GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN MUSLIM TWEENS STORIES:

A Discourse of Intersectionality of Religious and

Gender Representations

By

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ABSTRACT

The following study set out to examine the creative works of five Muslim tweens in Toronto, Canada, with focus on analysing the intersectionality of religious and gender representations in their works. Theoretical framework underlining this study is a discourse on visual representation of female Muslim characters, hybrid construction of gender, religious values, and media consumption. The primary research questions of this study are; (1) How do Muslim tween girls reproduce meaning and construct gender identity in their creative works? (2) How do their stories intersect gender construction with their religious background and media consumption?

The results of this study revealed the hijab (Muslim head scarf) as significant visual representation of female Muslim characters in young adults' stories. It affirms hybrid representation of gender, religious and media consumption which, in turn demonstrates Muslim tweens mitigation in gender construction. This study also reveals the fluidity of domination which explores aspects such as new context of non-existent male-characters, religious identity and kindness as the indicator of perceived beauty. Additionally, some of these tweens associate feminine identity and representation with nature which is deeply rooted in Western fairy tales and religious values (Judeo-Christian and Islam).

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First and foremost, I must express my greatest gratitude to Allah, Lord of the heavens, Earth, and all that resides within the universe, for bestowing upon me the determination and fortitude that were required in successfully completing this study. To Allah I belong and to him I shall return. I also want to express my gratefulness to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the greatest man in history, for his exemplary guidance.

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DEDICATION

This Master's Research Paper is dedicated to Saadiq, Omar, Erina, Khalid, Erna, Mama, Bapak, Adan, Ghina and the rest of family. I am forever grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

My first encounter with Islamic fairy tales was in 2011 when I saw picture books in Indonesia that were geared to girls' reading. These books were in series and represent the different stories of princesses whose names have meanings that cater to Islamic teachings and they act accordingly like the meaning of their names. A case in point is the story of Princess Salma in *Princess Salma and the Mysterious Voices* (2011)*, whose name means 'the saviour' in Arabic. Like her name, she is a princess who talks to animals and save them from dangers. She nurses an injured bee and saves the birds from the hunters.

These books are written to mitigate mainstream princesses' stories in the Western world which are dominated by Disney. What I find interesting are the ways princesses are reimagined in this context. They were drawn with the artistry of *Manga* comics and wear Western looking princess' dresses. Nonetheless, the stories are not about princesses who are locked in the dungeon, being abused by their step-mother and sisters, or waiting for a prince to save and wake them r up from sleep. These princesses were set as royal female protagonists who are set on missions to save people and animals, and act according to the Islamic moral compass.

When I came to Canada in 2014, again I was exposed to the Islamic fairy tales that negotiate Disney's princesses' stories. However, these books did not recreate new princesses, but rather rewriting Disney's princess stories and add Islamic attributes and characteristics to the characters. An example of these stories is Fawzia Gilani-Williams' *Snow White: An Islamic Tale (2013)[1]*, one such fairly tale, which is circulated in the Muslim community, that offers an alternative perspective of feminine representation. In Gilani's version, Snow White is a devout Muslim who always prays, reads her Qur'an, and goes to the Mosque. Her stepmother despises her and orders a huntsman to kill her. Snow White flees until she meets up with a group of old Muslim female dwarfs who take care of her in the woods. After ingesting some poison dates, Snow White slips into a deep sleep, after which a prince comes to the rescue and marries her. This story is obviously a retelling of Grimms' (1812) *Snow White* and sets out to showcase Islamic values and principles throughout its narrative.

Being exposed to these Islamic fairy tales, I was pushed back to ponder what does it mean by Islamic fairy tales? What are considered by

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[1] In an interview at the Ummah Reads website (https://muslimkidsbooks.wordpress.com/2011/03/29/q-a-with-author-fawzia-gialni-williams/) , Fawzia Gilani-Williams states despite of the growth of multicultural characters in mainstream books and media, yet in her experiences Muslim children still do not use Islamic names in writing their own stories. Thus, she urges books to give visibility to children in order to give sense of belonging and place for children.

Islamic stories? How would Muslim girls actually negotiate Islamic and Western[2] values in the stories?

Muslim girls who read and watch princesses from both mainstream and Islamic texts/media are undoubtedly exposed to a broader sense of cultural enrichment and understanding since such parallel narratives, which are both culturally and aesthetically different. However, this phenomenon also establishes a dichotomy of female identity for Muslim girls who eventually seek to negotiate different representations of gender construction among various fairy tales.

Meanwhile critics affirm mainstream-Western fairy tales have been criticized for portraying female archetypes as passive female protagonists, whom ultimately become 'trophies' for male protagonists once the quest has been completed. As a result of these representations, feminists have both criticized these character tropes, which are seen as subservient to male authority, while at the same time producing fairy tales that conform to feminist narratives of women (active and empowered characters that need or depend on the help of men.).

On the other hand, non-mainstream publications have come with various multicultural children's books, geared towards grass-roots' ideals, such as religious-based children's books. Fairy tales such as, *Cinderella: an*

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[2] Western stories mean literature that based on the context of Judeo-Christian ideology or Eurocentric values

Islamic Tale (2010), Sleeping Beauty: an Islamic Tale (2018), and *Snow White: An Islamic Tale (2013),* are some of the stories circulated within the Muslim community that homogenize Western fairy tales and Muslims' culture. Other Muslim fairy tales, such as *Princess Rasheeda and the Perfect Presents* (2014)*, Princess Haleema and the Ring* (2016)*,* and *Princess Aziza and the Purple Orchid* (2016)*,* are picture books that concern themselves with moral/spiritual education and character developments of children. Furthermore, Muslim fairy tales are represented with the cultural values from different Muslim majority countries and appear to enrich themselves with elements from what many consider to be the most famous and influential Western based fairy tale about a princess; *The Persian Cinderella* (1999)*, The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story* (1998) and *The Egyptian Cinderella* (1989)*,* are a few among many that add diversity to the genre of Muslim children's books.

Aside from Islamic fairy tales, writers also attempt to produce books that convey Islamic contemporary issues and using social realism such as (1) Refugees and freedom: Deborah Ellis's *The Breadwinner (2000), Parvana's Journey (2002), Mud City (2003),* Rukhsana Khan's *Wanting Mor (2009),* N.H. Senzai's *Shooting Kabul (2010),* Ibtisam Barakat's *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood (2007)*, Malala Yousefzai's *I am Malala* (2013) (2) School life and teens: Randa Abdeel fattah's *Does my Head Look Big in This? (2005)*, Haifaa Al Mansour's *The Green Bicycle (2015),* S.K. Ali's *Saints and*

Misfits (2017), (3) Islamic cultures and arts: Robert and Adl's *Ramadan Moon (2009)*, Khan and Paschkis' *The Night of the Moon (2008),* Khan and Amini's *Golden Domes and Silver Lantern (2012),* and (4) Muslim Superheros: G. Willow Wilson's *Ms. Marvel (2014).*

Additionally, tweenhood (age 8 to 12) is the age when girls are stepping away from fairy tales and princess culture and tend to change their primary focus on books and media toward school lives and realistic themes. Hence, most of representations of Muslim girls in books and media seem to be in themes of refugee and stories, girls fighting discrimination in Third World Countries, and the issues of discrimination and equality in north America.

In Canada, Muslim girls must contend with the North American media, which is a powerful and influential tool; with the potential to mold public perceptions and formulate new ideologies surrounding femininity and identity. Additionally, these tween girls who stem from different cultural backgrounds and dispositions; be it foreign, domestic or diasporic, are the loyal consumers of Disney's products, despite these products representing an unattainable utopian fantasy for these girls since they do not represent the reality nor the existence of Muslim girls. On the other hand, Muslim girls balance this with the teachings and core principles of feminine identity in Islam. This challenge quite often results in the necessity of careful negotiation in the gender construction of Muslim girls who find themselves

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inundated with North American media and encompassed by Islamic ethics and morals

In my research project, I analyze the creative works of Muslim tween girls as the response of their mitigation of popular media influences and their religious backgrounds in Canada. Subsequently, it is a study aimed at examining the degree to which these texts and media influence Muslim girls' responses to gender representations, and how Muslim girls showcase their sense of agency via their own depictions of femininity. Focus in this project is given to stories that describe Muslim girl characters because this can be seen as a new endeavor for providing Muslim girls with media that reflects the core principles of their faith and family's culture. These creative works can therefore be seen as an initial effort within the Muslim community to reconcile the dichotomy that exists between Western and Islamic identity. They also may connect Islamic culture with Western traditions in media whose audience includes Muslim children. As mentioned earlier, my research assays the nature of Muslim tweenhood and how Muslim tweens negotiate their sense of agency of their representation of girlhood via their writings and drawings. This approach is inspired by Karen E. Wohlwend's (2009) research that implicates the nexus of girls' practice of identity through plays and writings in the school environment. Nonetheless, my research is to perform a similar activity in the context of a home environment where the cultural background may be much more encompassing and integrated into daily life

This approach is used to demonstrate how children's literature and media may convey similar or different sets of gender representations, when compared to Muslim girls' own gender representations, as manifested in their creative works.

My interest revolves around several questions, such as; (1) How do Muslim tween girls reproduce meaning and construct gender identity in their creative works? (2) How do their stories intersect gender construction with their religious background and media consumption? My study is an in-depth analysis of how Muslim tweens reproduce meaning that may construct similar, hybrid or alternative gender construction, when compared to their media consumption.

Furthermore, the result of my research contributes theoretical perspectives in research on Muslim tweens and media cultures as well as intersectionality in meaning reproduction. Undoubtedly, my research mitigates the possibility of creating a sense of agency towards texts and media for Muslim tweens.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

(1)   Gender and Media Representation

Gender, in general, roots its terms to its individual/personal and social identities. The realm of childhood identities is far more complex and involves the essence of child development (cognitive, physical and mental) (Burke & Stets, 2009). However, my research does not revisit the discussion of childhood in the context of a psychological perspective. The context of psychoanalysis related to self-identities does not offer the appropriate framework for this context aids to convey the correlation between media and cultural identity, which is the main purpose of my research. Identity, in this context, is a discursive phenomenon whereas "identity is located not in the 'private' realms of cognition, emotion, and experience, but in the public realm of discourse, interaction and other semiotic systems of meaning-making" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2010).

As a critical discourse, my research builds upon the Foucauldian notion of discursive practices. With that being said, the notion of gendered identity also deconstructs language and ideological power representations in production, transmission, and consumption (Benwell & Stokoe, 2010). Stuart Hall (1996) also conveys discursive practices similar to Foucault in that,

"identities are constructed in relational interactions" (6). Likewise, Judith

Butler (1990) also implies the idea of gendered identity as *performative*, a

social and cultural construction, and repetition. She emphasizes, "There is no

gender identity behind the expressions of gender; … identity is

performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its

results." (ibid.: 25). Therefore, there is no fixed or authentic identity,

instead, it is fluid and can only be identified through repetition. I avow Hall

and Butler's perspectives of identity as a social and cultural construction

whereas the gendered identity of Muslim girls is analyzed through the

ideological power in gender representations of Muslim/non-Muslim children's

fictions and fairy tales, and how these representations construct Muslim girls'

identity socially and culturally.

Other focuses of my research are the symbolic representations of

gender of Muslim girls in the media. George Gerbner (1972) develops the

notion of symbolic representation whereas the cultural values and ideals are

embedded in the media (44). Later, Gaye Tuchman (1978) further

researches this notion with the thoughts of, "the media are thought to

convey to audiences what types of roles and behaviors are most approved of

and valued in society". Therefore, media plays significant roles of controlling

the values and attitudes in the society (8).

