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Exploring the Acculturation Preferences of Bangladeshi-Muslim Second-Generation American Immigrants in New York City.

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Exploring the Acculturation Preferences of Bangladeshi-Muslim Second-Generation American
Immigrants in New York City.

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to apply previous frameworks of acculturation to evaluate the acculturation preferences of the Bangladeshi-Muslim second-generation American immigrant population in New York City. This thesis attempts to understand the acculturation preferences of the aforementioned population by analyzing how they view their Bangladeshi ethnic identity and their Islamic religious identity in relation to their American immigrant upbringing. To do this, participants have been organized into acculturation preference tracks based on John Berry's acculturation preference model. This thesis will then explore possible explanations for why differences between these acculturation preferences exist and why certain individuals found themselves aligning with one acculturation preference track over another.

Keywords: Asian-Americans, Acculturation, Assimilation, Immigration, Identity, Second-generation, America, Bangladesh, Islam, Ethnicity, Culture, Neighborhood, Community, Family, Values, Beliefs

*“my voice
is the offspring
of two countries colliding
what is there to be ashamed of
if english
and my mother tongue
made love
my voice
is her father's words
and mother's accent
what does it matter if
my mouth carries two worlds”*

Accent

By Rupi Kaur

Acknowledgments

This project, or rather, college, has been a tumultuous journey. Honestly, looking back, I should have taken a gap year between high school and college. I wish that I had taken the time to relax and better think about what I wanted out of college instead of just rushing through it. But I'm finally here at the end of it now, and I would like to thank the people who made it possible for me to get through the last few years of my life.

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Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
<i>America: The Land of Assimilation?</i>	1
<i>The Origin of Bangladesh</i>	2
<i>Bangladeshi Immigration into the United States:</i>	3
<i>Literature Review</i>	7
Assimilation:.....	8
Acculturation:	10
Ethnic Acculturation:.....	12
Religious Acculturation:.....	13
<i>Research Design:</i>	15
Research Methods:.....	16
Chapter II: Views on their Bangladeshi Ethnic Identity	19
<i>What does it mean to be Bangladeshi?</i>	19
<i>What is American Culture?</i>	22
<i>Do you feel Bangladeshi and American at the same time?</i>	23
The Assimilated:.....	27
Those Who Integrate:.....	30
The Separated:	33
<i>Discussion & Conclusions</i>	35
Other trends and possible explanations:	38
Socioeconomic Status & the Family:.....	38
Gender:.....	39
Religiosity:.....	39
Chapter III: Defining their Religious Identity	41
<i>Religiosity in First-Generation Bangladeshi-Muslims</i>	43
<i>Islam as a form of Childrearing</i>	48
<i>Redefining Faith</i>	52
The Assimilationists and Islam:.....	53
Integrating Islam:.....	54
Separationism and Islam:.....	58
<i>Discussion and Conclusion</i>	59
Chapter IV: The Overtaking of Islam in Bangladeshi Culture?	63
<i>Interethnic or Interreligious?</i>	64
<i>Being Bangladeshi verses being Muslim</i>	68
<i>Discussion and Conclusion</i>	71

Chapter V: Conclusion	73
<i>Key Findings</i>	73
<i>Limitations and Notes to Consider for Future Studies</i>	78
Post-Thesis Remarks	80
Bibliography	83
Appendix:	90
Appendix A: Interview Questions	90
Appendix B: Email Script to Affinity Groups/Organizations.....	92
Appendix C: Email Script to Recommended Individuals.....	93
Appendix D: Email Script to Interested Parties	94

Chapter I: Introduction

America: The Land of Assimilation?

As a second-generation immigrant, I was placed in front of a lot of choices I had to make when it came to deciding the person that I wanted to become. Growing up with values and practices at home that was completely different from the values and practices of the people I met out on the streets, stores, school, and etc., was not easy. This experience led me to struggle with how I saw myself. Was I Bangladeshi? American? What about my religious beliefs? How did that tie into it?

There's a lot of questions about what you believe when your life is split between two different identities. This is an experience that a lot of second-generation immigrants' experience as they grow up. In my experience, I found myself becoming associating more and more with American values than my that of my ethnic origin. Did this mean I assimilating into American society? Was this something I wanted? Was it inevitable for me to assimilate and lose track of my Bangladeshi heritage regardless of my want? These questions made me more interested in the sociology of immigration and the processes of assimilation and acculturation. Growing up, I did not have many close Bangladeshi friends. I did not live in a significantly populated Bangladeshi neighborhood, and my parents did not really socialize much in general, be it with Bangladeshi people or otherwise. We were not even particularly religious. I could not help but think about whether this was the reason I did not have a close connection to my Bangladeshi heritage. These thoughts sparked the inspiration for this project – I wanted to see how my experiences compared to others in the same demographic group as I.

This project, although designed to contribute to the literature about assimilation in regards to Bangladeshi-American Muslim second-generation immigrants, is equally important to

my personal journey in understanding my answer to the question of how I viewed my own ethnic identity.

Personal motivations aside, the Bangladeshi immigrant community is inherently a fascinating demographic to study. In addition to Bangladeshi-Americans being an overlooked group of people in American sociology, they are a group of people that have struggled with several intersectional social problems. Social mobility, assimilation, ethnic identity, religiosity, and gender are a few of the intersections that my study intends to discuss. In particular, I am the most interested in the intersections between the Bangladeshi-American second-generation immigrants' perception of their ethnic identity, their religiosity/religious beliefs, and immigrant status. Islam, being the predominant religion of the Bangladeshi people, has a perplexing relationship to the founding of the country itself – and part of my paper will be dedicated to unpacking its relationship to the ethnic culture of the Bangladeshi people in the context of being an immigrant.

To provide more insight into the Bangladeshi-American Muslim population, the next section will explain the history of immigration of said demographic.

The Origin of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a fairly recently liberated country. The country did not gain its independence up until 1971 after they won the war of liberation against Pakistan. Following the partition of India, after the British left the area, the Indian subcontinent was split into the Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. This split was primarily decided by religious lines. Regions in which Islam was prevalent became a part of the Dominion of Pakistan, whereas primarily Hindu regions were a part of the Union of India.

Bangladesh was then known as “East Pakistan” due to being located on the east side of the Indian border. Tensions arose between the East Pakistanis and West Pakistanis. One of the main reasons was the ideological differences in the type of society they wished to create. West Pakistanis wanted to create a society based on their Islamic identity, whereas Bangladeshis wanted a society based on more western ideals such as democracy and secularism. Given they were both under the Dominion of Pakistan, they struggled to come to a consensus. However, much of the political power was concentrated in West Pakistan. As such, they held more sway in deciding the road the Dominion of Pakistan would take. In this conflict, the West Pakistanis attempted to do away with the Bangladeshi language due to it containing verbiage from Hinduism – which was unacceptable by the West Pakistanis in their desire to create an Islamic state. In turn, the people of East Pakistan grew resentful towards West Pakistan, as they were very prideful of their ethnic culture and language (Schendal 2009).

The process in which the West Pakistanis attempted to “Islamise” East Pakistan caused tensions between the two sides to rise to a boiling point. These conditions fostered the rise of a Bengali resistance movement and the subsequent declaration of independence in March 1971 (Schendal 2009; Gupta 1974). What followed in the next nine months was one of the bloodiest revolutions in history. Civilian casualties have estimated to range from 300,000 to 3 million deaths (BBC 2012). On December 16th, 1971 East Pakistan officially won the war of liberation and established itself as present-day Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi Immigration into the United States:

Following the establishment of Bangladesh as a country, more members of the region were able to immigrate to other parts of the world. A few years prior to Bangladesh gaining its independence, the United States of America had passed the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization

Act. This was a pivotal moment for all immigration in America as prior to it, immigration in America was heavily regulated and controlled so that mostly only those of European descent could emigrate to the United States. Asian countries were mostly blocked off from doing the same due to the discriminatory visa-quota system the United States upheld prior to 1965.

The conditions created by the Immigration Act of 1965 allowed immigrants, in general, from Asia to be able to more easily migrate to the United States. Even so, however, only a small number of Bangladeshi immigrants actually immigrated to the U.S. in the 70s and 80s. The purpose of this migration was to avoid political persecution. Bangladesh was, after all, in the midst of recovering from a long bloody war and still attempting to establish its government and nation. Additionally, many immigrated from Bangladesh during this time period to avoid religious persecution as well – at least, those who were in the religious minority in the region. Between the 1970s and 1980s, the number of Bangladeshi immigrants was only a couple thousand – roughly 3500 by 1980 (Anam 2015; Jones 2019).

Presently, the number of Bangladeshi immigrants has shot upwards to approximately 277,000 first and second-generation immigrants. Furthermore, nearly 48% of that population has arrived in the United States on or after 2000 (Migration Policy Institute 2014). This indicates that a large section of Bangladeshi immigrants in the United States arrived recently. Why?

The answer is that while the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 certainly opened up Asian countries like Bangladesh to be able to send their people to the United States, the types of people who were granted that ability were limited. Primarily by their socioeconomic standing, as well as their skillset and education. Only the highly educated, and privileged, members of Bangladesh were able to apply to get a visa to emigrate (Anam 2015). This made it so that only a select type, and number, of Bangladeshi people, were granted visas to gain legal entry into the

borders of the United States – meaning that they were granted to mainly Bangladeshis who have abundance skillsets and educational credentials.

This changed in 1990, however. During this time period, the United States created the diversity visa programs. Immigration programs that were implemented in the mind of immigrating groups of people from underrepresented countries across the world to America. One of these countries was Bangladesh.

The method by which these diversity visas were distributed was through a visa lottery system – providing a more randomized and equitable way to distribute travel visas to Bangladeshis to come to America. Bangladesh was added to the diversity visa program in 1995 and remained in it until 2012. They were removed due to the high volume of Bangladeshis immigrating to the United States that it could no longer continue to offer the diversity visa as Bangladeshis dominated the percentage of diversity visas granted (with 5 to 9 percent of all visas going to Bangladeshis between 2005 and 2011). Nonetheless, the program caused Bangladeshi immigration to skyrocket in the United States (Migration Policy Institute 2014; Pew Research Center 2017; Vaughan and Huennekens 2018).

The rapid increase in Bangladeshi immigration was not solely increased by the diversity visa program, however. It worked in tangent with the new immigration laws proposed by the Act of 1965 which allowed immigrants to apply for visas for their immediate families. Immigrants who would arrive through winning the diversity visa lottery would come to the United States and start new lives here. Over time, they would apply to bring their families to the United States as well as have children.

This process has been the single largest contributor to the Bangladeshi immigrant population – and it continues to be so given that other avenues of immigration have been closed

to them following the cessation of the diversity visa program in Bangladesh (Vaughan and Huennekens 2018). In the early 2000s, when the country was still in the program, there were already more immigrants that were sponsored by their families coming in than initiating immigrants¹. However, the ratio was a lot more balanced. For instance, in 2000, 2001, and 2002, the United States received 1,712, 1,762, and 1,232 initiating immigrants respectively. In the same years, we had 4,133, 2,968, and 2,128 sponsored immigrants arrive respectively. As we look at the numbers closer to the years when the diversity visa program was beginning to be limited and eventually shut down for Bangladesh, we see a significant peak in the difference between initiate immigrants and sponsored immigrants from Bangladesh. For instance, in 2012, when the program was shut down, we have 408 initiate immigrants to 12,344 sponsored immigrants. A few years later, in 2016, we had merely 78 initiate immigrants, but 15,723 sponsored immigrants arrived (Vaughan and Huennekens 2018).

Therefore, it seems as if family sponsored immigration is the main cause of how so many Bangladeshis managed to arrive at the United States and start to build communities here. My study intends to focus on the Bangladeshis who have settled in the New York City Area. And fortunately, it just so happens to be the city most populated by Bangladeshis in the country. According to data collection done in 2015, there were roughly 61, 927 Bangladeshi immigrants in New York City alone. 66% of them reside in the borough of Queens (Profile of New York City's Bangladeshi Americans 2019).

My study intends to look at these neighborhoods and the Bangladeshi population in them. In particular, I will focus on the acculturation preferences of second-generation Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrants. Before the research question and methodology for my study is explained,

¹ Immigrants who arrived via a work or diversity visa

however, it is important to understand previous literature on assimilation and acculturation – which the next section will detail.

Literature Review

This study is primarily based on the general framework provided by previous researchers regarding assimilation and acculturation. My study, in particular, is about the experience and trends of 2nd-generation immigrant Bangladeshi-Muslim Americans in New York City in navigating their sense of their cultural identity. Culture, however, has not been defined in this study yet. In general, culture is a complex concept that sociologists have wrestled with. Previous interpretations of culture have defined it as the values of groups, frames of perception, identification with different institutions and so on (Small et al. 2010). In other words, the concept of culture is incredibly complicated. Thus, for the purpose of this study, I will use a more specific definition of culture in that it is “the ways of life the members of society, or of groups within a society. It includes how they dress, their marriage customs, language and family life, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits” as a definition of culture (Itulua-Abumere 2013; Giddens 2005). In essence, culture in this study will comprise of the behavioral patterns, values, and customs of the members of a group. More specifically, I will pay close attention to these categories in the ethnic and religious dimensions. This is because this study will focus more on the differences in my participant’s attitudes towards their ethnic and religious identities in the context of their American immigrant identity. As a result, the findings of this study will naturally be more centered on the acculturation piece of assimilation. That being said, it is important to understand the general theoretical framework of assimilation before delving into the more specific theories on the processes of acculturation. This section is broken down into two main parts, general theories of assimilation, and theories of acculturation.

Furthermore, the section on acculturation is further segmented into acculturation in relation to one's ethnic identity, and acculturation of one's religiosity and religious beliefs.

Assimilation:

So then, what is assimilation? In virtually every discussion about immigrants, the concept of assimilation is mentioned. Modern assimilation theory is largely based on Milton Gordon's definition of the term. Gordon defines assimilation as "the entrance of the minority group into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level" (Gordon 1964). Gordon's interpretation of a complete form of assimilation was the devolution of a minority group's ethnic identity until they become indistinguishable from the majority group. In later studies, the concept of assimilation, though still reflective of Gordon's definition, has largely been based on Richard Alba and Victor Nee's interpretation of the phenomenon of which they describe "the decline, and at its endpoint, the disappearance of an ethnic/racial distinction and the cultural social differences that express it" (Alba and Nee 1997).

It is important to note that though Alba and Nee's definition focuses on ethnic/racial distinctions declining as what assimilation is, my study expands upon the definition to also include religious distinctions as well. As such, a more accurate representation of what assimilation is in my study is the "gradual decline of cultural distinctions between an ethnic minority group and the majority group of the host society". This definition accounts for all different segments of my definition of culture, which goes beyond the mere ethnic and racial categories in Alba and Nee's definition, and includes religion as well.

Based on the above definition, however, assimilation is implied to be inevitable for all minority groups and each succeeding generation is more assimilated into the host society than the previous. This interpretation is known as straight-line assimilation (Warner and Srole 1945;

Gordon 1964; Alba and Nee 1997). This is not always the case, however. Other researchers have proposed alternative approaches to assimilation theory. Bumpy-line, segmented, and residential assimilation are modifications to straight-line assimilation theory that this study considers in its analysis of acculturation preferences in 2nd generation Bangladeshi-Muslim American immigrants in New York City.

Bumpy-line assimilation theory is a modification by Herbert Gans of straight-line assimilation theory. Gans, although originally supportive of straight-line assimilation theory in his early work in 1973, changed his stance once researching more on the topic. He discovered that assimilation does not always embody the “inevitable” theme expressed earlier. Instead, Gans argued that minority groups actually redevelop their sense of the cultural distinctiveness intergenerationally – meaning that some succeeding generations may actually be more culturally distinct from the host majority group than their predecessors (Gans 1992). This, according to Gans, invalidates straight-line assimilation theory as assimilation routes can progress or regress depending on circumstantial or environmental factors per generation, hence the “bumpy-line” assimilation theory.

