

**In Search of Home: Family Literacy Practices among Iranian Refugee and Immigrant  
Families**

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis presents a case study of the family literacy practices of an Iranian refugee family and an Iranian immigrant family, both with a young child (aged between 6-9) in Canada. It also identifies the Iranian immigrant and refugee families' beliefs about perceptions of their first language (L1) and second language (L2) (English, Farsi<sup>1</sup>) as well as the needs, resources, barriers, and expectations for addressing their children's early literacy development. This study addresses a gap in the research with Iranian minority families and draws attention to difference between refugees' and immigrants' family literacy practices, considering Ogbu's differentiation between voluntary/involuntary migration.

The study was informed by sociocultural theories of literacy and literacy as a social practice. Data collection included participant observation, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and collection of artifacts such as children's writing and drawing. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) with a focus on literacy events. The refugee and the immigrant children shared various literacy practices shaped in their social communities by their family, peers and teachers. However, the children differed in terms of their home literacy practices which were shaped by their parents' experiences, social position, migrant status, and cultural and social capital. For example, the immigrant family viewed literacy as a skill that needed to be taught and learned, ensured the child practiced at home, and provided tutoring. The refugee family did not expect the children to practice literacy skills at home and was unable to provide tutoring. While the voluntary migrant family ensured the children maintained their first language, the involuntary migrant family did not. Consistent with Ogbu's hypothesis the child

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<sup>1</sup> Also referred to as Persian, which is the predominant language of Iran

from the voluntary migrant family performed well in school while the child from the involuntary migrant family struggled. Contrary to Ogbu's hypothesis, the involuntary migrant family was eager to acculturate into the dominant society whereas the voluntary migrant family was less so inclined, maintaining strong links with their homeland, and its culture and language. The findings of this study have implications for future research, families and educators.

## **Lay Summary**

The purpose of this study was to document: the ways in which Iranian immigrant and refugee children (aged between 6-9) learned literacy after their move to Canada; what parents thought of first language and second language learning. Both the refugee and the immigrant children spoke Farsi at home and engaged in various digital literacy activities that helped them develop their reading and writing skills. However, the immigrant family were able to provide more resources and support for their children than the refugee family for their children's learning. The immigrant parents emphasized practicing reading and writing at home while the refugee family believed learning occurs at school. The immigrant child was doing well in school while the refugee child struggled. The refugee family was interested in assimilation in the society by learning what Canadians do and think, while the immigrant family was less concerned with acculturation.

## **Preface**

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Mahshid Ghaffartehrani.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

First language: L1

Immigrant Services Society: ISS

Investor Immigration Plan: IIP

Second language: L2

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: UNHCR

British Columbia: BC

Behavioral Research Ethics Board: BREB

English as a foreign Language: EFL

Registered Education Saving Plan: REPS

Secondary School Admission Test: SSAT

United Nations: UN

Entertainment Software Rating Board: ESRB

Permanent Residency: PR

Low Socioeconomic Status: Low-SES

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my family. Thank you for your patience, understanding, compassion, forgiveness, and support. I recognize the sacrifices you all have made in order for me to complete this thesis. Mehdi, thank you for understanding my need to grow academically and for providing me with the time, financial support, and resources to focus on my program. Mom and Dad, thank you both for believing in me and supporting me as I fulfilled my dream of studying far away from you. Alireza, my dear brother, thank you for being my first motivator to pursue a master's degree in Canada.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The global displacement of people increased drastically in 2015, with record-high numbers. By the end of the year, 65.3 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, war, or human rights violations, 5.8 million more than the previous year (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016).

Around the world, some children are lucky enough to be a part of a family and be permitted to thrive and prosper in the community. But there are many children who do not have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. For example, many refugee children with significant ability, talent, desire to learn, strong work ethic, and the love and support of family, unfortunately, cannot avail of support and services considered important for development and learning. Their families are particularly disadvantaged; they worry about survival, getting deported, keeping safe, and helping their children learn until they are provided with formal education opportunities. Immigrant children too, tend to come into their new country with divergent skills, knowledge, talent, interest, and love and support of the family but these children have different levels of access to support and services that can help them develop and learn in a new country. Their families are more advantaged; they typically have prepared themselves and their children for immigration before moving to a country, and they are more aware of the sociocultural circumstances they are going to face.

### **1.1 Background of the Research Problem**

Refugees and immigrants experience psychological dilemmas to different extent. In leaving their country, both refugees and immigrants face a loss of identity due to minority assimilation and acculturation as they become detached from the cultural practices embedded in their language and cultural values while affiliating in the new society. Refugees and immigrants

sometimes encounter a sociocultural mismatch between their ways of socializing in the community and those of the society to which they move (Li, 2010; Mansfield, 1995; McCarthy, 1997). They may also have difficulty adjusting to the new education system in their new country of residence, new conceptions of literacies, and dominant ideologies which may be very different from those in their homeland.

Ogbu (1993) distinguishes between *voluntary migration* where people (e.g., immigrants) move of their own volition and *involuntary migration* where people (e.g., refugees) have little or no choice in the decision to move. A close look at the literature and the Citizenship and Immigration Canada statistics shows that there were not many Iranians living in Canada until the victory of Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, when the first Iranian immigration wave occurred (Bagheri, 1992). The people moving out of Iran were mainly skilled and self-sufficient individuals who were fluent in English and familiar with Western culture. The second immigration wave occurred in mid 1980s concurrent with the Iran-Iraq war. This group of people consisted mostly of young, unskilled refugees who had little or no command of English and were separated from their closely-knit families (Bagheri, 1992). Also, the statistics of Iranian-born migrants living in Vancouver between 1980 and 2000 reveals that there has been a clear distinction between economic and political migration, categories which are similar to voluntary and forced displacements (Swanton, 2005). The increase in immigrants from Iran may be attributable to the skills shortage identified in Canada in the 1990s. As well, the “brain drain” in Canada, which resulted in the revision of immigration policies and expansion of opportunities for international students to pursue higher education, likely contributed to growth in the Iranian student population (DeVoretz, 2006). According to the Immigration and Refugee Board of



Canada, Iran has ranked among the top 10 countries with the highest refugee acceptance rate in Canada (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015).

Many reasons have been identified as to why people migrate including socioeconomic well-being, overall opportunities, greater political/religious freedom, and escape from wars (Ogbu, 1993). Such circumstances shape families' socioeconomic status, sociocultural background and influence their ways of being and thinking. Refugee and immigrant families have differential access to educational resources and to cultural and social capital (Lareau, 1987). These differences are thought to play a significant role in learning opportunities (e.g., literacy) for minority families. Inequality in terms of cultural and social capital are associated with social class differences in refugee and immigrant families which result in refugee and immigrant children having different school experiences. These differences also provide refugee and immigrant families with unequal access to various material and other resources for supporting their children's literacy learning (Lareau, 1987).

Involuntary minorities often encounter risks and experience considerable trauma when fleeing/moving out of their country. They also face transitioning difficulties in adjusting to new cultural requirements, language use, concepts or perceptions of literacy learning and teaching, social relations, and thinking styles of their new country (Ogbu, 1995a). However, voluntary minorities, due to a longer application process, have more time to become aware of and consider sociocultural differences and prepare for any difficulties they may meet. Therefore, they tend to encounter fewer adaptation problems in their new country (Ogbu, 1995b).

Regardless of families' socioeconomic status, sociocultural background, and differential access to cultural and social capital, researchers have found that most families support their children's learning and literacy development at home (e.g., Friedrich, 2016). However, families

from different cultural backgrounds have different ways of supporting their children's development and learning. For example, Rogoff (2003) illustrated how middle class, U.S. families structured their children's conversations during shared, picture-book reading. She showed how parents adjusted their prompts to children's understanding level as they developed. Dorsey-Gaines and Garnett (1996) demonstrated that African American elders, despite their low literacy, also supported their grandchildren's spiritual learning and Bible reading using their extensive knowledge of the Bible. If the young readers missed words or verses while reading the Bible, the elders would help fill in the missing information. Volk and de Acosta (2001) reported how Puerto Rican parents taught their children numbers, letters, and how to write their names before attending school, through explicit instruction. Perry (2009) shared how Sudanese refugee families in her study used television to learn English. Not all of the families shared a common belief of how learning is best achieved and developed, and they used divergent methods in supporting their children's learning.

Scholars working within a sociocultural framework have documented the contributions parents make to a child's literacy development as being influenced by their beliefs about literacy acquisition/learning (Anderson, 1995a). Anderson explored the orientations to literacy acquisition in three different cultural groups. The Chinese-Canadian parents in his study engaged their children in the direct teaching of literacy skills, demonstrating a more traditional orientation to literacy learning than the Indo-Canadian and Euro-Canadian parents in the study (Anderson, 1995a). Li (2009) drew a connection between Chinese parents' ways of engaging their children in school-like literacy events based on their own experience of literacy learning in their native country. Li (2009) and Mui and Anderson (2008) illustrated how the Chinese and South-East Asian parents in their respective studies, facilitated their children's literacy learning through skill

and drill worksheets and workbooks, along with other activities and strategies. Volk and de Acosta (2003) documented how the three Puerto Rican families in their study engaged their children in a blend of school and church literacy and cultural-related home literacy activities. They described how the families borrowed practices and the texts from church to improve their children's reading, as well as to engage in Bible reading. Anderson and Gunderson (1997) in their study with parents of elementary-aged students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (including Iranian-Canadian parents) found that many of the immigrant families believed that their children learned through rote memorization. Non-Euro-Canadian parents emphasized the role of accuracy in learning to read and write, and the importance of assessing children's understanding, for example, when reading a story with them. Taken together, these studies illustrate how families from diverse cultural and linguistic groups have different perceptions of literacy learning and teaching and tend to support their children's literacy development in different ways.

On another level, researchers have documented and described the minority families' literacy practices with attention to mainstream or school or dominant conceptions of literacy (Anderson & Gunderson, 1997; Au, 1980; Au & Jordan, 1981; Heath, 1982; Li, 2009, 2010; Mui & Anderson, 2008; Purcell-Gates, 2007, 2013; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Volk & de Acosta, 2001, 2003). For example, Au (1980) explored the culture of schooling in Hawaii and argued that it is more similar to the culture of white middle-class families rather than the cultures of non-mainstream or marginalized families. Au and Jordan (1981) posited that for school instructional events to be culturally appropriate and inclusive, they need to: be comfortable for the children, be comfortable for the teacher, and promote academic skills acquisition. Therefore, schools need to be more inclusive of, and responsive to, the beliefs, cultural knowledge, and

values of marginalized families. Purcell-Gates (2013) documented the ways in which literacy mediated the lives of farmworkers whose children attended the Migrant Head Start Program in the United States. Despite children's exposure to various early literacy experiences, the literacy practices offered in the pre-school setting were based on "practices that are predominant in Western educated families" (Purcell-Gates, 2013, p.92). She attributed the cultural mismatch between home and school to "a profound lack of knowledge on the part of curriculum developers, program directors, and teachers of the lives and activities of migrant farmworkers, and how they are mediated by literacy practices" (p.92). Moreover, Tharp and Gallimore (1991), in their study with underachieving minority children in North American schools, commented on "conventional schooling not being compatible with the natal cultures of many of the nations' people" (p.276). They proposed that schools would succeed only when they became "designed to provide teaching and learning for all members of the educational institution" (p.277).

The research documenting families' literacy practices have focused on a number of cultural groups including Sudanese (e.g., Henning & Kirova, 2012; Perry & Moses, 2011), Bangladeshi (e.g., Gregory, 2001; Ruby, 2012), Chinese (e.g., Kendrick, 2005; Li, 2003, 2009), as well as, Spanish-speaking (e.g., Souto-Manning & Dice, 2009; Volk & de Acosta, 2003), with the majority of families being identified as immigrants (e.g., Gregory, 2001; Li, 2010; Mui & Anderson, 2008; Reese, 2009). Few studies have involved refugees (e.g., Friedrich, 2016; Perry, 2009). Some researchers (e.g., Bagheri, 1992; Ghazinour, Richter & Eisemann, 2004; Mobasher, 2006) have documented the psychological challenges and sociocultural complexities experienced by Iranian refugees and immigrants in Canada. As well, a few scholars (e.g., Aghaei, Lie, & Mohd Noor, 2015; Sadeghi, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008) have explored Iranians' perspectives of education, identity, and adult literacy practices both in and out of Iran. However, there is a dearth

of research in the area of family literacy practices involving Iranian immigrant and refugee families with young children. Addressing this gap in the literature is important because studies as such as this one will shed light on sociocultural and socioeconomic factors and circumstances that impact Iranian children's literacy learning in Canada and other western countries. In this study, I have looked deeper into two variations of Iranian minority families (refugees and immigrants) and examined the similarities and differences between immigrant and refugee families' literacy practices at home and their relationship with "school literacy" as reflected in curriculum documents in British Columbia.

It is for the following reasons that I chose to conduct the study with Iranian immigrants and refugees in the context of Canada:

First, as mentioned above, Iran has ranked among the top 10 countries with the highest refugee acceptance rate in Canada (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015). Second, both immigrants and refugees, who often do not have the resources to establish themselves in Canada easily, are provided with broad settlement services to support and enhance successful integration (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014). This support is a major factor in selecting Canada as a destination for many Iranian refugees and immigrants (Sanasarian, 2006). Third, Iranian international students are motivated to apply for immigration after graduation due to less stringent immigration rules for top international graduates from Canadian universities, again contributing to the Iranian diaspora in Canada (Swanton, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to document the family literacy practices in an Iranian refugee family and an Iranian immigrant family, both with a child aged 6-9 living in an urban area of British Columbia. As well, the study examines Iranian immigrant and refugee families' beliefs about, and perceptions of, first language (L1) and second language (L2) literacy learning,

and their identified needs, access to resources, barriers they encountered, and expectations they have for their children. Finally, the study examines and documents the similarities and differences between Iranian immigrants' and refugees' families' literacy practices, considering Ogbu's differentiation between voluntary/involuntary migration. voluntary/involuntary migration.

The documentation of Iranian immigrants' and refugees' families' literacy practices will add to the limited literature on Iranian family literacy practices and to the emerging literature on family literacy practices in the homes and communities of immigrant and refugee families. It should help to understand these practices in terms of their "fit" with school literacy in Canada and other western countries, and how cultural capital and sociocultural factors such as voluntary/involuntary migration, religion, and socio-economic status relate to Iranian immigrants' and refugees' families' literacy practices. I did cross-case comparisons between the two families through the lens of sociocultural theories of literacy (in relation to power and positioning) and literacy as social practice (in relation to context and relationships). The findings of this study will have implications for practice, research and theory.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The following research questions shape the frame, data collection, and analysis of this study:

1. What are an Iranian immigrant family's' and a refugee family's' perceptions, beliefs, identified needs, resources, barriers, and expectations in terms of their children's literacy learning? How do these factors relate to their practices?
2. What literacy activities and events do the children and families engage in at home and in the community?

3. What are the similarities and differences in literacy practices and beliefs between the two families? How do the similarities and differences relate to Ogbu's notion of voluntary/involuntary migrations?

Following noted sociologist John Ogbu's notion of *voluntary/involuntary migration*, I am documenting how families' migration status is related to their access to resources, their literacy practices, and by implication, children's early literacy learning.

### **1.3 Significance of Study**

This study addresses a gap in the literature on Iranian refugee and immigrant families' beliefs or perceptions of language and literacy learning and their literacy practices, in both L1 and L2. First, given the fact that children's home literacy experiences affect their responses to conventional literacy instruction and predict their language and literacy proficiency (Adams, 1994; August & Hakuta, 1997), a better understanding of refugees' and immigrants' beliefs and perceptions of literacy, as well as the literacy activities and events in which their children engage is of great importance for educators. Second, the socioeconomic, racial, and residential detachment of minority children, impacts the kind of education they receive (Kozol, 2004; Li, 2005; Orfield & Lee, 2005). Therefore, a premise underlying the current study is that the findings will provide grounds to advocate more effectively for minority Iranian families in Canada (and especially refugee families) by increasing awareness of the sociocultural, historical, and differences in the ability to access resources and services among these families. Third, knowledge of different literacy practices among Iranian families is a first step in helping educators and school literacy programs respond appropriately to individual and cultural variations. The study contributes to the knowledge of the literacy experiences of voluntary and

involuntary minorities and has theoretical implications as well as practical implications for early childhood educators.

## **1.4 Key Terms**

For the purpose of this study, I define the words/phrases “immigrant,” “refugee,” “family literacy,” “digital literacy,” and “multimodality” as follows:

### **1.4.1 Immigrant**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (n.d.) defines an “immigrant” as “a person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born and has acquired social ties to this country (p.1).” Immigrants, personally make the decision to leave their home country based on internal factors such as seeking better/different education or occupation, better living standards, or escaping the difficult sociopolitical system in their home country.

### **1.4.2 Refugee**

According to the United States of America for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (n.d.), a “refugee” is “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence (p.1).” These are external factors that lead to refugees’ displacement.

### **1.4.3 Family Literacy**

Family literacy is defined as sociocultural practices associated with text in multiple communicative forms that occur within the daily lives of families.



#### **1.4.4 Digital Literacy**

According to the British Columbia's (BC) ministry of education (2015), "digital literacy" is the ability to use digital technology to communicate, access, comprehend and transfer information.

#### **1.4.5 Multimodality**

Multimodality refers to the different modes of meaning-making – "Linguistic," "Visual," "Audio," "Gestural," and "Spatial" that are part of and needed for communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 7).

### **1.5 Organization of Thesis**

There are 7 chapters within this thesis. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework and a literature review. I draw on sociocultural theory of literacy and literacy as a social practice to establish the framework. In chapter 3, I introduce the research participants and describe the methodology. I explain how I recruited the participants, the procedures for data collection and analysis, as well as my social positioning. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 presents the findings in regards with my research questions and a comparison of the families. In Chapter 7, I discuss my findings and offer implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with an explanation of sociocultural theories of literacy (Street, 1984; 2003). Sociocultural theories of literacy aim to describe how social positioning and power structure within societies and help explain different family literacy practices. Within this framework, I draw upon the construct of literacy as social practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; 2003). Within this perspective, literacy is viewed not just as cognitive linguistic skills but as social practices that vary from one context to another in terms of function or purpose, meaning, and learning and teaching. Through the lens of sociocultural theories of literacy, I was able to consider the factors in participants' social positioning (e.g., gender, religion, power, etc.) to examine the differences and similarities in Iranian refugees and immigrants' families' literacy activities and events. The literacy as a social practice frame allowed me to focus on the refugees' and immigrants' traditional, multimodal, and digital literacy actions based on their sociocultural circumstances, family interactions, social relations, perceptions, and beliefs of L1 and L2 literacy learning. It allowed me to identify the similarities and differences between the minority Iranian refugee and immigrant families' literacy events based on their minority group status (Ogbu, 1993).

In the second half of this chapter, I present a literature review on literacy in non-school contexts, and then canvas the literature on non-mainstream, low-SES (socioeconomic status), and Iranian families. My review not only, points to the need for studies with Iranian minority families, but also emphasizes a need to consider any differentiation between Iranian immigrant and refugee families' literacy practices. Further exploration of these literacy practices at home

and in the community, provides educational systems with a more comprehensive understanding of how literacy learning takes place/is viewed in different sociocultural contexts.

## **2.2 Theoretical Perspectives**

### **2.2.1 Sociocultural Theories of Literacy**

Sociocultural theory of literacy is based on the premise that “higher functions originate as actual relationships between the human individuals” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57). Within sociocultural theory, learning is seen as social; children learn to use cognitive tools, including language and literacy, in the context of family and community. These tools are first mediated by parents and significant others (e.g., grandparents, relatives, caregivers, etc.) inter-psychologically (e.g., language use around the child); then, this support is gradually withdrawn as children learn to use the tools intra-psychologically (e.g., thinking) (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning first occurs socially through interactions in the home and community and then reoccurs individually as individuals internalize higher order functions (e.g., Wertsch & Rogoff, 1984). The social interactions are located within the child’s zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1978) argued that through interactions and cooperation with peers, and adults, learning occurs and cultivates a variety of internal developmental processes such as comprehension. In terms of literacy, comprehension is a higher functioning skill that demands “knowledge — both about the world at large and the worlds of language and print” (Fielding & Pearson, 1994, p.62). For example, a child learns quickly where to stop riding a bike when approaching a “Stop” sign, based on her knowledge of the world and what the sign signifies. According to Rogoff (1984), social interactions reflect the “intercultural tools and skills of the culture” (p.4) and further mark the child’s ability to excel in other contexts out of home. In a parallel fashion, Duke and Pearson

(2002) identified skills such as making predictions, summarization, and asking questions as factors in improving a child's school reading comprehension. They argued that children could gain these skills from their experiences within, and outside of, school. For example, parents from middle class homes in Canada typically provide children with opportunities to acquire or learn literacy knowledge in their daily lives as they shop, drive, work, attend church, mingle with friends, write shopping lists, or read the street signs to find an address.

On one hand, children learn and develop as socially interacting within their own environments and homes. Children's early socializations, "scaffolded" by a significant other, transform them into literate beings actively participating in their own learnings. On the other hand, parents from different social classes participate in their children's school learning differently (Lareau, 1987). Different access to social, cultural, and economic resources caused by different social class leads parents to construct different educational pathways for their children. As a result, through the lens of sociocultural theories of literacies, families are not "deficit" but are "different" in providing their children with the learning opportunities. Therefore, educators need to be aware of these pathways taken by families and concepts taught in the home so that school learning can be built upon them. In the following section, I more fully address the construct of literacy as social practice.

### **2.2.2 Literacy as Social Practice**

Within the perspective of literacy as social practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984), literacy is not only viewed as cognitive skills, but also as a blend of social and cultural practices (e.g., Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010). Literacy as social practice theories have been mainly influenced by Street's study in Iran (1984) on various ways that reading and writing were used for different purposes in people's daily lives.

Street differentiates between the “autonomous” and “ideological” models of literacy. In the autonomous model, literacy is assumed to be a set of skills that people either possess or not and are transferable from one context to another. It is assumed that people are either literate or illiterate, and those who are illiterate, are often seen as deficient. On the contrary, the ideological model frames literacy as set of contextual practices (rather than skills) that are “inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society” (p. 433). Street’s (1984) explanation of the ideological model of literacy (as opposed to the traditional autonomous view of literacy) focuses more on the definition of literacy as a social practice which requires the recognition that literacy is different across time, space, and social position. Therefore, literacy is a set of tasks people do with reading, writing, and texts in real world contexts and includes people’s motivations. To get a better understanding of a family’s literacy use, one needs to “capture” families as they engage in daily literacy events which are influenced by culture and by their social and economic status. Further, Barton and Hamilton (2000) argue that literacy practices are an inseparable aspect of people’s values, beliefs, and sociocultural positioning. They exist between people, different communities and social groups rather than only residing in individuals (Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

As such, reading and writing are embedded in each family’s daily life and is subjected to change as sociopolitical circumstances change. For example, a Muslim family who has found Christianity as a way to salvation would adopt different literacy activities such as reading Christian themed books or watching Christian themed series, and so forth. They would also likely abandon previous literacy activities such as reading Koran or saying prayers in Arabic. If this newly Christian family is forced to flee elsewhere, due to the fear of prosecution in their

Muslim home country, their new location/country would give them access to different literacy resources and activities.

Drawing upon Barton and Hamilton's (2000) work, I differentiate between "family literacy practices" and "family literacy events". "Family literacy practices" include families' general perceptions of literacy and what they "do" with literacy. Therefore, they need to be inferred from observable literacy activities or events. On the other hand, "family literacy events" are the actual observable activities or tasks that families engage in around texts. As Barton and Hamilton (2000) explained, "Events are observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them." (p. 8).

Children as an integral part of families acquire different "discourses" as they experience different social circumstances along with their families (Gee, 1989). According to Gee (1989), "discourses" are "a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write" (p.127). Discourses such as "refugee," "immigrant, etc." position children/families differently in the social structure of a community, resulting in different identifications. How families identify themselves helps define what they do around text. Barton and Hamilton (1998) stated that children learn literacy skills from social interactions at home, school, and in the community and then simulate those learned literacy practices while playing games, interacting with peers/significant others, creating artifacts, etc. Literacy practices are dynamic and changing and rooted in the past, just like the lives of people engaged in them.

These perspectives - sociocultural theory of literacy and literacy as a social practice - suggest that language and literacy are not mainly patterned within the scope of classrooms; they are learned from an early age and in connection with family and community; literacy activities

and resources vary drastically among families; the functions and purposes of texts also differ in families across time, space, and social class and position. In addition, some families' literacy practices are aligned with school literacy practices whereas some are different. In general, family literacy practices represent the underlying social status of the family and where they stand in the community. Children tend to represent their ethnic, cultural group in the literacy activities they engage in during play, in communicating, and so forth. In this regard, minority families such as refugees and immigrants are social entities with different literacy practices than the common white middle-class practices in North American context. Their literacy learning actions, and perceptions are affected by their sociocultural displacement, their histories, and social class. As they are introduced to and take up new practices through sense making, informal learning, and formal school learning, they sometimes create *syncretic literacies* (Duranti & Ochs, 1997) — “intermingling or merging of culturally diverse traditions [which] informs and organizes literacy activities” (p. 4) — rather than new practices.

According to Ogbu (1993), the prerequisites to understanding minorities' academic performance in developed countries are: first, to differentiate the types of minority groups (based on their immigration status, beliefs, power dynamics, and social class); and second, to define the types of cultural differences. Immigrants or voluntary minorities (who willingly have moved to another society) – regardless of their primary cultural difference from the dominant majority – have fewer academic difficulties than refugees or involuntary minorities, who were forced to incorporate oppositional culture and identity as their frame of reference. Educational adaptation of involuntary minorities in some countries differs significantly from those of the voluntary minorities (De Vos & Suárez-Orozco, 1990). Involuntary minorities' devalued status in some new contexts, and their own assessment of potential for occupational success have resulted in

their lack of educational achievements which leads them to believe that no amount of education is enough for them to overcome the discrimination before them (Ogbu, 1991). On the other hand, children of voluntary minorities tend to achieve more academically than the children of involuntary families. This has been found in studies with bilingual students (including Farsi speakers from Iran) by Cummins (1984), Kerr (2004, 2007). They concluded that after a few years, immigrant children in Canada despite adaptation barriers and lack of language proficiency, tend to perform at or above the norm for non-immigrant students in almost all subject areas and significantly well in mathematics.

For this study, I am also guided by work on multimodalities (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). Multimodality entails the notion that there are many ways of meaning making, in addition to reading and writing, including “visual,” “audio,” “gestural,” and “spatial” modes” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). For example, to learn how to read and write children use any available meaning making medium in their context. They use different tools such as pencils, papers, scissors, TV, iPads, Tablets and engage in divergent meaning making practices including singing songs, drawing pictures, creating artifacts, watching TV, playing games, typing messages, etc. Kress (2009) cautioned that multimodality is not a theory but rather a field of meaning making. When viewed through the lens of social semiotic theory, it encompasses how signs (words, acts, symbols, sounds, pictures, etc.) convey meanings and results in learning. More recently, children also have become fully experienced with new digital media “in a variety of modes with myriad materials that are made of bits and bytes” (Yelland, Lee & O’Rourke, 2008, p.1). As the world is changing through the development in technology, children’s digital skills are growing. Therefore, this study is also guided by how digital technologies affect families’ literacy learning



and practices and considers similarities and differences in the multimodal, digital literacy activities of Iranian refugee and immigrant families.

Furthermore, I draw on Bourdieu's notions of social and cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986), identified cultural, social and economic capital as key elements in a person's ability to garner power and status in a society. Cultural capital consists of the knowledge and information on which a person acts. Social capital is comprised of relationships among people that afford access to institutions and the transfer of information (cultural tools). Economic capital includes financial opportunities that make convenient access to information. Both cultural and social capital are inextricably intertwined with economic capital. Two additional concepts to Bourdieu's capital theory (1974) are field and habitus. Field is the frame of reference in which the sociocultural interactions take place (e.g., home, the workplace). Habitus, refers to the assumptions and rules under which people operate, often without being conscious of them.

Bourdieu (2011) argued that unequal scholastic achievement originates in the unequal distribution of cultural and social capital. He maintained that, "the social yield of the educational qualification depends on the social capital inherited by the families" (p.83). That is, families' access to information (cultural capital) and relationships and connections with people (social capital) affect the support system they can provide to improve their children's school learning. Bourdieu (1974) argued that class distinctions among families include differences in the acquisition and use of both social and cultural capital. Parents from low-SES backgrounds have little access to cultural and social capital in comparison with parents from middle-class backgrounds. Laureau (1987, 2011), for example, has empirically shown differences in the schooling of children from working class and middle-class homes based on Bourdieu's constructs.

To understand the underlying nature of the family literacy practices in this study, I observed family-child interactions, family literacy events (including multimodal, multilingual and digital literacy activities) and their functions/purposes at home and in the community and asked about families' previous L1/L2 literacy events. This process enabled me to make inferences about family-child relationships, the family's role in the child's literacy learning, the family's previous and current L1/L2 literacy practices, and families' perceptions and beliefs about L1/L2 literacy learning.

### **2.3 Related Literature**

In this review of literature on family literacies, I focus on research with socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse families. The review of research on non-mainstream minorities, low-SES groups, and Iranian families helped identify the voids in research and contributed to the conceptual framework of this study.

Morrow, Paratore and Tracey (1994) defined family literacy as:

The ways parents, children and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Sometimes, family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children "get things done." These events might include using drawings or writing to share ideas; composing notes or letters to communicate messages; making lists; reading and following directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading and writing. Family literacy activities may also reflect the ethnic, racial or cultural heritage of the families involved (p. 3).

Consideration of the family environment as an educational setting has garnered much attention over the past several decades (Gregory, 2001; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Taylor, 1983).

Researchers in early literacy have identified a variety of literacy activities (e.g., shared book reading, playing school, telling stories, and asking questions) that occur in home contexts (Anderson, 1994; Anderson, 1995b; Li, 2006; Perry, 2009; Taylor, 1983). These diverse activities mediated by parents, siblings, and/or significant others shape children's early literacy experiences and many children enter school with various skills and knowledge as a result of these interactions at home (Cairney, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Taylor (1983), in her ethnographic study involving young children in six middle class families in the United States, argued that "literacy is a part of the very fabric of family life" (p.87) and centered in a child's "personal, familial, and social histories" (p.98). Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) further defined the role of families in family literacy practices as "active members in a print community in which literacy is used for a wide variety of social, technical, and aesthetic purposes, for a wide variety of audiences, and in a wide variety of situations" (p.200). They suggested the need for "socially constructed" research with families to change the stereotyped perceptions of "racial minorities" which entails involving families throughout the research process and doing research "with them", rather than "on them" (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 37). Some educators contend that families are a child's first teacher and provide the first and "the most essential educational environment" for their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, p.47). Therefore, families' literacy practices need to be documented as activities and events occur naturally in families' daily lives.

Several studies (e.g., Gregory, 2001; Lareau, 1987; Li, 2006; Mui & Anderson, 2008; Perry, 2009; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Purcell-Gates, 1997; Reese & Gallimore, 2000; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) have used ethnographic techniques to document literacy activities and events as they occur in daily lives of minority and low-SES families.

Regardless of families' socioeconomic status, sociocultural background, and cultural capital, researchers have found that most parents provide support for their children's literacy development at home. Purcell-Gates (1996), in her widely cited study, discredited the myth that a rich home literate environment is a by-product of only the middle-class. She discovered that families of low-SES used print for different purposes on a daily basis. She stated that although the amount and range of literacy occurring in low-income families vary even within this homogenous group, "by living and participation in an environment in which others use print for various purposes, children infer the semiotic and functional nature of written language" (p.426).

In conceptualizing literacy as sociocultural practice, minority families (e.g., refugees and immigrants) need to be viewed as different rather than deficient. Therefore, "the curriculums and educational plans must allow access to literacy for every single learner, regardless of social class, minority status, and parental education" (Purcell-Gates, 1997, p.191). Purcell-Gates (1997) conducted a case study with Jenny and Donny, a mother and a five-year-old son from the Appalachian region in the United States. The two-year long study with a "nonliterate family" (p.15) captured the process of how Jenny and Donny learned to read and write. The family had books at home; however, no one could read them. The Bible played a key role in settling moral and ethical issues and Jenny's knowledge of it had been acquired orally from her parents. Likewise, she transferred the Bible knowledge to her children orally. From Jenny's perspective, one would learn reading and writing, when working hard on the teacher given assignments. This was also evident in Donny's writing practices in that he only copied words from the books given to him by his teacher. In tutoring Donny and helping Jenny with school negotiations, Purcell-Gates compared minority children from poor homes, with lower literacy skills and various ways of incorporating literacy into their lives, with children from middle-class homes. She found that

children and adults in low-income, minority families have more difficulties in learning to read and write in schools that are designed to meet the needs of middle-class, literate families.

Purcell-Gates further spoke to significant literacy variation within families and described how a “deficit view” of families is formed when schools do not consider the strength and the needs of the families they serve. In a parallel fashion, Tharp and Gallimore (1991) undertook a case study with two teachers in a mentoring relationship in a research and demonstration school in the United States. They explained that it is challenging for underachieving Native Hawaiian minority children to prosper in North American literacy because, they possess certain patterns of natal life that do not provide the literacy training in the home on which American schools depend. Through the shift of teaching role from “analyzer of themes” to an “assistor of children who analyze themes” in reading classes, Tharp and Gallimore demonstrated the possibility of making schools a “community of learners” because teachers “reduce the distance between themselves and their students by constructing lessons from common understandings of each other’s’ experience and ideas” (p. 51).