However, representation underlines the process of making meanings

besides projecting or reflection. Stuart Hall (1997) emphasizes

representation as efforts to understand meanings not only from media depictions, but also from outside of the media. As he mentions, "We give things meaning by how we represent them--the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them" (3). Certainly, I epitomize the essentials of media to the values and attitudes of Muslim girls in the society. As these girls read and watch different texts and media, both from mainstream and alternatives media, their understanding of gender is represented through their creative works.

Consequently, Muslim tween girls in my study were assigned to write their own stories whereas the results confirm hybrid or even alternatives ideas of negotiated gender construction.

(2) Tweens' Illustrations and Identity Representation

The relation of children and visual information prevail through a perception, how children acquire knowledge of visual information and interpreting it that shapes their understanding of the world. According to John Berger (1972), "seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak" (p. 7). The first thing that children learn is what they see of the world before they learn oral or written language.

By the time children enter kindergarten, they learn to schematically organize visual information and can recognize different cultures as rendered by artists across books, times, and media of expression. They create a set of "memory images" that artists themselves render and, thus, understand culture as a set of codes – details that carry concepts, behaviours and physical characteristics (Albers, 2008, p. 189).

Thus, we, humans, profess the motion of reading the world through images or visual information. We recognize and interpret our perception of the world through visual patterns and structures that exist within images. Our interpretation can be matters that exist through physical information in an image like colour choices, techniques of drawing, or frames. Additionally, our interpretation of an image is also seen through discourse of social and culture practices. Subsequently, our interpretation of the visual images is also seen as the essential that mold our beliefs and knowledge about society, culture and ideology (Albers, 2008). Therefore, images and illustrations are similar to texts. They convey signs and meaning that are formed socially and culturally.

Semiotically, images or illustrations are essential to decode signs and meanings that often are ambiguous and difficult in texts. Children's books always enrich the readers receptions with illustrations and pictures.

Pictures do clarify texts, especially texts designed to require their

clarification, and they indeed inherently interesting enough to attract

attention and thus have the potential to offer pleasure (Nodelman, 4).

Images and illustrations are discussed in my study because of the

stereotypes that are often occurred with regards to the portrayal of Muslim

characters. These portrayals do not only occur in the mainstream media, but

also in non-mainstream media such as multicultural and religious media

circulated in particular societies. In fact, these portrayals are varied and

controversial at times.

Additionally, images and pictures are also precarious matter in the

Islamic traditions and norms. There are certain issues that must be

conformed and negotiate carefully in depicted certain people or things. A

case in point is the depictions of God, prophets and female characters. The

majority of Muslims, especially *Sunni* Muslims' theological teachings forbid

the depiction of God and prophets in images and pictures in any forms.

Correspondingly, Muslim writers often draw God and prophets with images of

their names or ray of lights emanation. Additionally, portrayals of women

must also accord to the Islamic teachings and moral codes, such as

encouraging modesty in the figure of women.

Nonetheless, between the Islamic theology and the depiction of Muslim

characters or Islamic themes in the mainstream media, there seems to be

gap and differences in defining what does it mean by a Muslim character? What defines Islamic themes in texts and media? Such dispute conveys unknowable directions to where the meanings and contexts of Muslim characters and Islamic themes should be developed?

As Islamic children's literature offers a number of creativity and innovative solutions to the challenge of formulating Islamic faith in a minority setting, giving the literature its particular Islamic character, and thus, its appeal for religious consumers., … Whether this is perceived as pleasing for children, and if so, what kind of pleasure the religious component of the reading entails remain questions to be researched. (Janson, 2017, p. 150)

Consequently, I engage the discussion of images and pictures in the creative works of the Muslim tweens which may offer mitigation, whereas the definition and context of Muslim characters and Islamic themes are affirmed through the eyes and opinions of Muslim tweens. Whether it is children's books and media in general or Islamic children's literature, they are meant to be from, for and about children. I rely on the concept of images and illustrations as the medium to detangle Muslim tweens' perceptions on gender construction. I treat the Muslim girls' creative works as arts creations that conveys the artists' perceptions of the world, of their surroundings, socially and culturally. Therefore, their creative works are analyzed through

the lens of intersectionality of their media interpretations and their religious knowledge.

(3)   Intersectionality of Gender and Religion

By definition, intersectionality is, 'the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class and sexuality, has emerged as the primary theoretical tool designed to combat feminist hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity" (Nash, 2008, p. 2)

Although the notion does not really direct religion as one of the aspects of subjectivity, yet the idea of combating hegemony and hierarchy has become the reason why religious aspect may become partner with the other marginalized subjects, as Kimberle Crenshaw (1989 & 1991) and Patricia Williams (1989) state intersectionality calls for agreement to the legacy of exclusions of multiply marginalized subjects from feminist and anti-racist work. As in North America where Islam and Muslims have been the subject of stereotypes, discrimination, and Islamophobic, the aforesaid definition become correlated with other marginalized subjectivities.

Thus, religious aspect may become comparable trajectory with other subjects such as race, gender, class and sexuality under the affinity of marginalized people and struggles against hegemony and hierarchy. What is more, the dichotomy of intersectionality theory as the outcome of identity theory have been widely debated. Jennifer C. Nash (2008) brings a gripping

conception that if intersectionality implies identity theory, "it must grapple with whether intersectionality actually captures the ways in which subjects experience subjectivity or strategically deploy identity" (11).

It definitely needs further exploration whereas such theory would convey processes and mechanism that may unfold identity is intersected, layered and negotiated. Accordingly, I offer possible answers and exploration to the aforesaid concept. It engages tweens' understandings about gender by which their works may mitigate their understanding about identity. With focus on five stories and interviews, I aim to describe how tweens stories reflect their concepts of gender construction? And how their stories reveal intersectionality of feminine representation with their background of religious norms and teachings. Additionally, my study also inspires topics such as, "what determines which identity is foregrounded in a particular moment, or are both always simultaneously engaged? What is the relationship between the matrix of domination?" (Collins, 2000, p. 299).

(4)   Ubiquity and Shifts of Media's Gender Representation

Gender representation in children's literature has shown shifts in its paradigm, particularly in fairy tales, "women – for three hundred years at least – quite intentionally used the fairy tale to engage questions of gender and they create spoken or written differently from those told or penned by men" (Haase, 2004, p. ix). The arguments circulated in the fairy tales

substantially are critics on the superior, active and dominant characteristics of male characters over the females. Fairy tales are the dominant genre depicting female characters and, "fostering passive Sleeping Beauty and helpless Snow White" (Clark, 1999, p. 3).

Meanwhile, in the realm multicultural children's literature, the Muslim children's literature has grown attentions whereas the depiction of female characters is presented as powerful social actors (Sensoy and Marshall, 2010, p.301). *The Breadwinner* is an example of multicultural children's literature depicting an Afghan Muslim girl who is set to her mission with rescue, civilize and modern characteristics (Sensoy and Marshall, 2010, p.300).

Correspondingly, my study divulges the dynamic of shifts and pervasiveness in the participants' stories as compare to the stories and media productions. I also seek new meaning making in their stories where it may open new perceptions towards Muslim characters and Islamic children's literature.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

My research is an art-based study with a critical discourse approach, which design mainly embodies writings/ drawings activities and interviews. The activities are recorded through field notes, photos and videos. My research involves five Muslim tween girls, with ages ranging from 8-12 years old. This age range is known as tween, a phase where girls often perform storytelling, writings and drawings, as well as conduct a productive discussion. Tweenhood is also known as the transitioning age of gender acumen. Additionally, Naomi Hamer (2009) states, "The tween age group, namely preadolescents between the ages of 8 and 12, constitute a heavily targeted niche for branding and cross-marketing of products" (121). This is the age when girls are exposed to abundant resources of media. They engage and embrace its values that shape their identity. Prior to tween phase, children are encapsulated with fairy tales' fantasies and princess culture, meanwhile tweens divulge their interests to realistic and self-identification themes. Consequently, my study delves into the process of identity transitioning through stories meaning reproduction.

Furthermore, the participants in my research are tween girls who read and watch both Disney and non-mainstream media such as Multicultural

children books. Additionally, I had worked with Ryerson Research Ethics Board (REB) to obtain consent and assent from parents.

The process of recruitment was done through sending emails and Whatsapp messages in the Muslim community groups in Toronto. After the communities received my messages, some parents started to contact me and set up a date to meet. Three parents agreed to meet me at the community group picnic where their children would perform the activities together. The other two parents set up different dates for my visit to their home. I sent an email to parents a week before visit, explaining about the study and attached the consent and assent agreement for the parent and the child to read them before the visit. Before each activity, I socialized the study in brief to both parent and child. Upon their verbal agreement, they signed the consent and assent agreement.

Additionally, I gave these girls questions to brainstorm their ideas on how to depict their characters and other details that may be attributed in their characters. these questions are as follows,

1. If you were a writer, what would your girl character be like? Is she a princess, super hero, or a school girl? Please write or draw your story with a girl as your character.

2. Draw or write your girl's character with details. How does she look like? What clothes does she wear? Describe what makes her unique.

After explaining my questions, I let these girls ask any questions regarding the activities. It was also a chance for brainstorming and drawing essential ideas before they started the activities. For about five to ten minutes, I answered their questions and unclear ideas. The activity started as soon as they grabbed their papers and pencils. Initially I planned to do the activities individually in every home. However, three parents suggested their kids to perform the activity in a park at the same time of the community picnic on July 7, 2018 and continued with interviews at their homes. Therefore, my study took place in both community place (park) and homes.

The activities were initially designed for one hour; however, they were extended up to 90 minutes as the results of participants' inquiries. Meanwhile, the interviews took 10 to 15 minutes as it was originally designed. I designed the interview as semi-structure and the questions contain three major parts; exploring the story, exploring tweens' gender perception, and exploring participants' media consumptions (See appendix 3 for list of interview questions).

The Muslim girls who participated in my study come from different ethnic backgrounds, mainly are from Southeast Asia and South Asia. They all are second generation Canadians. When they agreed to participate, I asked them to write their names in pseudonyms. These girls are; (1) Canad5 who is 10 years old, and lives in Toronto. She comes from Southeast Asian family

background. (2) Daiko, ages 11 years old, and lives in Mississauga. She also comes from Southeast Asian family background. (3) Gumisgreat, ages 12 years old, lives in Mississauga. She comes from Southeast Asian family background. (4) Laluna is 10 years old, and lives in Mississauga. She has Southeast Asian family background and just recently moved to Canada, (5) Sofia is the only participant who comes from South Asian family background. She is 10 years old and lives in Toronto with her parents.

Chapter 4

Hijab, a Gender Representation in Muslim Tweens' Creative Works

Growing up as a Muslim girl, my daughter used to draw her character similar to the books she read and movies she watched. She drew her character without hijab and she always said that the character was not her. It was just a girl of her imagination. It had nothing to do with her or anyone in her immediate family and friends. Now, she is at tween phase, she has started to depict a girl character with hijab. Her character looks much more like herself, a girl with hijab and green eyes. As I observed over time, she paid attention and became more opinionated about her surroundings and the media she consumed. From this point, I began to delve my interest into cultural negotiation among Muslim tweens. I was pulled to the center of tween's world. My daughter's experience before her tween age was about the peripheries of her identity by creating imaginative characters that reflect away from herself. And when she reached tweenhood, she established the relation of her representation in her character and at the same time, she negotiates such representation through religious values and media consumption.