Segmented assimilation, on the other hand, is a theory focusing on how minority immigrant groups can be blocked from certain pathways to assimilation due to certain barriers. For instance, class or economic status may provide a block to socioeconomic assimilation as the inability to afford certain types of capital may jeopardize their ability to attain the average socioeconomic status of the typical American (Portes and Zhou 1993). Additionally, different minority groups face different or fewer obstacles in assimilation, hence segmenting the ability to assimilate into mainstream American culture per minority group (Brown and Dean 2006).

Residential assimilation focuses on the spatial location of minority groups. Studies indicate that once individuals in minority groups achieve a level of socioeconomic mobility, they will leave areas in which their ethnic minority group is prevalent (i.e. ethnic neighborhoods). The regions these individuals leave to are more representative of the ethnic majority (Alba and Nee 1997; Walton 2015). This was also likewise argued in sociologist Min Zhou's study on Chinese Asians from the Chinatown neighborhood in New York City. Zhou's findings supported residential assimilation theory in that she found that once Chinese Asians found socioeconomic success, they would tend to leave the enclave in favor of more suburban neighborhoods that were predominately white. This led to the degradation of their ethnic identity as Chinese Asians to which Zhou suggested was a movement towards being "white" (Zhou 2009).

This framework suggests the presence of one's cultural background in their residential location influences their attitudes towards their cultural background. Other studies have promoted this explanation through collective efficacy theory. The idea that communities can socialize individuals to perform favorable behaviors. This theory, in conjunction with the concept of ethnic neighborhoods introduced by Min Zhou, argues that ethnic neighborhoods can reproduce behaviors representative of that ethnicity's culture. In essence, ethnic neighborhoods may act as a counter to the assimilation process. This phenomenon is also heavily present in Asian values, as previous studies have defined Asian values to be more collectivist in nature than American values (Walton 2015; Collins et. al 2017; Smajda and Gerteis 2012).

Acculturation:

Acculturation, on the other hand, is viewed as a separate, but a connected piece to assimilation. Acculturation is the process by which the minority group in a foreign host society starts to take in the habits and patterns of the majority group in the foreign host society (Gordon

1974). Examples of this process range from wearing clothing from the host society to learning their primary language. Acculturation differs from assimilation in that it does not necessarily mean that it reduces the “cultural distinctiveness” of a minority group. It is more additive in that habits and patterns from the host society are added to the activities of the minority group. Although acculturation processes can be considered to be a separate process from Assimilation, it can form a pathway to being assimilated into the host society. Acculturation is inherently accumulative due to its additive nature. Thus, the more you acculturate and accept the host society’s norms and cultural behaviors, the more at risk you are in assimilating into the host society. Furthermore, acculturation is viewed as a one-way process in that aspects of the majority host society are accepted by subjects of the minority group, but the same is not true for the reverse (Gans 1992; Gordon 1974).

For the purposes of this study, I will be centralizing my use of acculturation by referencing to the definition provided above, and by the acculturation model developed by John Berry.

Berry’s acculturation model presents four different forms, or tracks, of acculturation. Assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. The assimilation track, though not to be confused with the general term assimilation, still assumes a similar trend in its definition. The assimilation acculturation track refers to the outcome in which minority groups choose their host society’s majority culture over their own. Integration is the idea that they uphold both sides of the host society’s culture and the culture of their minority group (original culture). Separation is the idea that they favor their minority group over the host society. And lastly, marginalization is the denial of both one’s minority culture and the host society’s culture (Berry 1997).

Much work has been done with John Berry's acculturation model. Previous studies have utilized it to track the acculturation preferences of different intergenerational immigrant groups across different countries. My study will likewise do the same, but this time focusing specifically on the experiences of the Bangladeshi-Muslim American second-generation immigrant group and their first-generation parents. In particular, I will be exploring their acculturation preferences towards their Bangladeshi ethnic identity versus their American immigrant identity, and how the influence of being raised in the United States of America has impacted their religiosity and religious beliefs.

Ethnic Acculturation:

Although there are few previous studies specific to the Bangladeshi demographic, there are many studies that studied acculturation and assimilation in the South-Asian population overall in western societies. Previous studies have found that South-Asian adolescents, and adolescents from other minority-groups, in the UK, have an increased awareness of their ethnic identity whilst growing up (Hutnik 1991). This awareness often leads to a self-evaluation of their ethnic identity that previous researchers have utilized as an indicator of their preference of their acculturation track. Studies have found that there was a trend in the use of hyphenated labels when self-identifying themselves. For instance, a study performed in the UK found that many South-Asians identified themselves as "Pakistani-British", the hyphen combining their ethnic background with the nationality of their host culture (Robinson 2005). This practice, according to the study, implied two things. The first being that integration – the fusion of both one's ethnic background and host society's culture – was the preferred acculturation track from Berry's model. Secondly, it meant that this group of people did not think that their two identities clashed, this further supported the popularity of the integration track (Hutnik 1991, Modood et. al 1994).

However, though this was an expectation of the South-Asian adolescents in the UK, it did not necessarily end that way. Studies have also reported friction between the cultural values held by first-generation immigrant parents and their second-generation immigrant children. These frictions originated from the different attitudes they had towards the host society's culture. First-generation immigrants tended to hold values that aligned with the separation track of Berry's model – the idea that they preferred their own ethnic culture over the host society's (Stopes-Roe, and Cochrane 1991; Shaw 1988). This conflicted with the integration preference of their children who started to change not only their language-use, but also their religious beliefs, and values to better reflect the host society's (Ghuman 1975, Shaw 2000).

The intergenerational conflict indicates that there is a case of the succeeding generation (at least from the 1st generation to the second generation) being more assimilated than that of their parent's generation. The explanation for this, as mentioned before, lies in the different approaches to acculturation in relation to the host society's culture that the two generations differ in. In general, the generation succeeding the first generation is more open to negotiating their cultural identity and their differences between themselves that of the majority group of their host society. This is especially true for those who grow up in the host society as they are constantly negotiating their cultural identity in response to the cultural values of the host society. Their placement on Berry's acculturation model is a result of the preferences that arose from the negotiations they made between their original culture and the culture of the host society (Dhingra 2007; Schwartz and Unger).

Religious Acculturation:

On the topic of acculturation of religiosity and religious beliefs, there have been studies that have been conducted specifically on Muslims in European countries that analyzed the

intergenerational differences between the religiosity of first-generation Moroccan immigrants and their children in the Netherlands. The first finding was that there was an increased sense of religiosity in the first-generation immigrants in their Islamic faith. Alongside this, it was found that those who reported high levels of religiosity likewise were more exclusive in their social groups (Lubbers and Gijsberts 2010). This finding coincides with the finding that first-generation immigrants tend to be on the separation track of Berry's acculturation model.

Furthermore, those who were first-generation immigrants and reported high religiosity likewise faced discrimination and their faith acted as a barrier to structural assimilation (Beek and Fleischmann 2019, Foner and Alba 2008; Alba 2005). There was, therefore, a negative correlation between having a separation acculturation attitude and socioeconomic success in the first-generation immigrant group.

On the other hand, second-generation immigrants did not report the same type of religiosity. The first trend that was discovered in previous studies was that there was not a very significant drop or change regarding religiosity intergenerationally amongst Muslim immigrant groups. The reason being that religiosity was primarily passed down through socialization practices by the family. Therefore, those who had a tightknit family environment also tended to retain the same level of religiosity as their parents (Soehl 2017). However, the form of Islamic faith was found to differ amongst the second-generation immigrants compared to their parents.

Second-generation youth, even if retaining the same level of religiosity as their parents, were found to often alter their perception of interpretation of their religion in response to the values of their host society (Beek and Fleischmann 2019; Vertovec and Rogers 2017; Soehl 2017). This actually falls in line with the preference of the integration track of acculturation reported in the studies mentioned above. It should be noted that this trend was reported primarily

in Muslim second-generation immigrants in European studies. Interestingly enough, another study conducted in the United States reported that it was the reverse – that the interpretation of the faith tended to remain the same, but the level of religiosity of second-generation immigrants changed to match the religiosity trends (frequency of worship) found in their host society (Conner 2010). I hope to address this discrepancy with my research.

Research Design:

My study aims to explore the experiences of the second-generation immigrant population of Bangladesh-American Muslim young adults in New York City. Previous similar studies were primarily centered around Europe and South-Asians in general. My study aims to be more specific with the demographic of Bangladeshi people. Throughout the study, I aim to answer the following questions.

“What track from Berry’s model of acculturation is preferred by my demographic while balancing their ethnic, religious, and immigrant identities – what attitudes, situational contexts, and experiences facilitate this preference?”

Answering this question will provide insight into the assimilation and acculturation processes of one of the largest immigrant groups in New York City. This knowledge will help us better understand what pressures the second-generation to be more accepting, in conflict with, or denial of each aspect of their ethnic, religious, and immigrant identity. As expressed in the sections above, every succeeding generation following first generations is expected to gradually assimilate with the majority host culture until they are culturally indistinguishable from the majority. The second-generation, out of all studied generations, are the most fascinating as they are the only generation that has the experience of growing up with the values and expectations of their ethnic origin in a completely foreign environment. It is my expectation that the experiences,

and acculturation preferences, of the second-generation, are what determine this supposedly downward path. It is my hope to research more about their experiences as a result. The methodology in which I gathered information to answer my research question is discussed in the next section.

Research Methods:

In this study, I interviewed a total of nine participants who were all Bangladeshi second-generation immigrants that were raised with Islam. Although the study was open to anyone within that demographic in the New York City area, the majority of my participants stemmed from neighborhoods in Queens. In fact, the majority of them grew up in neighborhoods in which there is a large Bangladeshi presence such as Hillside Jamaica and Jackson Heights. There were likewise participants who did come from neighborhoods with a large Bangladeshi presence. All participants were between the ages of 18 to 26 during the time of the research period of the study.

Participants were recruited from a combination of emailing and reaching out to Bangladeshi affinity groups in New York City. However, majority of my participants were recruited through the snowball method in which I asked previously interviewed participants to recommend the opportunity to those they felt would be a good fit. As an incentive, participants were entered in a raffle to win one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards.

Participants were recorded during the interviews. The recordings were transcribed and deleted. To protect my participant's identities, full transcripts will not be provided. Furthermore, any mentioned names, including that of the participants, have been swapped out with pseudonyms.

Interview questions are located in Appendix A, recruiting email scripts are within Appendices B through D. The next section will outline the organization of this research paper.

This remainder of this thesis is divided into three primary chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter will explore the concept of ethnic identity and acculturation in the United States. The first chapter opens up with supplying information about Bangladeshi cultural values and American cultural values as my participants defined them. Following this, I will explain the primary framework that is crucial to understand the arguments made in both the first and second chapters. This framework is the acculturation model that John Berry developed through his studies of acculturation. Following this, the first chapter will then layout acculturation preferences within my sample and start to discuss the different trends found within each acculturation preference group. Lastly, I will attempt to develop an argument that would explain the differences in why certain participants preferred a particular acculturation track over another.

The second primary chapter will then shift the conversations towards religiosity and religious beliefs. Islam is the primary religion of the Bangladeshi people, and all my participants were raised Muslim. The second chapter will work to uncover the trends in religious beliefs and the religiosity of my participants. Additionally, the chapter will lay out the trends in how these beliefs were determined by my participants before finally utilizing Berry's acculturation framework to understand why each acculturation group indicated a particular set of religious set of beliefs.

The last primary chapter is the most exploratory. Following the findings of this study in terms of trends in acculturation preferences in regard to Bangladeshi-Muslim second-generation immigrants' views on their ethnic and religiosity/religious beliefs, this last chapter will focus on

explaining the unexpected intersection between the Bangladeshi ethnic identity and Islamic religious beliefs.

Lastly, the conclusion will summarize the key findings of this study, as well as provide information on the limitation of this study and notes to consider in future studies on the Bangladeshi-Muslim second-immigrant population.

Chapter II: Views on their Bangladeshi Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a significant piece of one's cultural identity. As such, it is one of the largest parts of a 2nd generation immigrant's identity that is put into question as they grow up in their host society.

In the previous section, I provided a view of the primary literature on the processes of assimilation and acculturation. The general expectation for immigrant groups in the United States is that they are expected to gradually lose all their ethnic differences until they become indistinguishable from the majority group of the American people. It is expected that over the course of succeeding generations that immigrant groups inch closer to this endpoint. Second-generation immigrants, in particular, are one of the most interesting groups to study as they are the first, and only, to experience what it is like to grow up with their cultural roots dominating their home life, but then still navigating through their host society on their own. The decisions that they make in how they associate with the values of their ethnic origin, or their new environment, are important for how they choose to lead the rest of their lives, and what values they choose to pass on to the next generation (Massey and Sanchez 2009).

This chapter aims to explore how the participants in my study think about their Bangladeshi origins, how they view their ethnic identity, how they view American values and norms, and how they navigate between the two. I will speak on the different acculturation preference tracks that my participants have chosen, the traits of said acculturation paths, and then provide a possible explanation that influenced their arrival in said acculturation preference track.

What does it mean to be Bangladeshi?

Ethnicity is a multidimensional term. However, for the purpose of this study, we shall focus on the intersection of two definitions of it. The first is one defined by Henri Tajfel as "the

part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group to gather with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership" (Tajfel 1980). Whereas the second definition emphasizes the actual content of ethnic identity – meaning the cultural values expressed by the members of that identity and other indicators of their cultural distinctiveness, such as language (Islam 2008; Rogler et al. 1980).

When I first proposed the question “What is Bangladeshi culture to you?” I was met with a variety of answers. Many of my participants touched the surface level of expectations they received from their parents to answer this question. Often, I heard “getting good grades,” “the language”, “the clothing”, or even “eating fish” as a response. These are answers that reflect the definition of culture provided in the literature review (Itulua-Abumere 2013; Giddens 2005). Furthermore these were also common answers to similar questions that were asked in previous studies about the composition of one's ethnic culture (Vertovec 2018; Islam 2008). Although those are certainly associated with Bangladeshi culture – especially given that many of my participants repeated them at me, it did not provide a solid framework to work with when analyzing attitudes towards my participant's ethnic origins.

Upon further investigation, and after deeper conversations with my participants, however, I uncovered more substantial themes to Bangladeshi values that is important to define before proceeding to analyze the differences between my participant's acculturation preferences and the reasons for said differences.

Amongst all nine of my participants, all of them alluded to or directly referenced, two large themes to Bangladeshi culture that they had grappled with as they grew up. The first of the two was that they saw the nature of Bangladeshi culture being inherently societal or collectivist. Fatima directly stated and elaborated on this topic during our interview:

“...Bangladeshi culture is more societal than individualistic. Speaking from my experiences, whenever I’m in Bangladesh visiting my family, everyone is much more in everyone’s business so to say. It’s not what you want, it’s what the family thinks is best. You don’t just make a decision, and go with it, you consult with your elders, when you make holiday plans, you plan involve going to your Nana Bari², or visiting family in general, not about going to some tour somewhere else. It’s all about the family. I see the contrast more and more as I get older, how much of a group society Bangladeshi culture is.”

Fatima emphasizes the connection a Bangladeshi person has with their family and community. When they make decisions, it is not a decision for themselves. In many ways, it is a decision that should be reflected by a collective. Whether it be the family or even the greater Bangladeshi community. By this framework, the decisions one makes are often interpreted to be reflective of the entire collective in which they are a part of. Often times this comes down an individual showcasing the values of their family. Frequently, it is the children that reflect the values of the parents in their actions and public behaviors as a result. Samir touches on this upon his experience with the collective nature of the Bangladeshi community.