Furthermore, researchers have highlighted the role of parents’ sociocultural background and socioeconomic status in shaping their perspective of children’s literacy development. For example, Li (2006) in her case study, documented the biliteracy (Chinese/English reading and writing) and trilingual (Mandarin, Cantonese, and English) practices in the home milieu of three, first and second grade, Chinese-Canadian children. She observed the children’s literacy environments, the parents’ symbolic values attributed to each language, the children’s choice of languages, and the different strategies that the parents used at home in support of their children’s literacy development. Li (2006) found a dynamic process in the choices and patterns of language use in the three homes. Children in all three families displayed a varied range of English and

Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese) use and literacy practices at home which spoke to the parents' various attitudes and supports of becoming biliterate and multilingual. Parents who viewed their presence in Canada as assets to Canadian society, valued Chinese language and culture significantly. That was because, these families came to Canada as investors, bought houses and cars, and spent thousands of dollars which gave them the confidence in their contribution. Parents who considered themselves as sojourners (guests in a friend's house who would not "jump in and take over" (p.10)) or perceived racial discrimination as barriers to their child's literacy advancement, paid more attention to speaking English at home and adapted their home literacy to those of the school. Li argued that home context and parental attitude play a key role in the success or failure of biliteracy development and pointed out the influence of English media on children's tendency to use English rather than their heritage language (Li, 2006).

Lareau (1987) documented the role of families' cultural capital in shaping children's school success. In a study in the United States with white working-class and professional middle-class families both with first-grade students, she examined family-school relationships. She found that in both communities, parents valued educational success and believed in themselves as supporters of their children's schooling. However, they supported their children's differently. She found that the working-class parents were reluctant to contact the school, and only tended to intervene over nonacademic matters such as children's drawings or games. They also reportedly read to their children less often and had difficulty understanding the school curriculum and any problems the children encountered. They depended on teachers to educate their children because they viewed education as a responsibility of teachers.

The middle-class parents provided more supervision for the schooling of their children. They attended school activities frequently and read to their children more often. They viewed

education as a shared enterprise and monitored their children's school experience regularly. Lareau's study showed the differences between the groups in terms of "parents' various educational capabilities, view of division of labor between teachers and parents, the information they had about their children's schooling, the time, money and other material resources available in the home" (Lareau, 1987, p.79). She argued that there is a link between parents' school involvement and their class position and the social and cultural resources available to them as influenced by their social class. She stated that the social class and culture create a form of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1977a; Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) in the school setting which leads both working and middle-class parents to construct different pathways to their children's school success. Therefore, in conceptualizing literacy as a sociocultural practice, we need to explore minority families' sociocultural background, socioeconomic status, and access to cultural and social capital, which impact their perceptions of children's literacy development and families' access to literacy learning resources.

However, families as powerful agents of adaptation can change their traditional ways of supporting their children's early literacy development as they participate in new societies. For example, Reese and Gallimore (2000) carried out a longitudinal project with non-mainstream Latino immigrants in two Spanish-speaking communities in southern California. They used data from two independent studies from this project: an ethnographic study with 10 Spanish-speaking immigrant families with kindergarten students and a case study with 29 Spanish-speaking immigrant families with kindergarten-aged children selected at random from a larger survey sample of over 120 immigrants. In both of the studies, the parents were first generation immigrants who came to the U.S. from Mexico. Reese and Gallimore found that the immigrant parents shared common literacy learning experiences in their native societies. The Latino

immigrant parents viewed reading and writing as the task of joining syllables, which the child learns formally at school through repeated practice. Therefore, they did not perceive children's early literacy experimentations such as pretend reading, scribble writing, and knowledge of letters and print awareness to be of developmental value and worthy of expansion. Latino parents treated reading aloud to a child as a task that begins with formal instruction at the "age of reason" (about 5 or 6 years old). Over a decade long contact with the immigrant parents, it became clear that their literacy development model although rooted in their past, was flexible. This was evident in the shift in reading practices which seemed to occur as a result of contact with the U.S. schools. Families did not regard the changes in their beliefs about and support of their children's literacy development as abandoning traditional values, but rather "sensible, functional, and adaptive responses to new circumstances that increased their chances of survival" (p.128). If reading to children at an early age meant a better chance of academic success, parents would comfortably abide by the teachers' suggestions. Reese and Gallimore (2000) speculated that the literacy perceptions and practices that the young children were likely to develop would be different from those of their parents, and more closely aligned with dominant, mainstream views conveyed by educators in the United States.

Perry (2009) also portrayed how literacy practices among Sudanese refugees are impacted by their experiences in the U.S. In a study with three Southern Sudanese refugee families and four focal children (two boys and two girls) in kindergarten and first grade in Michigan, Perry reported that the parents identified television as a learning device through which they learned English, and their children became familiar with new practices such as reading sports scores. Television also provided them with opportunities to enhance print literacy skills. After arrival to the U.S., the families continued reading and writing in Arabic as well as in



English. They read religious texts (e.g., Arabic-language Bible), professional and self-help texts, as well as community related texts (e.g., food labels) in Arabic. As well, they used Arabic for taking notes, and writing shopping lists. All the three families used English texts, sometimes requesting help with genres such as school correspondence. Perry found literacy brokering among the Sudanese family members to an important literacy practice in the U.S. She defined literacy brokering as “a process of seeking and/or providing informal assistance about some aspect of a given text or literacy practice. Brokers bridge linguistic, cultural, and textual divides for others” (Perry, 2009, p. 256).

The findings of her study suggested that all the three families engaged in reading various genres with their children including homework, children’s books, and text on TV screen. Interestingly, the Sudanese refugee children, provided brokering for their parents in form of oral translation for texts when their parents had difficulty understanding questions. They used texts to mediate understanding such as pointing to the label on the prescription medication or provided words for their parents when they stumbled over reading them. As well, they supported their parents’ ESL spelling homework by providing information about letter-sound relationships in English. Perry showed that literacy brokering engages children in authentic real-world texts which are different from parent-child shared reading, a practice in many middle class (Heath, 1983) homes and a mainstay of early literacy pedagogy in western countries. Brokering helped both refugee parents and children access the new literacy genres which eventually enhanced the literacy skills required for their new community.

As can be seen, a plethora of studies have documented parents’ roles in young children’s literacy learning, but more recently, researchers have also explored the roles of significant others including siblings (Gregory, 2001; Li, 2009; Mui & Anderson, 2008). For example, Gregory

(2001) studied the “synergy” between siblings with 46 children in 16 families in two disadvantaged neighborhoods in East London for a year period. Eight Bangladeshi and eight Anglo-Londoner families, each with a child between 9 to 11 and at least one younger sibling took part in the study. Gregory found a reciprocal literacy learning relationship between the siblings of both groups. Both sibling dyads learned and taught literacy behaviors and engaged in reading activities. The Bangladeshis-Londoners’ reading activities were embedded in playing school (with the old sibling being the teacher, questioning the younger one). However, the Anglo-Londoners’ reading practices revolved around bedtime storybook sharing (with the older sibling reading the texts to the younger one). Differences displayed in these two groups were as a result of families’ different cultural identity, language classes, and religions (Gregory, 2001). Similarly, Mui and Anderson (2008) documented the literacy practices of six-year-old Genna Johar, and her joint, Indo-Canadian household. Genna’s literacy learning was supported by siblings (as in Gregory’s 2001 study), cousins, and the nannies also played a significant role. School literacy practices were highly valued and used in forms of workbooks and practice exercises. The family’s heritage language (Punjabi) was used as a result of everyday contact with grandparents, aunts and uncles living in the same house. Mui and Anderson’s study challenged the common notion of the “nuclear family” and a middle class, Eurocentric “orientation to literacy” upon which many family literacy assumptions are drawn from (Mui & Anderson, 2008). Mui and Anderson (2008) suggested “As we continue to work with increasing numbers of children and families from different cultural groups, it is essential that we recognize and value the different ways that literacy is supported in homes and communities” (p. 10).

However, in the present day, Western school literacy practices represent the dominant values in the larger societal domain. The "funds of knowledge" of the home language and culture (Moll

& Greenberg, 1990), are generally not recognized nor are the “ethnic identities” of all people within the society (Li, 2000). Among these ethnic identities are the Iranian refugee and immigrant families with young children whose literacy practices, perceptions and needs have been relatively unexplored, although some scholars (e.g., Aghaei, Lie & Mohd Noor, 2015; Hornberger, 2007; Sadeghi, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008) have explored Iranians’ perspectives of education, identity, and adult literacy practices both in and out of Iran.

Research into the literacy practices of the Iranian people is beginning to appear in the literature. Sadeghi (2008), in a study with six first-generation Iranian immigrant women in Canadian institutions of higher education explored the situated meanings of literacy and lifelong learning. She found that for all of the participants, higher education/learning/literacy (used interchangeably) played a critical role in shaping their cultural and social capital. The immigrant women described the prestige associated with higher education within Iranian culture and society which symbolizes their success within their schools and communities. Sadeghi found that a major reason for pursuing literacy learning and education among Iranian women was the economic demands of life in the diaspora. However, the value of literacy learning and education were also rooted in the participants’ early sociocultural experiences at home and school in Iran. The women in the study reported that they used rote learning and memorization as a learning approach they acquired in Iranian education system for literacy learning. They contrasted these approaches with critical and analytical thinking in Western (Canadian) education systems and claimed that for success in Canadian education systems, they needed to adopt new learning approaches. Sadeghi’s study revealed that regardless of the immigrant women’s socioeconomic status in Iran, they all had experienced financial difficulties of some sort after immigration to Canada. These realities of life as an “immigrant,, and their previous sociocultural experiences in

Iran, influenced their perspectives of higher education/learning/literacy and influenced their adaptation to the education system in the host country (Sadeghi, 2008).

Hornberger (2007) explored ways in which immigrants' and refugees' adaptation to the school system affected their literacy practices and helped them develop new identities in the context of U.S. In her study with transnational multilingual youth and adults (both immigrants and refugees from Iran, Mexico, and Sudan), she explored the multimodal, multilingual literacy practices that are brought into, as well as developed in, the new context, and the effects of these practices on the transnational people's identity and social relations in the U.S. She used the term transnational because the immigrants and refugees physically moved across borders, yet maintained the literacy practices, beliefs, and perceptions that tie them to their homeland. Hornberger reported instances of multilingual language and literacy use such as tagging via graffiti-like inscription of names, or that of the country of origin in public spaces, branding by drawing attention to any kind of Mexican or Farsi-language reference on their clothes or accessories, and shouting out their place of origin. In addition, she documented growth in multimodal literacy practices such as blogging and webpage designing, all of which took on elements of the immediate U.S. context. Hornberger concluded that literacy practices such as reading assigned texts, copying, responding to known-answer questions, filling the blanks, and memorizing did not provide them with the agency, knowledge and skills necessary to address the daily challenges of the outside world. In other words, these literacy practices fell short on preparing the participants for a successful academic and socioeconomic future in the new country. These findings align with the arguments of (Aghaei et al., 2015; Koo, 2008; Gee, 1997) that literacy practices and identities associated with them are profoundly affected in the process

of globalization (e.g., forced, economic or political migration) and developed across time and space.

Mansfield (1995) documented the family literacy practices and identified the major concerns in terms of adapting to new environment of low SES immigrant adolescents over a six-month period in an urban school in Canada. Among the three male and the three female participants (all in grade 10), was an Iranian boy, Rashid, who had arrived in Canada 6 months prior to the study after a five-year sojourn in Sweden. He was one of a small number of Iranian immigrants at school who was not Muslim. His family decided to move out of Iran due to his father's career uncertainties and the unstable political climate, after the catastrophic war between Iran and Iraq in the late 1980s. Rashid's father used Farsi texts to pass on values associated with Persian culture to his children. For example, he read articles about both professionally and academically successful Iranians in America who spoke fluent Farsi and celebrated Iranian cultural traditions (e.g., Nowruz) to demonstrate the importance of valuing Farsi language and culture. Although Rashid and his older brother had not communicated with grandparents and relatives back in Iran since their move, their parents kept ties by corresponding with people in the home country. Rashid had not written in Farsi for almost 6 years and since arrival in Canada, only read and wrote in English to learn it better. However, he mentioned that he still used Swedish to correspond with his friends in Sweden. Rashid's father was the only person who read Farsi newspapers at home. The family also watched Farsi programs on the multicultural TV channel and listened to a weekly Farsi radio broadcast. Despite knowing several Farsi speakers in their community, the family did not see them socially because they were "offended by their attitudes toward life, or by their Muslim faith" (p.172). Therefore, Rashid's different religious orientation deprived him of opportunities to connect with other Muslim Iranians both at school and in the

community. Mansfield (1995) concluded that language acquisition, as the first layer of multidimensional adaptation, is rarely immigrant students' concern. Instead they consider "making friendship" in the new society as the main factor that reduces "uncertainty" and enhances "inclusion" in the new society (Mansfield, 1995, p.250).

Consequently, to better include Iranian minority children in early education programs and in school, we need to understand the cultural literacy knowledge/behavior (embedded in practices), and the literacy learning traditions Iranian families bring with them. Mercado (2005) believes that, with knowledge of the cultural background and practices of minority children and their families, teachers will be able to "build on and support bilingualism, multidialectalism, biliteracy, and language play for learning in the school" (p. 147). With insights gleaned from the current study and similar ones, educators should be better able to provide more appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, than has traditionally been the case (e.g., Purcell-Gates, 2017). As well, Iranian immigrant/refugee families would feel more included in the educational system as the understanding of their literacy practices at home/ in the community grows. Iranian families would also feel more confident to use their home language and cultural values as a scaffold to progress in literacy learning in Canada. On a broader scale, this study has implications for the early education of minority children.

In this section, I highlighted findings from the literature on family literacy practices among socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse families. In addition to theoretical constructs I described above, the following principles from the research with non-mainstream minorities, low-SES groups, and Iranian families in non-school contexts, also shaped my research questions, guided my data collection, and informed my understanding of the data: (a) children develop literacy skills before entering school, (b) a variety of different literacy activities

are mediated in home context by parents, siblings, and/or significant others, (c) literacy practices within home and community shape children's early literacy experience, (d) families sociocultural background, socioeconomic status, and social and cultural capital influence their perspectives of children's literacy development, and (e) literacy perceptions and practices of minority families develop, shift, and change as they participate in new societies as refugees or immigrants.

Furthermore, although there are some studies of the literacy practices of Iranian immigrants and refugees, there is a dearth of research into family literacy practices of these groups.

## **2.4 Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the conceptual framework guiding this study. Specifically, I described constructs from sociocultural theories of literacy (Street, 1984, 2003) including literacy as social practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 2003), findings from literacy research with socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse families in non-school contexts, and findings from research on the literacy learning of Iranian refugees and immigrants, that shaped my research questions, guided my data collection, and informed my data analysis. In the next chapter, I discuss the research methodology used in this study.

### **Chapter 3: Method**

The purpose of this study was to document and describe the family literacy practices in an Iranian refugee family and an Iranian immigrant family living in Canada. Both families had a young child aged between 6-9. As well, I aimed to identify the Iranian immigrant and refugee families' perceptions of first language (L1) and second language (L2) and their perceived needs, access to resources, and barriers they encountered, in terms of supporting their children's literacy learning. I further documented the families' expectations for their children's early literacy development and learning. Finally, I examined the similarities and differences between Iranian immigrant and refugee families' literacy practices, considering Ogbu's differentiation between voluntary and involuntary migration.

I defined this research as a case study as it uses a case to illustrate a problem (Creswell, 2013). The case is used as a unit of analysis through which a particular phenomenon is examined (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Miles, Huberman & Johnny, 2014; Yin, 2009). According to Merriam: "...the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case" (Merriam-Webster, 1993, p.40). Thus, in this study, the case is an Iranian refugee and an Iranian immigrant family with a young child (aged 6-9). The families' literacy activities are viewed as an interrelationship between user, texts, context, and process. In this case study, the users are an Iranian refugee and an Iranian immigrant family and the texts includes print, digital texts, writings, and conversations in English and Farsi, etc. The context comprises the families' homes and communities where literacy events occur, as well as their patterns of occurrence (Bell, 1997).

The aim of this study was to conduct an in-depth analysis of family literacy practices in an Iranian refugee family and an Iranian immigrant family with a young child in Canada during a



two-and-a-half-month period. The literacy practices in Iranian refugee and immigrant families were compared and contrasted, as were their literacy resources, needs, and expectations for addressing their children's early literacy development. The two participant families were defined by their sociocultural, religious, socioeconomic circumstances, and cultural capital, as well as their educational background, location, and beliefs about and perceptions of L1/L2 (Farsi and English). I developed interview questions that allowed families to describe their traditional literacy practices in Iran (and elsewhere, if they had lived in another country prior to moving to Canada) and then compared them with their practices today. I paid attention to the changes in literacy patterns, beliefs, and practices, that I inferred had been brought about by different sociocultural, economic, and contextual circumstances.

A number of investigators (e.g., Friedrich, 2016; Li, 2006; McTavish, 2014; Purcell-Gates, 1997; Reese & Gallimore, 2000; Taylor, 1983) have used case studies involving single and multiple participants to explore family literacy practices in the context of home and community. Case studies have been accepted over the years for their informative descriptions of cultures and home languages that are not considered mainstream. Case studies are particularly valuable for exploring family literacy as they help researchers and educators understand immigrants' and refugees' home and community literacy practices. Once researchers and educators understand minority literacy practices, they can include or build upon these practices and in this way, provide greater opportunity for all children to develop into successful readers and writers.

I next introduce the participants and their families, outline the recruitment process, and then describe the contexts in which the families lived. I then describe the data collection and data analysis procedures.

### **3.1 Participants**

The participants were Iranian refugee family (The Avanesians) and an Iranian immigrant family (The Tops) <sup>2</sup> with young children aged 6-9 years. Both families had been in Canada for a short but similar amount of time. Table 3.1 provides information about the participants.

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms have been chosen by participant families to protect their identity in this study.

**Table 3-1 Participants**

Name		Age	Highest Level of Education	Occupation	Religion	Duration in Canada	Duration out of Iran
The Tops Family	George (father)	63	MA in Mechanical Engineering from a top-ranking state university in Iran	Iran: Factory owner and general manager Canada: none	Born Muslim	2 years and 8 months	2 years and 8 months
	Julia (mother)	45	BA in English Literature from a private university	Iran & Canada: Housewife			
	Eva (daughter)	9	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	Student (Focal Child)			
	Ethan (son)	11	7 <sup>th</sup> grade	Student			
The Avanesian Family	Yura (father)	63	High School Diploma in Biology	Iran: Inventory Keeping/ Factory Clerk Canada: Cleaning Services/ on Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities	Born Muslim, converted Christian	2 years and 3 months	7 years out of Iran
	Rosa (mother)	44	High School Diploma in Human Sciences	Iran: Driver Training Instructor Canada: Cleaning Services/ food runner in a Persian Restaurant			
	Andre (son)	9	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	Student (Focal Child)			
	Anoosha (daughter)	6	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Student			

### 3.1.1 The Avanesian Family

The Avanesian family lived in a middle socioeconomic neighborhood in a large city that was a part of a metropolitan area in British Columbia. The Avanesian family were Iranian with Azeri<sup>3</sup> roots. More than 41% of the city's residents were foreign-born residents; West Asians

<sup>3</sup> Azeri is a Turkic language spoken primarily by the Azerbaijanis, who are concentrated in Iranian Azerbaijan.

including Iranians comprised 3.7% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2011). The city was ethnically diverse and multicultural (e.g., South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, etc.). The Avanesian's townhouse was located on a hilly terrain where the majority of residents lived in townhouse buildings surrounded by tall trees and untrimmed gardens. Their neighborhood was almost free of environmental print, other than the street names, the house names/numbers, warning signs on garage doors, advertisements displayed on the bus stops; an occasional For Sale sign dotted the lawns.

Commercial and recreational services were situated within a 10-minute drive of the Avanesian's home and the family accessed them on a daily basis. That area had several schools, two branches of the public library, a community center, a community sport and leisure complex with a public swimming pool, and numerous parks, green spaces, and forests.

The subsidized townhouse building that the Avanesian family lived in had a common area with a kitchen that neighbors used to hold resident meetings or parties. The family lived in a three-bedroom, two-story home with a living room, dining area, kitchen, and a balcony. They spent most of their time in the living room, where they talked, watched TV, read, studied, used their Tablets and phones, and played.

The focal child in the Avanesian family was a 9-year-old boy named Andre. He was in the fourth grade of a public primary school that offered pre-school and six years of primary education. He was the first child and had a 6-year-old sister, Anoosha, who went to the same school as he did. Andre's mom, Rosa Avanesian was 44 years old and had a high school diploma in Human Sciences from Iran. Andre's father, Yura Avanesian was 63 years old and had a high school diploma in Biology from Iran. Each partner had been married once before and had been married to each other for 9 years.

At the beginning of the study in November, 2016, Rosa and Yura were working for a cleaning company. However, towards the end of the study in February 2016, Yura's disability due to a chronic infection from a previous surgery forced him to quit the job and apply for Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities. Due to this, Rosa had to quit her cleaning job and find a new job at a local Iranian restaurant as a food runner, that provided more income. Both Rosa and Yura were born Muslims but had converted to Christianity before their marriage in Iran.

The Avanesian family came to Canada as refugees 2 years and 3 months prior to our first meeting. Before that, they had spent 6 years in Belarus and 1 year in Armenia. Andre was born in Tehran, the capital and the largest city of Iran in which both of his parents were born and brought up. The family moved to Armenia in 2007, when Andre was 2 months old. There, Andre learned to respond to his Armenian nanny's simple commands in Armenian. When Andre was one, the family moved to Belarus and applied for asylum. There, he began his primary education in a German public primary school at the age of six. The Avanesian family finally came to Canada in October, 2014, through Canada's Government-Assisted Refugee Program<sup>4</sup>. They have not traveled back to Iran since they left. Andre continued with grade two and three in Canada and at the time of the study, he was in the first 4 months of grade four; this was the second school he had attended since arriving in Canada.

Rosa and Yura spoke to each other and to their children in Farsi most of the time, and when they needed more privacy, they switched to Azeri (both parents were of Azeri origins), Armenian, or Russian. The children both spoke Farsi to their parents and a mixture of English

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<sup>4</sup> Under the Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) Program, refugees are referred to Canada for resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) agency or another referral organization (Government-Assisted Refugees Program, 2016).

and Farsi when talking to each other. Most of my interactions with Rosa and Yura were in Farsi. However, all the informal conversations between Andre and me were in a mixture of English and Farsi to make sure he had complete comprehension.

Andre was a happy boy who had gained a satisfactory status in his academic progress in class based on the teacher's notes on his report card (Andre's report card, December 2016). His parents admired his friendly, sociable attitude, but thought that he was two-three grades behind in Math and English literacy (reading, writing, and spelling). Andre sometimes attended church with his parents and sister on Sundays. At the beginning of the study, both Andre and Anoosha were attending an Immigrant Services Society (ISS) afterschool program called, "School Out," but after Rosa realized that the children had been encouraged to draw about Iran in an activity about their original country, she took them out of the program (see more in Chapter 4). When the children were not at school, they spent all their time with their parents as they worked (e.g., cleaning offices or working in the Iranian restaurant), volunteered at the Food Bank, celebrated events with neighbors, went swimming in the community sport and leisure complex, or hung out with acquaintances from the church or Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and Success foundation classes.

### **3.1.2 The Tops Family**

The Tops family lived in a high socioeconomic neighborhood in a large city adjacent to the one in which the Avanesians lived. West Asians comprised 7.2% of the city's population the highest ratio for any Canadian city (Statistics Canada, 2011). The city was culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse. The part of the city in which the Tops lived was located on a cul-de-sac featuring large, well-maintained homes surrounded by tall trees and manicured

gardens. The neighborhood was almost free of environmental print, other than the street names, the house numbers, or the occasional garage sale signs dotting the lawns.

The commercial and recreational services were within a 20-minute drive of the home and the family accessed them on a daily basis. There were numerous public and private schools, three public libraries, three community centers, a multicultural center, two community sports complexes with two public swimming pools, and many recreational opportunities such as parks, green spaces, beaches, and forests in the area.

The large two-story detached house that the Tops lived in had six bedrooms, five bathrooms, two kitchens, two big halls, and two living rooms, one of which was located downstairs and used as a children's game area filled with a home theater, numerous electronic and traditional board games, and books. The children spent most of their time in their bedrooms, and spent family time in the living room, or kitchen while eating, or watching TV.

The focal child in the Tops family was a 9-year old girl named Eva. She was in the fourth grade in one of the most elite private schools in British Columbia. The school consisted of a day care, pre-school, primary, middle, and high school. Eva was the second child and had an 11-year-old brother, Ethan, who attended one of the best public secondary schools (reported by Julia) in the city. He was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the age of 4 and had gone through numerous therapies and medications. Eva's mom Julia Tops was 45 years old and had a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from a private university in Iran. Eva's dad George was 63 years old and had a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering from a top-ranking state university in Iran. George had been married three times and had two daughters with his first wife. His first daughter, Kelly, had a Master's in Computer Software and worked for a big software company in the United States. His second daughter Liz, had a Ph.D. in

Management and was a university professor in the United States. George and Julia had been married for 15 years.

George was the general manager and owner of a kitchen equipment and utensils manufacturing company based in Iran. He stayed most of the year in Iran due to work constraints and traveled to Canada five times a year, spending three to four weeks on each visit. Julia was a housewife and parented alone the majority of the time. She was in charge of driving the children to and from school and various classes, arranging their extracurricular activities, monitoring their homework, and conducting minor banking and shopping for the family. Both parents were born Muslims but, neither practiced Islam nor provided children with religious instruction. Two years and eight months prior to this study, Eva's family emigrated from Iran to Canada through the Investor Immigration Plan (IIP)<sup>5</sup>. Eva and Ethan were born in Tehran, the capital of Iran in which both of their parents had been born and brought up. The family came to Canada after Eva had finished first grade in Iran. At the time of the study, she was within the first 4 months of fourth grade in the same school as she entered when they moved to Canada. The children have traveled twice to Iran, and Julia five times since their arrival to Canada.

The Tops' home was a Farsi-only speaking environment. Julia and George spoke to each other and children in Farsi only. Children were highly encouraged to speak Farsi at home and to their Iranian friends. However, the children spoke English to each other and other friends, unless they were reminded to switch back to Farsi. My interactions with Julia and George were conducted only in Farsi. The informal conversations between Eva and me were in Farsi;

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<sup>5</sup> The Immigrant Investor Program (IIP) aims to have experienced business people contribute to Canada's growth and long-term prosperity by investing in Canada's economy (Entrepreneurs and Investors, 2014).



however, when explaining a school project, assignment, or process of a game, she would switch to English.

Eva was a helpful girl who had gained an “excellent” status in class based on the teacher’s notes on her report card (Eva’s report card, December 2016). Her teachers believed that her improvement in English speaking and literacy had been outstanding for a newcomer to Canada (Informal conversation, Julia, January 10, 2017). Her parents admired her happy, sociable attitude and thought she was two grades ahead in school in math and computer science. They believed her English literacy (reading and writing) was at grade level and therefore, unlike her brother, she did not have an English tutor. Eva participated in several extracurricular classes such as singing, ice skating, piano, and French. As well, parents and significant others offered lessons and support at home such as extra math (Complete Math Smart Revised and Updated level 5, 2015), extra coding (Wolfram Mathematica 10), and Farsi literacy (reading and writing). Eva attended book club sessions, and parties and went shopping with her brother, mother, and dad (whenever he was in Canada).

The children spent most of their time at home in their bedrooms, doing school work, extracurricular class assignments, or surfing YouTube. They went to Iranian gatherings and parties on weekends and watched movies on Netflix with their family at night. Julia often took them to the library or shopping to fill the time between their classes.

On the first visit with the Tops family, I met with Julia, Eva and Ethan. I did not meet with George until after November 30<sup>th</sup>, when he arrived in Canada from Iran. He stayed for three weeks and during that time Julia had surgery which left her in bed for five weeks. Before George left for Iran on December 21<sup>st</sup>, Julia’s brother, Ted flew in from Vienna to help his sister with the children in George’s absence.

### **3.2 Recruitment**

The case families were drawn from contacts in Iranian communities in the two cities mentioned earlier. The sampling strategy was a convenience sampling, and purposive due to my membership in different Iranian communities. All Iranian refugee and immigrant families with young children aged 6-9 who lived in these two cities with the highest Iranian population were considered for inclusion in the study as participants. For the purpose of cross-case analysis, I recruited a refugee family and an immigrant family that had been in Canada for relatively short time, as I hoped to include families who had not fully acclimated in order to observe traditional literacy activities from their homeland. Families excluded from consideration were: all the families not members of the Iranian refugee and immigrant communities; Iranian families with no children aged 6-9; Iranian families with children aged 6-9 who were in Canada for more than 5 years; Iranian refugee and immigrant families who were not in Canada for relatively the same amount of time.

Following the research ethics approval from the university's Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BREB) in November 2016, I contacted families in my community that I believed fit the inclusion criteria and gave them information about my research. Once I found two potential families who agreed initially to take part in the study, I presented them with the translated Parent Consent and Child Assent forms (Appendix A). The families had a week to decide whether or not to participate. When they agreed to participate in the study, they completed the form and contacted me. After that, I arranged the initial visit at a time and location that was suitable for the family and collected the completed forms in person. I introduced myself as a Masters student who was interested in understanding the ways in which young children in the Iranian refugee and immigrant families learn in the home and community. At the conclusion of the study, I presented each family

with a \$100.00 gift certificate from a local business as a gesture of appreciation for their willingness to participate.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

I employed a case study to document the family literacy activities and events of an Iranian refugee family and an Iranian immigrant family. I utilized a cross-case comparison which required some standardization of instruments and procedures in order to place the findings side by side over the course of the analysis. The family literacy activities of an Iranian refugee and an immigrant family were compared and contrasted. Their literacy learning patterns, resources, practices, boundaries, perceptions, and beliefs were based in their current and previous sociocultural contexts and on their cultural capital. Initially, I visited each home to get a sense of context, the participants, and the child-family interactions at home and in out of home settings. Data collection for this study included participant observation, two semi-structured interviews with both parents in each family, informal conversations with the parents and the focal children, a collection of artifacts (samples of writings, readings, crafts, etc.), and photographs of the participants' engagement in literacy events in the home and the community (e.g., public outdoor spaces including shopping malls, swimming pools, restaurants, etc.). Home visits were of two to three hours' duration in consultation with the families, twice each week for a period of two and a half months. I also completed a journal after each visit to capture as many thoughts and ideas about the observations as possible, and to reflect on what I had observed. I decided that saturated data for analysis was obtained within the (40-hour) time frame, because I noticed a repetitive pattern in the recorded literacy activities. In Table 3.2, I present the research questions and the related data collection methods.

**Table 3-2 Data Collection Methods**

Research Questions	Focus of Data Collection	Data Collection Method	Information Gained
1. What are the immigrant family's and refugee family's perceptions, beliefs, identified needs, resources, barriers, and expectations in terms of their children's literacy learning? How do these factors relate to their practices?	Family literacy events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with focal parents: 1-hour interviews (twice)</li> <li>• Informal conversations with the focal children and families</li> <li>• Participant observation at home: twice weekly 2-hour sessions (November 2016-February 2017)</li> <li>• Participant observation in the community: twice weekly 2-hour sessions (November 2016-February 2017)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Participant observation at home and in the community:</b> Participatory structure of participants in literacy activities</p> <p><b>Informal conversation:</b> Further clarification of the observed family literacy activities</p>
2. What are the literacy activities and events that an Iranian refugee and immigrant family with a young child (6-9 years old) engage in at home and in the community?	Family literacy events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant observation at home: twice-weekly 2-hour sessions (November 2016-February 2017)</li> <li>• Participant observation in the community: twice-weekly 2-hour sessions (November 2016-February 2017)</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with focal parents: 1-hour interviews (twice)</li> <li>• Ongoing informal conversations with focal families and children</li> <li>• Literacy inventory in community</li> <li>• Photographs and literacy artifacts collection: November 2016-February 2017</li> </ul>	<p><b>Participant observation at home and in the community:</b> Participatory structure of participants in literacy activities</p> <p><b>Semi-structured interview:</b> Type of texts, the purposes, and importance of literacy activities, the sociocultural contexts in which the activities occurred, the people involved in the activities</p> <p><b>Informal conversation:</b> For further clarification of the observed families' literacy activities</p> <p><b>Literacy inventory:</b> Recorded texts in the community</p> <p><b>Photographs and literacy artifacts collection:</b> Further clarification and elicitation tool</p>

3. What are the similarities and differences in literacy practices and beliefs between the two families? How do these relate to Ogbu's notion of voluntary/involuntary migrations?	Family literacy events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-case comparison</li> </ul>	<b>Cross-case comparison:</b> Differentiating the focal families' literacy practices with regards to their past/present sociocultural positions
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In the next section, I describe how I collected and analyzed data according to the methods defined in Table 3.2.

### 3.3.1 Data Collection

This phase took place between November, 2016 and February, 2017. I completed twenty observations of a minimum of two hours with each family. These observations took place within the homes and the communities of the two focal Iranian families. I carried out two semi-structured interviews with the two focal parents, one at the beginning and one the end of the project. I also had ongoing informal conversations with the focal children and their families.

#### 3.3.1.1 Participant Observations.

I observed the following principles below throughout my observations in the family homes and in the community:

- a) I entered each location with a notebook and an iPhone 6 to audio-record meaningful conversation around literacy and to take photos of all of the child's and family's engagement in literacy activities.
- b) During each home visit, I placed myself on the periphery of the room where I could observe literacy activity without distracting the people involved. When I participated with families in the community, I was directed to a location to observe the activity by the parents.

