudice and blame because of the adult's need to legitimize and justify "a societal prejudice against children" (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p. 1). This universal argument can be deepened by a granular view of nuances of race and religion, which lead to unequal terrains of prejudice affecting children. Britzman (2009) supports this layer of analysis when she asserts a difficulty of preserving natality since "our beginnings [are] met by the reception from those already here" (p. 27). However, if those that are already here have decided upon what to expect from children and young people of a particular race or religion, natality is denied because newness is not seen nor expected from those 'already here.'

The adolescents in this study articulate the inner experience of denied natality; they do not experience a sense of welcoming from their world, nor do they describe that they have the ability to create the world anew. Rather, they express that they are newcomers in a world of old narratives, and that they are continually subject to what has already occurred before their arrival and projected onto them. Psychoanalytically, projection can be understood as "the expulsion of ideas or affects from the ego and their relegation to the outside world" (A. Freud, 1966, p. 51). As noted, the youth of this study are the objects of the projections of the ideas of hate and fear against Muslim subjects. As a result, natality is disavowed for these youth, and often not discreetly. The youth of this study have an acute awareness of how their identities are already determined in a context of Islamophobia and prejudice, leaving the question of what it means to become a social and political subject, to find tolerance and acceptance, and to engage and contribute to their communities and Canadian society at large. This chapter will explore what it means and how it feels to embody a position of disavowed natality, to be mislabeled and pre-

judged, and to feel generally unwelcome in a nation that ironically showcases multicultural ideals (Walcott, 2001).

All these ideas are encapsulated in the opening epigraph of this chapter: Sophia articulates sadness and anticipates negative portrayals of Muslims in the media on a frequent basis. This chapter elaborates on these experiences with a view to analyze the impact of these representations on the internal world of the adolescent. That is, what kind of personas do young Muslims reflect back to a prejudiced world of intolerance, rather than one that is celebratory of their existence in the world?

Borders and Boundaries

Borders and boundaries are significant obstacles to natality in that they operate as limits on the life of the Muslim adolescent. Youth reveal that their “Muslimness” is always uncomfortably in the spotlight; they admit having experienced prejudice by many of those around them and are often subject to negative stereotypes based on their facial features, their name, or the colour of their skin. It is not insignificant that these experiences of prejudice intensify at borders, where national security discourse imposes its binary logic of insiders and outsiders. In the focus group, Faheem, Zahra and Jenna disclose their experiences with security agents while travelling internationally:

Faheem: “.... Because I mean, even if you go to an airport and you look like you could be a Muslim, they’re gonna check you more than they would check----”

Zahra: “Random check!”

Jenna: “Yeah, [inaudible].”

Faheem: “Someone else.”

Zahra: “I always, my thing is they don’t trust it. Like they’ll ask whether you want the scanner or the pat down, we’ll just say the pat down ‘cause like the radiation in the scanner. They’ll do both, they don’t care.”

Jenna: “My dad always gets stopped because he has a hyphen in his name. His name is Hussein, but it’s al-Hussein, so every time ...it’s always... my dad, always gets stopped than my mom or me.”

Zahra: “I don’t get stopped as much, because, like, my name’s Zahra, ‘cause it’s more, like, uh modern. But my brother’s, like, Mohamed, so it’s bad. Mohamed Jaffer, don’t go. *laughs* yeah. But also, um, I mean, I feel like everyone already has, like, their opinion of Muslims. But, I think, like, I wish they knew that, like, they’re not all, like, we’re not all the same. Like, uh, I don’t know. Like, we follow, we follow the Qur’an and everything. Because I think, like, for ISIS, they [only] listen to parts of the Qur’an, right?”

The negative attention that Muslims experience in public spaces is something that all participants understand and know very well. It has become commonplace for participants to arrive extremely early to the airport in case they are asked to complete more security checks, on the hope that they might somehow allay or avoid looks of apprehension or discomfort from border patrollers who discover their Muslim identity. This awareness is so at the forefront of the participants’ consciousness that they anticipate situations of prejudice before they actually occur. Maleeka shares that she felt “scared and worried” when travelling for a school placement in France:

“Ok. umm... for the first one, you were afraid of (*whispered*)... ok umm.. ok yeah, so when I was.... When I was innnnn... I went to ... I went to France, in grade 10, in April. And it was, like, I already told you this, I think, it was around the time that the attack had

happened in Paris. And I was in the, like, in the Nice airport, because we went to Nice as well. And umm... like, the thing beeped when I went through the security thing...and so, like, I got scared, like, right, like.. I was scared in general, or a bit worried in the airport area, just because there's so many, like, security people and everything. And, like, with what just happened, they would be on the extra lookout, you know. Ummm... and, yeah, when I got, like, beeped through the thing, I was, like, oh my god, people are going to think the worst...like, umm... I thought they would be, like, really rude to me or whatever. So I was just, like, you know, smiling a lot, I'm, like, here you go, pat me down its ok! (enthusiastically) they didn't, they just let me go. But that was..."

(she does not continue).

Maleeka's story contains more than just her narrative of being afraid in the moment. Her speech embodies qualities of a fear that runs deep and that is related to her sense of existence itself: her hushed tone and whispered start, her incomplete sentences, and her lack of a closure. She stops mid-sentence and does not continue until I speak next. There is also repetition; Maleeka has told me this before, a point she herself acknowledges, but still proceeds to tell it to me again.

Repetition in psychoanalysis is often a marker of unresolved psychological conflict and trauma, referred to by Freud (1920) as the "compulsion to repeat" (p. 20). The urge to repeat signifies that the subject "is caught up in unconscious conflicts" (Frosh, 2012, p. 43), repeating material which "can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction even to the instinctual impulses which have since been repressed" (Freud, 1920, p. 20). Lapping (2011) adds that the "compulsion to repeat is theorized as ever present, awaiting the appropriate conditions in which to find a means of expression" (p. 80). Maleeka's re-telling of her experience, where she was so afraid that her Muslim-ness would get her in some sort of trouble with border security, suggests

an unconscious way to try to release tension. Maleeka copes with past reprimand by repeating her anticipation of it in the future. Winnicott (1974) uses the term “fear of breakdown” to highlight the protective quality of such an anticipatory response, where an individual worries about the future to cope with “the fear of a breakdown that has already been experienced” (p. 104). While we must admit that Maleeka’s anticipation of trouble with border security is accurate – in that there is a high chance she will be stopped for being Muslim – it also carries with it a deeper history of such experiences, orienting her psychic structure not only to predict, but *expect* frightful experiences as the norm. This history may not necessarily be about airport encounters, but any negative encounter concerning her race or religion, and that may not even involve her personally, but rather signify experiences of her parents and grandparents, a point I return to below. For now, I note, with Frosh (2012), that the past “breaks through” to impact and create an anxious present and future (p. 42). As Frosh (2012) reminds us, “repressed unconscious material...has a life of its own...and keep[s] seeping out or breaking through in peculiar ways” (p. 42). When trauma is repressed, “it cannot be properly dealt with” (Frosh, 2012, p. 42). For many Muslim youth, acts of prejudice often go unacknowledged or are kept to oneself, but later resurface as anxiety. Naila, for example, had a plethora of experiences tinged with prejudice that lead her to reflect on the insidiousness of the negativity centered around Islam. When asked what she wishes was different about her life, she admits that she wishes there wasn’t “such a big negative connotation around Islam” instead of wishing for something more personal or particular to herself. She confesses a disappointing interaction she had at a school with a potential new friend that she takes to heart.

“...so, like, a time where something was different about my life... so this isn’t particular...but, like, I wished it was not such a big... negative connotation around Islam I

guess. ... it's, like... scary, and, like...it affects, like, how you, like...let's say, like, I'm Muslim or I'm from Pakistan or whatever people respond, like, oh really, I wouldn't guess that...you're not, like, a terrorist or something like that. One time in high school, I just made friends [with someone] and then, like, she thought ... she was pretty sure that I was Indian...so when I told them I was Pakistani, she was, like, "oh really..." and I could sense her judging me...because obviously Indians have a better connotation like that, because Pakistanis are more Muslim directed...so she was, like, "I wouldn't have.... imagined that you were like that."'''

Naila effectively tells her story twice; once, in a general way to explain the situation, then one more time with added details. This may signal a compulsion to repeat unresolved conflict – between wanting to belong and wanting to be oneself – through narrative; it is clear that Naila is unsettled by this encounter with her friend and the memory of being judged by someone she thought she could trust still pains her. Other participants also admit many racist and prejudiced remarks coming from their peers. Almost all confess that they have been called a terrorist at some point in their lives, and in most cases, they reveal that it was said as a 'joke,' or perhaps the intention was to make it appear as a joke since it would often be accompanied with a laugh. Zahra expresses her disapproval of all forms of terrorist name-calling and assumptions, and says she does not respond when she hears the comment:

FVM: "So you've been called a terrorist before?"

Zahra: "I uh...not in high school, but in middle school, for sure."

FVM: "Mmhmm. Ok."

Zahra: "Even if they don't mean it...it's still... like, they say it as a joke, but still."

FVM: "How do you respond?"

Zahra: "I don't answer."

In the exchange above, Zahra recognizes that even if her peers are joking when they call her a terrorist, she does not think it is right. She is not able to finish her thought, she merely says, "it's still..." A variety of words can be used to fill in this blank: disrespectful, not appreciated, discrimination, wrong. Just as she is not able to finish her sentence with me, Zahra meets the inappropriate verbal comments of her peers with silence. Similar to Zahra's experience, Maleeka also shares in her interview that she has heard people at school making jokes about being a terrorist. She states that even though it was a few years ago, she feels that people still have these thoughts in their minds: that a terrorist is a Muslim, or that a terrorist has brown skin, like she does. Maleeka admits that she is afraid that she will be seen as a criminal or a "bad person" because she is "brown:"

FVM: "Do you ever get nervous when people talk about the news?"

Maleeka: "Yes!"

FVM: "How come?"

Maleeka: "Because I'm brown, and so they're gonna associate something like that, they could. And then it's the wrong, like, completely wrong impression, and then I don't want them to, like, think that we're bad...you know, think that I'm bad. Um, *pause* yeah."

FVM: "Has there been a time where that's happened?"

Maleeka: (*pause*) "I don't think directly to me, like, people, well, maybe when, I walked in the hall once, this was a few years ago, I walked in the hall, and this other Persian guy, he was making jokes about being a terrorist, and then I walked by, and no one looked at me or anything, but I just felt like, I was like, like, now that that thought is in their head, whenever they see someone that looks like that, they're gonna think about

that. So that was one time. I'm sure there were so many others. But nothing's happened recently, I know that. But maybe a couple of years ago."

Maleeka's experience of witnessing jokes about terrorists feeds into her anxiety about being Muslim. She feels that at any point, she may be suddenly on the defense and have to answer to these types of comments, which may or may not be said as a joke in the future. Her dialogue with me indicates that she is afraid of being associated with being "bad" and having to deal with the repercussions of this label. The boundaries of prejudice, from body searches to the curious utterance, "oh really," haunt Muslim adolescents, erecting obstacles to natality. Past and present experiences of prejudice cast a shadow on how these young people imagine their future, as we have seen, through an anxious lens of anticipation, worry, and defense.

Unfriendly Interactions: "People Don't Understand"

Another obstacle to natality at work in this study can be found closer to home, as it were. Many participants articulate that they feel ostracized not only by non-Muslims, but also by other Muslims who are not from their Shia Ismaili faith group, such as Sunni Muslims. This creates difficulty for the adolescents as they feel their minority group status is not accepted even inside of their faith group. For instance, Jenna encounters hostility when she discloses information about her religion. In her experience, a Muslim who identifies as Sunni was particularly unwelcoming and unreceptive to her interpretation of Islam. She felt "annoyed" and "attacked:"

"I did, like, tell one other, I think she was a Sunni Muslim, about my religion because she asked—like, she turned around and said, 'oh you're, you're Muslim too, I think someone told me', and I explained to her. But then, she kinda started, like, quiet---not in a rude way, but she kinda started attacking, saying like, oh but you're not this, and you don't pray 5 times day, and you don't do this and everything, and like, that wasn't really a

pleasant experience, not because I felt bad, but it annoyed me, like, it really annoyed me. Like, someone who clearly wasn't knowledgeable about my branch of a type of Muslim, and was kind of saying oh, but you're not this. Like, if you don't know, I don't think you should.... tell someone that, right? If you don't know it. But if you are knowledgeable, then yes, have an opinion."

Jenna's anger intensifies as she explains how she was judged for her practice and understanding of her faith. Although she states that she did not feel "bad" during her encounter, her narrative shows that the attacks on her identity do, in fact, make her feel bad, perhaps because she is being denied her identity from someone that should seemingly be an ally: another Muslim. The experience of being stripped of Muslim status by other Muslims is common for Ismaili youth. In fact, Naila has had similar experiences to Jenna and she often thinks twice before she even tells her Muslim friends that she is Ismaili because she is "afraid of being judged:"

"I guess, like...sometimes when I, like...want to tell my Muslim friends that I'm Ismaili... I'm, like, afraid of being judged because Ismailis don't have the best connotation...and we're also, like, different from most other Muslims... like, the rituals we practice..."

Naila later states that she hears frequently that Ismaili Muslims are not "real Muslims" because of their different prayer practices.. These differences often cause participants to feel self-conscious when speaking of the details of their faith, as Naila's narrative articulates, and the ostracization can amplify feelings of isolation and difference. In fact, this type of rejection within the Muslim community permits the development of stereotypes outside of the Muslim community as well, since a Muslim speaking on the behalf of another Muslim, even if from a different branch, would appear as a credible and acceptable source of information. Faheem

regularly experiences the same misunderstanding as Naila and admits that most individuals in his life (Muslim or otherwise) who are not Ismaili do not understand his identity as an Ismaili Muslim. Rather, they tend to believe whatever is portrayed in the news, on television, and social media. He feels that the Sunni interpretation is often over-represented and applied incorrectly to all Muslims:

“... I think, like, people here, show what they hear. If they hear about a whole bunch of these terrorists – Muslim terrorists, they’re going to automatically jump to that conclusion, but I think in a less extreme example, if you read a book, where there’s this Muslim, who’s not being portrayed exactly as they should, like, you can take Aladdin, the animated movie, for example, like, in that movie, Muslim women and even men, aren’t perceived how they actually are. And in that sense, people would be, like, oh so is that, like, how you are supposed to act? Right? Or if you’re reading a book, and there’s a Muslim that prays 5 times a day, so it’s, like, oh you’re supposed to pray 5 times a day? Why aren’t you doing that? People don’t understand.... they only understand [that] you have to do what everyone else does.”

In an attempt to rationalize this lack of understanding, Naila tries to explain the complex situation of Ismaili Muslims, what she calls a “minority in a minority.” Her identity is often contested both within the Muslim community as well as outside of it:

“But I also think of Ismaili Muslims as a minority in a minority, and we’re not heard enough. And... specially umm... when we have ISIS who are...uh...that are terrorists, and then Muslims are thought of as terror---terrorists, I feel there’s much hate against Muslims. And even amongst Muslims, Ismailis are thought of [as] not that Muslim. Like, not a true Muslim.”

Naila is aware that her status as a Muslim is not always seen as “true” by many Muslims within the faith. Her comments show that with the exception of the Ismaili Muslim community, she has learned to anticipate hatred from everyone she meets: non-Muslims mistake her for a terrorist, but other Muslims deny her association to Islam. Either way, she loses. Sophia, too, feels that the disparaging comments are frequent at her school, but she adds that “not the nicest comments” are expressed towards many groups, not only Muslims:

“I think there’s always those few people that you do hear—not, like, the nicest comments come out from them. I don’t think, like, I’ve experienced it in high school, like, something very intenseful [sic]. But I do hear things when I’m walking through the hallway About people not just being raci [sic]—but people being disrespectful to other people, about their races and things like that. Or religion, not specifically Muslim, but they’re definitely comments I’ve heard towards other people.”

Although Sophia acknowledges that she is regularly a witness to discriminatory comments at her school which are broadly directed towards many races and religions, she speaks of this reality without much affect – such as shock or condemnation – but rather as an indisputable fact and reality of schooling. The environments in which many of the youth in this study live and learn appear to fit the description of Sophia’s account. Based on Zahra’s experience, she has concluded that society is “very closed minded” and people are slow to change their minds about Muslims, or any groups for that matter. In her individual interview, she offers:

“I don’t know---people, I guess uh... our society is very closed minded, like once they’ve already created their opinion on like, a certain group, it doesn’t change. So, it’s uhh... and also, like, if uh... let’s say you’re out of the country, like far, and someone says what are you? Would you say Canadian, or would you say Muslim, right? I would personally

say Canadian first. And then if you keep talking to them, you would end up going into, like, Ismaili Muslim and everything. But like, the first thing I always identity with is Canadian.”

Although Zahra is aware that she may be judged by her skin colour, she still feels more comfortable calling herself a Canadian first, before her Muslim identity marker. This idea of being closed minded is brought up again in the focus group interview. Three participants (Jenna, Faheem, Zahra) engage in this dialogue with me, and share openly that Islam has already received a negative label from the Canadian public, stating that some “people don’t want to understand.” The impression I get from this exchange is that these youth have already realized what they are up against; they are not going to be welcomed into the world in a way that remotely comes close to Arendt’s concept of natality, but rather face weariness and resentment as they seek to find a place for themselves. As Zahra states, “society has already pegged us in that bad group:”

Faheem: “Some people understand, some people don’t. Some people get mad.”

Zahra: “People don’t want to understand.”

Faheem: “Yeah some people are too umm...”

Jenna: “Closed-minded?”

Zahra: “Yeah.”

Faheem: “Yeah.”

Jenna: “Or stuck in their ways.”

FVM: “Are they generally closed-minded about many things or is it mainly about Islam that you find?”

Faheem: (*laughs*) “Islam”

Zahra: “Islam!”

Jenna: “At least nowadays, probably Islam.”

Zahra: “Yeah it’s just because of, I mean ISIS is obviously a big problem, but like, because of that, and because of what like media and like society has like, pegged us, like Islam to be. As a follower of Islam, you’re already categorized in that group.”

Faheem: “Yeah.”

Zahra: “I mean you could be a good, like, Ismaili, you could be a good Muslim, and it means nothing, because society has already pegged us in that bad group.”

In the exchange above, the participants dialogue with each other about how closed-minded they feel people are towards Islam and Muslims. Ironically, their comments can also be read as repeating the very closed-minded logic they describe; they do not express that there are exceptions to the rule or complicate their statements, their expectations are not open to newness, just as the society in which they live is not open to their newness. These statements show the difficult effects of being an object of negative projections; when society continuously says of Muslims, “this is all you are – terrorists,” Muslim adolescents seem to start to respond with “and this is all you are – racists.” This is an example of projection forming its own closed loop, with both groups denying newness from either side. As Farley (2018) states, “the excessive use of projection means that the ego never meets the other,” (p. 69) but only encounters small fragments and faults. In this closed circuit of closed-mindedness, newness is not likely to be given on either side. However, there are small windows of hope that start to open when youth share with me the way in which they respond to stereotypes propagated in public media.