Likewise, the participants in this project embed Islamic values in the identity of their characters in their creative works. In this activity, I asked them about their girl characters, i.e. what would your girl character be like?

Is she a princess, super hero, or a school girl? How does she look like? What clothes does she wear? Describe what makes her unique? (See Appendix 3) Thus, the outcome is expected to be the visual portrayal of the characters in their creative works.

In most children's books, illustrations act like texts. They convey meanings that are parallel with meanings of the texts. These meanings are also often hidden and unnarrated through words. Perry Nodelman states that images or illustrations most likely provide signs to be decoded (137),

> The words in picture books always tell us that things are not merely as they appear in the pictures, and the pictures always show us that events are not exactly as the words describe them. (Nodelman, 1999, p. 137)

Therefore, the participants in this study also drew their own illustrations to convey meanings that depict their stories and meanings that unnarrated in their stories. Although I did not ask them specifically to draw, I gave them choices in the activity that they can either draw or write. The fact that they all drew their stories, juxtaposing visual information as young adults' preference to communicate meanings.

The participants' illustrations in my study are the representation of their understandings on gender and femininity. As soon as they were asked to describe their girl characters, four out of five girls drew their characters as hijabed (headscarf) girls (see figure 1). From these four images, Canad5

describes her character as a Muslim princess. Canad5 drew her character in typical dress of a Western-princess with a headscarf. She mitigates her character's appearance to look like the ones in the mainstream media, such as Disney. She also enriches her character with Islamic norms such as hijab. Meanwhile, the other three girls Daiko, Gumisgreat, and Sofia, do not describe their characters as princesses. They portray their characters as contemporary Muslim girls with hijab. Additionally, Sofia's character seems to convey unique image as she is portrayed with mini skirt, pants, short-sleeve shirt and hijab.

a. Canad5's illustration, a girl dressed in pink and hijab, in a 'Western' princess' dress
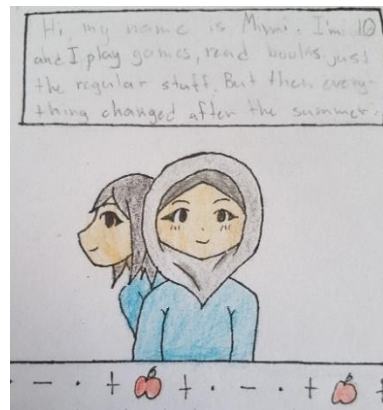
b. Daiko's Illustration, a girl with two images, one at the back portrays her past without hijab and the other one at the front portrays her in present with hijab

c. Gumisgreat's illustration, shows hijabed girls which main character is shown with eyes and the others without one, conveying uniqueness and identity through visual portrayals

d. Sofia's illustration, shows a hijabed hero girl with in a shirt, skirt and legging

Figure 1. The Illustrations of participants' creative works

Canad5 drew her character whose name is princess Ruqayah in a typical medieval princess with feminine colours, pink and purple, juxtaposing her negotiation of cultural values and media consumption. She also embellished the princess with a necklace which also a cue in feminine representation. She used pink colour, which is also often assumed as a feminine colour, particularly with children from age 2 years old (Paelotti, 2012 & LoBue and DeLoache, 2011). Canad5 has conformed to her associations with feminine representation by associating pink as the colour for girls. Her image of the girl character in her story complies the omnipresent feminine representation in the media.

Nonetheless, such conventions do not apply to Daiko's image. She drew her character in different colour, blue and grey, which complies to the colour of masculinity (Paelotti, 2012 & Cunningham & Macrae, 2011). Her

technique is also further advanced because she drew the main character in an image of two figures. The image shows one wears hijab but the other one does not wear one, to represent self transformation. She also lines up the image with thoughtful meaning, because the first figure is presented at the back of the full-imaged one to signify past reality. Additionally, the image at the front shows a hijabed girl looking forward, signifying the present reality looks forward to the future.

Gumisgreat's illustration on the other hand, highlights her character as a unique person from the others. Despite the fact all girls in her image wears hijab, she etches eyes only on her character. Eyes become the symbol of uniqueness and at the same time, it signifies discrimination appears through visual medium. Stereotypes start from society's visual judgments. This image is captivating and strong because of the profound meaning that underlines the image. It is as if Gumisgreat criticizes how people are often very quick to judge and generalize assumption based on what they see, and she is able to convey it through her story and drawings.

Sofia also conveys gender through colours in her image. Through incorporating green and brown, she empowers her image through associating the colours with nature. Unlike canad5's character that wears pink long dress, Sofia portrays her heroine with pants, skirt and short-sleeve shirt. Reversing from the traditional feminine dress and colours, Sofia conveys her gender perspective through neutral colours and clothing. She also portrays

her girl character with brown skin. Consequently, this portrays the significant

discourse of a person of colour as hero or heroine.

What is more, Laluna depicts her female character as a princess

without significant Islamic attributes in her character (see figure 2). She

drew her princess without hijab and similar to canad5's image, her character

conveys the representation of traditional femininity; wears skirts, shirts, hair

bun, and long dress. This is the only image among five participants that does

not portray Muslim girl with hijab. Laluna in fact highlights her character akin
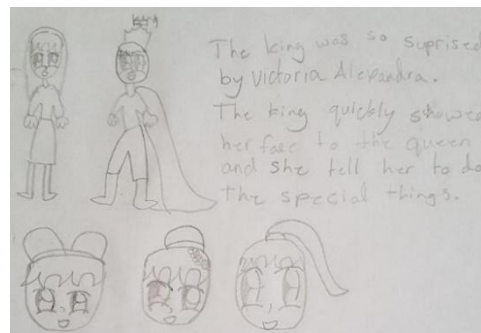
to popular princesses' stories in the media.

a. The princess, Victoria Alexandria and the bullies

b. The princess waves at her adopted mother to go to school

c. The princess met her parents, the king and queen

d. The king surprised after finding his daughter

Figure 2. Laluna's creative works

Among these participants, four of them portray their characters as girls with hijab, underlining the tendency to support hijab as the symbol of Muslim girl identity. Such portrayal is incongruent with the portrayal of Muslim girl characters in mainstream media.

Mainstream media often describes the Muslim character in some ways, both with or without Hijab. One popular representation that may be perceived as controversial is Disney's *Aladdin* (1992). It is debatable whether *Aladdin* is a movie with Muslim characters or not. Given the context of cultural framework i.e. names, origin, story setting, *Aladdin* is palpable in conveying Muslim or Arab characters. Nonetheless, Jasmine as the feminine main characters is depicted without hijab (scarf) and dresses far from Arab medieval princess supposed to look like.

a. Disney's Jasmine from Aladdin (1992)
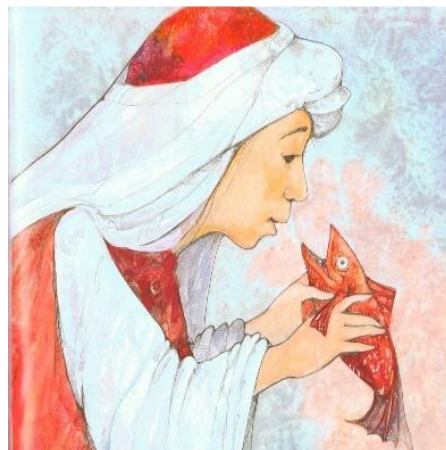
b. Maha, the Middle Eastern Cinderella, in Hickox's *The Golden Sandal*

Figure 3. Illustrations of (a) Jasmine, in Aladdin (1992), Disney Animation, illustration source: http://static1.wikia.nocookie.net/__cb20120627061520/disneykilalaprincess/images/4/42/Princess_Jasmine.png, and (b) Maha, Illustrated by Will Hillenbrand (1998), in Hickox's *The Golden Sandal*: A Middle Eastern Cinderella, New York, Published by Holiday house.

Since its release, Disney's *Aladdin* (1992) has brought some criticisms toward gender and cultural stereotypes. i.e. exaggerated femininity and love at first sight, (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek, 2011, p. 564). Most critics on Aladdin (1992) are mostly in how Disney as the representation of American or Western culture have established inaccurate stereotypes of Arab/Middle Eastern culture. One of these stereotypes is Jasmine's image as a Middle Eastern princess is far from the historical facts of how the Middle Eastern princess and ladies dressed during the Ottoman empire in the medieval times. Unlike Disney, non-mainstream media put efforts to mitigate political correctness of Muslim girls' characters by representing the character with hijab such as Hickox's *The Golden Sandal*. (see figure 3).

Another mainstream media that have produced the contemporary Muslim girl character is Marvel's *Ms. Marvel.* Marvel introduces its new characters, Kamala Khan as Ms. Marvel in 2014. She is the new Muslim heroine with Pakistani-American background. In this series, Kamala Khan is portrayed as a Muslim girl who dresses like an American girl. Her identity through hijab is only shown when she is in the mosque or attending Muslim communities' events. She then becomes a super hero who help others with her super power. Kamala's identity as Muslim is only palpable through her

family background as conservative Muslims. Consequently, her identity as a Muslim girl is a trajectory of many North American Muslim girls who are looking for balance in representing her identity as part of Western society and as a Muslim at the same time. However, the creative works of the participants in my study do not seem to seek such issue to solve. But rather, they look for the ideal representation that exhibit their identity as a Muslim girl in their daily lives.

a. Kamala Khan in her superhero suit

b. Kamala Khan dressed as Muslim girl, attending Mosque's event

Figure 4. Kamala Khan, Marvel's Muslim girl superhero (2014), written by G Willow Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona and Jamie McKelvie (a) illustration source: https://www.marvel.com/characters/ms-marvel-kamala-khan/in-comics, (b) illustration source: http://cbldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/page13.jpg

Consequently, mainstream media such as Disney and Marvel have yet to concern their productions towards creating Muslim characters as main characters. These mainstream media only fathom the creation of Muslim characters through their Islamic background and culture in the story. This is quite likely what Disney would have done. It is not a surprise to pinpoint its ambiguous approaches in perceiving politically correct character's representations. Disney has been known to discourse 'faux feminism' in their productions over the years (Craven 2016; Pershing & Gablehouse, 2010; Ryan, 2011). Particularly in producing parodies, Disney enacts their productions to incorporate feminism notion which come out to be received as 'lip service' or, "amounting to forms of antifeminism or faux feminism" (Craven, p.188). Disney also often attempts to produce culturally correct productions which came out inauthentic and accurate. For the last two decades, Disney produced some movies that supposedly represent minority cultures and celebrate diversity such as *Mulan* (1998), *Pocahontas* (1995), *Aladdin* (1998), *Brave* (2012), *Moana* (2016), *Coco* (2017). However, these productions have yet to gain congruity because of the superficial approaches in representing minority cultures. Correspondingly, these superficial approaches are the results of lack of engagements and negotiations with 'grass-roots'. As a result, cultural appropriation becomes "Disney's defining characteristics" (Craven 2016, p.149), including Muslim culture appropriation as in the aforesaid discussion.

Multicultural children books and media on the other hand, have stepped further into creating the Muslim characters with strong descriptions. Bunting's *One green apple* (2006), Khan's *Wanting Mor* (2009), Yousafzai's *Malala's Magic Pencil* (2017), *The Breadwinner* – the movie (2018), are among the multicultural media that bring strong description hijabed Muslim girls as the main character. It appears this non-mainstream media grasp the notion of creating image as an identity breakthrough. The facts that these Muslim girls reproduce their characters identically is the indication that image of Muslim girl character is seen mostly and firstly from hijab as an identity notion. As E.H. Gombrich (1994) states that "the visual image is supreme in its capacity for arousal" (82), the visual image is the first to notice in a production. It was produced to create awareness and interest (Nodelman, 1988, p. 4). When a book or film is shown to a child, the first meaning she/he would register is the visual images. As Perry Nodelman (1988) states that "pictures communicate more universally and readily than do words" (5). Accordingly, visual images in children's media are essential as the first door for young adults to identify and perceive meanings in their media consumption, and non-mainstream media seems to pick up such notion. Consequently, non-mainstream media offers more opportunities in depicting Muslim girl characters that conform Islam and its cultural values.