- c) I participated in an activity when I was invited by the members of the families such as going around in the swimming pool with Andre and listening to his instructions on what each sign meant or engaging in the discussion after Farsi book reading with Eva and Ethan when Julia had to leave to answer a phone call.
- d) I tried to keep a neutral position throughout the study. For example, when Rosa asked for my opinion on the effectivity of “leaving the literacy activities to school to navigate,” I redirected the conversation and asked for Rosa’s opinion on that and how she felt about it.
- e) I only attended events such as birthdays, friendly gatherings, and parties that I was invited to or events that the host/hostess had approved of my presence in their space prior to the visit.

My role during data collection and visits outside the house was that of a participant observer. I typed notes in the notepad section of my cell phone and only took photos of the actual events but not the people involved in them to protect their identity. For example, I took pictures of the signs Andre read at the swimming pool and the menu in the restaurant Eva read to place an order. Immediately following each visit, I created field notes to document the activity I observed taking place during the visit. I drew from these notes to help create the description of settings, activities and events.

After the first two observations within the homes, I decided to alter the field notetaking process to an “inscription” process (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). This entailed reviewing the order in which events took place in my mind and occasionally typing keywords in my iPhone notepad. This enhanced my focus on the children and parents in their own activity because I noticed their distraction when I started writing during visits. I think typing on my iPhone notepad

did not seem as “serious” as writing on paper to the children and families, and they were not distracted by it. Immediately upon leaving each of the homes and before leaving the neighborhood, I typed detailed notes on my iPhone notepad. The notes included the events observed at home, the interactions between the child and the parents, and my reflections on the informal conversations about the families’ present and past literacy practices, beliefs, needs, and their socioeconomic status and cultural capital. I also added my thoughts about what the activities I had observed meant and what they implied about the families’ cultural capital and social positioning. Finally, I added notes on how the new data connected to previously collected data and determined what I would inquire about during the next visit. I transferred the information on my iPhone notepad to my home computer (through Bluetooth) and erased the data on my iPhone immediately following my return. The security of the data was maintained by password protecting of all the electronic files and backing up all electronic files on an encrypted USB stick kept in a locked cabinet in my office.

I began the field notes by putting in the day and the time of visit, as each visit happened on a different day of the week and at a different time so as to observe a composite day of the families. Then I described the context in which the observation took place and the activity around text, or other literacy activity (e.g., play on the Tablet or iPad). I named the people involved and their role in the activity. These descriptions echoed Barton and Hamilton’s (2000) definition of literacy events as “activities in which literacy plays a role and usually involves texts” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8). In addition, I added the language (s) of communication and the language (s) of the text, or activity.

I spent time observing the immigrant and refugee families in a variety of community contexts including (a) restaurants, (b) an ice skating class, (c) parties, (d) shopping malls, (e) a swimming

pool, and (f) health and welfare agencies. I conducted observations in these contexts to document how literacy activities were formed and conducted by families in different social domains.

### **3.3.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews.**

I conducted two one-hour semi-structured interviews with parents in each family: one at the beginning and one at the end of the project. Questions were based on families' past/present social position (e.g., their intentions for moving to Canada, their perceptions of literacy learning in Iran and Canada), cultural capital, and L1/L2 literacy perspectives, beliefs, needs, resources, and goals. The first semi-structured interview helped me collect information about parents' perspectives on literacy learning. The time between the first interview and the second interview provided enough data to enable me to determine the connections between the parents' literacy learning perspectives (collected in the first semi-structured interview) and the literacy activities and events each child and her/his family engaged in at home and in the community. The second semi-structured interview was used to triangulate the collected data and the accuracy of my interpretations; it also allowed the elicitation of additional information and answers to my questions that had arisen. I also used it as a way to do member checks as I shared my main interpretations with the families and ask for their feedback on the accuracy of the statements. Member checks enhance the trustworthiness of a study (Creswell, 2007). Below is a segment from the final interview.

Me: So, what I heard about your country options of immigration is that, the United States of America came first in the list before Canada and Australia for you because you attribute more educational and occupational success opportunities to it. Is that right?

Julia: Yes, we wanted to immigrate to America because we were looking for the easiest path to education in high ranking universities in America. Once our children become



graduated from a high-ranking university, they can get hired in top ranking companies with no problem (Semi-structured interview, November 30, 2016)

I conducted the semi-structured interviews in Farsi, audio-recorded them using an iPhone recording app, and then transcribed and translated the interviews into English for analysis. The semi-structured interview protocol is found in Appendix B.

#### **3.3.1.3 Informal Conversations.**

Informal conversations were an ongoing part of the data collection. I used them to clarify observed behaviors and to build rapport with the family. These conversations took place in Farsi before, after, and during the visits. If I noticed an interesting point during the conversation, I asked for permission to audio-record that conversation from then on and typed notes about the points discussed earlier on my iPhone notepad. I then transcribed and translated these conversations for the purpose of analysis. During the study, I noticed that it was taking more time to build rapport with the Avanesian family, which was attributed to their trust issues (more information in Chapter 4) than it did with the Tops family. Therefore, I added my reflective evaluation of the conversations and informal questions between myself and the families to monitor how they impacted my relationship and building of trust with each of the participant families.

#### **3.3.1.4 Photographs and Literacy Artifacts.**

I provided the focal children with an iPhone 6 during my visits, taught them how to take pictures, and directed them to take photos of their learning places and what they enjoyed doing in those places. Both of the focal children showed little interest in the activity. In Andre's case, he took a few photos of his desk, his drum set, his bed, and the drawings he had attached to his cupboard and went back to playing on his Tablet. In Eva's case, she took a few photos of the

books on her desk, book shelf, and bedroom, and then was directed by Julia to take photos of the view of the ocean from their living room and her piano. These pictures portrayed the children's literacy environments, activities, and artifacts to some extent. I used these pictures as an elicitation tool for the final interview. I recorded the responses in my field notes and included them for analysis.

I also took photographs of all the literacy events I observed and collected or took photos of all the child's print artifacts in the home and the community context. These pictures assisted me in keeping a record of what had been observed and happened in different contexts. They were also used as tools for member checks, elicitation of ideas, and clarifications. Therefore, none of the photographs were included in the data analysis.

For example, I had taken a photo of an Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Application Direct Deposit Request form displayed on Andre's cupboard. Andre had filled the form out with his contact information and the name of his favorite digital games "Roblox" and "Minecraft" as his banking information. This form made me think that the Avanesians might have applied for employment and assistance due to a disability. During the second semi-structured interview, I found out that Yura had been struggling with filing out the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities application form and getting the service he needed due to language barriers. This form made me think the Avanesian family might have had difficulty filling out the form which had caused them to take multiple copies, one of which Andre completed (Semi-structured interview, February 8, 2017).

My interpretation of the data was informed in part by insights developed through prolonged engagement in the community, observation of the participants, and by constructs identified in the literature such as sociocultural theories of literacy (Street, 1984; 2003), and literacy as social

practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; 2003). Data collection began in November 2016 and carried on until February 2017. To reiterate, I completed multiple visits that usually went over two hours due to different circumstances such as accompanying the families in the community, or getting invited to join the families for a meal (almost every visit), or (in the Avanesian family's case) having to stay overnight to babysit the children while the parents had to run to the hospital, etc.

### **3.3.2 Data Analysis**

The analysis procedure drew from Miles, Huberman, and Johnny (2014) and included analyzing emerging patterns through coding and thematic analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) with a focus on family literacy practices, the theoretical framework, and the questions framing the study. Miles et al. (2014) suggested a three-stage data analysis procedure: reducing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusions. In the first step, the researcher sorts, categorizes, and polishes data based on the research questions and the theoretical framework. This stage begins before data collection, involves pre-planning, and continues throughout the data collection process. In the second stage, the researcher represents the data in various forms such as matrixes, networks, and charts to enhance further planning and to verify conclusions. The third stage is concurrent with data collection and develops as the researcher interprets the main themes and discovers patterns when rereading transcribed interviews and field notes.

Data analysis and check-in with the participants to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts was concurrent with data collection to allow cycling back and forth between data processing and data collection strategies. Moreover, this continuous analysis helped “fill the gaps in interviews and informal conversations and helped produce interim reports” (Miles et al., 2014, p.70).

As another ongoing practice, I read and re-read the field notes, semi-structured interview transcripts, and the main points of the informal conversations and annotated them with memos, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). During coding, these memos assisted me in determining the properties associated with each category. As I read, I reduced the data based on the research questions and determined what tasks could be considered as a literacy activity or event, based on the definition of Barton and Hamilton (2000). The followings are two examples of literacy activities I observed and took field notes of within the homes of Tops and Avanesian family:

Eva and Ethan's older stepsister is a computer software engineer and lives with her husband and two toddlers in the United States. She Skypes in every week on Sunday evening and teaches them coding, or writing basic computer commands. This is an extra computer skill the family believes necessary for the children to develop. Their stepsister, Liz, connects to their computer to navigate and monitor the codes they produce and their designs. The language of coding on the family's computer is English; however, Liz teaches them in Farsi. The task usually takes about 30 minutes, and Liz often gives them some problems to solve during and after the class (Field notes, November 27, 2016).

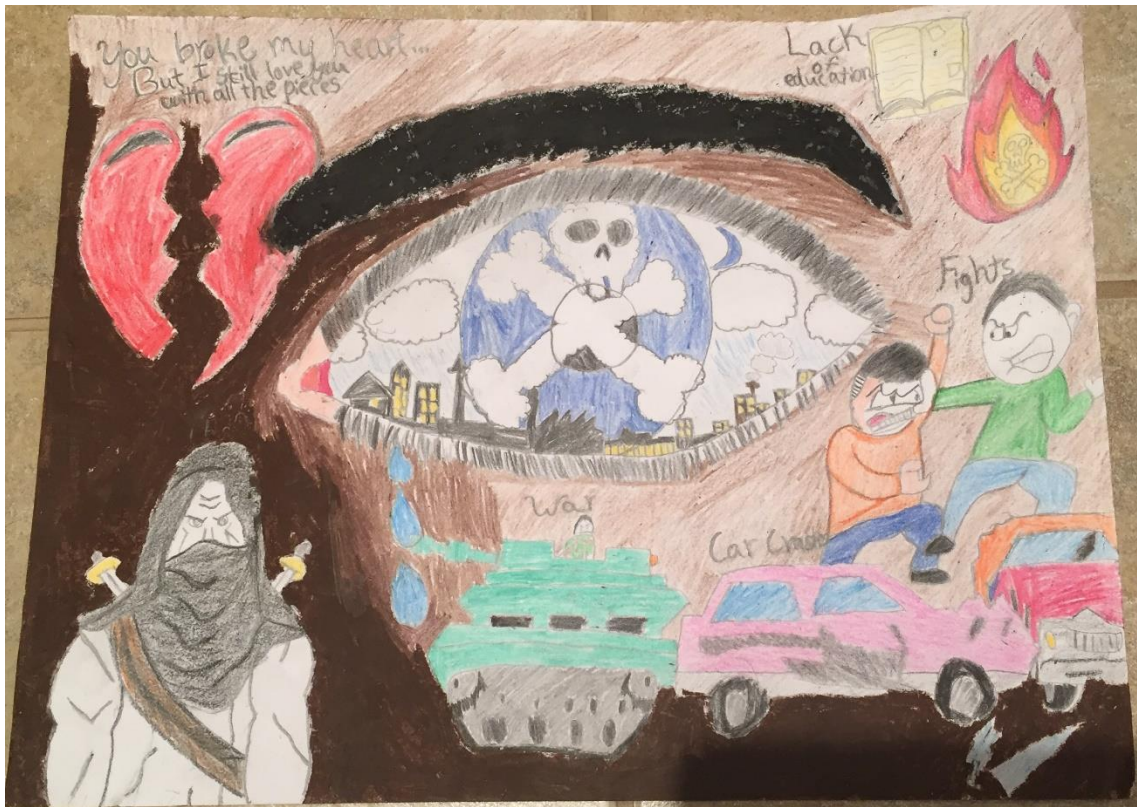
Felix mentioned today at home that he wanted to change his pseudonym from Felix to Andre just because he liked it better. When I asked him to spell the new name, he logged onto his RoBlox and checked the names of contestants and picked one named Andre and spelled "A-N-D-R-E." He got information about the spelling of words, how to draw things, and the instructions on how to do tasks from Google or YouTube, and the games he engaged in (Field notes, November 27, 2016).

Both of the activities were described as literacy events because there was some sort of text (e.g., digital) involved. The first activity was a shared multimodal reading and writing event in English between the child and her stepsister. The language of instruction was Farsi. However, the language used to code on the family PC was English. The second activity was a shared reading and spelling event between the child and me. As I asked the child to spell out his name, he relied on a common literacy activity which is looking for information online. He engaged in a writing activity as he inserted his username and password to log on to Roblox. Then, he engaged in a reading activity as he scanned the names of different contestants in the game to find his favorite one.

For cohesive, organized coding and analysis, I used the NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program. I uploaded the transcripts of informal conversation, field notes, and semi-structured interviews after each visit. I organized and analyzed the artifacts (samples of writings, readings, crafts, etc.) based on their usage, purpose, and focus of the literacy activity. I uploaded them to NVivo as text data. In addition, I added reflective notes as memos as I read and compared the data. Below is a description (Figure 3.1) of an artifact from Eva at home as a part of a school project:

The artifact was produced for a multilayered school project on “Immigration” and focused on factors resulting in immigration. Eva had drawn an eye of an immigrant and a reflection of what the eye saw. Through the eye, one could see what the immigrant would see and feel. In her drawing, she had represented theft, broken hearts, lack of education, and wars as the factors that drive people’s move. She had written one word or a phrase under each picture to define it more clearly such as “war, car crash, fights, lack of

education, and you broke my heart but I still love you with all the pieces” (Artifact Descriptions, December 2, 2016).



**Figure 3-1 Immigration Artifact**

Through the production of the art project, multiple literacy events were involved: a digital typing event as she googled ideas to draw different concepts, a reading event as she read search results on Google and chose what to draw, a drawing event as she drew, and writing events as she wrote descriptions under each picture. This was a shared activity between Eva, her mother, and her uncle as they gave her suggestions on what factors motivate or force people to immigrate. Julia stated that discrimination and political circumstances were motivating many Iranians' immigration. However, she believed that many Iranians were pulled to Canada and America and not pushed out of Iran due to discrimination or war but instead came seeking better educational and business opportunities (Field notes, December 2, 2016).

As suggested by Dyson and Genishi (2005), I made a “start list” of codes (deductive coding 20%) to indicate the hypothesis, conceptual framework, and research questions prior to data collection (see Table 3.3.). However, during data collection, some of the “start list” codes were merged and formed the main categories presented above. Within the process of data collection, some sub-codes emerged (inductive coding 80%) to mark off segments of data in each class of variables.

**Table 3-3 Conceptual Matrix of Codes**

Identity	Culture	Immigration status
An Iranian refugee family	Attitudes toward L1/L2 literacy learning	Social positioning/power
An Iranian immigrant family	Educational background	Learning stereotypes/ Stigmas
Families with children aged between 6-9 years	Literacy events	Native/Second language support
Iranian communities in Canada/ Iranian neighborhoods	Literacy learning expectations	Literacy learning resources
Neighborhood/worship places/parks/restaurants/libraries etc.	Religious literacy practices	Literacy learning barriers
Age/Gender	Family roles	

For each literacy event that I observed or that had been reported to me by the parents during informal conversations or the semi-structured interviews, I coded for the following categories: community literacy practices and support, home literacy practices, literacy learning barriers, literacy learning goals, religion and culture, literacy practices in the past, family context, social positioning, and school literacy practices. However, I needed to subcategorize these main codes somewhat differently based on the families’ different sociocultural experiences and literacy sources, perceptions, practices, and goals. The example below illustrates this process.

Julia: In Iran and up to a few months after arrival in Canada, we worked on Farsi school books but then I noticed the books involved children in complicated grammar, so I decided to work on Farsi storybooks rather than school books with children. We read from children literature that have simply explained Iranian customs, cultures (e.g., the important National days like Nowruz), and include Farsi expressions. Once the children each finish reading their assigned section, I give them a dictation so that they can practice Farsi spelling. We read and write Farsi at least once every week. We sometimes read more and write less and sometimes vice versa (Semi-structured interview, November 30, 2016).

The vignette above was divided into two main codes; home literacy practices, and literacy practices in the past. Based on the information above, I categorized Farsi literacy as a subcategory of both home literacy practices and literacy practices in the past. As mentioned by Julia, Farsi school book reading was performed in Iran and for a short period in Canada. Therefore, it fell under the “literacy practices in the past” main category. I also coded storybook reading as the Tops’ current home literacy practice. Moreover, Farsi book reading and Farsi spelling were sub-coded as smaller elements of Farsi Literacy.

Rosa: We did not have any books in Belarus. I used to tell them Persian kids’ tales like “Shangool, Mangool Habe angoor<sup>6</sup>”. We also, googled Farsi cartoons or kids’ programs for children like “Fitile Jome Tatile<sup>7</sup>” series. We had only a Farsi Bible story that I used to read to them. It had beautiful pictures that was interesting for Andre. He knows most of what he knows about Christianity from that Bible storybook. We do not read to them

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<sup>6</sup> A Persian children’s tale about a mother goat and her three kids in the forest.

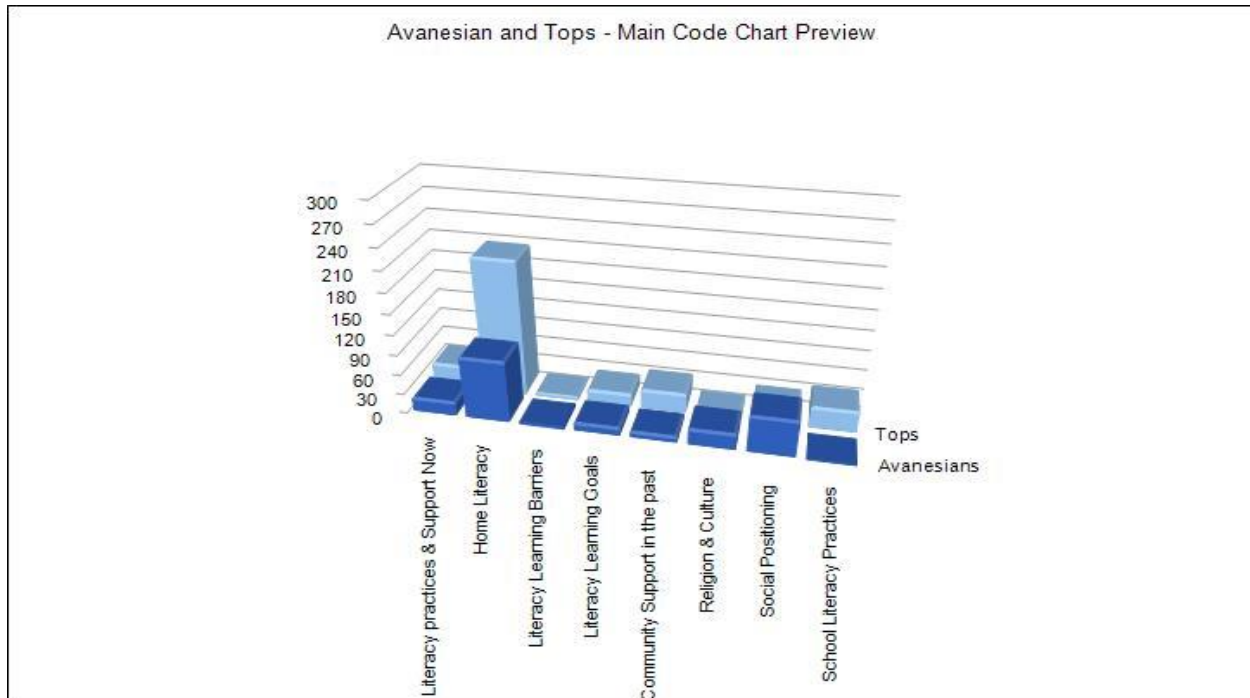
<sup>7</sup> A Persian children’s series with the aim to teach children moral traits that became popular between 2012-2016.



now. Instead Yura tells them stories about Christianity and history and I google Bible stories for them to watch at home (Semi-structured interview, November 29, 2016).

The excerpt above was divided into two main codes: home literacy practices, and literacy practices in the past. Farsi literacy activities were the Avanesian family's common home literacy activities both now and in the past so I coded Farsi literacy as a subcategory of both current home literacy practices and literacy practices in the past. In the Avanesian family, telling Persian children's tales, watching Farsi cartoons, and reading Bible stories were common Farsi literacy activities taking place in the past. Therefore, they were subcategorized as smaller elements of Farsi Literacy under the literacy practices in the past. I also coded Farsi storytelling as a current home literacy practice, and placed Bible series under the religion category.

The coding process was time consuming and involved continuous reading and revisiting codes. Once I coded all of the data collected, I summarized the main codes and generated reports for both focal families using the Query chart feature of NVivo. This enhanced the visualization for thematic analysis. The following query chart (Figure 3.1) displays the main codes described above.



**Figure 3-2 Avanesian and Tops- Main Code Chart**

Thematic analysis was the most suitable for the interview and participant observation data. The tactics for generating meanings out of text were: noting the relations between variables, finding intervening variables, building a logical chain of evidence, and making conceptual coherence (Miles et al., 2014). The Memo and Memo Links features of NVivo helped me navigate the four tactics to generate meaning.

Exploring the families' literacy practices through the lens of literacy as sociocultural theory and literacy as social practice guided me to pay attention to variables such as religion, power, gender, and literacy actions based on sociocultural circumstances, family interactions, and perceptions of L1/L2 literacy learning. As I read and reread the field notes, semi-structured interviews, and informal conversation transcripts, I annotated the relations between the variables, and kept track of the intervening variables. I used Memo Links to document the relationship between variables and their frequency patterns. The Data analysis process also involved a cross-

examination of the field notes, observations, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, artifacts, and a reflective journal. I looked for examples of how sociocultural aspects such as power, gender, religion, and context appeared to guide family literacy practices. This triangulation across multiple data sources corroborated and enhanced the validity of findings, ensuring that the interpretations were not based on my own experiences and biases (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Miles et al., 2014).

Throughout the process of coding, I performed thematic analysis in six phases to create established and meaningful family literacy patterns. These phases were: familiarization with data (reading the text several times for a better comprehension of complete data set), generating initial free codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes and their relationships, defining and naming themes, and drawing conclusions. Throughout this six-stage process, different matrices and networks were used as tools to help summarize, visualize, analyze, and draw relationships and conclusions. These tools included: a context chart, construct table, and conceptual matrix, mind map matrix, and composite sequence analysis chart (Miles et al., 2014). I utilized these tools to elaborate and clarify the findings and discussions in the following chapters. Finally, with the help of the memos, matrixes, networks, charts, and ongoing thematic analysis, I drew conclusions that answered the research questions.

In short, I studied the family literacy practices of an Iranian refugee and an immigrant family with a young child within both home and community contexts, considering larger structures such as socioeconomic and historical contexts, and power systems. I focused on the families' engagement in literacy events, and I collected and compared data about practices that mediate bounded sociocultural contexts. I analyzed the case study data within a system of code dimensions that reflected literacy as sociocultural theory and literacy as social practice theory. This cross-case

comparison addressed the gap in the literature by evaluating the family literacy practices in two Iranian minority groups.

### **3.3.2.1 Cross-case comparison.**

The advantages of doing cross-case analysis is that it increases generalizability and develops sophisticated descriptions and powerful explanations (Miles et al., 2014). As an ongoing practice, during observation and reflection with the Iranian immigrant family and the Iranian refugee family, I constantly compared the settings, literacy activities, children's interactions with parents, and the role of literacy in their lives. I made reflective memos for each field note based on the similarities and differences that I had observed between the focal families.

## **3.4 Role of the Researcher**

I entered this research as a Master's student working in the field of family literacy. However, I brought in a wide range of experiences, perceptions, and beliefs to the field that have impacted my understanding of the study. To begin with, I am an Iranian female educator who landed in Canada in August 2015 to pursue a Master's in Early Childhood Education. I was born and brought up in a middle-class family of four in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. I am the older daughter, and I have a brother who is 1 year younger than I am. My parents paid extra attention to our school learning, as well as extracurricular activities such as English, piano, and various sports activities. My dad is second generation Iranian of Russian descent. My mom has Azeri roots but was born and raised in Tehran. My parents speak Farsi and Azeri and watch Azeri movies which gave the opportunity to my brother and me to learn Azeri as growing up.

I loved school, reading, and learning new things. I was considered a good student throughout my studies in elementary, middle, and high school. My brother and I had plenty of books on different topics (e.g., literature, science, science fiction, etc.) and read frequently. Often

times we played “school”, a game in which I took the role of a teacher and taught him whatever I had learned at school, or read in books. When I was 9 years old, I began English lessons and continued until I got my First Certificate in English (FCE) at 18 years of age. When I graduated from high school, I took some teacher training courses that focused on teaching English to children and adults and began teaching at an English institute. However, the majority of my career was spent tutoring children and young adults in their homes. I was always amazed by how literacy learning approaches, environments, and habits varied in different households and among a homogeneous group of upper middle class educated families.

My passion for English led me to pursue a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in English Translation from Azad University of Central Tehran. During my BA, I took various courses in teaching and research. The type of support I offered my own students in class and at home was impacted by my studies at university and my teaching experiences in various contexts. Gradually, I became interested in running my own early childhood program. I started with a small English literacy program at a bilingual kindergarten in the north of Tehran. Over the years, I incorporated different components and modes of literacy learning into the program. Since I felt that the Farsi literacy habits of parents whose children attended the early childhood program differed from the ones necessary for acquiring English literacy, I engaged parents in various family-child workshops. These workshops engaged parents and children in activities useful for English literacy acquisition such as partnered flash card games, partnered storybook reading and acting events, games of charades, singing, and reading and drawing sessions. I found that familiarizing the parents with approaches that helped children acquire English literacy was a turning point in children’s English reading and writing development. Additionally, these workshops allowed me

to observe how parents' new knowledge helped them support their children's early literacy and English language learning in a formal early learning setting.

After I began my studies in Canada, at first, I struggled as some of my assumptions and beliefs about language and literacy learning and teaching were challenged. These assumptions included ideas such as the notion that Low-SES families do not provide their children with the "right kind" of literacy practices, that using the first language in an EFL classrooms would prevent students from acquiring higher functioning skills (e.g., thinking and comprehension) in a second/additional language (e.g., English), and that the use of popular infant educational DVDs like "Baby Einstein" and "Brainy Baby" improve and enhance language development, etc. Therefore, my expectations regarding literacy activities in the home were certainly influenced by the literature in family literacy and my experiences in my new context in Canada.

Early on after my arrival in Canada, I started volunteering for a Reading Buddies and One To One children's literacy program. These experiences also made me realize how literacy learning practices vary in different countries, as well as, among children from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. I noticed that learning English literacy could be challenging for immigrant and refugee children due to their varied literacy learning practices and lack of competency in their heritage language literacy. Because of my previous experience in Iran teaching English to children with high-level of literacy in Farsi, I realized that children would improve their English literacy (e.g., reading, writing, etc.) if I as a teacher learned more about their families' literacy practices. This motivated me to study family literacy practices among Iranian refugee and immigrant families.

In an earlier case study titled "I recruit: A Case Study of Teaching, and Learning of Business Literacy in Home Context," completed as one of the requirements in a course in family

literacy, I reported on the multimodal, bilingual family literacy practices of an Iranian immigrant family in the home and community. I found that; “business literacy” was embedded in the child’s daily literacy activities at home and in the community and that despite the family’s short stay in Canada, they had developed a more Western perspective about their child’s literacy activities. These experiences likely shaped how I interpreted the literacy learning processes of the focal families in this study.

Due to my ethnic background, I was able to access the Iranian communities in Canada easily and quickly establish rapport with the participant families and the focal children. I was perceived as a resource person and a translator whom they trusted. I made my best effort to compensate or reciprocate for the permission to enter their family lives and houses in several ways. For example, upon request, I accompanied the Avanesian family twice to the BC Employment and Income Assistance office to help with their interview for the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities application. I babysat the children overnight when Yura and Rosa had to run to a hospital for Yura’s emergency health issue. I interpreted a session on how to apply for the Registered Education Saving Plan (REPS) for the family. At times, I adopted the role of a literacy broker in that I assisted the Avanesian family with texts (Perry, 2009). In assisting Rosa and Yura with interpreting the letter grades and the “work habits” section of Andre’s report card, I clarified the individual meaning of words which can be classified as lexico-syntactic/graphophonic brokering. Upon request, I read and double checked the documentations necessary for Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities application such as identification, Social Insurance Number (SIN), copy of rent and utility bills, bank account balance, and proof of continuous job application. In this case, I provided genre brokering by explaining the function of the form. In attending the Employment and Assistance

for Persons with Disabilities application interview as an interpreter, I helped the Avanesian family with comprehending the rules and regulations and application process, providing them with culture brokering.

When Julia sought my support, I helped her with online book orders and Ethan's Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT) application. I also was requested to provide corrections to Eva's English spelling in school assignments and to help her translate ideas into English for a class project on "Immigration". I eventually adopted the role of a literacy broker in that I assisted the Tops family with texts. When I helped Julia with online book order and Ethan's SSAT application, I provided her with three levels of brokering. I explained the meaning of words in the book order and SSAT application web pages (lexico-syntactic/graphophonic brokering). I informed her of the documents necessary for each of the tasks (genre brokering) and clarified the applicable rules for each of these tasks (culture brokering).

Both of the families were willing to share with me their experiences of L1 and L2 literacy learning in the past and present. At times, they approached me with questions about their children's education in Canada, Canadian universities, and or how to support their children academically. Furthermore, I am aware that although the focal families have been in Canada for the same amount of time, there was a difference in the amount of time the families had been away from Iran and immersed in that culture. It took 7 years for the Avanesian family to settle in Canada after leaving Iran, while the Tops family moved directly from Iran. It is possible that some of the differences identified in this study may have been due to the Avanesian's longer time spent out of Iran.

I am aware that my own migration status as an immigrant could have affected my understanding of the focal families' social and cultural capital and literacy activities. At times



during data collection, I felt more affinity with the immigrant family, perhaps due to our shared socio-economic and educational status, than with the refugee family. To ameliorate biases, I constantly reminded myself of my role and responsibility as researcher. I tried first to understand the focal families' perspectives, as well as their literacy practices. The fact that data analysis commenced as soon as I started data collection and that I kept a reflective journal, helped me maintain a reflective stance.

Finally, I am aware that my presence in the home of these families may have influenced their participations in literacy activities. As a researcher, I was associated with the language and literacy department at the University of British Columbia. Therefore, the families could have felt that my presence in their house was to measure and evaluate the accuracy and appropriateness of their literacy practices at home. However, my continuous reminders of my role and intention to observe the families in their normal daily activity and not to evaluate the children or the family, combined with the prolonged, sustained engagement should have helped overcome this risk.

In this chapter, I described the methodology of my study, the participants and the contexts in which the data was collected. I also provided a description of the recruitment process and included a detailed explanation of the data collection and data analysis sources. As well, I explained my role as the researcher in this study.

In the next 3 chapters, I report Iranian refugee and immigrant family literacy activities through the lens of sociocultural theories of literacy and literacy as social practice.

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are an Iranian immigrant family's' and a refugee family's' perceptions, beliefs, identified needs, resources, barriers, and expectations in terms of their children's literacy learning? How do these factors relate to their practices?

2. What literacy activities and events do the children and families engage in at home and in the community?
3. What are the similarities and differences in literacy practices and beliefs between the two families? How do the similarities and differences relate to Ogbu's notion of voluntary/involuntary migrations?

In chapter 4, I outline how cultural capital and power structures across different time and space affect the Avanesian family's literacy actions, perceptions, beliefs, needs, resources, and expectations of literacy learning. I also describe the Avanesian family's current home and community literacy activities.

## **Chapter 4: The Avanesian Family**

### **4.1 Literacy learning perceptions, beliefs, needs, resources, barriers, and expectations**

As Barton and Hamilton (1998) suggest, literacy is an integral part of the context in which it is practiced, and we cannot understand literacy practices without understanding the contexts that have shaped them. In this section, in order to understand the Avanesian family's literacy practices, I describe the family's backgrounds, previous literacy practices, cultural capital, and social positioning before coming to Canada. I explain how different factors such as power, and religion operated in social positioning, as well as how the family's social class and socioeconomic background affect the family's literacy events. In the second section of this chapter, I use the data from the field notes, semi-structured interviews, and observations to interpret how these factors relate to the Avanesian families' literacy actions.

#### **4.1.1 The Avanesian's Background**

In the Avanesian family of four, Rosa was born into an Azeri Muslim family who practiced and highly respected Islam. Despite the Azeri speaking environment in her house, she only spoke Farsi until the age of 14. It was then, Rosa became interested in the Azeri language and began to teach herself how to read and write Azeri texts using different self-study books. Rosa's parents had only elementary school education; they did not read to Rosa or her five other siblings while growing up. However, they gave their children Islamic religious lessons which included praying, reciting prayers, and reading the Koran, all in Arabic. After that, Rosa taught herself Armenian through rote memory, how to read and write individual Armenian letters and Bible verses in order to be able to attend Church services and understand the Bible better.

Rosa: I really liked learning Armenian in Iran. There were not many Armenian self-study books in Farsi that I could use to learn. I even went to “Vank Cathedral<sup>8</sup>” in Isfahan<sup>9</sup> and they only had a single book to give me which helped me self-taught myself at home (Semi-structured interview, November 29, 2016).