Media Stereotypes

All participants share in their focus group and individual interviews that the media misrepresents the identity of the Muslim figure. They note in particular the tendency of the media to spotlight terrorist groups and negative actions committed by a few individuals. In their responses, they frequently state that the media is consciously making a choice to focus on the violent and extremist events in the world, rather than on the lived reality of so many non-violent and non-extremist Muslim communities. Sophia believes that the media actually “tends to drive us apart from everybody.” In her view, increased awareness and interventions are needed to remedy this:

“I think the media tends to drive us apart from everybody else in the community, especially lately, so I think it would be good if more positive things were focused on. So maybe if people learned more about like, the inventions of the Muslims... and stuff like that, trying to, so people can try to relate to us more as regular people. And I also think if people were more aware if there are different branches, branches of Muslims, I think people are aware of that, but they just tend to think more generally like Sunni or Shia. And that within Sunni and Shia, there are way more branches. So, embedded in each of those branches are different values and ideas too. So, not just... not all Muslims are the same, um, and that there are different ideas and things like that too.”

In the context of these media influences, other participants discuss misunderstandings and difficulties that they face in their interactions with others. Zahra comments that she is often accused of being violent and associated with terrorism, and when she tries to contest this and explain her perspective, she is often not understood. As a result, she tends to evade the conversation in order to avoid any accusations. Zahra explains her difficulty below:

“... I mean, also, media does not help. Because, like, there’s always a sense of jihad, which means sacrifice I think? I don’t remember. But like, people are always, like, oh yeah, ‘cause if you’re Muslim, you’re part of that. I’m like, it doesn’t mean that, because I mean, they follow certain parts of the Qur’an, right. They read what they want to read. So then, people just, they categorize you one place [sic], and once they’ve categorized you, they just, they leave it at that. And then if I try and explain, they don’t like, comprehend it. I just... I just, don’t. I mean I leave it. I don’t argue it that much. I don’t talk about religion at school that much, because to avoid these types of issues, being called a terrorist and stuff, that’s like standard now.”

As a Muslim girl, Zahra states her religious identity often creates difficulties for her, however, she also theorizes that for Muslim boys and men, it is even more challenging to fight the stereotype. As Zahra understands it, her life would be more difficult if she was a boy, and she believes she would be projected more firmly into the “bad people” group:

“But it’s not, like, it doesn’t happen that often to me, because I’m not as dark as like, a normal, like, what’s considered a normal brown person, and I’m not a guy, I don’t have a beard or anything. So, I’m not like, originally, like, that’s not the first thing I’m pegged as...but once someone gets to know you, the first thing they’ll ask you, are you Indian, are you a Muslim, and once they get into that, then you’re put as a terrorist, or like, into the bad people.”

Perhaps because life is more difficult as a Muslim male than female, rather than avoiding discussions of religion as Zahra does, Faheem, a male participant, chooses to encounter misunderstandings differently. Faheem expresses in his individual interviews that he hears a lot of negative talk about Muslims, which he often feels he needs to address. He feels that he is

usually successful in “eliminating” the misunderstandings. However, Faheem’s efforts use a different approach than rationality when he is dealing with prejudice or misunderstandings; that is, he appears to utilize humor and irony with people he encounters when dealing with misrepresentations. Although he is quick to correct distortions of Muslim identity, he also admits to joking about the issue of terrorism with his friends.

“I mean with my friends for example, I will joke about the fact that, like, oh I’m a terrorist, but just with my friends, because, like, they know, like, that that’s not true, and they know that’s how society... so I just kind of play around with the fact of how society has kind of put us.”

For Faheem, it is almost empowering to joke about the fact that he has been categorized and labelled by society. His playful embodiment of hateful projections is a way of re-signifying hatred in a way that shifts the meaning to his own terms. But it is also a way of re-distributing power. When I ask him to tell me more about why he does this, he shares that sometimes “it’s fun to play into people’s naiveness” to see what kind of reaction he gets from them:

“And um, I think people, sometimes it’s fun to play into people’s naiveness. Like, ‘cause, sometimes, when people are, like, oh um, why aren’t you praying 5 times a day, I’m like, “*I dooo*” And I want to see, if they, like [know I’m joking]...and I’ll add in, a little bit of extra, crazy, like, things, that are, like, urban legends, in a sense. Or things like, people paint, like “*oh yeah all Muslims are terrorists.*” And I wanna see if they kinda, like, it’s fun to see if they kind of see that, and if they’re, like, “*oh wait, no, no there’s, like, no way, that’s, like*”...But then it’s fun. And it’s especially fun, when people actually think, “*oh really, that’s interesting*” (*laughs*) I’m like...” (*Faheem sighs and shakes his head*).

Faheem explains that this type of approach is his personality, to joke about things and be seen as a funny person. However, his strategy sometimes backfires. In his second interview, he shares with me that it “frustrates” and disappoints him when people do not realize that he is joking. He states that when people take his comments literally, they miss the “obvious” point of irony and instead take his comments to “be true.” In a world where Faheem is misunderstood, he in turn becomes a joker, a pretend-terrorist, in the hopes that he can show people the silliness of applying the label so broadly to all Muslims. However, because he is sometimes taken seriously, his strategy sometimes confirms his original experience of being misunderstood. While humour is used as a way to regain power in order to “move on” and away from stereotypes, Faheem also embodies a sense of vulnerability in sharing his sense of disappointment that “people think that.”

Such feelings of disappointment were common amongst all participants, particularly when their friends or people around them showed intolerance towards them or their religion. Of all the other participants, Naila was the only one who, like Faheem, used humour to cope with the disappointments that come from misrepresentations of Muslims. However, differently from Faheem, Naila laughs in a way that is both belated, or spoken after-the-fact, and vulnerable. In her individual interview, Naila describes an unpleasant experience she had with her peers who were not understanding of her absences from class due to religious reasons. After describing her experience of being forced to do most of her group’s project work by her peers as a way to rebuke her for her absences, she concludes, “So I guess that wasn’t that great!” and laughs out loud. It certainly was not great; in fact, it was far from great. Similarly, when I ask Naila how she responds when she overhears people calling Muslims names such as ‘terrorist’, she gives a serious answer, but begins with a laugh:

(*Naila laughs*) “I have no words...it’s kind of scary, but I try to say, obviously...not all Muslims are terrorists, but some people don’t want to accept things...”

Laughter is significant in important ways in both examples from Naila and Faheem. At times, it offers a medium through which to re-claim extremist accusations, such as in Faheem’s “pretend” play; at other times, it relieves the tension associated with facing a time of negative peer judgement, misunderstanding, and outright intolerance. For Faheem, humour seems to help, by way of self-defense, his struggle with feelings of disappointment and sadness in relation to experiences with intolerance or misunderstanding. Naila’s laughter may convey something of her own misunderstanding – in the form of disbelief – that she has to even address the stereotype of the terrorist as the only way to be Muslim. For both, laughing might not be so far away from crying. Porteous (1988) suggests that there is a link between laughing and helplessness, as well as laughing and crying. For example, when faced with a situation of incredible frustration or seeming absurdity, an individual may laugh or even cry because both responses involve a “giving up of active control over one’s own body and an abandoning of directed relationship to the environment” (Porteous, 1988, p. 70). Laughing when faced with a difficult reality is also a method of defense. Krokoff (1991) states that in the coping model of conflict resolution, an individual uses humour to minimize “the aversiveness and hence facilitates the expression of negative emotions, especially under difficult circumstances” (p. 6). Freud (1905) also states that humour operates as a defense mechanism, “since it allows the individual to express feelings of tension and frustration without having to suffer the consequences of such expression” (Krokoff, 1991, p. 6). In the cases of Faheem and Naila, they seem to use humour as a way to tolerate the difficult experiences of intolerance and racism that they experience in their lives, but their laughter also indicates a sense of helplessness or despair felt with the situations they face.

However, particularly in the case of Faheem, humour can also be interpreted as a hopeful response, rather than only helplessness. This is because Faheem's humour uses irony, allowing him to re-position the old narrative of the "bad Muslim" and make new meaning out of the labels (Lear, 2003). For him, the stereotypes allow him to change the interpretation of what is being said, and instead offer a critique of how society and individuals operate and think through categorizing. Thus, for Faheem, taking up the ironic position of the very label lodged against him offers him a way out of the corner in that he is able to reframe on his own terms the meaning of this tired and worn-out stereotype. Although his hope may also be clouded with a sense of defense, this may be a method that allows him to reclaim a sense of natality. When youth are able to reposition the boundaries and negative interpretations that are placed upon them, they create an entry-point to register a plea for rethinking and for a different possibility. However, this repositioning takes effort and persistence on the part of the youth, and risks misunderstanding, which leaves us with the question: how much responsibility can the adult place on the child to reclaim natality?

This chapter demonstrates that prejudice is a persistent, frustrating, and anxiety-provoking reality for the participants of this study. In fact, many participants carry with them a high degree of anticipation for prejudice, creating a constant anxious state. Their responses show that they are always on guard and ready to defend themselves, their religion, and their identity. The social world is not a welcoming place for them and contrary to Arendt's (1977) appeal to natality, the youth of this study do not experience a world looking to them with hope, but rather fear and negative judgement. As a response to this environment, Ismaili Muslim youth differently rely on their own critical faculties to protect themselves, by way of predicting, concealing, and actively avoiding situations of potential prejudice. A less common response is

the use of humour to manage stereotypes that are placed upon them. Given that adolescents often feel rejected and attacked by individuals who are Muslim themselves, the data shows that there is a need to look for new ways to frame inter-faith relationships in schooling and society.

Ironically, their experiences close down their own expectations of others. Just as they experience repeated Islamophobia and misunderstanding, they come to anticipate it, producing a closed circuit that wards off newness, thereby inadvertently refusing acceptance. Even their peer groups and friend circles are a contested space since they are often misunderstood and wrongly labelled in passing remarks and conversational exchanges. There appears to be no solace for these youth; it may be for this reason that they contradict the accepted adolescent pattern of detaching from their parents, and instead share a very close bond with their caregivers, a theme I explore more fully in chapter six of the dissertation. In the next chapter, I more closely examine the issue of anxiety as it emerges alongside the embodiment of hybridity, with a focus on how both happiness and education are used as defenses that come along with this position.

Chapter 5: Splitting Hybridity: The Happiness Defense, Loneliness and the Impulse to Educate

The Ismaili Muslim youth of this study routinely express concern about how their identity is perceived by others, as well as the various ways they find belonging in their communities. This particular worldview that they each carry, and the challenges faced while engaging in this creative process of self-location raise questions about the psychic experience and (not) belonging. The emotional world of these adolescents reveals the problem of wanting to belong, the pain of being misunderstood, and the difficulties faced in forging relationships with peers. Similar to Yon's (2000a) study on youth identity and culture, a sense of ambivalence is seen when participants were asked to share their thoughts on belonging, or sense of self. Overall, in my dialogue with them, they appear to hold contradictory positions and conflicting attitudes in their responses, which Yon also discovered in his study. For instance, Yon argues that youth participate in a discursive process of identification, which are inherently contradictory. Rather than subscribe to rigid markers of identity, the youth of his study occupy a place of ambivalence, in Yon's (2000a), words, "living with the tensions of opposing views and positions" (p. 127). Like Yon, my study surfaces evidence that identity is elusive: fluid and continuously evolving. Yon's participants seem to playfully interact with the idea of hybridity with a quality of experimentation and curiosity.

My participants, however, seemed to be very anxious and defensive when the topic of hybridity arose. As will be detailed in the pages to follow, I noticed a different quality of ambivalence that took the shape of splitting between claims of being "fine" and feeling discomfort or negativity. In almost all instances, there seemed to be the following pattern: an insistence of neutrality or positivity on the subject matter, followed by a gradual admission of negative feelings or experiences. I speculate that the participants of my study not only use a

neutral/positive attitude to cope with feelings of not belonging, but their responses also indicate not having a place to land, or a space of acceptance, in the midst of this conflict. Here, identity is indeed in flux, but also in crisis. For the youth, the uncertain position of hybridity is brought into relief by the idea of being a ‘good immigrant’, a ‘good Canadian’, or needing to fit into a model minority myth. Hybridity, for the youth of my study, is felt as anxiety, leading to the psychic concepts of splitting and defense, rather than experimentation and play. There is a tension that punctuates the hybrid experience for the participants in this study: to acknowledge difficulty as a quality of being Canadian feels like a betrayal to their family’s historical narrative of struggle and migration to the ideal country, and life. Furthermore, this anxiety of hybridity is often coupled with feelings of loneliness and experiences of isolation.

A. Freud (1983) refers to the term ‘defense’ “to describe the ego’s struggle against painful or unendurable ideas or affects” (p. 42). The ego thus employs a variety of defensive methods in order to protect itself from a state of disrepair or anxiety. In this study, participants frequently employ the concepts of splitting, excessive claims to happiness (the happiness defense), and the impulse to educate others as methods to help them cope with the anxieties of their Muslim and South-Asian identities in an external world that is not accepting and suspicious of them. As these defense mechanisms are filtered through the participants’ social experiences, they may take on different qualities, adding a Muslim nuance to the mechanisms of defense that A. Freud (1983) describes in her work. That is, although their defenses stem from the roots of A. Freud’s discussion of the mechanisms of defense, they may be slightly modified in the contemporary situation of today, and thus must be interpreted and read through the circumstances of their social environment. This chapter explores how social prejudice that comes from the outside is felt on the inside, and in turn, how adolescents use the resources of their inner

worlds to find a place in an unwelcoming world without falling apart. While I argue that defense mechanisms are essentially creative, I also underscore how the particular quality of defenses used by the adolescents of this study assume too big of a burden of responsibility in a world that, over and over, does not support them. In short, their positive outlooks, their insurances on happiness, and their impulses to educate others all indicate an effort to fit in and get by in a world that itself refuses to change.

The Happiness Defense

As a response to the overly negative perception that the public has of Muslims in the world, many of the participants share that they want fellow Canadians to know that they, as Ismaili Muslims, are peaceful, positive-minded, striving to contribute to society in meaningful ways, and most importantly, they are just like ‘everyone else’ in Canada, who value hard work, knowledge, creativity, progress, and peace. This need to state and prove to the world that they are in fact, good people on behalf of an entire community is a weighty responsibility that they regularly bring forward in many of their interview responses. Imran makes a plea for acceptance from the Canadian community on these grounds:

“I think that ... [the] Canadian community should know that we as a religion, we value peace, and knowledge, as far as different innovations and inventions and how we are always striving to do better. And whether it’s like, to make a better object, or be better physically, mentally, emotionally, that sort of thing. I think when we are able to achieve the fact that everyone knows that we’re peaceful, I think the media will be able to not focus on those few groups and be able to focus on the majority of Muslims, in Islam. And be able to showcase some of their talent, whether it’s art, sports, music, ... stuff like that. That’s all under knowledge.”

Naila provides a more detailed plea for belonging by explaining that Islam is “exactly like any other religion,” against the extremism more often cited by the media. She gives specific examples of what Islam means to her, and lists values that her religion teaches her such as honesty and forgiveness:

“For me, I guess one thing I want Canadians to know about Islam is that it’s exactly like any other religion. We pray to God, we try every day to be more like God in his ways and his virtues, that we want to [inaudible] seek knowledge, and we believe that there’s laws between *Din* and *Dunya*, worldly and spiritual matters, and I guess the media portrays everything bad related to our spiritual matters, so I would also like the world to know that our spiritual matters are just like any other faith, we value our truth, honesty, forgiveness, meekness, humbleness towards ourselves, to others, and God. Because media especially, I know *jihad*, people think it’s killing like, others, but it’s more of a sacrifice in the name of God, so it’s like, a visual remembrance and love for God, rather than to be ruthless and kill others. So, if people knew that Islam was just like another faith, I feel like they would accept it more because we always, there’s always, like, the bad ones in everyone, like, for Christians, it’s KKK, for Islam, it’s ISIS. So, if people would just, like, the KKK was pushed aside, if ISIS was pushed aside, from the, the idea of Islam and Muslims, I think it would be a much better place.”

Both Imran and Naila actively communicate that they are good, peaceful citizens, and wish to improve the society in which they live. They are both keen to say that they are happy to keep within society’s rules and boundaries for what is acceptable, and so forms their argument, that they, too, should be accepted. Both adolescents also frame their responses very closely to the official narrative that is presented in the religious education curriculum for secondary students in

the Ismaili Muslim community. This curriculum seeks to teach the values and ethics of Islam through a civilizational and humanistic approach; that is, by learning from how Muslims lived in past societies and how they contributed to their communities, often in academic, scholarly ways (The Institute of Ismaili Studies [IIS], 2017). The idea of balance between the material and spiritual worlds is an idea that is articulated throughout the religious education system (IIS, 2017). Imran's and Naila's responses are suggestive of the influence of the community's religious education curriculum, and in particular the idea that they, like Muslims before them, are model citizens who want good things for themselves and others. They are both comfortable to speak for the community, using the pronouns "we" and "our," contrasting their ideals with the use of "they," suggesting a closeness to this communal narrative.

While such narratives are important for the way they trouble the "terrorist" narrative discussed in the previous chapter, they nonetheless imply a strategy of defense. Ahmed (2010), for instance, argues that happiness is a tantalizing ideal of the colonizer that actually upholds social structures of unequal power and social control. Happiness is a charged affective promise that, while ideal on the surface, repeats colonial relations. As Ahmed (2010) writes, "in mimicking the colonizer, the other becomes happy not in the sense of feeling happy but in the sense of acquiring good habits, which might involve an affective disposition" (p. 129). In trying to appeal to values that, from the participant's perspective, would be appreciated in Canadian society—peace, rule-following, championing knowledge—the subject may actually be engaged in assimilating the status quo. Here, hybridity is about identifying with the colonizer, which has troubling effects.

Indeed, Bhabha's (1984) work on hybridity shows that mimicry produces hybrid individuals who are "almost the same, *but not quite...almost the same, but not white...*" (p. 130,

original emphasis). Because of the multiple influences acting upon the hybrid individual, the mimicry is always only partial and is limited since there will always be something different in the hybrid. Ahmed (2010) plays on Bhabha's words by suggesting the minoritized subject follows a similar logic on the promise of happiness, which is limited by race: "*almost happy, but not quite; almost happy, but not white*" (p. 130, original emphasis). People of colour often have the responsibility and duty placed upon them to be the 'good immigrant,' meaning that they often feel that they must show that they are grateful, positive, and happy contributors and citizens in a white world (Shukla, 2016). As Shukla (2016) argues, "the biggest burden facing people of colour in this country is that society deems us as bad immigrants" (p. xvi) until they show they are competent and worthy of being called good immigrants. This particular limitation, or burden, that is placed on people of colour is seen in the responses of the participants in this study. The narratives of Imran and Naila, for example, are crowded with pleas of goodness as the basis of belonging that seem to have little room for complaints or mistakes. This air-tight narrative of the good makes for a rigid path, particularly for adolescents, who are at a time in life where they may be pushing boundaries, learning from mistakes, and facing shortcomings. For some, this strict way of being also interferes with the acknowledgement of a possible unofficial narrative – that sometimes, the world doesn't agree with the idea that they are acceptable people and "the same" as everyone else.

