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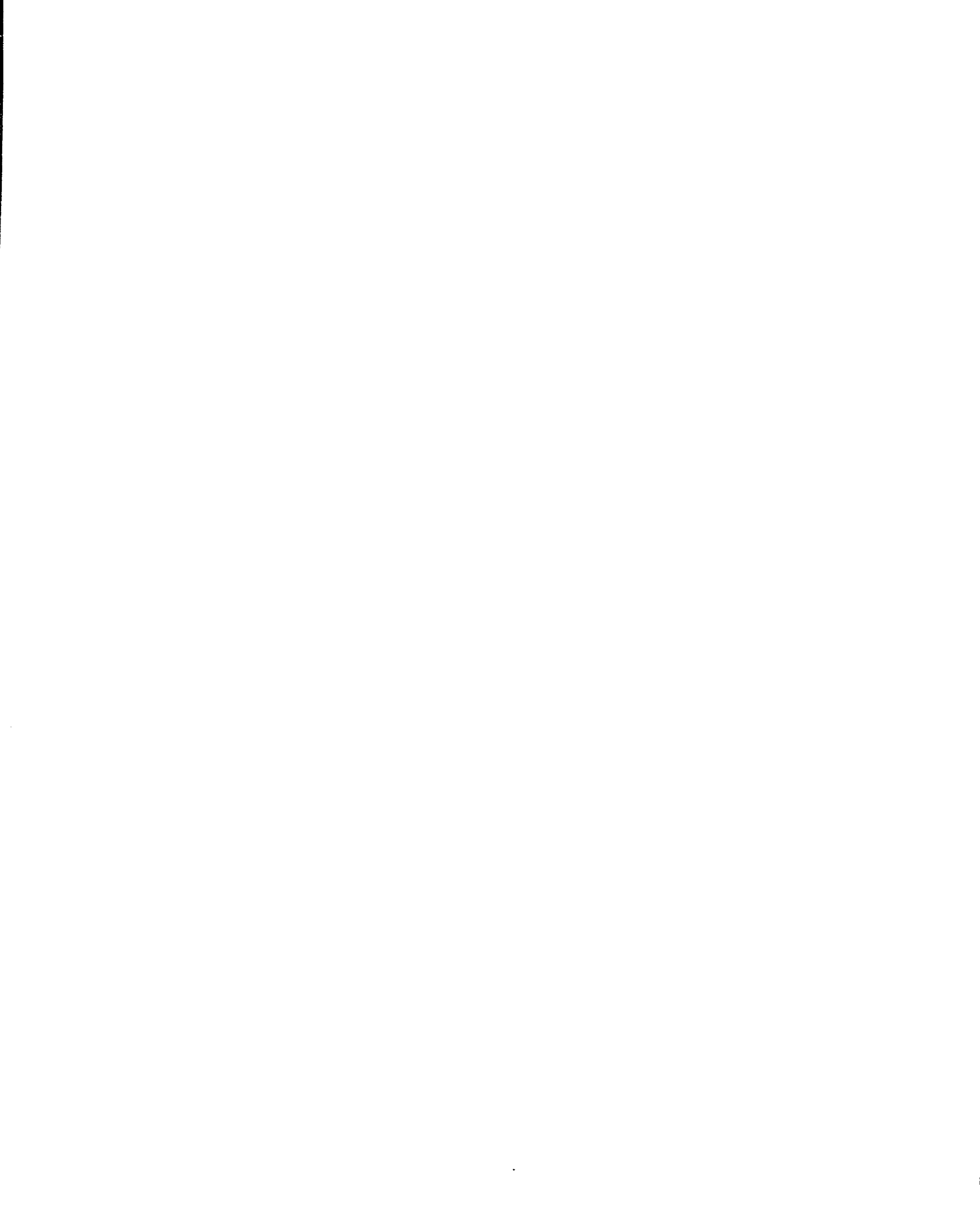
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THE EXPERIENCE OF ADAPTATION IN  
CANADIAN SOCIETY:  
A Case Study of Bangladeshi Families

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A thesis

in

The Department

of

Ph.D. Humanities

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
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## ABSTRACT

### Experience of Adaptation: A Case Study of Bangladeshi Families

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Concordia University, 2000

This study examines the influence of cultural values on the process of adaptation of Bangladeshi community in Montreal. The forms of adaptation as a community range from institutions rooted in an enclave economy on one hand to more complete assimilation on the other. But cultural differences are experienced very acutely at the interpersonal level. It is at this level that this study seeks to discover which values are most likely to be a) abandoned, b) undergo adaptation, or c) remain constant.

My findings indicate that those families and individuals most deeply involved in an enclave community - the Sylhettis - and, at the other extreme, those who have secure jobs that are commensurate with their status expectations, experience the least amount of stress in making adjustments to their cultural values. Those families and individuals, whose previous occupational training and previous social status are not sufficiently valued by members of the host society in Montreal find it much more difficult to accommodate their cultural values with those of the host society and subsequently experience much more personal stress and anxiety.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM .....	1
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
Defining Adaptation.....	9
Ethnic Earnings and Adaptation of Immigrants.....	13
Unequal Experience: Discrimination at Workplace.....	26
Occupational Inequality.....	32
The Effects of Gender.....	40
Cultural Differences Among Groups from the Indian Subcontinent.....	41
Summary.....	44
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
SAMPLE DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY.....	48
The Research Approach.....	48
Data Collection.....	50
Ethical Considerations.....	67
Stress and Strains of Field Research.....	68
Summary.....	70
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
THE FINDINGS.....	72
Making a Living.....	76
The problem of Finding Work.....	78
Idealistic Expectations.....	85
Discrimination at Work.....	88
The Problem of Status Dislocation.....	92
Pattern of Expenditure .....	95
Social Adaptation.....	98
Changes in Cultural Values .....	103
The Problems of Parent-child Relationship and Changes in Family Structure.....	125
Social Interaction.....	135
Discrimination in Social Settings.....	137
Interpreting Changing Values.....	138
Summary.....	157
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
CONCLUSIONS .....	167
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	180
	188

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In North America, ethnic minority workers have become an integral part of the production system; their concentration in certain industries and occupations makes their presence an important factor in shaping the economy. In this study, I shall address, first, the processes promoting or hindering the adaptation of immigrants to Canadian society. Second, I shall attend to the process of adaptation itself, with special focus on the socio-economic experiences of Bangladeshi families in Montreal area. I also wish to redirect the attention from dealing with the problems of new immigrants in the community (such as discrimination at workplace or in social settings and the clash of cultural values), as they occurred in the past and as we anticipate them in the future, to a possible prevention of at least some of the difficulties in adapting to life in Canada. The focus of the study will be on current levels of income, education and occupation of Bangladeshi families in Montreal area and the degree to which they influence processes of adaptation to the Canadian society. Included in this, of course, are issues related to patterns of discrimination and changing patterns of cultural values.

In dealing with issues of immigrant, we may move to a broader understanding of people's needs as they experience processes of culture change, even if those needs do not always manifest themselves as public issues. This also re-focuses the emphasis from viewing the immigrant as "having problems" to



seeing the environment as presenting a host of problems to the adapting immigrant.

Although Indo-Pakistanis have been in Canada for about 80 years, we can trace back the arrivals of Bangladeshis only to the late 50s. Bangladeshis do not share the same history in Canada with Indo-Pakistanis, though their experiences may have been similar. Most local Canadians do not differentiate between Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

There are two basic historical differences between Indo-Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. First, unlike Indo-Pakistanis, Bangladeshis are recent immigrants. Second, traditional Indo-Pakistani immigrants came from rural settings with a low level of education (Johnston:1984,p.6). But most Bangladeshi immigrants are from urban middle-class families with some education. Though the motive was money in both cases, early Indo-Pakistani immigrants left their families behind and then returned from Canada with their savings. Bangladeshi immigrants, on the other hand, intend to stay in Canada permanently. However, this is increasingly the case for many Indo-Pakistanis who are recent immigrants.

Bangladeshi communities in Canada include a large population of university educated people as opposed to most of the early Indo-Pakistani immigrants. While many accepted jobs

below their qualifications, as a group they are well distributed through the Canadian occupational structure and have been thoroughly assimilated economically, although they remain socially cohesive. But there is also a sizeable population who come from a distinct region of Bangladesh who are different from other Bangladeshis in many respects. They come from the Sylhet district, and they call themselves "Sylhettis" (not Bangladeshis). They speak a very distinct dialect which separates them from other Bangladeshis. "Sylhettis" are basically businesspeople with low levels of education, but with greater financial success. They contribute to the development of the Bangladeshi enclave economy in Montreal.

Education, command of English and French, and economic integration have not necessarily been translated into complete assimilation. Just like Indo-Pakistanis, Bangladeshis in Canada, whatever their occupation, have tended to find their friends in their own community and to view critically North American family values (or the lack of them). But, while these things are shared, there are great differences - organizational, historical, religious and linguistic - between Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and these differences will have a bearing on their future adjustment in Canada.

Ethnic minority employees constitute a large portion of Canadian labour force. Some status attainment researchers and the human capital theorists imply that the workworld is an open market in which individuals freely compete. The status attainment model visualises eventual job placement as the outcome of a series of choices the person makes. The choices are influenced by the socioeconomic status of the parents, the aspirations they instil in the children, and the education they are able to provide. These factors work in different ways in cases of local Canadians and ethnic minorities due to the cultural differences.

The focus of the study will include not only the work experience of Bangladeshi working men/women, but also the entire family setting. By sharing an intimate daily existence, immigrant family members become engaged in an ongoing process of negotiating assimilation, or at least adaptation, in a new society, dealing with discrimination and cultural conflict, and attempting to establish consensus, which may be more or less successful.

This study is interdisciplinary in its conceptualization, and unorthodox in its methods. The research problem rests its analysis on three interrelated disciplines - sociology, economics and history. Key concepts like 'adaptation', 'language skill', 'ethnicity', 'gender' create a sociological

perspective of the research problem, but there is a need to include an economic analysis of the Canadian labour force. To have a better understanding of the topic we must also study the history of immigrant Bangladeshis and their place in present Canadian labour force.

I came to Montreal in 1988 and, as a community member myself, have been observing the Bangladeshi community, expanding and growing since. Demographically, the community is quite significant and visible with its sizable population of around 8000 in Montreal alone. Bangladeshis have a very strong cultural and national identity as well. Yet, the community often is considered a part of either the Pakistani or East Indian communities while their presence in Canada has been very much different historically. Culturally, Bangladeshis differ from Pakistanis in their language, in their food habit, and in their manner of dress. However, they do share the same religious background. Most Indians don't speak Bengali. They are mostly Hindus, while Bangladeshis are mostly Muslims. Indians are ethnically more diverse with at least sixteen languages and so many different cultural districts. In these respects, Indo-Pakistanis represent different cultures than Bangladeshis.

Writing a thesis on my own community would, I thought,

provide me with an excellent opportunity to help the community get recognition as an ethnic group separate from East Indians and Pakistanis. The fact that almost nothing has been written about Bangladeshis in Canada added to the attraction of the project, and finally, studying my community based in Montreal was important to me in terms of access to my subjects.

**Statement of Purpose:**

This study examines the dynamics of the process of adaptation and the problems it poses in the Bangladeshi community in Montreal. The basic research questions asked in this study are: Which values are most likely to a) be abandoned, b) undergo adaptation, or c) remain constant, over time while living in Montreal? How these values are influenced by the variables such as the length of residence in Montreal, levels of education and where they received their last years of education, occupation, income, age, and the degree of involvement in the enclave economy? Can the Bangladeshi community in Montreal retain their cultural values and adapt successfully to the Canadian society? How does the Bangladeshi enclave economy contribute to the process of adaptation and how does it influence the experience of discrimination? How much of the cultural values are retained from one generation to another and what aspects of cultural values are retained most? Further, how do we explain this retention? That is, what

are the dynamics of this process and what factors contribute to the retention of ethnic identity, particularly from one generation to another?

The operating research proposition is that - other things being equal, the longer the families have been in Canada, the greater will there be changes or modifications in the set of values held by the Bangladeshi respondents.

Research on ethnic adaptation and assimilation notes that ethnic groups vary in their degree of assimilation into Canadian society (Porter; 1965, Portes; 1987, Zhou; 1992). There is, however, very little information on why this occurs. Reitz (1994, 1997) notes the retarding effects of separate ethnic economies but this does not explain the reason for their existence, nor, more importantly, their persistence. While discrimination from the larger society may be responsible, in whole or in part, for this, an equally powerful explanation may be found in the degree to which individuals are committed to their traditional value systems and whether this commitment is sustained over time and across different generations.

The process of adaptation does not necessarily mean a complete loss or rejection of one's ethnic values. Rather, as persons become structurally and culturally adapted, they often still retain some aspects of their cultural values.

While immigrants from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh and

the children born to them are know as "Indo-Pakistanis", "East Indians" or simply "Asians" in popular as well as in academic literature, they are, of course, from quite different religious backgrounds and constitute a wide variety of regional, ethnic, and linguistic groupings having their own distinctive histories and value systems.

In the next Chapter, I will discuss the major theories and research regarding immigrant adaptation, with a special focus on their involvement in the economy and their experience with discrimination. Then in Chapter Three, I will discuss the methodology that I undertook for this study and its significance, reliability and limitations. In Chapter Four, I will document and analyze the findings. Then in Chapter Five, I will conclude with a statement of the implications of the study as well as its significance and limitations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will, first, discuss the concept of adaptation and its implication in different studies. Next I will present research findings on the relationship between ethnic earnings and the process of adaptation. Thirdly, I will note the research on discrimination and how it affects the process of adaptation. Fourthly, I will present an overview of the literature on the experience of adaptation in Indo-Pakistani community and how it is relevant in explaining the Bangladeshi experience.

#### Defining Adaptation

Canada's population is striking in terms of its diversity of national and ethnic origins. This diversity is not only a matter of individual differences. It is also a matter of the presence, shape and content of institutional structures that preserve a cultural differences of groups within the social fabric of Canadian society. Accompanying these differences are underlying strains between the demands of the institutions of the more powerful host society and those of the ethnic, or minority group<sup>i</sup>. The severity of these strains, and the manner in which they are resolved, have

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<sup>i</sup>"power" is defined here as having access to, and control



profound effects on the nature of integration of an ethnic group into the host society. These factors also affect the attitudes and behaviour of individual actors.

There are a number of concepts in the field of ethnic relations which attempt to capture the different "solutions" to these strains. The term "acculturation" connotes the modification of institutional structures of both the host society and immigrant groups (Driedger, 1987). The type of acculturation may range from "accomodation" or "adaptation" in which the institutions of the host society modify their character in the act of preserving the central institutional elements of an ethnic group, to "assimilation" in which these elements become absorbed by, or lost to the institutions of the host society. An example of such symbolic act, RCMP now permit Sikh recruits to continue wearing their headgear while on duty (Kendal et al. 1999, p.257)

The consequences of these "solutions" for individuals are not always predictable. For example, assimilation for one group may mean that individuals identify with the larger society and become indistinguishable from other members of the host society. For others, however, assimilation may mean disorientation with respect to their identity and commitments. The latter response may be more likely if the host society

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of socially relevant resources.

forces assimilation on the ethnic community or if the institutional structure of the minority group is destroyed without any conscious effort to replace it (for example, the case of Inuit; or the descendants of Black slaves).

Assimilation is a way of absorption of a nondominant group into an established dominant group, or it can be by way of the merging of many groups to form a new society, as in the "melting pot" concept (Driedger: 1987). In a detailed analysis of this form of acculturation, Gordon (1964) distinguishes a number of subvarieties or processes: most important among these are 'cultural or behavioural assimilation' (i.e. similarities in food habits, language etc.), in which collective and individual behaviours become more similar, and 'structural assimilation', in which the nondominant groups participate in the social and economic systems of the larger society.

The adaptation or accomodation option implies the maintenance of the cultural integrity of the group, as well as the movement by the group to become an integral part of a larger societal framework (Driedger: 1987). This is what is known as multiculturalism in Canada. In this case, there is a large number of distinguishable ethnic groups, all co-operating within a larger social system. Such an arrangement

may occur where there is some degree of structural assimilation, to use Gordon's term. This strategy is assumed in the ideology that supports the concept of *multiculturalism* in Canada.

Where there are no mutually beneficial relationships between the minority group and its more powerful host the outcome can be quite different. Depending on which party gains control of the relevant political issues, the outcome may be either *segragation* or *separation*. Segregation implies limited participation in the host society, while separation involves cutting all ties between the two entities. Either party may initiate either course of action. In the case of Bangladeshi community in Montreal, as this study suggests, the model of segregation is at work which is self-imposed by the community itself, which also suggests a very low level of adaptation.

Of course, when the institutional supports for ethnic identity are destroyed and are not replaced with effective integration into the dominant society, individuals can experience *marginalization*. This is often characterized by a lost sense of identity and feelings of alienation. It may involve striking out against the dominant society. Berry (1984) attributes this to "acculturative stress", or adaptation stress. Driedger (1987) views this as tantamount to "ethnocide". In this study, I argue, that the factor of

adaptation stress is caused by a culture-clash of values.

Porter (1965) argued that greater ethnic group survival in Canada (than the US) was a result of the more rigid Canadian system of social stratification. Immigrant groups in Canada more often remain subordinated in the economy and this leads to greater ethnic cohesion. Reitz (1980) believes that Porter's social class interpretation has a plausibility because the most occupationally segregated ethnic groups seem to stick together most strongly. It is also true in the case of my respondents in this study, I will discuss this in detail in my use of the concept "enclave economy".

#### **Ethnic Earnings and Adaptation of Immigrants**

The degree to which immigrants and their descendants distribute themselves throughout the Canadian occupational structure is one potential indication of their integration into Canadian life. Such occupational integration is desirable, but the question arises whether it fosters cultural assimilation and/or loss of the ethnic language. On the other hand there is the question, whether cultural and language retention may inhibit occupational and social integration.

In the past, Immigrants often were recruited for specific low-status occupations which became stereotyped as "immigrant occupations", such as Chinese launderers or Ukrainian farmers.

Since these "ethnic speciality" occupations are usually at the lower level of the scale, the social mobility of an individual belonging to a highly stereotyped group could be quite limited (Porter; 1965). Bangladeshis do not represent any such immigrant occupation, though they are contributing to a flourishing enclave economy.

According to another theory concerning economic adaptation:

*For industrial societies, (1) the higher the immigrant's former occupational status, (2) the more transferable his skill, (3) the less the positive value upon ethnic identity, by members of the host society, and (3) the more equal the prestige of the occupational field in the two societies, the greater the rate of acculturation (Kurokawa, 1970, p.28).*

Census statistics indicate that with an increasing period of residency in Canada, occupational and income characteristics change for the various ethnic groups, although not at the same rate for each (O'Bryan, Reitz, Kuplowska, 1976).

Three factors which are often referred to as basic determinants of occupational choice are ethnic values, language barriers and occupational discrimination. Both the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1970) and Porter (1965) suggested that ethnic values or loyalties may affect the movement of a group or individual through the class

system. According to these sources, certain cultural factors, especially those that influence occupational choices, work habits, spending, saving and investment practices, may work to retard or advance certain groups in the economic structure. For example, if an ethnic group is closely knit, it may encourage the individual member to choose particular occupation. In such a case, ethnic segregation becomes an important factor in the link between occupation and ethnicity. Some of the other influencing cultural factors are attitudes towards education, the relationship between economic behaviour and religious practices, attitudes to risk and attitudes to property ownership.

Thus, it seems that retention of certain cultural traits or factors may inhibit economic integration. Also, if these traits should be discarded by an individual to facilitate his/her movement in the class system, depending on the role these traits play in the life of the ethnic community, his/her occupation may encourage cultural assimilation, and over a period of time, perhaps even loss of the ethnic heritage.

The problem of language barriers probably is more prominent among recent immigrants than their Canadian-born descendants. The latter are usually fluent in at least one of the official languages. Fluency in an official language is almost certainly a basic prerequisite for economic integration

and social mobility.

One reason to believe that economic mobility is associated with cultural assimilation is that economic mobility often requires extensive education. The role of education as an assimilating influence is strongly supported by Borhek's study (1970). Of four variables examined, Borhek found that formal education alone was the most powerful predictor of assimilation and ingroup choice among his sample of Ukrainians in Alberta. Yet, in this study, even though the factor of formal Canadian education seems to be encouraging a smoother process of adaptation, it failed to lead the process further.

According to Reitz (1997), education is the strongest predictor of occupational status for different ethnic groups, but actual outcomes vary by ethnic group. Further, occupational outcomes are not translated in a uniform manner into similar levels of income. There is evidence of racial discrimination, but even here the effects differ by group.

Borhek's and Reitz's research findings empirical results and conclusions stand in sharp contrast to those of Li (1988) who also used 1981 Census data to conduct an empirical analysis within a Marxian framework. The conflicting findings are attributable mainly to differences in statistical

methodology and selection of variables. Li used fewer controls.

Porter (1965) was the first researcher to identify the pattern of unequal ethnic representation in occupational groups among males. Using national census data, he found that Jewish and Anglo-Saxon males had the highest occupational status and the French and various north and east European groups ranked lower, while south Europeans and native Canadians had the lowest occupational status. Richmond (1967) and Blishen's (1970) studies confirmed Porter's findings. Lack of job qualifications, mainly education, explains most of the lower occupational "entrance statuses" for European immigrant groups in Canada. In the second and later generations, the levels of both education and occupational status improve considerably (Darroch 1979; Reitz 1980). It is also true for the Bangladeshi group, as I will argue later.

Goldlust and Richmond (1973) found ethnic effects on incomes among various groups of immigrant males, not just racial minorities. According to them, given equivalent social origin, years of education, present occupational status, age, years of residence in Toronto, and years of post-secondary education, immigrant men of English and Jewish origin earned about \$500-800 more than those of western European or Italian origin, \$2,100-2,300 more than those of Slavic, Greek, or



Portuguese origins, and \$3,800 more than Asians or blacks. As this study suggests, these factors don't work equally for everybody.

A follow-up study by Richmond and Verma (1978) found considerable income mobility for Canadian males of both European and Asian origin, even though third generation persons of "black and mixed racial origins" were less successful when qualifications are similar. The third generation Bangladeshis are not grown yet and the effects are still unknown in this respect.

In order to find out how ethnic differences in job qualifications, or human capital, affect ethnic differences in status and income, Reitz (1997) used multiple regression analysis for status and income which included three job qualifications: years of formal education, years of work experience, and knowledge of English. The results: years of education has the most important effect. Knowledge of English and work experience has much less impact on career mobility. There is also evidence of discrimination against racial minorities, in the case of Chinese and West Indians. Years of Canadian education and knowledge of English were certainly the basic factors contributing to career mobility in this study.

Reitz's (1997) study shows that ethnic concentrations do

affect ethnic inequality, sometimes by restricting opportunities for upward mobility, and sometimes by creating those opportunities. Also, the impact of ethnic concentrations in labour markets varies as a result of several factors (instead of the terms "the ethnic economy", "ethnic occupations", "ethnic enclaves", "enclave-economy", "ethnic work settings", "domains", "job ghettos" etc., Reitz used a more neutral term, "ethnic concentration", in order to avoid positive or negative connotations of the term). Ethnic concentration is common among Sylhettis in the Bangladeshi community in Canada. They own and work for most of the Indian restaurants (in fact, these Indian restaurants are mostly Bangladeshi). They are also owners of garment factories and speciality ethnic grocery stores in Montreal area.

An ethnic economy (Reitz termed it as ethnic concentration) exists whenever any immigrant or ethnic minority maintains a separate economic sector in which it has a controlling ownership stake. Bonacich and Modell were the first to operationally define this concept of ethnic economy (1980, p.45). By ethnic economy, they meant any ethnic or immigrant group's self-employed, employers, and co-ethnic employees (1980, pp 110-11, 124). Thus defined, an ethnic economy distinguishes the employment that immigrant and ethnic minorities had created on their own account from employment

they found in the general labour market. In this sense, the Cuban ethnic economy of Miami comprises self-employed Cubans, Cuban employers, and their Cuban employees. It does not include Cubans who work for wages in the general economy. This is also true for the Bangladeshi ethnic economy developed by the Sylhettis. The rest of the Bangladeshis may be found participating in economic employment outside the community.