Rosa reported that she changed her faith to Christianity in her late twenties. She began studying English in high school. Later on, when she married Yura, she took three courses in an English language institute. Her basic knowledge of English language was gained from the lessons in Iran and listening DVDs designed to support English learning.

Yura was born in Iran. Both of his parents were low literate and therefore, could not read to Yura and his four other siblings. Yura mentioned that his dad was not aware which grade he was in, or which school he attended (Field notes, January 11, 2017). Yura’s first experience studying English was during high school; however, he did not pursue any more English lessons in Iran after high school. Therefore, his basic knowledge of English was gained from high school and listening to English learning DVDs.

Although Yura was raised in an Islamic household, he had not practiced any religion until the age of 45 when he converted to Christianity. Yura argued that his rescue from addiction to opium would not have been possible without the help of Christianity and Jesus Christ.

#### **4.1.2 The Avanesian’s Language and Literacy Practices Prior to Canada**

Yura indicated that his survival from addiction motivated him to establish his own center to help “sick people” overcome their addiction.

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<sup>8</sup> Also called the Holy Savior Cathedral is a cathedral located in the New Julfa district of Isfahan, Iran

<sup>9</sup> Isfahan is a city located in central Iran known for its architecture

The family was dissatisfied with their situation in Iran and moved to Armenia in 2007, when Andre was 2 months old. It was there, Andre learned to respond to his Armenian nanny's simple prompts in Armenian such as "sit, give it to me, etc." and he was also exposed to Armenian songs. When Andre was 1 year old, the family moved to Belarus. After arrival in Belarus, the Avanesian family applied for asylum there, but they were rejected four times; it took 6 years until the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) referred them to a third country (Canada) that accepted their application. They underwent severe and traumatic hardships during their time in Belarus such as several months with no refugee stipends from the UNHCR, harsh winters with little or no food, unemployment, language barriers, etc. Above all of these difficulties, according to Rosa, their "refugee status" registration "got erased" along with their asylum application, which was taken off the UNHCR records for 2 years. These traumatic experiences destroyed their perceptions of safety and feelings of trust of people, especially those in authority. However, they indicated that their strong connection with the church and their religious brothers and sisters created a safe, supportive, and stable environment for them. This enabled them to deal with language barriers, communication difficulties, traumatic experiences, and financial hardships (Semi-structured interview, November 29, 2016). Moreover, the difficulties that the family faced helped them to develop a strong family bond and to build resilience in facing the traumatic consequences of refugee life.

Both Rosa and Yura were active members of the church in Belarus. They defined Sunday church services as times to participate in communal worship, sing hymns from Russian, Farsi, and Armenian hymnals, listen to the pastor's speech, and participate in the after-service community gatherings. In addition, they volunteered with various organizations, attended Bible study circles, held Skype Bible study sessions, and recited Bible verses in Russian. Andre and

Anoosha would attend Sunday school classes during the church service. According to Rosa, the Sunday school classes were “serious” learning environments for children. They were required to sing Russian hymnals and the teachers read them Bible themed stories, and taught them new prayers, and involved them in drawing and crafts. Rosa and Yura attended the adult Sunday school after the worship service and the community gathering to improve both their Russian speaking and Bible reading through various activities including singing, making crafts, games, etc. (Field notes, December 1, 2016).

Rosa: At the end of our stay in Belarus, Andre was able to read few Bible verses in Russian. It was because Sunday school was meant a serious learning space where Andre was taught new prayers, songs, arts, crafts, and stories from the Bible. Whereas, in the Sunday schools in Canada, children are simply given papers to draw on and they do not listen to Bible stories (Field notes, December 1, 2016).

The description above illustrated how the Avanesians literacy activities at the church in Belarus influenced their notions of what was to be expected in Sunday school and the “seriousness” of different learning environments in various contexts.

#### **4.1.3 The Avanesian’s Language and Literacy Practices in Canada**

Rosa clearly expected songs, prayers, and Christian themed stories to be offered in children’s Sunday schools in British Columbia. On another note, the Avanesian family was struggling with attending an English-speaking congregation, a Farsi-speaking congregation, or using the opportunity for fellowship after church services in British Columbia. Due to language barriers, the family could not comprehend the English service conducted with the English-speaking congregation. Also, having lived and practiced Christianity in Belarus and Armenia for over 7 years, they had acquired and developed new ways of thinking and making sense of the

world. For example, in observing church etiquettes and routines, they began to demonstrate certain Christian practices. In BC, Rosa would still veil her head when attending church while the rest of the family wore neat conservative clothes. The family also picked up on various church practices, such as the offering of bread and wine and how it was restricted to only those who have been baptized during the Eucharist ceremony. These different practices separated the family from other Christian Iranians who had sought asylum in Canada due to conversion to Christianity. Both Rosa and Yura experienced resentment from the Iranian church community members and felt reluctant to attend the Farsi service offered by, as they put it, “fake” priests, who did not follow church routines and etiquette according to the Holy Bible (Field notes, December 6, 2016). These perceptions made it difficult for the family to be accepted in Iranian communities in British Columbia. This lack of acceptance resulted in their isolation and lack of motivation to maintain the Farsi language as a mean of communication with the Iranian population in their community.

On the other hand, the family has had a positive experience with and among the Canadian church community which contributed to their motivation to learn and speak English to communication in their new context.

Yura: I think Canadians are way nicer than Iranians here, they respect you and take you serious. That is why it is important for us to learn English to be able to understand English (informal conversation, January 7, 2017).

During the course of the study, the Avanesian family was in the process of examining different churches. When I paid them a visit for the Iranian New Year in March 2017, Rosa told me that they had finally found an English-speaking congregation in a Protestant church where they felt welcomed and supported. Yura was accepted as a priest and was conducting Bible study

sessions in Farsi for a few Iranian new comers who attended the church. They believed that, they were more accepted and welcomed there because they were the first Iranians who had attended the church and offered to conduct Bible studies in Farsi. (Informal conversation, March 2017). Both Yura and Rosa were provided with English Bible classes that could contribute to their English and Christianity knowledge simultaneously.

As mentioned above, the Avanesian family indicated that their experiences had led to them not feeling safe and devoid of feelings of trust. The incident that took place in the ISS afternoon program called “School Out” was an example of their lack of trust in any initiative or activity that advocated for Iran and Farsi language learning for their children and language maintenance for the family. The Avanesian family refused to be identified as Iranians and expected to be treated and identified as Canadian citizens as they had applied for Canadian citizenship in their new place of residency.

As noted, the traumatic experiences the Avanesian family were exposed to through their asylum seeking, created a bond of togetherness among the family members which had both positive and negative effects on the children. On the one hand, the family’s togetherness had been positive because it provided Andre with the opportunity and autonomy in structuring his own activities and expressing what he thought, felt and needed. For example, the Avanesian family had provided Andre with his own computer screen and keyboard in his room to encourage him to spend more time in the bedroom so that they could have some privacy; however, he refused to do that. He mentioned that he felt more comfortable “being around everybody in the living room” (Field notes, December 18, 2016).

The Iranian cultural activities in the Avanesian family seemed to have declined as a result of their experiences. Rosa’s reluctance in teaching Andre Farsi literacy was in part because of the



Arabic letters incorporated into the language. As a result, Andre could not read or write in Farsi (Informal conversation, December 13, 2016).

As mentioned above, the Avanesian family spent most of their time together. This increased the opportunity for children to hear their parents' devaluation of Farsi literacy and Iranian people. Despite the use of Farsi as the main language of communication in the house, the family's negative attitudes appeared to affect negatively, Andre's interest in learning Farsi language, literacy, and culture. The conversation<sup>10</sup> below between Andre and me exemplifies the negative attitudes, growing in him.

Me: What languages do you speak?

Andre: I can just speak English. I cannot speak Farsi at all.

M: At all?

Andre: Sometimes. I don't like Farsi.

M: Why?

Andre: Because we came here and Justin Trudeau lets us do things we like.

Another factor contributing to Andre's lack of interest in Farsi reading and writing could be the absence of Farsi story book reading in their new context. As reported by Rosa and Yura, they used to read Farsi stories to Andre as a part of his bedtime routines from the age of 3 in Belarus. "We did not possess many books because we were always on the run" (Informal conversation, December 13, 2016). The only book they could recall having was a Farsi Bible for children that they read and reread to Andre until he entered school. The pictures in the book kept Andre engaged and focused as he listened to the stories. Rosa thought that Andre had mastered

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<sup>10</sup> The grammatical errors in the conversations reflect the fact that Andre was still developing his English proficiency

many Christian concepts and was familiar with many Christian characters as a result of hearing the many Bible stories that were told to him over the years. Both Yura and Rosa had stopped reading to Andre once he started first grade in Belarus in order not to conflict with his Russian language and literacy learning. Rosa added that she searched for Farsi cartoons on YouTube for children to watch during their stay in Belarus; this was a new habit in contrast with their previous routine of watching cartoons on TV in Iran. Since arrival in Canada, Rosa has replaced this habit with searching for English programs.

Andre did not attend nursery in Belarus and started in grade one there. Due to language barriers, he could not establish a relationship with the nursery teacher and refused to continue after a week of attending the classes. Rosa and Yura preferred not to pressure him and kept him home until the first grade. Andre's elementary school in Belarus was built by Germans after World War II. Therefore, besides learning Russian letters of alphabet and basic math, Andre learned short poems, rhymes, and greetings in German in first grade. Prior to attending school in Belarus, Andre spoke to his parents and sister in Farsi and Rosa and Yura used a mixture of Farsi, Azeri, Armenian, and Russian to talk to each other. However, after Andre started school, the family switched to speaking in Russian to help Andre learn it better. After their arrival in Canada, the Avanesian family replaced speaking Russian with Farsi. Therefore, Andre spoke to his parents in Farsi and to his sister, a mixture of both English and Farsi. He also randomly used Russian, Azeri, and German prompts or greetings in different contexts.

The conversation below occurred at the beginning of the study when Andre was choosing his pseudonym:

Andre: Put my name “привет Вам” for your research.

Rosa: “привет Вам” means “greetings to you” in Russian (Field notes, November 27, 2016).

The conversation below took place at the kitchen table when he wanted his mom to prepare him a small sandwich:

Andre: Mom give me “Küçük bir lokma” (in Azeri meaning a small bite).

Rosa: Here is your “Küçük bir lokma”. “Lokma” in Azeri means “a bite” and “Küçük bir” means “one small” therefore, “Küçük bir lokma” means “a small bite” in English (Field notes, December 1, 2016)

The exchange below took place when Rosa was talking about Andre’s first school experience in Belarus:

Rosa: When children attended Kindergarten at the school in Belarus, the teachers taught children both German and Russian at the same time. He learned the names of fruits, songs, and numbers in German.

Andre: Yes, I know German. Hallo, Wie Geht es? (meaning: hello, how are you?) (Field notes, December 16, 2016).

Andre could read and write some Russian as a result of attending school in Belarus. Although Andre’s parents commented on his “nice handwriting” in Russian, he never created any Russian texts during my observations.

Yura’s and Rosa’s experiences with education in Iran, and in learning Armenian, Russian, and English over 7 years of refugee life led to strong feelings of perseverance. Moreover, the experiences helped form their aspirations for their children to excel in English, be liked and accepted in the school community, and establish a positive relationship with both school teachers and peers. Most importantly, they resulted in the belief that someday, the

children could become useful, “literate” members of the community and contribute to it by “helping other people”. When asked about the end goal for their son in terms of literacy learning, they hoped he would eventually master English so that he would be able to play a strong humanitarian role and be able to support the community in a positive way.

Rosa: After all these years of having to learn different languages to follow our dreams as refugees, I want my children to learn English well. I want them to be entrepreneurs with positive contribution to society. I do not expect our son to be a doctor or an engineer like all the Iranians expect their children to be. I want him to have a good relationship with his teachers and friends, I want him to be liked at school. I want him to be a literate person who is useful to his family and the next coming generation of Canada. Without being good in English, he cannot do any of that (Semi-structured interview, February 6, 2017).

The data clearly illustrates how the Avanesian family viewed learning English language and literacy as an important mean of establishing and maintaining connections with people and making a contribution to society. This aspiration was also evident in the decisions they made for attending different English classes. Over the course of the study, Rosa and Yura quit attending LINC classes and began with the Success foundation classes.

Rosa: The students who attended foundation classes were stronger communicators as these classes were to support stronger English skills. Specifically, if an individual wanted to take citizenship tests, attend college, or find a job. Second to this, due to the fact that they were not every day, the student had time to study, practice, and earn a certificate (Field notes, December 22, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, both Rosa and Yura perceived Canada as their home where they wanted to settle. Therefore, they had strong motives to master English proficiency and become

confident communicators. They also found the new classes flexible for their busy schedule, felt better supported for pursuing employment or to obtain a major in college. Therefore, they had found classes that best addressed their English literacy needs and guided them in the education/occupation path they would eventually like to pursue. In addition, the Avanesian family had noticed their children's fast paced English learning process at school and wanted to keep up with that by using the free English learning opportunities for refugees.

Rosa: I need to use the opportunity to learn and improve my English while the opportunity is available for us to attend the classes for free. I do not want to spend 3 or 4 years here and then like most refugees, who have not learned English perfectly, depend on others such as my children for communication or problem solving. I need to work hard to make sure that I understand English and can communicate well with my children in English (Field notes, December 22, 2016).

The conversations above illustrated that both Rosa and Yura placed significant value on learning English language and literacy for creating better career and education pathways for themselves and to facilitate communication with their children and people in the community. They held the same beliefs and goals regarding their children's English language and literacy development in Canada.

The Avanesian family sought literacy support from different sources; they consulted their case worker for filling out their income tax forms when filing a personal income tax return. They got brochures from their church pastor on the application process and conditions of the Registered Education Saving Plan (RESP). They consulted on Skype with a small group of trusted Iranian friends when making decisions about children's program (e.g., ISS program named "School out"). The Avanesian family also sought my support for checking their

interpretations of the information they read on official letters, different web pages, and English pamphlets given out in class.

Despite having experienced an overwhelming amount of both traumatic and financial hardship, the family had gained the power to build resilience in facing problems and finding ways to adapt to new sociocultural circumstances. Among these included ways to overcome language and literacy learning barriers, communication difficulties, and lack of literacy resources. For example, they had found values in reading the same Bible storybook for over 3 years, strengthening relationships with people through participation in church activities, and staying together through the traumatic experiences of refugee life. In addition, they cared about their children's literacy learning and closely monitored what the children brought home from school.

#### **4.1.4 Summary**

All in all, the Avanesian family's current literacy activities and events appear to have been considerably impacted by their past experiences in different economic, linguistic, political and social contexts in Iran, Armenia, and Belarus, as well by their socio-economic circumstances and social and cultural capital. Christianity provided the context for many literacy events as demonstrated through prayers, Bible readings, storytelling, and watching videos. Also, the Avanesian family's focus on language and literacy development shifted as their country of residence changed. They focused on Armenian in Armenia, on the Russian language and literacy as Andre entered first grade in Belarus and turned their focus to English when children started attending school in Canada. Farsi was used as long as it did not interfere with the acquisition of mainstream language and literacy development in school, in each country in which they lived.

On one hand, the Avanesian family indicated little interest in pursuing and maintaining Farsi literacy development, due to the following factors: they experienced resentment from the Iranian church community members in Canada which resulted in their isolation and loss of motivation to attend Farsi-speaking congregations; they refused to be identified as Iranians due to their previous experiences. On the other hand, factors such as establishing and maintaining relationships with people in Canada, being able to attend English-speaking congregations, getting supported among the Canadian church community, viewing Canada as a home, and keeping up with children's fast developing English skills, contributed to the Avanesian family's stronger desire to learn English.

#### **4.2 Family literacy activities at home and in the community context**

In this section, I use the data from my field notes, semi-structured interviews, and observations to describe the Avanesian family's literacy events and activities. Through the lens of literacy as a social practice, I focus on the families' traditional, multimodal and digital literacy activities based on their current sociocultural circumstances, cultural capital, family interactions, and social relations.

In the Avanesian family, I observed both print and oral texts mediate activity in their daily lives. The children observed their parents check the news online, read and send messages on different communicative apps, write resumes, assignments, and memorize English vocabulary. They listened as their parents recited Bible verses in both English and Farsi at home. The children also learned about Western cultural traditions such as Christmas, through oral texts delivered during the community celebration at school (informal conversation, December 26, 2016). They picked up on Christmas traditions, such as putting up and decorating the Christmas

tree at home with family. They listened to Yura's Christian themed stories, and observed their parents engage in Skype Bible studies (See below).

In the Avanesian household, Christianity practices were the cornerstone of their life and they participated in everyday religious literacy events (prayers, Bible readings, storytelling, video watching, etc.). Christianity defined how they viewed the world. During every visit, a concept, story, verse or passage from the Bible was discussed (not read) with the children in Farsi. Given what seems like their aversion to and disdain for Farsi, they used it to communicate within the family as it was the only language they knew well enough to do so and believed that Farsi would help the children communicate well with the Iranian diaspora in Canada. Yura told Christian themed stories such as *Susanna*<sup>11</sup> and *Saeed Kordestani*<sup>12</sup>.

He also told the story of how the Christian rehab club helped him overcome his addiction to opium. He talked as well about the philosophy of votive/sacrificial food in Christianity, clarified differences between Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic churches, shared information about both the Georgian Orthodox church and Baptism church, and so forth. For the story telling time, Yura sat the children down before him, asking them open ended (e.g., "What did you learn from this story?") and more literal (e.g., "What happened to *Kordestani* at the end of the story?") questions, during and at the end of the story. After the story, the children chose to engage in other activities such as playing catch or working on his crafts (e.g., story booklet).

Children also observed Yura's engagement in conducting Skype Bible studies a couple of times a week for other Farsi speaking refugees applying for Canada's Government-Assisted Refugee Program. Moreover, Yura read, wrote, and rehearsed his English assignments for the

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<sup>11</sup> The story of a Hebrew woman named Susanna who was falsely accused by lecherous voyeurs

<sup>12</sup> The story of *Dr. Saeed Kordestani*, an Iranian Kurdish physician



English lessons they were taking first at LINC and then in the Success foundation classes. He would check both Farsi and English news online via his cell phone, family PC, and TV and while also browsing Facebook and Instagram. He shared videos, photos, and wrote comments in Farsi on his friend's Facebook walls or Instagram pages. Furthermore, he used the communicative apps on his cell phone such as Telegram, Tango, Skype, and WhatsApp to contact his friends and colleagues (church pastors) around the world.

The Avanesin family also read official letters and completed forms to apply for, or renew, rental subsidies, to apply for tax return, Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities, Canada child benefit, and/or indicate a change in address. They also were required to write resumes and cover letters and fill out job application forms. As parents of two school aged children, Rosa and Yura were required to fill out and sign forms in order to register their children for programs, or to place a request for their school lunch. Since the monthly documentation for Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities could only be uploaded to the BC Employment and Income Assistance webpage, the Avanesian family were required to have access to a computer and to the internet. Furthermore, they needed to provide their email address to get updates on their monthly status. As English learners, Rosa and Yura were required to read, write, and rehearse the English assignments given at ISS and Success foundation classes.

Rosa's everyday literacy revolved around learning English, conducting church services, attending Bible study circles, singing hymns from English, Farsi, and Armenian hymnals, and reciting Bible verses in English and matching them with their Farsi equivalents in the Farsi Bible. She also checked her email, Facebook, and Instagram on a daily basis. She shared church and family memories on both her Facebook and Instagram pages. She also kept in touch with her

friends by utilizing the communicative apps on her cell phone. Besides these activities, she took care of the house, cooked, and baked for her children, and her husband. She baked bread and made cheese, yogurt, and pickles because as she said, “they were not rich enough to afford those foods at the store” (Field notes, December 29, 2017).

It was customary for Rosa to read the Bible at five o’ clock in the morning, when the rest of the family was asleep and she could concentrate. There was always a Farsi Bible and an English Bible on the coffee table next to where Rosa usually sat. Some of the corner pages were folded to mark the last page read. Rosa read few scripture passages in English and only used the Farsi Bible to double check the meaning of some words, phrases, or sentences. Oftentimes, she checked the meaning of words on Google Translate, using her cell phone. She found that double checking her words enhanced her English reading comprehension (Field notes, December 29, 2016). Therefore, Rosa used Farsi texts as a mean to scaffold her English literacy development.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Andre and Anoosha, when not at school, spent all of their time with their parents. This bond of togetherness increased their opportunity to learn both their family’s literacy practices including those that involved religious texts. Although I did not attend any of the church services with the family during my study, I viewed several photos and videos of the family at the church, shared on their social media accounts (e.g., Facebook and Instagram). For example, I observed Andre’s involvement in both religious and cultural activities of the church during a Eucharist ceremony when he was dressed in special liturgical clothing, holding a chalice and offering bread and wine to the congregation. I also viewed Rosa’s church services as she sang hymns from English, Farsi, and Armenian hymnals in different churches in Canada (Social media field notes, January 2, 2017).

During data collection, I observed the Avanesian family's celebration of Christmas, and attended one Canadian birthday party with them. I also accompanied them to a restaurant, a Microsoft store, and the Sport and the Leisure Complex. I wrote field notes to document the activities I observed and drew from these notes to create the following description.

The Avanesian family have not maintained most of their Iranian cultural traditions and only celebrated Western cultural traditions such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, Canada Day, Easter, etc. However, the family sometimes still participated in Iranian cultural practices such as singing old Farsi songs, dancing, and playing music. I once observed Andre invite his mom to dance with him. He turned on the TV, searched for "Iran moozik" on the search bar of YouTube and played the first song on the play list. When dancing, Rosa told the children how to move their bodies to the rhythm of the music. She later showed me a video of herself teaching her son how to dance "Lezgi"<sup>13</sup> on her Facebook page (Field notes, December 1, 2016). Rosa was the only person in the family who was taking piano and singing lessons. The songs she rehearsed included English, Armenian, Russian and Farsi. The children observed their mom's music and songs but did not participate in the activities.

The family learned about Western traditions by active participation in, and observation of, events in the community. As they enacted these traditions at home, their conversation and discussion often involved codeswitching between Farsi and English. For example, during one visit, Rosa helped the children hang a Christmas Wreath on their door. While helping them do that, in Farsi, she asked them what the wreath meant, and why they were attaching it to their door. Rosa also made a connection to the Christmas celebration at the children's school and

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<sup>13</sup> Lezgi dance also known as Lezginka dance, is a national dance of the Lezgins (ethnic group native to southern Dagestan and northeastern Azerbaijan) which is also danced in Azerbaijan and Iran.

mentioned “Christmas is the time when we, Christians, celebrate the birthday of our prophet, Jesus Christ. Just like the celebration at your school, we are celebrating Jesus’s birthday today by eating cookies” (Field notes, December 26, 2016).

The Avanesian’s household was not a print literacy rich environment, from a Western perspective in terms of having traditional literacy resources such as books, magazines, cards, and materials such as scissors, and craft tools, etc. so the children had minimal opportunities to engage in literacy activities such as book reading in the home environment. The nature of their household was suggestive of the circumstances that the family had lived through. As refugees, the family had been moving for 7 years and constantly sought refuge. They had few opportunities to buy and possess traditional literacy resources such as books and magazines and as a result, they adopted new literacy habits such as on-screen and iBook readings. Interestingly, while they did not have access to more traditional literacy resources such as books, they had access to digital literacy resources. In other words, the Avanesian family’s background and sociocultural circumstance created a form of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1977a; Bourdieu & Passeron 1977; Lareau, 1987) that deprived them of traditional literacy resources and gave them more access to digital literacy resources in various contexts.

In Belarus, due to the financial support system available to the Avanesian family, they were able to spend a lot of time reading a variety of books about history, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity on-line. Their access to fast, unlimited internet provided the opportunity for them to download these books and engage in on-screen reading.

Rosa: I had a lot of time in Belarus to read books on different topics like history and Christianity. Unfortunately, I do not have that much time here as I need to work hard.

In Belarus, the refugee stipends and the financial support from the church was enough for us not to worry about making ends meet.

Yura: We stayed in Belarus for 6 years. It was a very difficult and hard experience for us. However, I am so proud of something we did over those years which was downloading between 15,000 to 17,000 books in Farsi, Russian, and English with the help of our friends. I have more than three thousand books on Christianity that both Rosa and I have read (Informal conversations, December 13, 2016).

The information above, explained the lack of print books in the Avanesian household in Canada. Due to the access to technology in their different contexts (e.g., Belarus, Canada), it was possible to develop new literacy habits. These habits included both on-screen reading and writing which in turn, improved their digital literacy skills. Therefore, the Avaneisan family's household was a digital literacy rich environment with rich, multilingual Archives on various topics. Those archives included self-learning digital resources such as DVDs on English and guides on how to use Microsoft Word, and Windows 10. There was also a small stack of notes, letters, and reminders placed on the shelf under the TV set. Both Yura and Rosa had maintained their acquired literacy habits of on-screen book reading and searching for Cartoons/programs on YouTube in the context of Canada.

As mentioned above, I took notice of a few books and booklets around the Avanesian household such as both English and Farsi Bibles, and a Christian themed storybook series in English. There were also government booklets and guides for newcomers to Canada (e.g., a Welcome to Canada booklet) in both Farsi and English, textbooks for learning English, workbooks, as well as maps of the city. There were only two books in Andre's bedroom, *Bedtime favorites* (Walt Disney Firma & Disney Storybook Artists, 2012) and *Youth Bible global*

*edition: Holy Bible*, contemporary English version (Bible societies, 2004). Andre mentioned that his dad had bought the storybook for him to read but he found the stories more suitable for Anoosha because they were so boring for him (Field notes, November 25, 2016). Andre also found the Bible “so hard to read” (Field notes, November 27, 2016). I also never witnessed Andre engage in any traditional book reading during the study; he only borrowed only one book, *An unofficial league of griefers adventure: The return of the rainbow griefers* (Morgan, 2015), from the school library. When I asked him about the book, he mentioned that he had chosen it because it was about Minecraft but found it too difficult (Field notes, December 16, 2016). His ideas of the books being boring and hard to read suggested the quite limited print literacy resources in the Avanesian’s household that matched Andre’s literacy needs.

When I asked Rosa about the English Bible in Andre’s bedroom, she mentioned “I have read that book to them a couple of times. The problem is that the book is all in print with no pictures. Also, the text is old English which is hard for the kids to comprehend” (Field notes, December 9, 2016). Rosa’s opinion on the *Youth Bible* being full of “old print with no pictures” suggested that she would consider books with easy texts and more pictures as more suitable reading materials for their children.

At the Avanesian’s household, children structured their own activities when using technology. Andre engaged the most of all the family members with digital technology at home as most of his time there was spent watching YouTube videos which provided information for performing tasks such as singing songs and making cheese popcorn. They also gave Andre information about playing games such as “Roblox,” “Pokémon Go,” “Call of Duty,” “Happy Wheels,” “PewDiePie’s Tuber Simulator,” “Minecraft,” etc. Andre was interested in sharing with me what games he played and what videos he watched on YouTube. He indicated that he

used that platform to obtain information about different phenomena. Andre also found solutions to problems there such as what to do when bullied. The conversation<sup>14</sup> below exemplifies this:

Andre: What do you do when people bully you?

Me: Well, I am not sure. What do you think one should do when bullied?

Andre: Let's check YouTube to find what to do when someone bully us.

Andre then typed "hat do when somon bulli me?" on the YouTube search bar, and chose the video, "4 things to do to stop a bully?" to watch. When the video was finished, I asked Andre questions regarding the video.

Me: What did you learn?

Andre: If someone tell me stupid, I don't care anymore. I can tell them "what did you just say?! No, I am kidding! I say, I am sorry that you have a bad day, hope you feel better tomorrow, or I respect your idea but I do not think like that" (Informal conversation, December 13, 2016).

YouTube seemed to play an important role in developing Andre's literacy skills in that he searched the names of his favorite shows, typed and retyped the search terms until he got them right, and read the search result lists to find the appropriate video. His favorite YouTube channel was the "Texting" series including, "Texting a Creepy Killer Clown Army", "Texting Jesus," "Texting Santa", etc. This series was based on scenarios around YouTubers texting someone and then proceeding to engage in conversation by responding to each message. Andre spent hours reading these messages. Due to the fast-paced nature of the videos, Andre would pause the clip after each new text message to accommodate his reading pace. As he read along, he made

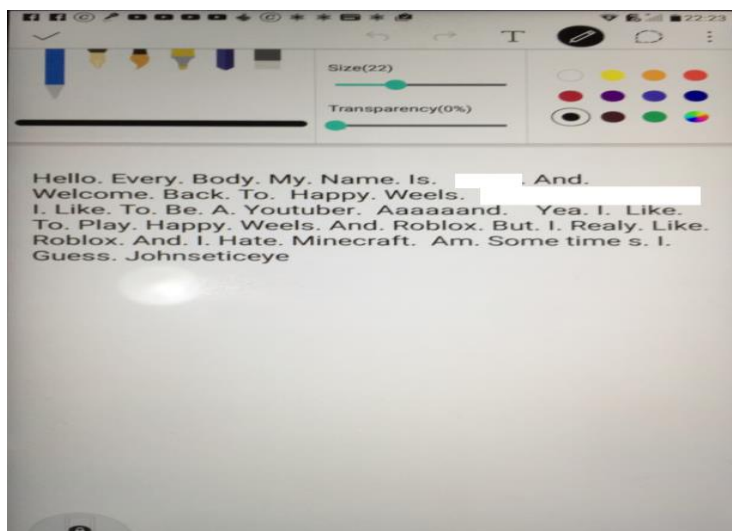
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<sup>14</sup> The grammatical errors in the conversations and the text typed by Andre reflect the fact that he was still developing his English proficiency

comments such as, “Oh Jeez, Jesus is answering! OMG; He is texting the killer clown; I don’t like the boy clown, I like the girl clown” (Field notes, November 27, 2016). During my visits in December, 2016, I noticed Andre texting Santa Claus on his Tablet. Initially, Andre typed “Texting Santa” on the YouTube search bar of his Tablet, then he watched the video, and wrote down the name of the app, “Santa Claus” on a piece of paper. Next, he typed the name of the app on the Play Store search bar of his Tablet and searched the app. After that, he downloaded the “Santa Claus” app and started texting Santa Claus to ask for his Christmas prize. This multimodal activity is an example Andre’s literacy learning was supported by YouTube and the apps on his Tablet. This event demonstrates how Andre is typical of many children his age living in western Canada who seamlessly employ a range of modalities in making and representing meaning (Li, 2017).

Towards the end of the study, I noticed that Andre’s literacy activities became influenced by YouTube videos. Andre had begun preparing YouTube talking pieces (Figure 4.1) by typing on his Tablet. When asked about his audience, he indicated “nobody” because he did not intend to post it on YouTube (Field notes, February 6, 2017).





**Figure 4-1 YouTube Talking Piece**

This literacy activity seemed to be reinforced by Andre viewing various YouTube videos, as well as, observing his parents’ engagement in social media. Their social media engagement entailed taking photos and videos at certain events, adding oral or print texts as captions to them (like YouTube videos), and uploading them on various social media platforms. Andre’s preparation of a message (Figure 4.2) for a video about one of his favorite games, “Happy Wheel” is an example of using social media to produce messages, and not just to consume what others have produced (e.g., Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). It is also example of the intergenerational exchange of transfer of literacy knowledge and skills that is a key tenet of family literacy (e.g., Taylor, 1983).

Andre “followed” his parents on both his Facebook and Instagram accounts and therefore had access to information his parents shared on their Facebook and Instagram pages. I observed him checking his Facebook page four times, and his Instagram once during the study. On one occasion, I observed him type *Jackseticeye* and *Markipier* (his favorite YouTubers) on his Facebook search bar; then he viewed the people, videos, photos and tags of *Jackseticeye* and

*Markipier*. He swiped through the pages quickly and paused from time to time to read aloud the English comments under the pictures and videos (Field notes, January 9, 2017).

Andre also played different games on his Tablet and family PC. Table 4.1 displays the digital games I observed him play throughout the study, how he learned about them, and the literacy events associated with each. The games listed below are organized from the most frequently played to the least.

**Table 4-1 Games and embedded literacy related activities**

<b>Game</b>	<b>Source from which he learned about the game</b>	<b>Literacy activities embedded within the games</b>
1. Roblox (app)	School friends	Reading and writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating with virtual friends through reading their messages</li> <li>Typing messages/songs and issuing directives to virtual friends in English</li> </ul>
2. Happy Wheels (app)	YouTube	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading instructions as they pop up throughout the game</li> <li>Spelling out the swear words as reading them</li> </ul>
3. Call of Duty (Xbox)	Yura bought it upon arrival to Canada	Reading and writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjusting the setting of the game by choosing different clothes, vests, guns, location, ghosts, etc. (typing)</li> <li>Reading the conversations of the opponents on the screen to strategize attacks.</li> </ul>
4. Pokémon Go (app)	YouTube	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjusting the setting of the game including location, energy, and combat</li> </ul>
5. Smule Sing (app)	YouTube	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Singing the song lyrics as they show up on the screen</li> </ul>
6. Minecraft (app)	School friends	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjusting the setting of the game including building aspects, exploration, crafting, and combat</li> </ul>
7. Would you rather? (game on Google)	School friends	Reading and writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading the two sets of questions in each round</li> <li>Typing a response and, or</li> <li>Select from multiple responses (reading)</li> <li>Finding out what percentage of people agree/disagree with the selected response (reading)</li> </ul>
8. PewDiePie's Tuber Simulator game (app)	YouTube	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading instructions on how to buy and furnish a room</li> <li>Reading instructions on how to videotape the events taking place in the room</li> </ul>
9. Stickman and Play touch (app)	School friends	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjusting the setting and location of the game</li> </ul>

The digital Xbox games, free Tablet apps, and Google games all appeared to contribute to Andre's English literacy in that playing them entailed reading and (sometimes) writing. Importantly, they also allowed him to adjust the pace of the reading. The games required him to read for comprehension, write/type to communicate with virtual friends, issue directives, and participate in pretend conversations in English. For example, I observed Andre pretend to lead the virtual players as a police chief while attacking a small town in the game of "Roblox" (Field notes, December 6, 2016). Andre, participated in pretend conversations in English most when the game did not allow him to communicate with his virtual friends (Field notes, December 13, 2016).