For example, all of Imran's responses are suggestive of the psychic effects of this suffocating ideal. Although he often starts to acknowledge a difficulty or challenge, he then quickly seeks to reclaim it as a positive situation. In spite of the many examples and experiences of prejudice documented in the previous chapter, Imran does not admit to feeling any type of negative emotion and denies any experience of prejudice or discrimination, both in the case of

himself or anyone he personally knows in the Ismaili community. In the focus group and his individual interview, Imran never shares any negative feelings, even when the content or fact that he is sharing is itself negative. For example, when I ask Imran if he thinks it is challenging to be a member of a minority group, he explains that he believes it is challenging “in a good way”. He feels that minorities have less of a voice, but to him, this offers the opportunity for minorities to prove themselves to the community and better themselves:

FVM: “Ok. do you think it’s challenging to be a member of a minority group, both in the sense of race and religion?”

Imran: “I think it’s challenging but in a good way. I think that as ... minority... we have less voice, but we’re always there to support. And I think that by the humanitarian work that we do...or the knowledge work that we do.... or ... the position we are in, as ...as a community, I think sticks us out to other communities, that yes, they’re small, but they are big at heart. And I think that being a minority, it’s always a challenge to keep up...but it’s a good challenge ‘cause we’re always trying to better ourselves.”

Instead of stating that Muslims are marginalized or discriminated against in the community, as noted in the previous chapter, Imran insists that the Ismaili community is up to the challenge and implies that this is the way things will improve and get better. This act of over-emphasizing the positive is similar to what Joseph (2000) calls “excessive agreeableness” (p. 641) in that a person maintains a positive tone and/or agrees with whatever the analyst suggests. Joseph (2000) describes this defense of excessive agreeableness as a type of compliance to help defend the ego against deep anxieties. Comparably, Imran only expresses the positive notes in his life and seems to turn away from any negative ones. He does not seem to want to dwell on any discomfort he may have experienced. Imran’s unilateral focus on the good suggests an avoidance of anxiety,

and an attempt to interrupt conflict to express that he, in contrast, is fine; he is not experiencing discrimination, he does not see hardship, but rather, he only sees and experiences the positive elements in his life. Joseph (2000) argues that the problem with this type of defense is that it acts as an obstacle to allowing the ego to make insight from anxiety, to symbolize its effects, and to not fossilize the ego around its pitch. Joseph (2000) suggests that excessive agreeableness is a “kind of drug that the patient uses to placate and sedate her object and to protect herself from violent intrusion by the object. She sedates her own mind and so does not have to take seriously her own fears, anxieties...” (p. 648). I speculate that Imran has stopped himself from speaking about difficulty in his life because it is too painful to allow an object of prejudice – and his hatred of it – to intrude his mind. It is safer to change negative affect into a positive situation.

I also speculate that there is a fear that if youth do not project themselves and their community as “the good immigrants” who are happy to live in Canada, there is the danger that they will be rejected further and fail to meet the expectations of a country within which they are still looking to find belonging. Although most participants speak of Canada as a very accepting country, their sentiments seem to be tinged with a perceptible sense of not feeling completely included, or under threat of potential exclusion. For all participants, being born and raised in Canada is acknowledged as positive; they often express that Canada is a welcoming country, without as much hate as other countries, and emphasize a multitude of cultures. For instance, Sophia says:

“When I think of Canadian, I also think of a lot of like, diversity, and different, like, cultures and religions, just a lot of different kinds of people, because a lot of people, I don’t know, there are a lot of different people here, and I also think as well, it’s very accepted here, to practice umm... different religions. Like, there’s not as much hate, or

there still is, but, like, it's not as bad as in other countries, where people have to do it in secret, or they're not allowed to have a religion and things like that. And when I think of Ismaili Muslim, I think of, like, a big community and, like, I don't really know what else to say." (*laughs*)

Sophia uses the word "different" many times, and shares that she thinks of diversity when she thinks of Canada. She shares that the practice of religions is "very accepted here" but at the same time says that there is still hate in this country, then quickly adds that "it's not as bad as in other countries." Although the practice of one's religion and differences in general are seen as welcome in Canada, many adolescents gradually admitted to their struggles to feel at ease within what they saw as Canadian culture and life. Reflecting on her visit to Mombasa, Kenya, her parents' birth place, Zahra states:

"It's weird in a way, I feel more at home there than I do here. Maybe its because my grandmother and aunts and uncles are there. But um, I think for me, being back home here, like, it doesn't really matter where you are, it's who you're with in a way, that sounds cheesy...But it's, like, as long as I'm with my parents, and with people who, like, understand me, and people who I'm comfortable with, I can be anywhere and feel fine. It's just wherever, like, if I'm just by myself in a society, I'd probably rather be here. But being there, I mean, its still nice, and, like, um, if I'm with everyone, and if I got to choose whether to be here or there, I'd sometimes prefer to be there. 'Cause like, you're away from society, you have no problems, you just, you just focus on your family and everything there. Here, you have your whole society running around in your head."

FVM: "Do you feel like when you go there, it's kind of like an escape from this world?"

Zahra: "Yes, for sure."

Zahra feels that when she is visiting her parents' hometown of Mombasa, she is able to escape from the problems of her own life and be with people that she is comfortable with. While she does not explicitly state that she is uncomfortable in Canada, she feels *more* comfortable in Kenya and would prefer to be there than in Canada. Zahra thus understands her identity as split, between Canadian and her understanding of the Ismaili-African culture. Similarly, when Jenna is asked how she would describe her culture, she states that her culture is South Asian, but she also articulates ambiguity – or a mix – when it comes to culture, to the point of herself being mixed up about what it means at all:

“It’s kind of like a mix, right, ‘cause we’re... I’ve been—I’ve been brought up in a Westernized culture, so I have the influence of that, but I think I lean more towards the Indian side of things. But technically that would be South Asian. ‘Cause I asked my dad, I said, what, what is our culture? ‘Cause someone had asked me, they’re like, I know what your religion is, but what—what—what’s your culture? And I was, like, I have no idea.”

For many participants, like Jenna, culture and religion are tied up together and difficult to differentiate from one another. It seems that the construct of religion, particularly for Muslims, has been on spotlight for so long, that the details of culture are hardly emphasized or recognized for Jenna. Regardless, Jenna is aware that her culture is not completely “Westernized” as she says, and that she finds some familiarity with South Asian, or Indian, culture. Imran, in his interview uses similar language as Jenna, such as the mixing of cultures, when he is asked to speak about himself:

“I think my culture is a mix between East African and... a bit of Gujarati as well. I think looking at the language that we speak, Gujarati...the food we eat is Indian as well. And

there is always a mix between spices from each side of the country, from whether it is Nairobi or from India...there's a mix."

The feeling of being a 'mix' of or 'split' between two or more cultures was also found in Yon's (2000b) study, in which youth often expressed their identity as a blend or hybrid of multiplicity in their culturally diverse upbringing and schooling. Often, youth were able to shift their identity markers depending on context, making identity discursive – fluid and subject to change. In a similar way, Ismaili youth drew from their parents' and grandparents' cultural markers as well as their exposure to Canadian customs and, although connected to both, there did not appear to be an assertion of comfort in belonging to either one. Responses from the Ismaili youth of my study can be read as engaged in the creative process of "identification" that Yon (2000b) discusses in his work, where participants are actively and continuously forging their sense of self, without ever arriving at a final sense of identity, as identity is not static.

However, in my reading, participants' responses can also be read as the experiencing of the psychoanalytic defense of "splitting," in response to a perceived danger or felt anxiety stemming from the external world. Before moving to narrative examples of this claim, I describe below the meaning of splitting as a quality of psychical life. Klein (1987) theorizes "the mechanism of splitting as one of the earliest ego mechanisms and defences against anxiety" (p. 181). While the language of splitting may sound extreme, Klein's (1987) view offers a portrait of everyday experience in development. In this view, the early ego of the infant lacks cohesion, "tends to fall to pieces" (p. 180), and alternates between integration and disintegration because it easily interprets internal frustration as a form of persecution or annihilation. According to Klein (1987), in order for the ego to overcome this anxiety, it seeks to rid itself of danger and frustration by actively splitting the ego – and outside objects – into good and bad, or wanted and

un-wanted. Klein (1987) asserts that “the more the object is felt to be in pieces, the more the ego is in danger of being split in relation to the internalized object fragments” (p. 181). In this case, “the result of splitting is a dispersal of the destructive impulse which is felt as the source of danger” (Klein, 1987, p. 180). Although this defense emerges in our earliest object relationships, Klein argues that we carry our early feelings and defenses into adulthood as layered structures that organize the mind and that are called back in times of distress and anxiety.

Numerous exchanges with participants indicated that they were actively engaging in splitting. In their focus group interview, Maleeka and Zahra exchange comments and share reactions to Maleeka’s surprising encounter with a non-Muslim teacher (Zahra attends the same high school as Maleeka). Maleeka expresses disbelief that this teacher knew of the work and character of her spiritual leader, His Highness the Aga Khan:

Maleeka: “But, just this one teacher, like, I had, like, a couple of years ago, um, I saw, like, a thing on this desk that said ‘Aga Khan’, and I was, like... I thought I was dreaming, I was. Like. ‘what am I seeing right now?’ and then I asked him, I was, like, like, what is this for? And he’s, like, oh, like, I was just connecting with the Aga Khan Museum... And I was, like, oh, like, did you know he’s my spiritual leader? [*everyone in the focus group laughs*] and he’s, like--- I literally asked that--- and he’s like, oh, no way, oh I’m so, I, I love all the work he’s doing, this and that. And I was, like, whoa, like, he’s the last person I thought would know anything about this!”

FVM: “Oh wow. Why did you think he would be the last person?”

[*background chatter, Zahra making a side comment to Maleeka and Maleeka telling her the name of her history teacher*].

Maleeka: “He, ok...”

Zahra: “Maybe because he’s a history teacher.”

Maleeka: “Yeah he’s a history teacher, I never really, like, liked him as a teacher, I don’t know, he just seemed very, like, you know, I don’t know. And so, when he knew about, like, what...Hazar Imam⁷ was doing, I was like, ...” [*Maleeka makes a surprised face*]

FVM: “You were really shocked?”

Maleeka: “I was *VERY* shocked.”

[*background chatter, Zahra making another comment to Maleeka*]

FVM: “So you usually expect most teachers to not know then?”

Maleeka: “Yeah. And when they do know, I’m like, wow. Yeah.”

Zahra: “I wasn’t expecting that one!” (*Zahra laughs*)

Maleeka: “That’s why I asked! I was like, OK!” (*Maleeka laughs*)

Maleeka’s shock demonstrates that she has either never encountered, or very infrequently encounters, someone outside of her faith community who is familiar with anything that has to do with her Ismaili Muslim identity. Objectively speaking, the Aga Khan Museum is quite a prominent building in Toronto, and there are many individuals who are aware of the work of the Aga Khan who are not Muslim. Thus, to encounter a teacher in a multicultural city who knows about the Aga Khan, while possibly rare, is not particularly shocking. Zahra and Maleeka’s shock is perhaps suggestive of their experience that history teachers, or teachers generally, are not up-to-date on contemporary or multicultural issues. It also suggests that they do not expect issues of faith to enter into the public school classroom, or that they themselves keep faith out of their schooling experience. For someone who has split off this part of their ego and only engages with it in religious spaces, encountering a piece of oneself (in this case, Maleeka’s spiritual

⁷ Hazar Imam is the title that Ismaili believers use to refer to the Aga Khan. It means, “Present living Imam.”

leader) in a context where it is not to be expected may be difficult to process: a shock. This experience of shock suggests a compartmentalized ego, where incompatible parts are kept separate in a bid to allay conflict.

Yet another element of Maleeka's shock has to do with the way her teacher's interest contradicts her internal narrative of going unnoticed and unacknowledged. That is, her teacher's interest challenges and punctures her expectation that the outside world does not, and cannot, know her. When her defense is broken in this way, Maleeka appears to be left feeling vulnerable and exposed in this condition by her teacher's gesture of understanding. Although this is somewhat pleasurable to her, indicated by her humorous spin on the narrative, it seems terrifying at the same time, since she seems unable to overcome her initial feeling of shock with this teacher. This experience raises an interesting issue: that adolescent narratives of not being understood may defend against the terror of close bonds, and in particular, the anxiety of loss they also bring. And this may be why splitting off one's religious identity from relations in public schooling is strangely more tolerable for, while leaving one feeling misunderstood, it nonetheless repeats a familiar narrative that is at the very least predictable and so not a shock.

Thinking further about the process of splitting in relation to his Ismaili-Canadian identity, Faheem states, "it's hard to acknowledge both." Depending on with whom he is interacting, Faheem explains that he uses one signifier to describe himself that pushes the other part of him aside. He does this in order to be understood and make connections:

"And when you're interacting with someone in Canada who isn't an Ismaili Muslim, you would say, like, you would umm... you would use them, like, you would call yourself Canadian because that's what you have in common with them and that's what they would

understand about you. Rather than that other part of you that they wouldn't necessarily understand or be able to connect with."

On this topic, Zahra, without hesitation, shares her perspective on the incompatibility of her religion and nationality:

"I feel like in a way, they contradict each other. Like, uhh... I feel like it's mainly 'cause, our religion, like Ismaili Muslim, like, let's say I was Christian, if you say you were Christian... Canadian, it---there's no, like, questions about it. It seems normal. Like Jewish Canadian, seems normal. But if you're, like, an Ismaili Muslim Canadian, it's, like, it doesn't seem like it's a match, it doesn't seem right."

That Muslim identity "doesn't seem right" as a match for Canadian identity indicates a split ego awaiting the slow work that Britzman (2003) calls the "pain of integration" (p. 148). This work, in Britzman's (2003) words, "makes one lonely, for in accepting the good and the bad, omnipotence must be given up" (p. 148).

This pain involves coming to terms with the difficult task of making links across disparate parts of one's inner reality as one encounters the external world (Britzman, 2003a). For the Ismaili youth in this study, the experience of not belonging can certainly be lonely and painful and externally imposed. But these efforts of embodiment are also affected internally. As Klein (1963) writes, the self,

cannot do away with the feeling that certain components of the self are not available because they are split off and cannot be regained. Some of these split-off parts...are projected into other people, contributing to the feeling that one is not in full possession of one's self, that one does not fully belong to oneself or, therefore, to anybody else. The lost parts, too, are felt to be lonely. (p. 302)

In order for a successful integration, the self must accept both the difficult and pleasing aspects of the mind, which, if not achieved, can lead to difficult components of the self being split off and disassociated. Analysis of the participants' interview responses indicate that they are at work on this struggle of what belongs to the outside and what belongs inside of them and, in this embodiment, there is also a question about what must be hidden away.

Significantly, this psychoanalytic insight is in line with other literature on second-generation identities that indicates that although second-generation North Americans may appear to be better able than their parents to integrate socially within mainstream Western culture, they may actually face higher levels of ambivalence, anxiety, and self-doubt (Min and Kim, 2000; Waters, 2006). Rajiva (2006) states that the awareness of difference takes shape in the construction of a self that is "more fragile and more open to confusion" (p. 5). In my study, such fragility is seen in Zahra's experience of being Ismaili Muslim. She states that she doesn't express this part of her identity outside of her space of worship, the *Jamatkhana*. In public spaces and at her school, she feels that people don't tend to understand the complexity of her identity. She states:

"I mean, it gets to a point where I don't even know how to explain it because I don't understand it. Like, I know we're a sect from Shia...and we're a very small sect, even though we seem big...but I guess, I don't understand it, like, I mean, I can't really explain it. Like, if someone says, what is an Ismaili? I would say, 'me'... like, I don't know what to say."

Zahra also states at other points in her interviews that she wishes she was white, and that life would be much easier if she was not Muslim and brown. This confusion and rejection that Zahra feels about herself may be a symptom of the hatred against parts of the self and a weakened ego

caused by “the excessive splitting off and expelling into the outer world of part of itself” (Klein, 1987, p. 183). Zahra does not feel that particular parts of herself (for example, her religion and skin colour) belong in the external world that she inhabits and has thus split these parts of herself off from any notion of the good. This feeling of inadequacy, and the issue of skin colour, returns in more detail in the next section, as participants share their experiences of feeling on the outside in Canada even while living inside its national borders. The happiness defense that opened this chapter conceals a more difficult narrative of nation, which returns us to the experiences of prejudice, discrimination, and not belonging more openly described in the previous chapter.

Living on the Outside

When asked if she wishes something was different about her life, Maleeka first has trouble engaging the question. She first starts by repeating the wording of the question, as if to indicate her effort to understand: “Wish something was different about your life...” and then continues: “...umm...not... I don’t wish I ... well, well... not really... about life in general... I wish it was more...peaceful. Not like, about my own life, though... so I would...not sure if that’s the question.” Seeking to clarify the question for her, I offer, “Yeah more about your own life, was there ever a time in your life, even for a moment... that you wished something was different? It may have gone away later.” She then proceeds to answer the question, where she brings up the issue of skin colour. The exchange is below:

Maleeka: “Ok... at times, I think this is more when I was, like, younger, before...maybe I had wished...my umm... skin colour was different. I think. Or maybe I was just, like, ... I don’t know. There’s always, that, where you want to be, like, more fair, you know? ‘Cause you thought that was, like, looked nicer, or whatever. I think that’s what I felt...yeah I felt that a little bit when I was younger.”

FVM: “How young were you?”

Maleeka: “Maybe like... grade 7 and 8. I think. Yeah. Around there. Grade 7, 8. But now. I really don’t care. Like, I just love... you know what, it’s fine. You just... embrace yourself.”

FVM: “What made you change your mind about that?”

Maleeka: “Just because there was [sic] different, you know. There weren’t a lot of, like, people, I don’t know. ‘Cause there’s some areas you know, like, some areas in the city where there’s, like, more... predominantly more people that are ... umm... have, like, brown skin colour. In our school, it was, uhmmm... there weren’t a lot, like, at all. Umm... and like, I was one of the only ones to like, I don’t know, I just felt, like, different, like, umm... I was still, like, a little bit young. So, I felt, like, I... kind of out of place. People don’t... people didn’t treat me out of place...maybe I, I just felt myself, like, just a little bit.”

Soon after this exchange, Maleeka was quick to say that she does not feel this way anymore, predominantly because she saw more people of other races, and does not feel as “different.” That is, in spite of this difficult response, she is quick to show that now she “embraces herself” and that, “it’s fine,” which mirrors the narratives described at the outset of this chapter: here again, we see evidence of the need to portray herself as “fine,” and not dwell in the very difficult topic of not feeling good enough and wanting to have white skin.