Reitz (1997) also concludes that, if ethnic concentrations create discriminatory barriers, they must do so in ways that vary by group. According to his findings, Chinese more often work in ethnic occupations than do West Indians, but West Indians experience more discrimination. Any effects of ethnic concentrations must be highly variable to account for the very different position of each group. Reitz also concludes that mobility to high-status occupations usually means mobility out of ethnic specialization.

The literature now distinguishes an ethnic economy from an ethnic enclave economy (Light et al, 1992). The ethnic enclave economy is a special case of the ethnic economy. Every immigrant group or ethnic minority has an ethnic economy, but only some have an ethnic enclave economy. This discrepancy arises because an ethnic enclave economy requires locational clustering of firms, economic interdependency, and co-ethnic

employees, whereas an ethnic economy requires none of these. When ethnic firms are not clustered conspicuously in a neighbourhood like Miami's Little Havana, or when firm owners have no employees, or when vertical and horizontal integration do not obtain, then an ethnic economy exists but not an ethnic enclave economy. Since all three essential conditions rarely obtain, the concept of ethnic enclave economy fits many fewer cases of ethnic self-employment and co-ethnic hiring than does the ethnic economy. Ethnic enclave economy exists in case of Sylhettis in this study, which separates them apart from rest of the Bangladeshis. Sylhettis own restaurants, ethnic grocery stores and needle trade businesses in Cote des Neiges and Park Extension area, where they employ mostly Bangladeshi workers and their clientele, also, are Bangladeshi people.

According to Reitz's study (1997), for Chinese, Portuguese, and West Indians in Toronto, ethnic concentrations in labour markets often reflect significant disadvantages. Stereotypical ethnic occupations bring low incomes, and, the data show, even lower class. Ethnic businesses have not yet helped very much. The self-employed do make relatively good money. However, successful entrepreneurship is difficult, as shown by the low rates of self-employment. The Chinese have been most successful. However, even for Chinese, the jobs created within ethnic businesses are few and poorly paid. The

reality remains the same for Bangladeshis in this study as well. The owners seem to be doing well financially, but the workers are poorly paid.

Reitz (1997) also found income discrimination against West Indians and Chinese men who are concentrated in low-status occupations, mainly in the service sector. But sometimes, there is discrimination but no negative effects on ethnic occupations. For example, West Indian female occupations do not affect incomes even though they experience income discrimination. Their occupational concentration are in health fields, as well as the service occupations. Reitz conclude, the negative effects of ethnic occupations within group do not always translate into discriminatory effects across ethnic or racial groups, which would be the focus of this study.

According to Reitz's data (1997), upward mobility within ethnic occupations is often related to establishing successful minority businesses. His study shows that two conditions are responsible for the success of minority businesses: by focussing on ethnic occupational specialities and their use of ethnic labour. The two conditions may occur together. This certainly seems to be the case for the Sylhetti community.

Reitz's study (1997) concludes that successful ethnic businesses can generate positive employment opportunities

within the group. But his findings in the Toronto area differ from those of Sanders and Nee (1987) on Cubans in Miami and Chinese in California. Sanders and Nee distinguished between "immigrant workers" (who are disadvantaged financially) and "immigrant bosses" in the "enclave economy". In the Toronto data, the overall average income effect of employment in minority businesses across seven minority groups is nil; that means, employment in a business within one's own ethnic group results in wage levels no different than employment outside the group. The Sylhetti enclave economy serves to be beneficial for Sylhetti newcomers with low levels of formal education and without official language skills. They would have hard time finding jobs in the open labour market otherwise.

Another interesting finding in Reitz's study (1997) is the fact that upward income mobility within ethnic occupations does not improve occupational status. Ethnic occupations are lower in status than they are in income. Such a pattern corresponds to the priority needs of immigrants from impoverished backgrounds; economic survival takes precedence over social respectability. For many of my Sylhetti respondents, their success in their enclave economy resulted in improved occupational status.

Reitz (1997) concludes that a shift to new occupational

specialities can lead to upward mobility in status as well as income. This change often occurs for the second, or Canadian, generations, because of the requirement for high levels of education in high-status occupations. This issue is not possible for me to study, the second generation barely started to take part in the labour market.

Stelcner and Kyriazis (1995) used data from the 1981 Census to explore the determinants of employment income among men and women of 16 ethnic origins. The objective of the analysis was to ascertain whether some striking ethnic earnings disparities can be systematically related to ethnic origin, or whether they are due to other considerations. According to their findings, for most ethnic groups (Africans are the exception), ethnicity plays almost no role in determining earnings, these findings are quite different from the earlier studies.

Stelcner and Kyriazis's study largely conform with those of Kuch and Haessel (1979) who performed a similar earnings analysis with the 1971 census. They found that human capital and other attribute variables (marital status, region, city size, etc.) contributed significantly to inter-ethnic earnings inequalities. Their basic findings are also in line with those of Boyd (1992) who used 1986 Census data.

The findings of Stelcner and Kyriazis's study are also similar to those of deSilva (1992) who, using 1986 census data, analyzed the earnings gap between immigrant and native-born wage workers. Among his main conclusions are: "there is no significant discrimination against immigrants in general"; "there is no detectable general tendency to discriminate against immigrants originating from Third World regions" (p.37). Although deSilva finds that the 'standardized' earnings of immigrants from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean are 7.6 percent below native-born workers, he attributes this earnings discrimination mainly to the undervaluation of education and experience acquired outside Canada. This study will focus on this issue.

Another factor which has been found to have considerable influence on the integration or adaptation of the ethnic group member is the social organization of the communities with which the individual member comes in contact. This issue also proves to be relevant in this study.

According to Breton (1968), the three relevant communities of contact are: the community of the individual's ethnicity, the native-Canadian community and other ethnic communities. With these in mind, Breton Postulated (1) that the integration of the individual will take place in any one of these communities or in two or three directions; (2) that



the direction of the individual's integration will to a large extent result from the forces of attraction stemming from the various communities; and (3) that these forces are generated by the social organization of these communities.

Breton's results from a survey of immigrants in Montreal support his assumptions. With respect to ethnic composition of interpersonal relations, his data revealed that nearly 60% of his sample had a majority of personal ties with members of the native community. Although recent immigrants (up to 6 years of residence in Canada) tended to be segregated from the native community, after six years, ties with the native community began to show substantial increase.

Breton's data also revealed a positive correlation between institutional completeness and ingroup relations. Communities with the highest degree of institutional completeness had a much greater proportion of members with the most personal relations with their own ethnic groups. Apparently, the existence of institutions in a group tends to have an effect on the cohesiveness of the ethnic group irrespective of its orientation toward the native or its own national culture.

#### **Unequal Experience: Discrimination at Workplace**

In the pluralistic societies of North America, immigrant

and ethnic minorities have always competed for income mobility. Assimilation theory assumed that insertion into the economic mainstream improved immigrants' earnings chances, and that insertion required and accelerated acculturation (Hirschman 1983, p.400). Some ethnoracial groups have turned heavily to entrepreneurship, others have not. High-entrepreneurship groups include: Arabs, Armenians, Chinese, Gypsies, Greeks, Italians, Japanese, Jews, Indians and Pakistanis, Lebanese, Koreans, and Persians. As usual, they did not include Bangladeshis as a separate group, but they should be included as well. Groups of Western and Central European origin have generally displayed only average entrepreneurship in North America, as have Cubans and Latin Americans.

In the case of immigrant and minority workers, discrimination and exploitation in the work-place play an important part. Ethnic minority workers now constitute a large part of the labour force in Canada, a situation quite similar to that in other advanced capitalist countries, and often they suffer from a underclass status, as ethnic discrimination and racism continue to affect their opportunities in the labour market (Bolaria and Li: 1988, p.236). The exploitation of minority workers is widely documented (Li, 1988, 1990, Carney, 1976). Their exploitation has sometimes been attributed to their docility, ready compliance, or lower aspirations (Lipset

and Bendix: 1966). The vulnerability of minority workers, however, is often produced by deliberate political manipulations (Portes: 1978a,p.32). Recency of immigration is always a big factor in influencing the socio-economic status of minority workers. They are also more vulnerable to threats and repression by employers, the government and the indigeneous work force. When the labour pool is overflowing and capitalist production faces crises, minority workers often become scapegoats for various social problems (Portes: 1978a).

Racial discrimination in employment jeopardizes the opportunities of minority workers and places them as an inferior 'underclass' to the white working class (Rex and Tomlinson: 1979,p.275).

Recently arrived immigrant workers, like most Bangladeshi workers, are also vulnerable to exploitation (Bolaria & Li, 1988). These workers are more vulnerable to threats and repression by the employers than are the indigeneous (Canadian-born) labour force, because of their weaker legal status (lack of citizenship, for example). Employers can make political threats, including threats of deportation, to discipline immigrant workers and secure docility and compliance (Portes: 1978a).

A 1983 study by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, of graduates of Ontario universities with Masters degrees in Business Administration, indicates that "the Anglo-Saxon

candidates were hired more often, received greater income and advanced more rapidly than visible minority candidates, despite the fact that visible minority candidates submitted more applications, attended more interviews and held similar qualification" (Report of the Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canada: 1984,p.33).

South Asians were more likely to experience unemployment and lower incomes than other groups. A 1978 study by Canada Employment and Immigration, of youth 15 to 24 years of age in Regent Park, Toronto found an unemployment rate of 87%. The corresponding figure for non-visible (white) minority youth was 57% (Report of the special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canada: 1984,p.36).

Race remains a significant means of creating segregated labour markets. Such segregation often takes the form of racial ghettoization, in which racial minorities are confined to limited job markets, in addition to being housed in slum neighbourhoods. A split labour market (Bonacich: 1972, 1976) is a common feature in advanced capitalist economies where the price of coloured labour is often cheaper than that of white labour for performing the same job. Bangladeshis immigrants, who arrived recently and do not have a Canadian education, live in two ghetto areas in Montreal, Park Extention and Cote des Neiges area. They mostly work in the needle trade district or in the restaurants of Montreal doing menial jobs with low

pay. Without knowledge of French, they are stuck in this situation without a chance of upward mobility. In that respect, living in Quebec proves to be harder for them.

Reitz, by analyzing some of the studies, states that the visible minority group members encounter "formidable barriers" to equality in the workplace. In addition, Reitz pointed out that these new visible minorities may, perhaps, have greater difficulty in being accepted than did the older European minority group immigrants (Report on The Fourth Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism: 1981, p.27). The employee attitude study carried out by the Royal Bank in 1981 shows that only 40% of the respondents agreed that: "One's ethnic background is either unimportant or very unimportant in getting a promotion in the Royal Bank" (Report on The Fourth Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism: 1988,p.31).

Ethnicity is often grounds for unequal pay. In 1981 Census of Canada reports that the national income in 1981 was \$14,044.87. When both native-born and foreign-born are considered together, it is evident that those of South European origin, and non-white origin have the lowest average income levels. The income level for blacks and Chinese is respectively \$1,588 and \$1,295 less than the national average. In contrast, those of Jewish origin have the highest income level of \$6,262 more than the average Canadian. Among persons of West European origin, those of French descent are the only

group with an income below the mean (-\$501). All those of East European origin have income levels above the national average, and the Hungarian and the Czechs and Slovaks have the highest income among these groups.

**Rates of return for higher education propensity**

Group	Income rank	Mean Incomes, university graduate	College propensity rank*
Jewish	1	32,235	1 (58%)
Russian	2	30,073	9 (22%)
Korean	3	28,210	3 (33%)
Japanese	4	28,202	4 (30%)
Finnish	5	27,350	10 (21%)
Yugoslavic	6	26,366	7 (25%)
Czechoslavic	7	26,074	5 (23%)
Greek	8	25,670	8 (25%)
Ukranian	9	24,936	11 (20%)
Indochinese	10	24,783	6 (25%)
Chinese	11	24,370	2 (35%)
Black	12	24,085	13 (16%)
Portuguese	13	22,244	14 (9%)
Fillipino	14	20,749	12 (17%)
Indo-Pakistani	15	13,186	15 (3%)

\* Percent ever attended college in parentheses  
 SOURCE: 1981 Census tables produced for Multiculturalism  
 Directorates (Winn: 1985, p.691)

Bangladeshis are included in the category of Indo-Pakistanis, who belong to the lowest income-rank.

Castles, Booth and Wallace (1984) argue that 'foreign workers... experience their class position as the specific result of institutional discrimination and racism, rather than as the result of the relationship between labour and capital

(Castles et al., 1984: 217).

Bonacich (1976) suggests that what appear as ethnic and racial antagonisms in the labour market, are rooted in initial differences over the price of labour. In Bonacich's words - 'The real division is not between white and non-white, but between high priced and cheap labour' (Bonacich: 1976,p.20). He developed the theory of the split labour market to explain how race can be used to differentiate the price of labour so that employers benefit from the cheap labour of the lower-paid workers. For example, Chinese workers appear to have earned about 50 per cent of what white workers did for doing the same type of work (Phillips: 1967,p.8). This type of study has not been done in the case of Bangladeshis.

### **Occupational Inequality**

In 'The Vertical Mosaic' (1965) Porter offered three distinct observations about ethnic inequality. First, he argued that 'charter status' groups, the French and English, commanded greater power and privilege than did 'entrance status' groups (i.e. other immigrants) arriving later. Second, he noted an asymmetry of power favouring the English over the French. Third, he claimed that among non-charter immigrant groups too, ethnic inequality persisted. Porter also suggested that once in Canada ethnic groups differed in the extent to

which they aspired to upward occupational mobility. Some ethnic groups valued achievement less than others, either because of cultural differences or because of perceived or experienced discriminatory barriers. However, to the extent that ethnic assimilation occurred, Porter reasoned that ethnic origin exerted less impact on individual occupational mobility. Conversely, in the face of continued ethnic affiliations, mobility was limited - a thesis of 'ethnically blocked mobility'.

Darroch (1979) undertook revision of Porter's interpretation and suggested that Porter failed to note the diminishing strength of the association between ethnicity and occupational level. Darroch's findings show vividly that Porter did misinterpret trends in occupational differences among ethnic groups, that there was evidence of change in the direction of greater similarity which Porter did not perceive. He concluded that the idea of blocked ethnic mobility had no foundation in fact and that we should be 'skeptical of the idea that ethnic affiliations are a basic factor in generally limiting mobility opportunities in Canada' (Darroch: 1979,p.16). In my study, it proves to be true in case of most of the respondents.

However, Darroch's findings are less than definitive with regard to how much ethnic dissimilarity prevailed in 1931,



1951 and 1961. The six broad occupational categories used by Porter and adopted by Darroch were appropriate for a rough scanning of the occupational distributions of the ethnic groups in order to determine the direction of changes in these, if any. This occupational scheme, however, is not appropriate for precise summa measurement of differences among occupational distributions, i.e., for calculating dissimilarity indexes, the values of which, as Darroch (1979: 12) notes, are inversely proportional to the breadth of the categories used, other things being equal. By 1961, for example, over half the male labour force (58 percent) was contained in the residual "All Others" category. The crude classification probably makes many important differences in the attainment of more precisely defined occupations by the different ethnic groups.

Winn (1985,p.689) reviewed data from the 1971 and 1981 censuses, concluding that his evidence provided 'no empirical support for the premise that Canadian society is immobile and that visible or low prestige groups cannot make economic progress'. According to Winn the ethnic inequality implied by the vertical mosaic was exaggerated. Two visible minorities, Japanese and Koreans, and one identifiable minority, Jews earn high incomes largely as a result of high propensities for college education (1981 census). The income problem most

widely shared by non-whites is a low rate of return for investments in higher education among those born abroad. The low rates of return for non-white college immigrants may be explained by academic training unsuited to the Canadian economy or by language or cultural difficulties. These non-racial explanations for the income problems of foreign-born non-whites gain some plausibility from two facts: Chinese, Blacks, and Indo-Pakistanis earn higher incomes than other non-whites, foreign-born, university graduates, and Canadian-born non-whites do appreciably better than their counterparts abroad (Winn, 1985, p.698).

A more pessimistic conclusion concerning the continuing salience of ethnicity as a basis for inequality appears in Lautard and Loree (1984). Using more detailed occupational data, they agreed with Darroch's finding that occupational inequality among ethnic groups had declined over time. but whereas Darroch (1979:22) was willing to conclude that ethnicity was no longer a fundamental source of inequality, Lautard and Loree (1984:342) maintained that 'occupational inequality is still substantial enough to justify the use of the concept "vertical mosaic" to characterize this aspect of ethnic relations in Canada'. In their study, occupational differentiation and inequality among ethnic groups are analyzed with the same measures used by Darroch. The *index of*

*dissimilarity* was employed to measure occupational differentiation. It represents the percentage of a given ethnic group which would have to change jobs in order to have the same occupational distribution as the rest of the labour force.

Lautard and Loree (1984) have confirmed at least part of Darroch's argument. While they point out that Darroch has underestimated the magnitude of ethnic dissimilarity in occupational status, they concur that ethnic differences are decreasing over time. However, they pointed out, that the magnitude of occupational dissimilarity among ethnic groups increases substantially when inequality among men and women is considered separately, and when more occupational categories are used in the calculation of the index of dissimilarity. The index of dissimilarity, used widely in studies of residential segregation, is affected by the unit of analysis (Myers, 1954; Ducan and Duncan, 1955; Taeuber and Taeuber, 1965).

Porter (along with Pineo, 1985) repeated his earlier analysis with the 1971 census and, agreeing with Lautard and Loree, claimed that 'ethnic stratification has persisted through to 1971' (ibid:48). Here, he offers no hints about a collapse of the vertical mosaic.

Working with Pineo (Pineo and Porter: 1985), Porter

demonstrated that for native-born Canadian men, ethnic origin had no significant influence on individual occupational mobility. This latter finding suggests that the thesis of 'blocked ethnic mobility' does not persist for second- and third-generation Canadian men (but only from the major European ethnic groups). This is also not possible to study for the time being in case of Bangladeshis, since the third generation is not yet in the labour market.

Boyd's (1985) research on the influence that birth-place exerts on occupational attainment supports this interpretation. For foreign-born men and women, she showed that ethnic origin had a definite effect on occupational attainment, even after controlling for differences in the average age, education, social origin, and place of residence of ethnic groups. For women she found evidence of a double negative for being female and foreign-born. Indeed, she concluded by noting the 'importance of birthplace and sex as factors underlying the Canadian mosaic' (ibid:441).

More recently, Satzewick and Li (1987) examined the relationship between ethnicity and stratification by studying the effect of ethnic origin on occupational status and earnings over a three-year period for a sample of immigrants who entered Canada between 1969 and 1971. They wanted to determine whether opportunities for immigrants are improving

over time and whether the implication of more equality among ethnic groups found in recent studies holds for immigrant groups. They analyzed longitudinal data for 4,584 immigrants of sixteen ethnic groups entering Canada between 1969 and 1971, and arrived at some conclusions relevant to the vertical mosaic thesis. First, over a three-year period following the immigrants' initial arrival, the gross effect of ethnic origin on occupational status declined, but the gross effect of ethnic origin on income for the same period remained consistent. Second, the rankings of ethnic groups by occupational status and income level persisted over time - with immigrants from European countries and the United States having a definite advantage because of their ethnic origin and with immigrants from non-white source countries having a net disadvantage attributed to their origin. The seven variables they used were ethnic origin, years of schooling, English proficiency, occupational status of the first job in Canada, and occupational status of the job after three years in Canada, and lastly, monthly income of the first job in Canada, and monthly income of the job after three years in Canada.

As Li (1988: 66) argued, the unequal social treatment of people based on their ethnicity can adversely affect their psychological well-being and their interpersonal relations which has a direct impact on job satisfaction and turnover. I

will elaborate the affects of these factor in this study, which prove to be very significant for most of my respondents.

The advantages of self-employment income over wage income is, however, less clear. Early research assumed that self-employment fetched higher incomes than wage employment. Only in the 1980s did this assumption undergo scrutiny. Early evidence tend to show that the immigrant and ethnic self-employed earned higher incomes than did co-ethnic wage earners. The key contribution was that of Portes and Bach (1985). They also found that participants in the ethnic enclave actually earned higher education-adjusted wages than did their co-ethnic counterparts in the general economy.

Sanders and Nee (1987) opened a useful empirical debate on this subject. Although they conceded that entrepreneurs earn higher human-capital-adjusted earnings than did wage workers. But Sanders and Nee (1987) disputed Wilson and Portes's (1980) claim of positive returns on human capital for immigrant workers. In their view, an ethnic economy benefited a group's employers but harmed its exploited workers. Zhou (1992, pp.115-16) pointed out that workers often accept low-wage employment by co-ethnics because it offers symbolic reassurance, the advantage of being able to work longer hours and to evade taxes, as well as the perceived possibilities for training in hard-to-acquire entrepreneurial skills. Sanders

and Nee showed that the effect of an ethnic enclave economy might be mixed or even negative rather than wholly beneficial. Some of my respondents complain about the abuse they suffered from their ethnic-employees which supports their claim.

Distinguishing wealth and income, Oliver and Shapiro found that the self-employed in the United States own "from two to 14 times as much net worth as their salaried counterparts" (1990, pp.143-44). This finding shows that differences in income underestimate the economic advantage of the self-employed, including the ethnic self-employed.

#### **The Effects of Gender**

When women experience discrimination in the general labour market (Ong, 1987), marriage offers male entrepreneurs privileged access to the unpaid labour of their wives (Pendraza, 1991, p.318). Therefore Bonacich declares that immigrant enterprise rests on the cheap labour of the entrepreneurs and their families" (1987, p.454). However, even immigrant women employed in the general labour market work long hours; the family firm has no monopoly on overwork (Kim and Hurh, 1988). The issue is also murky because tax forms, loan applications, role expectations, and census statistics often omit and overlook women's equal role in a family firm

(Tenenbaum, 1993, p.56). Josephides even observed that whatever the truth, women who work with their husband are 'not seen' as economically independent of their husbands (1988, p.55). Moallem finds that the "Iranian patriarchal system" encourages women to "offer their services for free" to their husband's firm (1991, p.187). Among Asians, married couples with children had higher odds of self-employment than did Asians in other living arrangements. It is clear here that my Sylhetti self-employed respondents live a very different cultural life, since their wives don't work for the family firm. It is culturally unacceptable (for Sylhettis) for women to work outside home.

#### **Cultural Differences Among Groups from the Indian Sub-continent**

Many authors cited the differences between different ethnic groups in the Indian Subcontinent. Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are from quite different religious backgrounds and constitute a wide variety of regional, ethnic, and linguistic groupings (for example, Bowen, 1981 for Hindus; Tomlinson, 1984 for Muslims; Ballard and Ballard, 1979 for Sikhs) having their own distinctive histories and value systems (Punetha, Giles, and Young, 1987). In the latter study, it showed that the Asian respondents perceive and accepted their minority group status with the indigenous group



being considered the dominant group able to enjoy most of the available resources and social power? The data do not suggest, however, that Asian immigrants possess a negative social identity. On the contrary, the findings reveal that they consider their own languages, cultural standards and values, and talent in economic pursuits, in a very favourable light. In addition, personal characteristics such as kindness, hard working, and reliability are highly valued and group-ascribed in ways that doubtless contribute to the expression of a positive social identity. Moreover, the social distance they perceive between themselves and the local population on the other hand, is in line with other reports of their desire to maintain a quite separate cultural identity. Khan (1982) and Milner (1984) also examined these issues.

Interestingly, Punetha, Giles, and Young (1987)'s study also suggests that Hindus and Sikhs have, at least on their measures, a mutual respect that differentiates them a little from the Muslim group, to whom Bangladeshis feel a strong bond. They suggest that all South Asian immigrants experience severe problems in adaptation not only due to constraints imposed by the larger society, but also because of their own cultural attributes, motivations and aspirations. Ballard (1979) also documented how Indo-Pakistanis try to retain their cultural values and segregate themselves from the larger

society. Brooks and Singh (1979) pointed out several reasons for that:

1. they were unable to speak good English,
2. were less educated,
3. were from a rural background, and
4. had a dream of returning to their home country.

Bangladeshis, just as Indo-Pakistanis, are socially segregated.

But their reasons behind it are not the same. Most Bangladeshis speak English (not French), they are fairly educated, most of them are from urban background and they are in Canada to stay.

Joy and Dholakia (1991) also report that most of their Indian respondents want to go back to India at some point. According to these two researchers, for Indians, acculturation has precipitated an imbalance between the central tenets of Hindu identity. The lack of an overall institutional framework to nurture the central principles of Dharma, Artha, and Kama poses a threat to their sense of self in Canada.