These girls' stories then perceive meanings from both mainstream and non-mainstream media because their stories disclose both notions, hijabed

31

and non hijabed characters. Canad5, Daiko, Gumisgreat and Sofia present

their characters with hijab as the main identification of their characters. Even

though they brush their characters in different techniques and concepts of

characters, they convey collective acumen of girl characters representation;

hijabed Muslim girls. These representations are distinctive from mainstream

media's portrayals about Muslim or Middle East girl characters. Laluna's

story, on the contrary, is the representation of common identification in the

mainstream media. Her character is akin to the mainstream portrayal of

Western princesses. She even did not consider her character as a Muslim

character,

Interview with Laluna

Interviewer : yeah. So, you have a girl character in your story.

She is a princess and her name is Victoria Alexandra.

is she a muslim?

Laluna : I don't know.

Source: Transcription, Interview 4 with Laluna

Thus, her character exceptionally is assumed to be non-religious based

character, which reflects Laluna's preference not to include Islamic or cultural

background in her story. Such notion of course open alternative

interpretation of Muslim girl preference not to accentuate religious concept in

a creative work. Laluna's creative work shows the correlation of media

consumption and how it influences the creative process of Muslim girls' stories.

As the conclusion of this chapter, the girls' creative works express identity in visual meanings, which portray Muslim girl characters in hijab. Their creative works are rather different from the mainstream media portrayal of Muslim girl characters and they offer understanding of what Muslim girls expect to see in a character that represent them.

Chapter 5

Tweens' Creative Works:
A Hybrid Construction of Islamic Norms and Media Consumption

Aside from visual images, the participants also produced texts that strengthen the Islamic identity through thematic notions, i.e. growing up as a Muslim girl without parents, mitigating new life after conversion to Islam, hijab problems at school and work, and helping animals as part of Islamic teaching. Such themes certainly reflecting what Muslim girls consider as gender representation; it is the representation of Muslim girls' ordeals in their lives. Some of these themes reflect what these girls adopt from media and books consumption, such as, Ellis's *The Breadwinner* (2000), Yousefzai's *I Am Malala* (2013), *Tangled* (2010), *Wild Kratts* (2011)*.* These books, films, and TV shows convey themes such as equality, discrimination, girls growing up without parents and helping others. As a result, it concedes the presence of meaning internalization of media consumption.

Canad5 describes her character as a princess who lost her parents and was forced to bring out herself as a Muslim princess. Like other texts that brings out the female Muslim characters, canad5 reproduce her own story with similar theme, discrimination and equality.

Interview with Canad 5

Canad5   : but many people dislike her because she was a Muslim. So in this story, she had to fight against discrimi..., like discrimination, and like, dislike inequality, because lots of people like they thought that Muslims aren't good.

Source; Transcription. Interview 1 with Canad5

Furthermore, Canad5 negotiates her religious background and her media consumption through her works. Her story intersects Disney's movies and multicultural books she read. It is a princess's story with plot and themes like in *Coco* (2017) and Malala Yousefzai's *I am Malala* (2013)*,* as she said in her interview,

Interview with Canad 5

Canad5   : well, I think it makes it special is the fact that Ruqaya actually takes in many personalities of like, ehmm many role model, Muslim role model around like the world, such as Malala. She, she speaks up of herself.

Interviewer : oh Malala, you read Malala?

Canad5   : yes.

Interviewer : so, your story is almost …?

Canad5   : it's like intertwining.

Interviewer : oh okay...So you think your story similar to the story of

Malala?

Canad5   : yes.

Interviewer : the similarities are?

Canad5   : there aren't much similarities, but they both are Muslim

girls and they are fighting for their rights.

Interviewer : okay, so is there anything that you think it is similar to

the Disney you watched?

Canad5   : mhm, like, not very much, but like in some Disney

characters, there, like food poisoning, for example, the

Disney movie Coco,

Source; Transcription. Interview 1 with canad5

Canad5 is aware she was using some ideas from the movie and books she read. As it was mentioned in the interview, her story intertwines the books she reads, and she conveys her story through intertextual knowledge using some meanings in the texts to reproduce meaning through her story.

Meanwhile, Daiko describes out her character as a Muslim girl who experiences dilemma after her parents converted to Islam. She is conflicted her decision to whether she wears hijab to school or not. Her friends help her throughout her transformation and accept her for who she is. Daiko expresses her character as a Muslim girl who helps her friend to go through a

transformation to be a Muslim. It seems the aim is to feel the struggle of *Muallaf* (a person who converts to Islam) from the eyes of a born-Muslim point of view (Daiko is born Muslim). Daiko's theme is rather new because such theme does not widely used in both mainstream and multicultural media. Her story tells a girl who becomes 'newbie Muslim' struggling at school to adjust and mitigate society's attention.

She shows adequacy to create stories that brings out girls' problems as a representation of gender construction among Muslim tweens. What makes her story unique is the least possible influence of media consumption. Her creative work does not reflect media consumption and she observe that it is different from mainstream media which does not convey religious representation,

Interview with Daiko

Daiko   : because like Disney stories, they are more like, they don't really have religious things in it, more just like for kids and stuff but for my story. It's more for like children, more Muslim I guess, and to like inspire them to be like to, it's fine that you're different, and like, and yeah everybody different.

Source; Transciption. Interview 2 with Daiko

Similarly, Gumisgreat exposes the problems of hijabed women at workplace which often getting judged because of their hijabs. She created her female character as a hijabed woman who is fired from her workplace because of her hijab. In this story, Gumisgreat does not emphasize her character as a tween like her, but rather an adult or teenager. She is capable to point one of many problems that Muslim women often encounter because of her appearance. She also represents tween process of growing up, able to point other people's problems, children or adults. She affirms tween capability to express her understanding of complex issues which often occur to someone who is older than them. Additionally, she conveys gender perspective through issues such as discrimination against Muslim women at workplaces and she emphasizes the uniqueness of every woman through her image.

Interview with Gumisgreat

Interviewer : so, your story is about discrimination?

Gumisgreat : yes.

Interviewer : why is the girl being discriminated here?

Gumisgreat : because she wears scarf and people…

Interviewer : she wears scarf

Gumisgreat : yes.

Interviewer : yes, and?

Gumisgreat : and people felt uncomfortable because she is a Muslim

Sofia diversely offers a different story which is rather simpler and easier. She showcases the story of a hero-girl who saves animals from hunters. She also reproduces the intertextual knowledge from the *Wild Kratts* (2011) TV series and formulated a Muslim girl hero. Interestingly, within this intertextual knowledge, Sofia negotiates *Wild Kratts* as the show that represent boy heroes into a Muslim heroine. Yet, her ideas swapping the boy heroes into a girl heroine were not further depicted through details of how girl heroine would help the animals and how the role would be different from *Wild Kratts*.

Interview with Sofia

Sofia   : well, in *Wild Kratts*, they usually take a disk and they have a suit so if they put the disk and match animal, they transformed into that animal but in my story and they also help animals like *Wild Kratts*, but in my story she just helps animals. They don't, yeah, she's not like, …
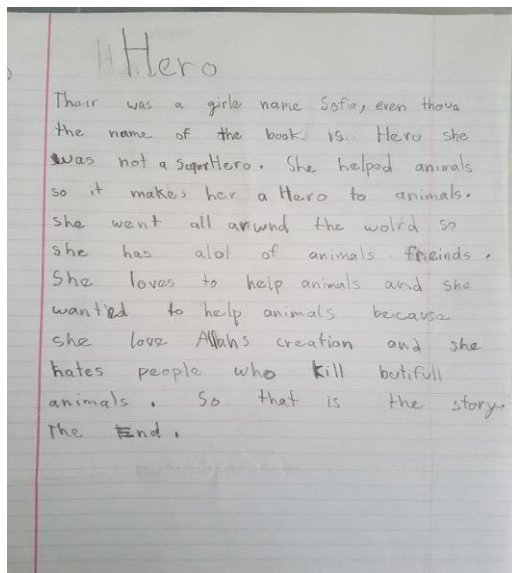
Hero

There was a girl named Sofia. Even though the name of the book is Hero, she was not a superhero. she helped animals so it makes her a hero to animals. she went all around the world so she has a lot of animals friends. She loves to help animals and she wanted to help animals because she love Allah's creation and she hates people who kill beautiful animals. So, that is the story.

Figure 5. Images of Sofia's writing and her story

Interestingly, Laluna appears to conform to popular ideas inher story. Beside from portraying her character as non-religious character, she also conveys her story adapt to the popular stories in the mainstream media such as *Tangled* (2010). She describes her story as a missing princess whose parents were searching for her, which is similar to *Tangled's* Rapunzel (2010). Laluna illustrates her intertextual knowledge which is mostly derived from popular ideas in the mainstream media. A case in point in these popular ideas is the princess who grows up without parents. This notion is typical, and it is not only a pattern in the fairy tales but in most children's stories across culture set up the main character to grow up with absence of parents. Laluna conveys this idea and recreates her own character which name is Victoria Alexandria. Just like Rapunzel, Victoria was missing since her infancy

and was raised by a surrogate mother. However, she negotiates the story in

Tangled (2010) by portraying the princess goes to school and fights the

bullies.

Canad5 also produces the same archetype whereas her character's

parents died. She must grow up without parents and being nurtured by

maids. However, canad5 negotiates her character by portraying her

character's identity as a Muslim princess.
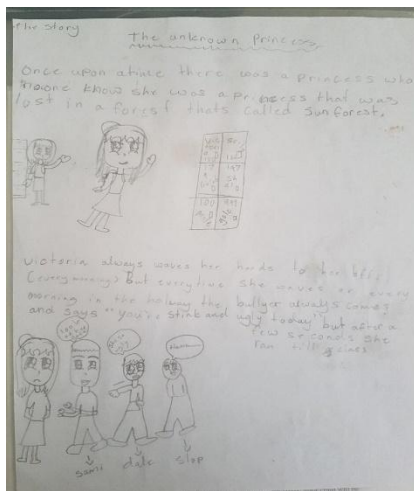
The Unknown Princess

Once Upon a Time there was a princess who no one know she was a princess that was lost in a forest that's called sunforest.

Victoria always waves her hands to her Bff (every morning). But everytime she waves or every morning in the hallway the bully always comes and says, "you're stink and ugly today" but after a few seconds she ran till class.

Figure 6. Images of Laluna's Story, *The Unknown Princess*

The intersectionality of these stories shows that the participants in my

study delve into gender construction and its relationship to other aspects of

identity. In social cognitive theory, the process of gender development

embodies modeling, generate new pattern behavior and develop new

interpretations and behaviors (Golden & Jacoby, 2017). Consequently, the

participants of my study construct their gender understanding by narrowing

and altering stereotypes that conforms their religious values from both mainstream and non-mainstream media, generating new ideas from their intertextual knowledge and develop new interpretations of gender construction. Sofia, Laluna and Canad5 are the participants who narrow and alter the stereotypes of their media consumption. Sofia narrows and alters her character from *Wild Kratts* which originally a show with male heroes, and she alters this idea by creating a hijabed heroine. Laluna also narrows and alters her character from *Tangled* which is a story of the lost princess. she adapts this idea and alter it by creating a princess who goes to school and fight the bullies. Additionally, Canad5 also confirms that her story is pretty much similar to *Coco* and *I am Malala*. She alters the story by creating a hijabed princess.