As presented in Table 4.1., Andre learned about half of these games from his peers at school. He had some of his school friends on his Roblox contact list and messaged them to arrange to play Roblox together. This showed the extent to which Andre's home literacy practices were influenced by what he learned from his peers and community of people at school. The messenger system was his way of communicating with his virtual friends, helping him build relationships with others, and stay connected. The activities associated with messaging on the "Roblox" game appeared to contribute to his learning of English spelling and writing/typing, as well as reading comprehension. At the end of the study, I noticed that Andre made fewer spelling mistakes when messaging his virtual friends on Roblox, comprehended their messages better, and typed the songs (e.g., Pen Pineapple Apple Pen), that he previously read, from memory (Field notes, February 8, 2017).

Upon arrival in Canada, Yura provided Andre with seven Xbox games (a list of the Xbox games is included in Appendix C) to assist with his English learning. However, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) label on the games read "Mature 17 +", which

meant the games were for 17-year-olds and above. Andre found them too hard to comprehend and play. However, he had found a way to solve this problem partially with one of the games, the “Call of Duty”, by using a video on YouTube. He searched YouTube for “DIY Call of Duty”, watched the video a couple of times to learn how to pass the first few levels. However, he did not play the rest of the games because he found the language in them obscene and the games too hard to follow (Field notes, December 16, 2016).

The provision of a Tablet, 7 Xbox games, an English bedtime story, and an English Bible for Andre suggests the value of English literacy development to the Avanesian family. Despite their financial constraints, they provided traditional, multimodal, and digital literacy resources for their son to help him improve in English literacy. However, their lack of English proficiency and unfamiliarity with resources sometime resulted in their obtaining unsuitable book and games for their son’s age and level of English literacy. As a result, the Avanesian family’s inability to choose the appropriate literacy learning resources that matched Andre’s level of English literacy level, resulted in Andre’s compensatory and extensive use of YouTube as a source to gain information. Table 4.2 represents the pieces of technology which were used by Andre mostly for watching YouTube and collecting information, listed from the most frequently used to the least.

**Table 4-2 List of Pieces of Technology**

Technology	Nom	Users and Use	Technology	Nom	Users and Uses
1. LG Tablet	1	Andre: watched YouTube videos, played games, typed notes, searched for information on Google and Facebook, etc. Yura: used for communication (Skype, Telegram, etc.)	6. DVD Player	1	Andre, Yura, Rosa, Anoosha: watched DVDs
2. TV	1	Andre, Anoosha, Rosa and Yura: watched news, YouTube videos, English series, and movies, and searched for music	7. Cell-phone	2	Rosa and Yura: sent text messages, read news feeds, used for communication (Skype, Telegram, Facebook, etc.), Google search, and Google Translate
3. Family PC	1	Andre: played games, searched for information, watched YouTube videos, etc. Yura: used for communication (Skype, Telegram, etc.), read Farsi iBooks and watched/read Farsi and English news	8. Organ	1	Rosa: played music
4. Xbox 1	1	Andre: played games that involved reading and writing/typing events	9. Drum Set	1	Not used!
5. Play Station 2	1	Andre: played games that involved reading and writing/typing events			

Andre engaged in traditional literacy events when he created small Bible story booklets featuring different “Roblox,” “Pokémon Go,” and YouTube popular characters. These stories were to a greater extent, inspired by Yura’s Christian themed stories, their refugee status, and the activities taking place in the community and his school. The booklets included eight stories that outlined four major themes: Christianity, resistance, resilience, and super powers. The description below depicts how he presented his story in a teacher-like manner.

First, he started with a clear loud voice explaining to me the technical words (the names of the games that the characters were borrowed from, etc.). Second, he read the story

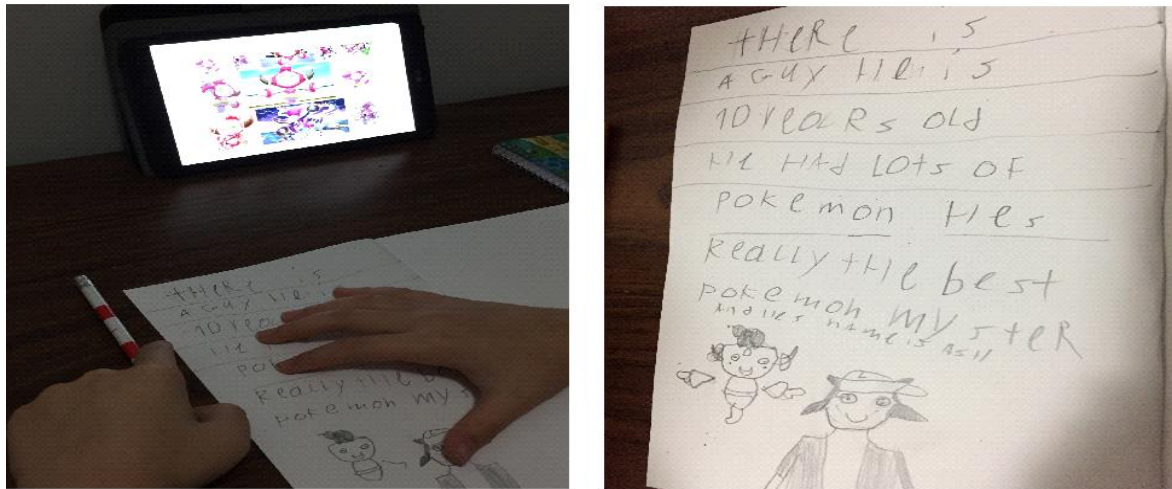
“The Steve and Creeper” with a loud voice making sure that I could see the page he was reading. As he was reading, he showed his drawings to personify the characters in the story and googled the other characters on the search bar of his Tablet to provide a pictorial description along with the printed text in the booklet. (The pictures and the text of this story are included in Appendix D.) The story was about a character named “Steve” who got killed in a battle field with a *Creeper* (a “Pokémon Go” character). His brother sought to revive him with the help of *Herobrian* (a wicked “Pokémon Go” character). *Herobrian* promised to revive Steve, only if his brother killed all of Steve’s friends. This story was inspired by Yura’s story of the Eternal rest two days earlier. The story was about faithful souls who were forced to abandon their faith in exchange for their family’s lives. They did not accept and got martyred. Despite their death, their souls were salvaged and rested in paradise along with their other loved ones (Field notes, January 4, 2017).

As is evidenced in this description, production of these Christian inspired story booklets consisted of multilayered, multimodal steps:

Andre folded a couple of A<sub>4</sub> papers and stapled them, then he began writing. As he wrote, he checked the spelling of the words he was not sure of (e.g., friend, Creeper, and upset) on the Google search bar of his Tablet by typing the first couple of letters and choosing from the suggested words that he believed matched the word he was looking for. When he finished each page, he would search for the picture of the main characters, drawn from “Roblox,” or “Pokémon Go” (e.g., “Ashh mom”<sup>15</sup>), on the search bar of Google Image to get ideas on drawing them (See Figure 4.2).

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<sup>15</sup> This is a text produced by Andre as searching for Ash’s mother’s image on Google



**Figure 4-2 Multimodal Composition of Story booklets**

Reading played an important role in Andre's access to information in out of home contexts. For example, when I accompanied them to the restaurant and the Microsoft store, I noticed Andre reading the environmental print such as street signs, names of the restaurant, and so forth to clarify location. He also read the food menu (English) and the labels on the laptops at Microsoft store to identify the food and laptop he wanted to have. At the Sport and the Leisure Complex, Andre used the environmental print effectively.

Because I had told the family that I had never been to any swimming pools in Canada, Andre took the lead to guide me on what I needed to do and know at a swimming pool. As we walked in when I accompanied him to the pool, Andre pointed out to the signs displayed on walls and told me what each meant: "you can take a shower here; you need to change your clothes in the changing room there; that is the deep end of the pool; and here is the shallow section; No outside shoes beyond this point; children are getting trained in that section; the sign reads preschool 3 shellfish, etc." After the shower, Andre pointed to a vending machine in the locker area and asked:



“What is Tampon? It says here “Tampon”. It is 25 cents only!”

Rosa: “I do not know that Andre. You will learn about it later at school” (Field notes, January 7, 2017).

The synopsis above portrayed the importance, and the perceived role(s) of school for the Avanesian family. The fact that Rosa indicated to Andre that he would learn more about the vending machine at school, projected her notion of school as a significant resource space for information. Moreover, the Avanesian family’s belief that school was the best resource for their children's learning, had caused them to place a significant amount of trust in "the school's expertise" demonstrated by the teachers, especially when they did not have the knowledge or information to share with the children. In this case, Rosa did not know what a tampon was (Field notes, November 25, 2016). They said that they trusted the educational system and the teachers in this matter because they had witnessed Andre’s English language and literacy development, which they highly valued (Field notes, December 9, 2016).

On one occasion, Rosa and Yura were requested to help Andre “develop comprehension skills by reading 20 minutes each night at home and improve his skills in spelling lessons” (Andre’s report card, December 2016).

Rosa: I don’t know how to help him read and write better. It’s hard when I myself am learning English. I don’t know what’s right and what’s wrong to do. I am sure his teacher can figure out how to improve his reading and writing the best (Field notes, December 26, 2016).

Rosa and Yura both did not feel competent in providing their son with reading and writing support. Also, they thought they were not appropriate role models for reading and spelling in English which contributed to the family’s dependence on school for supporting their

son's literacy skills. It also reflects a cultural belief that school, not the family is responsible for teaching children.

In summary, in the Avanesian family, print, oral, and multimodal texts mediated literacy activities and events. Christianity practices were the cornerstone of their daily literacy activities at home and in the community. The children were active participants and observers of their parents' engagement in traditional, religious, digital, cultural, and multimodal literacy events. The family had not maintained most of their Iranian cultural practices and instead highly valued Western cultural traditions and English language. The family learned more about Western cultural traditions and English language by participation in the community. The Avanesian's household was a digital literacy rich environment and there were limited traditional resources (e.g., story books, magazines) available in either Farsi or English as a result of their sociocultural circumstances and background. The children structured their own activities when using technology. Andre engaged in traditional and multimodal literacy activities which ranged from pencil and paper writing, drawing, and typing, to on-screen reading and inquiring information from YouTube. The Avanesian family had built a rapport with the school principal when discussing the incident that took place in the ISS afternoon program and teachers. They saw the school teachers as having the authority and the knowledge to facilitate and guide their children's literacy development.

## **Chapter 5: The Tops Family**

### **5.1 Literacy learning perceptions, beliefs, needs, resources, barriers, and expectations**

In this section, I take a step back and describe the Tops family's historical literacy practices, social positioning, and cultural capital before coming to Canada to be able to outline the literacy learning perceptions, beliefs, needs, barriers, and expectations of them today. I explain how social class and factors in social positioning such as power, and religion affected the family's literacy activities. In the second section of this chapter, I use the data from the field notes, semi-structured interviews, and observations to demonstrate the findings in relation to the Tops families' engagement in literacy events.

#### **5.1.1 The Tops' Background**

Julia Tops, the mother, was born in an "open-minded" Muslim family, in which Islam was respected and practiced but not forced on the members of the family. She decided not to practise Islam after years of reading about its philosophy in her adulthood. Like in almost all Iranian households, Farsi was the only language spoken and written in Julia's home growing up. She started to learn English in middle school and her interest in English learning motivated her to go on and pursue a major in English Literature at a private university.

Julia described her parental house in Iran as a traditional literacy rich environment. Despite lack of schooling due to financial constraints, Julia's father read old literature texts- novels, stories, and poetry - to Julia, her sister, and her four brothers. Every day, they read the daily newspaper and listened to the news on the radio (Field notes, December 5, 2016).

Julia: When I was Eva's age, I used to read a lot. Back then, we spent more time reading because technology was not as advanced as it is today. There were no computers or

laptops so most of our learning came from books, writing, and drawing (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

Julia's belief in the need to provide suitable informational texts for children was rooted in her own childhood experiences which placed value on genre. She invested a lot of time and money choosing suitable informational books (e.g., about geography, planets, and science) that matched the children's Farsi proficiency level. Julia viewed her lack of access to technology while growing up positively, because it gave her the opportunity for traditional literacy activities such as reading books and handwriting papers, rather than reading on-screen or typing on the computer. She argued that traditional literacy activities such as newspaper or storybook reading would bring families together while computers have separated children from their families nowadays (Field notes, December 5, 2016). Therefore, she monitored the children's technology use closely because she believed that the children used most of their on-screen-time playing uninformative games (Field notes, December 5, 2016).

After graduation from university, Julia worked in several positions as an administrative assistant. After marriage, she adopted the role of a home maker and took various artistic classes such as painting and cosmetology. She also continued reading Farsi literature, including poetry and novels. Julia mentioned that she could not bring all of her books to Canada and some of them were still in their home in Iran where her husband spent most of his time (Field notes, January 8, 2017). Considering the number of books and other printed materials in the Tops' house in Canada, I assumed that their house in Iran must have been a literacy rich environment too.

Julia's passion for literature was reflected in the Farsi literacy resources she provided for her children and the literacy activities that she organized for them. She also expected Eva and

Ethan to engage in more traditional literacy activities, and for example, expected them to memorize the Farsi spelling of the words that she selected from the Farsi texts they read together. She highlighted the words in the book and had the children write a sentence, using them, after which dictated the selected words for the children to write. The goal of engaging children in reading and writing in Farsi was to increase their Farsi literacy skills. Julia and George believed that it was important for the children not only to be able to communicate orally and through text with their friends, and relatives in Iran but also, to master Farsi to a level that would enable them to attend school, work, and run their father's business in Iran (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

George was also born and raised in an "open-minded" Muslim family in Iran who practiced and respected Islam. George was the only member of a family of eight, who did not practice Islam. Farsi was the only language used in spoken and written forms while he was growing up. George started learning English as a foreign language in high school. At home while growing up, George benefited from a literacy rich environment and his father's professional role as an adult literacy teacher.

George: My dad educated people and he used to sit my sister and I [sic] next to the other adults during his classes. He used to teach and give us assignments. I learned math and Farsi with the help of my dad. Before starting school, I could do addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. I could count until numbers with 15 zeros (now I cannot do that). I started school a little earlier [than is typical in Iran] at the age of 5 years old. In elementary school, my dad made me read and write from some difficult books such as

*Bustan*<sup>16</sup> and *Gulistan*<sup>17</sup> both written by Sa'di and *Kalīleh o Demneh*<sup>18</sup>. My dad thought what he was doing was right and that was necessary for us to learn math and literature. As far as I remember, the math section of my early learnings has always been useful for me in my life and education. The Farsi literature reading/writing at home was so boring for me, because I could not connect with old literature (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

George started learning to read and write Farsi and learning mathematics before going to school, because his father perceived them as skills that children needed to acquire at an early age. George found his early Farsi literacy “boring” because the texts were too difficult, uninteresting, and did not address his needs. George’s approach to Eva’s English/Farsi spelling - he requested that Eva write the correct version of misspelled words ten times, and complete four pages of math problems after each math lesson he offered her at home - was reflective of his own literacy learning experiences as a child in Iran. Having read unsuitable books as a child, George spent extra attention on providing suitable Farsi and English literacy resources for his children including simple Farsi stories and children’s poetry books, English chapter books, comic books, and novels in both Farsi and English.

George’s early mathematics learning and his interest and talent in that area led him to study Mechanical Engineering at a top public university in Iran. He took his Bachelor and Master’s degrees consecutively and established his own manufacturing business in his mid-twenties.

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<sup>16</sup> *Bustan* is a one of the major poetry books of the Persian poet Sa'di.

<sup>17</sup> *Gulistan* is another major poetry book of the Persian poet Sa'di.

<sup>18</sup> *Kalīleh o Demneh* is an ancient collection of interrelated animal fables in verse and prose written by Rudaki in the 12th century.

### **5.1.2 The Tops' Language and Literacy Practices Prior to Canada**

George and Julia both believed that learning English as a foreign language was a major contributor to “children’s learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016). George believed that:

Learning a second language is important for us just like it is all around the world. I think without knowing the second and third language a person cannot have a useful presence in the international world. We provided our children with English language tutoring sessions, English language kindergartens and English/Farsi bilingual elementary schools even before making the decision to immigrate to Canada. Studying English was a priority for our children. We only invested more time on their English after deciding to immigrate. I can recall that one or 2 years before our immigration, we raised the number of sessions they had English tutors at home (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

Multilingualism has been a priority for the Tops family even before immigration to Canada. Both children were exposed to English language during different literacy and daily activities both at home and in the kindergarten from the age of three. The children also had tutors from the age of four at home to help them with oral communication in English, learning basic math, and reading and writing in English. Both George and Julia had English Tutors twice a week before having children and continued that after applying for IIP to refresh their English speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills. They were moderately proficient in English and they maintained Farsi as a mean of communication in speaking, writing, reading, and use of media. Their emphasis on using Farsi was to enhance the children’s intergenerational

communications and relationships with people back in Iran and for keeping their cultural traditions (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

After university, George's literacy activities became more business oriented as he had to read economic reports and articles, factory departmental reports, and business sections of the newspaper in Farsi. He also followed the English and Farsi news on TV and on his cell phone utilizing Farsi and English BBC and CNN apps. George had managed to maintain these habits in the context of Canada. However, his literacy activities related to business such as reading reports and writing business plans had taken a more multimodal digital form; in other words, his use of digital technology has increased in comparison with the past.

Julia and George had access to radio and TV growing up. They believed in the value and importance of digital technology in children's learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and provided their children with personal iPads, iPhones, and radios in their bedroom; the children shared TVs, a PC, Xbox, and Wii with other family members. George acknowledged the role of technology in improving his children's computer skills, literacy skills, and scientific research skills, necessary for education in Canada. However, he did not consider these advancements in children's digital skills to be a result of their immigration to Canada. In fact, he believed different factors contributed to the children's current skills with regards to digital technology. He mentioned that children's use of technology had increased as they grew up. He also believed that his children would be using the same digital tools and in much the same ways, if they were living in Iran (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

The Tops family believed that educated people's path of life and their ability to choose an occupation was smoother than uneducated people's. Indeed, providing better education



opportunities for their children in a western country was one of the main reasons for their immigration to Canada. Julia thought getting educated was important because:

These days everywhere in the world, by means of a good education one can access good job opportunities faster and better. Generally, well-educated people can create better job opportunities as entrepreneurs, they have better networks/relations that they have made through their years of education. Generally, education or book reading can help people flourish better, approach problems with an open point of view. Whenever you apply for any job, a person with better education from a western university (like America) has a higher chance to get a job than an uneducated person (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

I inferred that, for Julia, getting well educated resulted in better job opportunities, creating better networks, establishing a community of experts, and getting a broader perspective on issues. Julia's usage of "getting educated" and "reading books" synonymously suggested how she associated education with traditional book reading which is also reflective of her own experience as a student and a criterion of a "good school" for her children (see section 5.1.3).

### **5.1.3 The Tops' Language and Literacy Practices in Canada**

The Tops family ended up in Canada not only for better educational opportunities but also to benefit from a socio-politically stable context where they faced fewer social restrictions. They believed that the unstable political situation of Iran in the region was concerning and could affect their children's future and academic progress. In George's words:

We were imagining a more peaceful and quiet space that would provide better opportunities for our children to develop and be educated (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

The whole application process took about 3 years and when the Tops family finally landed in Canada, they did not settle right away. They spent the first summer travelling through Canada, visiting cities such as Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver examining different cities in terms of whether they had Iranian communities, weather conditions, and so on. They finally decided on their present location for its concentrated Iranian population, natural surroundings, milder weather conditions, and closeness of the border with America, and peacefulness (Field notes, December 14, 2016). They immigrated to Canada the following summer in 2014. That a vibrant Iranian community was the foremost reason for the Tops family to move to the city they chose indicates the importance of connecting to their compatriots, language and cultural traditions. They also valued being close to the United States so that their children could pursue postsecondary education there if they wished. In fact, their first choice would have been to move to the United States because of its “great universities and educational opportunities” (Field notes, December 14, 2016).

Both George and Julia viewed Canada as their temporary home where they based their children’s future. However, they wanted to go back to Iran after their children began their university education in the United States or Canada. Julia especially thought that the children did not need further support once they start their postsecondary education. She had this impression that she was sacrificing her happiness, because of being away from her husband and her mother, for the future of her children (Field notes, February 1, 2017). As a sojourner (a guest in a friend’s house or a person temporarily living in another country) she had no motives to invest in further developing her English proficiency because she neither planned to stay long nor was it financially necessary for her to find a job which required better English oral and written literacy skills. Besides, with the support available from children, siblings, her husband, and friends

among the Iranian communities, she did not feel the need to improve her English proficiency level.

Despite the Tops family's interest in immigration to Canada for the above-mentioned reasons, the family highly valued Iran, its culture and traditions, as is explained in the next section. Having considered themselves educated people coming from a country that is home to one of the oldest major civilizations in the world, the Tops family perceived themselves as assets to the Canadian society.

George: We have brought hundreds of thousand dollars to this country to invest. We have bought a house which may have had an impact on housing industry here, we have renovated our house that has created jobs for some people over a period of time. Now that we live here, we pay tax and spend money on all the services we receive (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

The Tops family's sociocultural standpoint as successful, rich immigrants who consider themselves sojourners in Canada, had given them the confidence and perspective to attribute so much significance to the Farsi language, culture, and traditions. Therefore, they invested time, money, and energy in promoting Farsi reading and writing, as well as, maintaining a balance between the other languages (e.g., English) that children learned and used in their house.

The Tops family valued the comprehensive educational system in Canada that focused on a person's, educational, emotional, and physical development, although they also had some concerns.

George: In Canada unlike Iran, which focuses more on education, they focus on everything: education, sports, art, and above all making connections with people and working in groups. These are the positive aspects of Canada. However, we believe that in

my children's age group, there is not enough academic pressure on them from the school which there should be more. We believe that the math, English spelling, and science offered at schools here are way too easy for the children's level and school standards are way lower than ours (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

Julia: The most important thing is that the children in Canada lack general information about the world around them, and they are weak in spelling. They are way behind the children in Iran in understanding of sociology, geography, different cultures and spelling; they have not heard the names of many countries. They are not requested to practice from their spelling mistakes, etc. (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

The Tops family had certain expectations and assessment criteria for their children's learning at school that they believed were not met in the Canadian school system. These expectations and criteria seem to have been formed primarily by their previous learning experiences in Iran and by their sociocultural background as educated Iranian professionals. To address the perceived gap between their expectations and what was offered to children in schools in Canada, the Tops family provided the children with various lessons offered by tutors, themselves, and significant others.

The Tops family sought literacy support from different sources; they consulted experts such as their immigration lawyer and business consultant for filling out different forms such as Permanent Residency (PR) extension application and income tax returns. They got brochures/digital notifications from their Iranian friends, the children's schools, and the local recreation center about extracurricular classes, summer camps, etc. Their siblings provided them with links to the webpage for Europe visa application and filled in the application forms for them. Julia and George both sought support from their children (See section 5.2). Upon request, I also provided

support for their online book orders, Ethan's SSAT application, and helped Eva's English spelling and "Immigration" class project.

The Tops family's social status as educated, rich sojourners in Canada, and the resources available to them, created a form of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1977a; Bourdieu & Passeron 1977; Lareau, 1987) that gave them access to a multilayered literacy support system provided by their family members, people in their community, and societal entities. Eva and Ethan observed their parents' engagement in multilingual and multimodal literacy activities within different contexts and sometimes participated in them. In addition, they were the indirect recipients of these literacy supports available to their family in that they benefitted from the extracurricular classes, camps, and after school events.

#### **5.1.4 Summary**

As presented above, the Tops family's current literacy activities and their day to day practices were very much guided by the goal of "better education" and also impacted by their sociocultural background, socioeconomic status, past learning experiences (e.g., learning Farsi literacy through reading literary work and writing from them) cultural capital, and their intention to return to Iran. They aimed to provide the resources and support necessary for their children's education and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The family continued their previous literacy activities or habits from Iran such as reading books, writing using paper and pencils, rote memorization of spelling of words in both English and Farsi, and also giving dictations to children as a way to measure their Farsi and English spelling competency. The family had also adopted more multimodal literacy activities such as practicing French on the "Duolingo" app, communicating through email and communication apps, etc. Therefore, their home was a literacy rich environment with adoption of more digital literacy resources such as multilingual learning apps,

different iBook series, DVD guides to learn Excel, Access, etc. The Tops family's social class as educated, rich sojourners in Canada had socially placed them in a more confident position to attribute significance to the Farsi language, culture, and cultural traditions which was evidenced in their everyday literacy activities.

All in all, the Tops family valued their children's in-school and out of school literacy learning activities. They facilitated their multiliteracy, multilingual and multimodal activities at home and in the community context to bridge to a future that they believe held the best educational and professional opportunities for their children.

## **5.2 Family literacy activities at home and in the community context**

In this section, I use the data from my field notes, semi-structured interviews, and observations to describe the Tops family's literacy events and activities. I focus on the families' traditional, multimodal and digital literacy actions based on their current sociocultural circumstances, cultural capital, family interactions, and social relations.

As noted, the Tops were an affluent immigrant family who came to Canada in 2014 through IIP. They had made an investment of \$120,000 in order to be eligible for a permanent resident visa for Canada in 2011. The Tops family lived in a high socioeconomic neighborhood in a metropolitan area in British Columbia. Their large two-story detached house was decorated with classic furniture, antiques, digital devices, books, clothes, and toys. The Tops' home was a traditional literacy rich environment in that it was filled with English picture books, English chapter books, books of sheet music, Farsi literature including books of poetry, English and Farsi magazines, brochures, and catalogs, cards and so forth. Therefore, reading did not take place in one domain. Children had their own bookshelves in their bedrooms filled with English comics, chapter books, and picture books. There was a small book case filled with children's Farsi

storybooks in the living room where Julia practiced Farsi reading and writing with the children every Sunday afternoon. In addition, there were two big book cases downstairs in the children's play area, one in which books that children had already read were stored, and the other occupied by all of George's and Julia's books in Farsi, most of which they had read. There was also a basket of Farsi newspapers, magazines, and brochures in the living room for adults to enjoy. There also was a big stack of official letters from banks, the insurance company, children's schools, Immigration Canada and advertisements from shopping malls, restaurants, gyms, and so forth placed on the table in the living room which Julia skimmed often. There were many postal cards displayed on the mirrors in children's bedrooms from relatives and friends from around the world.

The Tops family engaged in reading and writing various official documents including Permanent Residency Extension forms, income tax returns, applications for a European visa, membership forms to the local recreation center, and orders for different books and digital literacy resources. Julia also spent about two hours a day reading the news on Facebook channels such as Iran News, BBC News, Trudeau News, Immigration Canada News, Health News that she had subscribed to. She indicated that she spent around half an hour reading English texts and an hour and a half reading Farsi texts daily (Field notes, December 23, 2016). Furthermore, she used the communications apps such as Telegram, Tango, FaceTime, and WhatsApp on her iPhone to contact her friends and family around the world. As the mother of two school aged children, Julia was required to fill out and sign forms to register the children for programs. She read and signed and responded to paperwork and emails from the children's schools in English (e.g., agendas, emails, notices, reading logs, reports) on a daily basis. Since many of the extracurricular activities could only be registered for online, Julia was required to have access to

a computer and to the Internet; she completed these tasks on her iPhone, iPad, and laptop, depending on her location. Furthermore, she provided her email address to the school to get updates on children's daily progress, assignments, and parent-teacher meeting schedules. She read the school newsletter and double checked with the children which event/activity they wanted to take part in before signing them up for those activities. However, Julia did not perform these activities without any support. Julia responded to the question of "do you get help with English from children?":

Yes, a lot. I ask them about the usage of sentences/questions in different contexts or the meaning of words. Last night, I had composed two emails to send to two people. First, I asked Eva to come and check my email, she then made one or two changes and told me it was a good email and sent it out for me. For the second email, I asked Ethan for help and unfortunately, he sent it out without proofreading. I have recently asked them for more help because I realized they were getting better in both their English and computer skills. The children love to teach what they know. I asked Eva to teach me or help me with something at least once a week such as; editing emails or typing. This makes her focus much more on them too. My husband usually asks Ethan or Eva the meaning of some words or sentences in different contexts (Semi-structured interview, November 30, 2016).

In this example, Julia benefitted from brokering at the levels of lexico-syntactic/graphophonic, culture, and genre (Perry, 2009) - that her children provided in different contexts. Other people in the family also acted as literacy brokers: Ted, (her brother), searched for Austrian visa application forms (in German) online and provided Julia with the link to the webpage. Then, he booked an appointment for Julia and the children, filled in the forms for Julia



and guided her on where to put her signature on the visa application forms (Field notes, February 7, 2017).

As indicated earlier, George came to Canada five times a year and then the children observed him engaged in various literacy activities. As a company and factory owner, George engaged in conference calls on Skype and FaceTime with factory managers and staff. He routinely monitored the job activity processes on his iPhone surveillance app which was connected to the surveillance cameras in the factory and office. He read the economic reports from different factory departments on-screen that took between 2 to 3 hours of his time a day. As George mentioned during the semi-structured interview:

When I am in Canada, I hardly have time to do any reading or writing for more than an hour a day. But when I am in Iran, the amount of time I spend on reading, writing can be more than two hours a day. I read newspaper, watch the news on TV or read it online. I send text messages and emails. I read economic reports as well as the reports that come from each department of my factory and company. Most of these activities are done in Farsi. When I am in Iran, I sometimes read and watch news in English (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

Thus, depending on George's location, the amount and quality of his engagement in literacy activities changed. He used the communication apps on his cell phone such as Telegram, FaceTime, Skype, and WhatsApp to contact his friends and family around the world. Consistent with traditional Iranian culture, as a father and the head of the family, George was in charge of correspondence with Immigration Canada, immigration lawyers, business lawyers, the banks in Canada, legal institutions (for example to get legal opinions on how to create a will), and travel agencies for flight bookings and travel reservations. He engaged in reading official letters and

completing forms to apply for, or renew the insurance for cars, house, and other possessions. He also dealt with online banking such as transferring funds for extracurricular classes and school payments. In Canada, George taught the children new math concepts from the Complete Math Smart series (Complete Math Smart Revised and Updated level 5, 2015) in Farsi and signed assignments and spelling tests. When he was in Iran, he provided the children with transnational literacy links such as multilingual and multimodal lessons using Skype.

The volume of print and texts in the Tops' home, and the amount of time spent on reading in the household suggested that both Julia and George highly valued both Farsi and English literacy and invested significant time and money into providing new suitable resources for their children. Julia mentioned that she had started reading Farsi books to both of the children when they were in her womb knowing that children could hear voices and learn from them. Reading books in utero has more recently become very popular among middle and upper middle-class parents-to-be in Iran. Julia also added that reading to Eva in the womb was more organized because that was concurrent with Ethan's shared book reading routine at the age of two. She continued reading to the children regularly until she taught Eva how to read and write in Farsi at the age of 5 when Ethan attended grade one at the age of seven. Therefore, the children's Farsi reading and writing developed together. Julia took advantage of various educational videos such as the series, "Learn Farsi with Amu Ferdos" and "Persian Alphabet for Preschoolers"; she believed the videos helped to teach the children Farsi reading and writing. Julia kept the book reading routine until the children began reading independently which in Eva's case was when she attended the first grade in Iran. However, since Eva started attending school in Canada, her independent book reading routine has only been in English (Semi-structured interview, November 30, 2016). Therefore, Julia had added a time slot for Farsi reading and writing in the

children's schedules on Sunday afternoons. During that time, both children gathered in the living room and read aloud a story from a book that Julia chose. Each child read about 5 pages before passing the book on to the other (see below). The Tops family also placed high significance on gaining general knowledge about the world, and natural and geographical phenomena which was made evident in the wide variety of informational resources available to children in their household.

Julia: Eva also reads a lot of interesting books that I buy for them. These books attract the children and help them learn in general and not just improve their reading and writing (Field notes, December 20, 2016).

During the study, I observed Eva read books during the day as well as at bedtime. Eva borrowed books from her school library and the public library. She borrowed between 4 to 5 books from her school library, and between 2 to 3 books from the public library once every two weeks. Before going to bed, both children had to place their iPads, and (Ethan's) laptop on the coffee table in the living room and then get ready for their book reading routine. Julia indicated that she does not allow the children to take their iPads to their bedrooms because they would spend the night playing with them. The children read between half an hour to one hour before Julia reminded them to turn off the lights and sleep (Field notes, January 3, 2017).

The Tops' family maintained their cultural traditions in their new context. They celebrated the Iranian New Year, Persian Festival of Fire<sup>19</sup>, Yalda Night<sup>20</sup>, Iranian Mother's and Father's Day, and so on. They took part in Iranian friendly gatherings and parties, joined their

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<sup>19</sup> The *Persian Festival of Fire* also, widely known as the Red Wednesday, is an Iranian festival celebrated on the eve of the last Wednesday before Nowruz the Iranian New Year.