Joy and Dholakia further reports, for Indian women from upper-middle-class, urban backgrounds, house maintenance is never learned as a skill by either men or women.

Yeleja (1988, p.30) identified two points in time as likely to coincide with difficulties experienced by Indo-

Pakistani immigrants. First, within the first year and half, difficulties are experienced the seriousness of which is related to the nature of opportunity in the host country, e.g., availability of jobs and affordable housing. A second period in which difficulties tend to occur is several years after resettlement. Three main sources of these difficulties were identified; continued loss of social status, continued inability to speak the language of the host country, and especially, differential rates of acculturation within individual families. From the latter, as Yeleja concludes, conflict between spouses as well as conflicts across generations may evolve.

As we have seen, most of these studies are based on quantitative method, which would not be appropriate for my study. Rather, I would follow Sally Cole's (1991) ethnographic approach, when she stayed in a Portuguese village in order to study women, work, and social change.

### **Summary**

As the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1970) and Porter (1965) suggested, three factors are often referred to as basic determinants of occupational choice, these are ethnic values, language barriers and occupational discrimination. This, of course, is relevant for Bangladeshi group also. I would like to address these issues in this

study and go beyond the statistical facts these quantitative studies offer by relating these issues to the adaptation process Bangladeshi group go through. Most of these studies are quantitative in nature and are unable to explore the influence of cultural values on the process of adaptation to its full extent. Most of the studies that have influenced policy have been those done on aggregate data, where the key variables taken to measure degrees of discrimination or of integration, if not adaptation, have been those of occupational level and/or income. In this study, with the help of ethnographic method, I would like to identify the cultural values and attitudes and their impact on adaptation of Bangladeshis in Montreal. Particularly, to identify the values which are most likely to be abandoned, undergo adaptation or remain constant over the time. Research on ethnic adaptation notes confirms that ethnic groups vary in their degree of assimilation into Canadian society (Porter;1965, Reitz; 1997, Boyd; 1985, Li;1988). There is, however, very little or no information on why it occurs. Reitz (1997) identifies the retarding effects of separate ethnic economies but this does not explain the reason for their existence, nor, more importantly, their persistence. While discrimination from the larger society may be responsible, in whole or in part, for this, an equally powerful explanation may be found in the degree to which individuals are committed to their traditional

value systems and whether this commitment is sustained over time and across different generations.

The role of Canadian education as an assimilating influence is strongly supported by Borhek (1970) and Reitz (1997, 1998). I would like to compare their findings with the experience of Bangladeshi group. Richmond (1967) and Blisshen (1970) support Porter's (1965) idea of unequal ethnic representation in occupational groups. Goldust and Richmond (1973) found ethnic effects on incomes. In this study, I would like to introduce these issues as they work in this particular ethnic group.

Reitz's study (1997) also suggests that ethnic concentrations do affect ethnic inequality, sometimes by restricting opportunities for upward mobility, and sometimes by creating them. I would address both of these aspects to show how they both work in unison for Bangladeshi group. Light et al (1992) distinguished between ethnic economy and ethnic enclave economy. Sylhetties, among Bangladeshis, are in the process of developing an enclave economy in the community. In this study, I will also analyze the influence of enclave economy in the process of adaptation.

As Punetha and Giles (1987) suggest, South Asian immigrants

experience severe problems in adaptation because of their own particular cultural attributes. But none of the studies analyzed the particular cultural values that encourage or discourage the process of adaptation. I would like to explore this issue in case of Bangladeshis in Montreal. Why are they culturally and socially segregated as they are? What are the cultural values that encourage this segregation or retardation of adaptation? What is the nature of Bangladeshi enclave economy in Montreal and how does it compliment or contradict Reitz's (1997) findings? I would also focus on the implications of Stelcner and Kyriazis's (1992) findings on discrimination in Bangladeshi community. Breton's (1968) analysis of community contact would be a good place to start exploring these issues.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**PROBLEM FORMULATION AND METHODOLOGY**  
**The Research Approach:**

According to the major research proposition of this study, we should expect a decline in the traditional values practised by the Bangladeshi families living in Montreal with the length of residency in Canada. But the effects would be modified by the type of their economic activities, intensity of religious practises and family relations. Thus the primary independent variable in this study is the length of residency in Canada, I selected families with different lengths of residency, ranging from eight months to thirty years. I also selected two Sylhetti families who contribute to the Bangladeshi enclave economy. The Sylhetti families represent a unique variant of the larger Bangladeshi community in their greater conscious effort to maintain their cultural values by means of social and economic exclusion.

As a community member, I was well aware of the history of the Bangladeshi group in Canada. For this study I sought information about the adaptive processes pursued by individuals within the community. For example, what does being a Bangladeshi in Montreal involve? What are the experiences of family units before and after their arrival in Canada? How do individuals living within their family and community network adopt to the complex host society of Montreal? I was interested in the extent to which being Bangladeshi is how

important for one's sense of identity. I also intended to see how their identity may be modified in the process of adaptation. The analysis is focused on family units and the individuals within them; how individuals perceive the interaction both within their families, with other Bangladeshi families and with the larger society in Montreal.

The research method I chose to accomplish my objective was based on the ethnographic approach. An ethnographer enters the world of the subject using both observation and intuition. The purpose of the method is to develop understandings of complex social settings and relations. The researcher participates in the everyday life of the people and situation he/she wishes to understand. He/she speaks with them, sympathizes with them, shares their concerns and accomplishments, listens to them and asks questions. This method assumes that an important way, perhaps the only way, to understand some areas of social life is to immerse oneself with others in their social arrangements (Bogdan: 1972,p.4).

As will be evident in the following chapters, it is obvious that the Bangladeshis have given considerable thought to the difficulties encountered in adapting to Canadian society, and have been struggling to deal with the problem areas. The need for empathy in these circumstances seems so evident as not to require further elaboration. Even though I am a community member myself, my experience as a researcher



has enriched my understanding of the community.

**Data Collection:**

A number of research strategies have been employed in order to collect the data for this study:

**Participant Observation:** I have been observing community members and interacting with them socially since 1988, when I first came to Montreal. I started to take notes since 1995, when I decided to work on this particular topic. During the past four years I tried to attend all the cultural activities held in the community.

My participation in the community has been crucial to my research in several respects. First, I have gained a sense of what goes on at different events, who attends them, how people interact with each other, who socializes with whom, what are the topics they talk about most, etc. Secondly, and in conjunction with the reading of secondary literature, my reflections on this information have assisted in clarifying the research problem, in formulating questions, in determining selection criteria, and in guiding my interviews. Thirdly, I have had an opportunity to be recognized as a trustworthy person to my subjects who, they believed, was not only a member of the community, but who takes an interest in the community. My subjects felt comfortable answering my questions, I was a 'friend'

to most of them, and the feeling was mutual. Indeed, approaching the respondents was largely carried out in the context of participant observation. Moreover, I had an advantage just by being a Bangladeshi. I am inclined to think that my research intervention may have had a less disruptive impact on my subjects than if I had entered a different ethnic group. Finally, continuing to socialize with my respondents permitted me to keep in touch with them in case I might wish to speak to them further - as I indeed did.

***Interviewing Within the Community:*** The interviews I carried out for this research were of three types; pre-test and background interviews followed by in-depth interviews, and lastly, follow-up interviews.

***Pre-test and Background Interviews:***

Based on the information gathered from my participation observation, and from the secondary literature, I had prepared a draft interview guide and was ready to test it in the early 1999. I selected an extended family with 11 family members which I thought would be an informative experience. The main goal of this interview was to help verify the appropriateness of my interview schedule, and to ensure that the tone and content of the questions would be

acceptable to members of the community. In addition, the information gained from this interview helped me modify and formulate my ideas further and it provided me with additional questions. I noticed that issues such as family companionship and performing housework were important to the respondents and I incorporated these areas in the guide. After completing the interview, I changed the interview guide slightly.

The interview guide was divided into two sections; one prepared for the parents and another for the children. Not all of the children were born Canadians, some accompanied their parents when they came to Canada. The Date of arrival seemed to be relevant here because some children spent their formative years in Canada and others grew up in Bangladesh.

***INTERVIEWS:***

Selection of Respondents: On the basis of the information about the community which I had gathered, I selected 10 families of different age groups, occupation, education level and arrival date in Canada. I also sought variation in the extent of their activity in and for the community. I included different types of families. These included families with and without children, and nuclear and extended families living in the same household.

The ten selected families represent a range of different demographic factors. So the most recently-arrived family has been in Montreal for about eight months, and the most early-arrived family came here about 30 years ago.

As a community member myself, I am well aware of the fact that not all families would be willing to share their private lives with me. Bangladeshis are very private people. I had to select the families I felt comfortable to speak to and they to me.

Finally, I selected two 'Sylhetti' families to make the sample more representative of immigrants from Bangladesh. I did not know the Sylhetti families (Imam and Kamal) and that was a concern for me. I had approached five Sylhetti families but only these two agreed to be interviewed.

I used both English and Bengali while interviewing the families. The children who were born in Canada preferred to speak English in most cases. Scheduling interview-dates were not difficult as I was able to establish confidence beforehand.

#### *The Interviews:*

The first interview took place in May 1999; while the remainder were held between July 1999 and December 1999. I went back for follow-up interviews between January and February 2000. All interviews were held at the respondents'

homes. Some interviews lasted for more than three hours. Twice, because of other commitments on the part of the respondent, we had to hold the interview over the course of two meetings. Then I had to go back for follow-up interviews. All interviews were audio-taped with permission from the respondents. In addition to increasing the accuracy of data collection, the use of a tape recorder allowed me to be more attentive to the respondents. The follow-up interviews were not audio-taped, rather, I took notes. Four of the follow-up interviews were done over telephone.

I used the reflexive type of interviewing. I chose this type because of its flexibility. It calls for no particular sequence of questions and no single mode of asking them. Further, it allows the questions to be guided by the responses (Hammersely, 1995;152). Even though I had an interview guide to point out the basic areas I intended to cover, I never knew exactly which question I was going to ask or in what sequence. If I required the respondent to clarify some point or to provide a specific piece of information I would ask a direct question. I tried to give the respondents the opportunity to bring the issues up of their own accord and to interpret and explain things from their perspective and in their own words.

### *Interview Guide:*

The interview guide consisted of a range of questions covering six broad areas; participation in the labour force, family and personal relationships, interpersonal relations within the ethnic community, social linkage within the Montreal larger community through schools and economic and social transactions, and recreation and leisure time activities. Each of these areas, I assumed, represented important context within which the individual has to confront value systems that are often in conflict.

Two separate guides were prepared, one for parents and one for children (see Appendix).

### *Analysis of the Interviews:*

After finishing all 10 interviews, I translated them (where necessary) as soon as possible. I took notes along with the audio-taped interviews. The substance of systematic, objective, and analytical participant observation lies in keeping complete, accurate, and detailed field notes (Bogdan. 1972:39). I took notes on my observation as well as the interviews. These notes included casual cues such as the respondents' clothing, gestures, body language, food served, smells, etc. Taking notes during the interview helped me in three ways. First, notes on casual cues provided contextual data, useful for more

valid interpretations. Second, they helped me formulate new questions as the interview moved along. Third, having notes about what was said facilitated later analysis, including locating important quotations from the tape itself.

The translation-process, though time consuming and monotonous, turned out to be very helpful. It allowed me to become thoroughly familiar with the data. In fact, once several interviews had been completed, I began to notice some general patterns emerging and started developing ideas about the ways in which the information might connect with my theoretical framework. These notes, along with my participant observation and literature survey, helped me identify important issues emerging from the information I collected.

### **An Overview of the Families**

#### *The Hamid Family<sup>2</sup>:*

The Hamid family have been in Montreal for about thirty years. After completing his university education in Bangladesh (East Pakistan at that time) Mr.Hamid came as a foreign student to McGill University. His wife also was a university graduate. Mr.Hamid, as an accountant, worked steadily until 1995. Mrs.Hamid also worked as a insurance broker for a few years. She now works as a volunteer at a local charity

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<sup>2</sup> Family names are fictitious

organization. Currently they both are unemployed. Mr.Hamid is fifty-six years old and Mrs.Hamid is forty-nine years old. They have two Canadian-born children, a twenty-five year old son and a twenty-three year old daughter. They both are university students.

The children went to English schools, but they are fluently bilingual. The current yearly income for this family is very low, about \$15,000. But about five years ago, their yearly income ranged between \$60,000-\$100,000. Both children live at home and work, but the parents don't allow them to contribute to the family. Instead they pay for their own education. The family lives in the South Shore area. They bought their house twenty-five years ago. This family has close relatives in Canada and in the United States. They sponsored the parents from the wife's side who lived with them for two years, then they went back home. They come to Montreal for short visits time to time. The children have a strong bond with the relatives abroad.

*The Uddin Family:*

Mr.Uddin came to McGill University as a foreign student twenty-nine years ago. He did not complete his university education in the old country, rather, he received a university diploma from McGill. He is fifty-three years old. Currently he is working successfully as an accountant. Mrs.Uddin received a



university education in Bangladesh. She is forty-five, a housemaker, and never worked outside home. They have two children, a twenty-three year old daughter and a sixteen year old son. The daughter goes to the university, the son is in the high school. They went to English schools, and do not speak French. This family has a comfortable lifestyle with the yearly family income of \$120,000. The daughter works during the summer, but does not contribute her earnings to the household. They live in the West Island area in their own house. Mr.Uddin had sponsored and brought many of his own family members and his in-laws to Montreal. Initially they all lived with them (not at the same time) for short periods of time. Mrs.Uddin's mother went back to Bangladesh because of her health condition after being here for about five years. The rest of the family still live in Montreal and there is a strong relationship among the family members.

*The Enam Family:*

Mr.Enam, who was an engineer in Bangladesh, came to Montreal as a foreign student twenty-seven years ago. He completed his bachelors in engineering from McGill and has been working for an international company since. Mrs.Enam was a university graduate in Bangladesh. She is a housemaker, and has never worked outside the home. She is involved in the community cultural organizations. Mr.Enam is fifty-five year

old and Mrs.Enam is forty-seven year old. They have two daughters, twenty-one and fifteen year old. The elder daughter is a university student, the younger goes to the high school. The daughters went to English school, but they also speak French. Their yearly family income is about \$100,000. They have close relatives in other Canadian cities as well as in the United States. Mrs.Enam's parents lived with them for two years, now they live in another city. This family lives in their own home in the West Island area.

*The Wakil Family:*

Mr.Wakil is fifty-three year old. He completed his university education in Bangladesh. Then he came to Montreal and enrolled in a trade course (TV/radio repairing). He graduated but was never successful to find a job in that field. He has been doing general work since. Mrs.Wakil went to high school in Bangladesh during which time she got married. She worked for two years as a sewing machine operator in the early eighties so the family could buy a house. She stopped working after two years and never went back.

The family was on welfare for a few years during the recession period in the late eighties. Mrs.Wakil is forty-year old, a homemaker. Mr.Wakil has been working steadily since 1991. Their yearly income is about \$20,000. They have two sons, eighteen and eleven years old. The older is in the

CEGEP, the younger is a fourth grader. The eighteen year old works part time to pay for his car and his education. He lives at home. The sons go to English schools, and they do not speak French. Mrs.Wakil sponsored her mother and brother to Canada, they lived with them for a few years. The mother passed away. The brother moved to the United States. The Wakil family lives in the South Shore area and owns their own house.

*The Ahmed Family:*

The Ahmed family moved to Montreal from West Germany twenty-two year ago. They lived in Iran for two years before moving to West Germany. They came to Canada as political refugees.

Mr.Ahmed is forty-eight year old, and did not finish his university education in Bangladesh. He was doing administrative work in Iran, but had to leave within two-days notice because of political instability during the revolution. After coming to Montreal, Mr.Alam worked as a licensed real estate agent for a few years. But during the recession of late eighties, he lost his job. Currently he is working in two jobs (one full time, one part-time) as a grocery store manager (for two different stores) and earns a comfortable living.

Mrs.Ahmed is forty-four year old and has been working as a sewing machine operator for twelve years on and off. The family's yearly income is close to \$60,000. Though they make

less than some of the other families, they own more material possessions.

The family owns two houses in the Laval area, they live in one and rent the other. They own two cars which they bought new, one a Toyota Camry (1998) and the second, a BMW (1999) that the son drives.

All the children are adults, the son is twenty five, the daughters are twenty-three and nineteen. The son and the older daughter went to universities but did not complete their degrees. The younger daughter is about to finish CEGEP. Mr. and Mrs. Ahmed tried but failed to send their children to English schooling. They sent the older daughter to a private French school. The other two also went to French school. All three are fluently bilingual. They speak Bengali as well. The younger daughter works at McDonald's part-time and contributes some of her earnings to the household. The son used to work part time but is now unemployed.

*The Rahim Family:*

Mr. and Mrs. Rahim immigrated to Canada in their later years, about fourteen years ago. He is sixty-four years old, she is fifty-seven. Mr. Rahim used to work as an administrator for the Bangladesh airforce and Mrs. Rahim was a school teacher in Bangladesh. They both have a university education. They came as political refugees, leaving grown children back home.

There are five children altogether and four grand children. When they received permanent residency, they were able to sponsor their unmarried son and daughter who are now 36 and 27 years old respectively.

The son has since got married and brought his wife (twenty-six years old) to Montreal. The couple have a two-year old son. The son's wife has a university degree from Bangladesh. Mr.Rahim's daughter goes to university in Montreal. They all live together in a single household, a rented three bedroom apartment in the Park Extension area. Mr. and Mrs.Rahim worked in different factories as general workers in the first three years, they have been unemployed for about ten years now.

The son has university education from Bangladesh. He works as a waiter in a restaurant. His wife also works as a sewing machine operator. Their yearly income is around \$25000. The son and daughter-in-law support Mr. and Mrs.Rahim and the son's sister.

*The Kamal Family:*

The Kamal family comes from the Sylhet district in Bangladesh. Mr.Kamal has been in Montreal for thirteen years. He came as a political refugee and brought his family about six years ago after getting his permanent residency in Canada. Neither Mr. nor and Mrs. Kamal received much formal education.

Mr.Kamal is fifty and Mrs.Kamal is thirty-nine year old. They have six children ranging in age from seventeen to three. The youngest child, a son, was born in Montreal. The children (except for the youngest) go to French schools. They speak French but no English. They live in their own house located near the downtown area. Mr.Kamal owns his business and earns around \$40,000 a year. Mrs.Kamal, who stays at home has never been gainfully employed.

*The Qazi Family:*

This is a relatively younger couple. Mr.Qazi is thirty-five and Mrs.Qazi is twenty-seven years old. They have a four year old son. Mr.Qazi came to Montreal thirteen years ago as a political refugee. After getting his permanent residency in Canada, he went back to get married. His wife joined him in Montreal about five years ago. Mr.Qazi completed his higher secondary education and a diploma in electronics in Bangladesh. He has been working as a cook ever since he came to Montreal. Mrs.Qazi also received a university education in Bangladesh, but she never completed her degree. She is a homemaker, raising her son. The family live in a one-bedroom apartement in the Cote des Neiges area.

*The Imam Family:*

The Imam Family is from Sylhet. Thirty-two years old

Mr.Imam has been in Canada for thirteen years. Five years ago he brought to Canada his elderly parents, seventy-year old Mr.Imam Senior and sixty year old Mrs.Imam, and three younger siblings. His brother is twenty-five years old, the older sister is twenty-two years old, and the younger sister is sixteen years old. The sisters go to English school and speak moderate English, but they don't speak French. Recently, about eight months ago, his married sister, thirty-six years old Mrs. Shaheeda, and her family (the husband and two children) immigrated from Bangladesh and they all live in the same household. Their six year old daughter and five year old son go to French school. Mr. Imam owns a speciality grocery store and his brother and brother-in-law work for him. The yearly family income is \$120,000. Mrs.Imam is only twenty-two years old. She came only two years ago as a young bride. Females in this family don't work outside the home. Males and females in this family do not have a university-education. Mr. and Mrs.Imam Senior are illiterate. The Imam family lives in their own house near the downtown area.

*The Saber Family:*

The Saber Family came to Canada from the Middle East about two years ago. Forty-year old Mr.Saber is an engineer. He started his professional career in Saudi Arabia and worked as an engineer for twenty years. Mr.Saber's work-contract was not

renewed and he did not want to go back to Bangladesh. He decided to come to Canada for a better future for their children. Mrs.Saber is forty-two, a medical doctor, she worked in Saudi Arabia for six years. She can't work in Canada as a doctor because of government regulations. Mr.Saber just completed a diploma in computer programming from Dawson College but is still unemployed. His wife does not work outside the home. They have four children. The eldest a daughter, is fourteen years old, and goes to a French school. The son is seven years old and goes to a French school. There are two more children, a three year old daughter and a year old son who was born in Montreal. They live in the Park Extension area in a two-bedroom apartment. The yearly family income is \$15,000, they receive government subsidies.

The Imam family and Rahim family live in a permanent extended family-situation. In both cases, there are three generations of people living together in the same household. As I have mentioned, many of the other families also lived in extended family situations, but for them, the arrangements were never to be permanent.

Table 1 presents a summary of the characteristics of each family.



TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

Families	*	**	***		Length of stay	Number of		Yearly family income
	Education	Age	Occu.	unmarried children		adult/minor	\$	
	native/Canadian							
Hamid(h)	U	U	56	Unempd	30 yrs	2		15000
(w)	U	-	49	Unempd	27 yrs			
Uddin(h)	Col	U	53	Accnt.	29 yrs	1	1	120000
(w)	Col	-	45	H.Wife	23 yrs			
Enam (h)	U	U	55	Eng	27 yrs	1	1	100000
(w)	U	-	47	H.Wife	25			
Wakil(h)	U	DEC	53	G.Work	27 yrs	1	1	20000
(w)	HS	-	40	H.Wife	20 yrs			
Ahmed(h)	Col	DEC	48	ST.MGR.	22 yrs	3		58000
(w)	HS	-	44	MA.OPT	22 yrs			
(h)	U	-	64	UNEMPD	14 yrs			
Rahim(w)	U	-	57	UNEMPD	14 yrs	2	1	25000
(h)	Col	-	36	Waiter	8 yrs			
(w)	Col	-	28	MA.OPT.	4 yrs			
(h)	-	-	70	Rtd	5 yrs			
(w)	-	-	60	H.Wife	5 yrs			
Kamal(h)	HS	-	50	Bus	13 yrs	1	5	40000
(w)	PS	-	39	H.W	9 yrs			
Qazi (h)	Col	-	35	Cook	13 yrs		1	15000
(w)	Col	-	27	H.Wife	5 yrs			
Imam (h)	HS	-	32	Busi	13 yrs	-	-	120000
(w)	Col	-	22	H.Wife	2 yrs			
(h)	PS	-	43	Busi	8 mo			
(w)	PS	-	36	H.Wife	8 mo			
Saber(h)	U	DEC	49	UNEMPD	2 yrs		4	15000
(w)	U	-	42	H.Wife	2 yrs			

(cont. on the next page)

Notes:

*	**	***
Families	Education	Occupation
h=husband w=wife	PS=Primary School HS=High School Col=College (CEGEP) U=University DEC=Trade Course	Rtd=Retired Busi=Business Owner H.wife=homemaker G.Work=General Worker St.Mgr=Store Manager M.Opt=Machine Operator Accnt=Accountant Tech=Technician Unempd=Unemployed

**Ethical Considerations:**

Ethical concerns are as relevant for someone undertaking social research as they are for any other form of human contact (Hammersley, 1995:261). In order to ensure an ethical standard, I undertook a few precautionary measures. When approaching a possible respondent if they would be willing to talk to me, I spoke about the nature and the reasons for the research at length. I also informed them that the interviews would take a few hours, and would be at a time and place of their choice. I also assured them that the content of the interviews would be kept confidential and their names would not be disclosed in the final version. I repeated all this information again right before each interview. In addition, I informed them that it was their complete right to decline to answer a particular question if they so wished and that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time. I also asked them to let me know if they felt that the questions

were out of line. I had my subjects sign a form of consent stating all the above conditions.

I audio-taped each interview with their consent and at the end of each interview, I asked whether, if it became necessary, I might speak to her/him again. In order to maintain confidentiality, the real names of the participants have not been used, rather, a fictitious name has been assigned randomly to each family.