Nonetheless, Daiko and Gumisgreat step further than narrowing and altering. They create their female characters unlike many characters in the media. Their characters rather conform their religious based values, an ordinary Muslim girl who must cope and solve her problems because of her identity as Muslim which is represented through hijab.

Chapter 6

Non-Existent Male Characters and Muslim Tweens' Beauty Perceptions

Beside representing their characters as Muslims (four of these participants depict their characters with Islamic values), these girls also emphasize their characters as girls with gender distinction. Unlike mainstream stories that often pairs girl characters with boys, these girls' stories do not include boys as characters. They do not describe boys as pivotal characters, but rather play the minor role in the stories. Even the description of boys' role is considered insignificant. The only part reflects considerable boys' roles is in the interviews where these girls notice they opt out male or boy characters. Interestingly, this phenomenon is not new considering previous research have examined how girls reproduced stories with lack of pivotal male role. Shumway (2003) considers the decentralization of male character in a story as the feminine story which explains the inclination of gender construction in my study.

All participants in my study do not consider boys as partners in completing missions in their story. They also consider boys in opposite roles to girls, such as being villains and adults. Canad5 and Daiko consider the male characters in their story play insignificant role such as family member.

They did not write nor draw these characters because they wanted to focus on the girl character in the story.

Interview with Canad5 and Daiko

Interviewer : is there any boys character in your story?

Canad5　　　: the father.

Interviewer : only the father?

Canad5　　　: yeah.

Daiko　　　　: so, there are three girls, Mimi, and then her two friends
　　　　　　　　Tara and Jenny.

Interviewer : right, so, all them are girls. there is no boy?

Daiko　　　　: no, I don't know.

Interviewer : you do not know?

Daiko　　　　: no.

Interviewer : okay. you just choose not to have a boy character in your
　　　　　　　　story?

Daiko　　　　: well, she has like a brother and a dad. like I don't really
　　　　　　　　draw them.

Interviewer : right, okay. So, you focus with girls here.

Daiko　　　　: yeah.

Source; Transcription, interview 1 with Canad5 & interview 2 with

Daiko

Meanwhile, Gumisgreat, Sofia and Laluna, consider their male characters as villains. They do not decentralize their male characters, but rather pair them with the female characters as the anti-heroes and insignificant in compare to the female characters. In their portrayals, Gumisgreat depicts the male character as the boss, a person in power and the one who brings problem to the female character. Laluna reveals the male character as the bullies at school and Sofia describes her male characters as the hunters or the villains.

Interview with Gumisgreat and Laluna

Gumisgreat : the boss, kinda fired here, but he only did that because of the complains, but the good character would be the main character, and the people who's read her article and supported her too.

Interviewer : oh, there is one more character. who?

Laluna   : the bullier and her best friend.

Interviewer : the bullier and her best friend. does the bully have a name?

Laluna   : yeah.

Interviewer : what's her name? Is it a he, a boy or a girl?

Laluna   : a boy.

Interviewer : a boy. okay, what's his name?

Laluna   : one is Sammy, one is Dale, one is slob.

Interviewer : Sammy, Dale, and Slob, okay. All of them are boys?

Laluna   : yeah.

Interviewer : so, the bullies are boys?

Laluna   : yeah.

Interviewer : and they are bad characters?

Laluna   : yeah.

Interviewer : so, you have a girl character in your story, but I see that

               you don't really   have a boy here in your story.

Sofia   : unless it's the one who kills,

Interviewer : oh, the one who kills the animals is boy.

Sofia   : man.

Interviewer : man, yeah, they're boys.

Sofia   : yeah.

Interviewer : so, do you have reason why you don't include boys here

               really? besides those who kill the animals?

Sofia   : because I don't like boys.

Interviewer : you don't like boys, right.

Sofia   : because they pretty much annoying in my class.

(both laughed)

Mean bosses, bullies and hunters are the descriptions attached to the male characters. This is a breakthrough from the conventional archetype of children's literature and media which usually portray male characters as the hero, provider and protector of the female characters. Fairy tales, regardless of the cultures, most often describe males and masculinity as the provider and protector of the female and femininity. In most cases, fairy tales seem to convey secondary female characters as the villain of the main female character, i.e. step-mother, step-sister, evil queen etc. Therefore, these stories offer alternative provision of gender construction where it inbounds the notion of feminine story and endeavours the shifts of having female characters as the central characters.

Gender construction can also be perceived with regards to beauty perception whereas physical appearance is one of the attributes attached to the characters. For long fairy tales provide the pattern of princess beauty is the main reason for the prince to save her. Prince would not have turned his eyes if magic did not turn Cinderella into a beautiful lady. And so was Aurora would not be able to make a prince kiss her and wake up from her sleep if she was not pretty. Feminists have defined this notion as feminine beauty

ideal, "the socially constructed notion that physical attractiveness is one of women's most important assets, and something all women should strive to achieve and maintain" (Baker-Sperry, 2003, p.711).

All participants in my study reveal interesting perceptions of their feminine beauty ideal. Canad5 describes her girl character as pretty and divulges her character's beauty with moral compass and inner beauty, as she said,

Interview with Canad 5

Interviewer : do you think she is pretty?

Canad5   : yeah

Interviewer : in what way she is pretty?

Canad5   : as in her... like moral character, she shows, she, like

                    her.. her she kinda like shines.

Interviewer : shines?

Canad5   : yeah, like, I don't know how to explain it.

Source; Transcription, interview 1 with Canad5

Correspondingly Daiko conveys similar ideas of her beauty perception as inner beauty. Being kind and nice are the criteria of feminine beauty ideals. She also emphasizes that either being kind or having nice personality, is not measured from certain religious perspective. A Muslim can have great personality and so can non-Muslim. Daiko also shows a rejection to brand

someone as pretty or not. She thinks every girl is pretty no matter what. Thus, she underlines her perception of feminine beauty ideals from personality instead of physical appearances.

Interview with Daiko

Interviewer : is she a pretty girl?

Daiko : I guess you could say like you shouldn't really say girls are pretty or not, but like all girls are the same, so I guess yeah she is.

Interviewer : What makes her pretty?

Daiko : because, wait, is it before she is Muslim? or after she is a Muslim?

Interviewer : either way, she is still the same girl, right? before or after? I'm just wondering, what makes her pretty? is it because she's turning into a Muslim? or she has a nice hair? or she's wearing hijab or something?

Daiko : what makes her pretty is like her personality. like she's really nice, she even if she's still Muslim, she's still kind to everyone, and even if she's not she's still kind.

Source: Transcription, Interview 2 with Daiko

Gumisgreat on the other hand has firm opinion regarding her character's beauty. She does not consider her character stands out as being

pretty, but rather she's average and ordinary. However, she does not really clarify what is pretty? What is beauty? What is the criterion of being pretty? If what she means with beauty ideals are that pervasiveness that occurs in the children's literature and media conventionally, then Gumisgreat's character does not follow the conventional criteria of feminine beauty ideals. The ubiquity of beauty ideals in children's books and media have been referred to the portrayal of girls as being white, young, economically privileged and virtuous (Baker-Sperry, 2003, p. 722). Therefore, Gumisgreat character can be said as one who is not white, nor economically privilege, but she is determined, kind and independent.

Interview with Gumisgreat

Interviewer : right, one more question. do you think your girl

character is a pretty one?

Gumisgreat : I'm not sure,

Interviewer : you're not sure, what do you think? is she pretty?

Gumisgreat : I think she's average

Interviewer : average. Are you talking about physical appearance of

being pretty?

Gumisgreat : I wouldn't say that she's exactly like stand out, from

apparently not being pretty or being, (she stopped her

sentence)

Source   : Transcription, Interview 3 with Gumisgreat

An interesting observation occurred in Laluna's explanations where she considers her character pretty and unique. Although she also does not describe her character's beauty in detail, she certainly considers magical girl is pretty. The only reason for her character to be pretty is her magical notion. Being able to talk to animals is a criterion that makes her character stands out.

Interview with Laluna

Interviewer : next, wait, is your girl character pretty?

Laluna   : kind of.

Interviewer : kind of?

Laluna   : yeah.

Interviewer : okay can you explain what makes her pretty? for example like you can tell me if she has long hair? What's the colour of her hair?

Laluna   : she is unique.

Interviewer : she's unique?

Laluna   : yeah.

Interviewer : in what way she's unique? I mean you are unique, she's unique, everybody is unique. can you tell me what makes her unique?

Laluna   : because every time she moves and call butterfly, then
            the butterflies come.

Interviewer : oh, every time she moves and call butterflies, then
            butterflies come.

Laluna   : yeah.

Interviewer : is that what makes her pretty? that's it?

Laluna   : yeah.

Source: Transcription, Interview 4 with Laluna

Unlike the other participants, Sofia is the only participant who explains her character's beauty from clothing and skin colour. She implies hijab or headscarf is the criterion of beauty ideals, as she said, "she has a nice sport scarf". Furthermore, she also insinuates darker skin colour as the criterion of beauty ideals. Additionally, Sofia affirms her beauty ideals perception by associating it with nature colours, such as green and brown.

Interview with Sofia

Interviewer : can you tell me, like, is she a pretty character?

Sofia   : yeah.

Interviewer : can you have me understand, how is she pretty like,
            what makes her pretty?

Sofia   : she, well she has a nice sport scarf, and she has a skirt,
            and she has a green shirt, because like, because most

thing are so, she has a brown pants and brown skirt and

she has a light green and dark green shirt, because it's

kinda like the earth in like, so trees and grass are green

and the trunks of the trees are brown, so she wears

brown clothing at the bottom and her skirt is brown too.

Interviewer : yeah, and I see your girl character, you coloured her

brown here?

Sofia   : yeah, like, just like me, I am, skin's colour is light brown

Interviewer : so, that's what makes her pretty?

Sofia   : yeah.

Source   : Transcription, Interview 5 with Sofia

Associating beauty ideals with nature is also depicted by Laluna who considers talking to butterflies as being pretty. This characteristic resembles to some fairy tales' characters, such as Snow White and Cinderella, who talk to animals.

Correspondingly, associations with nature is not a new manifestation in childhood. Fairy tales have long affirmed nature associates with innocence and beauty standards. Snow White is a beautiful girl who is associated with nature because she talks to animals. Her beauty is also portrayed as nature's beauty, "Not very long after she had a daughter, with a skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony and she was named,

Snow White." (Grimm and Grimm, 1882, 213). Cinderella or *Aschenputtel* is

also depicted as a beautiful girl who talks to animals and asks for their help,

> O gentle doves, O turtle-doves,
>
> And all the birds that be,
>
> The lentils that in ashes lie
>
> Come and pick up for me!
>
> The good must be put in the dish,
>
> The bad you may eat if you wish. (Grimm and Grimm, 1882,
>
> 120)

Therefore, Sofia and Laluna's stories are pervasive as they associate

their girl character's beauty with nature which also implies children's

innocence.

The discussion above reveals the diverse interpretation of gender

construction in Muslim tweens understanding. Instead of creating equal

numbers of female and male characters, these participants reveal their

preference to focus on girls as the main characters and heroines. They also

convey male roles as the villains which shifts the conventional pattern in

fairy tales that often portray second female characters as the villains. In

terms of feminine beauty ideals, they describe beauty ideals as inner beauty,

great personality, nice, kind, magical, dark skin, nature association, and

hijab. It confirms the notion of Muslim tweens do not negotiate their

understanding of beauty ideals only from media consumption, but also from the religious values they carry in the family.

