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Arab Canadian High School Students' Perceptions of Their Schooling Experiences: A Narrative Analysis

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Arab Canadian High School Students' Perceptions of Their Schooling Experiences: A Narrative Analysis.

Nesreen Elkord, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education

Introduction – present study:

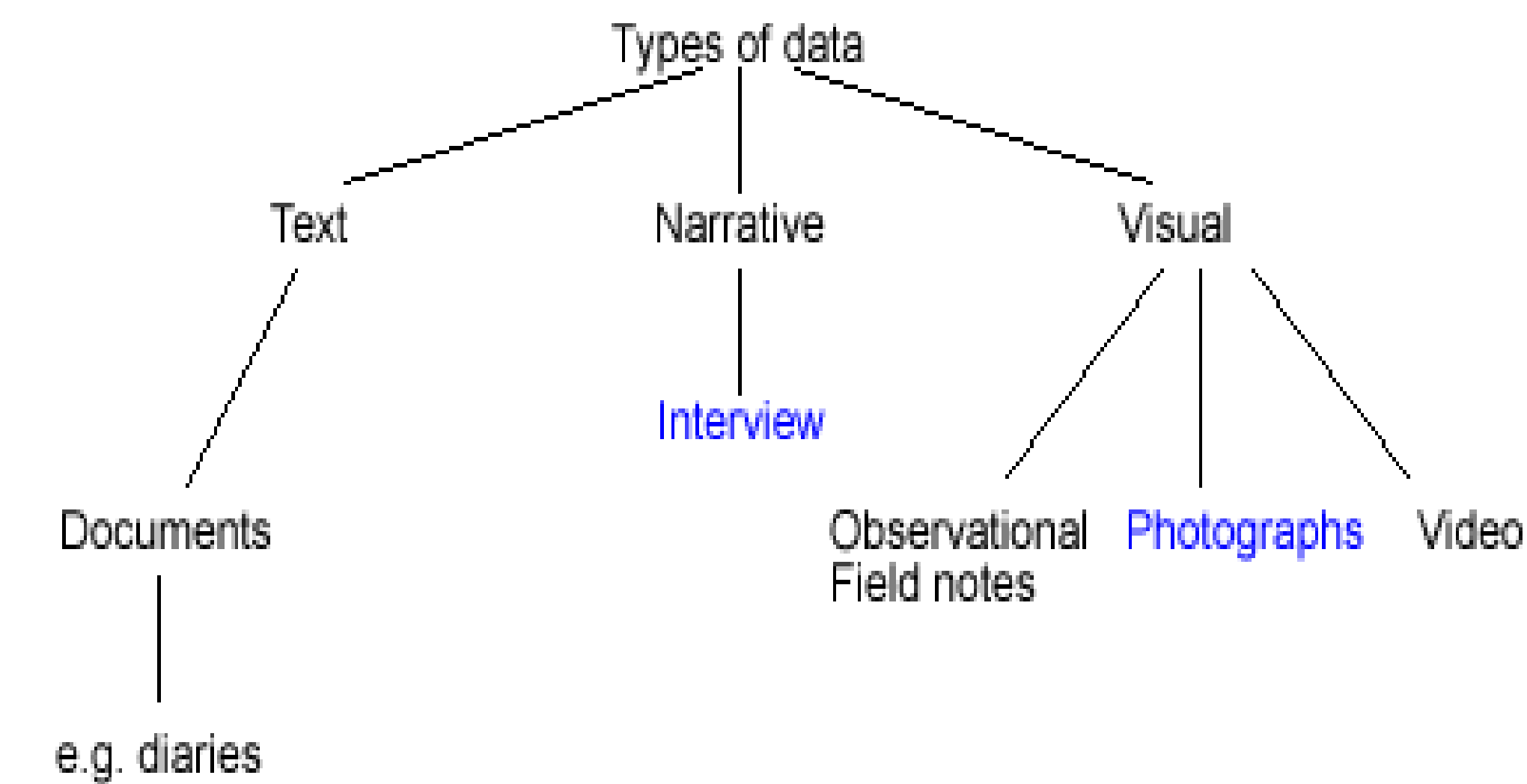
Due to the rise in the number of Arab students in Canadian schools, I am interested in Arab immigrant youths' everyday lived experiences at school.

Because I believe in Dewey's (1938) argument, that knowledge is constructed through experience and experience is an essential element in education, I am conducting an exploratory study to learn more about the perceptions of new comer Arab Canadian high school students of their schooling experiences in Canadian schools.