#### **Stress and Strains of Field Research:**

Field research can be at times an emotionally stressful experience for the researcher (Hammersley, 1995;113). In the beginning, my major concern was to get the respondents to speak to me about private issues. Being a Bangladeshi myself, I was aware of the fact that, culturally, Bangladeshis are very private people. It is seldom acceptable to speak to a non-family-member about personal matters.

I sometimes felt uncomfortable during the interviews. For example, one respondent told me that she was forty-years old, when her daughter was thirty-six. I could tell that the error was unintentional, as I knew that people from the rural areas of Bangladesh lack knowledge of their

real age. There is no system to record the date of birth in the rural areas. Age is not an important matter to them. Also while interviewing Sylhetti families, it was very hard for me to comprehend the Sylhetti dialect at times. I had to ask over and over to explain certain words.

At times, I was disturbed by the fact that I had to change the interview-setting against my will. My plan was to interview children separately from their parents. I was unable to do that in most of the cases.

I was also worried about the fact that most of my respondents had limited time to spare for me. I experienced this problem with male-respondents especially. In two cases, male respondents stopped the interviews before I was finished.

In a few cases, I was able to detect deception on the respondents' part. I believe the presence of the tape recorder was the cause of that. This factor was a constant worry for me. I tried to get rid of this problem by not using a tape recorder for the follow-up interviews.

The most stressful moment was the day I spent interviewing Mrs.Ahmed. In the middle of the interview she started to cry loudly which put me in a totally uncomfortable situation. I got nervous and asked her whether I said something wrong. She assured me repeatedly that it was not my fault. At the end of the interview she

thanked me and said that the whole experience worked as a therapy for her. Nevertheless, it was an emotionally draining experience for me. I used the same questions for other respondents but did not get the same type of reaction. I assume that such occurrences vary by topic and by the characteristics and life circumstances of respondents.

### **Summary**

In this study, I explore the specific cultural values that influence the processes of adaptation. To what extent do Bangladeshi people remain culturally distinct from the general population of Montreal? What are the cultural values most and least amenable to the adaptation process? How do the experience of the respondents differ or imitate the experience of other Indo-Pakistani groups in Canada and why? To what degree do variables such as, language skills, experience of discrimination, last years of schooling, length of residency in Canada etc. affect the outcomes of adaptations?

While the concentration on such a small number of respondents does not permit generalizations to Bangladeshi immigrants in other social contexts, I do hope to provide a detailed analysis of the ways in which individual's weave together the cultural values and personal identities of their

original ethnic and national identity with those of the larger and complex host society of Montreal. A major emphasis of this study is on the process of adaptation and less on the outcomes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this dissertation is to trace through the process of adaptation by first identifying those values which define the unique cultural characteristics of the Bangladeshi community and then to ascertain how, and the degree to which the configuration of these values are modified in the host society of Montreal, Quebec. My approach is to conceptually isolate the key values of the community and then to determine which values are most likely to be retained, which are most likely to be modified and which are most likely to be abandoned. Of course, the mere fact that respondents in my sample chose to leave Bangladesh already disposes them toward the acceptance of some amount of change in their value systems. Nevertheless, the degree of change and the nature of that change as expressed in their degrees of commitment to their previous values remains a viable focus of the enquiry.

Adaptation in a new society for an ethnic group includes uprooting oneself, disrupting established relationships, and engaging in the process of "growing roots" in a new society. Sociologically, the process of becoming part of a new society is a lengthy one. It may take an entire lifetime, and it may involve several generations. Immediate adaptation, as I found from my interviews, involves finding workable solutions for a great variety of problems. These include learning a foreign language, finding employment, earning an adequate income and finding appropriate housing. Socio-demographic variables, such as age at the time of migration and education, also affect the adaptation process.

The process of adaptation usually starts with the experience of culture shock, which takes place immediately after the arrival.

*A Bangladeshi man just arrived in a North American city. He was tired and hungry from the long flight. He was looking for food on the streets, but could not find anything familiar. Then he saw a hotdog vendor selling his dogs to people. He was so hungry that he could not take it anymore. He asked the vendor, "What do you call these?" The vendor replied, "These are hotdogs. You want one?" "Okay, give me one," he said. As the vendor prepared the hotdog, he was watching with disgust, then finally asked, "Do you have any 'other' part of the dog?"*

This is a joke very famous in the Bangladeshi community which is a perfect example to understand the culture shock factor.

Many immigrants experience what has come to be known as culture shock. This is a phenomenon that often has several



phases; an immediate phase, usually taking place at the time of the immigrants' initial exposure to the new culture, and a later and ongoing phase, resulting from the immigrants' deeper awareness of the society's relationship to him/her. However, not all immigrants necessarily experience culture shock and not all who experience it do so in the same degree. Mr.Wakil recalls:

*I threw up first time when I saw fresh pork at the grocery store.*

For Mrs.Hamid seeing snow was the first shock she suffered from. Cold winters seem to be at the top of the list for most of my respondents. Many female respondents also talked about the shock of doing household chores by themselves<sup>1</sup>. As Mrs.Wakil puts it:

*When my sister-in-law asked me to clean the bathroom, I cried for the whole day. Who ever heard of cleaning bathrooms without the help of the servants!...I complained to my husband when he came home from work in the evening. I was devastated when he told me that from then on, I had to clean both of the bathrooms. I felt like I was dying! I wrote a letter to my parents to send me tickets to go back home. I did not want to stay in Canada for one more day!*

Lima, Mr.and Mrs.Rahim's daughter-in-law, feels the same way:

*Sometimes I fantasize about living in Dhaka (the capital city of Bangladesh) and having four servants to do all the housework.*

The language issue seems to be another major problem, as Mr.Ahmed says:

*I still vividly remember how helpless I felt when*

*people spoke French to me. I still could not overcome that fear totally....I never learned French.*

This bewilderment may be accompanied by feeling conspicuous, by feeling like a stranger and by uncertainty about what behaviour is expected. Feelings of embarrassment, shame and guilt are often present, side by side with feelings of discomfort.

According to Mrs.Qazi:

*No, I don't go to stores myself...my husband shops.... I am always afraid that the cashier would ask me something.*

Mr.Rahim feels very passionate about the moral issue:

*When I saw a young couple kissing in the metro, I felt disgusted!...I don't want my daughter to watch these! We are Muslims! We are not supposed to be exposed to this nonsense.*

The immediate phase of culture shock for the immigrant is bewilderment with a new and different way of life and customs and an accompanying realisation that, not only is one different from others, but that one is an 'outsider' and not readily accepted by members of the local society.

The later phase of culture shock is akin to the phenomenon of social change in which there is a shift or disruption of the group support for values or norms that have been traditionally accepted and deemed to be correct. Unlike the initial phase, this phase takes place within the context of one's personal, informal, interaction with both persons from

outside the ethnic group and within those close to the immigrant, especially the immigrant's own growing children. It is a realisation that those close to oneself do not necessarily support or share the same values and norms that one has accepted as normal and universal. The consequence may be self-doubt, disorientation and heightened feelings of alienation from both the society at large and the immigrant's ethnic group. The consequence may also be, which tends to be true in case of all ten families that I studied, a tendency to keep a small circle of friends in the same ethnic group for support, especially the informal groups and organization.

#### **MAKING A LIVING**

For any newly arrived immigrant, the most important spheres of everyday affairs which can affect the development of a coherent status image and value set, will be the degree of participation and acceptance in his or her social and economic activities. Given the principal reason for the migratory move, economic success - that is, achievement of economic aspirations - the success or failure of the immigrant's expectations in the economic system will have a marked effect on all other institutional adjustments that he or she may make to the new society.

On assessing the economic adaptation of members of The Bangladeshi group in Canada, there are many factors which

should be taken into consideration. These include their educational and work qualifications, their motivations and aspirations, as well as the degree of occupational mobility possible. The existence of racial prejudice and discrimination are also factors that will influence occupational mobility.

Individually and collectively, Bangladeshis are continually faced with the problem of initial incorporation into Canadian society. New immigrants have to find their way, learn the rudiments of acceptable behaviour, find housing and find a job. Established community members must repeatedly deal with relatives and friends who are in this state, even though they may themselves have only been here a few years. All of my respondents went to live temporarily with their family or friends initially. They all, even the Saber Family, who came here only two years ago, opened their homes to newly arrived family and friends.

In this respect, chain migration is a significant help to new immigrants, who inevitably have relatives or friends. This process usually provides for a remarkably smooth transition into life in Canada. Initial costs for the new immigrants are low, both in economic, social, and psychological sense. By initially staying with other Bangladeshis the new immigrant is able to conserve his/her money at a time when it is needed most. In addition, they are brought immediately into familiar surroundings, out of which they can venture with far greater

assurance than if they were forced to begin on their own. More established Bangladeshis are in this way an important resource for their newly arrived compatriots and relatives.

It should be noted that this initial exposure to Canada also exerts a powerful re-socializing force on new immigrants. This is evidently true in regard to picking up the 'rules of the game' of Canadian society. What is not so evident is that this sort of initial exposure to Canada also exposes the new immigrant to Bangladeshi-Canadian customary behaviour, much of which differs radically from that practised by the very same individuals in Bangladesh. For example, clothing, hair styles, and food-habits among Bangladeshis in Canada closely approximate Canadian models; new immigrants typically change over almost instantaneously.

#### **The Problem of Finding Work:**

Once initially established, the next priority is a job. This is an economic necessity, and its importance is usually further magnified by the picture of Canada which new immigrants have of a country with virtually limitless economic potential. Most of the respondents, except for the four who came to Montreal as foreign students, started to work within a month or two of their arrival, even though the work was not well paid and of more inferior status than they wished. This is compensated for by sending out as many of the family into

workforce as is practical. Thus today, some of the wives work, so do most of the young adults still living with their parents.

After families are reasonably established (it took about a year for most of the respondents) primary wage earners typically feel a greater need to return to their chosen occupation. When they make the attempt they find many obstacles in their path. The fact that their families may be doing adequately already is in itself a disincentive to try to make the switch, for doing so frequently requires retraining and hence temporarily lowers one's income. Beyond this, those who do try to return to their field face three hurdles. The first of these is a near universal demand by employers for 'Canadian experience'. Mr.Saber worked as an engineer for twenty years in the Middle East, which is virtually meaningless in the Canadian context. Obviously this sets up a situation where the prospective employee often cannot win; because he/she has no 'Canadian experience' and therefore he/she is unlikely to be able to get any of it. Many of my respondents had been forced by this requirement to take on menial jobs which have nothing to do with their skill or previous experience. Mr. and Mrs. Rahim and their son and daughter-in-law, Mr.Iqbal, Mr.Wakil, Mr. and Mrs.Ahmed share this expereince. Mr. and Mrs. Saber, who immigrated only two

years ago, have been forced to remain unemployed.

There are substantial variations among the respondents based on their age, regional background, and levels of education which determine the length of time it takes them to find work after arrival. Among my respondents, the basic factors influencing this aspect seem to be age and their last years of schooling. People who came here in the 60s and 70s and had Canadian university education, had no problem finding work. As Mr.Enam states:

*At the time when we came, the Canadian economy was growing. They did not have enough skilled workers. I got my first job right after I finished my engineering degree, may be within a month or so. But for recent immigrants with the same skill-level, it is tougher. They mostly have to move to the States. Economy is saturated here. Job market is not lucrative anymore. I came here as a foreign student...I never thought that I would not go back. Then I was offered a job and settled here.*

In case of this respondent, along with Mr.Uddin, Reitz's (1997) suggestion of Canadian education as the strongest factor or occupational status becomes real. Reitz's findings became more obvious when I spoke to recent immigrants, such as Mr.Saber, who worked in the Middle East for 20 years as an engineer and has been living in Montreal since 1998. He has just finished a diploma in computer programming but remains unemployed. He says:

*I worked as an engineer for so many years for an international company... people here think that I don't know anything. I feel like a failure.*

*I have four children...I don't know what to do. All those years I spent at school and all the experience I had... suddenly they don't mean anything! It is degrading to live on welfare. But what else could I do?*

Mr.Hamid is fifty-six year old, has been living in Canada for 29 years, has Canadian training as an accountant, has been unemployed for five years. In his words:

*Is this the life I wanted? I came here for a better life.... After working for so many years, suddenly I am unemployed! Nobody wants to hire me because I am old. I have two children who go to the university. How would I support them? They are good kids. They support themselves by working hard. I feel so guilty!*

Mr.Hamid thought that his age could be a factor contributing to his unemployed status as well as his ethnicity.

For recent immigrants who came here with some education, but did not have Canadian training, finding work in factories or restaurants, was not too difficult. Bangladeshis usually take help from other Bangladeshis for finding work. As Mr.Qazi says:

*Two weeks after my arrival in Montreal, my friend took me to his workplace and I got the job as a busboy. I have been working since on and off....Not really hard to find a restaurant job. But without the knowledge of French, I can not work as a waiter, which could have been better financially.*

For the Sylhetti respondents, who own their businesses, finding work, of course, was not an issue. They never intended



to find work outside the enclave economy. Mr.Imam worked at his relative's grocery store for two years after coming here. Then after getting sufficient experience, he opened his own grocery store. The same was true for Mr.Kamal. He opened his own factory after working for his relative for a few years. The Sylhettis developed an enclave economy in order to secure their financial well being. This is a group without a significant formal education and language skills. Without these competitive skills they would be virtually powerless in the open job market. Therefore, they developed a completely new sector of economy where there is no competition.

The most commonly used channels through which most of my respondents search for work are informal ethnic contacts. A number of studies have shown that, in searching for work, immigrants tend to rely on their own ethnic groups and their friends or acquaintances in the group more than on public or any other institutional employment-search facilities (Isajiw, 1999: 96). My respondents are no exception. All male and female respondents got their first jobs, both in the ethnic enclave economy and outside the community, through their friends or acquaintances from the community, except for the Uddin and Enam families. In the case of these two particular families, both Mr.Uddin and Mr.Enam received Canadian education and they did not have to seek help from the

community. Mr.Hamid, the accountant, who is unemployed now, has Canadian education and was employed by an international company in Singapore as a Canadian. Mr.Hamid picked the job advertisement from the classified section of The Montreal Gazette and applied. It is apparent that employment in better paid occupations is dependent on higher levels of Canadian education, as Reitz (1997, 1998) states.

Employment obtained through informal ethnic contacts may ease the search process. Often, however, it has negative long-term consequences. The job opportunities available within the network of one ethnic minority group are often limited. Hence a new immigrant using only informal ethnic contacts to find a job may become locked into a low-status job with no chance of advancement.

Mrs.Ahmed has been working as a machine operator for eleven years now. She received only two pay-raises in these eleven years. Mr. A works for a grocery store, he never had a pay-raise since he started working for them eight years ago. Mr.Qazi, Who works as a cook, says:

*I am happy with what I make. I don't speak French. Who else would hire me? It is very difficult to get a job these days. Nobody wants to hire a Bangladeshi cook who does not speak French...At least I am not unemployed.*

Lack of knowledge of the dominant language works against the immigrants in two ways. It cuts them off from those

channels of finding a job that require the language to obtain job contacts and job leads, and it closes the doors to those jobs that require the use of the dominant language as part of the job itself.

The exclusive immigrant occupational networks are an important factor in the creation and maintenance of a double labour market in society in which the newly arrived immigrants are often exploited by members of their own group. They are often paid less than what they should be. As Mr. Kamal states:

*...we are always trying to take advantage of others. We, as a people, are not very good natured.. When I came here first, I used to work at my relative's grocery store for two dollars an hour. Is that justice?*

Immediately upon arrival, however, immigrants are not as much concerned with the long-range aspects of a job as they are with the problem of getting a job, often any job, in order to support themselves and their families. They are also concerned with establishing themselves as soon as possible among the people of their own ethnic background. This may not necessarily increase their job satisfaction, but it does provide a more amenable social and psychological environment, one in which they do not feel alienated and in which they can interact with people whose values, concerns, life styles and language they can readily understand and on whom they feel that they can count in case of need.

### **Idealistic Expectations:**

We now will look at some of the social-psychological problems of immigrant adaptation. Immigrants coming to North America often have an idealistic conception of the society and the conditions of life. They have a tendency to see Canada or the United States as a country in which life is bound to be better than what it has been before immigration. They often have a perception that it will be easy to find a job, that there is a demand for people like them and that they will be treated with justice and consideration and without prejudice and discrimination.

Unfortunately, reality often does not measure up to the preconceptions of the immigrants and disappointment follows. The greatest disappointment after arrival appears to be with employment opportunities, income and cost of living, and discrimination. Since 1967 better educated persons have a better chance of being admitted into Canada.<sup>3</sup> The immigrants

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<sup>3</sup> Canada's recent immigration flow has been shaped most by modifications in the 1952 Act which were introduced in 1962 and 1967 (Marr, 1975; Green, 1976). These took the form of new regulations which, in the first instance, technically eliminated discrimination on the basis of race or nationality. Secondly, the criteria for selecting independent immigrants were set out in the form of nine factors, against which applicants would have to score 50 out of a possible 100 points in order to be admitted. The sponsored class was reduced to directly dependent relatives, and a new class of nominated immigrants was created which helped non-dependent relatives to gain admittance. Finally,

with a university education and with work experience are quite likely to be more disappointed after arrival. As Mr. Rahim states:

*I always heard that people earn a lot of money in Canada. My children were crazy about coming to Canada....look at me now!*

Mr. and Mrs. Rahim have been unemployed for more than six years. They are financially dependent on their son and daughter-in-law.

Mr. Ahmed feels the same way:

*I had a dignified job in Bangladesh....I used to belong to a middle class in Bangladesh. Now I am at the lower class here....My boss here does not even have a high school diploma, and I am taking orders from him. The main reason for me to come here was to make money, which I never did.*

The reasons for such idealistic expectations are divided. On one hand, people moving away from a condition of poverty and lack of opportunity or lack of political and social freedom are bound to see their place of destination as something better, as a place where the old problem will be no more. In addition, idealistic expectations among immigrants are stimulated by the international image of Canada or the United States as countries that are rich and free. This image is strengthened by North American products, by American power politics, by tourists etc.

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in 1967, provision was made for visitors to apply for landed immigrant status while in Canada.

The outcomes, of course, are not always disappointing. The Kamal and Imam families seemed happy with their economic success. They achieved what they expected. They came here to build their business, and they were successful. Both Mr.Kamal and Mr.Imam have little formal education compared to others. They did not have to suffer from the strain of status dislocation. As Mr.Kamal states:

*I am happy that I was able to come to Canada. There was no business opportunity in Bangladesh. There are thugs and hooligans....I had to pay protection money. I am happy here....People in my village respect me for my success.*

People with Canadian training also seemed to be satisfied. Mr.Enam and Mr.Uddin, both are happy with their achievement in Canada. They both came as foreign students and wanted to go back after graduating. Then they were offered jobs with substantial amount of salary, and they decided to stay. They started their working lives in Canada with financial incentives, they too, did not have to go through the "status strain".

The main factors which appears to account for status satisfaction is the degree to which status in Bangladesh can be matched or improved in Canada. The primary means to ensure this outcome is evidence of training or general education in Canada.

It is important to mention here that for most of the parents, children's education seem to be the priority. The Ahmed Family sent their daughter to a French private school, but they could not do it for their other two children because of the financial burden. The daughters from the Enam and Uddin Families went to a semi-private CEGEP. The parents from both of the families believe that their daughters got accepted at McGill University because of their private schooling. For the rest of the families, the idea of private schooling for children is appealing, but they don't feel they are financially well off to realize their wishes.

#### **Discrimination at Work:**

Discrimination results when any one group or a set of groups are continuously excluded from opportunities. It is difficult to study discrimination empirically, since few people will admit to discriminating against ethnic groups and since the manner of discrimination is often subtle. Sociologists usually gather all the data on occupational distribution and related variables among ethnic groups, and if differences in the distribution cannot be explained in terms of any other variables, in particular qualification and education, the conclusion is drawn that they are due to discrimination (Herberg, 1990).

Mr.Ahmed reports that he did not get a raise or a

promotion since he started to work for a particular company eight years ago. According to him, people who were hired after him and with less education and qualification, were promoted only because they were whites.

Mr.Uddin believes that his Muslim-sounding name was the first barrier he had to cross in order to land a job. He did not get any job interviews until he changed his first name 'Muhammad' to 'Haris' (which is a Bengali but English-sounding name). Mr.Rahim's son complains that he was called 'Paki' at work numerous times and his co-workers make fun of his accent. Mr.Hamid believes that he lost his job because of his ethnic background.

Self-reported discrimination, however, while a valid method of measuring discrimination, involves the danger that some respondents may attribute all their failures to discrimination while there may be other reasons for them. Likewise, it is very difficult to observe, prove and to study discrimination directly.

Discrimination also limits the employment opportunities of newly arrived immigrants. In case of most of my respondents, discrimination based on their ethnicity or race was not a big issue. Rather, discrimination based on differences in their professional and technical qualifications seemed to be the



major factor. As Mrs.Ahmed states:

*People here are nice. Bangladeshi people are more prejudiced than them. I feel perfectly okay working with Canadian people. I never experienced racism. It is Bangladeshi people who judge me...are disrespectful towards me.*

Mr.Uddin thinks:

*There are people who are racist. May be not openly, but they are prejudiced against 'black' people like us...We have to be better than them in order to get jobs. Once you prove your competence, racism is not an issue.*

None of my respondents, except for Mr. And Mrs. Hamid, and Mr.Ahmed, think that racism is a problem in the job market. As

Mr.Hamid says:

*They (white Canadians) think we are not as good as Them. We are brown people...they call us 'Paki'. I am an unemployed accountant. Find me an unemployed white accountant.*

For most of the respondents, the basic problem about discrimination involves qualifications. Employers do not give full recognition to training acquired in countries other than Canada. The problem is most severe in the medical and health professions, architecture, engineering, teaching and a number of other technical trades. There is research evidence that qualifications obtained in the United States and Great Britain are generally more acceptable in Canada than those obtained elsewhere (Richmond, 1974:13). Furthermore, some jobs require Canadian experience, a requisite that newly arrived immigrants obviously cannot fill. Mr.Saber's experience illustrates the

frustrating consequences:

*I worked in the Middle East for twenty years as an engineer. Now I am nothing here! They are asking me for a Canadian diploma in engineering. All these years of hardwork and experience mean nothing!*

Further evidence that the "right" credentials are necessary; that credentials earned in Bangladesh are not valued as highly, is provided in the following accounts. Mrs. Rahim taught in a high school in Bangladesh for fifteen years. She worked in a garment factory for two years after arriving here, now she is unemployed. Her daughter-in-law was an officer at a bank in Bangladesh, now she works as a sewing machine operator. Mr. Qazi used to be an electronic technician in Bangladesh, now works as a cook in a restaurant. Mrs. Ahmed used to be a high school teacher and later on, a flight attendant, in Bangladesh, now she works as a sewing machine operator. Mrs. Saber was working as a medical doctor in the Middle East, now she is a housewife.

Some children complained about being called 'browny' or 'paki' at school, but most of them think that it is a non-issue. The older daughter from the Ahmed family thinks that people are even more discriminatory in Bangladesh. Only the sixteen year old son from Uddin Family feels strongly about the race issue. In his own words:

*I hate white kids. They are stupid. They think they are better than us.*

### **The Problem of Status Dislocation:**

Judging from these last responses, it is obvious that many immigrants experience a drop in social status when they begin their first jobs in Canada, i.e., their new jobs in Canada are of lower status than their previous jobs or they do not require the qualifications that they obtained in their previous country.

There is evidence that some of the respondents suffered downward status mobility on their arrival in Canada. The most severe downward mobility occurred for those members of the group who were previously employed in skilled trades, five male and three female respondents in these occupations having to accept jobs as unskilled or service workers or to remain unemployed.

The longitudinal study 'Three Years in Canada' (1974) found that by the end of the three-year residence in Canada, at least one-third of the immigrants sampled had not found or begun jobs in the fields in which they had intended to enter upon arrival in Canada. After the immigrants had spent one year in Canada, they were asked to give reasons why they had not obtained jobs in their intended occupations. The reasons given were as follows: 20

percent could not obtain acceptance or recognition of their qualifications, 20 percent lacked requisite Canadian experience, 21 percent simply could not find a job in their intended areas, 16 percent found that lack of knowledge of the language was a barrier and 10 percent simply chose different jobs (Green Paper on Immigration, Ottawa: Manpower and Immigration, 1974).