In the context of intersectionality, the results of this study reveal interesting identity hybridity or fluidity which is still debated widely. As Kathryn Ecklund (2012) states, "intersectionality theory holds that identity is developed in cultural group contexts and power-oppression dynamic are inherent in culture" (261), it normally tends to exhibit domination fluidity of a culture. However, in this study, the intersectionality of gender and religious norms occur dynamically and suggest fluidity in identity rather than showcase a matrix of domination. Despite of the dominant hijabed characters in the participants' works, the themes offer much more variants such as rewriting fairy tales from mainstream media, describing the struggle of *Muallaf* and minorities in work place.

Furthermore, in terms of non-existent of male characters and beauty perception, the participants convey hybridity by introducing the idea of non-existent-male characters or utilize male characters as the villains. This depiction is quite different from mainstream media that often depict secondary female characters as the villains. Additionally, when it comes to the beauty perception, Muslim tweens considers religious moral compass and kindness as the indicator of beauty which is quite different from mainstream books and media that often emphasizing beauty perception in the context of physical attractions. Nonetheless, the visibility of associating beauty with

nature is an indication of religious (Islamic and Judeo-Christian) and

traditional fairy tales' domination in interpreting beauty standards.

Therefore, the Muslim tweens in this study mitigate the matrix of domination

of mainstream books and media by reproduce hybridity or fluidity in the

context of religious values.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

One day, on our way to school, my daughter who was 7 years old suddenly said, "Mommy, you must ask Allah to make us a house made of bricks, so the dragon won't be able to destroy it with fire". I was quite amused with that statement, because it was unexpectedly making me ponder how did she come up with such story, conveying Allah (God) and a dragon in her story? I believe this was a part of mitigation of her religious background as a Muslim and her media consumption of fantasy stories.

Children's literature enthralls in a long exploration of what does it mean by children's literature. Does children's literature represent childhood? How do we know children's books and media that are created by adults, serve children's needs? Arguably, these questions may intrigue one of the fundamental ideas of children's literature and childhood; when adults write books for children, it is palpable that adults are exercising power and children are either being manipulated or dictated (Hunt, 14). Either answers on this problematic argument results on undefined conclusion of what is the definition of children's literature. As Peter Hunt (2009) affirms,

> The study of children's literature texts is technically more complex
> than the study of the adult books, partly because the audience is

different, and their responses more obviously unknowable, and partly

because of the range of texts and the range of purposes (25).

Underlining this argument, it is agreeable that aside from examining

the texts, we must look at carefully the readers' and responses which may

offer various alternative meaning reproductions. Besides, readers and

viewers "are those who participate in the meaning-making process in ways

not intended that free them from repressive intentions texts" (Nodelman and

Reimer, 2003, p. 148). The process of meaning-making has been embraced

through readers/viewers responses and reproductions which not necessarily

free from didacticism, societies and media influences, but rather conveying

the process of intersectionality of media consumption, personal background

and societies' influences. Regardless, perhaps readers/viewers responses

would reveal the options to bring our understanding on children's literature

as the texts for children, about children and from children. Therefore, this

study underlines the participation of the Muslim tweens as the efforts of the

reproducing the meaning-making process through mitigating didacticism,

societies and media influences.

The results of my study are layered because gender construction in

these tweens works intersect feminism ideals with the religious norms. The

intersection of both religious and gender construction does not often appear

in mainstream media, particularly in North America that emphasize

secularism in all aspect of lives and feminism empowerment. These Muslim girls encounter such notion by creating stories that conform their religious norms and at the same time construct their gender roles perceptions. The results of my study reveal two conceptions of intersectionality; (1) decoding images that often being neglected by adult writers to reveal meanings apparently embody signs and meanings. There are firm indications that children at the age of as early as under eight are able to decode meanings in symbols and signs of the images they see. Along with tweens who prove themselves in my study that they are able to create meanings through their drawings. (2) decoding texts that appear to reveal various themes with Muslim characters. The participants come up with different thematic stories, proving their mitigation of media consumption and religious background. What makes it interesting is the diverse themes, the ability to combine ideas, princess culture, fantasy, realistic themes. This is the sign that tween is the age of transitioning of performing gender understanding. They are transitioning their understanding of stories from fairy tales' readers to a much more varied genre. They are also transitioning their apprehension of Islamic theological teachings and moral compass with stories from mainstream media.

The hybridity of gender construction in the participants stories results from the intersectionality process of tween understanding about gender roles in the media and religious and moral teachings. The facts that most of the

girl characters are portrayed in hijab, shows strong influence of Islamic teachings as the foundation of Muslim tween's apprehension of gender roles. Such fact reveals how Muslim tweens are encouraged to show modesty in their physical appearance. It also describes hijab as one of main identity attributes of Muslim tweens. Thus, the images of hijabed Muslim characters are seemingly essential in the media whereas such notion is yet to be adopted in the mainstream media productions. As Janson (2012) states,

> The imaging of identity in current Islamic children's literature needs to be understood in terms of a contemporary negotiation of sensitive Islamic norms vis-à-vis the pedagogic needs (and opportunities) of Euro-American minority existence, resulting both in creative solutions and discursive constraints (324).

Regardless, hijab portrayal in these tweens' works are divergent as the results of Muslim tweens' media consumption. Hijab in their creative works are portrayed as in the characters of a princess, a school girl, a working girl, and a heroine. The findings are captivating because in many Islamic children's books, the substance of these books is often in the concept of didacticism, divulges in the traditional forms of Islamic teachings and reverting the non-Islamic stories into religious and moral-based stories, such as *Snow-White: an Islamic tale, Cinderella: An Islamic tale*, etc. Meanwhile, these participants in my study offer more refreshing ideas on the genre.

They suggest contemporary options that conform modern societies in North America. Their works and ideas are reflecting their knowledge, perception and passion of what they received from media and their personal background.

As Butler (1990) mentions in her theory that gender is performative and repetitive, these tweens' works convey several repetitions on certain issues. And repetition as pattern resulting on omnipresent issues in the genre. The omnipresent ideas in children's books and media appear in the participants works layered and altered. Canad5 and Laluna's characters resemble to the typical princesses' stories in Disney such as Tangled. They even establish a pervasive pattern of the story by turning the princesses into orphan, being lost and grow up without parents. Such pattern is pervasive because it is widely used in other stories for ages. However, they also altered the pattern by combine new ideas such as creating princess as a school girl fighting bullies (Laluna's story) or assigning the princess in a mission for education and fighting discrimination (Sofia's story).

Another repetition occurred in terms feminine representation as nature divulging which often occurred in the fairy tales, such as talking to animals or colour choices that align to the colour of nature. Undoubtedly, such representation is not new in realm of children's literature. The notion is omnipresent and these participants (Laluna and Sofia) represent it in their stories as the indication of their apprehension of feminine representation.

Such notion reveals gender performative among Muslim tween by which repeating certain issues in the feminine representation.

Nonetheless, associating feminine identity with nature may also relate to the idea of Islamic and moral teachings which align to the other religious perspective. In some Islamic children's literature, the books often divulge on creation and nature, religious rituals, and confined domestic space (Janson, 2012, p 333). Nature and creation are the essential teachings in Islam whereas such themes endeavor faith to God, testifies the glory and authority of one God. In other words, the negotiation of gender construction, particularly in the development of feminine identity among Muslim tween suggest inclination to faith, religious rituals and nature association, as Janson (2012) states,

> feminine space has become the dominant arena for the negotiation of Islamic identity within European cultural pluralism in recent children's literature. Ritual space and nature remain prominent themes as well, but they generally provide thematic free zones for *not* having to deal with pressing cultural issues (337).

In conclusion, my study delves into understanding how gender constructions intersect feminine and religious representations. The notion is also the response of questions circulated in the discourse of intersectionality and Islamic children's literature such as, what identity foregrounded the

intersectionality? what does it mean by a Muslim character? or what defines Islamic themes in texts and media? Consequently, the results are layered, hybrid and altered based on the tweens' media consumption and their religious background. The participants narrow and alters media stereotypes that conforms their religious norms and teachings. They also generating new ideas from their intertextual knowledge and develop new interpretations of gender construction.

As Canadians, these participants are part of the multicultural society and representing the young generations of Canada. They are in the axis of connecting their lives with Western society's culture and their parents' cultural heritage. This study reveals the voices of Canadian young people towards books and media that often distort cultural representation and tend to seek representation from mainstream-Western culture's point of views. Particularly in Toronto where film and media productions are growing abundantly, the voices of young minority Canadians like these participants are very important to negotiate representations in books and media. The results of this study explain how the participants in this study mitigate their ideas about gender and religious values through their creative works. The facts that they offer much more dynamic and hybrid representation in the stories shows how intersectionality of gender construction in books and media is much preferable. This study also reveals details of dynamic gender construction, which is giving more Islamic visual representation, bringing the

context of social realism in terms of themes, and emphasizing moral and kindness in interpreting beauty.

This study may benefit Canadian Muslim writers to produce books and media that cater to the crucial issues of the Muslim youths in the western societies where it is important to up bringing the religious values and moral conducts in a story, but at the same time, these young adults also seek for themes and issues of stories that are much related to their every day lives and problems.

I also encourage future research to expand my study quantitatively and expand these explorations into ethnographic field. Perhaps, questions such as how Muslim children and parents consume Islamic literature must be addressed? What is the matrix of domination in the intersectionality of Islamic norms and teachings with feminine identity? may foreground the follow up research. As a reflection, Muslim children in North America are often questioning their identity because of the expectation from both societies and their parents' culture. They have to mitigate their identity development and negotiate the cultures in balance. On the other hand, books and media that surrounding their development should bridging the negotiation that conform the sanctification of the Muslim children.

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Ryerson University
Consent Agreement

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

This title of this study is *Gender Construction in Muslim Tweens Stories: A Discourse of Intersectionality of Religious and Gender Representations*

 INVESTIGATORS: This study is being conducted by:

Erni Suparti (MA Candidate of Communication and Culture Program, Ryerson University),

SUPERVISOR

Natalie Coulter, Ph.D. (Associate Professor, York University)

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact;

1. Erni Suparti: esuparti@ryerson.ca
2. Natalie Coulter, Ph.D.
   Communication and Culture Program (Joint Program Ryerson University and York University)
   Phone: (416) 736-2100 x77849   Email: ncoulter@yorku.ca

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

This study conducts an activity of drawing and writing of stories by Muslim girls with the purposes of understanding gender representation in the Muslim girls' stories and in comparison, to the mainstream media. This study will involve five Muslim girls at the age of 8 to 12 years old. They are expected to have been exposed by the tales and stories in mainstream media, such as Disney and multicultural stories*.* This study is also in partial completion of the MA program of Communication and Culture Program, Ryerson University.

WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS:

Agreement to participate in this study means you agree to allow the investigator to come to your house and conduct the activities with your child or, you and your child will come to our location to conduct the activities. If you agree your child to participate in this study, your child will be asked to do the following things:

- Write or draw a story: this task aims to analyze plot and girls' characterizations.
- draw a girl character image/picture: this task will focus on girls' beauty images.
- discuss the story with the investigator.