<sup>20</sup> The *Yalda Night* is an Iranian festival celebrated on the "longest and darkest night of the year," that is, in the night of the Northern Hemisphere's winter solstice.

friends in singing Farsi songs, reading literary poems, playing Iranian music on the piano, and dancing. They have also adopted Western cultural traditions such as celebrating Christmas, Halloween, and Easter. I observed their celebration of Yalda Night (December 20), Christmas, George's birthday, and attended one friendly gathering and one party with them. I also accompanied them to a restaurant and two shopping malls.

The Tops' Iranian traditional practices enacted in Canada included Farsi oral and written texts that were taught in connection with Western cultural traditions. Julia had chosen the children's Farsi storybooks that familiarized them with Farsi idioms, expressions, and Iranian ancient traditions. The vignette below exemplifies how Julia took advantage of the Western cultural traditions to create opportunities to familiarize children with Iranian cultural traditions.

Close to Christmas and New Year, Julia brought a storybook about Nowruz (Iranian New Year) for Farsi reading time. Ethan and Eva gathered in the living room and Eva started reading. Julia preferred the children to sit next to her to be able to monitor and help reading. As Eva read, she paused before reading the words she was not sure of and Julia waited for her to make a few guesses. Julia pronounced the word correctly after Eva's unsuccessful trials. In some cases, Julia deliberately mispronounced a word and had Eva read the sentence including that word, but pronouncing it correctly. In most cases Eva would realize the word did not sound right and this created a fun atmosphere for Eva, Ethan, and Julia to laugh and enjoy reading, and to monitor the reading for meaningfulness. Julia created a fun reading atmosphere, as well as, an opportunity to memorize the new words by giving the children tongue twisters using the new words in the story. When both Eva and Ethan finished reading, Julia asked what they thought of Iranian New Year and why it was important to Iranians. Eva thought Nowruz was

important because families would get together and celebrate. Julia then explained to the children while it was important to celebrate the Western New Year, it was much more important for them to celebrate and know about their Iranian traditions because that defined who they really were and where they came from (Field notes, December 20 & 25, 2016 & January 10, 2017).

In this scenario, Julia placed value in celebrating the Western New Year while using it as an opportunity to link to the cultural traditions of the Iranian New Year. Julia emphasized the Iranian cultural traditions to the children because she felt it was important they were made aware of the homeland where they grew up and the cultural traditions that helped shape their identity.

As mentioned earlier, singing was as an important aspect of Iranian cultural traditions, and was often incorporated in Tops' gatherings and parties. Both events that I attended with the Tops' family, as well as the Yalda Night and George's birthday celebration held in the Tops home, included singing, poetry reading, dancing, and music performed by different members of each family (including children and elderly members). I attended the parties and gatherings as Julia's guest and only observed the events; I did not participate in the poetry reading and so forth. From time to time, I took notes on my iPhone notepad but did not take any photos during the two gatherings I attended in other households as Julia's guest. Below is a summary of my observations during the Yalda Night celebration at the Tops' household.

Older parents and grandparents sang several old Farsi traditional songs, or read poems from a *Hafez*<sup>21</sup> book or other famous Iranian poetry books. The younger ones sang the song lyrics from memory or read lyrics displayed on their cell phones, iPads, or tablets.

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<sup>21</sup> *Hafez* was a Persian poet whose collected works are regarded as a pinnacle of Persian literature

Similarly, the children sang from the memory or from lyrics displayed on their technical devices. Children also, played the piano or guitar while reading the printed note sheets.

During the gathering, Julia sang a couple of old Farsi songs such as “Shabe Mahtab” (Moonlight Night) and “Soltan e Ghalbha” (The King of Hearts). She read the lyrics from her “music notebook” and also googled the lyrics of the song, “Jane Maryam” (Maryam Sweetheart) on her iPhone (Field notes, December 20, 2016).

Practicing Iranian cultural traditions gave the Tops family the opportunity to connect and maintain their relationships with the Iranian communities in their neighborhood, and also provided a context in which literacy in various forms was integral.

The Tops family had their children participate in a book club consisting of 10 families who were friends and members of the Iranian community. They met almost every week and the host/hostess of that gathering had the responsibility of organizing and running the one hour-long book club for the children of the guests. During each session, the children chose a different English book to read for the next session. They had to read the book at home and write a summary in English. During the session, each child would present their summaries to their group of friends. Eva handwrote her summaries; however, despite Julia’s emphasis on writing, Ethan typed his summary and printed it. These events, although reflecting a traditional orientation to learning, created opportunities for the children to improve their English literacy skills, enabled them to engage in discussion, and connected them with other children from their community.

At the time of study Julia was practicing two old Iranian songs with Eva and Ethan to sing for George on his birthday. She had also asked Eva’s piano teacher to include a few Farsi music notes in her lessons so that she could play on her dad’s birthday, Father’s Day, or at the Iranian New Year party. Eva played an equal number of both English and Farsi songs which

demonstrated the significance of maintaining Iranian cultural traditions (in this case old Iranian songs) in the new context. Eva was reluctant to play the piano for an hour every day and would not devote the full hour to playing. Instead, she spent some time resting on the couch, or reading English storybooks and would only start to play again when she heard Julia's verbal reminder such as the ones below:

Julia: I need to hear what you play or else I am going to deduct the quiet time from the one-hour total that you need to play (Field notes, December 5, 2016).

Eva also indicated that she wished that she could play the guitar instead of the piano. When Julia was informed of Eva's wish, she said that she could play whatever she wanted but, she was not allowed to quit the piano because Julia loved her to play it (Field notes, December 11, 2016). These decisions on one level indicated the extent to which Eva's daily activities and extracurricular activities were structured and enforced by her parents and specifically her mother Julia. On another level, Julia's insistence on continuing piano and all the other extracurricular lessons they took spoke to the traditional Iranian culture of parenting which requires children to follow their parents' instructions and abide by their decisions. It further reflects the traditional practice of enrolling children in different extracurricular activities.

As indicated, the Tops parents, and specifically Julia structured children's activities and the level of participation in them. Their schedule consisted of school work, and extracurricular classes, offered by tutors including piano, singing, ice skating, and French. There were also, extracurricular lessons offered by family members in Farsi reading/writing, extra math, and coding. Eva's weekly extracurricular activities are depicted in Appendix E. Children were expected to spend time practicing the extracurricular lessons at home. For example, beside their once a week French lesson offered by a tutor, the children were supposed to practice French on

the “Duolingo” app of their iPads for half an hour a week and then role play a set of greetings in French for Julia. Both children had their own accounts to log on to the app. Practicing French involved multimodal and multilingual reading and writing. The app consisted of 78 modular lessons, designed as stages in games. For the children to pass each stage/lesson, they were required to provide correct responses (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) to questions. The new material was taught in French orally and written texts and the children were supposed to translate the words into English and type them in blank spaces. There were also plenty of picture-text association tasks that required the children to match words to illustrations. At the time of the study, both Eva and Ethan were on Module 11. After one session that I observed, the children role played a set of greetings in French. They then sat in front of each other and role-played questions and answers about their names, country of origin, favorite foods/drinks, the days of the week, and the months in the year. Although Julia did not speak French and could not support the children in that regard, she requested that they practice in her presence so that she could monitor them (Field notes, December 27, 2016).

The Tops family had several pieces of the latest technology which were used mostly by Ethan and Eva, and the least by their dad, as he did not spend much of his time in Canada. Both Eva and Ethan spent any free time their schedule/mom allowed on digital technology. Table 5.1 represents the technology used by Eva and her family at home, and the literacy events associated with them.



**Table 5-1 List of Pieces of Digital Technology**

Technology	Nom	Person using and the literacy use	Technology	Nom	Person using and the literacy use
1. iPad Air	3	Eva & Ethan: watched YouTube videos, played games, practiced French, did school assignments searched for information on Google, etc. Julia: used for communication (Tango, Facetime, etc.)	7. Radio	2	Eva: Listened to music and sang along
2. Smart TV	3	Whole family: watched Farsi movies (Netflix), English cartoon episodes, and Farsi/English news	8. DVD player	2	Never observed being used during the study
3. Xbox 1	1	Eva and Ethan: played games that involved reading instructions and typing participant's information and performing actions	9. Cell-phone	5	Julia & George: made calls, sent text messages, read news feeds on Facebook, used for communication (Tango, Telegram, WhatsApp, etc.) Eva & Ethan: made calls
4. Wii	1	Eva: played games that involved reading instructions, typing participant's information and performing actions	10. HP Color Printer	1	Whole family: printed, scanned, copied documents and school assignments
5. Piano	1	Eva: rehearsed Farsi and English music notes for an hour everyday	11. Guitar	1	Ethan: rehearsed music notes for half an hour a week
6. Family PC	1	Eva & Ethan: practiced coding and took coding lessons Julia: set the TV passcode on/off	12. Mac Book Air (laptop)	1	Ethan: did school assignments, played games, etc.

Julia, believed that, having used different pieces of technology:

[The] children have progressed in the computer skills necessary for entering university or finding a job and these skills have in turn helped drastically improve their lessons at school. However, most of their time is being allocated on these pieces of technology

which can result in having a negative impact on their learning progress. Moreover, their dependence on the computer, iPad and laptop has resulted in weaker spelling skills and the ability to write nice handwriting. That is because they trust the correction system these devices provide rather than their own spelling knowledge. Also, the ease of typing has resulted in their hands to become lazy in writing (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

Despite recognizing the importance of technology in children's learning, Julia believed that it had drawbacks in terms of children's literacy development. Therefore, she organized their schedule in a way that allowed them to have only an hour and a half of screen time every day. The screen time entailed working and/or playing on their iPad or laptop, watching TV, and playing on Xbox, or Wii. After their allotted screen time was finished, both children were requested to place their iPads, and laptop (Ethan's) on the coffee table in the living room. The children also were requested to do their online assignments in the living room where Julia could monitor them. In addition, Julia had the TV in the living room set to a specific time frame and locked with a passcode only she had access to. The TV automatically went off at 10 p.m. so that Julia made sure, the children could not spend a lot of time watching TV when she and George were at a gathering or party. Despite all the mentioned measures taken to monitor children's screen time, Julia had to remind and continuously monitor their screen use (Field notes, January 13, 2017).

During the study, I did not observe any spiritual or religious events that entailed literacy and when I asked about that, Julia replied:

We do not have any religious or spiritual books at home neither in Farsi nor in English because I do not have religious beliefs. Therefore, I do not carry out religious training at home because I do not want to push religious beliefs onto my children.

Uncle Ted: None of us have religious beliefs.

Me: How did the children get familiar with Islam, which is a crucial part of Iran's history and daily life?

Julia: They do not know much about Islam, all they are aware of is that we are labelled Muslims and Muslims pray. Specifically, Eva knows very little about Muslims. All she knows is that Iran is an Islamic country and that we need to wear Hijab when going to Iran for a visit; that is all (Field notes, December 8, 2016).

The absence of religious texts in the literacy rich environment of the Tops' household is reflective of being raised in an open-minded religious family and their social positioning in relation with religion in their new country. That is, the family's sociocultural background and circumstances has led them to form a neutral stance with regards to religious training. This has eliminated the family from practicing or participating in any religious events such as saying prayers and reading Koran in Arabic, or taking part in Friday prayers.

As mentioned earlier, shopping was another common activity in the Tops' family that involved the children. I observed Julia asking Eva to make a grocery shopping list in Farsi once during the study. Eva wrote down the foods and their quantity as Julia checked what they needed. When Eva finished with the list, Julia looked at the list and reminded her of the correct spelling of “کره” (butter). Eva then, erased the word and replaced it with the correct spelling. While grocery shopping, Eva read the list out loud to her mom and told her that she would find “butter and milk” in the dairy section while Julia picked up the rest of the items in the list, first

by reading the aisle sign and then by reading the packaging labels. After she had collected all of the items on the list, she double checked with her mother to make sure they were the right products (Field notes, December 23, 2016). The same thing happened, when Julia took both children shopping for clothes; Julia asked Eva to select whatever items she liked. However, she had to make sure the clothes were size 14, XL, which was suitable for age 10-11. Eva first located the children's section of the store and when she found her favorite pieces of clothing, she checked the size and age group on the tag, and finally chose the clothes to try on. These examples showed shopping was a context in which Eva read and wrote for real life purposes (Field notes, December 17, 2016).

As depicted in Table 5-1, the children spent most of their time on their iPads watching YouTube videos. YouTube provided Eva with information in English about performing tasks such as solving a 3\*3\*3, or 4\*4\*4 Rubik's cube, making cookies, ice cream, and jelly, singing songs, and playing games such as "Roblox," "Spyfall," "Happy Wheels". These videos included step by step demonstrations of actions with some captions in English. Eva also used YouTube for entertainment, or as she put it, "for taking a break from school work" (Field notes, November 28, 2016). The conversation below, however, illustrates Eva's use of YouTube as an information source that enhanced her learning:

Eva: Can you solve a 3\*3\*3 Rubik's cube?

Me: No, I can't. Can you?

Eva: Choose a color.

Me: Blue.

Eva: Let me do it for you. I have watched two hours of YouTube to learn how to do this.

I can do it in less than 4 minutes (Field notes, December 2, 2016).

Later she showed me the YouTube video she had watched to learn how to solve Rubik's cube; it was an English video with captions in English and she read along with the print on screen to teach me how to solve the cube. Over the next visits, Eva showed me how she had learned to solve the 4\*4\*4 Rubik's cube in 4 minutes, stating that she had spent a couple of more hours watching the YouTube video to be able to solve the cube (Field notes, December 17, 2016). YouTube played an important role in providing practical information and instructional texts on how to do tasks and, it appears to have supported Eva's language and literacy skills. She searched for the videos that were suggested to her by her brother and school friends. She typed the names of the videos in her YouTube search bar and read the descriptions of the videos to help her choose. Her favorite YouTube channel series was called "DIY". This English series was based on scenarios around YouTubers taking the viewers through a step by step procedure of doing different tasks such as making a glow-in-the-dark jello pumpkin, making a mega giant lollipop, or making a cotton candy flower. Eva would spend hours on YouTube if she did not have a class, or when her mother was not around to monitor her activities.

Eva's self-initiated writings and crafts at home were often inspired by YouTube videos and she created multiple YouTube-like videos and voice clips to practice school literacy and/or to record her experiments. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, Eva was engaged in a school project called "Immigration" for a couple of weeks during the study. As part of the "immigration" project, she recorded a YouTube-like video clip to share her Uncle Ted's perspective as an immigrant to Europe. To prepare Ted for the interview, she translated the English interview questions given by her teacher into Farsi for him because, as she put it, "My uncle's English is terrible" (Field notes, December 8, 2016). Eva then gave Ted a few days to write his answers to the questions in Farsi and then she translated his answers into English and gave Ted a few days

to memorize them. When Ted was finally ready, Eva asked Julia to record the interview. During the interview, inspired by videos she had watched on YouTube, she introduced herself, mentioned how she felt that day, and gave an explanation of what the video was about. Eva prepared a printed script as a prompt that she could call on if and when she needed it during the video recording and had placed it on a table in front of her. She also had placed a copy of Ted's responses in front of him to provide him with support in case he needed it (Field notes, December 14, 2016). This shared multimodal literacy event between Eva, her mother, and Ted was inspired by YouTube videos, as noted. Both Julia and Ted had an active role in providing Eva with support in monitoring different factors when taping the video such as issues around privacy and copyright. They also provided her with guidelines on who to share the video with (Field notes, December 14, 2016). This activity represented Eva's knowledge of multimodality and the extent to which Eva's literacy activities were mediated by different multimodal and digital tools at home. Eva's use of Farsi and English interchangeably in this example is also indicative of her bilingual and biliterate knowledge, and ability to code switch or translanguage (e.g., Bauer & Guerro, 2015), in both oral and written domains.

On another of my visits, Eva engaged in a multimodal literacy event that included a recording of a voice clip discussing her mother, brother, and Uncle Ted's Chinese Zodiac sign. She recorded their voices to practice Mandarin from a lesson at school. First, she explained to them the process and that she would be asking them their Chinese Zodiac sign in Chinese. She requested that they respond by saying their Chinese Zodiac in English. She then reviewed everyone's Chinese Zodiac, and wrote her uncle's Chinese Zodiac, "My Chinese Zodiac is a dog", to support him with his English-speaking sentence. When recording the conversations, she shook her head to positively reinforce the correctness of the responses she was receiving from

her mother and uncle. Finally, she translated the English responses to Chinese, and stopped recording (Field notes, December 5, 2016).

The events above illustrate how Eva engaged in digital literacy, multimodality, and capitalized on her multilingualism.

As mentioned previously, Eva attended one of the most elite private schools in British Columbia. George and Julia chose that school, despite its high tuition (\$ 30,000 per year), because according to Julia, the school “expected the children to read a lot and study hard by providing them with plenty of homework which helped them learn and practice the lessons better” (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016). Most of Eva’s time at home was spent doing school work. She had a spelling test at school on Fridays and her teacher assigned six pages of the spelling book as homework each week. Julia gave Eva a dictation on Thursday to prepare her for the spelling test on Friday. In case of any spelling mistakes, Eva had to write out every misspelled word ten times in the belief that it would help her to memorize the correct spelling. Furthermore, Eva was supposed to get her school spelling tests signed by her parents, and in case she made spelling mistakes on the test, her parents wanted her to write out every misspelled word ten times before they would sign the test for her (Field notes, December 2, 2016).

Eva also did several school projects during the period when I was conducting the study. For example, she did projects on “Immigration”, “Family Tree”, “Micronation”, “Composite and Prime Numbers”, “Chinese Zodiac”, and “Donald Trump’s Wall”. Each project required her to write down or type out her reflections, search for relevant information, read/classify relevant data she found online, draft her response to the questions asked in the project, prepare in her words, “an artifact” and finally, prepare a PowerPoint to present her research steps, findings, and

suggestions. According to George, the frequency and the multimodal nature of Eva’s school projects resulted in her “advanced computer, typing and reading skills” (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016).

Eva also played different kinds of games on her iPad. Table 5.2 illustrates the digital games I observed her play during the study, how she learned about them, and the literacy events associated with each game. The games are organized based on their frequency.

**Table 5-2 Games and embedded literacy related activities**

<b>Game</b>	<b>Source from which she learned about the game</b>	<b>Literacy activities embedded within the games</b>
1. Roblox (app)	School friends	Reading and writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating with virtual friends through reading their messages</li> <li>Writing/Typing messages and issuing directives to virtual friends in English</li> </ul>
2. Happy Wheels (app)	YouTube	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading instructions as they pop up throughout the game</li> </ul>
3. Soccer (Xbox)	Her own interest	Reading and writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjusting the setting of the game by choosing the style, number of players, teams, clothes, etc. (typing)</li> <li>Reading the instruction of the game</li> </ul>
4. Plants vs Zombies 2 (app)	YouTube	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjusting the setting of the game including location, time of the day, and energy</li> </ul>
5. Minecraft (app)	Brother	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjusting the setting of the game including building aspects, exploration, crafting, and combat</li> </ul>
6. Google Feud (Google game)	School friends	Reading and writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading the questions from the 4 categories of Cultures, People, Names, and Questions</li> <li>Typing responses and</li> <li>Comparison with Google responses (reading)</li> </ul>



7. Papa's Bacteria; Papa's Freezeria; and Papa's Pancakeria (Google game series)	School Friends	Reading and writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking costumers' orders (typing)</li> <li>• Reading instructions on how to prepare the orders</li> </ul>
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The digital Xbox games, iPad apps, and Google games would appear to have contributed to Eva's English literacy development, as she engaged in meaning-making in functional and purposeful ways. Her engagement in the games required her to read for comprehension, write/type to communicate with virtual friends, and make adjustments. For some games such as Google Feud (Figure 5.1), Eva had to type up to three responses (guesses) to fill a blank in a sentence until she was provided with Google's most frequent responses (Field notes, December 25, 2016).



**Figure 5-1 Google Feud**

As presented in Table 5.2, Eva learned about half of these games from her brother and/or peers at school, which illustrates the important role of siblings and peers. She had her brother and

some of her friends on her “Roblox” contact list and messaged them only when they were not playing from the same location, because as she put it:

There is no point in messaging when we are sitting right next to each other. We cannot concentrate on the game. We can talk instead of texting. We only type “Hi” (Field notes, January 1, 2017).

In summary, in the Tops family parents structured and mediated many of the children’s activities. Digital resources appeared to support Eva’s Farsi literacy development along with her English, French, and Chinese literacies. Eva adopted the literacy practices that best met her literacy needs and interests at home and in the community context. She also adopted practices from observing her parents’ participation in different events. The family highly valued Iranian cultural traditions and the Farsi language and the parents taught their children Iranian culture, along with Western cultural traditions. As well, the family had access to a variety of support systems, and the parents sometimes availed their children’s English language and literacy knowledge as necessary.

In this chapter I described the Tops family’s historical literacy practices, social class, and social positioning before coming to Canada as a background to understanding their current perceptions of literacy and their literacy practices. In the next chapter, I discuss similarities and differences found in the families’ literacy practices in relation to Ogbu’s notion of voluntary and involuntary movement.

## **Chapter 6: Similarities, differences, and relationship**

In this chapter, I outline the differences between and then the similarities across an Iranian refugee and an immigrant families' literacy practices. Then, I describe the extent to which these similarities and differences relate to Ogbu's differentiation of voluntary and involuntary migration.

### **6.1 Differences and similarities**

As previously discussed, the families were different in terms of their sociocultural background and upbringing, values, and social class with the attendant issues of access to cultural and social capital. These factors were related to how the Avanesian and Tops families perceived literacy development differently and also structured their children's involvement in literacy activities and events differently. To help organize the findings for this section, I displayed the similarities and the differences in a construct Table (Miles et al., 2014) of comparisons every two weeks. Table 3.4 is as an example of these tables that helped me present the data in this section.

**Table 6-1 Comparisons up to Visit 6**

<b>Eva</b>	<b>Andre's</b>
iPad Games: Roblox, YouTube, Happy Wheel, Xbox, Wii, Plants vs. Zombies 2, Papa's Bacteria; Papa's Freezeria; and Papa's Pancakeria on Kizi.Com, Google Feud, and Minecraft Email	Tablet Games: Roblox, YouTube, Pokémon Go, Stickman, piwee dee, Happy Wheel, Xbox  Facebook and Instagram
Family including the child are passive in social media	Family including the child are active in social media
Mom and dad are less confident English speakers	Mom confident English speaker but not dad
Farsi speaking home-environment: children speak English to each other and others unless they are reminded to switch back to Farsi	No requirement to speak Farsi at home: Children speak English and Farsi to each other but only Farsi to parents, with occasional Russian or Azeri words.
Eva speaks Farsi to her parents and puts value on learning it to be able to communicate with her relatives in Iran. (parents speak and think highly of Iran)	Andre is not motivated to learn Farsi (parents make disapproving comments about Iran and have no contact with relatives there)
Using Google image as a source to get ideas for drawing and search	Using Google image as a source to get ideas for drawing+ to search for things, word spelling, and word meaning
Aim to go back to Iran once they get a passport to come back to Canada again before Ethan starts grade 10 so that he is prepared for university	Aim to stay and establish a new life in Canada
Parents directed most of the children's activities	Children deciding on their own which activities they engaged or participated in.
Literary works	Religion Literacy

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Avanesian family's experiences had destroyed their assumptions of safety and feelings of trust. This finding is aligned with the perspective of psychiatrist, Herman (1992), who believes, "The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others" (p. 133). She argues that, "Trauma destroys

one's assumptions of safety and calls into question his or her relationships with others; it crushes the survivor's sense of connection and feelings of trust" (Herman, 1992, p.51). The Avanesian family's experiences likely lengthened the time it took them to trust people and systems. The family indicated that they had more safety and trust concerns in Armenia and Belarus than they did in Canada. Their concerns justified their constant monitoring of what the children brought home from school and who they made connections with in the community. The family's mechanism to deal with the insecurity and lack of trust in their lives was to stick together through the toughest circumstances and experiences. On the other hand, the Tops family's relatively stable sociocultural background and experiences in Iran likely contributed to their "fitting in" in Canada. An indication of that would be the family's membership in the children's schools and community and their strong connection with the Iranian communities in Canada.

The families also held different perceptions of literacy and of their roles in supporting children's literacy development and learning more generally. These beliefs created different levels of participation in the children's literacy learning at home and in the community. Julia's and George's sociocultural background, upbringings, and values appeared to influence their clear demarcation between adults' and children's roles and responsibilities. Children had little input in structuring their home and community activities. In the Tops' household, Julia primarily made the decisions related to children's schooling, extracurricular activities, and so forth. She placed significant emphasis on children's education, especially information literacy, and on extracurricular activities which she believed would lead her children to a better life in the 21st century.

In the case of the Avanesians, the family was isolated from the Iranian communities due to their experience of resentment. This resulted in their lack of connection with others more

knowledgeable about Canadian education and schooling and their lack of access to information about children's literacy development in the context of Canada. Thus, both Rosa and Yura had turned over the responsibility for education and literacy development to the school teacher. They felt that they lacked the confidence and the knowledge to support their son's literacy development at home. As mentioned in chapter 4, despite Andre's teacher's request to them to help develop Andre's reading comprehension and spelling skills, both Rosa and Yura did not feel competent in providing their son with reading and writing support. They believed that could not provide accurate models for reading and spelling in English.

Despite constant monitoring of the materials that the children brought home from school, the Avanesian family only initiated contact with teachers when they wanted to raise nonacademic issues such as the children's drawings during the ISS afternoon program called, "School Out" (see chapter 4), or delayed lunch (Field notes, December 16, 2016). Lareau (1987) found that the process through which the family participates in their children's schooling is affected by their social class. The Avanesian family, like the working-class families in Lareau's study, took a subordinate stance to the school teachers' recommendations for addressing Andre's English literacy issues because of the parents' lack of English literacy skills placed them at a disadvantage and reinforced their dependence on expertise of educators.

All of the Tops family friends were Iranian immigrants which suggests support for Olsen's (1988) claim that "immigrants tend to cluster with other immigrants" (p.217). They had friends who already had experience living in Canada. Searle and Ward (1990) indicated that recently arrived immigrants seek friendship because they need assistance from those who already have some experience of adaptation to, and have more information about, the new context. Therefore, the Tops family's immigration status enabled them to access information about their

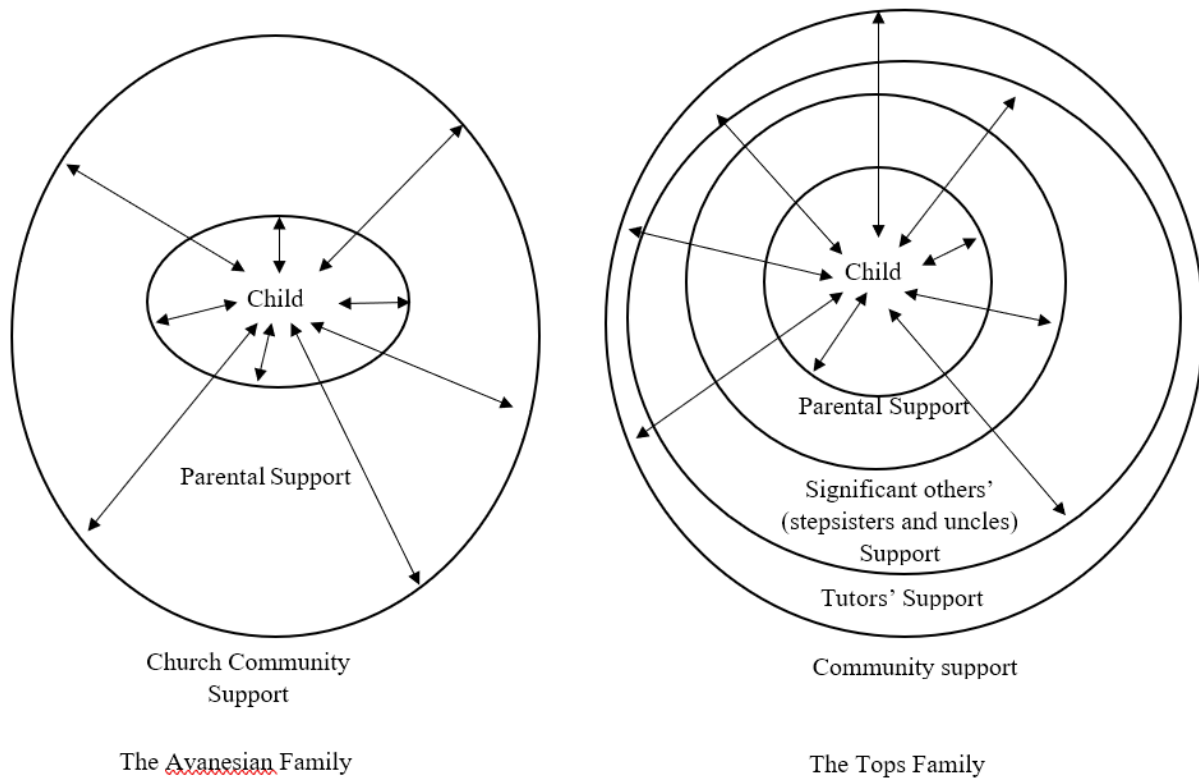
child's education and literacy learning through their contacts. They used this information to confidently criticize their children's school literacy learning. Like the middle-class families in Lareau's study, they viewed education as a shared enterprise and monitored and supplemented their children's school education and literacy development. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the Tops family had certain expectations for their children's literacy learning and development that they believed were not addressed in the Canadian school system. Therefore, they designed their own way of supporting their children's knowledge development through extracurricular lessons offered by tutors, parents, and significant others. That is, as Lareau points out, their cultural and social capital allowed them to support and enrich their children's learning and schooling.

During one of my home visits, Julia told me that she had rented a house in a particular neighborhood just in order to be eligible to "register her son in the best public school in the city" (Field notes, January 11, 2017). Also, the fact that both Julia and George had decided to experience a separate life from one another (one in Iran and one in Canada) to be able to work toward providing the idealized future for their children was an indicator of the financial, physical, and the mental demands and efforts, they were willingly placing on themselves. Julia would start her day by taking the kids to and from different schools (each at one side of the city) and driving them to attend various extracurricular classes during the week and on weekends. She would follow up on all homework and assignments ensuring they were completed in a timely fashion while closely monitoring their screen time (computer, television, iPad, etc.). All of the above indicated the significance the Tops family placed on learning, "education and a better life". Their socio-economic position as an upper middle-class family afforded them the material resources and the knowledge and time to provide this sustained support to their children. Similar roles and responsibilities were also identified among the middle-class parents in Lareau's study

(1987). They too, viewed education as a shared enterprise and supported the school experiences of their children. Like the Tops family, they would read to their children, help with their homework, initiate contact with teachers, and attend school events. Unfortunately, similar cultural, financial and social capital was not available to the Avanesians.

Another effect of the social class differences between the two families was their access to literacy support systems in their new context. In the Avanesian family's case, the financial constraints and the sociocultural circumstances of their refugee life in Canada such as having to work night shifts to be able to attend English classes and take care of the children during the day, led both Yura and Rosa to be one of the two literacy supporters of Andre's multilingual and multimodal literacy development. The social and cultural resources and the privilege brought by the parents' financial situation, educational background, and occupational position provided Eva Top with multilayered literacy support system.

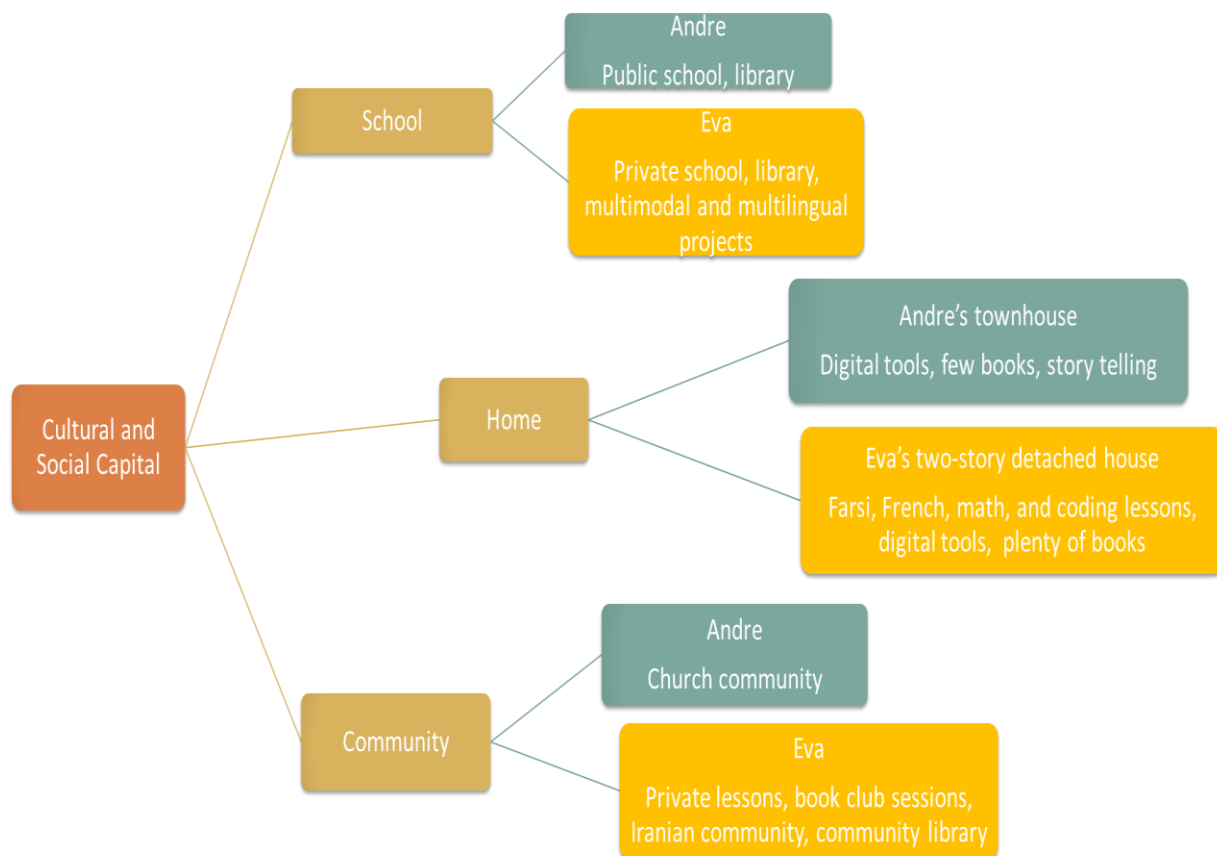




**Figure 6-1 Literacy support systems**

As illustrated in Figure 6.1, the Avanesian family, largely based on their social class and refugee status, were isolated and left on their own (Ogbu, 2008). Therefore, Andre was provided with a two-layered support system from the church and his parents in developing his literacy skills. The Tops family had extended family and friends in Canada because they were allowed to move en masse as a result of their social class. The circumstances as immigrants, and the concomitant access to cultural, economic and social capital in Canada afforded Eva access to a multilayered literacy support system provided by family members, people in their community, and societal entities. The Tops family's social class, provided various social and cultural resources for them. These resources constitute forms of 'cultural and social capital' (Bourdieu 1977a; Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) in Canada which eventually increased the Tops family's

power, confidence and autonomy in adopting literacy support systems. The lack of cultural and social capital which was attributable to their refugee status prevented the Avanesian family from accessing the same support systems and providing the ongoing support for their children's literacy learning and education generally. Figure 6.2 portrays the cultural and social capital matrix that the focal families possess and the social and cultural resources it yields to them.