The effect of status drop or dislocation on the psychological well-being of immigrants can be substantial. As Mr. Rahim states:

*I am a total failure...I used to work for Civil Aviation in Bangladesh, now I am unemployed. My children don't respect me...my health is failing. Look at my wife. She had such a respectable job...now she is sick and almost bedridden.*

Age at the time of migration seems to affect the process of migration, Mr. Rahim is a good example of that. Immigrant seniors like Mr. Rahim and Mr. Saber, are particularly vulnerable to the stress of migration. They both immigrated to Canada in later years of their lives. It is particularly difficult for seniors to find jobs and to start from the beginning. Koranyi (1981) notes that among aged immigrants an identification with the new Canadian culture, manifested by understanding its traditions and political ideology and possibly learning English or French as a second language, is minimal or altogether nonexistent. It is also very true in

case of Mr. Imam's parents, who seem to have no connection with the larger society whatsoever.

Mr. Rahim's daughter-in-law, 'Lima' works as a sewing machine operator, states:

*My parents don't know that I am a factory-worker now. I am always scared that somebody from here would tell them. I wanted to go to school for trade courses, but I have a big family to support. I don't know what to do. Sometime I feel angry with my in-laws...They brought me here to work and support them...*

Mrs. Qazi is also unhappy about her husband's occupational prestige:

*...relatives back home think that he owns a restaurant. It will be degrading if my parents knew...He did not disclose to my family that he only works as a cook. Now I can't tell anybody. I feel betrayed...I am angry with him (the husband).*

In the case of Mrs. Ahmed, this issue seems to be devastating.

She was crying as she was saying:

*What did my kids do? Why don't they (people from the community with white collar jobs) allow their kids to associate with my kids? It is not their fault that their parents are factory workers...they are innocent kids! Why should they suffer for their parents' mistake? I am not just someone from the street...I used to have a good job in Bangladesh. My husband used to work for Romanian Embassy. Then how come they think we are nobody? ...my kids go to Concordia (university)... How come they don't get any respect from them?*

For all these respondents, a decline in their social status

seems to be devastating. Social class, which is a combination of education (Canadian) and financial success, seemed to be a

vital category. The class difference that have been in Bangladesh seems to have been strengthened by the simple factor of education, received in Canada. This proved to be a major factor in relative success in finding work and raising a family.

**Pattern of Expenditure:**

The patterns of economic expenditure illustrates very well the way in which the Bangladeshis adapt to Canadian society, as experienced in Montreal . For them, the goal of owning a home is the fundamental material objective. Owning a home means security and symbolizes prosperity and the stable family. It is also an important status marker, and much Bangladeshi economic activity is aimed at achieving it. Very few immigrants bring with them enough money to secure the downpayment for a house, and consequently home ownership is achieved through their efforts in Canada. Typically, they move through three phases of housing into home ownership. First comes a short stay with relatives, which does not normally extend much beyond a few months. Then immigrant families usually tend to move to apartments located in Cote des Neiges or Park Extension. Living in small apartments allows the family to keep expenses low and thus to save money toward the day they can afford to buy a house. Until house prices and mortgage rates soared recently this accumulation phase

typically took five to ten years depending on the age, occupation and the family size.

Bangladeshi immigrants' first house purchases, representing the third stage, tends to maximize benefits in the light of financial costs. The ideal house must be large and closely situated to work. This is the reason why most of the professional respondents bought their homes in the South Shore or the West Island area depending on where they work.

For the respondents who are not professionals, the ideal house is a duplex, with at least one rental floor, for this makes keeping up with the mortgage much easier. The compromise between use value and price means that most such houses are the ones in the areas originally occupied primarily by working class Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Indians and Sri Lankans.

Buying a first house is in actuality part of a larger process of establishment which ties it to chain migration, described previously. A large house can serve as part of chain migration by its use in accomodating new immigrants. Insofer as other important expenditure go, Bangladeshi immigrants try to balance their ability to pay for what they purchase with their desire to maintain status in the eyes of other community members. Status markers in this sense include not only having a house, but also furnishing it well, and having a new car. These are heavy financial burdens for the new immigrant, but the ready availability of credit in Canada is used to its

maximum. Frequently this has led to substantial financial difficulties when the family's income is in any way diminished.



## ***SOCIAL ADAPTATION***

With reference to social relationships among members of the Bangladeshi group, the concept of social networks looms important. As a tool in illustrating such aspects as friendship patterns, kinship roles, cultural patterns or associational ties, it is particularly useful. Because social networks reach across and between institutions and associations, they provide a means of examining interrelationships in the behaviour of people in different contexts.

As with virtually all immigrant groups the Bangladeshi family and household constitute a reservoir of difference and continuity in a rapidly changing world. Like most immigrants, Bangladeshi immigrants have little by way of a sociological perspective on how immigration will affect their families, and come to Canada with the conviction that it should be possible to maintain family organization much as it was. As a result Bangladeshi immigrant families inevitably reach a point where they must reconcile the reality of the changes in family and household which immigration has generated with their ideal models for both. Frequently this reconciliation is extremely stressful.

Consider the question of who will live together in a given household, as opposed to the model of who 'should' live together. Older couples would like to establish households in Canada where their adult children and their children live with them under one roof; in Bangladesh this objective was frequently realized, if for no other reason than that the younger couples had nowhere else to go. Here, things are very different. Younger couples and young unmarried adults have economic and social resources available to a much greater extent than they would in Bangladesh, and therefore are not necessarily dependent on their parents. In addition, they have access to a far greater range of behaviours and life strategies. Adult Bangladeshis who wish others to live with them are therefore restricted considerably in their power to enforce their expectations and truly extended families are unstable and relatively rare.

Only two out of ten families in this study live in an extended family situation, one of these families is a part of Bangladeshi enclave economy. Almost all of the families who have been in Canada for more than ten years, at some point, lived with their adult extended family members they sponsored to Canada. These factors have led to a wide variety of household arrangements among Bangladeshi immigrants without a typical form in any normative sense. The most common household form is the nuclear family. But this is due to the contradictory and centrifugal interests of close relatives beyond the nuclear family. These larger and more inclusive arrangements are difficult to maintain. Some households are composed of a nuclear family with one or two dependent adults in residence- elderly parents, unmarried daughters and sons, recently immigrated single adults, and the like.

Immigration also places great stress on relations between husband and wives and parents and children and both constitute serious problems. Consider, for example, patterns of status and authority between males and females. The Bangladeshi males came to Canada with chauvinistic notions of the relationship between men and women. Bangladeshi men expect their wives to be subordinate to their authority, to raise children, and keep house. They expect to be able to be make all important decisions concerning the family.

Moreover, by necessity and choice, the world of Bangladeshi women here is wider and more varied than it was in Bangladesh. Husbands are economically rational enough to see that it is in the family's interests if their wives work, even though they know that this implies a certain loss of control on their part. Women's horizons expand considerably in the context of work, as they do in association with their Canadian friends and other Bangladeshi women who have been here longer. Much familial conflict stems from women refusing to acknowledge the unrealistic demands of their husbands to conform to Bangladeshi standards of female behaviour. Parallel conflicts arise from husbands abandoning their familial responsibilities in the process of accepting the appearance of 'Canadian ways' without fully internalizing them.

The majority of the respondents are first-generation immigrants. Many of the wives have come here after marriage. Several of the husbands have been in Canada or in a foreign country longer than their wives, indicating that many Bangladeshi men had gone back to Bangladesh to get married. Women, more than men, show evidence of being custodians of religious and cultural convictions. The areas of cultural retention are those where negative effects are not perceived. All the women continue to cook Bangladeshi food, most of them eat halal only. The sari is considered feminine and beautiful and is worn on special occasions. The majority wear their hair long. Observance of religious festivals, social and cultural ethnic activities continue, while participating in broader Canadian activities is restricted. All parents are eager to have their children visit Bangladesh, and the wives go to Bangladesh more often than their husbands.

Areas of change and adoption of Canadian ways occur when the continuation of traditional patterns is perceived as resulting in negative consequences. Some new patterns of behaviour, such as western dress and food, are adopted relatively easily. Saris are worn for special occasions while ordinary Western outfits are worn, not only to combat extreme weather conditions but also because the women then appear less visible, thus minimizing social contrast effects.

Other areas of change are accepted with less enthusiasm and some with a great deal of resistance. Perhaps the greatest cultural differences are in values and attitudes affecting relationships between males and females, a sensitive area and one affected by perceptions of female honour and chastity in Bangladesh.

The findings suggest that most members of the group show significant change in cultural values. Length of residence, last years of schooling and regionalism are the key variables affecting the degree of the changes. Those with longer residence in Canada, those who received Canadian university education and those who are not part of the Bangladeshi enclave economy, show high degree of cultural adaptation.

#### **Changes in Cultural Values:**

The maintenance of cultural identity is an important concern for all the ten families. The fact that almost all Bangladeshi parents are anxious to make their children knowledgeable in their own culture and encourage them to visit Bangladesh frequently indicates a desire for the preservation of their distinctive culture. Attendance at cultural and religious events reveals their considerable and continuing interest in Bangladesh. All the parents are keen that their children should learn and practise their religion.

While the children appear to be greatly influenced by what their parents say, interview data and observations suggest that they experience a strong desire for acceptance by their peer groups. The peer groups exert strong pressures for 'uniformity' within the group and actual differences in achievement and status tend to be minimized. The use of language, for example, while directly related to the length of stay in Canada, tends to be English or French rather than the mother tongue and English/French. While almost all children understand the mother tongue they all tend to talk in English or French.

Values are general criteria of what is desirable and what is undesirable. The types of values that are in conflict with the values of the host society are those that centre on workplace, community life, family life, friendship and communication. The North American vision of individualism emphasizes the desirability of thinking, planning, deciding and working for oneself, with as little constraint from others as possible.

Bangladeshis bring with them a culture that emphasizes familialistic, community-oriented values. According to these values, individuals, in all their actions, should keep others in mind, particularly their family - often, extended family and friends - and their community.

Examples of the expression of these values are the following. In the Ahmed Family, two of the children, who are full-time students, work part-time. They both hand their pay cheques to their father. In return, they get weekly allowance. Mrs. Ahmed also hands her pay cheque to her husband. She does not receive a regular allowance, but has to ask for money from her husband whenever needed.

There is also a norm that the older sister should marry first. The younger sister has to wait until the oldest gets married. Mr. and Mrs. Ahmed received a few marriage proposals for their younger daughter, but they would never let her marry before her elder sister. A final example is the finding that all of the respondents who are parents felt it was their obligation to their ethnic group to teach their children Bengali, and to contribute to the group's general welfare.



With consecutive generations, among my respondents, however, many, though not necessarily all, familialistic, community-oriented values are becoming less significant, and individualistic values are acquiring more significance. The Imam Family and the Rahim Family live in an extended family arrangement. Situations in each case are different in some respects.

The Imam family is a Sylhetti family with very strong family values. There are eleven members of the family of three generations. The arrangement seems to be working for them, because they still lead a very traditional life-style. Women in this family don't work, they have the least connection with the outside world. Married women in this family don't go out unchaperoned. Here is a portion of the interview I had with Mrs.Imam and her sister-in-law Mrs.Parvez.

*Interviewer: Do you read the newspaper, Local or Bengali?*

*Mr.I: Not regularly. Sometimes my mother-in-law's son (husband)<sup>4</sup> brings Bengali newspapers from the store.*

*Interviewer: Do you go to the community variety shows?*

*Mrs.I: No.*

*Mrs.P: Men are too busy to bring us there. They work all the time.*

*Interviewer: Can't you go all by yourself?*

*Mrs.P: (laughing) I don't know where they have those functions.*

*Interviewer: What if you wanted to go there alone, would your husband allow that?*

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<sup>4</sup> It is interesting that she uses the term "my mother-in-law's son" instead of "my husband". In traditional families, it is still obligatory for wives not to call their husbands by their names and show respect in front of others.

*Mrs.P: Why would I want to go alone? I have my children, my sisters...*

*Mrs.I: Nobody would ask us not to go...but I would not go.*

*Interviewer: Why do you say so?*

*Mrs.I: Because I can go anywhere I like. I go to the school (language school) by myself. Nobody asks me not to go. But school is different. I don't go anywhere else by myself. Where would I go?*

*Interviewer: How about shopping?*

*Mrs.I: He (the husband) brings me whatever I want. I don't need to go to the mall.*

*Interviewer: Your mother-in-law is present here, I am asking in front of her. Do you think you have enough freedom at home?*

*Mrs.I: Yes. My mother-in-law never bothers me. She is like my mother.*

*Interviewer: So it is perfectly okay for you to live with your in-laws?*

*Mrs.I: Yes. They are my family. Where would I live without them?*

Mrs.Imam's unmarried sister-in-law 'Lopa' supports their views, but thinks that extended family arrangements are not for everybody. When her time comes, she would be willing to share her household with her in-laws, if there was no 'problem'. But she certainly would not accept abuse from her in-laws. I asked her,

*Interviewer: What do you mean by abuse?*

*Lopa: Many in-laws abuse their brides. It is wrong. Sometimes they beat them. You know that. There are so many brides commit suicide because the abuse they suffer in the hands of their in-laws. I would not allow that to happen to me. In such situations, extended family system should not be maintained.*

The demographic profile of the Rahim Family is a bit different than the Imam Family. All Family members, regardless

of gender, are fairly well educated and are from urban areas. I interviewed Lima, Mr. And Mrs.Rahim's daughter-in-law, separate from her in-laws:

*Interviewer: What do you miss most?*

*Mrs.Lima: (paused for a moment) My freedom. Here I feel like a slave.*

*Interviewer: Why do you say so?*

*Mrs.Lima: My in-laws control my life. I wish they would leave me alone. I told my husband, we have to move to Toronto.*

*Interviewer: Yes, job prospects are better there.*

*Mrs.Lima: That too. But that is the only way to separate from my in- laws.*

Among the children, except for Lopa and two teen-age children of Mr. and Mrs.Kamal (both families are Sylhetti), no one else agrees to live with their in-laws. All three children, who agree, are recent immigrants, who still value traditional ways. Parents from Imam and Kamal Family believe that extended family arrangements should be maintained in the next generation. Mrs.Wakil feels that she would be very happy to live with her married sons, but her sons would not agree, she knows that. At the same time, she thinks that she would not be feeling the same way if she had daughters. She would never want her daughters to live with her 'mother-in-law'. Parents of the Uddin and Enam families, are not totally against it, but they don't want their children to live in one. Parents of the Ahmed and Qazi families are against the extended family system. Mrs.Ahmed states that she would never allow her son to live with her after he gets married (she

herself lived with her in-laws prior to coming here, and was an abused bride).

***Problem of Language:***

Language is the key to the deeper feelings, attitudes and values shared in a society. That is, to fully understand these, one has to have an ample knowledge of the language of the people. The problem of learning a new language in order to adapt to a new society seems especially stressful in Quebec.

All my respondents are from Montreal and its surrounding area. Except for the Imam and the Kamal Family, all of them are proficient in English, but none of the parents speak French. The problem of Language seems to be a vital issue for most of them. Mr.Kamal often is frustrated over not being able to help the kids with their homework:

*I have no idea what are they doing in school. How would I help them when I don't know any French! I can't even read the circulars they send me from their schools. I have to rely on the kids for translating them to me...I feel like a fool!*

Mrs.Ahmed has three adult children and is able to communicate in English quite well, yet her inability to speak French also put her in a compromising position:

*They (the children) speak French between them...it makes me crazy! I don't understand what they are talking about! They laugh, they giggle, and I feel frustrated! I can't even monitor their phone conversations*

*with their friends! I am always worried when their friends call. I don't know what they are talking about. It could be very dangerous...you never know... I feel like I am being left out from my children's lives.*

For Imam Family, the problem seems to be about life and death. Mr. Imam's mother, who is illiterate and does not speak an official language, needs regular kidney dialysis. She goes to the hospital along with her husband who, also, does not speak either English or French. In her words:

*They (the doctors and the nurses) take care of me like their own.... They don't understand my language, but they never loose temper. I try to communicate by gesturing...it is not enough...I have trouble explaining my problems to the doctor. That is not their fault.*

Women from Imam and Kamal Family also state that they have to go to a particular Indian lady Doctor, who is a general practitioner and speaks Bengali, for all of their health crises, even gynecological needs.

Interestingly enough, none of the children complained about language problem, not even the children who came fairly recently. Only the eight year child, from Imam Family, who came about eight months ago from Sylhet, spoke about language as a problem:

*She (the teacher at school) is mean. She gets angry sometimes. I don't understand what she says. She speaks too fast. I understand (French). I can't speak very well.*

Most of the children, except for the recent immigrants, state that they dislike to speak Bengali at home. In five of

the families, Enam, Uddin, Hamid, Ahmed and Wakil Family, children prefer to speak English with their parents, but parents usually respond in Bengali. But all of the children told me that they try to speak Bengali with members from their own community in social gatherings.

Only 4 out of 8 children who were born in Canada are proficient in both English and French. All children have some knowledge of Bengali, if not fluent. Moreover, 5 out of 8 children have some knowledge of religious verses in Arabic. All of the children, at some point in their early lives, were sent to the Sunday school to learn Arabic religious verses which is a tradition in Bangladesh. In addition to the problems of encountering two foreign languages, French and English, many of the children are required to learn their religious verses in Arabic. Some parents expressed their frustration over this practice. As Mrs.Enam states:

*I sent my daughters to piano class. Then I felt guilty for sending them to piano class rather than to religious class. Then I had them signed for religious class too. But after one Arabic class, they revolted. The younger one said that she would not return to that class. The elder one said that she would go to only one class, either to the piano class, or to the Arabic class. The choice was mine. Just imagine, how guilty I felt!*

Mrs.Uddin feels the same way:

*My son quit the Arabic class first. He was complaining that he did not like the teacher. Then I sent him to another teacher. He still did not like the other teacher.*

*Then he finally stopped going there. As soon as he dropped out of the class, my daughter stopped going there too. Now I am feeling so guilty...Allah would never forgive me!*

It is interesting to notice that the parents are more focused on religious teachings rather than French lessons. Of course, this is an example of cultural values related to religion.

Most of my respondents have a working knowledge of English (Except for the Imam and Kamal families) and those who work, mostly work in English environment. Some of the parents have a little knowledge of French, none was fluent. None of them complained about language problems at work. But almost all of them believed that knowledge of French could upgrade their careers. It is compatible with Borhek's (1970) study, who states that fluency in at least one official languages is almost certainly a basic prerequisite for economic adaptation. People who own their business seemed to be less worried about the language at work. But that is because they service their own community. Mr.Kamal has been in Montreal for thirteen years, he states:

*It is not a problem at work. Most of my clients are Bangladeshis.... I have some 'foreigner'<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> *It is interesting to notice that this particular respondent calls anybody outside the community as a*

*customers time to time, but I have employees to deal with them... If I have to sign a document, I ask my son to read it for me... Of course, it would have helped if I could read and write English and French.*

It is quite evident that the length of residence in Canada has no positive relationship with language skills (TABLE 2 on page 139). Sylhettis, who have been in Canada for more than a decade, don't speak English nor French. They don't need to learn since they interact exclusively in an enclave economy, both socially and professionally. But the children from these families, who came fairly recently, are learning to speak either English or French as they go to the schools.

Mr. and Mrs. Saber have been in Montreal for only two years; but they both, and their children, speak English. They had knowledge of English prior to coming to Canada. In this case, their educational background was more important than their residency in Canada in learning an official language.

On the other hand, children born in Canada have limited knowledge of Bengali. Most of them understand Bengali, but can't speak fluently. The children use either English or French while communicating with each other. This is true even for the children who migrated in their early years. It is interesting that children who understand Bengali, whenever, addressed by their parents or friends from the

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*'foreigner'. This illustrates the 'we' and 'they' (or*



community tend to answer in English or French. For the first generation immigrants, there is no significant loss of language.

The degree of retention of Bengali language among the respondents is illustrated in TABLE 2 on page 139.

***Influence of Education:***

Bangladeshis who came to Canada in the 1960s and 1970s with university education were mostly foreign students who attained a Canadian degree later. This is the group that sustained most of the value changes. Mr. Hamid, Enam, Wakil and Uddin came to Canada with a Bangladeshi university degree and most of them (Mr. Wakil went to a trade school) received Canadian university education.

Except for Mrs. Wakil, the wives also received university education in Bangladesh. The economic advantages of the professional class, added to other influences of class such as higher educational background, language fluency, differences in work atmosphere and social milieu, subject individuals to varying degrees of positive, overt or subtle experiences which prove to be vital in the process of adaptation.

These families have been in Montreal for the longest periods of time and have grown Canadian-born children. Because of their educational background, the parents were

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*ingroup/outgroup) feeling.*

exposed to the westernized culture even before they immigrated. So the transition after the immigration was less problematic than other families with less education.

These families celebrate some Canadian holidays, wear Canadian clothing while in public, and often eat Canadian food even at home. They support sex-education at school, most of them are against corporal punishment, and their children socialize with friends from other ethnic groups. Most of them also allow their children to socialize with friends from the opposite sex. The parents and children in these families often use English while communicating. The children speak English or French as the primary language while communicating with each other. These families also spend their leisure time as a family unit.

On the other hand, the degree of changes in values is lower in the families with less education. The Sylhetti families, for example, have very low levels of formal education. They are part of the Bangladeshi enclave economy and maintain their traditional values most. The parents in these families don't wear Canadian clothing, they don't eat Canadian food at home. The children are allowed to wear Canadian clothing only in public. These families don't celebrate Canadian holidays. They practice corporal punishment. Their children are not allowed to have friends from the opposite sex. The children socialize mostly with

other Bangladeshi friends.

Some values remained unchanged for the parents regardless of their educational background, such as values concerning dating and marriage and values concerning decision making and religion.

Education and exposure to western culture prior to immigration seems to help the process of adaptation in the cases of the Hamid, Enam, Wakil, and Uddin families. At the same time, the families who received Canadian education have been in Canada for the longest periods of time. Their Canadian-born children are less exposed to Bengali culture. Whereas, most of the Sylhetti children spent their formative years in Bangladesh. Length of time in Canada has its effect on degree of assimilation but a more important factor is the degree of involvement in the enclave economy and related institutions.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Saber are highly educated, yet they show a low level of adaptation which is very much similar to the Sylhetti families. In this respect, the factor of education has no clear bearing on the adaptation process. The Saber family has been in Canada for only two years and the length of residency seems to be the basic factor responsible for the low level of adaptation in this particular case.

### ***Values concerning clothing and food***

For most of my respondents, change of clothing was the first change they went through. Almost all of the Children wear Canadian outfits when they go out. Some wear 'hijab', a religious headgear, with Canadian outfits. Except for Imam and Kamal Family, women from the rest of the families wear Canadian outfits in public. Men did not have to change. There is no difference in men's fashion in Bangladesh and Canada. Men wore the same type of clothing back home. Men wear religious headgear while praying. Most of the males wear traditional lungi-punjabi at home. But they admit that it is not convenient to wear lungi-punjabi in the winter. None of the males wear this traditional outfits in public, except for the elderly father of Mr.Imam. He refuses to wear trousers even in the winter, it is a constant source of conflict between the father and the son. In the rural areas of Bangladesh it is considered improper for an elderly person to wear trousers, then again, it is a matter of taste.

Opinion on dress is determined by practical and aesthetic considerations. The sari is still considered a very feminine and beautiful apparel and is worn on all festive occasions. However it is not considered practical for all kinds of work and a compromise has been arrived at by the women who wear both Bangladeshi and Western type of dress. Only the married women from the Imam and Kamal Family wear only the sari; but

the rest wear both Canadian and Bangladeshi dress. The younger girls, even in the Imam and Kamal families, show a preference for Western dress except on special occasions.

Almost all of the children, except for the children from the Ahmed and Kamal families, eat Canadian non-halal food outside the home. But none of the respondents eat pork or drink alcohol. Except for the Qazi family, all of the parents eat halal-only at home. But the children from the Hamid, Enam, Uddin and Wakil families are allowed to eat non-halal food at home.

Variations in norms regarding clothing and diet are illustrated in TABLE 3 on page 140.

***Values concerning Holidays:***

Except for the Imam and Kamal Families, all of the families celebrate their children's birthdays (which is also a norm in urban areas but not a practise in rural areas in Bangladesh). The Imam and Kamal Families are from the rural region of Bangladesh and they did not change their behaviour.