“Usually whenever I do something that my parents don’t like, their immediate reaction is to always be like ‘what are other people going to say?’ and then start comparing me to every other Bangladeshi kid they know that is apparently ‘perfect’ and why can’t I be more like them and how all the other parents are judging them for failing to raise me right or something like that.”

In this statement, Samir makes the connection between his actions and how they are interpreted by the general Bangladeshi community to be reflective of how his parents raised him. This, in turn, pushes his parents to cite the Bangladeshi community in an effort to use its societal pressure to influence Samir to act in a way that the Bangladeshi community considers favorable. The mapping of one’s individual actions to be reflective of the values of the collective they represent is the norm for those from Asian ethnic backgrounds. I draw this argument because in

² Roughly translates to “Maternal Grandpa(rent)’s house from Bengali

previous studies regarding Asian-American communities, Asian society being centered around a group mentality was a common conclusion (Robinson 2005; Modood et al. 1994). Furthermore, this theme of Bangladeshi culture actually feeds into the next significant theme I found from my research: the expectations associated with being Bangladeshi.

Although the theme is general, it encompasses all the minute details of what it means to be Bangladeshi. Based on my participants, there are several different expectations that they had placed on them by their parents and greater Bangladeshi community growing up – these expectations, as I interpret, are reflective of Bangladeshi culture. These expectations ranged from “doing well in school” to “being muslim.” Later sections of this chapter will elaborate on more of the common expectations placed on 2nd generation Bangladeshi-Americans and how my participants had varying responses to based on the acculturation preference track they had most associated with. The next section will explore the general trends found in my participant’s interpretation of American culture.

What is American Culture?

As a counter question to the previous question on how my participants viewed Bangladeshi culture, I also questioned them on what they felt made up American culture. The answers were predicted by previous studies on the American values and culture due to my participants citing themes behind the American dream: notions of freedom and individualism (Jones-Correa 2018; Portes & Zhou 1993). By notions of freedom and individualism, my participants often meant the freedom to make choices for one’s self. Inaya summarizes her stance it below:

“what it means for me to be American. I think that like being very open, expressive and being in tune with yourself, and kind of like choosing what you want to do. And there's like very cliché, but like, it just feels like very free. You can decide what you want to do with your life. Which is what America is

supposed to be and it kind of makes sense. And I think at this point in my life I kind of do feel that, like obviously there are so many other things that don't go in line with that, but for me what it means what it means to be America to like express yourself and really be who you want."

Inaya emphasizes the idea of being able to express oneself in any way they seem fit as a significant part of what it means to be America. Once again citing the idea of individualism in the form of self-expression and freedom to do so without persecution.

In addition to agreeing with this, some of the other nine participants who followed along this train of thought. Often, they would even share their answers as a counterintuitive to how they viewed Bangladeshi culture, such as Akash.

*"...I mean, not to be basic or anything, but I think it's really just the idea of freedom, the American dream, and all that symbolic crap. I mean, America's not entirely all free and s***, but like there are things that I can take advantage of being in this country that I would not be able to do if I was born and raised in Bangladesh. Growing up with my parents who came directly from Bangladesh...I mean I guess they wouldn't accept those things either. But a regular American would have the freedom to do those things...and I have the option to think about it. Like I dunno, I can think about getting a girlfriend or some s*** like that."*

Following Akash's sentiments, the remaining of the nine who agreed with the values of freedom and individualism being a significant piece of American culture also reflected on how their exposure to these themes had profound effects on how they thought about their Bangladeshi ethnic identity and the decisions they made in regards to how they led their lives in navigating between the two. These effects will be explored in a later section of this chapter. Prior to that, I will discuss where my participants stood on John Berry's acculturation preference track model in the next section.

Do you feel Bangladeshi and American at the same time?

The purpose of this question was to start a discussion about the acculturation preferences of my participants. As the literature review in the previous chapter explained, much of this study

was based on John Berry's acculturation model. Berry's model provides four possible outcomes of an immigrant navigating through their ethnic identity in relation to the cultural identity of their host society. Berry's model is depicted in a figure below:

Berry's Acculturation Model

	HIGH Identification with Ethnicity of Origin's Culture	LOW Identification with Ethnicity of Origin's Culture
HIGH Identification with U.S. Culture	Integration	Assimilation
LOW Identification with U.S. Culture	Separation	Marginalization

In this study, the ethnic identity would be Bangladeshi while the host society's cultural identity is American. In accordance with Berry's model. Those in the assimilation track would have a high association with American values, but a low association with their Bangladeshi identity. Those who are in the integration track would have a high association with both their American, and Bangladeshi identities. Those in the separation track would associate highly with Bangladeshi culture, but associate lowly with American values. And lastly, those who are in the marginalization track would associate lowly with both American and Bangladeshi values (Berry 1997).

In terms of my findings, below is a table that organizes my participants into Berry's acculturation tracks alongside background information of each participant

Pseudonym	Age	Neighborhood	Education	Employment	Household SES Description	Self-Expressed Identity	Religious Identity	Language Proficiency (Speaking)
Akash	20	Astoria, Queens NYC	Completing Undergrad in Engineering	Unemployed	Low Socioeconomic Background	American	Agnostic	Non-Existent Proficiency
Samir	19	Astoria, Queens NY	Completing Undergrad in Economics	Variety of part-time campus jobs at his college	Low Socioeconomic Background	Bangladeshi-American (s)*	Spiritual, but not Muslim	Minimal Proficiency
Sohel	19	Sunset Park, Brooklyn NY	Completing Undergrad in History	Earns stipend from teaching at a Sunday School	Middle-Class	Bengali-American**	Muslim	High Proficiency
Esana	25	Jackson Heights, Queens NY	Completed Bachelor's in Psychology	Full-time Paraprofessional Teaching Assistant & Part-time Behavioral Therapist	Low Socioeconomic Background	Bangladeshi-American (s)	Not very religious at first, but wants to reconnect with Islam	Moderate Proficiency
Neha	26	Jamaica, Queens NY	Completed Bachelor's in Psychology	Manager in Business-related field.	Middle-Class	Bangladeshi-American	Not very religious at first, but wants to reconnect with Islam	High – Proficiency
Inaya	20	Jamaica Queens, NY	Completed Bachelor's in Psychology	Teaching Assistant in Pre-School	Middle-Class	Bangladeshi-American (s)	Self-defined form of Islam***	Moderate Proficiency
Rabia	21	Jamaica, Queens NY	Completing Undergrad in Economics	Analyst on Wall Street	Middle-Class	Bangladeshi-American	Self-defined form of Islam	Moderate Proficiency
Aisha	19	Sunnyside, Queens, NY	Completing Undergrad in Biology	Unemployed	Low Socioeconomic Background	Bangladeshi-American (s)	Self-defined form of Islam	Moderate Proficiency
Fatima	25	Midwood, Brooklyn NY	In Medical School	Unemployed (Focusing on Med-School).	Low Socioeconomic Background, now Upper-Class	Bangladeshi-American (s)	“By the Book” Muslim****	Mastery of Bengali

*(s) meaning they viewed their identity as separate parts of themselves.

**Sohel associated more with Desi/South Asian culture overall than with Bangladeshi.

***Rediscovered what Islam meant to them that differed from what they were taught.

****Follows the teachings and tenets of the Quran strictly.

Those highlighted in a white background represent participants on the assimilation track (Akash and Samir). Those with the grey background represents the integration track (Sohel, Esana, Neha, Inaya, Rabia, and Aisha). And lastly, the row highlighted in black represents the separation track (Fatima). During my study, I found no indication of any of my participants

fitting within the description of the marginalization track. This does not necessarily mean that the marginalization track does not exist for the Bangladeshi-American population. The reason why they may not be reflected in my study as they may serve as a minority group within Berry's acculturation framework. Furthermore, this study is in no way fully encompassing the Bangladeshi-American demographic and does not attempt to represent the entire demographic. As it only has 10 participants, it is possible that I did not meet a participant who preferred a marginalization track by chance. Additionally, it is possible that since this study was recruiting for "Bangladeshi-American 2nd generation immigrants", it did fall under the radar of such a group of people as, according to Berry, they would neither associate with their Bangladeshi or American identity.

Going back to the findings of this study, based on this figure alone, I can confirm that my participants found the integration acculturation preference track to be the most representative of their situation. This was also reported by previous studies that looked at South-Asian 2nd generation immigrants in the U.K. (Robinson 2005; Islam 2008; Shaw 2000). This was confirmed by the fact that many of my participants viewed their identity through the hyphenated title of "Bangladeshi-American". One of my participants, Rabia, actually spoke about her perspective on the topic in detail:

"I'm Bangladeshi-American, that's just like a part of my identity. That's not like something I separate from myself like I'm like American but I'm also Brown. Like no, those aren't two separate things for me, I consider that as like one thing. That's just who I am. It's not two separate things."

Rabia strongly argued that she was neither just Bangladeshi or American, but rather saw herself as a union of both identities, perfectly encapsulating Berry's integration framework. All others in the integration track followed along with Rabia's stance on her identity. There was some variance in how each participant felt about their Bangladeshi and American titles in that

not all of them viewed it as a perfect unison, but rather separate parts of themselves, but they all nonetheless identified themselves with the hyphenated identity of Bangladesh-American.

The next few sections of this chapter will explore the differences between the participants that were in different acculturation preference tracks in terms of their behaviors, attitudes, and attributes. Following this, I will then work to reconcile previously supported theories on what influenced each group to be more receptive to one acculturation preference track over another. It should be noted that in the following sections, there will be themes expressed that suggest gender plays a role in acculturation preferences. Although this will be discussed towards the end of this chapter, gender, in the context of this study, the results may be skewed as a majority of my participants (six out of nine) identified as women. As such, this study does not have enough diversity in its sample to capture the full scope of how gender is involved with acculturation preferences in the second-generation Bangladeshi-Muslim population.

The Assimilated:

In my study, I found only two participants who fit under the assimilation acculturation track: Samir and Akash. Akash was the most receptive to American values of all my participants. Furthermore, Akash even expressed negative attitudes towards his Bangladeshi ethnic origins and denied his Bangladeshi cultural roots. Samir, although considerably more ambivalent towards his Bangladeshi roots, still admitted that he identified more with American values than his Bangladeshi ethnic values. Despite the differences in the degree of assimilation that Samir and Akash had, they still held similar experiences and attitudes towards their ethnic origins that solidifies their placement in the assimilation track.

As I discussed in an earlier section, the two main interconnected themes of what made up Bangladeshi culture are the concept of it being inherently collectivist in nature and the behavioral expectations that the culture has for its members.

Akash and Samir, being in the assimilation preference track of Berry's model, indicated that they reacted negatively to the exposure of these primary themes. Akash, in particular, viewed the collective nature of Bangladeshi culture to be similar to policing. During our interview, he described one experience he has had with it

*“When Bengali people see any of us [Akash and his friends], they immediately judge us, or something like that. All of them are really like stuck up, they jump to conclusions so fast. One time I was with my friend right, she and I went to go look for a job basically. She's offered me a job and we went around Manhattan to look for it right? Couldn't find the area so like f*** it, we'll just walk around the place. And one my mom's friends. The aunties right, she saw us. And she told my mom that we went to a hospital. But we didn't. We were just walking around. And then my mom instantly thought that I got this girl pregnant...and I got in so much pointless s*** just cause they couldn't like keep their mouth shut and make some crap up about me. So, like I always need to watch who's around me and be careful otherwise next time I'll accused of being some drug dealer or some s***”*

Akash was frustrated with the Bangladeshi community for reporting his activities to his parents. Although in the case he admits to above, the report appeared to be false, Akash insisted that he often felt judged by those who shared the same Bangladeshi for not acting in a certain way. In fact, he admitted to refusing to be Bangladeshi if someone were to come up to him and ask. His reasoning being that “they won't judge me, or care about me if they don't think I'm Bangladeshi”.

Samir, in addition to his previous statement about how his actions were connected to his family's image, remarked on how he often had to pretend or lie about his daily activities to any Bangladeshi people he came across in addition to his parents. His reasoning is in the following quote.

“My parents wouldn’t let me do half the things that I normally do...they [the Bangladeshi community] would definitely hit up my parents and let them know and that’d be really hella annoying to deal with so I need to make sure I watch who’s around me as I go about my day”.

It should be noted that both Akash and Samir expressed frustration with the collectivist nature of their Bangladeshi background due to them pursuing interests and hobbies that are typically not approved by the Bangladeshi community. Akash, for instance, reflected on how he has been talked down by the friends of his parents for “wasting time by going to the gym and carrying about my body and getting gains” instead of “studying to become a doctor”. Samir, although studying Economics, loves participating in theatre and often faced criticism for likewise “wasting his time”.

Lastly, one of the most important indicators of assimilation was the acceptance of interethnic marriage or relationships. Akash admitted that he would only ever consider non-Bangladeshis to be in a relationship with. Samir was more ambivalent citing that it didn’t matter to him except that he looked for someone that matched his lifestyle and direction of thinking. Upon further consideration, he noted that this most likely meant marrying a non-Bangladeshi as he did not think it was likely to meet any other Bangladeshis like him. In other words, both Samir and Akash admitted to being accepting of interethnic relationships – something that is heavily frowned upon by the Bangladeshi collective community.

The interests of Samir and Akash were outside of the expectations of the Bangladeshi community. More specifically, they were viewed as antithetical to what the community felt they should be doing. As a result, both Akash and Samir developed avoidance strategies in regard to those from their ethnic background. This had profound effects across the board in their participation with their ethnic roots.

For instance, neither Akash nor Samir had close friends that were Bangladeshi. Akash argued most of his friends were Black or Hispanic whereas Samir argued his friends were very diverse ethnically but no close friends that were Bangladeshi. Neither Akash or Samir had a developed understanding of Bengali, their mother tongue, and they both expressed that they no longer believed in Islam, their original religious faith – as well as the most common Bangladeshi religious faith.

The next section will explore the trends and attitudes towards Bangladeshi ethnic culture of those who adopted the integration acculturation preference path.

Those Who Integrate:

As mentioned before, my findings reflect previous studies in that the integration acculturation preference track was the most commonly chosen track for 2nd generation immigrants (Seth and Unger 2010; Islam 2008; Robinson 2005; Shaw 2000). Those on this track argued that they felt that they felt their identity embodied aspects of both Bangladeshi and American values.

In terms of their thoughts on their Bangladeshi origins, the integrationists looked at it much more favorable than the assimilationists. Neha, in particular, elaborated on how it was nice to have the Bangladeshi community keep an eye out for their community members – thereby appreciating the collective nature of Bangladeshi culture. Sohel remarked that it was just another way for him to be able to connect with more people with similar experiences as him and appreciated his Bangladeshi background as a common ground to use to connect with other Bangladeshi people.

On the topic American culture, the integrationists actually did not differ from the opinions on American culture of the assimilationists. As a previous section in this chapter

discussed, they viewed American culture as being more individualistic and freeing in nature. The difference between the assimilationists and integrationists lay in their interactions with Bangladeshi culture, as described above, and in the intersection between American and Bangladeshi culture.

Previous studies conducted in the UK indicated that those who embodied the integration track also argued that those individuals did not see a conflict between their original ethnic identity and their host identity (Robinson 2005; Modood 1991). However, I found that my participants did recognize that there was a conflict between Bangladeshi and American culture. Although Rabia argued that being Bangladeshi-American was “just who she was”, she did expand on her thoughts in that, though she considered herself to be both, she still experiences instances in which she had to pick and choose which cultural identity she was going to represent.

For Rabia, she talked about how in her workplace, which she noted did not include people that came from her background, she had to cover up parts of her personality that represented her Bangladeshi side in order to better fit in with her co-workers. When I questioned her why she felt she needed to do that, her response was that “they just would not get my Bangladeshi-ness”. Esana had a likewise experience, however, she spoke on her experience navigating between both worlds while growing up.