There is also evidence that Maleeka still feels “this way” about race, rooted in her interpretations of race represented on the Hollywood/Bollywood stage. When I ask Maleeka if she believes that there are people in the world who think about their skin colour, she says, “Yeah! ‘Cause I feel like, I hear all these things, like, celebrities who make their skin lighter...I

don't know, I just... maybe to like, fit in, but that's, like, weird, 'cause like, now, everything's more multicultural, so why do—like...” Maleeka articulates a tension between the narrative of Canada as a multicultural state and the privilege and power that continues to be associated with whiteness in this very same place. She lives with the awareness that her skin colour is not generally embraced within celebrity culture, but also, on a larger scale, in society writ large. She later shares her perspective that fair-skinned individuals are more accepted and welcomed, a belief that can be extended to herself, as she may not feel as accepted and welcomed in society based on race, making her an outsider inside the seemingly inclusive borders of Canada.

The concept of race is one that many participants discuss, even when my question does not directly address the issue. Zahra brings up race when she is asked about what it means to belong to a minority group. Her understanding of this question, and her sense of self, is articulated in relationship to whiteness, which she sees as normalized and superior to her own. In the following passage, Zahra links beauty and acceptance with whiteness:

“Like, I remember people have asked, like, if you could choose, would you be white? Right? And I would think, like, obviously there's a million benefits to being white, like, you don't get picked on as much, or like, you look better or whatever. But I don't think I would change, like, being brown, or being an Ismaili. Like, there were times when I was a child, I was, like, oh it would be so much easier if I was Christian, right, like, life would be just breezy. But no, because I feel like I've grown more connected to my faith, and I've accepted who I am. And I feel like once you've done that, you don't want to be someone else. And I mean, I don't think I would change it. And I think I'm ok with it.”

Zahra's wording indicates the presence of anxiety, in particular her use of the present tense, indicating an immediate truth or reality; that is, if she had resolved the concern that whiteness

does not make her better looking, she might use the past tense. While Zahra says that she has accepted who she is, she also believes there are “a million benefits to being white,” namely, not being picked on, and looking better. Zahra does not quite say that she is no longer affected by her belief of a “breezy” white childhood or even the connection between whiteness and goodness; rather, she says that she has now accepted who she is, stating that she is “ok” with not looking like a white person, while acknowledging that she does not get to enjoy the benefits that she believes whiteness entails. In this case, Zahra has identified a sense of tension regarding race, which plunges her ego into a process of repressing the anxiety she associates with all that she is not.

The hierarchy of race and culture as understood by Maleeka and Zahra indicates that the white, Christian, European descent Canadian is more of a desirable identity than a non-white, Muslim one. Psychically, however, both girls also struggle to affirm their own racialized identities in this context. They try to reconcile their deep understanding of the power that whiteness is granted in Canada – and that whiteness grants Canadian subjects – while meaningfully embodying racial and religious markers. Indeed, their responses show how colonial legacies are still prominently felt for minoritized adolescents, and my study captures the feeling of being subdued, or othered, as a part of everyday living. In Maleeka’s and Zahra’s narratives, colonial legacies live on in their effort to be “fine” in the idealized glare of whiteness, which they attach, based on contemporary and historical discourses, to notions of beauty, innocence, femininity, and celebrity. Their narratives derail the happiness narrative, so prominently early on in the interviews, exposing the colonial condition of white privilege on which it depends (Ahmed, 2010).

Feeling othered, or like an outsider, in one's own home context is a lingering effect of colonial legacies. Corbey and Leerssen (1991) find that "the expansion of European control over the geographic environment ... goes hand in hand with an attempt to subdue the strangeness of the Other in cognitive terms" (p. viii). Ismaili youth often speak about feeling misunderstood and also brought up the term 'outsider' – or strangeness. Faheem, for instance, shares that he doesn't think Muslims will ever rid themselves of the label of "outsider":

"And we are kind of like outsiders in a sense. I mean, sure we can be Canadians, we can be...but we're always going to be...we're always going to have...like, no Muslim, well I can't say no, but very few Muslims, would already come from Canada or Europe, right, we come from Africa, India, Pakistan, etc. You would come from those places, so you would always have to come from somewhere that was not from Canada. In a sense, if you go back a few generations, you'll come from somewhere else, right, even if you're born here, you're an outsider, because you come from somewhere else. And it's always going to be like that. And It's just...the way it is."

Faheem shares a sense of hopelessness when he comes to the conclusion that he will always be an outsider and that's just "the way it is." Faheem's sentiments show a sense of giving up an omnipotence, which Britzman (2003) states characterizes the pain of integration. However, there is implied a risk in this labour, for "without the illusion of omnipotence, a certain sense of hope also is lost" (p. 148). One question is how Faheem may face the pain of integration and still retain a sense of hope that does not collapse back into the happiness defense.

Similar to Faheem, Naila also doesn't feel that she completely belongs. Although she is born and raised in Canada, she refers to her parents' birth country (Pakistan) as her "home

country” and notes that she feels a tension in how much she needs to know about her “Muslim” culture.

“Umm...so for me, personally, I feel like in a way, they do contradict each other, because if you look at the Canadian culture, it’s very different from the Muslim culture. And, umm... growing up, in Canada, I guess I ... I feel like I was more into the Canadian culture, I went to my home country a few months ago for the first time, and that’s a Muslim country. So, when I look at that, and how like, Muslim people are living there, I feel like they know what their faith is more. But I feel like when I’m here, and I haven’t really... I feel there’s still so much to learn of my faith, and I don’t really know, and there are not that many resources to know more. Because Muslim, especially Ismaili Muslims, who are a minority, and there are not as many... there’s not that much awareness out there, for people wanting to learn about Ismailis.”

Naila feels that as a Canadian, she has not learned about her faith as much as she could have if she lived in a Muslim country, leaving her with a feeling of living on the outside of her Muslim identity. This idea of not feeling part of her parents’ culture, but also not belonging in Canadian culture is a common quality of hybridity, which Bhabha (1990) refers to as the third space; a type of liminal space between two identities, allowing the subject to create a new understanding of the self that is inspired by more than one movement, and sometimes differing worldviews. Although Naila’s sentiments may also be interpreted as the defense of splitting, which is discussed above, her statement also shows a strong feeling of not belonging in Canada, and particularly that she is an outsider in Canada, even though she holds a Canadian passport and is Canadian-born. However, this feeling of not belonging in Canada, but also not in her parents’ birth country, seems to encourage Naila to forge a middle space, a liminal third space, where she is able to

work through a new negotiation of meaning, mediating this by recognizing the differences between the two cultures she lives within. The unique difficulty that is faced by the participants in this study is a felt rejection by the multiple groups with which they identify. This is seen in Jenna's comments where she states she feels like an outsider not only within Canadian culture, but also amongst other Muslims who are not Shia Ismaili:

Jenna: "Um, I have other Muslims in that school who are either, like, [Shia] Ithna'ashari or Sunni, and I don't know, like, what specific branch. But, like, anytime we've had a conversation, like, in a social science class, it's, like, I'll have, like, that one person, who says, well you wouldn't know, and I'm, like, what? I'm Muslim just like you. And they're just, like, no you're not like a real one or whatever. I know that's not true. But it's kind of, like, that's what it's seen as. So, it's, like, you have Muslim people who don't see that you're Muslim, and then there are Canadian people who don't think you're Canadian."

FVM: "Right, so then where does that leave you?"

Jenna: "Stuck."

Jenna's answer marked a brief pause, or stoppage in the interview, and left a feeling of emptiness, or feeling stuck, within myself, and the interview of itself. I speculate that this was Jenna's projection of her inside feeling to the outside world, in this case, to me, the interviewer, as I also felt that I was now stuck, like her. It is interesting to note that Jenna was not otherwise at a shortage of words in the interviews; in fact, she was the most talkative, and her responses were always very lengthy, as if she felt the need to fully explain and justify her answers in detail to avoid being misunderstood.

The feeling of being “othered” and without belonging, which Jenna describes, is one that leaves us without a place to land or stuck in a liminal realm of misunderstanding. Corbey and Leerssen (1991) assert that “Otherness can be detected at the root of much injustice and suffering” (p. xvii). These emotional sufferings were evident in this study; every participant interviewed shared at least one example of a misunderstanding or difficulty that occurred when the topic of their culture or religion came up in a conversation or interaction with another person. Maleeka’s response to feeling stuck was to disengage and physically leave a conversation about Islam that she felt was too uncomfortable to engage with:

“...It was, like, I think it was back in grade 9 or grade 10, a couple of years ago. And my friends, were, like, two of my friends were in my house, and we were just talking, and she brought up, ‘oh do you believe in Allah?’ ‘Cause it was at that time when there was a lot of talk in the media about *Allahu Akbar*, all those terrorists, you know, and so she was saying that, and I was, I was, like, ‘uh, yeah...’ [and] she was ‘*really*, like, *do you*, like, *what??*’ And so, I felt really, like, ahh, yeah, but it’s not like that, you don’t know...like...they’re not really... the same - and I just wish I could go into, like, a whole big talk about, this is our faith, it’s about peace and this, you know....”

FVM: “So what did you say?”

Maleeka: “I was just like, ‘yeah’...and I just walked away from the conversation.”

(*Maleeka laughs*).

Maleeka’s laughter relieves a tension, and cuts through the situation of being misunderstood, but also not being able to speak. Other participants also laugh when speaking of something sad, tragic, or uncomfortable, such as in the cases of Naila and Faheem discussed in the previous

chapter. As noted, laughter seems to be a way to negate difficult situations. Sophia, too, laughs when she shares her experience of being labelled as not a “real” Muslim:

“But yeah, I do get a lot of people saying, ‘oh you guys aren’t really Muslims, right?’

And I’m like, I don’t know how to respond to that (*laughs*) because I don’t see it that way. Just ‘cause we’re a little bit different, people don’t tend to, like, understand that as much. ‘Cause also the Imam is very open to new ideas, and I think um, people that are a little bit stricter with their religion are a little bit confused as to why we are how we are.”

Sophia frequently encounters individuals denying her ‘Muslim-ness,’ likely because she is part of a minority group of Muslims within the Shia branch of Islam, which is already much smaller than the Sunni branch of Islam. When she is stripped of this identity that is already a contested one, it leaves her without one, similar to what Jenna describes above as feeling “stuck.” When Sophia states, “I don’t know how to respond to that,” she manages the situation with a laugh, acknowledging the helplessness she feels in the encounter. The anxiety of hybridity that is experienced by Muslim youth when they feel stuck and helpless also takes shape in feelings of isolation and loneliness. Given that participants do not feel that they fit squarely into any social category, or that they are full members of any group, they often feel alone and invisible, as seen in the next section.

Feelings of Invisibility and Loneliness

When speaking on the topic of relating to others in the interview, many participants are quick to mention that they do not feel understood by their friends or the general public. In their explanations, all individuals feel the reason is that their identity is too complex, fraught with stereotypes, or that certain parts of them are too personal for others to connect with. Their responses indicate that there are gradients of loneliness that the participants experience;

loneliness may not only be imposed from the outside world, but can also come from within, and take shape as a state of loneliness. This emotional state of being lonely may develop for the adolescent who is perhaps trying to protect one's true self, for fear of being rejected or hurt. This emotional state is seen in Maleeka's explanation of why she doesn't feel that she can explain her religious self to people outside of the Ismaili community:

Maleeka: "No... 'cause like, our... you know, um, *khane*⁸ is so different than church, right. You can't just walk in, if you're not Ismaili. And so, it's, like, everything's so intimate. And so, its hard to bring other people into it, I feel like. And, like, that's not the point of our.... our..." (*long pause*)

FVM: "Because its not a public type of space?"

Maleeka: "Yeah yeah...so it's like, ...yeah...the only thing, the only way they would really know is by us telling them, like, helping them understand, or its whatever they see in the news...or...but still, its hard to bring in, when its something so personal. you know."

Winnicott (1965) describes the true self as "a potentiality, hidden and preserved by the compliant false self" (p. 7). He explains that the false self is a defence created by the ego to ensure the ego is not overcome by anxiety or becomes susceptible to trauma. Maleeka shares that she feels it's very hard to let another person into the Ismaili *Jamatkhana* because it's so personal, and such an "intimate" space. Her language suggests that it may also be very hard for her to let someone else see her true self, which includes her religious self, because that, too, is so personal and intimate. Similarly, for Zahra, she shares that she pushes people away if she is not able to establish a close connection quickly, suggesting that she often hides her true self and presents the world with her

⁸ The word *khane* is often used by Ismaili Muslims as a short form of the word *Jamatkhana*.

false self. When Zahra shares that she does not have any authority figures that she feels understand or care about her, other than her parents, I ask her why that is. She answers:

“I don’t know, I mean, I feel like, I’m a very picky person, like, people-wise too. So, um... if someone is not, like...like, if I don’t establish a connection right away, I kind of push people away otherwise. So, I don’t have authority figures that, like...stick out to me. Yeah.”

The act of hiding oneself away from the outside suggests the existence of a type of loneliness that is felt deeply; it is not temporary or short-lived. Rather, this type of loneliness is a lived reality for many of these participants. Although the feeling of being isolated or alone may have started from feeling misunderstood from the external world, the loneliness is taken inwards, and absorbed into the self.

For many of the participants in this study, their encounter with people outside of their faith resulted in the perception that there was a lack of interest or care for the participants’ cultural or religious narratives, and some felt that this lack of understanding sometimes inhibited the closeness or the development of a meaningful relationship or interactions with others at school or in the community. While sharing a story of feeling left out due to not being invited to go dress shopping with her friends, Maleeka shares that she notices a discrepancy between how close she appears to be to her friends while in school and how close she feels to them outside of school:

“Yeah. Left out. Yeah. Or like, disappointed, because I thought, ... every time I’m like, in school we seem so close, and then... outside it’s just like... it’s like, oh... like, I thought we were you know...but then, it’s different.”

This lingering feeling of distance is present for Zahra as well. Although she has not been explicitly told by her friends that they are not interested in learning about her culture and religion, Zahra has sensed this through non-verbal cues and the use of humour by her peers:

Zahra: “I guess I don’t exactly know that they don’t want to learn...but um...I guess that once you start talking about it, you can kind of see that they don’t care, maybe...or like, its something that they’ll never understand, so why start learning about it.”

FVM: “Mmhmmm. Is it because they don’t ask follow up questions or inquire?”

Zahra: “Probably. Or just like, if they make a joke about it... like, the smile thing” (Zahra shared earlier of her experiences of people making the joke that being Ismaili means to smile a lot).

Nabeel has also felt a sense of loneliness while at school. For him, his experiences of being excluded are more overt: he speaks of bullying as an occurrence that happens sometimes, and has come up with strategies of how to best respond, or how to avoid being noticed so that he does not get bullied for reading or doing other things that he enjoys but may not be commonplace at his school:

“Uhh... I used to like reading a lot, like, at school, during lunch. But then, in high school, like. I was reading, and umm, someone judged me for it, and came to me, and said, why are you reading during lunch? That’s so nerdy. And I was upset about it. And then, like, I’ve been kinda, like...like, nervous to read during lunch. Like now, if I read...

(*laughs*) I won’t do it like in the cafeteria. I’ll read outside, on the bench or something, where people aren’t watching.”

Nabeel’s choice to become invisible in school is one that he feels is appropriate in circumstances of bullying or exclusion. This strategy likely further isolates him from his peers, but also allows

him the space to read and be alone with his thoughts. The desire to be invisible, or hide, was prevalent for many participants, as they saw their identity as difficult and complicated to maintain. Responding to one of the prompts provided to her during the second interview, Zahra shares she wishes she was able to hide her Muslim-ness more and asserts life would be easier if she was not Muslim at all:

Zahra: “Ok...well you know the one, it’s like you wish something was different about your life...religion wise, maybe...because like sometimes, uh-hh like, it’s not, like, Ismaili that I’m, like, worried about... its just, like, the whole Muslim thing in general. So, like, if I wasn’t, like, let’s say I was Persian, but you can still be Ismaili Persian, right, so if I was from Persia, I feel like I would be judged less maybe. Because sometimes I just say I’m Persian, but um...yeah, because like, once you say you’re Indian, or you’re Muslim, it’s like, ok, you’re put into this category. So, like, sometimes, that’s the only thing I probably wish...or, like, just wish, like, people ...like, maybe ISIS didn’t exist, and we didn’t have to go through all this. Because before ISIS, it wasn’t as big of a problem. Like, obviously since 9/11 it’s been a problem...but, like, otherwise, not really. I think everything else has been pretty ok. But umm...”

FVM: “So you feel that if that happened, if you weren’t Muslim, if you were a different kind of culture or religion---”

Zahra: “I wouldn’t be judged as much.”

FVM: “You wouldn’t be judged. So, life would be easier?”

Zahra: “Probably.”

The wish to be more accepted and less marginalized was common to many participants. The sense of isolation was poignant in many of the participants’ responses. Nabeel spoke of not

having any close friends, and that he kept a lot of personal thoughts and feelings to himself, including truths about his identity, his beliefs, and his values. When I ask him if he wishes he had someone with whom he could share his struggles and feelings, he shares instead that he felt that it was fun to be alone. However, the mood of the interview did not seem to validate his response; it was quite a somber and gloomy moment. I suspect his use of the word ‘fun’ was a way to hide the realities of loneliness.

FVM: “Do you wish you had someone you could talk to about that kind of stuff?”

Nabeel: “No, not really.”

FVM: “No, how come?”

Nabeel: “I don’t know, it’s just fun to keep things to yourself sometimes!”

FVM: “It’s fun?”

Nabeel: “Yeah!” (*Nabeel laughs*).

FVM: “What makes it fun?”

Nabeel: “I don’t know... ‘cause then it’s something only you know. It makes you feel special or something.”

FVM: “Oh ok.”

Nabeel: (*laughs*). “I don’t know.”

During Nabeel’s second individual interview, he selects the prompt “a time when you felt let down or disappointed by others” and shares a detailed experience of when a classmate did not follow through on his word. Nabeel asked a peer to take his school bag down to a classroom two flights below from the gymnasium while he went to the washroom, only to realize afterwards that this classmate forgot, which meant Nabeel had to go upstairs again to retrieve his belongings. This seemed to be very notable for him and stood out to him as a disappointing

experience. Given that Nabeel does not have many people he considers friends to begin with, this incident likely solidified this fact for him. Nabeel's vulnerability does not seem to be safeguarded or taken seriously by his peers, even when he outwardly gives an opportunity to develop trust.

It is important to note that Nabeel never acknowledges that it bothers him when he is alone, or that he is sometimes bullied. At most, he says that he is disappointed, and at other times he only describes the experience of being alone, without admitting to any personal grief or difficulty that could accompany the experience. Although Nabeel and the other participants often feel lonely and isolated, they still feel it is their duty to help change prejudiced people's minds; they carry an impulse to educate.