**Figure 6-2 Cultural Capital**

To examine the Avanesian and the Tops families' literacy practices across time, space, and according to social position, I considered factors including the families' minority status, access to power, gender, age, and religion. In terms of the minorities' immigration status, the

families had varying perspectives. The Avanesian family's refugee status came with a sense of gratitude towards Canada. They wanted their children to develop a sense of gratitude for having been granted the permission to find refuge in Canada. They believed that Canada had invested in its wellbeing by accepting devoted asylum applicants. The Avanesian family thought their contributions to Canada included providing humanitarian support (e.g., volunteering at the food bank), and raising children devoted to the workforce who aimed to help people in the communities and move the country forward (Semi-structured interview, February 6, 2017). Therefore, they felt a responsibility to "pay back" through their contributions in humanitarian causes.

On the other hand, the Tops family believed that they had already made a contribution to Canada merely by their immigration. They viewed their presence in Canada as an asset to the country in that the government had made a financial advancement to itself by attracting immigrants through the IIP. Their primary goal in moving to Canada was neither making a contribution to, nor establishing a permanent life in, Canada. However, they believed that their expenditure, investment in property, creating jobs through renovation, and cash turnover had been a major contribution to Canada (Semi-structured interview, December 2, 2016). Put simply, the Avanesians believed that Canada had done them a favor by accepting them as refugees, whereas the Tops believed that they had done Canada a favor by moving there. Such differing perspectives undoubtedly affected the influence each family believed it could exert or in other words, how much power that it had.

In addition to minority status and the differential perceptions of possession of power in the families, I examined the role of gender, age, and religion in the families' structuring of literacy events in Canada. I noticed that within their new context, both women in the focal

families seemed to be somewhat similar in adopting more of what is perceived to be the Iranian male “gender role” (Ogbu, 2008). In the Avanesian family Rosa, the 44-year-old mother, was perceived to be the “voice, fighter, and the breadwinner” of the family because of her better oral and written English skills, as well as her better physical health (Field notes, February 1, 2017). She was the only family member to speak during their protest in Belarus. In Canada, she was the one who consulted with the school principal, teacher, and case worker to make decisions about the children’s after school programs. She also corresponded with government institutions such as the BC Employment and Income Assistance office and filled the application forms for the REPS. Lastly, she was the only person in the family who worked and earned money which is thought of as the man’s responsibility in Iran. On the other hand, Yura, the 63-year-old father whose medical condition did not allow him to work, stayed at home and had the role of a mentor for example, through story telling in Farsi. Child-rearing was shared equally between the two parents in their new context. The family’s new gender roles in the context of Canada differed from those in Iran where males make decisions for the family, protect the family, and earn money whereas women tend to be in charge of housekeeping and raising children (Mahmood, 2011; Mir-Hosseini, 1999). The shifts in the gender roles in the Avanesian family could have been the result of their 9-year experience in a non-Iranian community and context, or the couple’s 19-year age gap which created the necessity and opportunity for the family members to adopt new roles and responsibilities regardless of the gender role norms in Iran.

As noted, George Tops (63 years old) was mainly based in Iran and as a result Julia, the 44-year mother, adopted a more leading role in establishing connections, planning and directing everyday schedules of the family and arranging literacy supports for the children. In doing so, she hoped to enhance children’s skills in Farsi, English, and French. George, the 63-year-old

father was involved with decision making regarding children's daily schedules, planned extracurricular activities and entertainment when he was in Canada. As reported previously when George was in Iran, he supported his children's literacy and math learning via Skype. He also provided financial support and corresponded with Immigration Canada, immigration lawyers, business lawyers, their banks in Canada, legal institutions, and insurance company, etc. The shifts in Julia's gender role seemed to have been of a more temporary nature because she only took on what is perceived to be a male gender role in George's absence. It became evident that she dropped the leading roles and responsibilities in George's presence in Canada. These shifting roles could have stemmed from their short-lived experience out of Iran and close connection with the Iranian communities within Canada. It might be that these more normative roles may shift if the family continues to live in Canada.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Avanesian family's belief in Christianity seemed to have played a significant role in structuring Christian-themed literacy events and resources at home and in the community (see Chapter 4). That is, with the family's conversion to Christianity, they stopped saying prayers and reading the Koran in Arabic and performing other Islamic-themed literacy activities and events at home and in the community. The Tops did not offer religious training because they did not want to push religious beliefs onto their children. As a result, there was an absence of religious texts and/or events in the Tops' household. Thus, the role of religion in children's literacy development differed in the two families.

Parents in both families were alike in terms of their age, the mothers in both families were similar in adopting what is usually thought to be male gender roles in Iran. Both families spoke Farsi but more between parents and children, than between the children. However, as noted, while the Tops family valued Farsi and encouraged their children's maintenance of it, the

Avanesian family did not value it to the same extent, used it only out of necessity to communicate within the family. They did ascribe instrumental value to it in that they believed it could enhance the children's job prospects in future by being able to communicate with the Iran diaspora in Canada. Unlike the Tops, they did not see a value in Farsi as a vehicle for cultural continuity. Both families supported their children's learning but did so in different ways (e.g., telling stories in the Avanesian family and offering tutoring lessons in the Tops family) reflecting differing perspectives on language and literacy learning and had different access to resources, attributable to social class.

Both families engaged in various home and community literacy activities which led to different genres, modes and use of print literacy and conversations across home and the community contexts. The Avanesian family engaged in digital, on-screen reading to acquire information such as reading the descriptions of different laptops on the web; traditional print reading was done more to practice reading the Bible and English textbooks to learn that language. For the Avanesian family, handwriting was a way to remember information such as their appointments, to practice English grammar and vocabulary, and to record Farsi, Armenian, and Russian lyrics to hymns from the hymnals etc. They used digital tools for writing while engaged in games and using communication apps on different pieces of technology (e.g., cell phones, Tablet, family PC). Learning English language and literacy was considered a top priority for the Avanesian family as it would enhance their connection with people in the new context. As just noted, they saw instrumental value in maintaining Farsi oral language skills. (Field notes, December 22, 2016).

In the Tops family, both digital on-screen and traditional print reading took place for gaining information, as well as for leisure and entertainment in Farsi, English, and, in the case of

the children, French. Both Julia and George handwrote to remember (e.g., notes, reminders) and used digital devices to write emails and text messages on communication apps in English and Farsi. The Tops family prioritised languages and literacies in order as follows:

Julia: Eva is learning in English here in school because that is the official language.

Considering the option of living and education here in the future, French and Mandarin come after English. However, considering the family priorities, regardless of her future work/education here, Farsi and English are so important for her to speak, read and write (Semi-structured interview, November 30, 2016).

As a result, Farsi came first for the family because it was their mother tongue and it connected them to their home country. English, French, and Mandarin came in order after Farsi because they would broaden the opportunities for the children's future education and occupation.

As a result of different exposure to Farsi, the focal children had varying command of the language. For example, during one of our informal conversations at the beginning of the study, Rosa mentioned that Andre had mastered enough Farsi to be able to greet and communicate with their Skype friends at a basic level. However, he was not able to fully understand long conversations or stories in Farsi. Therefore, she asked me to communicate with him in English and translate what I said in Farsi for his better comprehension (Field notes, November 25, 2016). Whereas, during the first visit in the Tops' house, Julia clarified the children's ability to read, write, and speak fluently in Farsi and asked me to speak Farsi to them at all time (Field notes, November 26, 2016).

Iranian cultural practices such as sharing poems, delivering speeches and performing dances and music, and singing Farsi occurred in both families but to various extents. The Avanesian family did not maintain most of their Iranian cultural practices except for singing old

Farsi songs, dancing, and playing music. The limited occurrence of Iranian cultural practices in the Avanesian family suggested that these practices were likely to decline over time. However, the Tops family regularly participated in, and highly valued, Iranian cultural practices because they connected them with their homeland and shaped their children's identity. Although each family performed and viewed cultural practices differently (see Chapters 4 and 5), these practices allowed the families to connect with other members of the Iranian community, strengthened their bonds with people, and maintained Farsi language, but to a different extent and likely with different effects in each family.

In this section, I described the extent to which the Avanesian and the Tops families were different and similar in family literacy activities and events, in maintaining their heritage or home language, and in practicing Iranian cultural traditions. In the next section, I outline the extent to which the findings relate to Ogbu's differentiation of voluntary and involuntary migration.

## **6.2 Relationship to Ogbu's notion of voluntary/involuntary migration**

The distinction between voluntary and involuntary minority status is not based on ethnicity or race. Rather it provides a general framework that highlights differences between these two groups of people, regardless of their ethnicity or race, and how these beliefs affect children's school achievement (Ogbu & Simon, 1998). Therefore, it is possible to classify families from the same ethnic or racial backgrounds into voluntary (e.g., immigrant) and involuntary (e.g., refugee) minorities. Utilizing Ogbu's voluntary and involuntary migration notion (1987), I categorized the Avanesians as an involuntary (refugee) Iranian minority family who did not freely choose to settle in Canada. Due to the fact that they were rejected as refugees by both Armenia and Belarus, the family's asylum application was referred to Canadian



Government-Assisted Refugee Program by the UNHCR. This process took seven years. In other words, they were forced to come to Canada, as there were no other options available for them. Meanwhile, I categorized the Tops family as a voluntary Iranian (immigrant) minority who willingly came to Canada through the IIP which took 3 years. Both families came to Canada with languages and sociocultural backgrounds different from those of the majority of Canadians (Ogbu & Simon, 1998). However, their perspectives towards these differences and the ways they adapted themselves to cultural and language differences varied. For example, the Avanesian family identified themselves as Canadians (see chapter 4) who came in with a “tourist attitude” towards both the cultural and language differences, looking to learn the language and Canadian ways of being and talking. Their perspective presents a contradiction to Ogbu’s and Simon’s (1998) argument that, involuntary minorities do not possess a “tourist attitude” towards learning how to behave and talk like white people because, they do not choose to become minorities in a society. I believe this was different in the Avanesian family due to the fact that they did not feel obliged to comply with the Canadian culture or ways of being. Therefore, they voluntarily chose to learn and adapt themselves.

In spite of their desire to assimilate into the Canadian mainstream society, the Avanesian family had not been optimistic about their asylum application process. After being rejected from Armenia and Belarus and taking more than two years to hear back from their application to Immigration Canada, they had lost hopes of finding refuge. Secondly, they experienced multiple flight cancellations and postponements, while waiting to go to Canada. The Avanesian family indicated that for these reasons, they were not mentally, physically, and emotionally ready to move when they did. The effects of these delays and the length of the process are not known, although they likely had detrimental effects on the family, psychologically and socially.

The Tops family's approach to the cultural and language differences, and preparation for addressing these differences prior to immigration, reflected their voluntary status, which of course was strongly associated with their upper middle-class position. The family's financial situation gave them the privilege of developing a "tourist attitude", prior to their settlement in Canada.

Julia: We traveled out of Iran a lot and that helped children get a little used to the different cultures, languages and religions. We wanted the children to be aware of their religious and cultural differences (Semi-structured interview, November 30, 2016).

As is evident from Julia's comment above, the Tops family was aware of the challenges of adaptation in the new context. Therefore, they prepared both the children and themselves ahead of time by travelling and sending children to summer school in Canada a year prior to their immigration. These approaches helped them learn about the new context and school system and therefore, aided in their transition into Canadian society, and of course were possible because of their socioeconomic status.

Voluntary and involuntary minorities also differ in their frame of reference - in the way that they look at a situation. Their frames of reference differ because of differing circumstances and experiences (Ogbu & Simon, 1998). Ogbu and Simon argued that refugees have a negative dual frame of reference. The first frame of reference is their social and economic status in their context, the second is the social and economic status of the middle-class white people living in that context. Thus, involuntary minorities do not believe that their hard work and education will be rewarded as much as those of their white peers due to discrimination. Therefore, ambivalent ideas about education leads them to believe that the path to success does not go through education, learning, and hard work (Ogbu & Simon, 1998).

As mentioned in chapter 4, the Avanesian family perceived Canada as their home, a place where they could settle permanently. Therefore, unlike Ogbu's negative frame of reference, they had strong motives to learn English language and literacy for creating better career and education pathways for themselves (see chapter 4). Despite this, Farsi was used as the main language of communication in the Avanesian's house, due to the parents' relative lack of proficiency in English. Despite this situation, Andre was developing resistance toward speaking Farsi. As he was developing his reading and writing in English and becoming more fluent and proficient in it, he was losing his ability to use Farsi, just like he had lost most of the Russian, Azeri, German, and Armenian that he had learned, and slipping into becoming a monolingual and mono-literate English user. Several factors - his parents' devaluation of Farsi language and literacy, Iranian people; absence of Farsi literacy resources and Farsi book reading; and a decrease in Iranian cultural practices – likely contributed to loss in his home language. Given the Avanesian family's motives to master the English language and literacy along with the Canadian culture (e.g., Canada Day), and considering Andre's resistance to Farsi language and literacy, I would argue that Ogbu's perspective of resistance toward education and learning English on the part of involuntary minorities does not fit the Avanesian family.

According to Ogbu and Simon (1998), voluntary minorities also have a dual frame of reference, but the comparison is positive with that group. The first frame of reference includes their social and economic status in the new context. The second frame of reference is based on their social and economic situation "back home". The voluntary minorities' comparison of frame of reference is positive because of the opportunities that living in the new context brings for them. In comparing their situation with their family and friends "back home", the voluntary

minorities conclude that their children have a better opportunity to get “an American” education, especially higher education. They see higher education in the United States as providing a chance for professional careers they would not otherwise have attained back home (Ogbu & Simon, 1998, p.171). Consistent with Ogbu and Simon’s perspective, the Tops family also came to Canada to create better education and professional opportunities for their children in a stable socio-political environment. However, they never compared their social and economic situation in Canada with the one back home. Julia and George, themselves, did not picture their own future in Canada after their children’s postgraduate studies. This perspective led both of them to learn only as much of the host culture and language as necessary for them to get by and to achieve their temporary goals. Therefore, Julia and George also did not fit to Ogbu’s and Simon’s (1998) specification of voluntary immigrants who see learning English as adding another language that helps them succeed in the new country. The Tops family’s sojourner perspective also, motivated them to use Farsi as a main means of communication to enhance the children’s intergenerational communications and relationships with people at home, in Iran, and with other Iranians in Canada. The intention to go back to Iran encouraged them to maintain and enhance their children’s Farsi language and literacy development. They celebrated Iranian cultural traditions along with Western cultural traditions (see section 4.1.2), Julia acted as a Farsi literacy teacher requiring that their children speak Farsi and teaching the children reading and writing in Farsi.

Ogbu and Simon (1998) argued that involuntary minorities’ long history of “discrimination, racism, and conflict (p. 174)” leads to pessimistic attitudes and distrust of white-controlled institutions such as schools. This was evident in the Avanesian family’s safety and

trust concerns which caused them to closely monitor children's work brought home from school and their connections in the community. However, despite their distrust and feelings of insecurity, the Avanesian family had given full responsibility of their son's English language and literacy learning to school teachers, seemingly by default as they were unable to provide the necessary support at home.

Ogbu and Simon (1998) claimed that voluntary immigrants have an optimistic attitude when they arrive in their new context. This perspective contributes to their trust in white-controlled institutions such as schools. As a result, immigrant minorities tend to conform to the rules of schools because they see them as a clear path to societal success. The Tops family also held this standpoint. But while they appreciated the comprehensive educational system in Canada and followed the school activities and abided by its rules, they expected more academic pressure on children from the schools.

From the discussion above considering Ogbu's (1993) differentiation of voluntary and involuntary school achievements, I conclude that first, the Iranian minority families in the study partially fit in Ogbu's classification of voluntary and involuntary minorities. That is, the Tops and the Avanesian family both fit Ogbu's definition of minorities, possess the characteristics of voluntary and involuntary minorities, and face the same cultural and language barriers in the new context. The fact that the child from the immigrant family achieved well in school while the child from the refugee family struggled in school are consistent with Ogbu's contention. However, some findings were not consistent with Ogbu's differential framework in that both of the focal families moved to Canada with a "tourist attitude" toward the language and sociocultural differences. In both of the families, the comparison of their frame of reference led

them to see English language and literacy learning as a means for creating better career and education opportunities. But the Tops family assumed an “additive” perspective, ensuring that the children maintained their home language while acquiring and becoming proficient in English, and learning French and Chinese. Despite the families’ different perspectives on trusting schools, both of them conformed to the demands of them. These findings suggest the need for a more nuanced application of Ogbu’s classification of minorities’ school achievement.

In this chapter, I described the differences and similarities in the Iranian refugee and immigrant families’ literacy events and considered them within Ogbu’s notion of voluntary and involuntary migration. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings and offer implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

My purpose for conducting this study was to understand the family literacy as it was enacted within the homes and communities of Iranian refugee and immigrant families with children in Canada. I chose to observe and document literacy events through the lens of sociocultural theories of literacy (Street, 1984, 2003) and the theory of literacy as social practice (Barton et al., 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1995). These lenses allowed me to focus on the families' literacy actions based on their perceptions and beliefs of literacy which are affected by the families' social position across time and contexts. In Chapter 4, I identified the Iranian refugee family's literacy learning perceptions, beliefs, needs, barriers, and expectations based on their previous sociocultural background, upbringing, values, and social class. In chapter 5, again based on the Iranian immigrant family's historical literacy learning experiences, sociocultural background, upbringing, values, and social class, I reported their current literacy perceptions, beliefs, needs, resources, barriers, and expectations. This led me to chapter 6, where I outlined the similarities and differences between the minority Iranian immigrant and refugee families' literacy practices and then considered them relative to Ogbu's differentiation of voluntary and involuntary minorities with the participant families' literacy practices.

In this chapter, I provide a discussion of my findings, describe implications gained from this study as they relate to early childhood education and educators and families. I conclude with suggestions for future research and a discussion of the limitations of the study.

### **7.1 Discussion of Findings**

Based on the data in this case study, it is clear that the parents in both families support the myriad of literacy activities that the children engage in, although in different ways and to

different extents, a finding that is consistent with other studies (e.g., Heath, 1983; Li, 2009, 2010; Perry, 2012; Purcell-Gates, 1997; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). The parents continue to play a role in their children's literacy learning development using traditional, digital, and multimodal literacy activities. Both families in this study, similar to the parents in the studies by Li (2009), Mui and Anderson (2008), and Friedrich (2016), created opportunities for their children to observe and be active participants in the literacy events at home and provided resources such as English games, bilingual (Farsi and English) cartoons and movies, some English storybooks as well as technology such as Tablets and iPads, and writing tools (e.g., pencils, pens, blank A4 papers).

According to Bourdieu, (2011), "The scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family" (p.82). Cultural capital can be acquired, to a varying extent, depending on the social class quite unconsciously. The capital depends on the form of distribution of the available resources; the relationship between an agent and the resources available; and hence the profits they produce for the agent (Bourdieu, 2011). Lareau (2011) concluded that families' social class standing is crucial in the types and amount of cultural capital or information they possess and that helps determine their educational decisions (e.g., applying to college). Also, social class influences the families' relationships to and with educators, and their perspectives of academic careers. Lareau (1987) argued that "the level of parental involvement in school activities is linked to the class position of the parents and the social and cultural resources that social class yields" (p.10). The findings of this study are consistent with that perspective. The Avanesian family, who faced language barriers, time and financial constraints, did not possess the cultural and social capital that would give them access to various support systems and resources that enhance their children's literacy development (see



chapter 6). In terms of the Tops family, despite the language barriers, various literacy support systems and resources were available to them and their children as a result of their cultural and social capital. Therefore, I argue that Iranian refugee and immigrant families, depending on their social class, need to be provided with different resources that familiarize them with, and provide access to, the school-like literacy activities, learning processes, and literacy development procedures in a Canadian context.

The findings of this study align with those of Anderson and Gundersen (1997) and Gregory et al. (2010) in that parents are children's role models. Both sets of Iranian parents passed on literacy practices to their children. For example, in the Avanesian family, Andre picked up the habit of sending messages to his friends online (e.g., Roblox messenger system) from both Yura and Rosa. In the Tops family, Eva kept identifying Ethan's mispronounced words while reading, which was something that Julia did to make sure they pronounced the words correctly.

The portraits of the two Iranian families' home and community literacy activities demonstrated that language learning and development is socially constructed and depends on a multitude of factors from both the home and community (Dagenais & Day, 1999; Duff, 2008; Wesely, 2016). Both of the focal children participated in the host country school system, and therefore quickly developed English literacy and communication skills. This likely contributed to their preference for using English as a medium of communication at home and in the community (Fillmore, 1991). However, despite their preference to use English, both children spoke Farsi with their parents at home. Both of the participant families possessed divergent approaches to Farsi and English language and literacy learning (Friedrich, 2016; Li, 2006; Schecter & Bayley, 2002). As mentioned in chapter 4, the Avanesian family had developed a feeling of resentment

toward Farsi language and literacy, due to their previous circumstances and experiences. They were also isolated from Iranian communities in Canada, which they believed was attributable to their association with Christianity (Mansfield, 1995). They viewed Canada as a place of refuge in which they wanted to settle. These two perspectives toward the heritage language and the host country likely contributed to Andre's gradual loss of Farsi and interest in learning and speaking English. Andre basically used broken Farsi to communicate mainly with his parents because of their better command of Farsi than English. For the Tops family, Canada was considered a temporary base for preparing their children for "the American Dream"<sup>22</sup> (Hill & Torres, 2010). The family also viewed their immigration as an asset to the Canadian society, therefore, attributing significance to maintaining Farsi language and literacy skills and Iranian cultural traditions. They invested time, money and efforts to promote Farsi learning at home and in the community. Both Julia and George required both children to speak Farsi to enhance intergenerational communications and relationships with people at home (Gregory & Williams 2000), in Iran, and other Iranian communities in Canada. Researchers (e.g. Hinton, 1999; Kondo, 1997; Luo & Wiseman, 2000; Mills, 2001; Oh, 2003) have found that parents who portray a positive attitude toward heritage language positively affect the children's attitude and language use. For instance, when parents enforce a heritage-language-only policy at home and choose to speak it in their community, the children develop greater proficiency and a more positive attitude toward the language. Oh (2003) argued that these children are more likely to continue speaking the heritage language even after exposure to English in comparison with the children whose parents did not make this effort or promote the home language less.

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<sup>22</sup> The American Dream is "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement" (McNamee, 2009, p.2).

Additionally, the length of time in which each child had been speaking Farsi varied. In Andre's case, the family had not maintained any ties with their family and relatives back in Iran, other than with some Iranian friends in different parts of the world. He was also two months old, when they moved to Armenia. As a result of these factors, the family's transnational ties did not provide much language and literacy support for their children. Also, prior to their move to Canada, the Avanesian family spoke Russian at home to help support Andre's Russian learning at school. They replaced Russian with Farsi, once they moved to Canada, two years prior to the study. This discontinuation of the Russian language resulted in Andre's rapid loss of both the Russian language and literacy. He stopped writing in Russian and rarely used Russian when speaking to his parents. A rapid loss was also occurring in Andre's Azeri and German in that both of his parents were more focused on learning English, so they did not speak much Azeri to each other at home. In Eva's case, Farsi was considered her mother tongue which she was exposed to since before birth; Julia began reading to her children in Farsi while they were still in her womb. Also, the family's connections with family, friends, and relatives back in Iran, or in other words their transnational ties, made it possible for them to maintain strong links with Iran which was reflected in their literacy learning practices, beliefs, and perceptions (Hornberger, 2007).

The findings of this study are also consistent with those of other scholars (Anderson, 1995a; Anderson & Gunderson, 1997; Gunderson 2000; Gunderson & Anderson, 2003; Li, 2012; Ogbu, 1983; Ogbu, 1987) who identified cultural differences between minority families' views and the teachers' views on young children's literacy learning and how to teach it. Both families shared different beliefs about "relatedness of teaching and learning to accuracy/precision", "locus of control" "assessment/accountability", "expectation", and "rote memorization"

(Anderson & Gunderson, 1997, p.515). I observed the importance of setting an accurate role model for children in both focal families. The Avanesian family's reluctance in providing their son with reading and writing support in English due to a fear of providing inaccurate models and Julia's emphasis on accurate English and Farsi spelling demonstrate the ways the families related literacy teaching and learning to accuracy in this study. In addition, both families had chosen to engage their children in "rote memorization" in Farsi and English and assessed their learning in ways that tapped memory of information. For example, upon arrival in Canada, Rosa helped Andre memorize his prayer in Farsi and English<sup>23</sup> and asked him to repeat the prayer before each meal as a ritual practice (Field notes, January 7, 2017). George and Julia asked Eva to write out every word from the Farsi and English spelling lists that were extracted from the Farsi stories or her school English spelling book, and then would give her a dictation on them. These approaches to learning suggests that both families valued "rote memorization" and assessment of children's literacy learning.

The fact that Rosa guided Andre to learn more about the vending machine from his teacher at school, and when Julia expressed dissatisfaction with children not gaining sufficient information at schools about sociology, geography, different cultures, math, and spelling, indicate differences in how the families perceived teachers and the expectations of teaching and learning in Canada. The latter finding points to the need not to assume essentialist perspectives of minority groups, in terms of literacy learning and teaching.

I also noticed that the focal families structured their children's literacy learning differently because of their divergent perspectives on literacy learning. The Avanesian family

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<sup>23</sup> Andre's prayer: Oh, dear God! Thank you for mom and dad. Thank you for the food, thank you for the church. In the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

had a more “holistic perspective” of learning English literacy (Sonnenschein, Baker, Serpell, Scher, Truitt, & Munsterman, 1997). Therefore, they had adopted a more “entertainment” approach to literacy development that included learning literacy through playing digital games, reading English storybooks (even though very few), and watching cartoons and TV series in English. In contrast, the Tops family believed in literacy as a skill to be learned and therefore, had adopted a “skills-based approach to literacy” learning (Sonnenschein et al., 1997). They provided their children with direct teaching of Farsi, English, and French literacy skills (tutoring). In terms of Mandarin, they provided Eva with support (e.g., help with a school multimodal assignment) whenever she requested help. They required the children to improve their spelling skills by writing a Farsi and English vocabulary list. They also had the children read different Farsi and English texts and respond to questions to enhance their reading comprehension. As well, they supported the children’s French learning by assigning time in their weekly schedule to practice French on their iPads as well as having them role play a set of greetings in the form of a conversation in French. In other words, the Tops supported their children’s learning in formal, heavily scheduled ways.

Both focal families at times experienced difficulty in making sense of the texts in different domains (Purcell-Gates, 1995; Rogers, 2003). For example, when Rosa asked me to clarify what the notes on Andre’s report card said, she already knew the meaning of the sentence “develop comprehension skills by reading 20 minutes each night at home and improve his skills in spelling lessons” (Andre’s report card, December 2016). What she needed to know was specifically what she needed to do and how to do it, in order to improve her son’s reading comprehension and spelling skills. On one occasion, Julia asked me to help with an online book order and Ethan’s SSAT application. Despite the fact that Julia knew the meaning of the

terminology used on webpages, I had to clarify what the words and sentences implied. I also recall facing the same problem myself, when I first came to Canada. I had difficulty understanding implications of texts in instructions given to me in contexts such as university courses, driver's licensing office, banks, etc.

Print, oral, and multimodal texts mediated literacy events in the home and community context of both Andre and Eva. They both were active participants in literacy events and observers of their parents' engagement in traditional and multimodal literacy activities. They engaged with the digital tools provided for them at home. For instance, both children engaged more in searching for information, images, and videos on Google and YouTube on their Tablet or iPad and less for transnational matters (e.g., contacting with people from Iran which was only the case for Eva). Similarly, both of them read texts to acquire information (Friedrich, 2016; Taylor & Dorsey-Gains, 1988) like the description of YouTube videos and the foods listed in a restaurant menu, etc. In contrast to this, elementary school children in Iran do not access or use these devices for such purposes; instead, they get information from books and lessons offered to them by teachers at school. Andre and Eva also participated in multimodal meaning making-events such as writing YouTube talking pieces, and recording YouTube-like videos, none of which are common among children of those age in Iran. Thus, both of the children were similar in adopting many of the literacy practices of the social communities of their peers and teachers in the mainstream society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Street, 1984).

Within a sociocultural perspective, television and other forms of media are viewed as forms of multiliteracies (Marsh, Brooks, Hughes, Ritchie, Roberts & Wright, 2005) and represent types of texts utilized by families (e.g., Buckingham, 1993; Dyson, 2003; Marsh, 2009). This study demonstrates that parents play an important role in shaping the quality of their

children's experiences through the engagement with media and digital devices (Shuler, 2012). In the Avanesian family, Rosa would oftentimes ask Andre to "Stop playing on the Tablet, and work on his booklets or play with his sister" (Field notes, December 18, 2016). She also expressed amazement as to how Andre had filled out the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Application form playfully with his contact information and the names of his favorite digital games (e.g., "Roblox" and "Minecraft"). In the Tops family, Julia directed the children to "Stop playing on iPads, and practice French on it instead" and commented "Oh, that is really interesting. How does the app show the right answer?" when Eva was demonstrating a practice on the French app "Duolingo" (Field notes, December 14, 2016). In both families then, the children's use of digital media and tools was constrained at times and encouraged at others, reflecting the balanced perspective that other researchers (e.g., Marsh, Hannon, Lewis, & Ritchie, 2017) have reported.

Despite the fact that the Avanesian family provided Andre with his own computer screen and keyboard to use for playing Xbox in his room, both Andre and Anoosha (Andre's sister) still enjoyed spending their screen time in close proximity to their parents. This way, their parents could supervise the children while engaged with technology, and also support their learning. The children also felt supported, together, and safe when sharing this activity with their parents. Livingston (2002) argued that children prefer to spend time in family shared spaces with one another, especially when interacting with new media. Marsh et al (2005) argued that "families who spend a lot of time together on non-media-related activities typically also spend a lot of time together in media-related activities" (p. 32). The Avanesian family's togetherness increased the opportunity for Andre and Anoosha to engage in watching both English and Farsi news and YouTube videos. It also, allowed them to sit with their parents and watch English television

shows including, “The Bible,” “The X-Files,” and “The Homeland.” Often times, both children listened to their parents’ conversations about these programs and TV series.

Unlike the Avanesian children, both Eva and Ethan preferred to spend their screen time alone in their rooms, or in the playroom in the furthest proximity possible of their parents. I believe that children’s reluctance to engage with technology in the presence of their parents was to prevent having their iPads taken away for exceeding their screen time. The family did not ascribe value to playing on digital tools or watching different programs on YouTube. Therefore, Marsh et al (2005) and Livingston’s (2002) arguments about using media in families seems relevant only if families encourage, and see value in, media use.

The data suggests that Andre was facing more difficulties than Eva in developing literacy skills in the context of Canada. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the Avanesian family encountered risks and experienced trauma when in Armenia, and during asylum application in Belarus. They also faced more transitioning difficulties for adjusting to new places, languages, cultural requirements, in every context they experienced. The circumstances of their minority status and social class placed them in a less favorable position in supporting Andre’s literacy development. Andre’s parents believed that he was 2-3 years behind in his Math and English literacy (reading, writing, and spelling). Although his report card indicated his status to be satisfactory, it also mentioned the need for him to improve in reading comprehension and spelling skills (Andre’s report card, December 2016). The voluntary minority status and the social class of the Tops family placed them in a more empowered position (Ogbu, 1993) in helping enhance Eva’s literacy development. First of all, the Tops family voluntarily immigrated to Canada, they were aware of the adaptation problems as well as the “primary cultural differences” (Ogbu, 1987), and had more time to prepare for them. Also, the empowerment afforded by their social class gave



them the confidence and autonomy in changing the things they believed were hindering their children's learning and compensated for what they saw as the school's inadequate attention to information literacy, low expectations for math, and inadequate choices in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, their cultural capital gave them access to a multilayered support system that addressed their children's literacy needs and helped them "get good education" (Ogbu, 1987, p.317). As a result, Eva's parents mentioned that based on Eva's teachers' feedback, she was two years ahead in both math and computer sciences, and if not higher at the same level in English literacy (reading, writing, and spelling) at school. Her excellent academic achievement as indicated on her report card and also her teacher's evaluation of her "English speaking and literacy development to be outstanding for a newcomer in Canada" (Reported by Julia, January 10, 2017) attest to the fact that Eva was exceeding expectations in developing English language and literacy skills.