“But growing up I did notice like there were differences and there were things that I couldn’t relate to whether it be in school or outside. Like I don’t know we just have different etiquette. Like there are just certain things that when I get home my parents did for me that I knew that other kids didn’t have their parents do that stuff for them. So, I did have to adjust my etiquette when I am outside to be socially acceptable or whatever.”

Upon elaboration, Esana noted that the differences she meant were the types of clothing she would wear, or food she would bring to school, as well as habitual traits such as eating with her hands that she recognized was different from the other children growing up. Upon realizing

this, Esana admitted to checking herself as a child to follow along with the same types of behavior she saw in her non-Bangladeshi peers in order to fit in.

The idea of shifting the level of “Bangladeshi-ness” to be more American was not a one-sided phenomenon. Another participant, Inaya admitted that she also felt judged by the Bangladeshi community if she came off as overly American in her neighborhood, which has a predominant Bangladeshi population.

“My parents know a lot of people in the neighborhood, so it feels pretty homey, but also uncomfortable because I feel like I have to turn up how Bangladeshi I am, like lean in towards that on the spectrum between that and American. Like I have to lower my American and up my Bangladeshi. Like...I’d feel a lot more comfortable if wearing a salwar kameez³ as opposed to regular clothes. Or like if I was wearing a burqa and other ethnic clothing, I’d feel a lot more comfortable.”

In essence, the integrationists were aware that their Bangladeshi and American sides clashed at times. However, they were able to negotiate and adapt to the environments they found themselves by “playing up or down” aspects of themselves to maintain acceptance in both American and Bangladeshi environments.

In terms of acculturation indicators. The integrationists tended to have mixed friend groups, but with an emphasis on like-minded Bangladeshi people. For instance, Rabia, Inaya, and Neha all noted their close friends were also Bangladeshi, with a handful of friends from other ethnic groups. This also factored in with their use of the Bangladeshi language. The integrationists had moderate to high proficiency in speaking the language. Some participants, such as Esana, Sohel, Inaya and Rabia made an effort to speak Bangladeshi in their normal lives outside of the family sphere. For instance, they noted that they made an effort to occasionally think in Bengali or set aside a few minutes with their friends in which they would only speak

³ A traditional “suit” popularly worn by women in the Bengal region.

Bengali with one another. The remaining participants, Aisha and Neha, indicated a developed ability to speak Bengali, but would only speak it within the family sphere. Neither of the integrationists expressed the ability to write in Bengali. All integrationists considered themselves Muslim, but with varying degrees of religiosity – this will be further explored in the next chapter.

On the topic of interethnic marriage or relationships. I received mixed answers. All the integrationists noted that they would be accepting if other people in their situation married outside of their Bangladeshi ethnic group. However, they were divided when considering themselves. Rabia preferred to marry outside her ethnic group. Inaya and Sohel were open to the idea and cited the interpersonal connection they would have with such a person to seriously consider it. Esana, Neha, and Aisha noted that they would not consider it. All the integrationists agreed that the overall Bangladeshi community would not be accepting of interethnic marriage, which reflects previous studies' findings (Robinson 2005; Ghuman 1975).

The next section will explore the attitudes and attributes of the separation acculturation preference track.

The Separated:

In truth, there was only one participant who fit under the separation acculturation preference path: Fatima. Fatima viewed her ethnic identity as entirely separate from her American identity. This was different from the integrationists who varied in their interpretation of their ethnic identity in relation to their American identity as some of the integrationists struggled with balancing between their ethnic and American identity – but still acknowledged both as a part of their personal identity. Whereas Fatima argued that her true self was her Bangladeshi self and that her American self was a “mask” she had to put on.

During our interview, she talked to me about how she felt different from other Bangladeshi-Americans:

“...They were more mixed Bangladeshi-American than I was. Like whenever I went home I would take off my shoes and put on my salwar kameez and that was like taking out my outside identity and putting on my real one. But as I was exploring more and meeting other Bangladeshi-Americans, it made me feel a lot more different than ever in my life like this is how I identify but these people who are of Bangladeshi backgrounds identified in another way.”

The primary differences between Fatima and the integrationists was the higher level of emphasis she placed on her Bangladeshi roots in regard to her own identity. Fatima viewed the collective nature of Bangladeshi culture to be beneficial to her development to an adult and appreciated the tight community bonds she felt with those who shared her heritage. Fatima indicated the highest level of mastery of the Bengali language – being the only one of my participants that knew how to read, write, and speak the language. Furthermore, all her close friends were Bangladeshi, and she was the most religiously associated with Islam out of all my participants. Furthermore, she was the only participant that provided a different perspective on American culture compared to all other participants.

“American culture is a dominant culture. no matter where you go, you're going to find it. I went to Kyrgyzstan and the people there were listening to American radio as opposed to their own radio with their own songs in their language. When I think of American culture i think of it differently than European. Like what the British, French, and Dutch did was they colonized via military and manpower. but with American culture is doing is colonizing through media, so when I think of Bangladeshi culture, I think of it as a dying minority culture that has to rise against this dominate opposing culture.”

Although Fatima’s statement above touches on topics of colonialization, which is beyond the scope of this study, she brings up a fascinating analysis of American culture that nobody else has. Fatima’s phrasing of Bangladeshi culture needing to rise against American culture creates the narrative that she sees the two cultures actively conflicting with one another – a framework

that no other participants reflected in my study. Even the assimilationists, who would arguably be the other end of the acculturation spectrum in relation to Fatima, did not view Bangladeshi culture and American culture to be in direct conflict. The integrationists, who were in center of the two cultures, saw frictions between the two aspects of their identity, but ultimately acknowledged that they can still coexist between them.

This was further reflected in her opinions of interethnic marriage. Fatima disagreed with interethnic marriage and cited that she wanted to preserve her Bangladeshi heritage in her marriage. Furthermore, she expected her own children to do the same. Overall, as someone who would be in the separation track, Fatima actively makes decisions to preserve her Bangladeshi heritage over any American values, as well as planning to do the same with her children.

Discussion & Conclusions

Now that I have described the differences between the participants in different acculturation preference tracks. I can start to formulate an explanation as to what influenced my participants to prefer a particular acculturation track over another.

My primary argument is one that I have mentioned already. It involves the idea that Bangladeshi culture is inherently collective and combines it with the findings of previous studies that looked at the influence of how collective groups reproduce favorable behaviors in the individuals that are within their community. This phenomenon has been coined as collective efficacy theory (Collins et al. 2017).

Collective efficacy theory is the idea that the community actively works to reinforce behaviors within its community that they approve of. Earlier in this chapter, I talked about how Bangladeshi culture had two primary themes that were brought up by my participants during our interviews: Bangladeshi culture placed a lot of expectations on Bangladeshis, and there was a

greater emphasis on the individual representing more than themselves in their actions. These concepts fit within collective efficacy theory as the expectations of the Bangladeshi community are exactly the “favorable behaviors” that they want to reproduce. The process by which they reproduce these behaviors and push their community members to fulfill their expectations is through collective judgment.

In the accounts of my participants I gave earlier this chapter, judgment was a common theme when it came to interacting with their Bangladeshi communities. Samir talked about the fear of judgment by the greater Bangladeshi community pushed his parents to raise him in a way that the community would approve – for if he did not indicate favorable behaviors the community would have blamed his parents for failing to be good Bangladeshi parents to him. Furthermore, Akash touched on the policing aspect of the Bangladeshi community and how he had to lie and avoid them in order to prevent being judged for his actions – which he argued were things the Bangladeshi community would not approve of.

It is true that Akash and Samir were not embracing of their Bangladeshi heritage, so it is expected that they would face judgment as they are more likely to practice behaviors that are not approved by the community. However, the idea of judgment by the Bangladeshi community was not only present in the assimilationist’s lives. Inaya, for instance, as shown earlier talked about feeling judged for not being “Bangladeshi-enough” when walking through a Bangladeshi neighborhood despite having favorable views with her Bangladeshi culture. Additionally, Neha, Esana, and Aisha, also integrationists, noted that the primary reason for why they would not consider interethnic marriage was because the greater Bangladeshi community would not accept it. The idea of individuals within an Asian culture avoiding certain behaviors is unsurprising as it

follows similar trends found in previous studies that looked at Asian-American groups (Zhou 2009; Walton 2015; Ghuman 1975).

So then, if all my participants faced the collective judgment of the Bangladeshi community how does this function as an explanation for why they have different acculturation preference tracks?

The answer lies in the degree to which they have experienced the collective judgment while growing up. If we look at the participants who all look at their Bangladeshi heritage positively (the integrationists and separationists) you can see that all of them fulfilled one or both of the following qualities: (1) they grew up in a neighborhood that had a prominent Bangladeshi presence or (2) they had a network of extended family close by while growing up. When comparing this to those who look at their Bangladeshi heritage in disinterest, or even negatively, (the assimilationists), we see that they had neither an extended family presence nor lived in a Bangladeshi ethnic neighborhood. In fact, both Akash and Samir's families were the first and, presently, the only of their entire lineage to be in the United States.

Those who had an extended family present and/or lived in a Bangladeshi ethnic neighborhood had considerably more exposure to the collective sentiments of the Bangladeshi community. While Akash and Samir admitted they interacted with the judgment of the Bangladeshi community, it was more so in passing – whereas the integrationists and separationists grew up with the Bangladeshi community continuously attempting to socialize them in a favorable fashion. Thus, it is possible that the reason for why the integrationists and separationists are more accepting of their Bangladeshi heritage is because they have been socialized by their continuous exposure to the Bangladeshi community, as described in social efficacy theory, to be more in touch with their Bangladeshi heritage.

The greater connection to the Bangladeshi community while growing up – the more emphasis we see in my participant place on their Bangladeshi heritage. This would also serve as an explanation for why Fatima is a separationist as opposed to sharing the same hyphenated-type identity of being Bangladeshi-American as the integrationists. Fatima, unlike the integrationists, admitted that she only ever spent time with her family or other Bangladeshi children, which differed from the other participants, including the integrationists, who admitted to being exposed to a diverse set of cultures growing up – even within their neighborhoods. Fatima’s greater emphasis on her Bangladeshi roots over American values can possibly be attributed to having an upbringing that was less diverse in cultural exposition than her integrationist peers.

Other trends and possible explanations:

Other notable links between one’s acculturation preference track and their different contextual backgrounds were found in this study. This section will explore possible variables that may contribute the acculturation preferences of 2nd generation Bangladeshi-American youth.

Socioeconomic Status & the Family:

In the table that organized my participants in accordance to their acculturation preference track, there was a positive correlation between one’s socioeconomic status and their acculturation preference. The assimilationists had lower socioeconomic backgrounds than the integrationists. Furthermore, when I questioned Samir about why he felt he wasn’t connected to his Bangladeshi heritage his answer was as following.

“I dunno, I think it might have something to do with my relationship with my parents? My siblings and I talked about this but like we never really do anything with them...and its usually cause they’re all working. And so I barely see them so most of the time I kind of just do my own thing...and that just happens to be things non-Bangladeshi things”.

Samir's response draws a link between the family dynamic and his view, or interaction, with Bangladeshi communities. Given his family is restricted by their socioeconomic background, they were not able to spend much time with him or his siblings while they grew up, leaving them to explore their own path in life. Meaning that their exposure to Bangladeshi values was already reduced. Although Akash did not draw this connection during our interview, he remarked that he also rarely talked to his parents. Whereas other participants, such as Fatima, who has a positive view of Bangladeshi culture, remarked she often went out and spent time with her parents. Thus implying a possible link between the joint function socioeconomic status, which effects parental presence, and participant's perspectives on their Bangladeshi ethnic origin. This study was not able to track these nuances to make a solid argument, however.

Gender:

Another possible explanation is gender. Most of the integrationists and the separationists identified as female. Furthermore, previous studies on the South-Asian immigrant population noted that there were increased social expectations placed on women over men (Islam 2008; Robinson 2005). There is even an increased level of judgement for women who marry from another ethnicity than if men were to do it. Showcasing this is Fatima, who remarked that her opinions on interethnic and interreligious marriage were negative, but the only case she would accept it is if it was a male. However, seeing as majority of the participants of this study (six out of nine) were women, this study does not have conclusive evidence to argue this point.

Religiosity:

Those who were religiously affiliated with Islam, the predominant religion of the Bangladeshi people, likewise saw their Bangladeshi ethnic identity positively verses the assimilationists who did not care for either. The exact relationship between the two, as found in

my sample, will be discussed in chapter 3. The next chapter, however, will explore the general trends in religiosity towards Islamic beliefs that were discovered by my study.

Chapter III: Defining their Religious Identity

In the previous chapter on ethnicity, I noted that there may be a link between my participant's religiosity towards their Islamic faith and their acculturation preference in regard to their ethnic identity in relation to their American immigrant one. This was further supported by the fact that the divisions between my participants that organized them into the assimilation, integration, and separation tracks by their attitudes towards their ethnic identity are the exact same as when controlling for their religiosity towards Islam. Below is the table I previously provided in my ethnicity chapter.

Pseudonym	Age	Neighborhood	Education	Employment	Household SES Description	Self-Expressed Identity	Religious Identity	Language Proficiency (Speaking)
Akash	20	Astoria, Queens NYC	Completing Undergrad in Engineering	Unemployed	Low Socioeconomic Background	American	Agnostic	Non-Existent Proficiency
Samir	19	Astoria, Queens NY	Completing Undergrad in Economics	Variety of part-time campus jobs at his college	Low Socioeconomic Background	Bangladeshi-American (s)*	Spiritual, but not Muslim	Minimal Proficiency
Sohel	19	Sunset Park, Brooklyn NY	Completing Undergrad in History	Eams stipend from teaching at a Sunday School	Middle-Class	Bengali-American**	Muslim	High Proficiency
Esana	25	Jackson Heights, Queens NY	Completed Bachelor's in Psychology	Full-time Paraprofessional Teaching Assistant & Part-time Behavioral Therapist	Low Socioeconomic Background	Bangladeshi-American (s)	Not very religious at first, but wants to reconnect with Islam	Moderate Proficiency
Neha	26	Jamaica, Queens NY	Completed Bachelor's in Psychology	Manager in Business-related field.	Middle-Class	Bangladeshi-American	Not very religious at first, but wants to reconnect with Islam	High – Proficiency
Inaya	20	Jamaica Queens, NY	Completed Bachelor's in Psychology	Teaching Assistant in Pre-School	Middle-Class	Bangladeshi-American (s)	Self-defined form of Islam***	Moderate Proficiency
Rabia	21	Jamaica, Queens NY	Completing Undergrad in Economics	Analyst on Wall Street	Middle-Class	Bangladeshi-American	Self-defined form of Islam	Moderate Proficiency
Aisha	19	Sunnyside, Queens, NY	Completing Undergrad in Biology	Unemployed	Low Socioeconomic Background	Bangladeshi-American (s)	Self-defined form of Islam	Moderate Proficiency
Fatima	25	Midwood, Brooklyn NY	In Medical School	Unemployed (Focusing on Med-School).	Low Socioeconomic Background, now Upper-Class	Bangladeshi-American (s)	“By the Book” Muslim****	Mastery of Bengali

* (s) meaning they viewed their identity as separate parts of themselves.

**Sohel associated more with Desi/South Asian culture overall than with Bangladeshi.

***Rediscovered what Islam meant to them that differed from what they were taught.

****Follows the teachings and tenets of the Quran strictly.

As mentioned, if we cross-analyze the original acculturation preference track distinctions with my participant's stance on their religious beliefs, we see a negative relationship in which those who identified most with American values (assimilationists) identified with Islam the least whereas those who identified the most with Bangladeshi values (separationists) were more faithful to Islam.