The Impulse to Educate

Adolescents in this study felt it was their personal responsibility to educate and explain their faith when they encountered hostility or hatred towards Islam. In fact, instead of reporting an act of hatred or prejudiced encounter, participants stated, without hesitation, that it was important and necessary to try to understand the problem and then explain their perspective and interpretation to the misinformed individual. When participants were asked what they would do in the situation where they were being treated unfairly at school specifically because of their religion or ethnicity, every adolescent stated that they would likely not tell their parents, or an authority figure. Instead, they felt it was *their* duty to approach the individual(s) and explain to them that what they were doing was not appropriate and to reason that everyone should be treated fairly. Most participants went further and stated they would attempt to find out the "root" cause of the other person's behaviour and opinion, in order to really understand, from the vantage of the other, the prejudicial arguments they are making. They would then explain to the

hypothetical perpetrators what it really means to be a Muslim and how the public media's portrayal is incorrect. Participants share that there is probably a misunderstanding which could be cleared up with their confrontation. Naila shares:

“I would find, like, the root of why the person was being rude or something. Because you can't be rude for no reason, you have to have a reason behind it. Whether its personal insecurities or seeing something online, and try to find the reason behind it, and then explain to them that not only is what they're doing is not right, but their belief or understanding of Muslims is not right.”

Similar to Naila's comments, Maleeka states that she, too, would attempt to call out the racist behaviour:

“I would say, hey that's kind of---that's rude, that's what I would probably say. Hey, that's kind of rude, like, why- uhh... tell them about not being racist, or something. I don't know.”

Zahra further explains why she would need to take matters into her own hands:

“Umm... you know for me, I was, like, you know, like, the general response for a child is, like, 'I'd tell my parents, or tell the principal'...I wouldn't do either. Because I don't think the principal...especially in my school, it wouldn't work. But for other people, like, telling the principal, like, again, there's not much they can do about it, like. They will say something, get the kid suspended. They'll come, and they'll say it again. Like, a person doesn't actually really change. I might argue with them or like, just be like, ok what makes you different from me? Like, the colour of our skin, our religion? Like, we're still people, like. That's why, like, I think I would just handle it myself, in just trying to

explain, and talk sense into them and make them understand that we're not that different."

Paradoxically, Zahra admits that she believes a person doesn't really change, yet despite this, she states that her approach to the problem would be to explain her Muslim identity in a bid to make a difference. She, like the others, uses a narrative of education to move from the feeling of being misunderstood to the achieving of new understanding in the prejudiced other.

This impulse to educate others, particularly racist people, is grounded in the belief that it is possible to educate the hatred away. As hate is often irrational, unconscious, and difficult to reason with, the rational approach of educating hatred taken by participants is notable. It suggests the participants' use of reason in the face of unreason, arguably helps one to cope with internal feelings of feeling subject to racial hatred. The ego seeks to protect itself from this vulnerable situation by taking on the role of educator instead of victim, in an attempt to do away with the experience of being attacked. Being the object of hatred is replaced with the promise of one more conversation or explanation. The adolescents' impulse to educate is also an idealization of the self as one that is able to change closed minds, despite the difficulty of the task. Kristeva (2009) writes of this idealization of the adolescent self as the need to believe in the ideal object, where the ideal is the self, or rationality itself, that wards off a sense of despair or nihilism that nothing will ever change.

However, despite these efforts, the pain doesn't seem to fade because reason doesn't always give us the answers it promises. For Faheem, his pain of being hated is so unbearable that he shares he will always take a position of defensive status, even if he later realizes he was wrong. I cite a lengthy passage below to illustrate the extent of his fear:

Faheem: "Well... (*pause*)... no...but when...whenever I am attacked, or even potentially *gonna* be attacked, I'll obviously stand up for myself, I'll defend what I...even if I say something and I'm, like, well technically, that was a bad thing to say, I'll still stand up for myself, and say, yeah but I could have done this, or this...and it would still... like, I'm still standing up for myself, even if I know I'm wrong."

FVM: "Why do you have to do that if you know you're wrong?"

Faheem: "Well, I'm going to ...because I don't like being considered wrong."

FVM: "Ok".

Faheem: "Even if I know I'm wrong... I'm like well..."

FVM: "You don't want other people to know you're wrong."

Faheem: "Yeah. So obviously I need to stand up for myself in terms of that...and..."

FVM: "What would happen if they found out you were wrong?"

Faheem: "Well that would be.... Well Like, even if *they* know I'm wrong, *I* know I'm wrong, I'm still going to have to say, 'no I'm not wrong. I have evidence.'"

FVM: "Why do you have to do that? Is it not ok to be wrong sometimes in front of other people?"

Faheem: "Well, it is, but as long as I can defend myself, or find some sort of way to defend myself, I will."

FVM: "So you feel it's important to have a position of defense?"

Faheem: "Yeah."

Faheem feels he needs to protect himself from the outside world, and he appears to be living in a state of constant fear at school. Faced with the irrationality of racist others, Faheem takes on his own position of irrationality in the active refusal to change his mind. This defensiveness was also

found in Nagra's (2011) study when she discovered that Muslims are using a reactive form of identity-building to defend oneself in a racist society. In Faheem's case, he defends against changing his mind in his refusal to admit fault, as it is too uncomfortable, or even dangerous, to occupy a position of vulnerability when he feels unjustly accused. It may be relevant to note here that Faheem recently found out he has the same first and last name as a Muslim terrorist in Canada, which he shares in the focus group interview. He also seems to be aware of the gender differences faced by Muslim men and Muslim women, as this was brought up in the focus group:

Zahra: "I think it's also easier for girls. Because guys—because terrorists are mainly guys, right? And even if there are girls, they're not the ones on the front page I would say. So like, girls, like even if you have a strong like, Muslim name for a girl, it's not seen as bad as if you have a strong Muslim name for a guy."

Faheem: "'Cause a female Muslim would be considered more.... delicate in a sense. 'Cause then there's still that umm... prejudice with females in general. So, then there's that hurdle before you can even face your religion hurdle. 'Cause once they start treating you equally, then.... So, in a sense, it's kind of good that they don't treat you equally (*Faheem laughs*) because it's just kind of based on the way, right."

Faheem's protection of his ego may be a symptom of his rigid social context. In an environment that refuses to show any flexibility or openness to him, Faheem responds in kind, embodying his own refusal to change his mind. For Faheem, the experience of being male while being Muslim is filled with feeling under siege and even a continuous paranoia of where the next attack will come from.

This chapter has explored the sentiments of not belonging and feeling misunderstood that are experienced by the Muslim youth of this study. As a result of these feelings, participants

engage in what I call a “happiness defense” where they feel it is important to portray the role of the ‘good immigrant’ or the happy subject who is grateful to Canada for giving them a home. However, participants show that their feelings are much more complex; behind the happy front, they confront dynamics of discomfort, difference, and anxiety as they seek to find a place of belonging in Canada, for which they are searching. Hence, the data shows the participants’ internalization of the need to be a good Canadian – to belong – while they also manage feelings of inferiority and guilt at the same time. The youth of this study feel as though they are outsiders: both from the Canadian community, but also from the Muslim community. In this space between, they articulate that they do not belong in any group. No matter what, they are always a little bit different. As a response to these feelings of difference, many participants decide that in order to help repair and remedy the problem of hatred and misunderstanding that is directed towards Islam, it is their duty to educate and teach others about their religion, and all the ways that Islam is a positive presence in the world. In so doing, they strive to assert that they, too, can be and are a positive presence in the world, and seek to find acceptance in the communities in which they live. Adolescent insinuations that they are “fine” and “good” and “peaceful” conceal the anxiety of hybridity and social experiences of exclusion and racism. For these youth, it is not acceptable to be unhappy or anxious, even for a moment, for it would risk breaking their happy front and admitting feelings of loneliness and difficulty to a world that does not promise to respond or sadly, even notice.

Chapter 6: Second-Generation Melancholia: Feelings of Loss, Guilt, and Powerlessness

This chapter explores the participants' close relationships with their parents, which disrupts normative constructions of adolescence focusing on the work of differentiating oneself from one's parents. However, the data from this study indicates a departure from this normative distancing for second-generation Ismaili youth. I speculate that the very close attachments between the youth of this study and their parents arise not only due to their intense feelings of loneliness and exclusion in their social world, but also operates as a defense against the loss of one's heritage and cultural ties that are embodied in the immigrant parent. In this chapter, I link the refusal to let go of one's attachment to parents as a demonstration of melancholia at work in the life of the Ismaili Muslim adolescent. I argue that this "second-generation melancholia" emerges from their acute awareness and internalization of the struggle of their parents and grandparents and that can be identified in their narratives of guilt and inherited loss. This chapter will therefore explore the idea of attachment and separation as expressed by Ismaili Muslim youth and will postulate a connection between an unresolved Oedipal situation and feelings of melancholia. For the youth in this study, their parents represent a larger narrative of struggle, loss, difficulty, and a courageous leap into a new way of life in another country. Almost all participants were very aware of their parents' sacrifice and struggle in life and seem to have internalized the losses implied in migration and are quick to identify with it. Taking some departure from the multiple narratives featured in the previous chapters, here I delve deeply into the psychic structure of second-generation melancholia in my discussion of Jenna's narrative, who is working through the meaning of an inherited history of hope and promise, but also loss and difficulty.

Freud (1917) distinguishes mourning from melancholia in that mourning allows the subject to let go of the strong attachments one can make to loss, confronting the subject with the world as it is irrevocably changed. Melancholia, by contrast, defends against loss, pushing it deep into the reservoir of the unconscious. Early on, Freud (1917) defined melancholia as a form a pathology characterized by the ego's complete and total identification with the loss, to the point of giving up on the self, and life itself. In recent scholarship (Ahmed, 2010; Eng, 2000), however, Freud's concept of melancholia has been reworked and re-framed as a necessary and unavoidable psychic state in certain circumstances, particularly in contexts of *cultural* loss, immigration, and historical trauma. Eng and Kazanjian (2003), for instance, argue that in the context of colonial histories of violence, melancholia is a productive state that retains the traumatic past. Here, history "remains steadfastly alive in the present" (p. 3-4), and so works against social and political agendas of national forgetting. Ahmed (2010), too, reframes melancholia as a generative *refusal* to let go rather than a pathological *inability* to let go; for Ahmed, melancholia can also uphold painful dynamics associated with both colonialism and nation because "it is the repetition of the narrative of injury which causes injury" (p.143).

Many of the Muslim youth in this study carry a deep-rooted sense of loss entrenched in their parents' struggle with racism and exclusion in Canada, taking shape in feelings of guilt and loneliness. They also struggle with the idea of such loss because there is a fear that the admission of it changes a part of them and it could mean that their parents will no longer be a part of them. The stakes of facing loss are high insofar as it registers as a separation from family, tradition, and language. In this context, it is perhaps no wonder that the adolescents of this study hold onto their parents, to the point of idealizing the relationship and unwilling to separate from them. The participants embody melancholia as they are not yet ready to acknowledge loss or grief. I argue

that this position takes hold because participants do not have the appropriate “language to grieve...[and] this loss...[is] unrecognizable even to the subject” (Stillwaggon, 2017, p. 32). As a result, their narratives tend to waver back and forth between certainty and uncertainty when speaking about their parents. For example, many participants will insist that they do not face the same discrimination that their parents and grandparents faced in the past, but then later admit that their lives are very similar to their parents, giving examples of racism or discrimination that they have witnessed or felt today. This ambivalence signals a melancholic attachment, made from the continual re-visiting and living in the pain from the past. In the case of the participants in this study, their melancholia comes from their internalization of their parents’ struggles and losses. As Freud articulates, “the complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound” (1917, p. 253); it draws constant energy to itself and does not heal. It is for this reason that Freud (1917) defines melancholia as an undesirable state and quite a painful one, which, by contrast, mourning can be understood as a healing and may resolve to close the wound.

Thus while melancholia may allow the subject to continuously reflect and recall one’s historical trauma, it is also risky in that it justifies “using trauma as the foundation of identity” (Schwab, 2010, p. 19) and forecloses the opportunity to create distance between the subject and the object of loss (Britzman, 2000; Farley, 2018). In this chapter, I analyze the narratives of the second-generation youth of this study, with a focus on their melancholic identifications with discriminatory experiences and legacies of loss traveling across generations. I link this identification with a refusal to let go of one’s parents, marking, I suggest, a second-generation iteration of an Oedipal struggle that is linked to a melancholic state. Moreover, and despite much critique, I agree with Freud that this state is not ideal, and that it would benefit youth to work through their feelings of loss, so as to arrive into a state of mourning. If critiques of Freud’s

discussion of melancholia emphasize the risk of pathologizing second-generation youth who understandably internalize loss, I turn to Stillwaggon's (2017) thoughts on melancholia to rather foreground the role of *schools* to create conditions that can support students in the work of mourning to make their emotional state a less painful one. Education holds a responsibility to youth to forge emotional and social relationships to cultural histories that are more often denied and suppressed in curriculum and pedagogy. Because "self-understanding is shaped in relation to communal norms" (Stillwaggon, 2017, p. 33), schools should facilitate a transformation of personal repressed loss to create communities of grief in which youth can acknowledge and recognize all parts of their identity, including the lost parts.

As this chapter concerns youth and the working through of their relationships with their parents, as well as their feelings of melancholia that are linked to their parents' lived experiences, the Oedipus complex as articulated in psychoanalytic dialogues offers a meaningful lens for the analysis. Freud "argued that a central feature of human psychosexual development is the way in which...the Oedipus complex is negotiated" (Frosh, 2012, p. 8). The complex concerns how children and young people live with the restrictions and social norms placed on them by society and their parents. Winnicott (1984/2012) refers to the Oedipus complex as "the capacity to deal with triangular relationships – to accept the full force of the capacity to love and the complications that result" (p. 125). Although the Oedipus complex has been revised and rethought multiple ways since the time of Freud, it still essentially concerns the problem of love and attachment to one's parents, and ultimately involves separation, which can feel like overcoming or replacing one's parents. For the purposes of this dissertation, the Oedipus complex can be understood as an unconscious attachment and desire that subjects have for their parents, which ultimately results in detachment from the parents. This detachment usually results in the

replacement of the original object(s) of desire (parent) with another love object, and thus connects with the work of mourning loss. As with melancholia, ambivalent emotions are at play in the analysis of the parent-child relationship, such as the anxiety of doing better, the worry of failing or disappointing one's parents, the guilt of separation and the overall confidence needed to assert one's own distinct identity and beliefs. Because of the Oedipus complex, "the healthy child comes to adolescence already equipped with a personal method for dealing with new feelings, for tolerating distress, and for warding off situations which involve intolerable anxiety" (Winnicott, 1984/2012, p. 125).

The Oedipus complex, as experienced by second-generation immigrant youth, is impacted by the close ties that immigrant parents can hold with their own parents, making them less understanding or willing for their own children to separate (Mann, 2004). As we will see in the narratives of this chapter, both immigration and culture influence the Oedipal relationship of attachment and separation between parents and children. They demonstrate how the notion of separation at work in Freud's Oedipal conflict registers psychically as a loss of tradition and culture. My analysis suggests that youth embody a melancholic emotional position to resist this loss, focusing on the difficult emotions that accompany this state. In the end, and as noted above, I theorize the social and pedagogical conditions that can support youth to mourn loss, and work through its myriad of emotions. While this labour involves creating some distance from cultural loss in the form of language, memory, and narrative, it also allows youth and parents to form meaningful ties across generations. As it signifies in my discussion, mourning is an act of memory, not forgetting.

The Internalization of Parental Struggles and Loss

All participants confess at least one negative experience that their parents experienced in relationship to discrimination and racism, either in the present day, or in the early days of living in Canada. Jenna reveals that her dad has had more negative experiences of living in Canada than positive, and that both her parents have told her stories of these difficult experiences.

Jenna: “Yeah. Just because...probably... umm... probably just, I guess ‘cause like, yeah... umm... high school and all that. I’m not... like I’m not trying to say that that stung so deep, not like that. I think just... that would be his opinion. Like, no it wasn’t that great. Like, they got the blunt of it... the brunt, not blunt...the brunt of it and everything...Just because you know, like he had a thick accent, and the majority of his school had a white population. So, it was just like that... I don’t think like anyone physically ever did anything to him...but I know that ...(*coughs*) that he experienced that, and everything. My mom used to say that her older brother would come...would carry a bat to school.”

FVM: “Ohh?”

Jenna: “Because they were ... umm... like, mmm... my ...my mom and her sister uhh... her brother, they would uhh... they would call them, like, Pakis, ‘cause they thought they were from Pakistan, so they would call them that. So, I know that my mom, even though she came to Canada when she was like, 4, experienced a lot of stuff like that. Like, not just her, but her older brother and everything. So, I think he had been...both had the bad end of it.”

Although adolescents may not regularly experience the same hardships and discrimination that their parents have faced and continue to face, research has shown that second-generation children

“are at least witnesses, if not active protagonists, in this drama” (Levitt, 2009, p. 1226). Being a witness to hardship means that adolescents have grown up in a context where “the lines between the home and the host country and between the first and the second generation blur, making them one interconnected social experience (Levitt, 2009, p. 1226). Given this fluid relationship to the parents’ experiences, it is not surprising that many adolescents carry a type of sadness, grief, or overall melancholic state of being that can be interpreted from their responses.

Interestingly, some participants were unable to acknowledge the difficulties of their parents, indicating the repressed or unconscious quality of melancholia. When asked if minority groups struggle more than non-minority groups, Nabeel doesn’t think so, but then describes an example of his family doing just that. Starting from nothing, they actually work very hard to have an opportunity at surviving and carving out a positive existence for themselves:

FVM: “Do you think people from minority groups struggle more?”

Nabeel: “I don’t think they struggle more, because, as an immigrant, whether you’re moving because you’ve been pushed away, or pulled in, or a combination of both, my dad for example, and my grandparents, when they moved here, they didn’t really have anything, so they really focused on working hard, and working hard might have been a little more challenging, but now where they are today, it’s kind of opened up a path where it’s maybe not as challenging to get to where you want to be as an immigrant, because there’s more acceptance, because immigrants have showed the way for themselves, and carved a path.”

Later in the interview, he adds details about how his father was treated and how upsetting it was for him at the time. This is illustrated in the exchange below:

Nabeel: “My dad said when he was in school, people used to call him Paki, because they thought all Muslims were from Pakistan. He experienced a lot of racism and religious segregation. But I don’t feel any of that now. But I can understand when they first moved here, it wasn’t as accepting as it is now.”

FVM: “How did that make him feel, did he talk about that with you?”

Nabeel: “He was upset. My dad had a tendency to get into fights sometimes. So he would usually...it ended ok for him, but maybe not so great for the person who was upset with him for being Muslim” (*laughs*).

Although Nabeel articulates the difficult realities of minority groups, he concludes that the environment today is much more accepting, that it all ended up “ok” for his father, and that minoritized people overall do not struggle as much “now.” He laughs at the end of his statement when he jokes his father would win the fights, perhaps to indicate to me that this topic is not very painful, or perhaps because it is painful, and he is defending against it by using humour. These two exchanges indicate that Nabeel is struggling to face grief, which would entail attaching a narrative to the losses and difficulties of his family. Even though he is aware that his parents’ and grandparents’ experiences were not easy, Nabeel struggles under an abstract weight of loss that refuses to be named (Ahmed, 2010). This type of melancholic abstraction was demonstrated in almost all of Nabeel’s responses, such as when he speaks of being alone, not having many close friends, and feeling let down by a classmate.