Your child will do this activity at your home or park. The activity will last approximately for 60 minutes with a break in every 30 minutes. After drawing and writing, your child will discuss their works with the investigator for about 10 to 15 minutes. The topics and questions of the discussions will be about the stories and drawings. Some example of the questions will be:

1. What is the title of your story?
2. What is it about?
3. Who are the characters?
4. Who are the good characters?
   a. Can you tell me what are the good characters doing in your story?
5. Who are the bad ones?
   a. Can you tell me what are the bad characters doing in your story?
6. Do you have a girl character in your story?
7. Is the girl in your story good one or bad?
   a. If she is a good one, what good thing she does in the story?

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b. If she is a bad one, what bad things she does in the story?

8. Is your main character a princess? a hero?

9. What is your girl character's name?

10. Is your girl character Muslim?

a. If yes, what can you show me that she is a Muslim?

b. If no, why do you not choose a Muslim character?

11. What are your girl characters doing in the story?

12. What makes your girl characters different from boy characters?

13. Is your girl character pretty?

a. If yes, why would you make her pretty?

b. If no, why would you not make her pretty?

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: This study may potentially benefit to the participants where they can develop their understanding and self-awareness of their identity as Muslim girls who live in multicultural society whereas cultural understanding is essential. This study may also benefit to the participants and parents in terms of understanding reading materials and storytelling for Muslim children. Participation in the proposed research will contribute to our understanding of the Muslim children in Canada, particularly in recognizing their family heritage and Canadian culture to co-exist in the media.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AND YOUR CHILD:

This is a minimal risk study. The risk of this study may relate to the participant being asked to clarify or explain their drawing or writing in a manner of reflecting them to their personality or identity. Since, the participant is a child, it may require her to be brave and open to talk about herself. Generally, a child will feel shy or embarrassed to speak about their drawing or writing. These may evoke feelings of uneasiness and discomfort in the interview. However, I will not force, and the participant may refuse to talk. The participant may also discontinue the session at anytime and she even may refuse to join the interview at all.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All data included these informed consents, drawing and writing materials, non-identified photos, audio-video materials, and transcripts will be stored in an external hard-drive and will be locked at York University (Dr. Coulter's office). I will use pseudonymous names in analysing the data and your child's name will not be disseminated whatsoever in the published report or analysis. The data will be kept for at least 2 years and if the data will be needed for other research, I will release the data in pseudonyms only.

With regards to the audio-video materials, you and your child have the rights to review and edit the recordings or transcripts. All raw and transcribed recording will be stored in locked files in Dr. Coulter's office in York University. These recordings, however will not be released to other party whatsoever, because they are not my main data. These recordings are secondary data to support the main data which are the drawings and writings materials. Thus, the only data to be shared with other party for research and educational purpose will be the drawings, writing materials, and transcripts.

DATA STORAGE AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS:

The data that your child provide will be kept locked in separate files from the files of consent agreements and any data that identifies you and your child. All identifying information of you and your child (that is name, phone number, home-address and email address) will not be entered into the database. Only group findings will be reported in publications and presentations from this research. You will receive the copy of research findings through email.

INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION:

The participant will get a chapter book, Deborah Ellis' *The Breadwinner* after completing the session.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your choice of whether or not for your child to participate will not influence to your and your child future relations with Ryerson University or the investigators (Erni Suparti). If you decide your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your child's participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you and your child are allowed. Your right to withdraw your consent also applies to our use of your child's data. If you decide to end the session that you do not want us to keep and process the data that your child have provided during the participation, please feel free to tell the investigator. This study will take videos of your child therefore you are also free to opt out your child from the video taken. You can tell the researcher to stop the video at any time or erased the video if you suddenly decide to opt out your child from the video being taken.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact.

Erni Suparti - Researcher (esuparti@ryerson.ca)

Natalie Coulter – Supervisor (ncoulter@yorku.ca)

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042
rebchair@ryerson.ca

Gender Construction in Muslim Tweens Stories: A Discourse of Intersectionality of Religious and Gender Representations

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

_____

Name of Participant or Parent/Guardian

_____ _____

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian   Date

_____

Name of Child (print)

I agree to be audio-video recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian   Date

_____

Name of Child (print)

Assent Agreement

The title of this study is *Gender Construction in Muslim Tweens Stories: A Discourse of Intersectionality of Religious and Gender Representations*

<u>INVESTIGATORS</u>: This study is being conducted by:

Erni Suparti (MA Candidate of Communication and Culture Program, Ryerson University),
<u>SUPERVISOR</u>
Natalie Coulter, Ph.D. (Associate Professor, York University)

We want to tell you about a research study we are doing. A research study is a way to learn more about something. We would like to find out more about the Muslim girls' stories through drawings and writings. we would like to know how do you want your girl's characters and stories are like? You are being asked to join the study because you are a Muslim girl who read and watched Disney's stories, films and Islamic stories before.

If you agree to join this study, you will be asked to write and draw your own stories. After drawing and writing, I will ask you questions, such as;

1. What is the title of your story?
2. What is it about?
3. Who are the characters?
4. Who are the good characters?
5. Do you have a girl character in your story?
6. Is your main character a princess? a super hero?
7. What is your girl character's name?
8. Is your girl character Muslim?

You will do these activities at your home or park. That means I will visit you at your house or at a park with your parent's permission. You will do these activities for about 1 hour.

If you decide to join this study, you may gain understandings of what you read and watch as Muslim children. You may also become aware of the media surround you, whether or not they bring topics about you as a Muslim child.

This study needs you to be brave to speak and explain your story. So, you may feel shy and afraid. However, if you do not want to talk about your story, then you do not have to. We will not force you and you may stop the activity at anytime you like.

Your story, drawings and explanations will be recorded and used for publication. But we will only show your pseudonyms or 'pretend' name in our publication.

You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. You can say okay now. You can also say no. If you say okay and then you change your mind later. If you want to stop, then all you have to do is tell us you want to stop. No one will be mad at you if you don't want to be in the study or if you join the study and then change your mind later and stop. You also need to know that there will be video being taken during interview and discussion. If you are not okay to be in the video, you can say no and we will exclude you from the video. You can also say stop at any time during video being recorded or ask us to erase the video if you suddenly decide not to be in the video.

Before you say yes or no to being in this study, we will answer any questions you have. If you join the study, you can ask questions at any time. Just tell the researcher that you have a question.

We will also talk to your parents about this study. You can talk this over with them before you decide.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact **Erni Suparti (esuparti@ryerson.ca)**

Would you like to be in this research study?

 _____☐   Yes, I will be in this research study.   _____ No, I don't want to do this.

_____   _____ _____

Child's name   Signature of the child   Date

_____   _____ _____

Person who received assent   Signature   Date

Ryerson University

Interview and Discussion Guide

This title of this study is
***A Critical Discourse of Gender Construction of Muslim Fairy Tales*: An Ethnography Study of Muslim Girls Writings and Drawings**
INVESTIGATORS: This study is being conducted by:
Erni Suparti (MA Candidate of Communication and Culture Program, Ryerson University),
SUPERVISOR
Natalie Coulter, Ph.D. (Associate Professor, York University)
The process of this study are as follows,

1. Visit: visit to the participants and parents to get consent and assent agreements from them. I will explain to them the study in details and answers any questions from them before starting the activity.
2. Activity 1: the participants are going to draw and write their story. This activity will take about 30 to 45 minutes.
3. Activity 2: the researcher and participants will discuss the drawings and the stories. the researcher will interview the participants with some questions regarding to the drawings and stories. this activity will take about 15 minutes.
4. Analysis and Research Writing
5. Revision

The interview is structured as follows,

1. **Exploring the story**:
   - What is the title of your story?
   - What is it about?
   - Who are the characters?
   - Who are the good characters?
     - Can you tell me what are the good characters doing in your story?
   - Who are the bad ones?
     - Can you tell me what are the bad characters doing in your story?
   - Is the princess in your story good one or bad?
     - If she is a good one, what good thing she does in the story?
     - If she is a bad one, what bad things she does in the story?
   - What makes your story special?

- Do you think your story is similar with the stories you read or watch before?
    - If yes, what are the similarities?
    - If no, what are the differences with the ones you read or watch?

2. **Exploring Gender Representation**
   - Do you have a girl character in your story?
   - Is your main character a princess?
   - What is your girl character's name?
   - Is your girl character Muslim?
       - If yes, what can you show me that she is a Muslim?
       - If no, why do you not choose a Muslim character?
   - What are your girl characters doing in the story?
   - What makes your girl characters different from boy characters?
   - Is your girl character pretty?
       - If yes, why would you make her pretty?
       - If no, why would you not make her pretty?
   - Does your girl character have a job?
       - If yes, what does she do?
       - If not, why does she not have a job?
   - Is she waiting for a prince to save her?
       - If yes, why is she waiting for her prince?
       - If not, why wouldn't she wait for her prince?
   - Is your girl character strong?
       - If yes, what makes her strong?
       - If no, why is she weak?
   - Is your girl character smart?
       - If yes, what makes her smart?
       - If no, why is she not smart?
   - is she magical?
   - What makes your girl character unique?

3. **Exploring the books and movies the participants have read or watch**
   - Do you like reading princess story?
       - if yes, what princess stories have you read?
       - If no, why do you not like them?
   - Do you like watching Princess movies?
       - If yes, what princess movies have you watched?
       - If no, why do you not like them?
   - Do you like reading or watching Muslim princess stories?
       - If yes, can you tell me what Muslim princess stories have you read or watched?
       - If no, why do you not like them?
   - What makes princess stories interesting?
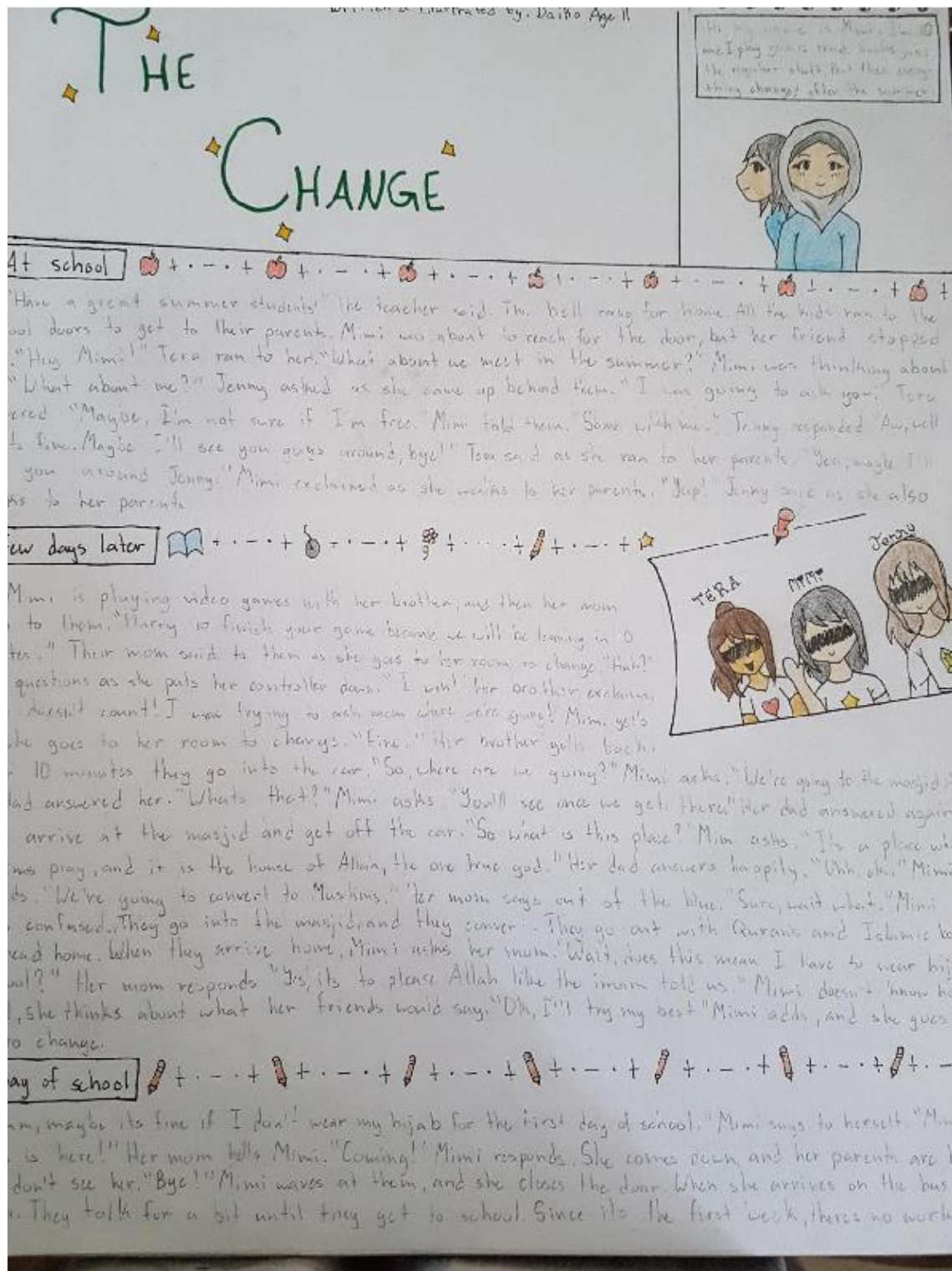
Appendix D