The purpose of this study is to bring an understanding of their lived experiences in an effort to potentially enhance the school-home connections and bridge a cultural gap.

The overarching research questions are:

- What are Arab-Canadian high school students' perceptions of their schooling experiences and the support programs provided by their schools to accommodate their needs?
- What recommendations can be suggested to best support Arab-Canadian high school students' English language and cultural learning and integration?



Data Analysis:

The theoretical framework which provide the foundation and lens for this study to guide the process of data collection, analysis, and synthesis is:

A three dimensional narrative inquiry space:

- Temporality (time of living and telling of experiences)
- Sociality (social context)
- Place (of research and experiences)

Based on the work of Connelly and Clandinin (2000).

Representing and analyzing someone else's stories needs to be done with respect. I therefore, use a social constructionist approach in analyzing the stories my participants tell in order for them to be viewed as changing and evolving narratives .

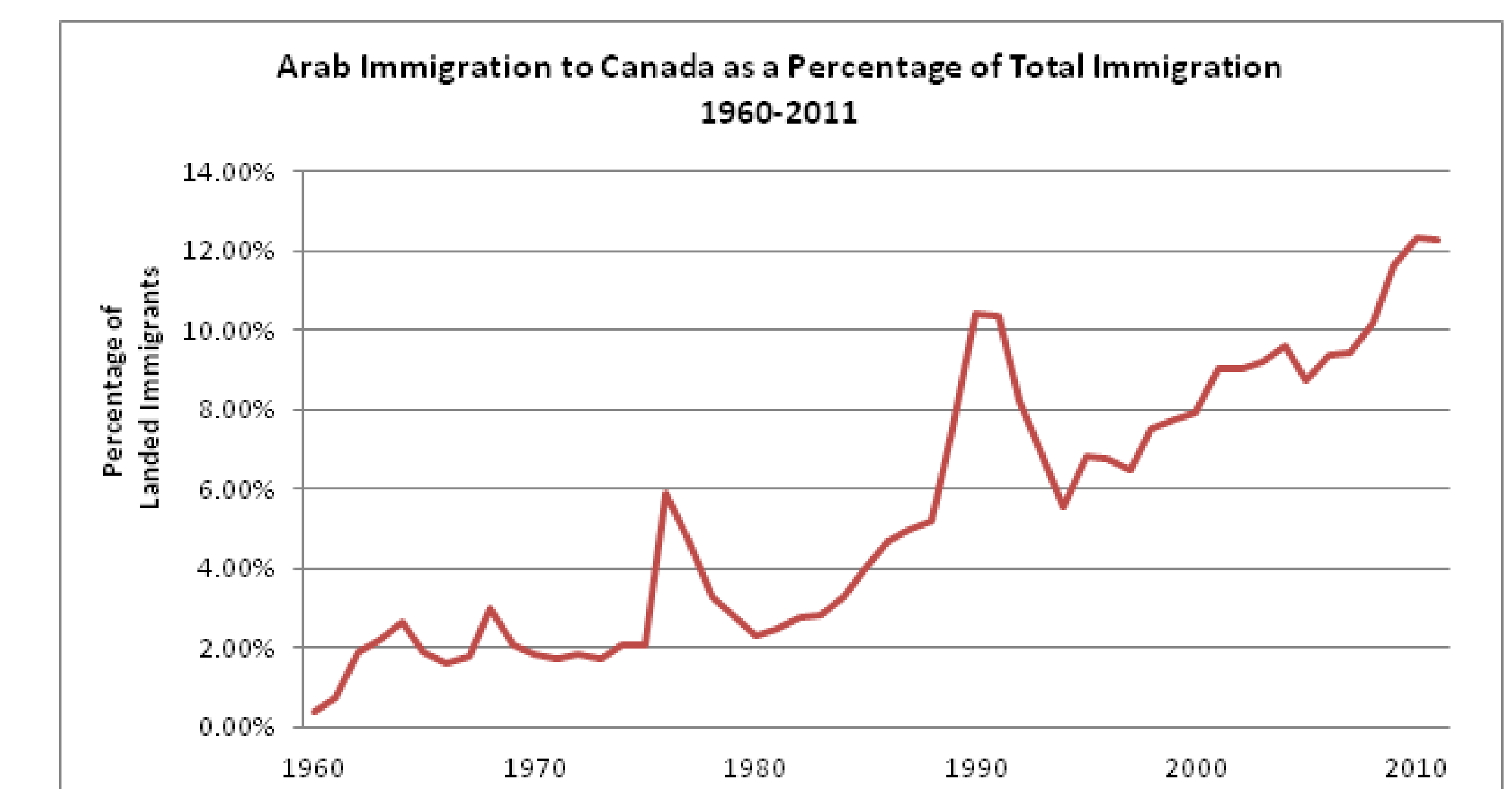
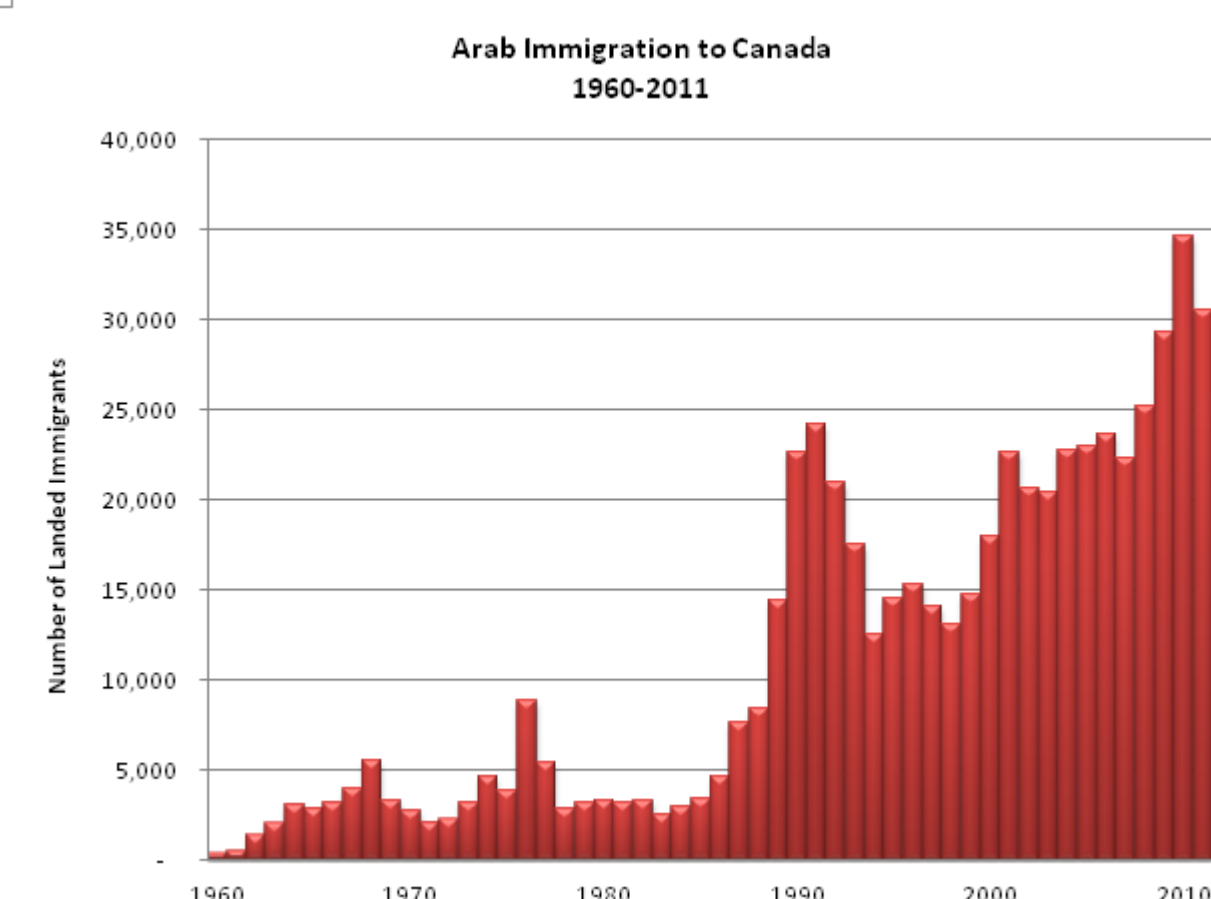
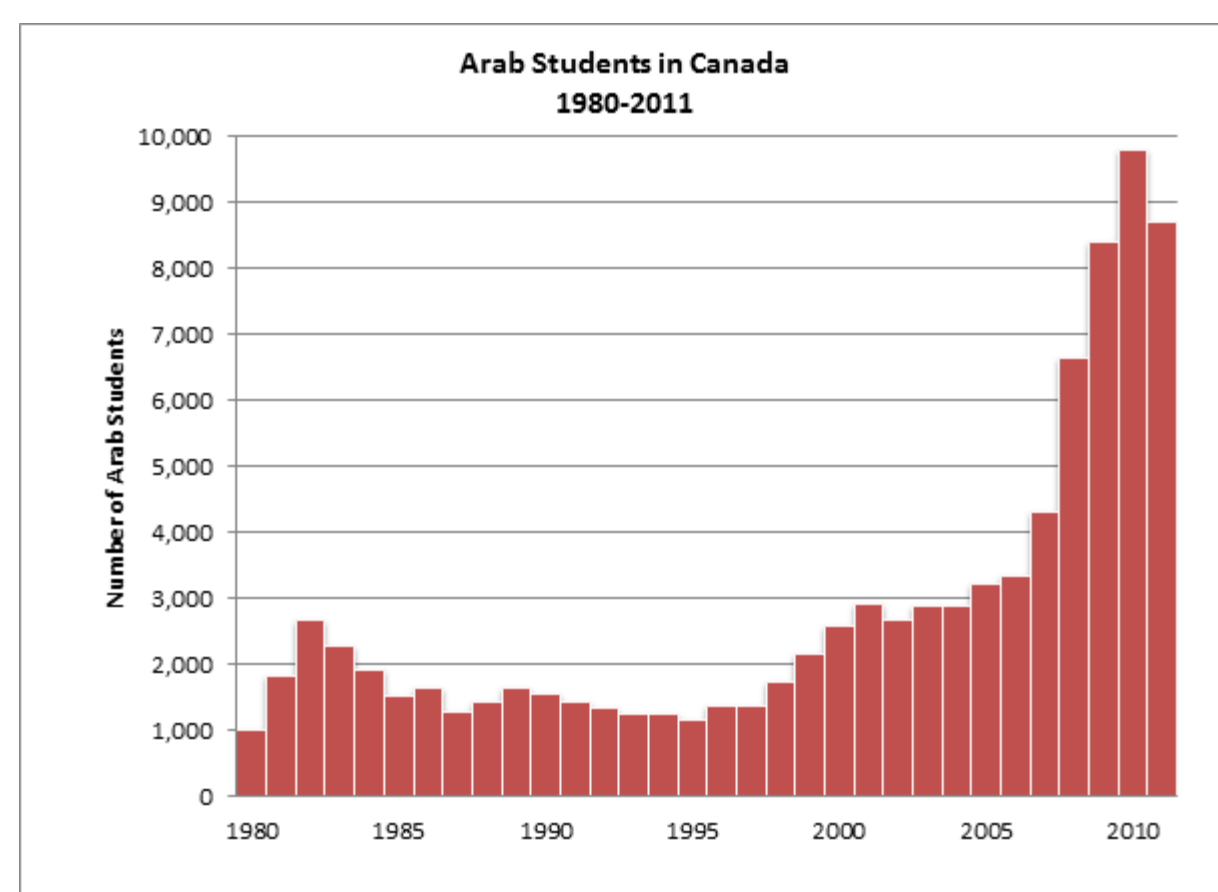
The aim is making educational meanings of stories with no theoretical definitions to label and judge them (Xu & Connelly, 2010), using theories instead to guide in understanding the phenomena.