Most of the social customs of the dominant culture like Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day which are new to Bangladeshi immigrant families, have been adopted by their children. Interviews revealed that parents encourage this and the children enjoy these cultural

events because it brings them greater acceptance by the peer group.

Except for the Imam and Kamal Family, all of the families celebrate some other Canadian festivities, such as, Mother's Day and Father's Day, Halloween, and Valentine's Day. They also celebrate sweet-sixteen birthdays for the daughters, which, of course, like any other Canadian festivity, is new to this community.

None of the families celebrate Easter or Christmas. Children from the Enam, Uddin and Ahmed Families, went to their high school proms, but they were chaperoned. In Bangladesh, people celebrate Bengali new year. But in Canada, along with most of the other ethnic groups, Bangladeshis celebrate English new year. They do not celebrate Bengali new year anymore. I found, this to be very significant in the process of adaptation. This is a clear indication of change. The Bangladeshis struggle with the daily choices they make. After a long process of negotiation, they let go of some of their traditional practices in order to accommodate some of the local practices they find hard to avoid. Their children celebrate English new year along with their peers and the parents join them. They choose the local practice over the traditional practice when it is convenient.

### ***Legal and Moral Values:***

At the beginning of my interview with the members of the Kamal Family, Mr.Kamal requested me not to ask his sixteen-year old daughter any questions regarding sex or dating. I respected his request. As a Bangladeshi myself, I understood that it was against the cultural values to discuss sex with a child of that age.

For many of the parents, raising Muslim children in a 'free sex'<sup>6</sup> society, is a tough job. In Bangladesh, males and females have to avoid a certain level of physical-contact while interacting with each other. Mr. and Mrs. Ahmed do not allow their grown up children to watch television because of nudity.

*Mrs.A: Our next door neighbour's son kisses his girlfreind right infront of my house! He is only eighteen! Can you imagine! It is shameful! I don't know how his parents allow this to happen. It is menacing to the whole society!*

*Interviewer: How do your children react to that?*

*Mr.A: We don't let them see. They know...I don't agree with that behaviour.*

*Mrs.A: But this is home. We cannot do anything when they go out. People are shameless! They do whatever they want to do in public. We are not animals! These things should be illegal. This is immoral for any religion, not only for Muslims.*

Mr.Kamal feels very emotional about this issue:

*What can I do? I just can't make them (the children) stay home all the time! They have to go out to school and see all these obscenities.*

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<sup>6</sup> In many cases, parents used the English term 'free-sex'.

Except for the Qazi Family, the feeling is mutual for the rest of the parents. They all think that the level of Canadian morality is low. The Saber, Hamid, Kamal, Imam and Rahim Families also feel strongly about sex and violence on television.

Another major issue, which is very important for all of the families except for the Qazi and Enam Families, is the issue of disciplining the children. All families, except for Qazi and Enam, are supporters and practitioners of corporal punishment, which is a traditional Bangladeshi practice. Children in the Ahmed Family are all adults, aged between nineteen and twenty-four. They still receive occasional beating from their parents. The children are not happy about that, but believe that their parents have the right to beat them if they did anything wrong. Mrs.Enam raises her hand to her twenty-two year old daughter, but cannot do that to her sixteen-year old son. She stopped beating him when he was six years old, in her own words:

*...he was too smart for us. He told his teacher at school that I slapped him. The Principal called us and warned us. Just think about it!*

Mr.Imam's mother does not know that corporal punishment is illegal in Canada. Here is a portion of the interview with her:



Interviewer: In Bangladesh, parents often beat their kids as a form of punishment. Do you practice that here?

Mrs.I (senior): My kids are big now, I don't have to beat them anymore. My grandchildren...

Interviewer: Do you know that it is illegal here?

Mrs.I(senior): No. I didn't know.

Mrs.P (her daughter): But they deserve beating once in a while.

Mrs.I (senior): Beating children is not a good thing. You should talk to them first.

Mrs.P: (laughing) Mom, you used to beat us all the time...

Mrs.I(senior): (laughing) I used to be younger then... had less patience... but children don't deserve to be beaten. You should talk to them first.

Interviewer: What if they didn't listen?

Mrs.I(senior): Then talk to them ten times.

Interviewer: What if that does not work either?

Mrs.I(senior): In that case, take a stick and beat the crap out them (she made a beating-sound by clapping her hands, everybody starts to laugh).

Interviewer: So, you don't agree with the law.

Mrs.P: The law is ridiculous. We should discipline our children the way we want.

Mrs.I: May be the law works for them, but it is not good for us. We are from a different culture... There was a boy around 12-13 year old from Park Extension, he called the police when his father smacked him. The boy was taken away for two weeks. What good did it do to the family? The boy was traumatized for being kept away from his parents.... The father was right, he (the boy) needed a lesson.

Only the Qazi's and Enam's feel that traditional ways of corporal punishment is outdated nowadays.

All the families are in favour of the Canadian law against spousal abuse, which seems to be another common cultural trait. One of my respondents is an abused wife. She does not want to talk about that and I would not identify her even though I am using fictitious names.

Almost all the families send their children to Sunday

Schools arranged by the community where the children learn about their ethnic language, culture and religion. This, coupled with frequent cultural and 'variety' shows, provide an opportunity to the youngsters to see each other and develop their friendship within the community. Most of the families see this initially restricted circle of friends as a 'mechanism' to control their choice of marriage at a later time.

***Religious Values:***

Except for the Qazi family, the rest of the families agree that religious values are most important to them. All the children, at some point of their lives, were sent to Sunday schools to learn religious verses and to learn how to read the Holy Qur'an in Arabic. All of the families practice religion to some extent; some more than others. The male children<sup>7</sup> from the Hamid, Wakil, Imam, Kamal, Saber and Ahmed Families practise religion more than the others, they all go to the mosque for the Friday prayer. The Qazi, Enam, Uddin, Wakil and Hamid Families think that they have enough freedom to practise their religious rights in Canada, there is nothing to be changed. At the same time, males and females from the Imam,

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<sup>7</sup> In Bangladesh, females don't go to the mosque to pray. They seem to maintain that practice here too. The only exception is that, females, with males from the family, go to the mosques to pray at religious festivals twice a year,

Kamal and Saber Families think that it could be better.

Mr.Kamal complains that his daughter is being teased at school for wearing a hijab (the religious veil or head-gear). He went to see the principal about the problem but did not get any help. Mr. and Mrs.Saber's fourteen-year old daughter refuses to wear the hijab at school and it has been a source of conflict between her and her parents for sometime now. She explains:

*I feel like a clown wearing this thing.... My parents don't understand. There is not a single girl in my class who wears a hijab. They stare at me.... It feels uncomfortable.*

Finally, she agreed to wear a black hijab (the traditional colour is white) hoping it would make it less obvious. Parents are often forced to improvise in order to minimize conflict while adapting to a new society.

People from the Imam and Kamal Families also complained about not having enough mosques near their homes. It is customary to have mosques near residences and workplaces so people can go to the mosques to pray five times a day. They can't do it here. Also, female respondents from the Imam Family mentioned that the males who work outside cannot pray during the required times. Their time at work does not permit

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which is not a norm in Bangladesh.

it. In Bangladesh people take breaks to pray during the working hours. In Canada, they are not allowed to do that. This is, as Mrs.Imam puts it, *'against our religious rights'*.

In Bangladesh, according to Islamic law, men are allowed to have four wives at a single time. All my respondents think that this right is no longer practised even in Bangladesh, so they don't miss it here.

None of the respondents drink alcohol, which is a part of religious values. The adult children are also against drinking. All of them, just like their parents, condemn this Western value as dysfunctional.

The changing pattern of religious values is illustrated in TABLE 8 on page 145.

#### **The Problem of the Parent-Child Relationship and Changes in Family Structure**

Since children usually learn the language of the host society much faster than their parents, immigrant parents who come over with school-age or even pre-school-age children (including the children born in Canada) often tend to rely on their children for everyday use of the new language. For example, Mrs.Rahim and Mrs.Wakil use their children as English translators, these children do not speak French. Mr. and Mrs.Kamal and Mr. and Mrs.Imam (senior) are totally dependent on their children in order to communicate in either English or

French. The rest of the parents use their children as translators only when they need to communicate in French. None of the parents speak French, and not all children are proficient in both official languages.

Initially, this may stimulate child and parent cooperation for new immigrants. But in the long run, this dependency of the parents on their children works to produce social-psychological gaps between them. When translating for their parents in front of others, children tend to develop feelings of being inferior because of their parents. Mrs.Wakil states:

*My son gets upset when I go to his PTA meetings.  
He wants his father to be there, because his father  
can talk to his teacher.*

Mrs.Kamal says that her teenage children don't want to accompany their parents outside. Moreover, they get upset when their parents speak Bengali loudly in public. These examples are a clear indication of children developing feelings of embarrassment. The school to which the child is sent often increases the gap between them and their parents. Indeed, the school that teaches all subjects in the language of the host society and gives no positive significance to the child's ethnic group is a significant factor in bringing about a gap between the immigrant generations. Such a school system creates the impression that ethnic minority language is undesirable or bad. As a consequence, ethnic language and the

child's ethnicity become symbolic of backwardness, and the child comes to define his or her parents, and everything they stand for, as in some way inferior. As the child grows into adolescence, this may develop into severe parent-child conflicts.

In the case of the Uddin Family, this has been the cause of an ongoing struggle between the parents and their sixteen-year son. Their son refused to speak Bengali at home when he started to go to school. He refuses to be called a 'Bengali', in his own words:

*I am Canadian. Yes. I am Canadian. What is the big deal about it?....My parents are Bengali, I am nothing like my parents.*

Mr. and Mrs.Uddin feel very guilty about their son's chosen identity. They blame themselves for not being careful enough early on. Their son refuses to eat traditional Bengali meals at home, he eats at the fast-food restaurants on a daily basis. He does not go to Bangladesh for yearly visits with rest of the family. Mrs.Uddin seems to be very disturbed about their son's attitude:

*I feel like I don't know him anymore. I still recall how cute he looked when he used to recite Bengali rhymes when he was a toddler....He can't even talk to his grandparents over the phone! They blame us for not teaching him Bengali.*

In addition, immigrant mothers often react to being in a foreign country by over-protecting their children and

indirectly creating problems or conflicts for them at home and outside of the home. Mrs.Ahmed does not allow any of her children to take public transportation, Mr.Ahmed drives them to their schools by himself. They don't allow their two daughters, who are twenty-two and nineteen, to get driver's license. They are allowed to bring their Bangladeshi and Pakistani female friends home, but not friends from other backgrounds. Mrs.Ahmed doesn't want them to socialize with anybody who speaks French, because she does not understand French. The son, who is twenty-four, is not allowed to bring any male friends at home, because, in Mrs.Ahmed's own words,

*He has two grown-up sisters at home... They speak French with each other. How would I know what they are upto?...I'll never allow my daughters to drive, that's how parents lose control over their children... My son is not allowed to give a lift to any females, you never know what kind of people are out there to get you.*

The majority of the marriages in Bangladesh are arranged by parents, and the immigrant families themselves have been used to the custom of arranged marriage. However, since in Canadian society decisions regarding marriage are taken by the children, the whole question of marriage as well as dating becomes a sensitive issue for Bangladeshi parents. All the parents consider religion an important factor in the choice of a spouse and they show consistency in preferring a marriage ceremony in the traditional religious style.

An important aspect of immigrant parent-adolescent relationship, which is indicative of changes in the family structure, is conflict over dating patterns (TABLE 6 on page 135). There is a pressure on adolescents for dating from the Canadian teen-age sector of society, and immigrant parents are often confronted with norms and values that differ from their own (Naidoo, 1986). None of the children from my sample dates officially. They are not allowed to. Culturally, dating before marriage is not acceptable. But parents and children often disagree about the issue of courtship. Mrs. Wakil recollects:

*When my son told me that he would not marry anybody he does not know, I was shocked. He told me that he has to know the girl for at least six months; he wants to go out with her, he wants to know her! I just can't accept that! I cried the whole day! My husband thinks I am crazy!*

Her son is eighteen-year old, he is a CEGEP student. His perception of courtship is totally different from his mother:

*I want to date girls before I marry...Time has changed. My parents don't understand that. I have to know the person I'll marry. In their (parents) days, it was okay to marry a stranger. But that is impossible for me.*

Mrs. Enam is also worried about this issue:

*I know I would not be able to choose a groom for her (daughter). I don't want that to happen. I told her that if she likes someone, to tell me first. Then if I find that the boy was from a good family and educated, I'll agree with her...I would have been happy if I myself could find the groom.*

Her twenty-year old daughter's reply:



*Of course I have to know the person I am going to marry. Isn't it obscene to marry a total stranger?*

In the Ahmed, Enam, Wakil and Hamid Families, both parents agree that they would prefer their children to marry within the community. But they would accept the child's preference to marry someone outside the community if he/she was a Muslim (Indian, Pakistani or Middle Eastern background). But they would never accept a non-Muslim as a son-in-law or daughter-in-law.

Worries over dating for most respondents are just a prelude to more fundamental concerns about marriage. In the Bangladeshi culture, marriages are important mechanisms for creating alliances and interdependence between families. Indeed, they are contracts between two families, not two individuals. Only in the past twenty or thirty years have self-contracted marriages been at all common and they are largely restricted to the urban middle classes. Moreover, marriage has been traditionally symbolic of equality between the two families concerned; Bangladeshi societies are highly stratified, with the result that marriage patterns have tended to be severely restrictive. People usually marry people of the same social class, region and religion as themselves. These practices are so pervasive and have so much importance attached to them that almost all Bangladeshi parents pressure their children to marry along traditional lines. For the

children, not following their parents' wishes can result in ostracism.

Mr. and Mrs. Uddin would never allow their daughter to marry outside the community, and it has to be an arranged marriage. Their children don't agree with their views. The parents of the Imam, Kamal, Rahim and Saber Family feel the same way. They don't believe in marriage outside the community and they don't condone courtship before marriage. Only the Qazi Family, with a four-year old son, are open to intermarriage. In Mr. Qazi's own words:

*I would ask my son to bring his girlfriend home. If it's a good person, I don't mind.*

Young children who immigrated fairly recently along with their parents, seem to have different perspectives about courtship after living in Canada for a few years. The following interview illustrates this nicely. "Lopa" is twenty-two year old, a sister of Mr. Imam. She who has been in Canada for five years:

*Interviewer: Suppose your parents found a match for you, but for some reason, you did not like him. What would you do?*

*Lopa: I would not marry the person...I'll tell my parents.*

*Interviewer: What if you were in Bangladesh?*

*Lopa: (laughing) No way, I had no chance of opening my mouth. I had to marry anybody they chose... If I was in Sylhet, I would have been unable to voice my opinion. No courage...no freedom. Now after coming here, I am confident that my parents would ask me first.*

Mr. Rahim's twenty-seven year old daughter, who immigrated

eight years ago and is a university student now, feels the same way:

*I told my mother to ask me first....They got my elder sisters married when they (sisters) were sixteen and seventeen. I am not that young... I have my opinion. I have to like the person I am going to spend the whole life with.*

Ensuing family-conflicts only reinforce the developing cultural gap between generations. An interesting aspect of the generational conflict is the way in which parents handle it. As in the case of finding work, Bangladeshis, like many non-European immigrants, tend to rely on their ethnic connections in finding help with the problems of their children. Except for the Qazi and Enam Families, all of the parents whom I interviewed, said that they would ask for help from their friends within the community.

Grygier, in his study of two hundred immigrant families, asked where the immigrants would seek advice if they had great difficulty with their children's behaviour. The Italians reported that they would seek help from their relatives. The Germans chose their doctor as their source of advice. The Hungarians chose first the clergy and, secondly, private Catholic agencies. The wives had a tendency to choose the doctor as well as the clergy. The most frequent choice of the British was a public or government agency, including school services (Grygier, 1975:167). It is very interesting to know how differently Bangladeshis react in contrast to their

European counterparts.

Another set of family-problems that immigrants face are derived from the changing husband-wife relationship (TABLE 7 on page 144). Many immigrant wives have to find employment to supplement their husband's income. Yet, for many of them, working independently outside the home is a new experience to which neither they, nor their husbands, have been accustomed. Even in the cases where the wives have work-experience in Bangladesh, the relationship still changes. For some of the women, being confronted with performing household chores is a major adjustment. In Bangladesh, household chores are done by live-in servants and childcare is provided by live-in nannies. This is a factor which is not a norm and therefore absent in regular Canadian households.

"Lima", who immigrated four years ago, still has trouble adjusting to this new life-style:

*Sometimes I feel like they (in-laws) brought me here to do houseworks for them...They expect me to go to work every morning to bring money, come home in the evening and then, to clean the house and cook for all of them. I can't take this anymore. I have a child that I need to take care of. If I ask my husband to help me, they (in-laws) get angry...men are not supposed to do houseworks!*

Like many European and Oriental traditions, Bangladeshi tradition has maintained a clear distinction between the man's

role as the family's breadwinner and the woman's role as exclusively housewife and mother. With their wives working, the immigrant husbands are often required to do some housework and child-care to which they are not accustomed. Mr. Ahmed feels very passionately about this issue:

*My father never did these things (housework), why should I? I come home working hard everyday. I don't need this nonsense....Ask her (the wife), don't I take garbage out? Don't I drive the children to schools? I do grocery every week. What more can I do?*

Mrs. Ahmed has a completely different perspective of the issue:

*Do I work less than him? Then how come I am still working when I come home...cooking...cleaning and washing! All he does is to watch television. I don't even have a life anymore.*

All this undermines the traditional status difference between husbands and wives and may have the effect of undermining the respondent's self-image and self-confidence. This may disrupt family life, prompting conflict and even wife-abuse as a form of psychological compensation.

Studies of South Asian immigrant women point to problems that result from traditional structures of marriage and family relationships in which women have been dominated by men and have been accustomed to passively accepting men's demands. The studies find them particularly vulnerable to exploitation both at their place of work and in the home. This often means extremely long hours of work, and isolation and alienation

from the community and even from their extended family (Naidoo, 1987).

#### **Social Interaction:**

Friendship with members of ethnic groups other than one's own, particularly friendship with members of the majority group, is a result of patterns of interaction usually established at various functions that encourage interpersonal interaction. It also is a measure of social inclusion of individuals in the host society.

What remained intact in the family structure, which was a surprise even to me, was the fact that the social interaction, for almost all of my respondents remained inside the boundaries of the community. This is true even for the second generation (TABLE 5 on page 142).

None of the parents socialize regularly outside their community. A few of them reported that they have Pakistani or Indian friends, but these friends are not as close as the friends in the community. There have been a few intermarriages that took place in the community recently for the second generation. But none of the parents support that. Except for the Qazi Family, all of them believe that these are bad examples for their kids. However, most of the parents claimed

that they do not discourage their children from socializing with white Canadians.

But some children feel differently. The twenty-seven year old daughter from the Rahim Family told me that her parents would allow her to bring a white friend at home, but they would not be very happy about that. I felt that parents were very cautious about their children's social lives. The parents encourage them to socialize within the community. They perceive Canadian influence as polluting their religious values.

At least two parents told me that they would not allow their children to bring their black friends home, this is a clear example of prejudice. But almost all of the children told me that their parents would be very concerned if they wanted to bring black friends home. Some children told me that they have white Canadian friends, but none of them come to their homes as regularly as their Bengali friends. Only Mrs.Enam's daughter, who is a university student, has a few white friends who are close. Those who reported that their white friends come to their homes, turned out to be the friends from childhood who used to come to attend birthday parties and stopped coming for years. Mrs.Ahmed told me that she would not allow her children to socialize with French Canadians, Jewish and black people. It is interesting that

she considers herself unprejudiced and open minded.

The children, just like their parents, socialize mostly with friends from their own community. Some have close friends from other communities, but they are mostly from other minority groups. Such as, Pakistani, Indian, Middle Eastern or in some cases, Hispanic. Only the daughters from the Enam family have white friends who are close. It is interesting to notice that the level of social interaction is very low between Bangladeshi people and the local Canadians. Moreover, the second generation is following their parents' footsteps. When they seek friendship outside the community, they look for friends from other minority groups with similar experience.

#### **Discrimination in Social Settings:**

Some of my respondents reported that they have experienced discrimination in their daily lives while interacting with white Canadians. Mrs.Ahmed believes that French Canadians are the most prejudiced towards Bangladeshis. She reports that she was harassed a few times for not being able to speak French. Her older daughter supported her:

*...We were at the counter to pay for the things we bought, and I heard the young girls at the cash making fun of my mother's traditional clothing. They thought we did not understand anything because they were speaking French. Right before we left that counter, I turned around and told them in French, 'You are disgusting! I am a*



*born Quebecois just like you and I speak French better than you!'*

Mrs.Ahmed is also very disturbed about her neighbours' attitude towards her family:

*My son (25 years old) doesn't stay outside after dark, he does not have any girlfriends, he does not drink... and the neighbour's kid (in his twenties) always taunts him for that. He calls my son names...I had to call the police one time. My son does not want to speak to them, then why do they bother us? Can they just do that because we are different?*

Mr.Kamal states that people in the metro don't want to sit next to him. Name calling at school seems to be a common occurrence. But most of the children don't think that it is a big problem.

#### **Interpreting Changing Values: A Summary**

TABLE 2 through 8 summarize the way the families in the sample dealt with 7 different sets of values. I previously made reference to these in describing the way the families resolved differences in cultural values.

TABLE 2. RETENTION OF BENGALI LANGUAGE

FAMILIES	Length Of Res.	Parents' Education* H / W	Retention of Bengali Language
Hamid	30 yrs	U© U(n)	Children speak English, French and Bengali. Children speak English between them, English, Bengali with the parents, Bengali with other com. members.
Uddin	29 yrs	U© U(n)	Children have limited knowledge of Bengali. They speak English between them. The daughter speak both English & some Bengali at home. The son refuses to speak Bengali at home. The mother is not proficient in English. The parents are frustrated.
Enam	27 yrs	U© U(n)	Both daughters are fluent in Bengali, but speak Bengali occasionally with other com. members. The primary language used at home is English.
Wakil	27 yrs	U(n) HS(n)	Children have limited knowledge of Bengali. They speak English exclusively at home. They understand Bengali, but do not speak. The mother do not speak English, complains of communication gap.
Ahmed	22 yrs	C(n) HS(n)	Children speak French, English and Bengali. They speak French between them, English and Bengali with the parents. Parents don't speak French. They complain about not being able to monitor children's conversations between them and with their friends.
Rahim	14 yrs	U(n) U(n)	Primary language used at home is Bengali. Except for the daughter-in-law, all the family members speak English too.
Kamal	13 yrs.	HS(n) -	The primary language used at home is Bengali. Children speak French at school, don't speak English.
Qazi	13 yrs	C(n) C(n)	The wife does not speak English, the husband does. Wife feels shy outside home for not being able to speak English.
Imam	13 yrs	HS(n) HH(n)	Primary language used at home is Bengali. Children speak English and French at school. The elderly parents and the wives don't speak English or French, complain about discomfort. Mr. Imam have limited knowledge of English.
Saber	2 yrs	U(n) U(n)	Primary language used at home is Bengali. All family members speak English as well.

TABLE 3. VALUES CONCERNING CLOTHING AND FOOD

FAMILIES	Length Of Res.	Parents' Education*	Values Concerning Clothing and Food	
		H / W		
Hamid	30 yrs	U©	U(n)	Parents and Children wear Canadian clothing outside and at home. They all wear traditional clothing at com.gatherings. Parents eat Halal only.Children eat non-halal.
Uddin	29 yrs	U©	U(n)	Parents and children wear Canadian clothing outside and at home. They wear traditional clothing at com.gatherings. Parents cook halal at home, but eat non-halal outside.Children eat non-halal at home.
Enam	27 yrs	U©	U(n)	Parents and children wear Canadian clothing in and outside home. They wear traditional outfits at com.gatherings. The father eats halal only. Mother and children eat non-halal in and outside home.
Wakil	27 yrs	U(n)	HS(n)	Parents and children wear Canadian clothing in and outside home. They wear traditional outfits at com.gatherings. The mother eats halal only. The father and children eat non-halal in and outside home.
Ahmed	22 yrs	C(n)	HS(n)	Parents and children wear Canadian clothing in and outside home. They wear traditional outfits at com.gatherings. The younger daughter wears hijab at school. All members eat halal only.
Rahim	14 yrs	U(n)	U(n)	Everydody wears traditional clothing at com.gatherings. Parents wear Canadian clothing outside home.Parents eat halal only. Children and daughter-in-law wear Canadian clothing in and outside home,eat non-halal outside home.
Kamal	13 yrs	HS(n)	-	Parents wear traditional clothing only. Children wear Canadian clothing only at school, wear traditional outfits outside home. The teenage daughter wears hijab <sup>8</sup> at school. Everybody eats halal only.
Qazi	13 yrs	C(n)	C(n)	They wear traditional clothing only at com.gatherings. Eat non-halal food outside home.
Imam	13 yrs	HS(n)	HH(n)	Elderly parents wear traditional clothing only.Eat halal only.Other adult members of the family wear traditional only also.Eat halal only.The children wear Canadian clothing at school& outside,eat non-halal outside of home.
Saber	2 yrs	U(n)	U(n)	Parents wear traditional clothing only. Children wear Canadian clothing at school, the daughter wears hijab at school.