Previous studies have debated on whether or not Islam serves as a barrier to assimilation in western societies (Foner and Alba 2008; Alba 2005). They argued that Islamic practitioners have too wide a gap in cultural differences between their religion and the host society's cultural norms to allow successful assimilation. Additionally, some studies have indicated that Islam is resistant to acculturation compared to other religions, such as Christianity. Studies have shown that Islamic religiosity in second and third immigrant generations have remained relatively the same as their previous generations (Soehl 2017). However, other studies indicated that religiosity did not stay static in the sense that succeeding generations were at the same level of religiosity as their predecessors, but rather, they adapted their religious faith to be more in line with the values of their host society – signifying acculturation, but still upholding the religiosity of their parents (Beek and Fleischmann 2019; Vertovec 2018; Zhou 1997).

My findings within my participant sample support the idea that succeeding generations tend to have similar religiosity levels as their parents' generation. However, I have found that their religious faith, for both the first-generation parents and their second-generation children, changes in response to being exposed to American values. The previous chapter already spoke about the different correlations between aspects of my participants backgrounds. Given that there is overlap between my participant's religious beliefs, their attitudes towards their ethnic identity, and their acculturation preference tracks, these correlations will remain static. This was likewise

reported in a previous study that looked at the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards one's ethnic identity (Lubbers and Gijsberts 2010).

Therefore, this chapter will shift its focus on the trends I uncovered in my participants' journey of discovering their religious faith whilst growing up in the United States of America as a second-generation immigrant. It will first start with trends in their parents' religiosity towards Islam as they grew up, how it influenced the methods in which they were raised, and how that, in turn, impacted their own religious beliefs and religiosity towards Islam. The topic of why differences in religious beliefs and attitudes towards ethnic identities overlap in my participants will be explored in more detailed in the next chapter.

Religiosity in First-Generation Bangladeshi-Muslims

Although this study did not directly interview and collect data from first-generation immigrants, during my interview, many of my participants indicated they found their religious beliefs in response to their parents' religious beliefs. This section will detail the view my participants held regarding the religious beliefs of their parents as it important contextual information to understand the reasons behind their own religious beliefs.

Eight of the nine participants reported that their parents had a high level of religiosity. This is not surprising given Bangladesh's history with Islam and the naturally close relationship citizens of the country have with their primary religion. Every day in Bangladeshi you will hear the Azaan⁴ ringing out in all corners of the country – with the public immediately quieting down in respect to hear it. Native Bangladeshis are noticeably faithful to Islam. Thus, when considering assimilation theory, it makes sense that the first generation of immigrants from

⁴ The Islamic call summoning Muslims to start praying

Bangladesh would carry that value to the United States as they would still contain their religious beliefs from their country of origin (Alba and Nee 1997; Zhou 1997).

However, the interesting note is that eight out of nine (Sohel being the exception) participants reported that their parents increased their religiosity over time as they lived in the United States. Rabia, for instance, remarked:

“Like my parents have just been increasingly becoming more and more religious over the years. I think when I was really young it was fine, but as I was growing up, they’ve become a bit crazier about it...I guess like, it just gave them. I just think they became more extreme Muslim.”

This opposes the argument that Phillip Conner makes in his study in which he argues immigrant groups tend to adapt their religiosity to match that of religious groups in their host society (Conner 2010). Islam is a faith that requires more time and practices from the average worshipper than the primary religions of the United States. By Conner’s argument, the parents should have become less religious. Instead, my findings follow in the trend of other studies that were conducted in the Netherland, which reported that first-generation Muslim immigrants became more religious overtime (Lubbers and Gijsberts 2010). Secondly, the study also noted that with this increased religiosity came a rise in separation between the Islamic first-generation immigrant groups and the remainder of Dutch society. My study likewise found similar sentiments in the first-generation Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrant groups as told by their children. During our interview, Samir admitted

“Yeah so I remember a time where my mom would invite like these two random old white ladies to our house when I was younger. And even though she couldn’t speak in English all that well, she was super open and cool with them. But like now she doesn’t do that anymore. And she nearly has an aneurysm whenever she sees me be friends with non-Muslims nowadays...which are most of my friends!”

Following Samir, Aisha, and Akash, who all admitted to having diverse friend groups, reported the same experience from their parents. There was a notable shift in their parents' openness to people from other cultures and backgrounds over time. In many ways, they started to embody the idea of separation acculturation track from Berry's model in that they became exclusive to their group (Berry 1997).

The explanation for why my participants' parents have become more religious over time may likely due to the same concept of collective efficacy theory that was explained in the previous chapter. When prompting my participants to answer why they think their parents became more religious, one of the answers I received, from Esana, was:

“it's honestly because my dad, his whole side of the family and they all kind of became religious together. it was like a domino effect. It's very different I guess it kind of made my family a little bit closer.”

Rabia also offered a more elaborative answer:

“It [Islam] did give them more of a sense of community because they started becoming a part of Islamic groups, or there are like other Bengali women that congregated together and talked about Islam so it gave them that. And so, they just felt more at peace and one with Allahs. And I guess it kind of gave them more internal peace.”

Both of these answers imply a collective influence in pushing their parents to become more religious. Esana argues that her parents became more religious as they were responding to the fact their other relatives were becoming religious – possibly pressuring them to do the same. Rabia's experience talks about how Islam functions as a way for her parents to connect with their peers. Rabia's answer provides an interesting observation as she indicates that it might have been Islam that influenced the creation of a Bangladeshi-Muslim collective. This is further supported by insight provided by Neha who remarked how the Hillside neighborhood in Jamaica, Queens

⁵ God; Allah is the Muslim term for the Almighty

was not always the largely populated Bangladeshi neighborhood it is known for today. In fact, it has only been a Bangladeshi ethnic neighborhood for less than a decade and a half. Neha, being one of the eldest of my participants, spoke to me about how she saw the transition from Hillside being more diverse to becoming full of Bangladeshis.

Neha argued that the formulation of Hillside's prominent Bangladeshi population was the result of the Jamaica Muslim Center. This center is one of the largest mosques⁶ in the city, and it was started by Bangladeshi people. Neha admitted that after the completion of the mosque, she noticed more and more Bangladeshi people moving into her neighborhood. With this, also came local Bangladeshi businesses. In many ways, the creation of the Islamic center attracted the attention of Bangladeshi immigrants and sparked the construction of Hillside as a Bangladeshi ethnic neighborhood.

Connecting this back to the ideas that Rabia and Esana mentioned, Islam seems to be a plausible explanation for what organized the Bangladeshi community into their neighborhood. This then formed the collective that placed expectations on their community members and utilized judgment as a way to socialize their members to meet those expectations as discussed in the previous chapter (Collins et al. 2017). However, now we see that it influenced religiosity as well in the first-generation Bangladeshi immigrant population. This reflects the findings of similar studies that researched different immigrant groups (Stopes Roe and Cochrane 1991; Smajda and Gerteis 2012).

This does not, however, account for the increase of religiosity in Akash and Samir's parents. The Bangladeshi collective pushing first-generation immigrant parents to become more religious makes sense when considering parents who live in prominently populated Bangladeshi

⁶ The Mosque is the house of worship/Allah for Muslims.

neighborhoods like Hillside. However, Akash and Samir's parents do not. So then, why did their parents become more religious over time?

The answer may still lay in collective efficacy theory. Although Akash and Samir's family do not reside in prominently Bangladeshi communities. Their parents were still tied to their Bangladeshi roots more so than the United States due to being born in Bangladesh. This was shown by the fact that their parents still attempted to raise Akash and Samir with Bangladeshi values – but ultimately failed due to the lack of a Bangladeshi community utilizing their collective judgment to enforce it. However, since their parents still associated themselves with their country of origin strongly, they may be utilizing Islam as a method to connect back to their roots. Given that previous studies indicated that first-generation South-Asian immigrants preferred the separation acculturation track on top of having high religiosity levels, this argument makes sense (Robinson 2005; Shaw 2000).

Aisha inspired this line of thought when speaking to me about how her mother attempts to get her to be more Islamic.

“I feel like for her [Aisha's mother] it's a way to connect back home you know? I don't know, I don't really talk about it with her, but I guess it makes sense for her to want to have something that sets her at ease since she's no longer at Bangladesh.”

Furthermore, both Akash and Samir admitted that their parents became significantly more religious after the death of a close family member. Samir admitted:

*“So my dad literally did not give a sh** about Islam until a few years ago. And then like he became more strict about it after his mom died...and then even more when had to get surgery a few months ago”*

Both Aisha and Samir's statements allude to the idea that their parent's increased religiosity may be linked to their connection with their Bangladeshi roots. Aisha spoke about how her mother may be using Islam to connect back to her homeland – which makes sense when

considering Bangladesh's strong connection to the religion. Furthermore, in Samir's father's case, he notably became more religious after the death of his mother. Given that Bangladeshi culture is collectivist in nature, and the family is an important structure within that collective, the loss of his mother may have influenced Samir's father to become more religious in an effort to feel more connected with her. This links religiosity back to the collective structure of the family.

Nonetheless, 90% of my participants indicated that their parents increased their religiosity towards their Islamic faith. This, when considering the collective nature of Bangladeshi culture and households, would have profound effects on my participants. The next section will speak on the experiences of my participants in growing up with Islam. This is important contextual information to consider when I later explore how my participants found their own sense of religious beliefs.

Islam as a form of Childrearing

During my conversations with my participants, it became evident that practicing Islam was not an individual action in Bangladeshi families. In fact, another widespread trend in all my participants was how the religion's beliefs and their parent's religiosity influenced the way that my participants were raised –this then later went on to impact their own religious beliefs.

Although I do not have the ability to discern whether or not raising children through Islam is the norm regardless of one's immigration, the idea of raising children through religion is not necessarily an odd phenomenon – it makes perfect sense for parents raise children and attempt to instill the same beliefs they hold (Robinson 2005). What I find peculiar, however, is that many of my participants felt that Islam was being used as a tool to mold them into performing or avoiding certain behaviors that would typically be considered harmless in the

name of religion. Furthermore, the function by which Islam worked as a childrearing tool appeared to be through the use of fear rhetoric, or rather, the idea of sanctions.

Islam was introduced to all my participants from a young age. Inaya, for instance, spoke to me about her experience.

“I was raised in a Muslim household, and my parents weren’t really super strict or religious at first, but we still were like very grounded in Islamic traditions and our beliefs”

Despite the original lower levels of religiosity Inaya’s parents expressed, they still deemed it important to introduce Islam to Inaya and her siblings early. This is true for the majority of my participants. In fact, eight out of nine of them (with Soheli being the exception), noted that they had been pushed to start learning the Arabic language in order to read the Quran, the Islamic holy text from the age of six or younger. Many of them likewise attended classes at the local Masjeed⁷ or even had Huzoors⁸ come to their homes to instruct them. As they learned to read the Quran, they also memorized surahs⁹ and learned how to pray. This was meant to raise them to become good practitioners of Islam. However, many of them argued this was not the case. Aisha for instance, admitted this on the subject:

“Yeah, like we didn’t even really learn what it meant to be muslim or anything. Like growing up my mom or my dad – usually my mom – would just tell me a bunch of things that I had to do or couldn’t do because it was haram¹⁰ or something and I was just a kid so I didn’t really understand what it meant or why I couldn’t do those things but I just listened cause like what else was I supposed to do?”

⁷ Masjeed is another term for Mosque; Muslim house of worship/Allah

⁸ Huzoors are Islamic scholars that also help spread the teachings of Islam

⁹ Surahs are “chapters” in the Quran – there are total of 114 of them in the Quran. Many are recited during prayers.

¹⁰ Forbidden; not allowed according to Islamic guidelines

Aisha touched on an important point when she noted “I didn’t understand what it meant...but I just listened cause like what else was I supposed to do?” Due to many of my participants growing up with a lack of understanding of what it meant to be Muslim, they often just followed the lead of their parents and their peers. Discovering what it meant to be Muslim when they were young was just doing what they were told. The lack of knowledge allowed for parents to influence their children’s behavior directly by telling them to avoid activities that they didn’t want them to do by citing religion as the reason why. Furthermore, Samir, Akash, Inaya, Rabia, and Neha noted that they were frustrated with the objectives of reading the Quran and praying while growing up and even called them pointless. Samir revealed some important notes about how he was “raised” to be a Muslim that seven other participants (all except Fatima and Sohel) repeated.

“I found the entire thing kind of stupid looking back. Cause honestly I didn’t learn anything. Like I can read Arabic but like I don’t understand a single damn word of it! Same with all the stuff my parents tried to cram in my head and memorize – I don’t really know what any of the prayer stuff even means...”

The Islamic education that seven out of nine of my participants received seemed to be surface level. This once again feeds back to the idea that many of my participants grew up with a lack of understanding of what Islam was actually supposed to be. This opened the door for their parents to utilize the religion and modify it to influence their behavior. Going back to Aisha, she recalled how she was frustrated with her mother for attempting to use Islam as a reason for why she could not do activities that she personally deemed harmless and typical for American teenagers.

“My mother says things that she doesn’t want – or like things she doesn’t want me to do...like going to the movie theater or going to a mall or just like being in the same room with a boy are haram. And I’m like that doesn’t really make

sense? Like when did the Quran start talking about movie theaters and malls? She starts making up stuff about what's allowed or what's not allowed and how like I'm going to hell and Allah won't forgive me if I do this random thing and it's kind of ridiculous."

Aisha's remarks underline the concept of utilizing fear rhetoric alongside Islamic beliefs to influence one's behavior. Aisha was not a single case either, the same group of eight participants all admitted to having their parents reference Islam and divine punishment as a means to push them to act in favorable ways. This is not an uncommon function of religion. There is a history of previous literatures that argued religion functioned as a form of social control through the use of sanctions (Carol and Schulz 2018; Ellwood 1918). This is not specific to Islam. The sanctions in the context of my study, is that Allah will punish my participants if they do not act in accordance to what their parents desire – it is this sanction that I am defining as “fear rhetoric”. The idea of fear rhetoric in the context of religion acting as a form of social control is not surprising. However, it is surprising that, in some cases, my participants' parents were using it to curtail the adoption of American patterns of behavior, just like how Aisha expressed in the quote above.

I found that this has had profound effects on my participants in regard to the decisions they make as they continue their lives (Islam 2008; Stopes-Roe and Chochran 1991). Even Akash, who was one of two participants that renounced his Islamic identity, admitted that his Islamic raised background still affects how he lives his life today.

“When I was a kid, I couldn't eat pork – haha – that's all I could think about as a kid. Like I remember when I was 5 years old, I had bacon once. And I didn't know it was bacon, and after my friend told me it was bacon, and I got scared out of my mind because I thought my mom was gonna beat my ass, you know. So, then I told her, and she was like it's okay if you didn't know. But like she was still on me, and it raised me still. Like even though I don't care about bacon or pork and how it's haram, I still don't eat it now.”

Another notable example was found in the behavior of some of the women in my study. In fact, one of my personal observations while recruiting for this project is that some of my participants, the women, in particular, were anxious about meeting me in person one on one. Although this may be due to safety reasons, the fact that it was only women who exhibited this behavior makes me think about how one of Aisha's comments was about how her mother told her that it was haram for her to be in the same room as somebody of the opposite gender. This, plus the fact that the other women I interviewed indicated that their parents opposed them having relationships with the opposite gender suggests that this may be more the result of childrearing techniques they were exposed to. Inaya, for instance, discussed how she had to hide the fact she was friends with males and even ensure that she would never be seen with one by her family. These trends suggest that Islamic childrearing has had a significant impact on how Bangladeshi-Muslim 2nd generation immigrants in how they choose to lead their lives.

The next section will explore how the experience of being raised with Islam through the application of fear rhetoric/sanctions has impacted the religiosity and religious faiths of my participants.