Melancholia is also seen in Faheem’s responses; when comparing his life as an Ismaili Muslim to his parents, Faheem acknowledges that his parents and grandparents had difficult experiences when they first arrived in Canada. While also noting that there is more “acceptance

now,” his response alludes to the possibility that his life today is difficult as well, and even that his experiences are “pretty much the same” as theirs:

“It’s different in terms of the times that we grew up. My parents of course grew up earlier, and they also didn’t know English very well. My parents’ parents, my grandparents, didn’t know English very well when they came here. And so, and they had a much harder time, and there was a lot less, in a sense, inclusiveness, that there’s much more being pushed for now, in terms of, everybody, black people-- and everybody. There was a lot less then, and you’re kind of, like, we can talk about you if we want and no one is going to stop you, and right, there was that stuff then, and um, overall, I think that the time wasn’t very different. Like, other than that small, like, there is a lot more of, there’s a lot more of an accepting, acceptance now, than there was then. But I’m not, I think everything’s pretty much the same, I mean, obviously the times are different, right, I mean in this type of, the way people interact, like I said before, about it, are different and so yeah. I think that’s, like, yeah.”

There are two striking features of Faheem’s articulation above: first, it appears that Faheem is able to state that his parents and grandparents had a “harder” time than he experiences today in Canada. However, he doesn’t seem to be able to concretely express what exactly made it difficult; he does allude there may have been “less inclusiveness” and people talking negatively about other people. Stillwaggon (2017) refers to the inability to express loss through language as a symptom of melancholia because “the limits on the public’s recognition of the object create a mirrored limit on the subject’s ability to express its feelings of loss” (p. 32). The second striking feature of Faheem’s narrative can be found in his contradiction: that everything was different for his parents and that it is also not different, and rather pretty much the same as his life. I speculate

that this ambivalence is a symptom of his internalization of parental struggle and loss, and that of a melancholic state, given that melancholia often does not permit the language to speak, and so the loss is rendered ambivalent: existing, but not completely recognized or acknowledged (Stillwaggon, 2017). Instead of mourning, which would allow him to recognize and admit difficulty in both his life and his parents' lives, he remains somewhat undecided, indicating a melancholic state of unworked out ambivalence relating to an internalized loss in his family history.

Closeness to Parents

All participants show an extreme closeness to their parents. In fact, they share countless instances of appreciation, sometimes emulating their parents directly. Naila often mirrors the choices and behaviours of her parents. For instance, she states that she sometimes lies to people when they ask her what school subjects she is interested in, so that she is better accepted by society. Both her father and mother also use this strategy to be accepted. Her mother lies about her profession, saying she is a teacher but really, she is an accountant, and her father often changes his name, as well as his country of origin (India instead of Pakistan) to avoid near constant discrimination:

Naila: "So when he says he's Indian to some people, he ... he, like ...he says...he, like, changes his name... he says a different name. So he says, 'my name is Dev Patel.' Not, 'my name is Mustafa.'"

FVM: "Oh ok, so he changes his name."

Naila: "Yeah, so he has a fake name."

FVM: "Ok so what's his fake name?"

Naila: "Dev Patel."

FVM: “Dev Patel.”

Naila: “Yeah. (*laughs*). So, then you can tell it’s a more common name, it’s generally Indian. So, it’s not associated with Muslim...whereas Mustafa is a Muslim name.”

FVM: “So it sounds like he’s really thought about it...”

Naila: (*laughs*) “yeah... yeah...” (*laughs*).

FVM: “And is that something that you agree with? Or disagree with?”

Naila: “Uhh... I mean, it has its benefits, obviously, because, like, you don’t... obviously, like, you need, like, some respect when you go and do the business. You feel... but, like... I also feel, like, here, there’s not...right now, like, we’re developing, so there’s not much need to hide your identity...probably for some people, who are really prejudiced towards others. So that, like, helps him, in a sense.”

Naila believes that there may not actually be a need to hide one’s identity “here” in Canada, but she still agrees that it is beneficial for her father to hide his identity. It is unclear if Naila feels that she would be discriminated against if she did not choose to lie about her favourite school subjects, but she participates in this lie regardless, perhaps as a way to feel close to her parents. By copying their choices, she stands in solidarity with them, in a sense, even when she may not completely agree with them.

In addition to wanting to emulate and be like one’s parents, participants express that they felt their parents understood them the best, and that they greatly valued and appreciated their parents’ efforts. For Maleeka, she feels her parents have seen her grow up and therefore “understand” her more than others:

FVM: “Ok. So out of everyone in your life, who do you feel understands you best?”

Maleeka: “My family?”

FVM: “Your family?”

Maleeka: “Yeah.”

FVM: “So specifically your parents? Or your siblings?”

Maleeka: (*pause*) “Hmmm. Ummmm...” *pause* “...Maybe my parents. Yeah.

Because my sisters are younger, so they always blame stuff on the fact that I’m a teenager, you’re 17, but they’re teenagers too, and I always tell them, you know you don’t know what it’s going to be like when you’re this age too. So, I think my parents, because they... I tell them everything, and they’ve seen me grow, and go through my difficulties. Maybe my dad, too, because we’re really similar.”

When Naila is asked the same question in her individual interview, she also says her parents, adding that there is no one else she can share her feelings with:

FVM: “Who do you feel understands you best? Out of everybody in the world.”

Naila: “I guess...it depends, like different aspects. Because first of all, I’d say my parents, because they live with me, like, they help me grow up, they are very much like me, they understand me to that level, but then it would also be my Ismail friends, I would say, because we have the same religion, so we can talk about other stuff, for example, the *mulaqaat*⁹, we can talk about our feelings of that. Or we look forward our experiences of that.”

FVM: “Is there anyone else?”

Naila: “No.”

⁹ By “*mulaqaat*,” Naila is referring to the November 2017 visit of His Highness the Aga Khan, who met his followers in a group setting to commemorate his Diamond Jubilee. Followers often consider a meeting with the Aga Khan as a special, important, and religiously significant event.

Echoing Naila and Maleeka, Nabeel also shares that his parents are the most understanding of him:

FVM: “Who do you feel understands you best?”

Nabeel: “Probably my parents. Because, like, they, like, know when I’m feeling down, and they know, like, if I’m struggling with something. They are always there to help. And I think that’s also because, like, I see them a lot, and I’ve been around them a lot, so they’ve had a lot more time to understand me.”

Imran specifies that he has a close and special relationship with his mother. In fact, he even refers to her as his best friend. He explains that the two of them have been through many things together, and they have supported each other through every difficulty:

FVM: “Out of everyone in your life, who do you feel understands you best?”

Imran: “That’s easy. I guess, my mom.”

FVM: “Your mom, why do you say that?”

Imran: “I guess we’ve always been connected. And.... I think through the fact that we’ve gone through different things together, like a rough patch, then closeness...I think in the end, she would be my best friend.”

In addition to feeling close to their parents, participants disclose a deep appreciation for what their parents have done and continue to do for them, and in some cases, participants express guilt in relationship to the hardships through which their parents have laboured, a concept I explore in more detail in the next section. For now, however, consider briefly Maleeka’s sense that she is constantly feeling appreciative of her parents, especially because of the attention they give to her and her siblings. She says,

“I’m so, like, appreciative of my parents—like, I’ve told them this so many times, like, for making our lunches all the time, and for just the little things, that we never did, like, I mentioned to you, those chores. Like my mom cleaning all the, like, washrooms all the time, umm... my dad making, like, all the food, and my mom making the food... all those things, like, just, like, when I think about the little things, it’s, like, they’re so big. You know? Like, they make such a big difference.”

Naila also expresses her appreciation, and offers that since her life is much easier than her parents, she wants to help out around the house as much as she can:

“I guess... I guess, like, when my dad told me how much he used to work during his high school years, and I see myself now, I don’t wor—I don’t have a job, and, like, my parents have enough money to support me and my brother. So, I feel, like, when my dad tells me about how much his jobs [sic] and how heavy his school work was, and his family wasn’t that great, and he had to help his siblings...younger siblings too. So I feel really, like... I understand----I don’t understand that but I feel, like, how difficult it would be. So that’s why I really want to help around the house because I want...they’ve struggled so much already, and I really don’t want to put any more burden on them.”

For many participants, the appreciation they have for their parents becomes a narrative of idealization that spills over to feelings of guilt for not themselves living up to this image. This idea of guilt takes shape in the narrative of not being good enough, or not being able to achieve a level to which their parents would admire and respect. Interestingly, participants *do* find a way to repay their parents in the form of schooling, which I explore in the next section. As we will see, guilt is repaid with the effort to achieve and maintain high grades. Here, grades are not just a measure of success determined by the school or the teacher, but, in the minds of adolescents,

take on a psychological narrative of love tinged with guilty feelings of wanting to restore the losses that this relationship also implies.

Guilt and Grades

One key site in which the participants' attachments to parents emerged as significant is in their discussions of school success, and in particular, worries over grades. While these concerns may be neither unusual nor rare for any adolescent wanting to do well, the narratives of my study carry a particularly strong plotline of guilt. In light of the closeness of these adolescents to their parents, and their melancholic identification with their losses, grades emerged as a possible compensation, or a trade-off. Sharon Todd (2003), drawing extensively from Klein (1937), links guilt with love, positing that guilt "provokes a desire to repair the damage thought to be suffered by the loved one" (Todd, 2003, p. 102). Todd (2003) argues that guilt is "a common response to being exposed to another's suffering" (p. 92) that can call the ego "into question for having been spared the indignities...to which an other has been subjected" (p. 93). The participants of this study show signs of being called into question for their relatively privileged life of being born in Canada and benefiting from the wagers taken and hardships endured from their parents and grandparents. Levitt (2009), too, finds that second-generation children often feel the need to compensate their parents for migrating to a new place in various ways, such as succeeding at school or work.

In my study of Ismaili youth, this sense of guilt emerges in the home, too, and is linked to a feeling of trying to make-up for a loss, to atone for some breach of existence, by virtue of arriving on the struggles of their parents. Maleeka, for instance, has recently started to feel a great deal of guilt for not being more helpful around the house. She states that she has just taken

on a part-time job at the mall and realizes how having “too many things to do” can impact her responsibilities at home:

Maleeka: “Sometimes when I have too many things to do, I just focus on myself, and it’s so bad.”

FVM: “Why is that bad?”

Maleeka: “Because, then, I’m not supporting any—like I’m not helping out. And I feel....and I feel bad, too. When I, like, finish...leave the zone. The school zone, I realize, like....”

FVM: “You feel guilty?”

Maleeka: “Yeah ...yeah I really do.”

FVM: “What do you do when you feel guilty?”

Maleeka: “Say sorry...and I’m, like...and then I help out.”

FVM: “Mmhmm.”

Maleeka: “Yeah.”

Maleeka has a sad tone in the exchange above, as if she is always letting her parents down. It isn’t acceptable to her that school sometimes takes away from her contribution to the household, which she equates with not helping out enough, and which further translates into a lack of appreciation for her parents. Similarly, Naila feels guilty that she does not show enough appreciation to her parents, and she often apologizes for being rude or disrespectful.

Naila: “Yeah I guess I don’t show it enough...but also, sometimes, like, you can become, like, rude to your parents. Like, if you’re not having a good day, sometimes you can be rude. But that’s, like, not fair because they do so much for us.”

FVM: “So what do you try to do to show them?”

Naila: “I definitely make it up after, and, like, say sorry. And then I help when, like, when my mom’s cooking. ‘Cause my mom has to work at work ...as well at home. So, I definitely try to help her at home, so she can get sleep. And then I help tutor...I tutor my brother because my mom and my dad are really busy.”

During the interviews, participants speak for a long time about school. They speak about their need to do well, and that their studying and high marks take priority over everything else – including friends, family, and their faith. Also, many participants speak about the pressure they face to ensure that their academic success leads to entry into university and eventually a successful career. Zahra, in particular, is very vocal about this topic and she mentions that the possibility of enrolling at a community college instead of a university is unthinkable and even shameful to her:

Zahra: “For most schools. Others you need a high 80 or a low 90. Like, it’s still pretty high. Like, I’m not going to go to Seneca college or Humber college. Like, no thank you. Right?”

FVM: “What would happen if you went to college?”

Zahra: “Oh no! That’s actually disowned.” (*laughs*)

FVM: “Do you personally not want to go to college?”

Zahra: “No I don’t think I would ever go to a college. I think that’s just for myself, I don’t want to be known as, like, getting a job after would be terrible...you didn’t go to a university, you went to a college!”

FVM: “What kind of reputation do you think you would get if you went to college?”

Zahra: “Pretty low. I think, I don’t even think my parents would tell people that I went there.”

FVM: "So they would be ashamed?"

Zahra: "*I* would be ashamed. Going to college just means you're not smart enough for University. Even if it's, like...like, you know Ryerson University? It's not considered very, like, high university, but it's still a university, it's better than going to a college.

That's why people apply to Ryerson - as a backup just in case."

Most participants subscribed to this hard-lined approach and two-tiered belief in higher education. And they expressed great disappointment if they were ever not successful in their present experiences at school. Naila believes it is very unfair when her hard efforts are not recognized with a good grade:

Naila: "I guess, like, let's say I worked really hard on a project, and I still get, like, not a great mark, and then my friend who doesn't work on the project that hard, will get a great mark. So then, like, it's kind of unfair because we all have different qualities and if we go past our potential and we still don't do good, it feels unfair."

FVM: "Why is it unfair?"

Naila: "Because we want to be rewarded for what we've done. So then, We want to be rewarded, but if we didn't do much work, then that doesn't feel good."

FVM: "So you feel that maybe you haven't been recognized?"

Naila: "Yeah."

FVM: "And that doesn't feel fair. Should people usually be recognized for something they worked hard for?"

Naila: "Of course. Hard should pay off. Even if it's not, like, a complete success. It should get at least recognized, so then you have more esteem to, like, work harder next time."

I link the idea that “hard work should pay off” to a parental narrative, which itself involves working very hard in a new country. It appears that Naila repeats this narrative in schooling. However, the internalization of this discourse is not one that Naila consciously traces back to her parents and family history; rather it is felt deeply and expressed symptomatically in her belief in the unfairness of school when she does not receive a high grade.

The feverish pursuit of high grades and success in life relates to the tension of assimilation that Ahmed (2010) links to the promised narrative of happiness; in this narrative, if you comply to the rules of successful citizenship, you will be happy and successful. As Ahmed (2010) writes, “education is an arrangement of circumstances in such a way that happiness is the result” (p. 129), but where that ideal is actually brokered on becoming “adjusted to *colonial* history” (p. 132). Participants of this study all stress that schooling is their priority in life; nothing else is to interfere with their high grades and they continually give examples where both family life and community participation took a back seat to performing well in school. Youth desperately want to be well adjusted to Canadian life, which is seen through their guilty assimilation to the demands of education and its colonial promise of happiness. For these youth, happiness, it would seem, carries the promise of allaying feelings of guilt associated with parental struggles of immigration. However, with Ahmed (2010), I expose the myth of this promise of happiness, for the youth of this study also harbour feelings of powerlessness to protect their parents from some of the more difficult aspects of life in Canada, exposing the crushing weight of this colonial narrative.

Powerlessness

The idea of powerlessness or helplessness when it comes to racism, discrimination, or ill treatment experienced from the external world was a common experience for the participants in

this study. Parental experiences of racism compound this feeling for Faheem, who discusses his responses to his father's negative experiences at work, and his inability to help him. When Faheem is asked if he has ever noticed that his parents have been treated unfairly, he shares a situation in which his father frequently gets undermined at work when it comes to decision-making and having his voice heard. While Faheem suggests that it bothers him that his father is treated this way, he adds that there is nothing he can do to help him:

Faheem: "Yeah. And then...um... go-you noticed your parents were treated unfairly...umm... there is an example I can think of... um, in terms of my dad, um, and I think that it's quite common...like I don't think it's quite common, but I'll say, like, that, it makes sense. Like, it makes sense what would happen. In terms of being treated unfairly."

FVM: "Ok. So what happened?"

Faheem: "Ok so basically, and this is just an ongoing problem, more than a small situation, but basically, it's, like, my dad is the only brown guy in like, who works in that ...in his department. And with a whole bunch of white guys, who are much older than him, so he's young and he's brown. And so, he isn't treated ...not necessarily the same, but as respected, he's kind of, like, undermined."

FVM: "How do you know this? Does he tell you this?"

Faheem: "Yeah. So, he doesn't um, so it frustrates him in a sense. And you can tell he's treated unfairly um, and that's the only time I've actually seen that happen since...again, quite tolerable time...but there are those small things that you see...happen. Or you hear about happen. Recently."

FVM: "Have you ever seen it happen or it's just what your dad tells you?"

Faheem: "I haven't seen it happen, really, but it's from what he tells me...he tells."

FVM: "Does it bother you that he's being treated that way?"

Faheem: "Obviously it does, yeah. But, yeah, is there anything you can do about it? Not really."

FVM: "Is there nothing he can do?"

Faheem: "Not really. If you think about it, your hands are tied. You can't really. Like you can say, no. But you're just going to get people mad at you. So, you might as well keep your head down, do your work. 'Cause at that point, you can't like.... if people are bothering you, you can't say, well I'm going to fight you on this, because...um, because, I'm ... 'cause you're doing this. Then, they'll get a little more mad at him. So, he might as well say, you know what, I'll keep my head down, do my work, and you guys can do whatever you want, I don't care. "

FVM: "What kinds of things do they do?"

Faheem: "Well, they will, just like, undermine him in decisions. And they're like, well....and of course, respectfully, because they can't really be like, um.... but they're like, oh well.... I don't really think that's such a good idea, we'll do this instead. They'll kinda, like.... And he doesn't have much of a choice, he'll be, like...um...they're like, oh we'll bring this person to the meeting instead of you."

Faheem admits that it "obviously" bothers him that his father is not treated fairly at work, but then admits his powerlessness when he states that there isn't anything that he or anyone else can do about it. His detailed description of his father's situation indicates not only that he knows difficult details from his father's life, but also that he is able to reflect upon the thought process of someone in his father's position, reasoning that "you might as well keep your head down, do

your work...". He repeats himself and says this twice in slightly different words. This articulation makes me wonder if this is a strategy that Faheem also internalizes. I later ask him if he thinks when he is older, he will have to face this type of situation as well. He responds with great ambivalence, first saying that it is "possible," then that it is "probable," and then ending with "there's a chance it won't be, or happen:"

"Depends on how the world changes. Because clearly, it's a very possible thing, you look at the US, look here even. And, like, that example, not just the US, it can happen anywhere, and honestly, depending on how the world changes, and how much it diversifies. It kind of, like, just has... I guess, everyone's the same, and how much that happens, and how many that affects, it's very possible and probable...and very probably that it will happen, if the world is the same. Which it probably won't be. So, there's a chance it won't be, or happen."