<sup>8</sup> Religious headgear.

TABLE 4. VALUES CONCERNING CHILD RAISING

FAMILIES	Length Of Res.	Parents' Education* H / W	Values Concerning Child Raising
Hamid	30 yrs	U© U(n)	Parents and children don't believe in corporal punishment. Parents and children support sex-education at school.
Uddin	29 yrs	U© U(n)	The daughter is subjected to corporal punishment, the son is not. Both Children are against the practise. Parents and children support sex-ed at school. Parents think corporal punishment is necessary.
Enam	27 yrs	U© U(n)	Parents and and children are against corporal punishment. They are for sex-ed at school. All the famaily Members adhere Canadian values.
Wakil	27 yrs	U(n) HS(n)	The mother believes in corporal punishment, but is afraid of practising. She is not aware of the sex-ed at school. Father and children support sex-ed.
Ahmed	22 yrs	C(n) HS(n)	Parents believe in corporal punishment. All three children were subjected to it while younger. The older two are still subjected to it. Children are reluctant to speak on the issue, but support their parents, though don't agree with it. Parents and children support sex-ed at school.
Rahim	14 yrs	U(n) U(n)	Parents are for corporal punishment. Daughter is against it, was beaten by her father recently. The daughter-in-law support corporal punishment. All family members support sex-ed at school.
Kamal	13 yrs	HS(n) -	Parents believe in corporal punishment, think Govt. Is biased, don't understand cultural difference. They monitor TV. They are totally against sex-ed at school. Children support parents opinion.
Qazi	13 yrs	C(n) C(n)	Father do not support corporal punishment, the mother believes in it's limited use. They both support sex-ed at school.
Imam	13 yrs	HS(n) HH(n)	Parents support corporal punishment, minors as well as adult children are subjected to it. Children don't support. Elderly parents are unaware of the sex-ed school. Adult males are totally against it. Women in the family and the children support sex-ed.
Saber	2 yrs	U(n) U(n)	Parents agree with corporal punishment, children don't. Parents are against sex-ed at school, children support.

TABLE 5. SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH 'OTHER CANADIANS'

FAMILIES	Length Of Res.	Parents' Education* H / W	Social Interaction with 'Other Canadians'
Hamid	30 yrs	U© U(n)	Parents don't socialize outside the community. Children have friends from other minority groups as well as Bangladeshis.
Uddin	29 yrs	U© U(n)	Parents socialize with Bangladeshis only. Children socialize with Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis. Children don't like whites.
Enam	27 yrs	U© U(n)	Parents socialize with Bangladeshis only. The daughters have whites friends along with Bangladeshis.
Wakil	27 yrs	U(n) HS(n)	Parents socialize with Bangladeshis only. Children have Pakistani and Indian friends, but close friends are from the Bangladeshi community.
Ahmed	22 yrs	C(n) HS(n)	Parents have Pakistani friends, but close friends are from the community. Children have Pakistani and Arab friends along with Bangladeshi friends.
Rahim	14 yrs	U(n) U(n)	The family socialize within the group exclusively.
Kamal	13 yrs	HS(n) -	The family socialize within the Sylhetti group. The working males socialize with other Bangladeshis as well.
Qazi	13 yrs	C(n) C(n)	The family socializes with Bangladeshis only.
Imam	13 yrs	HS(n) HH(n)	The family socializes within the Sylhetti group. The school-going children have friends from other minority groups as well as within the group.
Saber	2 yrs	U(n) U(n)	The family socialize with Bangladeshis & Pakistanis.

TABLE 6. VALUES CONCERNING DATING AND COURTSHIP

FAMILIES	Length Of Res.	Parents' Education* H / W	Values Concerning Dating and Courtship
Hamid	30 yrs	U <sup>o</sup> U(n)	Parents prefer arranged marriage within the group, but would not mind if the children chose themselves. Don't allow children to date. Children support arranged marriage, but would like to have control over the decision making process. The children are allowed to have friends from the opposite sex.
Uddin	29 yrs	U <sup>o</sup> U(n)	Parents support arranged marriage, don't allow the children to date. The daughter agrees to arranged Marriage, the son does not. The daughter has male Friends.
Enam	27 yrs	U <sup>o</sup> U(n)	Daughters are not allowed to date, have male friends. Parents prefer arranged marriage within the group. Daughters agree, but would not marry unless they know the person. Parents agree.
Wakil	27 yrs	U(n) HS(n)	The son is not allowed to date, but has female friends. The mother prefers arranged marriage within the group. The son is totally against arranged marriage, would not mind marrying outside the group. The mother would not allow that to happen. The father supports the son.
Ahmed	22 yrs	C(n) HS(n)	Parents and children are against dating. But they would like to know the persons before marriage. They are flexible with the son, but would like the daughters to accept their choice.
Rahim	14 yrs	U(n) U(n)	Parents want arranged marriage for the daughter, the daughter disagrees. She is not allowed to date. The son and daughter-in-law (who went through an arranged marriage) think that system is outdated, Children should be allowed to date within limits.
Kamal	13yrs	HS(n) -	Parents are totally against dating, would not allow the children to have opinion in the decision making process. Children agree.
Qazi	13 yrs	C(n) C(n)	The couple think it is up to their son who he wants to marry. They support dating before marriage, but with limits.
Imam	13 yrs	HS(n) HH(n)	The parents believe in arranged marriage system only. They are totally against dating. The children agree, but would like to know the persons before Marriage.
Saber	2 yrs	U(n) U(n)	The parents are totally against dating, arranged Marriage is the only option. The daughter agrees. But thinks that the bride and groom should be given Chance to talk in privacy before marriage.

7. VALUES CONCERNING FAMILY RELATIONS

FAMILIES	Length Of Res.	Parents' Education* H / W	Values Concerning Family Relations - Role of Women in Decision Making - Conflict Over Household Chores
Hamid	30 yrs	UC U(n)	Family decisions are shared equally, often children are included in the process. The father helps around the house, the son also cooks. Children identify the mother as the primary decision maker.
Uddin	29 yrs	UC U(n)	Financial and child-raising decisions are made by the father exclusively, wife is satisfied with the arrangement. Children identify the father as the 'boss'. Mother is a homemaker, father do not help around the house. Mother wants husband to help.
Enam	27 yrs	UC U(n)	The father is the primary-decision maker on financial issues, the mother dictates the household rules. They share obligations. No major Conflict. The father helps his wife to cook and Clean. Wife is satisfied.
Wakil	27 yrs	U(n) HS (n)	Mother has no opinion on major issues. Father is the sole decision maker. Mother complains about doing household chores alone. No major conflict. Children identify the father as the decision maker.
Ahmed	22 yrs	C(n) HS (n)	Major conflict over financial decisions. Mother works and hands in her pay cheque to her husband against her will, children do the same. Children identify the father as the 'boss'. Mother and children are unhappy. Father does not help around the house.
Rahim	14 yrs	U(n) U(n)	Three generations living in the same household. The family is dependent on son's income. Parents are happy, they make all the major decisions. Son and daughter-in-law are not happy with the arrangement. Daughter-in-law does not want to give her pay cheque to her husband, she is also unwilling to do all the household chores by herself. Major conflict.
Kamal	13yrs	HS (n) -	Very traditional lifestyle. Father makes all the Major decisions. Mother takes care of the household chores, does not expect husband to help. They do not communicate much. Father and mother spend leisure time apart from each other. No conflict.
Qazi	13 yrs	C(n) C(n)	Father makes major financial decisions. They share household chores, father cooks often. No conflict.
Imam	13 yrs	HS (n) HH(n)	Three generations living together. Women and men in The family spend leisure time separately. Son is the bread winner, but elderly parents are the sole decision makers. Women do not expect men to help around the house. Women do not work outside home. No conflict.
Saber	2 yrs	U(n) U(n)	Very traditional lifestyle. Father makes all the major decisions. Mother does not expect husband to help around the house. She is unhappy about not having paid-help.

TABLE 8. RELIGIOUS VALUES AND PRACTISE

FAMILIES	Length Of Res.	Parents' Education*		Religious Values and Practise
		H	/ W	
Hamid	30 yrs	U©	U(n)	Both parents are practising Muslims. The children received formal religious lessons. They often take part in religious rituals. Children observe basic religious practises (not drinking alcohol, not eating pork).
Uddin	29 yrs	U©	U(n)	Wife is practising, husband is not. Children received formal religious lessons. Children take part in basic religious practises. The daughter practises more than the son. But they observe basic religious values.
Enam	27 yrs	U©	U(n)	Husband practises more than the wife. The children received formal religious lessons, take part in rel. rituals. They are against use of alcohol and pork.
Wakil	27 yrs	U(n)	HS(n)	Wife practises more than the husband. Children received formal religious lessons, they often take part in religious rituals. They observe basic values.
Ahmed	22 yrs	C(n)	HS(n)	The family is very religious. Children received extensive formal religious lessons. The younger daughter wears hijab. The husband can't practise because of work-hours. The son goes to mosque to pray regularly.
Rahim	14 yrs	U(n)	U(n)	Parents are practising Muslims, they force the daughter-in-law to pray regularly. The daughter and son do not practise regularly, but observe basic Religious practise. They received formal lessons.
Kamal	13yrs	HS(n)	-	Parents and children practise strictly. The daughter wears hijab. Children, along with the parents, pray Five times a day. All family members eat halal only.
Qazi	13 yrs	C(n)	C(n)	They don't practise regularly, observe basic religious values.
Imam	13 yrs	HS(n)	HH(n)	All family members are practising Muslims. Working Males can't pray regularly because of working hours. Women and children pray five times a day. Children go to Sunday school. Adults eat halal only.
Saber	2 yrs	U(n)	U(n)	They are practising Muslims. The daughter is forced to wear hijab at school. Children received extensive religious training. All family members eat halal only.

\* © = Canadian U=University HS=High School  
 (n) = Native C= College HS=Higher Secondary



The religious values and practises as well as values concerning dating and courtship remained almost intact for the first generation over time. The religious values remain the same in the second generation as well, there is no significant change at all (Table 8). The values concerning social interactions with other 'Canadians' remain very much alike in both generations. Both parents and children socialize within the community. When they have friends outside the community, they are from other minority groups; basically Pakistanis, Indians or other Muslims. The daughter from the Enam family is the only one who has close white friends. The major values that create conflicts between generations are values concerning dating and courtship and family relations. The weakest values prove to be the values concerning clothing and food and retention of Bengali language, and of course, there are conflicts over these issues between the generations.

The main independent variable responsible for identifying some patterns in the value adjustments prove to be the length of residence in Canada. The operating assumption is that other things being equal, the longer the families have been in Canada, the greater will there be changes or modifications in the set of values held by the Bangladeshi respondents. The initial assumption was modified by the degree to which the respondents participate in the host society in Montreal. The

level of participation was, in turn, influenced by a) the terms of acceptance of Bangladeshis in the host society (e.g. preference of Canadian higher education credentials over those from Bangladesh) and b) the degree of commitment to those values embedded in Bangladeshi culture (e.g. strength of commitment to traditional family structures and to religious values and practises). The intervening variables that modify the effects of time are educational background, age, occupation and regionalism (enclave economy). These intervening variables influence the frequency and nature of interaction with the host society of Montreal. The most dramatic effects of these variables are those which result in the maintenance of an 'enclave economy'. In this case, families and their individual members, restrict most of their social interaction to the Bangladeshi community itself. The weaker intervening variables are age and income.

The common themes for all ten families are that, no one eats pork, no one drinks alcohol, everybody is somewhat religious, and all parents are against dating and all children are against corporal punishment.

Those values which appear to be most subject to change are those influenced by those social skills required to interact with the host society. Involvement of children as well as adults in the educational institutions has relatively profound

effects on language use, clothing styles, eating habits and attitudes towards traditional arranged marriages. Those adults who obtained professional degrees in Canada, appear to be most subject to changing their community values in the course of practising their professions (Mr. Hamid, Mr. Uddin, Mr. Enam). Other adults, who are in other occupations must modify their values or at least their expression of their values but perhaps are not as prone to make as radical a change (Mr. Ahmed, Mr. Wakil). Nevertheless, over time there are significant changes that occur, e.g. in intergenerational differences which is true in almost all the families.

The two Sylhetti families, Imams and Kamals, have made a conscious choice to avoid as much as possible social interaction with the host society. They are able to exert more control over their occupational lives as well as their family lives.

The first three families on the tables, the Hamid, Uddin and Enam families, are almost identical in their demographic attributes and in their value systems. The common demographic factors they share are that the male parents of these families are all Canadian trained professionals, the female parents are university graduates from Bangladesh, and all three families have been in Canada for the longest period of time (between 30 and 27 years). In these three families, both parents and children wear Canadian clothing and children speak English at

home, although they have knowledge of Bengali. There is no communication problem since all the parents speak English well enough to communicate. Except for the parents in the Hamid family, the rest of the parents and all the children eat non-halal Canadian food outside home.

Both parents and children in these three families believe in sex-education in school. The children socialize outside the Bangladeshi community. The parents are against dating, but the children are allowed to have friends from the opposite sex.

The children accept the idea of arranged marriage, but all of them want to know the person beforehand. The children don't identify either parent as the sole decision maker, so it is obvious that they share responsibilities. In the Hamid family, both of the parents make financial decisions, but in the Uddin and Enam families, the husbands are the final decision makers. There are no major conflicts over these issues in any of these three families. Religious values are strong in all these three families, both parents in the Hamid family, the wife in Uddin family and the husband in Enam family observe religious practises regularly. The children also share strong religious values, though none of them say their prayers regularly. It is interesting to notice that none of the parents from these three families were practising religion regularly until very recently. The change was very sudden for the Hamid family. The parents became very religious after Mr.Hamid lost his job. Now

they have more time to pray and to study religion. It is very common for Bangladeshi people to become religious as they reach a certain age.

The Wakil and the Ahmed families have been in Canada for a long time as well, but they don't show the same degree of changes as the first three families. Mr. Wakil and Mr. Ahmed did not receive Canadian University education and are employed in non-professional jobs. Their wives also have a lower level of education, which accounts for their traditional value system. The only common significant change is apparent in the intergenerational differences in the Wakil family, which does not apply in the Ahmed family.

The Rahim and the Saber families share identical value systems, even though their length of residence in Canada vary. Mr. And Mrs. Rahim immigrated in their later years, they both were in their fifties. The age factor becomes more significant here which accounts for their rigid value system. The Saber family immigrated very recently, which explains lack of change in their values. But in both cases, intergenerational difference is apparent.

The length of residence in Canada is an important variable explaining changes in cultural values. The Saber family has been in Canada for the shortest period of time, only for two years, and they show the least amount of cultural changes in their lifestyle. This becomes obvious when we compare the

values of the children in the Saber family and the children from two Sylhetti families (living in Canada for thirteen years) who seem to continue to retain very traditional lifestyles. The children from the Imam family are allowed to eat non-halal Canadian food occasionally, but the children from the Saber family are not allowed to do that. The female parents from the Imam family don't have any serious problem with sex-education at school, but both parents from the Saber family are totally against it.

In contrast, the families that have been living in Canada for more than twenty-five years (Hamid, Uddin, Enam and Wakil family) show significant changes in cultural values. The children from these families celebrate some Canadian festivities such as halloween, mother's day, father's day, valentine's day. The children from the Saber family as well as the Sylhetti families don't celebrate these.

The Wakil family has been in Canada as long as the Hamid, Uddin and Enam families. Mr. Wakil is not a professional like them and his wife has a lower level of education compared to the other three wives. They share most of the cultural values of the other three families; such as values concerning clothing and food, child raising, dating etc. The mother has communication problems with the children because of her lack of knowledge in English. The elder son is totally against arranged marriage, which is an issue of conflict between the

son and the mother. The mother does not know about the sex-education at school, but she is against it. The children identify the father as the decision maker.

The two Sylhetti families, the Kamals and the Imams, represent a good example of the ways in which individual family units are able to remain culturally unique. The factor of regionalism<sup>9</sup> is obvious in analyzing the similarities between the Kamal and the Imam families. Both families are from the rural areas of Sylhet with very little formal education (it is important to mention here that there are urban areas in Sylhet as well where people have higher levels of education). Both the Kamal and the Imam families own their own businesses and they operate within an enclosed, enclave economy. They had been in Montreal for about thirteen years. They socialize solely with other Sylhettis. They seldom socialize outside the community. The females in both families practise religion very strictly. The males are religious too, but can't practise regularly because of their work schedule. The children in both families also practice religion very strictly. The major language used in the household is Benglai (Sylhetti dialect).

The married females in these two families wear traditional clothing only, both at home and outside. They would not agree

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<sup>9</sup> Sylhettis are traditionally business people. They are well established in London, England with their own residential

to wear Canadian clothing. The married females in both families have only little contact with the outside world. This is largely true as well for the males in these two families.

The males operate inside the enclave economy which gives them little chance to interact with other Canadians. All the employees and almost all of their clientele are Bangladeshis. None of the adult members in these two families speak English or French fluently.

All male adults in these two families are against sex-education at school, they believe it is immoral and anti-Islamic. Some female adults are not aware of sex-education at school, but the children (whom I had chance to ask) are for it.

Dating before marriage is an impossible idea for the parents, most of the children agree. The children are for arranged marriage but often in a modified form. For example, at least one daughter (Lopa from the Imam family), who is twenty-two years old, stated that she would like to know the person beforehand. She also told me that she would never be able to say that while living in Bangladesh. It is obvious from this example that, even in a very strict environment, values do become modified.

The females in both families have no decision making power and they don't complain. In this respect, maintaining a very

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and business area in an enclave economy.



traditional lifestyle eliminates the possibility of familial conflicts. In fact, among all the families in the sample, the level of conflict is the lowest in these two Sylhetti families. In the case of the Imam family, there are three generations of people living in the same household including three nuclear family units, but there are no apparent conflicts. In contrast, the same family arrangement seems to be the primary source of conflict in the Rahim family, a non-Sylhetti family whose members have higher education levels (all of the family members have university education) and more outside contacts.

Considered alone, age and income are not good predictions of assimilation in the larger society. Mr.Saber, Mr.Kamal, Mr.Uddin are all from the same age group, but their value systems are quite different. Here, the length of residence, last years of schooling and regionalism became more important in identifying the differences. The Imam, Uddin and Enam families are in the same income group, but their cultural values are totally different. At the same time, the Hamid, Saber and Qazi families are from the same income group, but they don't share the same cultural values. There is a significant difference between the Hamid family and the Enam and Uddin families, yet these three families are quite similar in their professed values.

Of all the sets of values, religious values seem to be the most enduring over time. Bangladeshi people have a very strong identity as Muslims and their value systems tend to be organized along their religious orientation. The basic values that are kept intact over time and even in the second generations are the values rooted in religion. These values continue to be supported by practice such as not eating pork, not drinking alcohol and taking part in basic religious rituals.

The values that tend to be compromised or dropped over the long term are the values concerning clothing and food and the use of the Bengali language at home. Children at school tend to be influenced by their peers. They adopt the local language at school and from the media and their principle language is either, or both, English or French. With respect of clothing, it is inconvenient and impractical to wear traditional clothing in the Canadian climate and for many first generation immigrants, the change of clothing takes place almost immediately. Furthermore, children don't want to be identified as 'different' and they wear Canadian clothing at school.

Between generations, the values are constantly being transformed for different reasons. None of the parents of these ten families believe in dating before marriage, while the Canadian born children prefer this practice. Children

agree to arranged marriages only if they are given the chance to know the person beforehand. The parents, though reluctantly, tend to accept this.

There are other illustrations of transformations of values. One good example are the values concerning corporal punishment. None of the children are for it. The parents who are pro-corporal punishment, have to abide by the Canadian laws against it.

Another example is the conflict over the use of hijab between the parents and the teenage daughter from the Saber family. The daughter refuses to wear hijab at school because it makes her feel like a "clown". The parents, having no other choice, agreed to let her wear a black hijab (to make it less obvious) instead of a traditional white hijab. The older daughter from Ahmed family also refuses to wear hijab at school, the parents could not convince her to wear one.

The first four families (Hamid, Uddin, Enam and Wakil) on the chart are the most well adapted of them all to the larger society. They were able to retain their basic religious values while transforming other traditional values in order to accommodate to the larger society. The Sylhetti families, the Imams and Kamals, show very little change in traditional values. They also seemed to experience the least amount of conflict in values (both in the family level and with the larger society). Perhaps this is because they

operate in an enclave economy totally segregated from the larger society. Another way to interpret this is that they operate in an enclave economy because these families wish to keep their traditional values intact.

### **Summary**

Immigration and settlement have resulted in many challenges to traditional Bangladeshi immigrants. The general pattern of response of the immigrants in their study to the social and economic environment in Canada is a creative combination of holding on to some values and behavioural patterns developed in Bangladesh while adopting to new patterns which are deemed to be necessary to meet new needs in a new environment.

In this study, the main independent variable is length of time in Canada. The operating assumption is that other things being equal, the longer the families have been in Canada, the greater will there be changes or modifications in the sets of values held by the Bangladeshi respondents. This assumption was modified by the degree to which the respondents participate in the host society. The intervening variables, e.g. education, age, regionalism and occupation, that modify the effects of time are those which influence the frequency and nature of interaction with the host society. The most

significant effects of these variables are those which result in the maintenance of an 'enclave economy'. In this case, families and their individual members, restrict most of their social interaction to the Bangladeshi community. I argue that those values most likely to be retained are religious values. Those most subject to change or even elimination are those related to daily social interactions such as language and clothing.

The findings of this study show a significant retention of cultural values for almost all of the families, but it also shows a great variation among the families. The Imam and Kamal Families, the Sylhetti families, who are part of the Bangladeshi enclave economy, are strong retainers of these cultural values and they are the least adaptive to the host society. The Enam and Qazi Families, are weak retainers, while others are in the middle, involving a significant proportion of some patterns and little or no retention of others.

Among the latter families, the most highly retained external and internal patterns are endogamy, ethnic education and religious practice and values such as not drinking alcohol. The least retained patterns, which is more evident in the case of the second generation, are clothing styles, ethnic friendships (they seek friends from other minority groups as well), the use of ethnic language, and values about sex-education and child-raising.

Those respondents who are professionals with a Canadian education, were more 'westernized' in many of their behavioral styles and outlook, but at the same time, they retained their religious values and a number of traditional social norms such as restrictions on dating. This supports Borhek's (1970) findings. The process of adaptation is almost nil in the case of two Sylhetti families whose social interactions occur almost solely within an enclave economy.

The practical and the social-psychological aspects of immigrant adaptation are closely interrelated. Practical problems, such as unemployment, will affect family relationships (the Rahim family). Social-psychological attributes will affect how persons go about solving their practical problems, such as going out to buy something without the husband (Mrs.Qazi). Conditions that help one solve one type of problem will indirectly influence the possibility of solving the other type of problem. The solution to practical problems, such as unemployment, may be a condition for solving some social-psychological problems, such as loss of male self-image (the cases of Mr.Hamid and Mr.Saber).

The effect of immigration on marital relations is complex and seems to be a function of class background, economic and social situation, and individual temperament. Despite these qualifications, there have been several consistent changes. Most significantly, immigration has weakened the power of

husbands to control family affairs. Working wives are exposed to a variety of cultural influences contradictory to their traditional role and as wage-earners they demand more authority (Mrs.Ahmed and the daughter-in-law from the Rahim family). Husbands often find their family status weakened by their low-prestige jobs and their inability to transfer their status from Bangladesh to Canadian society (Mr.Ahmed, Mr.Saber, Mr.Wakil, Mr.Qazi, Mr.Rahim and his son).