Redefining Faith

As this section already introduced, the lines that divided my participants by their acculturation preference track by their attitudes towards their Bangladeshi ethnic identity corresponded to the divisions when accounting for their religious faith and religiosity. Those who were on the assimilation track in terms of ethnicity (Samir and Akash) no longer considered themselves as Muslim. Whereas all the remaining seven participants (integrationists and separationists) still viewed themselves as Muslim. However, the trends in how they interpreted Islam differed between the integrationists and separationists. This section will explore the

journeys that each group of participants underwent to find their religious beliefs in response to their parents utilizing fear rhetoric alongside Islam to raise them.

The Assimilationists and Islam:

Akash and Samir were the only two participants in my sample who reported themselves to be no longer identifying as Muslim. When questioned about their current beliefs, Akash admitted that he considered himself agnostic in that he no longer believed in Islam and was unsure of the existence of a higher power. Samir, similarly, noted that he also no longer believed in Islam. But he did remark he believed in a higher power – but did not believe in organized religion being an accurate medium to represent that power.

More interestingly, both Akash and Samir admitted to developing these beliefs in response to their parent’s religious beliefs and their use of fear rhetoric in raising them to be Muslim. Both Akash and Samir’s sentiments agreed with Aisha’s previous quote in that they both felt that their parents provided them a shallow understanding of Islam. Additionally, Akash also expanded on his own experience on this.

*“Islam has so many strict laws and sh** like that. And It’s like why? Why would Allah want...or have us do all this? And like, last semester I took a philosophy in religion class and it made start to question all of this stuff and I asked my mom why bother any of this...and she just told me to shut up and not question it or I’m going to hell...like what?”*

Likewise, Samir had similar thoughts, arguing that he was critical of the blind faith people put in religion. Samir’s stance on religion was more so that he was against the idea of organized religion

“There’s a lot of contradictions in religion, I think. I don’t really just mean in Islam but also in most religions. One person says one thing, another says something else. And to me it doesn’t make sense that we have all these rules on how to act daily. Like, why should I listen to the words of someone who was born ages ago in a completely different society in how I should act in our

present-day society? It doesn't make sense. And sure, you can argue that the Quran is the word of Allah, and so it should apply regardless – but like...the Quran was passed down by people, written down by people, spoken and passed down verbally in mosques by people. And people are not as objective as I'd think Allah to be – so maybe if Islam is the one true religion or whatever, what's in the Quran now might not be at all the same as what was originally shared to Prophet Muhammed back when that supposedly happened. People who passed down the knowledge over time probably changed things while they did so...I think that's where a lot of the contradictions also stem from...and why it doesn't make sense for me to believe in it, you know?"

Both Samir and Akash expressed doubt in Islam. They brought this doubt to their parents to discuss it but were met with the same sanctions that they were raised to see Islam through – that they would go to hell if they questioned their beliefs. For Samir, this also indicated that his parents were not educated in Islam as “they were incapable of taking my questions seriously”. This led both Akash and Samir to question their own faith and seek out alternative answers. Given American values includes the idea of secularism (Baker and Smith 2015), it is unsurprising that Akash and Samir, who closely identified with their American identity more than their Bangladeshi ethnic identity, embraced more secular ideas following the inability to reaffirm their faith with their parents.

Integrating Islam:

Unlike the assimilationists, the integrationists had a much closer link to their Bangladeshi roots – this corresponded with their responses about how they viewed their religious faith. All the integrationists still considered themselves Muslim. However, they followed the same trend of questioning Islam and their parents that the assimilationists did.

Aisha, as noted before, remarked how she was frustrated with her mother restricting her activities by citing it was haram according to Islam. This frustration was also expressed by Rabia, Inaya, and Esana. Despite having the same type of frustration as the assimilationists about their parents using Islam as a medium to curtail their behavior, the integrationists still sustained

their religious faith in Islam. However, they still deviated from their parent's interpretation of Islam.

In an earlier section of this chapter, I spoke about how Islam was used alongside fear rhetoric to raise my participants. Many of the participants were aware of this. In fact, Neha mentioning it to me was what inspired this analysis. During my conversation with Islamic childrearing, she admitted

“...it also helped them raise us differently. I think religion has a big part to do with it...not just [Bangladeshi] culture or what would people think. It was always what Allah was going to think. They have this fear instilled in them. But I think it helped them raise us. Not in like the best way, I don't blame them because I think it's hard to raise kids in America, to be honest, if you're coming from a whole different culture.”

Neha remarked that Islamic childrearing with fear rhetoric was a norm for her and her peers. Furthermore, Neha provides an important point in that fear was not just present in their Islamic childrearing practices – it was actually the basis in which their parents interpreted Islam. In other words, the sanctions that my participants' parents attempted to use to reproduce Islamic behaviors in their children also appeared to sustain their own religiosity. That being said, this did not mean that the integrationists agreed with that interpretation. Rabia, in particular, was vocal in her stance against how the first-generation Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrants viewed Islam.

“I feel like it [religion] increase their stress because whenever they would talk about religion they would always – like growing up I never was taught to love Allah. I was taught to fear Allah. And I think that's a really big thing. Like fear was a big thing in religion, not love. And I think that was a substantial part of like of how religion was taught to me and I don't think that was right. So yeah. Like a lot of the times when my mom talked to me about religion now, it's like everything I do is haram. It's all ghunna¹¹, and I'm going to go to hell. And it's just such a negative light of Allah, that Allah is going to punish you. And I don't think that's a good way to preach religion,

¹¹ A sin; sinful action

especially Islam because it is meant to promote peace. Like you can't replace peace fear and like terror."

Inaya and Aisha likewise argued the same concept about how their parents interpreted Islam – that it was more about acting in accordance with rules because they feared hell and Allah. What was remarkable, was their response to understanding how their parents viewed Islam. Unlike Samir and Akash, who completely turned away from Islam following their parent's unwillingness to answer their questions, the integrationists did not let go of their Islamic background. Instead, they worked to redefine it. This aligns with the findings of previous studies that looked the religiosity of second-generation Muslim immigrants (Lubbers and Gijsberts 2010; Modood et al. 1994; Ghuman 1975).

The redefinition appeared to center around their relationship with Allah. Their parents feared Allah, and it was this concept that they were highly critical of and aimed to change. Inaya, for instance, remarked:

"In high school or college, I just always felt like I was sinning too much and I didn't know what to do with this like am I not a good Muslim like what's the problem here. And I just sat down and thought about it and through my own research and stuff I just realized that like as a believer I don't think I should be feeling this way about my religion or feeling this way about Allah and that shifted my thinking about it and allow myself to think that there's a different interpretation that differed from my parent's one. They raised me to fear Allah rather than love him. That is the biggest thing that I have to get away from. I believe that before fearing Allah that we're supposed to love him. I think that's different from what my parents have been taught and what they have been teaching."

The integrationists all worked to redefine their relationship with Allah. From that shift, they also started to change the way they practice Islam. This also caused them to challenge the beliefs their parents instilled in them while growing up. Aisha spoke me a little about how she switched to her own interpretation of Islam.

“there is a difference between believing in Islam and believing in what my mother says. Cause the older generation to have their own ideas for how being Muslim is supposed to go and I don't think that's always right...so like always take what my mom tells me and then look it up for myself. If it makes sense then sure I'll listen to it...but if it's something stupid like how she doesn't want me to go to a movie theatre then no, I'm going to add that to my interpretation of Islam.”

The other integrationists, like Aisha, often questioned all the Islamic rules that their parents introduced to them. If the rules made sense to them, they would accept it in their interpretation of Islam. If not, they would deny it. In many ways, Islam for the integrationists became more of an individual relationship as opposed to a community that their parents approached. I argue this because, as a previous section of this chapter argued, Islam was spread to my parent's first-generation parents through familial or communal lines – and hence their faith was interconnected with their sense of community. However, the integrationists were more individualistic in their relationship with Allah and Islam. This may be a result of growing up in American culture which they argued was more individualistic. This was likewise found in previous studies that looked at the intergenerational immigrant changes in Islamic beliefs (Beek and Fleischmann 2019; Lubbers and Gijsberts 2010). Additionally, it opposes the findings of other studies that argued that Islam was a barrier to integration/assimilation into western societies as my participants indicate their Islamic and American identities can co-exist (Beek and Fleishmann 2019; Alba 2005).

In essence, integrationists worked to redefine their religious beliefs from their parents. The redefinitions seemed to stem from their American side as they would reference to American individualism to affirm or deny the Islamic tenants their parents proposed in their own interpretation of Islam.

The next section will discuss Fatima, who adopted a separationist acculturation preference track, and her perspective on Islam.

Separationism and Islam:

Fatima, being the only participant who fit under Berry's separationist category, had high levels of association with her Bangladeshi heritage. Likewise, she also had a high level of religiosity in her Islamic faith.

Like the integrationists, Fatima kept the Islamic identity that she was raised with. Furthermore, she was one of the eight participants who admitted that their parents became more religious over time. However, her view on Islam was different from the integrationists. During our conversations, Fatima revealed that she had always been a faithful practitioner of Islam and rarely found herself questioning her faith. This was different from the integrationists in that although they all continued their Islamic faith, the integrationists did doubt their faith as it pertained to the interpretation of Islam their parents tried to reach them.

In Fatima's case, however, she did not question her faith growing up nor her parent's interpretation of Islam. Furthermore, she made no mention of her parents having a fear-based relation with Allah or Islam. What struck me was that, in addition to this, she noted that in the process of her parents becoming more religious – they actually started to redefine what it meant to be Islam for themselves. According to Fatima, her parents started to become more serious in their faith started to directly look to the Quran as a strict set of guidelines on how to be a Muslim. It was this perspective that Fatima also took – she based her Islamic faith strictly on the Quran's verbiage. This differed from the integrationists in two ways. The first being that the parents of the integrationists did not appear to have a well-developed education of Islam – hence their inability to answer the questions their children asked them about Islam. Secondly, neither the integrationists nor their parents followed the Quran directly. They followed their

interpretation of the Quran, true, but they interpreted the religion as they saw fit and hence had a decentralized view of Islam.

Fatima's parents worked to educate themselves on Islam and became strict practitioners of it – which then passed onto Fatima herself.

Although she continued to label herself as Muslim like the integrationists that were discussed in the previous section. Her approach to Islam was different from the integrationists. Fatima had reported the same trend in her parents becoming more religious over time like all other participants. However, unlike the others, Fatima did not mention any reference to the use of Islamic upbringing. Furthermore, she made no reference to the same trend of fear being the basis of the first-generation. As a result, she made no distinction in her religious beliefs in terms of whether she viewed her relationship with good to be one where she feared Allah or loved him, unlike the integrationists. However, given that Fatima was the only participant who fit under the separation acculturation path, I do not have enough data to determine if her perspective on Islam is a trend for separationists or if she is merely an outlier. Nonetheless, her religious path is similar to that of the religiosity trends of other first-generation Muslim immigrants found in previous studies (Beek and Fleischmann 2019; Lubbers and Gijberts 2010).

Discussion and Conclusion

As previously stated, the differences between my participant's religiosity and faith directly corresponded to the divisions between them in terms of their acculturation preference track. The assimilationists in my sample were all found to have cast off their Islamic upbringing. The integrationists kept their Islamic background but had modified it in order to address their criticisms towards their parents' interpretations of Islam. And lastly, the separationist Fatima upheld the same level of religiosity and interpretation of Islam as her parents.

The findings on religiosity in this chapter expressed were relatively unsurprising. Previous literature indicated that Muslims tended to keep their religiosity levels stable between the first and second generations (Soehl 2017). This may be connected to findings in both this study and previous studies in which the majority of second-generation South-Asian immigrants were accepting of both their heritage and their host society's values (Islam 2008; Robinson 2005).

Furthermore, this study's sample was confirmed to follow the trend of first-generation Muslim immigrants adopting the separation acculturation preference track (Lubbers and Gijsberts 2010).

An important question that has yet to be answered, however, is what explains the differences between each participant group in terms of their religious faith and religiosity? In other words, why did the assimilationists cast away their Islamic roots? Or the integrationists develop a self-formulated interpretation of Islam?

Since I have already drawn a connection between my participant's religious preferences and their acculturation preference track, we can argue the same explanations for why they found themselves in particular acculturation tracks also account for their perspective on Islam. In essence, the reason would once again draw from collective efficacy theory and each participant's interaction with the greater Bangladeshi (and now Muslim) community collective (Collins et al. 2017). Those on the assimilation track had lesser exposure to this collective and hence did not experience the same degree of behavioral socialization that those in the integration and separation track did due to not living in a Bangladeshi/Muslim prominent area or ethnic neighborhood. The same expanded arguments I introduced in the previous chapter about how this is further amplified by gender and possibly socioeconomic status would likewise apply.

However, this explanation does not quite account for the nuances between each acculturation group's choices in how they choose to interpret Islam. I would like to expand on my previous arguments and note that instead of these differences being a result of my participant's involvement with the Bangladeshi-Muslim collective, it may be the result of their acceptance of American values. In other words, it is the acculturation preference track they have found themselves in to be the driving force in what determines their religious faith and religiosity.

I spoke on this possibility earlier in the assimilationist section. The assimilationists are naturally more accepting of American culture than any other group in my sample. American culture, as my participants defined in the previous chapter, was viewed to emphasize the role of the individual over the collective. Furthermore, American has a rich history regarding religion and individualism. Historically, protestant Christians came to the United States and dominated the religious biome of the country. Protestantism notably opposes previous branches of Christianity that depended on a centralized power (the Church) and emphasized the role of the individual connecting directly to God. Furthermore, American culture also emphasizes the idea of secularism (Baker and Smith 2015). Given the assimilationists were more accepting of American culture, it is unsurprising they embodied these values in their own religious beliefs and religiosity.

The integrationists likewise followed this trend. They viewed their American and Bangladeshi identities simultaneously. As a result, they were uncomfortable with the centralized view of Islam their parents expressed – especially given the emphasis in fearing Allah it was seemingly based on. As a result, they drew upon the individualistic nature of their American side to redefine Islam to develop their own interpretation of Islam. This would support an argument

previous studies conducted on Muslim immigrants that studied the same phenomenon proposed in that 2nd generation Muslim immigrants combine aspects of their heritage and host society culture (Vertovec and Rogers 2018; Zhou 1997).

Lastly, the separationist, Fatima. Although it is difficult to draw clear distinctions between her and the other groups seeing as she was the only participant in my sample to fit under the separation acculturation preference, this argument does make sense to explain her situation. Given Fatima's high connection to her Bangladeshi identity, she saw no issue in completely adopting the same levels of religiosity and beliefs as her parents. Fatima did not view any conflicts between the religious beliefs of her Bangladeshi-Muslim collective and her personal identity as she did not connect to American values the same way that the assimilationist and integrationists did.

During this part of my study, the connection between one's acculturation preference track in terms of their ethnic identity and their acculturation preference track in regard to their religious identity and how they overlapped intrigued me. The question "why?" returned for every interview I conducted. The next section explores this overlap and attempts to interpret the relationship between my sample's demonstrated Bangladeshi ethnic values and their Islamic religious values and works to come up with an explanation for why the two overlapped in my participant's acculturation preferences.

Chapter IV: The Overtaking of Islam in Bangladeshi Culture?

This study has looked at 2nd generation Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrants' acculturation preferences in terms of their attitudes towards their Bangladeshi ethnic identity and their Islamic religious background. In the previous chapter, I noted how the acculturation preferences overlapped for both the ethnic and religious dimensions. Initially, I was not surprised by these findings, as both religious and ethnic identity are components of the definition of culture I provided in chapter I (Itulua-Abumere 2013; Giddens 2005). Therefore, it made sense that my participants' attitudes towards their Bangladeshi heritage and Islamic upbringing would be similarly be split across their acculturation preference tracks as their acculturation preferences accounted for their attitudes towards all aspects of culture.