Significance:

I situate the research study in the field of immigrants' education, which is significant given the changing demographic composition of Canada's public school populations.

Through a clear representation of Arab students and familiarizing school communities with the experiences of a significant portion of society, I hope that it would have a positive impact on supporting Arab immigrant youths' learning.

This study could also assist Arab youth and their parents in understanding the journey and preparing for succeeding throughout the process. I hope that it also contributes in helping improve pedagogical practices and societal relations through its dissemination of information to teachers and policy makers.



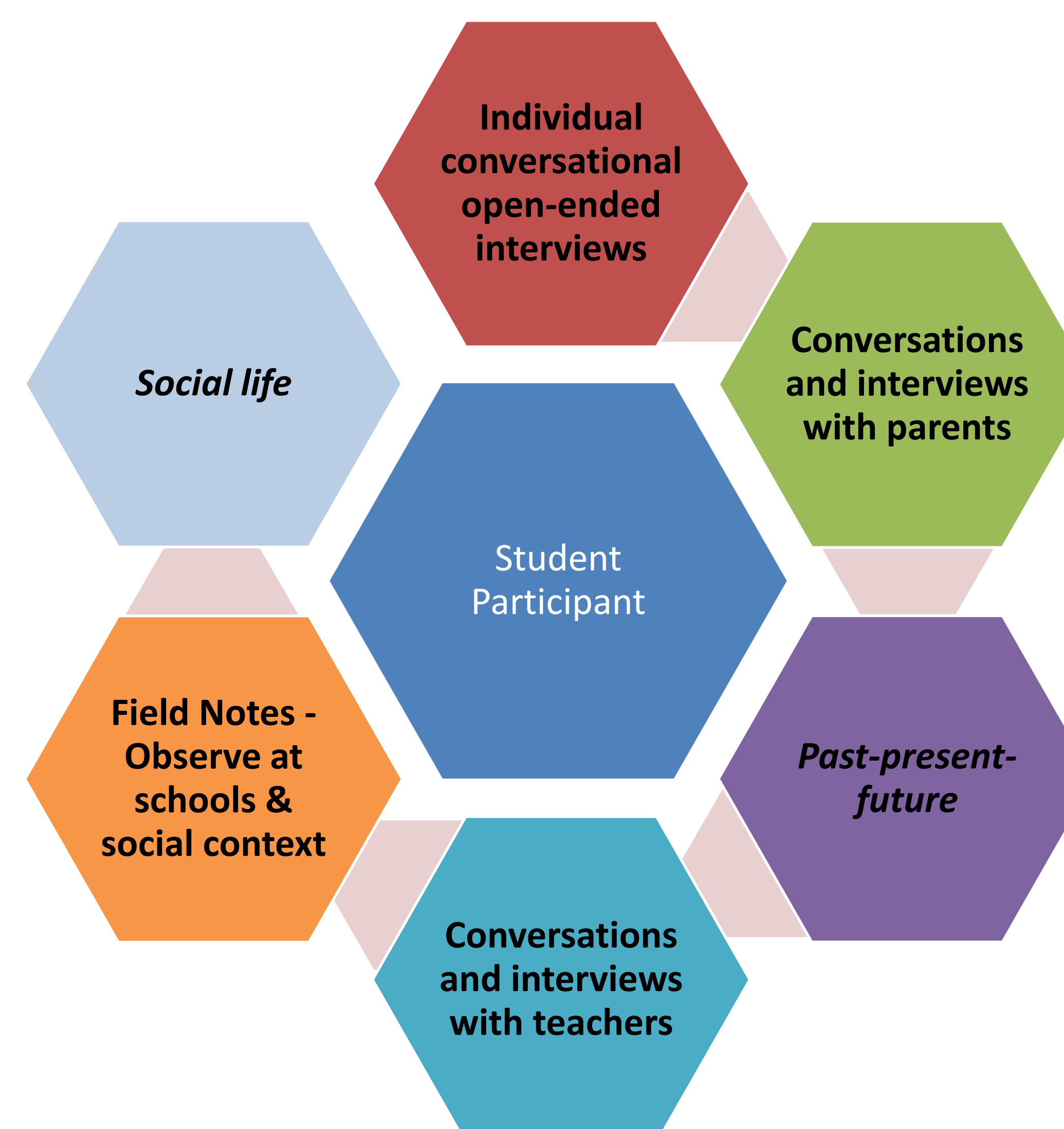
Research Design - Methods:

The study utilizes two major research methods, individual semi-structured interviews and in-school observation.

Interview participants mainly comprise of 2 to 3 teachers, 5 to 8 high school students and 2 to 3 parents of student participants from the significantly large Arabic community in Windsor, Ontario, which represented 8.15% of the city's population in 2006 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010).

While student participants tell narratives of their schooling experiences in open-ended interviews, interviews with parents and teachers add different perspectives to the study. Observing in schools as a narrative researcher allows me to explore their everyday needs and behaviours through my own researcher eyes, rather than the testing of specific hypotheses.

This allows for the gathering of a breadth of data, including attitudinal and behavioral detailed narrative data and allows for investing lots of time and effort in attempting to understand more of their lived experiences.



Curricular implications:

Student perceptions can be informing to school communities as to what can be done to best support them in their learning journey.

- Differential instructions
- Meeting individual needs of learners
- Culturally responsive teaching
- To help unpack the barriers of communication by understanding the lived experiences, the hopes and aspirations of Canadians of Arab decent
- In hope of influencing positive social change