Wives encounter their own particular problems in achieving an acceptable role. Almost without exception working wives are expected to do most of the housework as well. Husbands have generally accepted the responsibilities for more 'manly' household duties such as cutting lawns and making house repairs. But cooking, laundry, cleaning and caring for children are rarely done by the men. For many husbands this aversion to increasing their household responsibilities appears to be highly symbolic. While conceding to the assimilative forces of public life, they try to maintain symbolic aspects of Bangladeshi practices at home. This results in an unending workload for women (Mrs.Ahmed and Mrs.Rahim). Moreover, wives are frequently subject to much more social isolation than their husbands, particularly if they do not work outside the home (Mrs.Qazi and Mrs.Wakil).

Traditional Bangladeshi ideologies of ideal womanhood are quite different from their Canadian counterparts. The

traditional Bangladeshi woman is supposed to be devoted to her family, selfless, and self-sacrificing, a support to her husband.

Many of my respondents have been caught between this ideal and Canadian options that stress independence, self-achievement, and equality. Bangladeshi women seem to want the best of both worlds. On one hand, they desire a great range of freedom outside the home and more control over things within it. They want their husbands to change their ideas in order to make these things more easily realized as in the cases of Mrs.Ahmed and the daughter-in-law from the Rahim family. On the other hand, immigrant wives and mothers continue to ground their identity in the family. The wives such as Mrs.Qazi, Mrs.Uddin, Mrs.Enam, Mrs.Wakil, Mrs.Hamid, Mrs.Imam and Mrs.Kamal continue to accept traditional ideologies of achievement through the success of their husbands and families. They see many Canadian notions about family, marriage, and children as threats to this family-linked identity. At the same time, they value family access to educational, economic, and social opportunities even though they are aware that these have a potential for further weakening what they value about the traditional family.

Conflict in husband-wife relationships, however, is far from endemic. Bangladeshi families, such as the Saber family and Rahim family, who have come to Canada after being married



for a decade or more find ways to keep the stress from breaking up the family. Also the professional husbands with the educated wives, such as the Uddin, Enam and Hamid families, seem to be able to contain family conflict better, in all probability because they are already used to less traditional male-female roles. The Sylhetti families, the Kamal and Imam families, seem not to suffer from any significant conflict since they still maintain a very traditional mode of husband-wife relations.

But problems are particularly severe for couples who have been suffering from status loss (the Ahmed family) or who have married shortly after emigrating. Having traditional family expectations, unused to resolving marital disagreement, and cut away from possible conflict mediators, they often have a hard time.

Relations between parents and children experience similar stress. How should children adjust to their dual Canadian and Bangladeshi roots? Parents frequently are caught in a dilemma. They have high expectations and acknowledge that if their children are to succeed they must do so on Canadian terms. They are therefore keen to provide their children with appropriate education and vocational skills and hope that these will be translated into economic security.

However, they have not abandoned the wish that their children maintain certain key elements in their Bangladeshi

heritage. Particularly in the areas of family authority and marriage. As a result, children of immigrants eventually learn to negotiate two sets of cultural values, those of their peers and those of their parents. This alternation is rarely made without difficulty, for the immigrant culture of their parents and relatives often contradicts the values expressed by their peers, the media, and the educational system. We find this type of difficulty among the children from the Uddin family, the Wakil family and the Saber family. Mr. and Mrs. Uddin's sixteen-year old son totally rejects his Bangladeshi roots. Mrs. Wakil's eighteen-year old son is unable to understand his mother's idea about an arranged marriage for him. Mr. and Mrs. Saber's fourteen-year old daughter rebels against wearing hijab at school. Even twenty-two year old Lopa, the sister of Mr. Imam, who has been raised in a very traditional Sylhetti family, wishes to marry someone she knows.

Second-generation and young Bangladeshi children are undergoing massive assimilation and acculturation. As with other immigrant populations, parents have few resources to counter this trend. They work hard and long and have little time to devote to teaching children their culture; so many other settlement challenges seem more immediate. Attempts are nevertheless being made to transmit certain Bangladeshi values, beliefs, and practices to their children. Most of these values and beliefs concern family relations.

Parental objectives for cultural retention in the family vary tremendously, as is to be expected considering their wide range of cultural and class background, but there are some common themes. One is an attempt to establish parent-child relationships along somewhat traditional lines. Parents in Bangladesh demand greater control over their children's lives than is typical in Canada. Immigrant parents rarely expect or wish to exert this degree of authority here. Even so, Bangladeshi adults see Canadian society as being far too permissive and they see parental authority as one means of shielding their children from this permissiveness.

Many of the families practice traditional corporal punishment on the children and feel strongly about it. Except for the Enam and Hamid families, all the families use corporal punishment to discipline their children.

Many parents try to keep their children away from social situations that they believe threaten Bangladeshi moral values. This is particularly true for girls. In more culturally conservative families, adolescent daughters are expected to maintain great social distance from other children, especially from boys or men. The daughters from the Ahmed, Imam, Kamal and Saber families are not allowed to socialize with any male friends. They are not allowed to go out without parental supervision even with their female friends. Sons are allowed more freedom but are frequently

caught between the expectations of their parents and peers. Mr. and Mrs. Ahmed's son is allowed to go out with his male friends but is expected to be back at home before sunset. Mr. and Mrs. Wakil's son is allowed to receive phone calls from his female friends, but is not allowed to bring them home.

In studying any specific group of immigrants at any one period of time, it is very difficult to assess the total picture in which the factors that may help to solve one type of problems are weighed against the factors that may be more useful in solving another type of problems. This can be done to some extent by means of statistical analysis when the factors can be quantified, as, for example, years of education, occupational qualifications and the like (as did Richmond and Kalbach, 1980). It is, however, more difficult to quantify social-psychological phenomena, such as the effect of culture shock, the drop in self-esteem or the emergence of increased marital conflict. In this regard qualitative or ethnographic case studies, such as this, are important. Through this qualitative method, I was able to reach far beyond any quantitative measure. Because, in this study, the immigrants themselves indicated and explained how the different types of problems had been linked in their lives.

This study allows us some access into how different Bangladeshi immigrants, who are adapting to Canadian multicultural life, perceive themselves (being different than

other Indo-Pakistani groups) and their experience of culture-clash while adapting.

After a period of stay in the country, immigrants achieve different levels of adaptation, as this study indicates. Some may be frustrated and return to their home country, others may remain practically but not psychologically adjusted for the rest of their lives and some may have difficulties in practical adaptation for their entire stay in the country, others seem to have adapted fairly well and have been able to retain their identity as Bangladeshis and Canadians.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS:

This study of Bangladeshi families in Montreal, sought to understand the process of adaptation to the social institutions and culture of Montreal, Quebec. I focused on values, seeking to identify those values that are most likely to be abandoned, those which undergo adaptation and those which remain constant over time. It sought to explain the influence of the intervening variables, such as, length of residence in Canada, regionalism, levels of education, location of education, occupation and finally, degree of social and economic interaction with the host society.

Members of minority groups are generally socially isolated and frequently spatially segregated. Their subordinate position becomes exposed in their unequal access to educational and professional advancement. They are not as free as other members of the society to change their jobs. Lack of mobility in the job market could be one of the direct affects of discrimination or lack of adaptation at the workplace. Earnings may have a direct relationship with language skill and education level, as predicted by Reitz (1997). Then again, a certain group of Bangladeshis are financially very successful without language skill and education, they are also less integrated into the host society. They are the part of the Bangladeshi enclave economy.

They are business people and face the least amount of discrimination at work.

Bangladeshi immigrants, as this study shows, experience severe problems in adaptation not only because of constraints imposed by the larger society, but also because of their own particular attributes, motivations, and aspirations. They try to maintain their religious and cultural values and in so doing tend to keep themselves separate from their host Canadian society. It is also a phenomenon common in Indo-Pakistani communities. But the reasons are different in the case of Bangladeshi community in Montreal.

In case of Indo-Pakistanis, those who resisted intercultural mixing did so for several reasons: They were unable to speak good English, were less educated, were from a rural background, and had a 'dream' of returning to their home country (Brooks and Singh, 1979). None of these are true in the case of Bangladeshis living in Montreal. Most of the Bangladeshis speak English, most of them are from urban background (except for Imam and Kamal Family in this study) and they all came to Canada to stay.

But Bangladeshis, as opposed to East Indians, perceive their own culture in static terms and change in it is viewed by them as a possible or inevitable source of danger to the

retention of their distinctive value system. Their cultural value system is almost impossible to separate from their religious value system. Religion is the most important factor in their lifestyles (except for Qazi Family). They are trying to follow and to adapt to the religious revolution that has been taking place in Bangladesh for the last few years. With the oil-rich Islamic states as potential aid donors, Bangladesh with a predominantly Muslim population has been making use of Islamic fraternity in recent years and Bangladeshi ex-patriots have been observing this trend (Nazneen, 1996). In 1977, five years after the liberation, Islam was introduced into the Bangladesh Constitution. In 1988 an amendment to the Constitution was made to declare Islam the state religion of Bangladesh. In the case of the East Indians, they entertain very little awareness or concern of their own home culture and values undergoing modifications in response to a changing modern India (Punetha, Giles, and Young, 1987).

The values which are most likely to be abandoned over time are the values concerning clothing and food habits as well as the retention of the Bengali language. The values concerning child raising, social interaction with other Canadians, values concerning dating and values concerning family relations undergo a complex process of transformation and adaptation. Often there are conflicts concerning these issues between



generations. The values that remain quite constant are the religious values.

The most effective independent variable that identifies the patterns in changing values is length of time in Canada. The operating assumption was that other things being equal, the longer the families have been in Canada, the greater will there be changes or modifications in the set of values held by the Bangladeshi respondents. This initial assumption was modified by the degree to which the respondents participate in the host society. Additional intervening variables that modify the effects of time are age, levels of education, whether or not the last educational degree is Canadian, occupation and status expectations. The most significant effects of these variables are those which result in the maintenance of an 'enclave economy'. In this case, families and their individual members, restrict most of their social interaction to the Bangladeshi community itself. Therefore, the existence of an enclave economy seems to be the most effective of all the intervening variables in retaining Bangladeshi cultural traits. The least influential intervening variables are those of age and income.

This study has found that the process of adaptation, works in different ways for different generations. The first

generation, that is, those who arrived in Canada as adults, or, more specifically, those whose basic process of socialization took place before immigration, tend to retain the traditional life style. They tried to 'transplant' the culture of their homeland in Montreal. They established ethnic institutions based on the model of those of the home country. Transplanting things, however, never grows the same way. Transplanting is not a continuation of old ways. Re-establishment of relations under different conditions of existence even with persons sharing the same heritage cannot result in a simple continuation of the old ways.

In this study, it was shown that the process of adaptation does not necessarily mean complete substitution of ethnic minority identity by mainstream identity, but rather a fusion of some aspects of ethnic identity with those of the host society. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, most of my respondents participate in both the functions of the Canadian society and those of the Bangladeshi community. They fulfil their commitments as members of the society at large and feel a part of it, but also feel some obligations towards their own ethnic community. In this study, it is evident that retaining Bangladeshi cultural values, while trying to participate in the Canadian society, often poses significant problems for the Bangladeshi population living in Montreal.

I have identified cultural values as the basic area where conflict is more apparent. The parents in this study, while trying to adapt to the Canadian society, are struggling continually to retain their own culture and to instil it in their children. Double socialization (in case of the children) and its gradual imbeddedness in second-generation personalities is a significant source of conflict between the first and the second generation respondents. As I have identified, the arenas of this conflict include the use of Bengali language at home, the practice of dating, childraising, having friends from other ethnic communities (both minorities and majorities), etc.

In this study, in the first generation, even with the modifications that Bangladeshis have to make to their traditional patterns of life, the essential features of the home country's community life-style prevail. The adaptation process, for the second generation, however, is a completely different matter. Typically, the second generation goes through a double process of socialization. That is, through their parents and ethnic institutions, on the one hand, they receive basic socialization in the culture and identity of the first generation. On the other hand, in the public school system and through all the other societal agencies of

socialization, they are socialized into the culture and identity of the broader host society. These two identities are built into the personalities of the second generation from their infancy. As a result, a socio-psychological world of doubleness becomes an everyday reality for the second generation in this study.

Reitz (1997) was right in identifying education as the strongest predictor of occupational status for different ethnic groups. Reitz also concluded that ethnic concentrations do affect ethnic inequality, sometimes by restricting opportunities for upward mobility, and sometimes by creating opportunities. In my study, the two Sylhetti Families are the part of the Bangladeshi enclave economy which proves to be financial rewarding without the factor of formal education. Yet, members of these two families have the least knowledge of an official language and they are at the lowest level of adaptation. They retained their traditional life-style and have the least interaction with local Canadian culture. Their participation in an enclave economy (ethnic concentration) contributed to the fact of their low level of adaptation.

The rest of the respondents are far less restricted to their ethnic community. Even though Stelcner and Kyriazis (1995) and deSilva (1992) in their analysis of aggregate data, found no significant trace of discrimination against

immigrants from developing countries, some respondents in my study felt differently. It is one of the virtues of the ethnographic approach that enables the researcher to discover the perceptions of discrimination, how and in what manner different forms of discrimination may be expressed.

I also argue, that the individual Sylhettis experience less discrimination in the host society as they live in a socially segregated traditional culture. Thus they avoid social interaction that could involve discriminatory acts. Bonacich's (1972,1976) findings about ethnic ghettoization is also true in the case of newly arrived Bangladeshi immigrants. Most of them live in the Park Extension and Cote des Neiges area.

This study has identified a few socio-demographic variables that have strong influences on both external and internal process of immigrant adaptation. These are: age, gender, socio-economic status, amount, kind and source of education, and length of residence in Canada.

For the first generation, food habits remained the same. They eat traditional food at home. Except for Enam and Uddin Family, the families seldom went to Canadian restaurants to eat. Some families went to Bangladeshi

restaurants. But for the second generation, they prefer Canadian food, they eat traditional food occasionally. The children who came fairly recently (Lopa, and the daughter from Rahim Family), still eat traditional food as a staple. At the same time, they seem to like 'Canadian' food.

Except for the Imam and Kamal families, all families seem to celebrate Canadian non-religious holidays. This is also very significant. Children mostly celebrate these holidays and the parents follow them. At the same time, the children also participate in 'ethnic functions', along with their parents, as well.

'Canadian' and 'ethnic' functions are not necessarily contradictory, rather, they may be complementary. Since the third generation does not exist in the case of Bangladeshis (they have been in Canada for only around 40 years), the long term effect of this phenomena in the third generation of Bangladeshis is not possible to study yet. We can only deduce from studies done in other ethnic groups, that the duality between participating in both 'Canadian' and 'ethnic' functions diminishes by the third generation, yet, it does not completely disappear (Isajiew: 1990:55-60). The process of adaptation is not a unilinear, zero-sum phenomenon in which, the extent of one's adaptation results

in a loss of one's cultural practices. Rather the process involves both taking over the mainstream patterns and retaining some ethnic patterns.

Most of the parents still retained much of their original cultural values especially those pertaining to religion. This is the area where the parents are having a hard time coping with the children. The parents (except for Enam and Qazi Family) are worried that Canadian values are contradictory to Bangladeshi values and it is better not to expose their children to these values. Their concern mainly revolves around the issues of dating, sex-education at school, and violence and nudity in the media.

Some families are doing better than others financially, and they are at different levels of adaptation, depending on factors such as their length of residency in Canada, the amount and place of schooling, age at the time of immigration, degree of participation in the enclave economy, and language skills. This study also suggests that the influence of economic wealth is modified by how the wealth is earned. The Imam and Kamal Family are somewhat well off financially, yet they are at the bottom of the adaptation ladder. Their almost total involvement in, and dependence on the enclave economy contributed to their less adaptive status .

None of the respondents report experiencing direct discrimination at work, but some respondents suggest that they believe white Canadians are prejudiced against the 'brown' Bangladeshis. This is also a pattern among the second generation too. But for them, the race issue is not so significant.

In this dissertation I have attempted to highlight the complex nature of adaptation of a community of immigrants from Bangladesh into the complex culture of Montreal, Quebec. I have sought to go beyond those studies that are based on aggregate measures of income and/or occupational status. In doing so, I have been able to reveal the often ambivalent responses among Bangladeshis toward their reception in Canadian and more specifically Montreal society. This is expressed most fully in family relations and intergenerational tensions. On the one hand members of this community wish to be accepted as full participation members in their host society. On the other hand, they, older respondents especially, also wish to retain their core traditional values. How these two diverse orientations are to be resolved remains an ongoing dilemma for the respondents in my study.



### **Suggestions for Further Study:**

The Bangladeshi community has not been studied previously and its unique attributes provide interesting areas for further study. Aspects that could be addressed in more detail include the role of nationalism and religion in identity formation among the younger generation.

This dissertation could be a start for a longitudinal study of the community, determining to what degree these factors can be sustained over time. To what extent will later generations (i.e. the third generation, which is not in existence yet) experience similar processes of adaptation? Hopefully this study will provide a base point from which future research can be carried out on the ongoing processes of adaptation.

Breton, Isajiew, Kalbach and Reitz (1979) concluded from their study that one-third of the third generation retain significant elements of their culture. It seems most likely that, as long as the younger members gain something positive from their efforts such as a sense of rich cultural identity, there is a good chance that the Bangladeshi community will survive as a well-adapted, distinct and respected community in Canada.

Hopefully, this pioneering study will generate a significant interest in the existence of this rather large community and its influence in the Canadian multiculturalism.

## APPENDIX

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

Home ownership or rental? House size and satisfaction?

Family size and composition

Education

Occupation

Family Income

(Parents)

#### 1. Family and Personal Relations

Birthplace

Age

When did you immigrate? Why?

Age at migration

Did you speak English at home? At school? At work?

What language are you most comfortable with?

What language would you prefer your children speak?

Did you have considerable language problem in the early years?

What were the special family occasions back home? And now?  
- birthdays, anniversaries

What were the special social occasions? And now?  
- religious, cultural

What do you remember about your parents' methods of childraising? Any difference with your own? Why?

After the immigration:

- did you have a total change of lifestyle? (clothing, food)

Do you read newspaper? How often? Which one?

- which parts do you read? (local, sports, politics, international, women's section, comics, editorials, letters, business)

How often do you watch T.V.?

Do you go to the movies? What kind? In what language?

Do you have a similar lifestyle as your friends?

What is your perception of your nationality? What does that mean?

What achievement in your life are you most proud of?

What do you think about other ethnics?

- Hindus (friendly or communal)
- Blacks (oppressed or immoral)
- Chinese (hard worker or unfriendly)

Do you want your sons/daughters to marry within the community?

- arranged, courtship

## 1. Occupational Relationships

Relations with bosses, co-workers

Do you socialize with your co-workers outside the workplace?

Were you ever fired or quit? Why?

Seniority? Who was laid off first - ethnic workers?

Experience of racism at work (any specific incident?)

Language at work

Job satisfaction?

## 2. Ethnic Community Relationships

What community organizations are in existence?

- ethnic schools
- ethnic clubs
- mosques/temples
- political groups

Is there an attempt within the group to teach and to learn any of the languages?

Were you accepted warmly, upon arrival, by the established immigrants of your own community?

Do you think there is a class-system in your community?

- rich/poor
- regional blocks
- educated-uneducated
- Canadian citizens/refugees
- Who do you consider to be the leader of your community? Why?

Have you ever been taken advantage of by the members of your own community?

- socially
- financially
- emotionally

Do you read ethnic newspapers? How often?

Do you participate in ethnic entertainment?

- variety shows/meena bazaar
- movies

Are your friends from your own community?

Do you celebrate ethnic holidays? (Eid, Pahela Baishakh)

Could your community function completely independently of the larger society?

Does your community pull together in times of trouble?

Is there a pressure within the group to retain ethnicity? If yes, from who?

Unspoken community myths and laws, social mores and folkways

Has there been a breakdown of Bangladeshi culture? How?

Has North-American life diminished or enriched your life-style?

- conflicting laws and customs
- freedom and privacy/lack of social contact

How has the younger generation helped/destroyed the ethnic ways?

How has the community changed? (characteristics and mentality of population, group solidarity)

Regionalism - do you think regional and religious groups are segregated? (Sylhettis, Noakhalians, Chittagonians, Hindus)

What would you do if you could do it all over again? What would you change? What would you retain?

### **3. Larger Community Relationships**

How were you treated by Canadians when you arrived?

- discriminated against, slang? Your feeling.

How did you view Canadians? (friendly/unfriendly)

Do you socialize with Canadian friends? If yes, how often?

Were you ridiculed or encouraged by your community for having Canadian friends?

Do you feel that larger community has more opportunity?

What do you admire/resent most in your group? (national characteristics, group solidarity)

Are you associated with clubs, groups, charities outside your own community?

Do you feel secure in Canada - as a group?  
- as an individual outside the group?

How do you view Canadian laws? Complimentary/contradictory to

your culture (marriage, divorce and custody laws, absence of corporal punishment)

## 5. Values and Beliefs

What were the first values lost or abandoned after the move?  
(family values, child raising)

What custom or values would you like to see resurrected?

What do you want for your children?

Do you have a good life here?

How do you judge success? (money/education/children's education)

Did you consider yourself successful?

Relationship toward the old?

Morality and manner - sex education in school/ co-education

Do you go to the mosque? How often?

(children)

## 1. Family and Personal Relationships

What do your parents remember most about Bangladesh? (customs, social relationships, food, weather)

What do they miss most?

Have you ever visited Bangladesh since your family moved? What do you miss most? Change in views?

What language are you most comfortable with?

Did you have any language problems at school?

Special family and religious occasions

What do you think about your parents' methods of child raising?

Did you ever fight with your parents? Is discipline strict?

Any contradiction between your home-situation and your friends'?

Parents views on smoking/drinking? Your views?

Are you allowed to have opposite sex friends? Do you date?

Do you participate in sports?

Do you read newspaper? Which part?

How often do you watch T.V.?

Do you read books? How often? In what language?

Are you different from your friends?

What is your perception of your nationality? What does that mean?

What achievement in your life are you most proud of? (diploma, sports)

How do your parents view other ethnic groups? You?

Are your parents satisfied with their jobs?

When were you considered an adult?

Views on marriage - similar or different than parents

## **2. Ethnic Community Relationships**

How are you treated by local Canadians?

Any discrimination, slang? Your feelings at the time?

How do you view Canadians?



What do you like and dislike about people from your own community?

Do you ever remember fights or brawls caused by ethnic issues?

Do you have Canadian friends?

Were you ridiculed or encouraged by your family for having Canadian friends?

Did your inability/ability to communicate inhibit/facilitate the making of friends?

Would you date outside the group?

Would you ever consider marriage outside your group?

Do you feel superior, equal, or inferior to other ethnic groups?

Do you think larger community has more opportunities?

Do you feel secure in Canada?

Do you prefer ethnic food? Other ethnic food? Other ethnic music?

Do you remember any controversial issues in which your group may have been caught in the middle? How did the larger community react? Group feeling at the time?

## **2. Recreation and Entertainment**

What did your parents relate as recreation/entertainment habits of the old country?

Favourite music - language

Favourite T.V. shows

Favourite types of reading material

Favourite types of movies, last movie seen, favourite star?

Favourite holidays

### 3. Values and Beliefs

What are your parents' values? (traditional /religious/  
cultural)

What do you think about them? (too rigid/liberal)

How are yours different?

Have your ethnic group's values been changed for the better or  
the worse? (any change in the last few years)

What customs or values would you like to see resurrected?  
(religious/social)

If you had a lot of money what would you do?

Do you have the good life here?

How do you judge success? (money/education)

Do you consider yourself successful?

How do you view politicians?

How do you interpret Qur'an/Gita - liberal/strict?

How strictly do you practice religion?

### 4. Institution

Class distinction - old country and in Canada

Dress, drink, food, customs, habits? Traditional or local?

Do/did you attend ethnic schools? How do you feel about that?

Do/did you take part in regular school-recreations?

Ethnic vs. non-ethnic art participation

Views on Quebec politics

Religion in your daily life - fasting, animal sacrifice

How do you view other religions in your ethnic groups?  
(Christians, Hindus)

Written use of the language? Correspondence?

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