During my analysis, however, I noticed a peculiar theme coming up in my conversations with my participants during their interviews. Specifically, there was a connection between Islam and Bangladeshi ethnic culture that I had not fully considered during the formulation of this study. During my interviews, I had questioned my participants on how they felt the greater Bangladeshi community, as they saw it, would view interethnic and interreligious marriage. Marriage is the symbolic representation of assimilation – it represents the willingness to open up your cultural distinctiveness to be mixed with a foreign one. This is something that many previous theorists on assimilation have argued is the epitome of accepting assimilation/acculturation (Gordon 1974; Alba and Nee 1997; Portes and Zhou 1997). Hence, I thought it would be a good question to ask my participants to get a better understanding of how inclusive or exclusive the Bangladeshi collective was with their members. My participants' answers provided me an unexpected finding in the complexities between the relationship of Bangladeshi ethnic culture and Islamic religious culture.

This chapter aims to flesh out my findings on the subject, why it is perplexing in the context of Bangladesh's historical foundation, and to provide an additional view of the experiences that Bangladeshi-Muslim second-generation immigrants have to process as they navigate their identities while they grow up in America. The arguments in this chapter may be useful to consider in designing future studies that look at the Bangladeshi-Muslim American population.

Interethnic or Interreligious?

On the topic of Interethnic and Interreligious marriage, my participants provided responses that reflected their acculturation preferences. The assimilationists were very open to the possibility. The integrationists had mixed responses, but the reasoning often being linked to their individualism and arguing that "it didn't matter so long as there's a good connection". Whereas the separationist, Fatima, had already married within both her ethnic and religious groups and also wanted her children to do the same so as to preserve her heritage. For this chapter, however, I was more interested in how the greater Bangladeshi community viewed the concept.

Across the board, my participants admitted that the overarching Bangladeshi collective would be opposed to the idea. Samir, for instance noted the following:

"Haaha yeah that's like their worst nightmare. Every time my mom sees me with a female friend, she nearly has an aneurysm and I have to convince her that she's not my girlfriend or anything like that...I used to actually date a Nepali once, and I joked with my mom about her being my girlfriend once to test the waters. And she uh, well, she nearly kicked my ass until I lied and told her I was just messing with her. But even then she was on my ass about every time I went out and grilled me about what I was going to do for the next few months."

In other words, the greater Bangladeshi community was not very accepting of interethnic or interreligious marriage. This was expected given previous studies reported similar attitudes

within the overall South-Asian population (Robinson 2005; Shaw 2000; Ghuman 1975). Aisha also remarked on this and spoke from experience.

“So it actually did happen in my family...and it’s like super awkward. Because my cousin who married a white girl was basically ostracized and kicked out of the family”.

Aisha notes how the opposition is so severe that it had extreme consequences in that families would often cut off any relation to those who married into a different ethnic or religious group. This likewise reflects the trend in first-generation immigrants adopting a separation acculturation preference in western societies (Islam 2008; Lubbers and Gijsberts 2010).

Additionally, Inaya elaborated on about her own reasons why she would not consider it in fear of the consequences.

“It has a lot to do with my dad and his fear of judgment. Like, he cares a lot about what other people think, or what they’ll say. So if I were to marry a non-Bangladeshi or non-Muslim, he would be really furious cause then all his siblings and friends would probably judge him really badly even if it were my decision alone.”

Inaya drew on my earlier argument about collective efficacy theory and how the Bangladeshi collective manifests it through collective judgment (Collins et al. 2017). In this case, Inaya’s father pressured Inaya to not even consider the possibility of interethnic or interreligious marriage as a preventative barrier to the Bangladeshi community’s judgment. Inaya’s father has been socialized to further socialize his own family and dissuade them from participating in behaviors the Bangladeshi collective does not approve of lest he experience judgment.

I was curious, however, if the opposition to interethnic marriage and interreligious marriage were equal in the Bangladeshi community. I expected them to be relatively on the same level. However, the answers I received indicated otherwise.

The answers I received followed one of two trends. Sohel and Fatima argued that you could not differentiate between the two as they felt being Bangladeshi was strongly connected to being Muslim. The remaining majority, however, argued that the Bangladeshi community would be more willing to accept interethnic marriage so long as the partner identified as Muslim. To me, this meant that religion was more important to the Bangladeshi community than their own ethnic identity. Curious, I questioned my participants about this and asked them if they felt their Islamic background was a part of their Bangladeshi ethnic identity.

This question was aimed to get at the root of the intersection between Bangladeshi culture and Islam. To my surprise, the answers I received from a few respondents were more extreme than I anticipated. Although Sohel and Fatima continued their argument that they were interconnected and were equal to the Bangladeshi community, Fatima did note that the immigrant experience allowed Bangladeshis to start to differentiate between the two.

“...a lot of what we [Bangladeshis] eat, the clothing we wear, fashion, all of that I think is tied to Islam. And if you separate the two - I think the separation only happens if you leave Bangladesh. That's why for immigrants, when they leave Bangladesh, they start thinking what is Islam really? What am I going to prioritize and hold to, and what do I let go when in America? But when you're in Bangladesh it's [Islam] very tied into every aspect of your life.”

Fatima sets up the idea that Bangladeshi immigrants have to pick and choose which parts of their identity that they want to keep as they live their lives in America. This embodies the expectations of acculturation and segmented assimilation in which immigrants start to lose their cultural distinctness in different dimensions (Islam 2008; Zhou 1997; Portes and Zhou 1993). In this case, Fatima suggests that Bangladeshi immigrants to the United States have to pick and choose which parts of their identity they wish to preserve. Although my study argues that the majority of the 2nd generation Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrants in my sample prefer to keep both their heritage and host cultures as a part of their identity, I only explored the relationship

between their Islamic and Bangladeshi identity against their American identity. I did not explore the relationship between their Bangladeshi and Islamic identity and how they intersect in the context of an American immigrant.

I did, however, receive responses in which reflected this relationship that was surprising. On the topic of which identity (Islamic or Bangladeshi) my participants' parents saw as more important to preserve through marriage, I received surprising answers.

Akash admitted that his parents would rather him marry another Muslim at the very least. Furthermore, on the topic of if his parents had to pick between their Islamic identity or Bangladeshi one, he noted that "My parents...they would go for the religion. They would sacrifice their Bangladeshi heritage if it's to keep their religion".

In fact, Samir, Aisha, Rabia, Inaya, Esana, and Neha all agreed with Akash's sentiments in that their parents compromised that if they were not going to marry within the Bangladeshi ethnic group, their partners should at the very least be Muslim. Although not all of them admitted that their family would go to the same extreme that Akash noted in that they would sacrifice their Bangladeshi ethnic identity immediately to preserve their Islamic faith, it was nonetheless clear that Islamic culture and beliefs were a priority for the Bangladeshi community to preserve. This should not be surprising based on the other findings of my study in which I noted that all my participants had an Islamic upbringing in which their Parents utilized Islam as a basis for their childrearing. Additionally, there was a greater prioritization of acquiring Islamic traits versus Bangladeshi traits. Samir touched on this topic when I asked him about his use of the Bengali language

"So, like, I'm not a pro when it comes to Bengali, like I can get by. But I'm not super fluent in it...but the funny thing is, is that at most I can only speak to

people verbally in it. But I can read and write in Arabic perfectly cause my parents hammered that into my head growing up so I could read the Quran.”

Samir was not alone in this pattern. Other participants, such as Akash, Neha, Inaya, Esana, Fatima, and Rabia all noted that they had started to learn how to read and write Arabic from a young age – and that they were not taught how to do the same for the Bengali language. In fact, other than Fatima, none of my participants were able to read and write in Arabic. Furthermore, Fatima only learned because she chose to take college classes on the language of her own accord.

The prioritization of Bangladeshi immigrant parents teaching their children how to read and write Arabic over their ethnic tongue supports the argument that the Bangladeshi community, according to my participants, place greater value in Islamic culture over their own. This reflects previous studies on segmented assimilation in which immigrant groups acculturated partially in different dimensions as opposed to general assimilation theory that implies all aspects of cultural distinctiveness deteriorate simultaneously (Alba and Nee 1997; Zhou 1997; Gordon 1964). In my sample, it was religiosity was prioritized for preservation over the Bangladeshi ethnic culture. The next section speaks more on what form this took within my sample.

Being Bangladeshi verses being Muslim

In the previous section I talked about how my participants expressed that Islam had a greater influence on the upbringing and direction of their lives than their Bangladeshi heritage did. My sample were all raised under Islamic childrearing techniques and values, as a result – the focus was not developing a Bangladeshi cultural awareness, but rather an Islamic cultural awareness in their children. This did not merely mean the prioritization of teaching children the Arabic written language over Bengali as discussed earlier, but also the overtaking of Islamic traditions and holidays over Bangladeshi ones. I discovered this for myself when talking to Neha.

During our interview, Neha admitted to not being able to fully celebrate Bangladeshi holidays while growing up due to not having close family members nearby in her early childhood. I questioned her if she meant Eid, to which she shook her head and clarified she meant holidays such as Shahid Dibash¹² or Pôhela Boishakh¹³. This surprised me. As someone who grew up Bangladeshi myself, I had never even heard of these holidays. Furthermore, there was no mention of them when I questioned my other participants about what it meant for them to be Bangladeshi. This supports the argument about how the majority of my sample's parents did not focus on developing a Bangladeshi cultural awareness in their children as they grew up.

Moving on, I did get a sense of how Islam interacts with Bangladeshi culture based on other details from my participants. For instance, Aisha spoke to me about her family's views on Bangladeshi culture.

“Bangladesh has some culture, but like Bangladeshi culture is super Hindu – like it really stems from Hindu stuff. And so Bengali culture and Hindu culture are super similar and they mix in things like wearing teeps¹⁴. Like we used to wear teeps when we were younger but then my mom found out it was a Hindu thing so now like we're not allowed to wear it anymore. Like salaaming¹⁵ the feet, that's a Hindu thing. We found out that, so we don't do that anymore. So, like for us...Islam is always before [Bangladeshi] culture

Aisha brought up another case in which Bangladeshi culture is reduced to make space for Islamic beliefs. Or better yet, if aspects of Bangladeshi culture did not fit within Islamic beliefs, those aspects of Bangladeshi culture would be removed. In many ways, it seems there is an

¹² February 21st is National Martyrs' Day in Bangladesh. This holiday coincides with International Mother Language Day. During the rising tensions between West Pakistan and Bangladesh, then “East Pakistan”, students peacefully protested Urdu becoming the national language. Police fired and killed many of the protestors, however, and the holiday is a solemn day of remembrance for them.

¹³ April 14th is Bengali New Years – the first day of the Bengali Calendar.

¹⁴ An accessory placed in the middle of the forehead worn by many South-Asian descendants for a variety of purposes.

¹⁵ To Salaam means to greet. In this context, salaaming the feet is typically a sign of great respect from the performer of the action. Usually done to elders.

acculturation process within the Bangladeshi immigrant population in which their Bangladeshi and Muslim identities are clashing. Furthermore, in this relationship, it seems separation is the most common preference track given that Islam seems to be overtaking Bangladeshi culture based on how eight (with the exception of Sohel) of my participants indicated their parents valued Islamic culture over their Bangladeshi heritage.

In the context of Bangladesh's founding, however, I found this to be unexpected. As the first chapter introduced, while Bangladesh was founded primarily on religious lines, the primary reason that drove its citizens to fight for it to become an independent nation-state was their strong pride in their ethnic cultural identity. During the times in which Bangladesh was East Pakistan, West Pakistan attempted to eliminate East Pakistan's ethnic distinctness by wiping out their language (Bengali) and cultural practices due to the Hindu undertones they were based on. This, in turn, caused the Bangladeshis to rally and rebel against the rule of West Pakistan and eventually win their independence during the Bangladeshi War of Liberation as they desired a more secular country in which they could celebrate their ethnic distinctiveness (Schendel 2009; BBC 2012). The founding of the country was based on the extreme sense of pride Bangladeshis had for their ethnic culture. In fact, a national holiday was even established to celebrate those who sacrificed their lives to preserve the Bangladeshi language during the conflict.

In the historical context of Bangladeshi's founding, the fact that first-generation Bangladeshi-American immigrants are willing to let go of their ethnic values (language, customs, and etc) to be supplanted by Islamic culture is almost a reversal of the values Bangladesh fought for their independence for.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter was meant to bring light to a perplexing trend found in my sample of Bangladeshi-Muslim second-generation immigrants. Although I attempted to reconcile my findings to support my argument that Bangladeshi culture appeared to have been overtaken by Islamic culture, it is limited in its argument in that there is no theoretical background supporting it. Despite this, the findings do reflect the ideas of segmented assimilation in that portions of an immigrant's identities are more susceptible to acculturation over others (Zhou 1997; Zhou and Portes 1993). However, this study was not able to understand why the Islamic religion was prioritized over Bangladeshi culture by the greater Bangladeshi community of my participants. As such, researchers should take note of these trends and consider them in future studies on the Bangladeshi-Muslim population in America.

The trends reported in this chapter are particularly surprising in the context of Bangladesh's history. The fact that it was first-generation immigrants that initiated the process of prioritizing Islamic culture over their own Bangladeshi culture is interesting especially given the first-generation immigrant group is typically the most attached to their heritage. This implies that the phenomenon of Islamic culture being emphasized over Bangladeshi culture may be present even in Bangladesh itself – meaning this trend may not only be present in Bangladeshi immigrant group, but rather in Bangladeshis across the world. In either event, it signifies that this is a topic that needs to be researched further. Additionally, it may provide an extra dimension of acculturation studies that may not have been fully considered – the acculturation of religion in non-immigrant contexts. This possibility also means that this result may not be a result of American immigration, but by an unknown confounding variable.

The next chapter will reconcile and conclude the findings of this research study, as well as speak on its limitations and topics to consider for future studies.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Key Findings

This study looked at the Bangladeshi-Muslim second-generation immigrant group in America and their experiences in navigating between their Bangladeshi, Muslim, and American identities. Much of this study, as mentioned before, was based on John Berry's acculturation model. The study aimed to discover what the most common acculturation preference track was for Bangladeshi-Muslim second-generation immigrants. In the end, my sample of nine participants only represented three of Berry's acculturation tracks: assimilation, integration, and separation. The last track, marginalization, was not encountered during the research period. Nonetheless, I have found intriguing results from this study.

On the topic of ethnic identity. Six participants identified with the integration acculturation track, two with assimilation, and one with separation. This implied that integration was the most common acculturation preference track and thus aligned with previous studies on South-Asian second-generation immigrant groups (Islam 2008; Robinson 2005). Furthermore, I discovered that my participant's attitudes towards their Bangladeshi heritage were linked to the frequency of interaction they had with the greater Bangladeshi community.

Bangladeshi culture emphasized collectivist values. This aligned with the analysis of previous studies that examined the values of Asian ethnic groups (Robinson 2005; Walton 2015). As such, the Bangladeshi community also formed a collective force. This collective works under collective efficacy theory to reinforce favorable behaviors in its community (Collins et al. 2017). The greater degree participants interacted with the Bangladeshi collective, the more they were socialized to reproduce favorable behaviors. The way this was involved in the distribution of different acculturation preferences in my sample was based on the residential location of my

participants. Like previous studies on ethnic neighborhoods, Bangladeshi neighborhoods played an important role in creating a physical location to immerse its community members under its socialization effect (Smajda and Gerteis 2012). Those who lived in these neighborhoods, or had high frequencies of interaction with them, were more accepting and practicing of their Bangladeshi heritage. It was this group that made up the entirety of the integrationists and separationists groups of participants.

On the other hand, those who did not live in such neighborhoods had conflicting views of their ethnic culture and community. These conflicts originated from identifying more with American values and culture, such as individualism, that directly opposed the collectivist nature of Bangladeshi culture. This group made up the assimilationists. Although the assimilationists reported that they did face the collective judgment of the Bangladeshi collective, it did not socialize them to become “more Bangladeshi”, instead, the briefer interactions with the Bangladeshi collective’s judgment only served to further alienate themselves from Bangladeshi culture. In other words, this finding implies that in order for the socialization function of the Bangladeshi collective to work, its subjects needed to be continuously immersed in it, such as the integrationists and separationists.