Canad5's Creative Work

Princess Ruqayaah ♥

age: 15 yrs old
parents: Ayesha and Qabul who
both died when Ruqayaah was
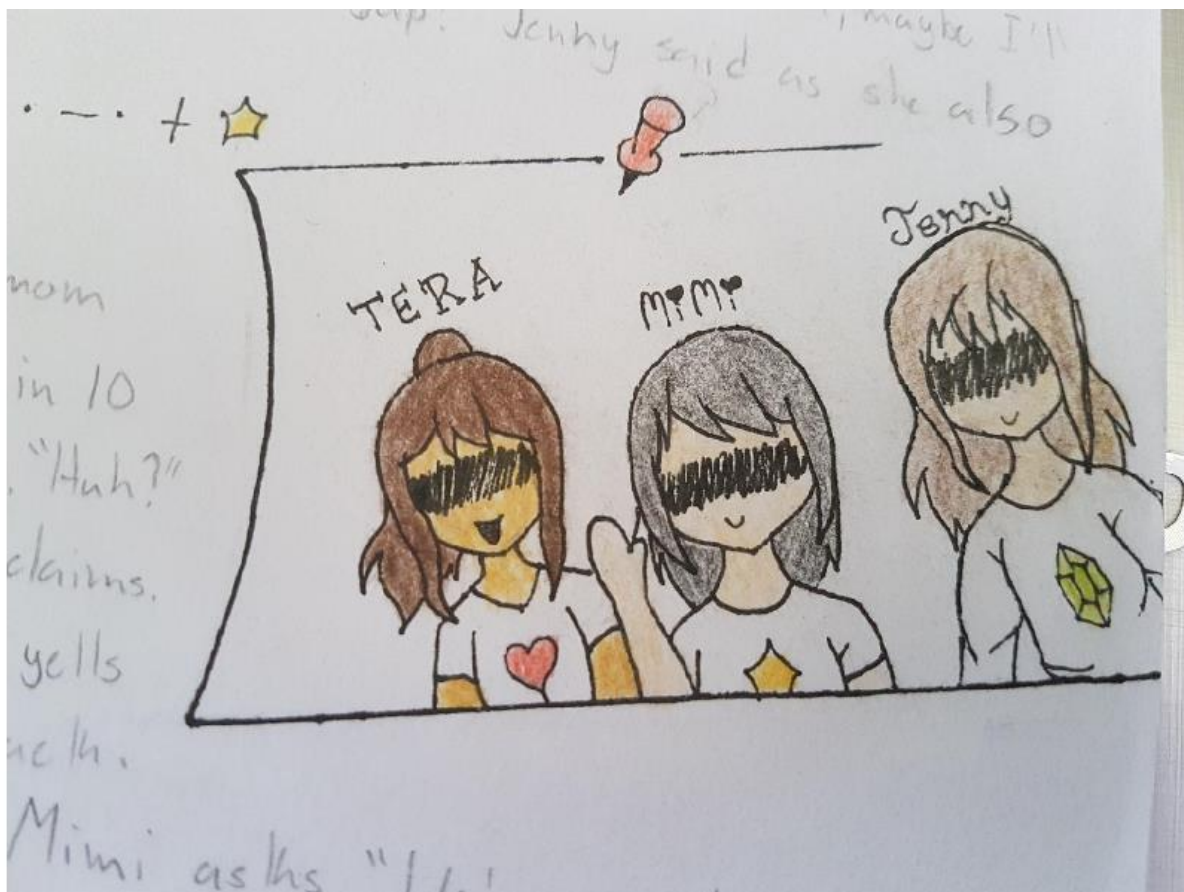born: January 1st 2002

CANAD5

Daiko's Creative Work

The title page of a handwritten and illustrated story titled "THE CHANGE," written & illustrated by Daiko, Age 11. The story follows a character named Mimi across panels labeled "At school," "A few days later," and "1st day of school," depicting her friends Tera, Mimi, and Jenny, and her family's conversion to Islam and her decision about wearing a hijab.

Its just introductions, tours, and other things. For the first week Mimi doesn't wear her hijab, and the week went by well.

Second week of school 📖 + · — · + 📖 + · — · + 📖 + · — · + 📖 + · — · + 📖 + · — · + 📖 + · — ·

"Maybe I should wear my hijab to school." Mimi says to her self. She puts on her hijab and looks in the mirror. "I don't know about this." Mimi questions. "The bus is here Mimi!" Her mom yells. "Yup I'm coming!" Mimi yells. "Bye mom!" Mimi goes on the bus and sees Tera. "Hey Tera!" Mimi greeted Tera and she stares at Mimi. "Hello? Earth to Tera!" Mimi waves at her face. "Oh, sorry but why are you wearing a scarf around your head?" Tera asks. Mimi doesn't know how to respond. "Uuuh, I converted to Muslim." Mimi afraidly answers. "Is that a problem?" "No, but wait does that mean you can't show your hair?" Tera asks. "Hmm, I'm not sure." Mimi answers unsure.

At school 📏 + · — · + 📏 + · — · + 📏 + · — · + 📏 + · — · + 📏 + · — · + 📏 + · — · + 📏 + · — ·

When Mimi and Tera get to school people start to whisper and point at them. Jenny comes and asks "Woah, why is everyone pointing?" Mimi sighs "Its a long story." Mimi tells Jenny about her converting to Muslim, hijabs, and Islamic stuff. "Is that why your wearing a scarf around your head?" Jenna questions. Mimi nods and sighs. "Don't worry, Mimi we'll respect that and we'll help you through it" Tera assured her and Jenny agreed. Tera and Jenny helped Mimi to tell everyone that Mimi is the same as everyone else. After a few weeks everyone treated everybody equally.

THE END

Gumisgreat's Creative Work

Once upon a time, there was a woman who had big dreams. She studied hard everyday, so she could become a movie star. However, she couldn't get the proper education, since her family is struggling financially. Her mother passed away while giving birth to the girl. The girl's father had to work from 5am to 12am. This woman worked in a fast food restaurant to help support her father. She lived with her father in a tiny appartment building.

Gumisgreat.

Equality =

Soon after she arrived, two other employees arrived together. Both of them wore scarves aswell. It seemed strange. Once when they arrived, her boss started to talk. The woman was waiting for good news, but instead... got the opposite. All the women in the room were getting fired. When someone asked why, according to her boss, he was getting many complaints, that he couldn't do anything about it. People said that they were uncomfortable, and felt uneasy, as if they would attack at any moment.

FIRED

shift, until one of her coworkers came over to her. Her coworker told the woman that her boss wanted to see her after her shift. She was happy, because the woman previously asked for a loan. After her shift was over, she visited her boss. She knocked on the door, and he opened it. She was expecting happy news, until she saw other workers there. There were around 10 employees who looked clueless. All of the employees were wearing a scarf. However, the woman still had her hopes up.

The woman couldn't do anything about it. Everyone felt as if it was unfair. The only thing that could do was accept it, and leave. When got home, she decided to write about what happened, then published it. She wanted the world to know about it. When she woke up the next morning, she looked at her article. She was shocked that it went viral. The woman recieved an email from the comany. It was an apology, and how it will never happen again. To her surprise, a big company asked if they could make a movie on it, and if she would like to be the star. She was happy, and agreed.

Movie

Star

Later on, she became a famous movie star. She had lots of money, but donated three quarters of it to islamic causes, since she was incredibly grateful. She was always humble, and always thanked Allah for everything. She continued to speak against discrimination, and touched many hearts. She became well-liked, and never became snarky about it. That is why you should never stop fighting for what you believe, and have faith in Allah.

The End.

Laluna's Creative Work

Pretend name: Laluna
Pretend age: 10
Character: She is a School Girl and a princess.

Victoria always wear regular clothes but when it comes to party she wears fancy dresses.

Everyone always says she looks pretty but some bullyers always come up to her and says "ugh you are stink and ugly".

Victoria loves playing and she loves smelling flowers.

Victoria is unique because every time she moves and call "buterfly" then the butterfly comes.

the story

The unknown Princess

Once upon a time there was a princess who no one know she was a princess that was lost in a forest thats called Sun forest.

Victoria always waves her hands to her bff. (every morning) but everytime she waves or every morning in the halway the bullyer always comes and says "you're stink and ugly today" but after a few seconds she ran till g class

sami   dale   slop
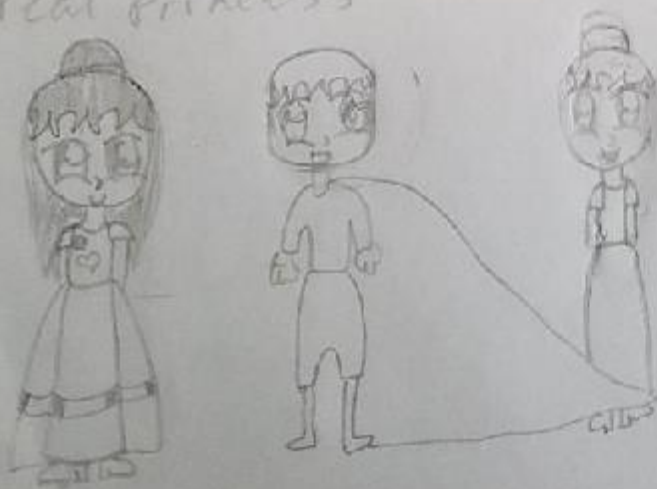
Victoria was so nervous to see the king
and the queen.

The king was so suprised
by Victoria Alexandra.
The king quickly showed
her face to the queen
and she tell her to do
the special things.

and then everyone knows she is the
real princess

Sofia's Creative Work

Hero

Their was a girle name Sofia, even thoua the name of the books is Hero she was not a SuperHero. She helped animals so it makes her a Hero to animals. She went all arround the wolrd so she has alot of animals friends. She loves to help animals and she wanted to help animals because she love Allahs creation and she hates people who kill butifull animals. So that is the story. The End.