This ambivalent response has great anxiety in it, but also melancholia, which can be seen in Faheem's inability to clearly differentiate between his life and his father's life; he seems sure but unsure at the same time in his responses when he attempts to consider if his life would face racism, as his father's. His sharing of his father's story shows that he is greatly affected by his father's trauma and feels that it is best to just endure the mistreatment because his father "doesn't have much of a choice." Like his father, he seems to have already mentally prepared for the world to racialize him and also has prepared a strategy of how to handle it. Although his father is facing a situation in which he feels powerless, Faheem shows signs in his language that he, too, feels powerless in his life as he has no control over how the world will treat him when he reaches adulthood. In so doing, Faheem has incorporated the trauma of his father into the foundation of his identity, a marker of the melancholic state (Schwab, 2010)

Working Through Loss: The Case of Jenna

Jenna shows signs of working through melancholia and into mourning, which can be understood as one that allows the ego to grieve and eventually let go of the lost object; where there was a sticky (Ahmed, 2010) attachment to parental loss taking shape in guilt and anxiety, mourning facilitates new attachments such that, “the ego becomes free and uninhibited again” (Freud, 1917, p. 245). Mourning is comprised of a painful acknowledgement of loss and how the world is affected by its absence. Jenna, for instance, is highly descriptive when she articulates the loss of closeness to her father and recognizes a changed relationship with her parents:

“When I was younger, I was kind of like my dad’s partner, so I feel, like, as I’m getting older, that’s where I feel disconnected the most...is I, like,...sometimes trying to be that son that he never really had, or whatever. But he’s never ever said that, like, he’s very proud of like, that he has a girl, and he’s so happy that I’m his daughter. So, it is... I do admit that a little bit is kind of in my head. Umm... and I feel that also makes me a little bit disconnected from my mom, because she doesn’t agree with that attitude.”

Jenna admits that she feels a distancing from her parents and is able to find the language to express this growing separation. In mourning, she feels the loss and is able to identify what it is that causes her pain. Precisely because she embodies this separation, she also finds connection; she realizes that her father is still proud of her and happy to have her as a daughter. Jenna is able to articulate her thoughts even further in the same narrative, as she continues to express her feelings, explaining to me that she is sharing this with me “because it’s been a little bit of an ongoing issue” for her:

“The reason why that came to mind, is because it’s been a little bit of an ongoing issue for me. Umm... just sometimes not being that person that my parents want to see...

like... I don't think they intentionally express it when it comes to certain things, but that always seems to be the.... bottom line, for any problem we have in our house. Otherwise we always get along, like, we're a family that gets along really well. Spending time together. But the only time I ever see is just not communicating to each other, not connecting with each other, is because of... umm... something like that."

Jenna speaks slowly, and although at length, she sometimes sighs, and her body language shows that she is pensive and working through her thoughts. She weighs her feelings and thoughts on the topic, admitting that, sometimes, she is not "that person that my parents want to see" but at the same time acknowledges that "we're a family that gets along really well." Her comments are without the idealization, suggesting that she is capable of articulating the loss of any perfect relationship with her parents and with herself. Although she sometimes feels sadness about her relationship with her parents, she seems accepting of the loss and seems close to letting go of it. In the quote that follows, Jenna expresses a poignant sadness that she is not able to fully communicate her feelings to her parents, and she notably does not attempt to explain this away with a happy narrative. She does not have the heart to admit to her father that his close relationship with her male cousin is creating a distancing between them:

"So I don't get sympathy from my mom with that, and I have a hard time ever admitting that to my dad that this is kind of like how I feel when you're so close to your nephew. But how do you tell your dad, don't be like that, when he's expressed to you that: *I want to be this for my nephew because no one was that for me.*"

Jenna seems to have accepted her limits in this situation, that she is not the singular, idealized object of her father's love. Although Jenna would like to feel close to her father, she knows that asking her father not to be close to her cousin is her own Oedipal wish, and which would hurt her

father. Just as her narrative suggests a tone of acceptance of her father's attachments outside, she also seems to have accepted the idea that she, too, cannot always please her parents. In letting go of her parental attachment, Jenna shows the close relationship between working through the Oedipus complex, which I am reading as a work of mourning the loss of her parents.

FVM: "Do you think they have high expectations of you? Too high?"

Jenna: "If they do... they've never forced it on me. But... *sometimes it feels like that* (*softly spoken*). But if I were to, like, *go up to them* (loudly spoken) and express to them, they wouldn't turn around and be like, well, we've never done that. They would probably just turn around and be like, well how can you say that, like, we've always been in your corner, and if we've ever made you feel like that, it's not intentional, you know what I mean? Like, I've got really good parents, but yeah... sometimes it I don't think high expectations, but more of, like, sometimes I feel like... *a little bit of a disappointment...* (*said quietly*). So not like, oh, I've never met your expectations, more of like, I don't think I had a chance. Like, I think, just, right off the bat, there was just ... I was meant for a different path. And I'm all for it, I'm all for the hard work, and I have my own, like, story with it, and everything, and that's what I'm saying, like, I would not trade that creative, hard struggle I've gone through for an easier path, but ... I... just not knowing what's going to happen in the end... it's just... *it sucks* (*said quietly*)"

Jenna appears to show an appreciation for having "really good parents" but at the same time, seems to be distancing herself from them when she speaks of embracing her own story and talents, which may be different from her parents' wishes. In doing so, Jenna allows a space to grow between her parents' expectations of her and her own, a space that is fraught with grief and

sadness, evidenced in her change in tone and volume when she expresses that she feels like a disappointment and that “it sucks.”

However, hers is not a melancholic sadness that refuses the loss. Jenna’s affliction is not one that overpowers her, nor does it melancholically draw her to a halt. Her loss is sad, but it is sadness that she can acknowledge, make meaningful through using stories and examples, and narrate with understanding and hope. She shows empathy for her parents and is able to realize the different positions that she and her parents hold on particular issues. Although Jenna feels guilt at times for feeling distant from her parents, her guilt does not leave her feeling empty and at fault; rather, her guilt is one that leads her to realize her parents’ positive intentions, giving her hope that although there is some distance between herself and her parents, the love and care that exists in her relationship with them remains. Where melancholia feverishly holds fast to lost objects, mourning lets them go and in so doing, creates a durable bond across the abyss that is our human condition. As seen in this chapter, for other participants, melancholia is apparent in incomplete thoughts, expressions of self-reproach, and the internalization of their parental suffering. Jenna does not show the intensity of these qualities, nor is she ambivalent in her communication of her sadness. She is reflective, analytical, and expressive in her thinking.

Through the examination of the stories of the Ismaili Muslim adolescents, this chapter showed that the Ismaili Muslim youth participants of this study are struggling to let go of their parents as well as the traumas and difficulties of their parents. I speculate that their parents’ struggles have been internalized, demonstrated in their admissions of guilt, ambivalent responses, their extreme closeness with parents, and idealized pursuits in schooling. With the exception of Jenna, participants portray a melancholic state of being, which, as they have stated, creates high levels of anxiety and emotional pain. I believe educators have a role to play in

responding to melancholia in students, in order to help their personal struggles and losses move to a productive and less painful state, one that allows adolescents to recognize their loss and speak about it. For these second-generation Canadians, emotional pain is at many points unspeakable and difficult to articulate. In these cases, educators can attempt to find creative ways to help students acknowledge difficult parts of themselves and their family so that these parts can enter into the realm of language, where they can be better understood and shared with others, rather than encased in fear and anxiety. While this task of moving to mourning from melancholia ultimately resides with the adolescent, schooling can certainly play a part in welcoming students' stories. Schools can create opportunities for students to creatively work with their stories in their writing assignments, drama performances, and other arts-based subjects. For example, when students are asked to select a novel to read for English class, they may be encouraged to select a writer who shares a common heritage to their own, or when completing a research assignment, students can include a personal connection component and perhaps incorporate their own family stories and events in their work. These gestures acknowledge and validate a student's history, positive and negative, and allow spaces for students to move to a state of mourning by working through their losses and struggles instead of asking students to keep their pain inside. This labour is important so their pain is not continuously re-experienced and repeated like an open wound, but rather, is acknowledged to allow a less painful state of healing.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

I think that the way to create change would most likely be through Muslim voices ... And I think the more we talk about, um, the more that we as Muslims we talk about our journeys, and our paths, and what we've had to incur, I think through that, people will become more respectful.
(Imran)

Imran's words in his quote above succinctly express the hope of this dissertation: to create conditions in which Muslim voices and experiences can be heard and more importantly, understood from their perspectives. In conducting this research, my aim has been to explore more deeply the emotional world of Shia Ismaili Muslim adolescents and to share snapshots of their life, in the hope of better understanding their identities and the struggles they face in the context of a multicultural city in Canada. It is my hope that this nuanced understanding will encourage a more critical reflection on how to notice and better create welcoming spaces for youth in the communities and societies in which they live. In this final chapter, I distill insights from my research that I believe could change how we think about Muslim youth, as connected to larger issues relating to ways of seeing, teaching, and doing research.

Overview of the Study

My inquiry began with my interest in deepening stories of resistance among young Muslims in Canada in response to Islamophobia and environments of prejudice and discrimination (Bullock & Nesbitt-Larking, 2013; Eid, 2002; Nagra, 2011; Zine, 2001). This resistance can be interpreted as a type of resilience; the ability to affirm one's identity despite the difficulties that one may face. However, I also wondered about aspects of the emotional world that resist representation in this narrative of resilience because both I and the students with whom I interacted for this research felt a range of difficult emotions when our identities were questioned in public spaces, even if we rarely spoke of these feelings. Rather, we would engage in strategies or defenses – such as the happiness defense or the impulse to educate – that, while

portraying a sense of resilience, also conceal a layer of anxiety of feeling misunderstood, labelled, or mistreated (Freud, 1926). The purpose of this study has been to investigate such difficulties and so to examine how Canadian-born Ismaili Muslim youth narrate a fulsome range of their emotional experience, including isolation, anxiety, guilt, anger, and sadness in contexts of prejudice and discrimination. I used a multi-disciplinary approach by combining concepts from cultural studies and psychoanalysis, thereby positioning the work in the field of psychosocial research (Gadd & Jefferson, 2007; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Not only did Pitt and Britzman's (2003) study on difficult knowledge guide the questions of my interviews, their psychoanalytic orientation to qualitative research supported my interest in the ways young people narrate what is difficult to represent about emotional experience.

Summary of Research Findings

My findings show that most Ismaili youth appreciate their faith and consider it to be a significant part of their identity; however, their "Muslimness" is often a difficult marker to carry due to internal and external pressures affecting their sense of belonging and overall acceptance in public spaces. These pressures took shape in insinuations of "being fine" even while fearful of others' judgements, in the anxiety of not belonging while embodying multiple identities, and in the melancholia felt in relation to the losses and traumas of their parent and family histories. As seen in previous chapters, participants' responses indicate feelings of anxiety accompanied with a sense of not feeling included or understood at school and with their peer groups. Feelings of isolation and loneliness were also common for participants, and they often felt distanced from their friends and teachers. On the other hand, in at least one instance, when an authority figure showed interest or knowledge of the Ismaili Muslim community, there was a sense of surprise and shock: perhaps an incredible need to disbelieve in the existence of a supportive other.

Parents were a notable exception to this rule. Participants not only felt very close to their parents, but also to their parents' traumatic experiences of difficulty and loss. This deeply-felt emotional connection to parental traumas often resulted in guilty feelings that they were not doing enough to help their parents, or feelings of powerlessness when it came to how they would be received by the world when they became adults.

This representation of Muslim identity as defended, lonely, and anxious is not often addressed or spoken about in the media; quite the contrary, the common Muslim is typecast as violent, unpredictable, and dangerous. As a response to these overly negative perceptions, participants often took it upon themselves to educate others around them about these falsely-held prejudices. Despite their pleas to be understood, participants were, paradoxically, not immediately forthcoming of their difficulties with being Muslim. Rather, they tended to exaggerate how positive their experiences as a Muslim in Canada have been. After having given this "disclaimer," however, they then delved more deeply into their experiences of discrimination and discomfort with the negative attention that being Muslim often conjures. Even so, they appeared to be careful to not come across as ungrateful, or dissatisfied with their life as a Canadian, which they continually acknowledge is a more fortunate experience of citizenship than in other countries. Across all these tensions, there is little elbow-room for error or mistakes. The youth of this study suggest that being Muslim while being young means having to take on great responsibility while feeling guilty for not doing enough and having to be good even when constantly encountering stereotypes that convey the opposite.

Returning to my discussion in chapter four, it would seem that Arendt's natality is not available for the Ismaili Muslim youth in this study because of the hostile climate directed towards Muslims in many North American cities, including Toronto. Under the weight of worn-

out narratives of Muslim identity, they cannot be born anew because they are born into a religion, race, and culture that are often marginalized and not well understood. As such, they are often denied newness and subject to old narratives of hate and discrimination that precede their coming into the world. The youth are caught in between what they believe they should be (a happy citizen) and what others think they are (a threat). For many youth in this study, the outcome of this way of living is not actually a state of happiness, but rather one of frustration and sadness.

Approach to Research

My inquiry into the life worlds of Ismaili Muslim youth utilized focus groups and in-depth interviews. I adhered to the overall guidelines and procedures of qualitative research (Morgan, 2008) and also sought to creatively adapt and nuance my research approach to include a psychoanalytical lens. This lens helped to inform all stages of the research, including the way in which I approached the research design, formed interview questions, took notes during the interview, transcribed the data, and later analyzed the transcriptions. Inspired by Derrida's proposition of discourse as providing "the possibility of play and substitution" (p. 7), Lapping (2011) argues that the articulation of psychoanalytic concepts within research can also be articulated in multiple ways as a sort of "'free play' of ideas or signifiers" (p.7). This idea was prominent in my attention to multiple meanings conveyed in participants' word choices, silences, and bodily gestures. Throughout, my analytic frame allowed for interpretations that lifted up the play of signification, and an active effort to listen to youth narratives not "as one unified idea, but rather as a conceptual structure that permits many articulations" (Lapping, 2011, p. 9). As seen in my data chapters, this psychoanalytic approach allowed me to become sensitive to moments when participants were quiet, when they laughed, when they repeated words or stories,

when they contradicted themselves, and when they shared experiences that were difficult to say out loud. In other words, I analyzed both what the participants said in relationship to how they said it. Throughout my analysis, I found that “abstracted conceptual structures...open[ed] up an ontological space that [permitted] multiple particular articulations” (Lapping, 2011, p. 177). As this was a multi-disciplinary study, I also utilized a cultural studies approach to identity where I hoped to bring forward the narratives of a minoritized group in Canada. In this way, this psychosocial approach to research expands psychoanalytic concepts to understand how they are rendered in the context of Muslim youth narratives and in turn, how cultural subjectivities are impacted by both their inner psychic worlds as well as a shared social world (Gadd & Jefferson, 2007). Truth be told, my research would have overlooked a large component to identity if I had not sought to investigate the internal psychic world of the participants.

The Emotional World of Faith

Educational research greatly benefits from a psychosocial methodology as it provides a more holistic portrait of the complex emotional processes at work in subjectivity, narrative, and becoming. The participants of this study show that the emotional world is too often neglected in classrooms and schools. Participants shared experiences of being bullied and singled out at school, and tellingly, they never considered confiding in their teachers about the event. It was only their parents whom they felt could understand, and even then, many did not confide in them in all situations. The participants of this study often felt alone, overly anxious about their grades, and tended to accept their feelings of alienation, not being good enough, and misunderstood as commonplace instead of signs indicating the need for closer analysis of how unwelcoming social contexts affect mental health. Given that educational spaces are emotionally-charged spaces filled with struggles, expectations, desires, and refusals (Britzman, 2015a), this study urges

teachers to be curious about the emotional situations of young people in our classrooms, and life itself. Creating an open atmosphere where the inner world is, at the very least, given attention and time, would very much benefit all students, particularly those struggling with parts of their identity that are not always welcome in public spaces.

A specific area of tension that surfaced in this study is the difficulty of acknowledging loss and struggle in educational contexts. Schools continue to operate on the mythic, and colonial, engines of progress that are forgetful of painful histories. The educational arena, as Stillwaggon (2017) writes, more often supports “an ideal of progress so invested in the future that it produces the past as merely the object that must have been overcome or completed in order for the subject to succeed” (p. 31). Against this backdrop, classrooms may unintentionally suppress and limit a young person’s attachments to her past, including her culture and heritage. According to the dominant narrative, learning means the past must be given up. However, as this study shows, young people’s identities are greatly influenced and created from their parents’ stories, which include parental traumas and struggles. Thinking with the youth of this study, education might be reframed not as a site of successful assimilation (arguably, they already know how to do this too well), but rather as part of a set of conditions and relationships in which young people can be supported to find creative outlets where they can acknowledge the struggles of their family, as well as their own, so they can learn not in spite of them, but because of them. Without this acknowledgement and support, there would seem to be few chances for resolution and transformation. As the youth of this study tell us, growing up is connected with consistently feeling guilty, under pressure, and isolated because of their unacknowledged histories and conflicted identities that are neither understood nor welcome not only in schools, but society at large. It is time, I suggest, for schools themselves to mourn the fantasy of progress in order to

support youth in the labour of working through inherited traumas and struggles, such as by inviting youth to share their stories and embracing difficult histories in school curricula and artistic symposia.

Diverse Expressions of Faith

The data strongly indicates that media stereotypes intersect and intertwine with school cultures very closely. The commonly held assumption that religion and politics can be kept out of classrooms and the public arena is no longer pedagogically sound, if it ever was. A responsible and just inquiry into the often inaccurate and sweeping portrayals of faith communities and racially-profiled groups is needed to better support youth to navigate the stereotypes that surround their lived realities. Such support is needed also from within the category of Muslim itself. The youth of this study share an overwhelming number of negative experiences with other Muslims, particularly Sunni Muslims. Youth report that they are frequently told that their faith practices are not valid, and as a result, they are not “real” Muslims, intensifying feelings of alienation. Not only do they already feel excluded from dominant Canadian society, they also feel ostracized from the larger Canadian Muslim community. Because Sunni Muslims represent the majority of Muslims in the world, and the Shia are a small minority within the faith of Islam, there tends to be an over-emphasis on the portrayal of the Sunni perspective in public media and in schools. In Canada, an emphasis on inter-faith understanding and acceptance is needed, in order to help mitigate the inter-faith tensions inherited and acted out among young people who come from different faith perspectives within one community. The idea that Islam has many interpretations is rarely given expression in mainstream representations of being Muslim, and almost never in public spaces in Canada. The youth of this study broaden the definition of a Muslim, and any faith believer for that matter, and

urge us all to consider what it means to welcome a diverse range of perspectives within borders of identity and community. In narrating conflict within the community, the youth of this study break the myth of a singular, universal category of being Muslim. But if being Muslim involves conflict, the question is, too, how conflict can be narrated in ways that restore natality, rather than compliance.