The comparison of literacy development between an Iranian refugee family and an Iranian immigrant family, both with a 9-year-old child in Canada, demonstrates how perceptions and responses to literacy learning are influenced by social class, cultural capital, and sociocultural values. It portrays the parents' role in mediating cultural heritage, home language as well as, the host country's language and literacy. It also shows the challenges that families face in supporting their children's literacy development and illustrates the disparity in learning outcomes between some Iranian refugees and immigrants.

In the next section, I offer the implications of the study for early childhood education and educators, teacher education, minority families, and future research.

## **7.2 Implications for Early Childhood Education and Educators**

Studies like this one provide knowledge about experiences of Iranian (and other) immigrant and refugee families that should inform early childhood education and educators. This study described current literacy activities involving print, multimodal texts, and oral conversations in both English and Farsi. Both focal families also continued with some of their previous literacy practices from Iran, and in the case of the Avensians, to some extent, the other cultural contexts in which they had lived.

Phillips, Hayden, and Norris, (2006) argued that parents from non-mainstream cultures willingly challenge their own experiences with literacy learning so that their children would be able to become literate in the mainstream societies. As such, Iranian minority immigrant and refugee families look to find ways to engage with their children's English language and literacy learning. They also need support to maintain their children's Farsi language and literacy development. Optimally, bilingual Farsi/English programs would enable first language maintenance alongside additional/second language learning; if that is not feasible, providing appropriate level, culturally relevant, bilingual Farsi/English or Farsi literacy resources such as books and games in the school libraries would be helpful. Somewhat surprisingly, Eva mentioned that her school library which had one of the largest book collections among schools in the city, had resources in English, French, and Chinese, but not Farsi, despite the concentration of Iranian immigrants and refugees in the city (Field notes, February 1, 2017).

The Avanesian family's inability to choose suitable literacy resources that matched Andre's level of English proficiency suggested the need for educators' support. It also suggests a need on the part of the public and school libraries to assist with this. The fact that Andre only borrowed one book about "Minecraft" from the school library and did not read it because it was

“too difficult to read” could suggest a gap between his knowledge attainment and his literacy skills, and probably assistance in selecting books from the library that match his reading ability and his interests.

### **7.3 Implications for teacher education**

The findings of this study should encourage teachers to shift their perspective away from expecting all children to be able to “read to learn” when they enter grade four and toward the notion that it is necessary for children from diverse language and literacy backgrounds to learn to read in the language of instruction. In addition, learning about culturally diverse ways of mediating literacy learning can enhance teacher education in Canada.

As well, since many involuntary minorities have undergone traumatic experiences that result in ambivalent feelings about schools, schools and teachers need to implement means and ways to get to know families better and help them feel secure in schools and develop trust in educators. For example, to create and increase trust, teachers can connect with families on different social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Tweeter), be open to communicate with them about their concerns and problems, and stay positive and unbiased toward families’ different ways of meaning making.

### **7.4 Implications for Iranian minority families**

The study indicates that Iranian minorities’ perceptions, beliefs, and expectations shape how they support their children’s early literacy learning. The findings of this study are of particular value to Iranian parents (and those from other minority groups) in learning that fellow Iranians (and other immigrant and refugee families) have faced the same difficulties and challenges similar to their own.

## 7.5 Limitations of the Study

The study involved two families, selected purposively and thus the results of the study need to be interpreted cautiously. I acknowledge that my presence in the families' homes could have affected their regular literacy enactments. As well, my affiliation with the language and literacy department at the University of British Columbia could have led families to believe that my presence in their house was to evaluate or judge the accuracy and appropriateness of their literacy practices at home, despite my ongoing assurance that such was not that case and that I was there to learn from the family. I introduced myself as a Master's student who was interested in understanding the ways in which young children in the Iranian refugee and immigrant families learn in the home and community. However, I believe that the Avanesian family might have interpreted my role as a resource to provide support for them and other refugees in the long term. In fact, Rosa regularly asked me about the specific implications of my research for Immigration Canada and welfare. Also, Andre told me during one of the visits that:

Andre: I know why you are writing about me.

Me: Why?

Andre: You want people to read about me and then come and give us money.

Me: Why do you think that? Do you need money?

Andre: I don't know and yes, I need money to buy a new laptop (Informal conversation, December 16, 2016).

Therefore, this perspective could have affected their openness in sharing of their life and history with me.

## **7.6 Future Research**

With this study, I have responded to the call for research on cultural factors of learning, and parents' role in the children's literacy learning (Cummins, 2000; Friedrich, 2016; Li, 2002, 2006; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992; Purcell-Gates, 2000; Valdés, 2001). I have responded by documenting the literacy practices of minority, Iranian, refugee, and immigrant families with young children both at home and in the community context. Moreover, I described the extent to which the participant families' literacy activities compared and contrasted depending on their sociocultural adaptation and social class. The findings from Iranian voluntary and involuntary families' literacy shed light on factors positively and negatively impacting minority children's literacy learning experiences in Canada. They also indicate a need for further research on sociocultural aspects of literacy learning in minority families from different cultural and linguistic groups, including voluntary and involuntary migrants. This research would help minority families adjust socially, overcome adaptation problems, and develop better literacy skills in the mainstream societies.

In order to contribute to the limited literature on the growing population of Iranian minority families in Canada, an expanded research project that includes a larger, representative population of Iranian immigrants and refugees is called for. Given that young children's first notion of literacy is formed inside their homes (Purcell-Gates, 2013), it would be interesting to investigate and further document how Iranian refugee and immigrant children adapt to mainstream school literacy and project it into their practices at home and in the community context upon school entry, as well as over time.

And finally, although some of the findings from this study were consistent with Ogbu's perspectives of differences between voluntary and involuntary migrants, other findings did not.

These contradictory findings indicate a need for studies with different populations to test Ogbu's hypotheses and whether and how they apply. Alternatively, the contradictory findings may indicate a need for researchers and scholars to examine his hypotheses in more nuanced ways.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A



## Parent Consent/Child Assent Form

**a place of mind**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

### **In Search for home: Family Literacy Practices among Iranian Refugee and Immigrant Families**

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jim Anderson  
Department of Language and Literacy Education  
Faculty of Education  
University of British Columbia  
(XXX)XXX-XXXX

Dear Parents,

My name is Mahshid Ghaffartehrani. I am writing to invite you and your child to participate in a study looking at the ways in which young children in your community learn at home and in the community. The research will focus on the children's participation in learning activities. I am looking for two families with children aged 6 to 9 years who have moved to Canada within the last three years to participate in this study. The study is part of the requirements for an MA degree I am doing at the University of British Columbia.

The study will be carried out between December 2016, January, and February 2017. The study will include your participation in two interviews, bi-weekly in-home visits. The total amount of time required for participation will be approximately 42 hours, spread out over a period of 2 and a half months.

The interviews will take place at a location of your choice (e.g. parents' work place, grand parents' or relatives' home etc.) during the month of December 2016, January, and February 2017 and will last approximately one hour each. In the interviews, you will be asked to talk about the kinds of things you read and write in your daily life, the kinds of things people in your family and community read and wrote in their daily lives while you were growing up in your homeland, your beliefs about young children's learning to read and write, and so forth. The interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. I will return the summary of the Persian transcripts to you to check for clarity and accuracy, and you will be able to sign your confirmation on the transcripts. All information will be kept in a locked office, with paper information separate from audio-tapes.

The visits to your home and/or to places in the community such as playgrounds, shopping malls, or restaurants will take place on different days of week including the weekend and at different times, within your comfort level. During the visits, I will be observing your child's participation in normal daily activities. Observations will occur between December, 2016, January, and February, 2017 (twice per week, for 10 weeks for approximately 2 hours). These observations will take place in presence of at least one of the parents and only when your child is present and awake. If I have any questions about the type of activities and behaviors I observe, I will ask you about them following the observation.

During the observation sessions, I will take notes. I will be asking your child questions from time to time and talking to them. I will also collect or take photos of some of your child's printing, writing, drawing, and/or crafts. No photographs of the participants will be taken at any stage of the study.

The information shared in interviews and observed during in-home visits will be confidential. I will not use your name or other identifiable information for the report I will be preparing or for future publications. All documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the co-investigator's office. Computer files will be password protected. Confidential information will not be collected or exchanged via email. I will provide you with a copy of the report of the study, upon its completion and can also meet with you to discuss the findings.

At the end of the study, you will be given a gift certificate from a local business in appreciation of your, and your child's participation. Through your participation in the study, you will also contribute valuable knowledge to enable educators to provide better learning opportunities for Iranian children in Canada.

If you and your child decide to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed forms and return them to me in the stamped envelope provided within a week of receiving them.

There are no known risks associated with your participation. You have the right to not answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. If you have any questions concerning any aspect of this project, the procedures to be used or the nature of your involvement, please contact me, Mahshid Ghaffartehrani, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. The principal investigator, Dr. Jim Anderson, who is supervising the study can be contacted at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at (XXX)-XXX-XXXX or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free X-(XXX)-XXX-XXXX.

Respectfully,

Mahshid Ghaffartehrani  
MA Student

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature also indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

I consent/I do not consent to [child's name] participation and my participation [adult's name] in the study titled, "In Search for home: Family literacy practices among Iranian refugee and immigrant families" as described above.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



در جستجو برای خانه: سوادآموزی در خانواده های پناهنده و مهاجر ایرانی

رضایت نامه پدر و مادر / فرم موافقت کودک

محقق اصلی: دکتر جیم آندرسون  
گروه زبان و سوادآموزی  
دانشکده آموزش و پرورش  
دانشگاه بریتیش کلمبیا، ونکوور، کانادا  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

والدین عزیز،

من مهشید غفارطهرانی، دانشجوی کارشناسی ارشد در دانشگاه بریتیش کلمبیا هستم. از شما و کودکان دعوت می کنم تا در تحقیقی که در صدد دریافت چگونگی یادگیری کودکان خردسال در جامعه و خانه است، شرکت نمایید. جامعه آماری این تحقیق بر مشارکت کودکان در فعالیت های یادگیری تمرکز می کند. من به دنبال دو خانواده، دارای فرزند 6-9 سال هستند و به تازگی (طی 3 سال اخیر) وارد کانادا شده اند، برای شرکت در این مطالعه هستم. این مطالعه بخشی از الزامات مورد نیاز برای دریافت مدرک کارشناسی ارشد در دانشگاه بریتیش کلمبیا است.

مطالعه در بازه زمانی دسامبر 2016 ژانویه و فوریه 2017 انجام خواهد شد و شامل مشارکت شما در دو مصاحبه، مجموعه ای از مشاهدات در محیط خانه (هفته ای 2 بار) می باشد. کل زمان مشارکت شما در این مطالعه در حدود 42 ساعت می باشد که در طی 2 ماه و نیم انجام خواهد گرفت.

مصاحبه ها در مکان انتخابی شما (محل کار، منزل پدر و مادر بزرگ و یا اقوام و غیره)، به مدت حدود یک ساعت در طی ماه دسامبر 2016 ژانویه و فوریه 2017 برگزار خواهد شد. در این مصاحبه ها از شما در مورد مطالبی که به طور روزمره مورد مطالعه و نوشتن قرار می دهید و همچنین انواع مطالبی که افراد خانواده و جامعه شما در زمان کودکتان در ایران مطالعه میکردند و یا می نوشتند و عقاید شما در مورد سوادآموزی کودکان پرسش خواهد شد. مصاحبه ها بصورت صوتی ضبط شده و پس از آن رونویسی می شود. من خلاصه ای از متن رونویسی شده فارسی را به جهت بررسی وضوح و صحت مطالب در اختیارتان قرار خواهم داد. و شما قادر به امضا و تایید صحت مطالب خواهید بود. کلیه اطلاعات به همراه مدارک کاغذی داخل دفتر کاری من جدا از اطلاعات صوتی قفل و نگهداری میشود.

بازدیدها در منزل شما و یا در محیط بیرون (مانند زمین بازی، مرکز خرید یا رستوران) در حضور حداقل یکی از والدین و در روزهای مختلف هفته و یا پایان هفته و در زمان های مختلف با توجه به برنامه شما صورت خواهد گرفت. طی بازدیدها مشاهدات روی فعالیتهای روزمره کودک شما متمرکز است که در طی ماه های دسامبر 2016 ژانویه و فوریه 2017 انجام خواهد گرفت. مشاهدات تنها زمانی که کودک حاضر و بیدار است صورت می گیرد. در صورت بروز هر گونه سوال در مورد فعالیت ها و رفتارهای مشاهده شده سوالات قبل از اتمام جلسه و یا پیش از شروع جلسه آینده پرسیده

خواهد شد.

در طول جلسات مشاهده، من به یادداشت برداری خواهم پرداخت، با کودکان به گفتگو و پرسش و پاسخ خواهم پرداخت. و همچنین به جمع آوری و یا گرفتن عکس از هر گونه نوشته فرزند شما طی فعالیت های متفاوت خواهم پرداخت. در طی تحقیق هیچ گونه عکسی از شما و یا کودکان گرفته نخواهد شد.

اطلاعات به اشتراک گذاشته طی مصاحبه ها و مشاهدات در منزل شما محرمانه بوده. اطمینان می دهم که نام شما، کودکان و یا

دیگر اطلاعات شناسایی شما در گزارش من و یا انتشارات آینده درج نخواهد شد. کلیه اطلاعات این مطالعه به همراه اطلاعات این مقاله در یک قفسه جدا از نوارهای صوتی در دفتر کار من قفل و نگهداری خواهد شد. اطلاعات محرمانه جمع آوری نمی شود و یا از طریق ایمیل رد و بدل نمی شود.

در نهایت کپی گزارش پس از اتمام تحقیق در خدمتتان قرار خواهد گرفت. در صورت تمایل طی جلسه ای حضوری یافته های تحقیق خدمتتان عرضه خواهد شد.

در پایان این مطالعه، یک کارت هدیه به نشانه قدردانی از همکاری و مشارکت شما و کودکان در این تحقیق خدمتتان تقدیم میگردد. مشارکت شما در این تحقیق، یافته های با ارزشی را در راستای ایجاد فرصت های یادگیری بهتر برای کودکان ایرانی در کانادا در اختیار مربیان و محققان قرار خواهد داد.

در صورت توافق شما و کودکان برای شرکت در این مطالعه، لطفاً فرم ها را تکمیل نموده و ظرف یک هفته داخل پاکت محور به تمبر و آدرس گیرنده توسط پست ارسال نمایید.

هیچ گونه آسیبی در ارتباط با مشارکت در این مطالعه شما را تهدید نمیکند و شما حق انصراف از پاسخ دادن به هر گونه سوال را داشته و در هر مرحله از تحقیق اجازه انصراف از ادامه مشارکت را خواهید داشت. در صورت بروز هر گونه سوال در هر مرحله از این پروژه، می توانید با من، مهشید غفارطهرانی با شماره همراه- و یا با محقق اصلی، دکتر جیم اندرسون که این تحقیق را رهبری میکنند با شماره - تماس بگیرید. در صورت بروز هر گونه نگرانی و یا اجحاف حقوقتان به عنوان شرکت کننده طی این تحقیق می توانید با خط انتقادات مشارکین در پژوهش - و یا با ایمیل [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca) و یا با دفتر خدمات پژوهشی دانشگاه بریتیش کلمبیا با شماره رایگان- تماس بگیرید.

با احترام،

مهشید غفارطهرانی

دانشجوی کارشناسی ارشد

این امضا نشان می دهد که شما رضایت به شرکت در این مطالعه دارید.

من رضایت دارم / ندارم که [نام کودک] و [نام بزرگسالان] در این مطالعه با عنوان "در جستجو برای خانه: سوادآموزی در خانواده های پناهنده و مهاجر ایرانی" شرکت کنیم.

امضا: \_\_\_\_\_ تاریخ: \_\_\_\_\_

## **In Search for home: Family literacy practices among Iranian refugee and immigrant families**

### **Child Assent Form**

(Child's name), I will be visiting with you to learn about the ways you and your (mom, dad, sister, brother, and others) help you learn when you are at home, and when you are outside your home.

I will visit you twice each week for the next ten weeks to watch as you go about your normal activities at home (play games, watch T.V, listen to music, or read books) and outside home (playing on the playground, going shopping, or eating out in a restaurant). One of your parents will be with us all the time. I will be asking you questions from time to time and talk to you. I will audio record some of our talks and collect or take photos of some of your writings, readings, drawings and crafts. I will return your writings, drawings, readings, and crafts back to you in February. Each time I visit, it will take about two hours. I will be visiting with you for about 42 hours. I will use what I learn from watching you and talking with you to write a report and it is possible that I will also write an article (or story) that I will share with teachers and other people who work with boys and girls like you. I will make sure that no one other than myself and Dr. Jim Anderson, who is helping me, see your work and I will not use your real name in my report or elsewhere and no one other than me will know who you are.

Do you agree (assent) to my visiting you? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

NB: I will read the aloud the assent form in Persian and summarize and reword as necessary according to the age of the child.

در جستجو برای خانه: سوادآموزی در خانواده های پناهنده و مهاجر ایرانی

فرم موافقت کودک

(نام کودک)، من جهت بازدید از چگونگی یادگیری شما در خانواده به کمک (مادر، پدر، خواهر، برادر، و دیگران) در

محیط خانه و در خارج از خانه با شما همراهی میکنم.

من با شما دو بار در هر هفته برای ده هفته آینده دیدار خواهم کرد برای مشاهده کارهای عادی و روزمره شما در خانه (مثل بازی، تماشای تلویزیون، گوش کردن به موسیقی و یا کتاب خوانی) و در محیط بیرون از خانه (مثل بازی در زمین بازی، خرید رفتن و یا رفتن به رستوران). حداقل یکی از پدر و مادر شما همیشه همراه ما خواهند بود. در هر بازدید با شما صحبت میکنم و از شما سوالاتی خواهم پرسید و بعضی از این مکالمات را ضبط خواهم کرد. در طی این مطالعه از بعضی از نوشته ها، خوانده ها، نقاشی ها و یا کار دستی هایتان عکس میگیرم و یا بعضی از آنها را جهت مطالعه با خود خواهم برد که همه آنها را در انتهای فوریه به شما پس میدهم. . هر بازدید حدود دو ساعت طول می کشد. من در مجموع حدود 42 ساعت با شما دیدار میکنم. من از مجموعه مشاهداتم در طی تماشای کارهای روزمره شما و صحبت با شما، برای نوشتن یک گزارش و یا یک مقاله (یا داستان) که به معلمان و سایر افرادی که با پسران و دختران مانند شما کار می کنند، کمک میکند. من اطمینان می دهم که هیچ کس غیر از خودم و دکتر جیم اندرسون، که به من کمک می کند، کار شما را نبیند و نام واقعی شما را در گزارش خود و یا جاهای دیگر استفاده نمی کنم .

آیا شما موافق (راضی) به دیدار من هستید؟ بله خیر \_\_\_\_\_

من فرم موافقتنامه را با صدای بلند به زبان فارسی برای کودک می خوانم و بر حسب سن و سال کودک متن را خلاصه و یا ساده تر بازگو میکنم.

## **Appendix B**

### **Semi-structured interview Protocol**

#### **Current Literacy Practices:**

1. Please describe the reading/writing/drawing you saw your child doing today.
2. What kinds of things does your child like to talk about?
3. What kinds of play/games does your child like to do?
4. Please describe the reading/writing/drawing your child saw you doing today.
5. What kinds of reading/writing/singing does your child see/do in the community (e.g., at the mosque or church)?
6. What languages does your child read/write/sing? Which one is more important to you and why? Which one does your child use more often?
7. What languages does your child see/hear others reading/writing/speaking/singing?
8. What languages do you speak /write at home and in the community of Canada? How about your child?
9. Does anybody read/write/draw/tell stories/sing/say rhymes with your child?
10. When does your child see you reading/writing/drawing? Which one do you and your husband use more printed books, or audio books? Why?
11. What kinds of things are you doing to help your child's reading and writing development?
12. How often do you go to the library/ bookstore?
13. What kinds of T.V programs does your child watch? Which ones do you watch? Do you watch anything together?

#### **Historical Literacy Practices:**

1. When did you first notice your child reading/writing/drawing?
2. Please Describe the reading/writing/drawing your child used to do before coming to Canada?



3. What goals were your children expected to achieve in learning before moving out of Iran? What goals are they supposed to achieve here in Canada?
4. Please describe the reading/writing/drawing you used to do as a child in Iran.
5. What kinds of things, games did you like to do as a child in Iran?
6. What goals were you expected to achieve in learning as a child in Iran? Who motivated you?
7. What languages did you speak/write at home and in the community in Iran? What about your child?

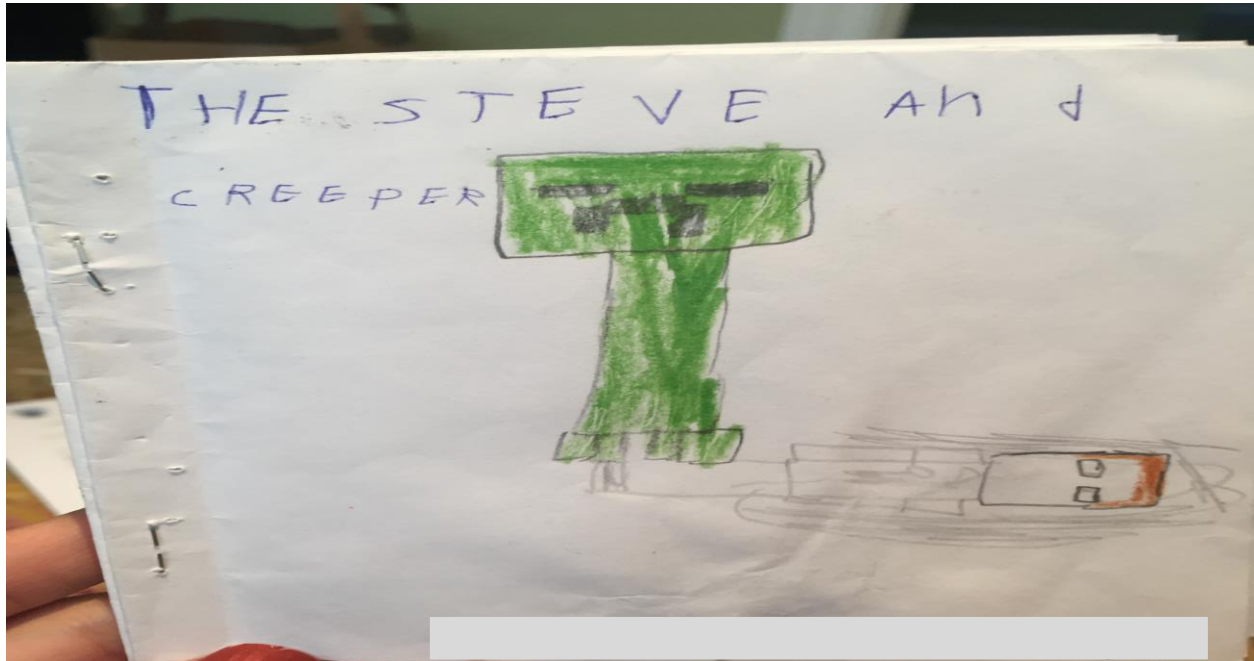
## **Appendix C**

### **List of Andre's Xbox One Games**

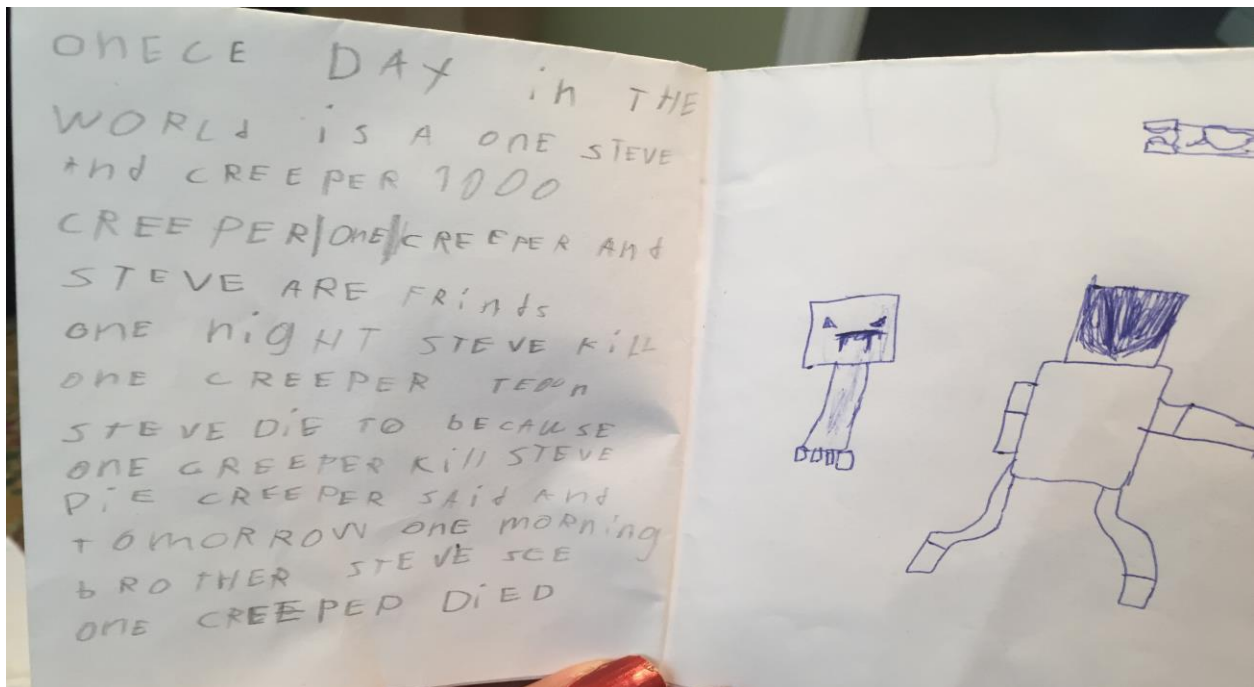
1. Call of Duty Ghosts
2. Watchdogs
3. Saints Row
4. Fighter Within
5. Assassin's Creed Unity
6. Dragon Age Inquisition
7. Forza Motorsport/5

## Appendix D

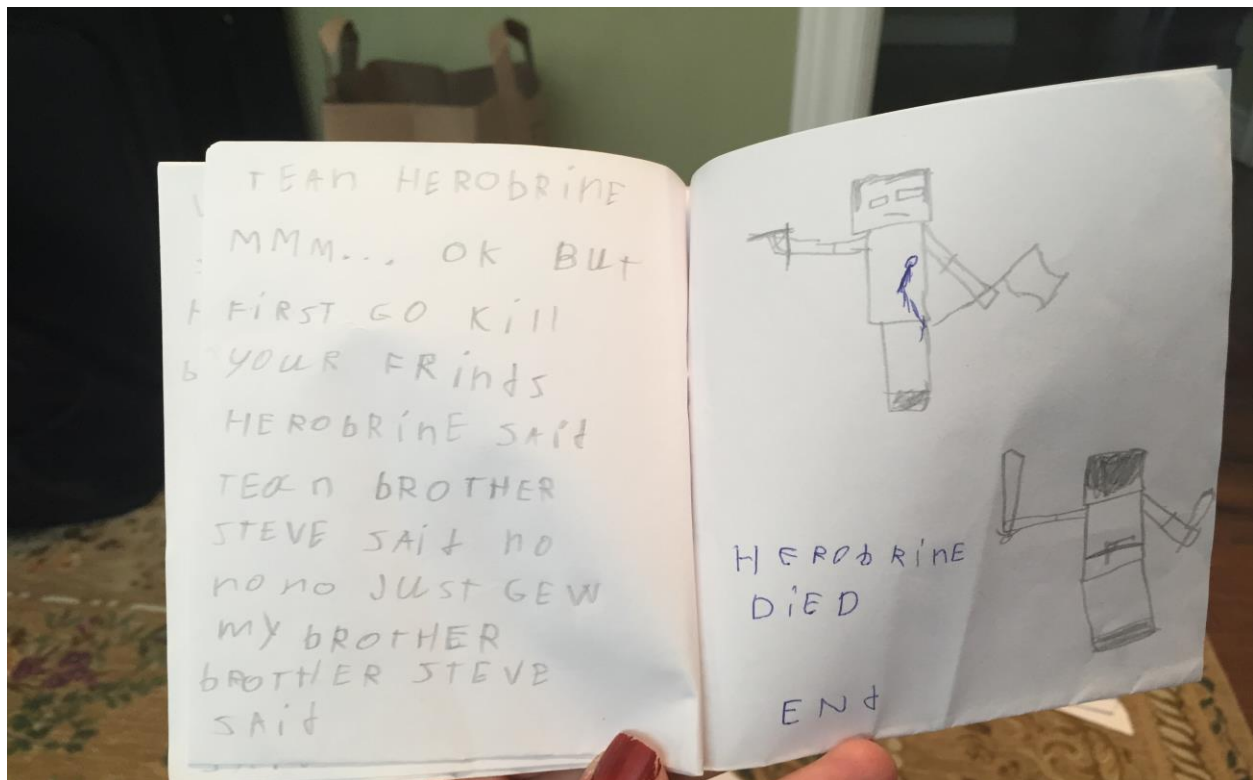
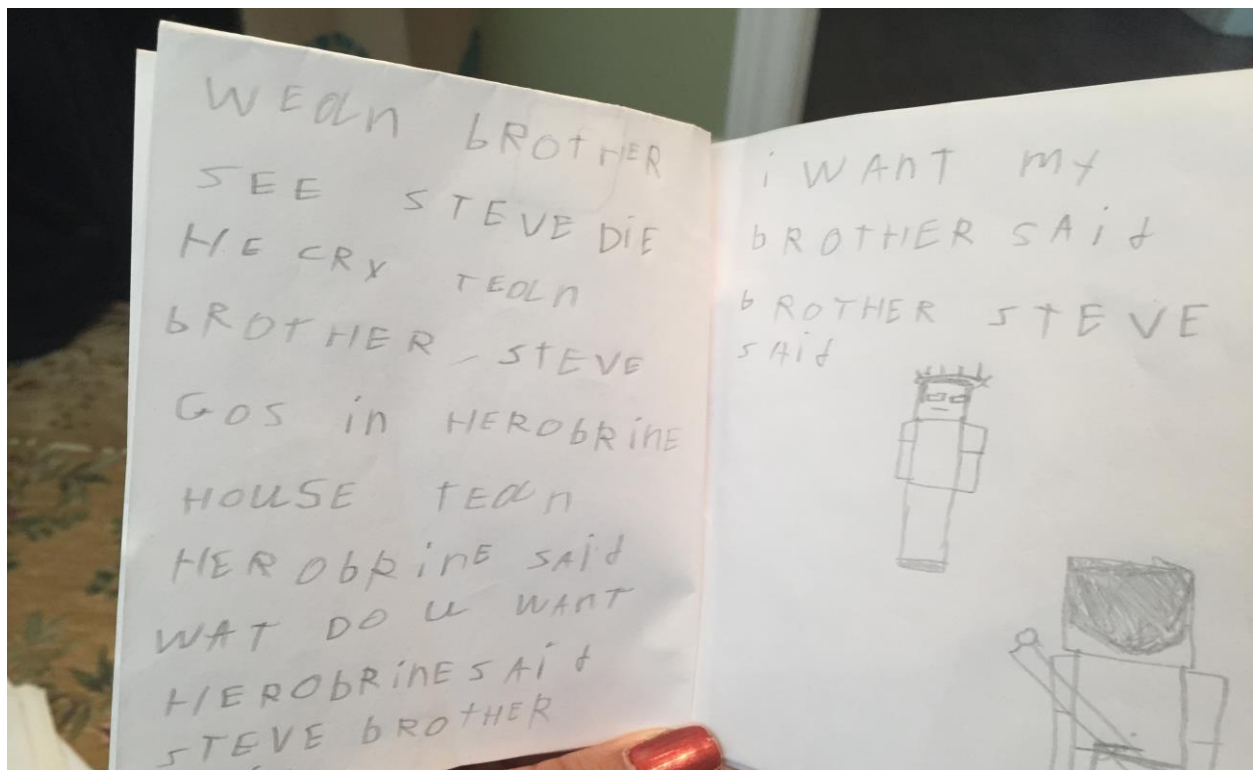
### “The Steve and Creeper” Booklet



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<sup>24</sup> The redacted parts are for the purpose of protecting Andre's real name



## Appendix E

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Piano (Practise)	Piano (Practise)	Basketball (Tutored)	Piano (Practise)	Piano (Practise)	Basketball (Tutored)	Basketball (Tutored)
Singing Lesson (Tutored)	Ice Skating (Tutored)	Piano (Practise)	French (Tutored)	Extra Math (offered by father or uncle)	Piano (Practise)	Piano (Practise)
Extra Math (offered by father or uncle)	Persian Reading/writing (offered by mother)	Piano Lesson (Tutored)			English Dictation (offered by mother)	
French (Practise)	Coding (offered by stepsister)					

### Eva's Weekly Extracurricular Activities

Infrequent tennis and swimming lessons on Fridays