Gender and Sexuality: When Omission is a Finding

Notably, the issue of gender did not emerge as a dominant theme in my exploration of Muslim identity. There were times, however, when these dynamics emerged, if in passing or implicitly. Participants themselves articulated differences in the ways in which men and women are understood in public spaces and how gender may affect the defenses young people use to respond to prejudice and unfriendly interactions. For example, there was a general awareness that it is “more difficult” to be a Muslim boy because of the increased perception that boys are more dangerous or prone to violence than girls. Interestingly, this theme emerged organically in the participants’ responses even while gender was not included as an interview topic. Indeed, participant responses indicate that faith identity is necessarily gendered and often emerging obliquely. For instance, discussions of whiteness emerged only among the female participants, indicating that young Muslim women are affected by entrenched racial stereotypes of beauty and belonging. It is also notable that female participants of the first focus group tended to fall silent, while the friendships of the second focus group seemed to invite the contributions of female participants, sometimes at great length. Methodologically, this finding suggests that familiarity within a group setting may support young women to express themselves and also feel heard. But it also suggests that silence says something about what it means to be a woman. All told, a focused study on gender of the Ismaili Muslim adolescents and how perceptions of gender

impact the ways in which youth relate to each other both inside and outside of the community would help shed light on specific gender nuances affecting Muslim youth identity.

Relatedly, sexuality was not mentioned by the participants. I suspect this is because sexuality is often considered a taboo subject within many Muslim communities (Sanjakdar, 2013; Zain al-Dien, 2010). However, particularly in Western contexts where this study was carried out, sexuality is constructed as an important aspect of one's identity formation, and especially in adolescence (Gilbert, 2014). Not only can sexuality affect one's sense of belonging, it positions identity as embodied in relationship to desire (Britzman, 2006). Gender and sexuality often present "limits, dilemmas, pleasures, and strange turns of events" (Britzman, 2006, p. 113) to one's development and maturation. If youth are feeling marginalized or isolated because of their sexuality in addition to their Muslim identity, a closer study on the emotional worlds of youth can deepen understandings about the difficulties and defenses they creatively mobilize in the embodiment of desire.

At the same time, I propose that the silence of youth on this topic is itself a finding that disrupts the common expectation that adolescence and sexuality go hand-in-hand. As an insider researcher, I may have intuited this tension and did not think to inquire into the realm of sexuality when I was constructing my questions. Yet, although I did not include specifically tailored questions of sexuality and gender, there was plenty of room for participants to bring these topics up as they wished. However, their silence (and perhaps also my omission) may be read as showing us how sexuality is affected by various factors such as culture and external pressures impacting the level of import that youth place upon this experience and idea. That sexuality did not take a prominent place in the youth narratives of this study may also suggest

that other experiences, such as race and racism, are felt as more pressing. Significantly, they were not shy to discuss many other topics that may be deemed private, or personal.

Final thoughts

As I collected data for this study, I noticed that the participants often answered questions after stating, “wow that’s deep,” or “I haven’t talked about this before,” suggesting that youth often do not have spaces to speak about the dramas and difficulties of their lives. For minoritized youth, so much of their days are dedicated to keeping up with the dominant culture and ensuring that they fit into their friend groups and public spaces – so much so that their own stories and narratives often get left behind. I suspect that this is not only the case of Shia Ismaili Muslim youth, but for many other minoritized cultural or faith groups in Canada. Studies on youth living in Canada who consider themselves part of a faith group that is not accepted or fully understood by others may generatively surface dynamic tensions, such as my study does, that break down hardened stereotypes and humanize emotional extremes without resorting to discourses of criminalization. Although the feeling of not belonging and being misunderstood may be common in adolescence, these experiences are much more pronounced and impactful when youth realize it is their skin colour and/or religion that are the sources of this isolation, and these feelings will likely carry forward with them in adulthood. Studies such as this one are a positive step forward since they finally allow youth not only a space to speak, but a forum to be heard.

But while it may be tempting to settle conflict with the right education, the “wows” of the participants of this study suggest something less consoling. Indeed, they repeat the shock of feeling understood, which suggests that even lending an understanding ear will not settle conflict. In giving representation to conflict, this study shows how the meaning and embodiment of faith, too, cannot be settled. A psychoanalytic study of youth rather suggests that faith

identity, while very often outwardly marked and excluded in contexts of Islamophobia, is impacted and changed by internal processes called up in this context. At the same time, internal conflicts, such as feelings of powerlessness, isolation, or loneliness, do not only remain inside; they are brought forward to the outside and help formulate perceptions of the world that youth are struggling to join. A world that constantly alienates youth, and that misrepresents their faith, invokes hardened interpretations of it as unchanging and cold, even when youth sometimes experience encounters that challenge this view. For participants in this study, faith is something that needs to be defended, hidden, and sometimes left behind in order to feel accepted and at least safely invisible as an “outsider” in spaces of schooling and society. The emotional labour of becoming for these youth is indeed a labour filled with guilty feelings of not being good enough, having to portray a happy stance in order to avoid confronting prejudice, and even shouldering the responsibility of educating racist others. While the youth of this study show signs of resilience, in that they use their defenses to help them navigate a complex social world, feelings of isolation, are, too, part of their emotional world that interrupt the inclusive multicultural Canada they also narrate. Their narratives behoove us to imagine a different response to Muslim youth, one that can loosen up narratives of their resilience or survival to find out at what costs they are struggling to exist in a world of too much hatred.

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Appendices

Appendix A-1: Focus Group Questions

On chart paper/board, the following two questions will be written down. Participants will be asked to think about their responses silently, after which volunteers will be asked to share their thoughts, to begin the discussion.

- A) What comes to your mind when you see the words, “Ismaili Muslim”?
- B) What about when you see the word “Canadian”?

For the discussion that follows, these questions will be posed to the focus group:

1. What is it like to be a Muslim and a Canadian at the same time?
2. Do you have more Muslim friends or non-Muslim friends?
3. Can you share an experience of when you spoke to your non-Ismaili friends about your faith and religion?
4. How are Muslims viewed at your school? in the media?
5. In general, do people understand the religion of Islam? How can you tell?
6. Do you think people are more receptive to hearing about what it means to be a Muslim from an actual Muslim or are they more likely to believe what they hear in the media?
7. Have you spoken to your teachers about the Aga Khan Museum or the Aga Khan? Do you think they know what these are?
8. Can you share an experience of when you spoke to your teachers at school about being Muslim?
9. If you could change something about your school or your teachers, what would it be?
10. Do you think there is any prejudice or discrimination in your school? How can you tell?
11. Is there anything you wish people knew about the religion of Islam?

Appendix A-2: First Individual Interview Questions

This interview will explore 6 categories, with some guiding questions for each category.

Depending on the nature of the conversation and the participant's experiences, some questions may receive more focus than other questions.

A) Being Ismaili Muslim

1. For you, what is it like to be an Ismaili Muslim? Tell me about an experience that you've had that stands out to you.
2. Do you feel that non-Ismaili friends and people in your life understand your world as an Ismaili? How can you tell?
3. Have there been any difficulties or misunderstandings when it comes to explaining your religion to others?
4. Who do you feel understands you best?

B) Islam in conversation

5. Do you ever get nervous when people talk about the news?
6. Do you ever feel you need to hide your religion from others?
7. In your experience, how does living in Canada impact being Muslim?
8. How often do you speak to your parents about Islam and being an Ismaili Muslim?

C) Parental experiences

9. Have your parents ever been treated differently because of their identity?
10. Do you parents speak to their friends and co-workers about Islam and being Muslim?
11. Have your parents had more positive or negative experiences when it comes to expressing their Muslim identity in Canada? Can you share one of each?

D) Challenges with Identity

12. If you ever felt like you were not being treated fairly at school because of your religion or ethnicity, what would you do?
13. Would you tell your parents? What do you think they would say or do?
14. Do you think it is challenging to be a member of a minority group? (both race and religion?)
15. Do you think that people from minority groups struggle more than non-minority groups? In what way? Why or why not?

E) Faith and Expression

16. For you, what does it mean to have faith in your life?
17. How do you express your belief in your religion?

18. How do your parents express their faith? Is this similar or different than how you choose to express your faith?

F) Language, Culture and Community

19. What languages do your parents speak? What languages do you speak?

20. Do you wish you could speak any other languages?

21. How would you describe your culture?

22. Do you feel you share the same culture as your parents? How or how not?

23. How is your life different, as an Ismaili Muslim, from your parent's experience of being an Ismaili Muslim?

24. How often do you go to *Jamatkhana*? Is this usually a positive or negative experience? Why?

25. Are you part of any Ismaili community events? How would you describe your participation?

Appendix A-3: Second Individual Interview Questions

Participants will be given these questions and asked to reflect upon the prompts before the second, and final interview. These prompts are based on Pitt and Britzman's (2003) thought experiment questions for their study on difficult knowledge. These prompts will guide the second interview, where participants will be encouraged to share and describe their experiences.

1. Thinking about breakdowns in encounters with others:

Times when...

- You have felt misunderstood at school or in your community
- You felt let down or disappointed by others
- Someone failed to respond the way you wished
- You experienced acceptance or non-acceptance based on your identity
- You wished something was different about your life
- You felt understood and cared about by an authority figure

2. Thinking about your relationship with your parents:

Times when...

- You understood and felt the struggle of your parents
- You were upset by your parents' response to a problem
- You felt disconnected from your parents and their experiences
- You felt appreciative and close to your parents
- You noticed that your parents were being treated unfairly
- You noticed your parents' lives are different or the same as yours

3. Thinking about experiences with hostility or confusion

Times when...

- You were afraid that someone would judge you or treat you unfairly
- You felt attacked by others
- You stood up for yourself or others
- You experienced confusion or dislike of your religious customs, rituals, or practices
- You had nothing to say
- You felt lost or were falling behind
- Knowledge overwhelmed you
- You did not want to learn about your faith
- The world seemed unfair

Appendix B-1: Informed Consent Form (For participants 16 and over)

Informed Consent Form

Date:

Study Name: *Who am I?: The Emotional Situations and Identity Constructions of Canadian-born Ismaili Muslim Youth*

Researcher name: Farah Virani-Murji

Dear Ismaili adolescent,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at York University and I am the Principal Investigator (researcher) of a research project on Ismaili youth. In this informed consent form I explain the research project and your rights should you consent to your voluntary participation. Please complete the attached permission form, if you agree to participate in this study. Only individuals who have agreed to participate will be involved in the study.

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to better understand the experiences of Ismaili youth and how they see their identity and faith, the interests they have, and the challenges faced.

My main research question is: *How do second and third generation Canadian Shia Ismaili Muslim youth construct their identity and understand their faith, culture, and citizenship in Canada?* The findings of the research will be presented in my dissertation.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

If you choose to participate, the study has two parts. You will be invited to participate in a group discussion composed of a total of 5-7 youth. The discussion will last for about 60 minutes. Part two of the study will involve half the participants being randomly selected to attend 2 individual interviews. Each interview will last for 60 minutes. The total time commitment will be approximately 3 hours, spread out over the course of 2 months. The focus group and interviews will be scheduled at an agreeable time and will be held at *Jamatkhana*.

Risks and Discomforts:

There are no known risks for participating in this research. However, some of the questions you will be asked will require you to think about and discuss instances of struggle, misunderstanding, Islamophobia or discrimination, which may cause some potential discomfort. As a response to this possible emotional distress and/or discomfort, you will be given opportunities to speak to me further about your feelings if you choose to, either before or after the interview, and you will also be provided with the Aga Khan Social Support Services Hotline number in case you wish to speak to a trained professional, in a confidential and anonymous space.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

The benefits of this research include the possibility of gaining knowledge about the self and one's identity as a Shia Ismaili Muslim in Canada.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

During the focus group and interview, you may choose to refuse to answer any question. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time without penalty. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Documentation and Confidentiality

I will be audio recording all interview responses and I will be taking some notes. I will not be video recording any conversations.

All names used will be changed to insure anonymity and you will not be identifiable in the research. Audio recording will not be shared with anyone else except the researcher (Farah Virani-Murji) and it will be stored in a password protected external hard drive, and in a private filing cabinet in a locked room in the researcher's home. The data will be stored for 10 years (until January 2028) in a secure place, after which it will be deleted and destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions about the research?

If you have questions about this research in general, or your role in this study, please feel free to contact the principal investigator or supervisor noted below.

Principal Investigator: Farah Virani-Murji, PhD Candidate,

Supervisor: Dr. Lisa Farley

The graduate program office in Education may also be contacted for any questions about this study.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I, _____ (participant name), consent to participate in the study *Who am I?: The Emotional Situations and Identity Constructions of Canadian-born Ismaili Muslim Youth*, conducted by Farah Virani-Murji. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Name of Participant: _____ Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Permission for Audio Recording

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature _____
Principal Investigator

Date _____

Please submit this signed form to the principal investigator if you wish to participate

Appendix B-2: Substitute Consent Form (For parents of participants under age 16)

Substitute Consent Form

Date:

Study Name: *Who am I?: The Emotional Situations and Identity Constructions of Canadian-born Ismaili Muslim Youth*

Researcher name: Farah Virani-Murji

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at York University and I am the principal investigator (researcher) of a research project on Ismaili youth. In this substitute consent form I explain the research project and your rights should you consent to your child's voluntary participation. Please complete the attached permission form, *if you agree to participate in this study*. The attached "assent form" should also be completed by your child. Only individuals who have agreed to participate will be involved in the study.

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to better understand the experiences of Ismaili youth and how they see their identity and faith, the interests they have, and the challenges faced.

My main research question is: *How do second and third generation Canadian Shia Ismaili Muslim youth construct their identity and understand their faith, culture, and citizenship in Canada?* The findings of the research will be presented in my dissertation.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

If you agree and your child chooses to participate, the study has two parts. Participants will be invited to participate in a group discussion composed of a total of 5-7 youth. The discussion will last for about 60 minutes. Part two of the study will involve half the participants being randomly selected to attend 2 individual interviews. Each interview will last for 60 minutes. The total time commitment will be approximately 3 hours, spread out over the course of 2 months. The focus group and interviews will be scheduled at an agreeable time and will be held at *Jamatkhana*.

Risks and Discomforts:

There are no known risks for participating in this research. However, some of the questions your child will be asked will require your child to think about and discuss instances of struggle, misunderstanding, Islamophobia or discrimination, which may cause some potential discomfort. As a response to this possible emotional distress and/or discomfort, your child will be given opportunities to speak to me further about your feelings if he/she chooses to, either before or after the interview, and he/she will also be provided with the Aga Khan Social Support Services

Hotline number in case he/she wishes to speak to a trained professional, in a confidential and anonymous space.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

The benefits of this research include the possibility of gaining knowledge about the self and one's identity as a Shia Ismaili Muslim in Canada.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

During the focus group and interview, your child may choose to refuse to answer any question. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time without penalty. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Documentation and Confidentiality

I will be audio recording all interview responses and I will be taking some notes. I will not be video recording any conversations.

All names used will be changed to insure anonymity and your child will not be identifiable in the research. Audio recording will not be shared with anyone else except the researcher (Farah Virani-Murji) and it will be stored in a password protected external hard drive, and in a private filing cabinet in a locked room in the researcher's home. The data will be stored for 10 years (until January 2028) in a secure place, after which it will be deleted and destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions about the research?

If you have questions about this research in general, or your role in this study, please feel free to contact the principal investigator or supervisor noted below.

Principal Investigator: Farah Virani-Murji, PhD Candidate,

Supervisor: Dr. Lisa Farley

The graduate program office in Education may also be contacted for any questions about this study.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions

about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I, _____ (parent/guardian name), consent for my child, _____ (child name), to participate in the study *Who am I?: The Emotional Situations and Identity Constructions of Canadian-born Ismaili Muslim Youth*, conducted by Farah Virani-Murji. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Child's Name: _____ Child's Date of Birth: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____ Relationship to Child: _____

Signature of Parent/ Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Permission for Audio Recording

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my child's interview(s).

Signature of Parent/ Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature _____ Date _____
Principal Investigator

Please submit this signed form to the principal investigator if you wish to participate

Appendix B-3: Assent Form (For participants under 16)

Assent Form: For Participants (Under age 16)

Title of research:

Who am I?: The Emotional Situations and Identity Constructions of Canadian-born Ismaili Muslim Youth

As a teacher, I am continually learning about the lives of my students, and the realities of Ismaili adolescents living in Canada. I would like to learn more about how you understand your identity and your faith, and how you feel that others in your life understand who you are.

I will be studying your responses to questions around your perceptions and feelings about being Ismaili Muslim in Canada, and also to questions regarding any struggles or challenges you have faced with your identity.

What will happen if you agree to be in this project?

If you decide to be a part of the project, you will be asked to attend one focus group interview for approximately 60 minutes, and possibly two individual interviews, which will last for 60 minutes each. The total time commitment will be approximately 3 hours, spread out over the course of 2 months. The focus group and interviews will be scheduled at an agreeable time and will be held at *Jamatkhana*. If you agree to participate in this project, I will use your responses to better understand the narratives and experiences of Ismaili adolescents. I will write a research paper, called a dissertation, based on your responses, in order to fulfil the requirements of my doctorate degree (PhD) at York University. All of your responses will be kept confidential and will also be anonymous.

Who will know that you are in this project?

If you agree to be in the project, all of your responses will be kept confidential. Only me and other focus group participants will know you participated in this project. However, when I write about your responses, your name will be changed, and the name of the *Jamatkhana* you attend will be changed, as well as any other names that could identify you. This is to protect you so you can freely express your feelings and thoughts without the worry that anyone else will know.

Do you have to share all of your thoughts?

No. You can decide which questions you want to answer and don't want to answer. You can do this by telling me that you do not want to share your thoughts to a question when I ask you.

Are there any risks?

There are no known risks for participating in this research. However, some of the questions will require you to think about and discuss instances of struggle, misunderstanding, Islamophobia or

discrimination, which may cause some potential discomfort. Because of this, you will have the opportunity to speak to me further about your feelings if you choose to, either before or after the interview, and you will also be provided with the Aga Khan Social Support Services Hotline number in case you wish to speak to a trained professional, in a confidential and anonymous space.

How will your responses be documented and kept confidential?

I will be audio recording all interview responses and I will be taking some notes. I will not be video recording any conversations.

All recordings will be stored in a password protected external hard drive, and in a private filing cabinet in a locked room in the researcher's home. The data will be stored for 10 years (until January 2028) in a secure place, after which it will be deleted and destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

What if you do not want to be in this project?

No one will get angry or upset with you if you do not want to be in this study. You can tell me if you don't want to be in the study. Also, if you agree to be in the study and then change your mind, you can tell me and you will not be part of the study anymore. This means that I will not use any of your responses in my research.

You can ask questions at any time.

IF YOU WANT TO BE PART OF THE PROJECT, WRITE YOUR NAME AND SIGN ON
THE LINE BELOW.

I understand what this study involves, and I agree to participate.

Your name: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____