This trend was likewise present when looking at the religiosity and religious beliefs of my participants. All participants were raised Muslim, but only seven out of nine of them continued practicing Islam. The two who cast off their Islamic identity were none other than the assimilationists who identified more with American culture than their Bangladeshi heritage. Whereas the remaining seven who kept their Islamic identity all equally accepted their Bangladeshi heritage alongside their American upbringing or preferred it over American culture. This automatically implies a correlation between one’s view of their Bangladeshi ethnic identity

and their Islamic identity. Those who looked favorably upon their Bangladeshi heritage likewise retained their Islamic identity. This aligned with the findings of a previous study in the Netherlands that also established a positive correlation between one's association with their ethnic identity with their religious, Islamic, identity (Lubbers and Gijsberts 2010). Therefore, we can assume that one of the favorable behaviors of the Bangladeshi collective is practicing Islam. Thus, the differences in religiosity and religious beliefs amongst my participants can be attributed to collective efficacy theory and the level of immersion individuals have with the collective while growing up (Collins et al. 2017; Smajda and Gerteis 2012; Zhou 2004).

Despite this, there were still some unexpected trends found in my sample in regard to their religiosity and religious beliefs. Regardless of the end result of how they identified in their religious identity, nearly all of my participants, with the exception of Fatima, seemed to have followed a similar path in determining their religious beliefs. All eight of them noted that their parents attempted to raise them by using Islamic expectations as guidelines in addition to utilizing fear rhetoric and the sanction of divine punishment to reinforce the achievement of those expectations. Previous studies on religion argued this was a function of religion in order to reproduce religious beliefs (Carol and Schulz 2018; Ellwood 1918).

The use of fear rhetoric and sanctions had the opposite intended effect, however, as it drove all of my participants, with the exception of Fatima, to reconsider their faith. Participants started to question why certain actions would place them in hell in the afterlife. Furthermore, many of them reported that the actions that their parents would label as forbidden to be benign things such as going to movie theatres and being in the same room with the opposite sex. After being exposed to American culture and contradictions it exposed to them, they started to

question the words of their parents – only to be rebuked. Following this, the participants' responses to the rebuttal are what split them in terms of their religious beliefs.

As noted before, the split in beliefs happened between the assimilationists, who denied their Bangladeshi heritage as a part of their identity, and the integrationists and separationists, who accepted their Bangladeshi roots or even preferred it. The assimilationists embodied American notions of secularism and had rejected their Islamic beliefs to pursue more agnostic or decentralized spiritual beliefs. Whereas those who accepted their Bangladeshi culture retained their Islamic identity but approached it in a different interpretation. This aligned with the findings of previous studies (Lubbers and Gijsberts). The integrationists attempted to co-exist between their acceptance of Bangladeshi, American, and Islamic culture. To do so, they redefined Islam to be accommodating of their lifestyle by having a more individual relationship with Allah and the religion based on love, rather than the communal fear-based approach their parents practiced. Fatima, as a separationist, saw no fault in the interpretation of Islam by her parents and thus adopted it completely. However, given she is a singular case, it is difficult to discern if she is an outlier.

Nonetheless, it appeared the approach my participants had on religion was based on the different levels of acceptance they had towards Bangladeshi and American culture. The more American values they embodied, the more willing they were to open up their faith to change.

Lastly, this study also noted an interesting relationship between Islam and the Bangladeshi ethnic identity. Sparked by the analysis of the overlap of acculturation preferences of both their ethnic and religious identities, I explored the relationship between Bangladeshi ethnic culture and Islam. What I found was unexpected. My participants indicated that the greater Bangladeshi community prioritized the perseverance of Islamic beliefs over their own

ethnic culture. This was discovered by questioning if the greater Bangladeshi population would rather accept interethnic marriage or interreligious marriage. Every single participant indicated that the greater Bangladeshi community would prefer interethnic marriage if it meant retaining Islamic beliefs.

Furthermore, there was a prioritization of passing down Islamic values to their children. Seven of my participants indicated they were taught how to read and write Arabic from a young age. Whereas none of their parents attempted to teach them to do the same for Bengali, their ethnic language. Additionally, none of my participants indicated any knowledge of Bangladeshi traditions and holidays – only Islamic ones. Those who did have knowledge of non-Islamic related Bangladeshi culture noted they no longer practiced it as Islam deemed it forbidden. In a way, Bangladeshis are attempting to overwrite their own ethnic culture with Islam. This is surprising when considering the context of why Bangladeshis fought for their independence. The Bangladeshi War of Liberation was started to oppose West Pakistan's mission to eradicate Bangladeshi culture and language as they wanted to keep their ethnic distinctiveness. For that reason, they chose to build a society based on western values of democracy and secularism after they won the war.

My findings are implying that the Bangladeshi community members from which my participants originate from are now propagating a movement that opposes the very foundation of what their country was found on. It is a perplexing situation that needs to be further analyzed in future studies of the Bangladeshi-Muslim population. Furthermore, this reflected themes of segmented assimilation theory in which portions of immigrants' identities would be lost with the acculturation of American culture instead of an overall loss of cultural distinctiveness (Zhou 1997; Zhou and Portes 1993). In this case, it appeared that the Bangladeshi ethnic identity was

more susceptible to be lost in the acculturation process than the Islamic religious identity in my sample. It should be noted that this phenomenon may also be present in the general Bangladeshi population – not just the immigrant groups within that demographic. In such an event, it would imply the acculturation of religion outside of an immigration context – something that should be considered for future studies on acculturation.

The next, and final, section of this thesis will layout the limitations and notes that future studies should consider when drafting research projects on the Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrant population.

Limitations and Notes to Consider for Future Studies

As expressed above, there are a few notes that should be considered for future studies on the Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrant population. First, this study was immensely limited in its findings due to the small sample size. As a result, none of my findings can be generalized to the entire Bangladeshi-Muslim second-generation community. This study failed to recruit a diverse set of Bangladeshi participants. Many of them were in higher education, grew up in similar neighborhoods, and there was a gender imbalance represented. Gender, as mentioned before, may play a critical role in understanding acculturation preferences in the Bangladeshi-Muslim population.

As noted in the first chapter, those who looked favorably at their Bangladeshi heritage were majority women. However, due to the lack of men who were willing to participate in the study, it is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions about the relationship between gender and acculturation preferences in this study. Nonetheless, future studies need to expand recruitment methods to collect more data from more participants in order to provide a more accurate analysis of acculturation preferences in the Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrant population.

Furthermore, participants were all young adults that were either in college or freshly graduated. Many of them are still deciding the direction of their lives. As such, the findings of this study only reflect the current beliefs and values of my participants – they are very likely to change in the future. As such, future studies should consider evaluating participants over several periods of time to note any differences in their acculturation preferences as they grow older. In addition, this study attempted to pseudo-analyze intergenerational differences regarding religious beliefs without speaking directly to previous immigrant generation groups. Thus, my analysis of first-generation immigrant religious preferences may be incredibly biased due to it being shared with me by my participants who may have varying feelings towards their parents. On top of this, this study did not look beyond the second-generation and the surface level of the first-generation.

To provide a more accurate map of the acculturation and assimilation trends in the Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrant population, studies need to evaluate the acculturation and assimilation preferences in multiple generations. Due to the limitations of this study, I was not able to touch on where the Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrant population stands in relation to assimilation theory in general. This study, even when only considering its sample, is not able to approve or disprove the different models of assimilation that were introduced in the literature review. Nonetheless, I believe this research study provides valuable information for expanding sociological research in the Bangladeshi-Muslim population in the United States of America. Due to particularly fascinating findings regarding the intersection of Bangladeshi ethnic culture and Islamic religious values, I believe that studying the Bangladeshi-Muslim population will provide more ways to expand upon acculturation theory.

Post-Thesis Remarks

This study was originally thought to tackle a different set of questions when first coming up with the topic for my thesis. Originally, I intended to analyze how differences in the Bangladeshi-Muslim 2nd generation American immigrants' attitudes towards their ethnic roots, religious upbringing, and other variables (socioeconomic status, gender, neighborhood, education, and etc) affected their ability to structurally assimilate into America. In essence, the study was meant to focus on the trends of socioeconomic mobility of my demographic and how it could vary based on their attitudes towards the different variables listed above.

The final product, however, changed severely. Instead, I strayed from analyzing my participant's paths to structural assimilation, and instead focused on their experiences in acculturating into American society. The emphasis of the study was still centered around ethnic and religious identity but in a different context. This study became more about how my demographic viewed their immigrant identity rather than my original intention of focusing on social mobility and how their perception of identity influenced it.

I do not think this was a bad thing, as the primary reason why I wanted to focus on Bangladeshi-Muslim 2nd generation immigrants in the first place was that it is the very same demographic that describes me. This project was meant to also function as a way to learn more about myself – and so uncovering the acculturation trends of how my people identified with their ethnic identity, Islamic identity, and viewed American society, was more crucial to that function than my original study was. In many ways, this what I actually wanted to study from the beginning – it was just difficult to see at first.

However, it has effects on the process of writing this thesis. Given that the focus of my study had shifted dramatically, I was not fully prepared to address all the unexpected findings

that came up. Often, I had to revisit different theoretical frameworks on acculturation to be able to understand my findings while I wrote about them. This led me to have to write about theories and apply them in a time crunch – meaning I did not always have the time to fully comprehend what each framework was arguing, how they differed from one another, and how they might intersect with my findings.

Even my findings were difficult to analyze. For instance, religiosity and Islamic values were something that I considered to be a small component of Bangladeshi identity – instead, I found that it was far more important to the Bangladeshi people than their own ethnic values to the point that it seemingly overtook their ethnic identity. This meant that religion had a more significant role in Bangladeshi 2nd-generation immigrants' view of their identity than I anticipated. And in many ways, their religious and ethnic identity conflicted and intersected in different fashions. This also created difficulties in analyzing the data as the values my participants spoke on and their attitudes towards them were hard to differentiate between if my participants were talking about the influences of Islam in their lives or their Bangladeshi ethnic upbringing. The two were so intertwined it was difficult to see them separately when writing up the trends in the chapters that explored them each. This coupled with the fact that I was running low on time to fully understand the theories behind the function of religion led to a struggle in being to connect those theories back to my findings in how my participants viewed their religiosity and the role of Islam in their lives.

Therefore, if I had more time, or if I were to revisit the topic of this thesis in a future research study, I would expand my knowledge on the sociology of religion and look more carefully at the role of religion in the acculturation process that immigrant groups undergo. Islam has been indicated in both my study and previous studies to be more resilient against

acculturation pressures (Soehl 2017). As such, researching this may prove valuable to immigrant studies.

Nonetheless, although this study was not perfect, I learned a lot from this experience, and it has provided me valuable experience to consider when moving forward in my life. I hope that this study is also valuable to any future researchers that are interested in the Bangladeshi, or broader South-Asian, immigrant population.

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Appendix:

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Acculturation:

Tell me about your background. When did your family arrive in the United States?
 What was it like to grow up as a 2nd generation Bangladeshi immigrant in the United States?
 What does it mean to be a Bangladeshi to you?
 What does it mean to be an American to you?
 Do you feel you can be both “American” and Bangladeshi at the same time? Why or Why not?
 What type of people do you like surrounding yourself with? Does their ethnic origin (Bangladeshi) matter to you? Why or why not?
 Does your family have a relationship with your friend groups? If so, how? If not, why?
 What language did you grow up speaking or learning? What kind of role does it have in your daily life?
 What do you think about a Bangladeshi marrying someone outside of their ethnic/racial group?
 What are some of the main expectations your parents have for your future?
 How do you feel about those expectations, do you intend to achieve them, why or why not?

Religiosity:

What type of religious beliefs did you grow up with? How has this shaped your own beliefs?
 What role has religion played in your parents’ lives?
 How important is your religious beliefs to your life?
 What does it mean to be Muslim to you?
 When thinking about the people closest around you, would most of them identify as Muslim?
 What do you think about a Muslim marrying a non-Muslim?
 Do you feel that your Islamic background is a part of your Bangladeshi identity? Why or why not?

Assimilation (Institutional):

Education:

How important is higher education to you? Why?
 What are your educational aspirations? Who, or what, inspired you to want to achieve them?
 Are you currently in school? What are you studying? Why?
 What are your career aspirations? Why?
 When making decisions about your educational and/or career goals, how important are your family and friends’ expectations to you? Do you discuss it with them?
 If you were given 3.5 million dollars right now, do you feel your career and/or educational aspirations would change?

Neighborhood:

Describe the ethnic breakdown of your neighborhood (what is the ethnic majority or minority)?
 Does your neighborhood play a large part in your daily life? Describe a typical day in it.
 Do you feel supported or helped by the members of your neighborhood?

(If participant lives in Bangladeshi neighborhood) What are the pros and cons of living in a neighborhood that is predominately Bangladeshi-Muslim?

(If participant does not live in Bangladeshi neighborhood) Do you see any pros or cons of living in a non-Bangladeshi-Muslim neighborhood?

Where do you see yourself residing in ten years? With who?

Demographic Questions (To be asked as a quick survey at the end of the interview):

How old are you?

What is your gender?

What neighborhood did/do you live in NYC, and for how long?

Up to what level of education have you completed so far?

Are you currently employed? If so, as what?

What are your parent's employment statuses?

 What are their careers/jobs?

 What is the highest level of education they have completed?

Select your family's socioeconomic status:

 Upper Class

 Middle Class

 Lower Class

Do you live with your parents?

Do you (or your family) rent or own your home?

Appendix B: Email Script to Affinity Groups/Organizations

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jakir Hossain and I am a senior at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. I am working on a senior project for sociology for which I need to conduct research. I am reaching out to you today because I wish to ask if anyone in your organization, that fits in the description of the population people that I intend to interview, would be interested in participating. Each participant would be compensated by being entered in a raffle to win one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards.

I am researching the experiences, attitudes, and aspirations of Bengali-Muslim 2nd generation immigrants between the ages of 18 to 25. Within this demographic, I also wish to focus on participants that live in the Hillside, Jamaica Queens neighborhood in New York City. Although this is preferred, this is not necessary to participate in my research study so long as they are:

Interested in participating in an interview no longer than an hour in duration

Are Muslim

Are Bengali

Live in New York City

Are between ages 18 to 25

Are second generation immigrants (meaning that their parents immigrated from Bangladesh, but they themselves were born in the U.S.)

If you are aware of anyone who would be interested in participating in an interview for my research study please forward this email itself or provide my email address (jh3508@bard.edu) for them to get in contact with me. Participation in my study has little to no risk, and the participant's identities will be kept private when referred to in my study.

South-Asians, much less Bangladeshis, are not often represented in academic literature. I hope that I can work towards changing that, starting with this research study. However, I can only do it by reaching out to organizations such as you who work with such people for support and help. I would greatly appreciate if you could share this email and opportunity to those eligible. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions!

Best,

Jakir Hossain

jh3508@bard.edu

Appendix C: Email Script to Recommended Individuals

Hello [name],

I am currently working on my senior project in Sociology in order to graduate from Bard College. I am reaching out to you today in hopes that you can help me progress my project! I am researching the experiences, attitudes, and aspirations of Bengali-Muslim 2nd generation immigrants between the ages of 18 to 25.

I am looking for volunteers to interview and I was wondering if you knew anyone who fit the following description:

Must be Bengali-Muslim

Must be a 2nd Generation Immigrant (meaning they were born in the U.S. to parents who immigrated here).

Must be between the ages of 18 to 25

Live in New York City.

Although I wish to focus my research on participants who also reside in the Hillside, Jamaica Queens neighborhood. This is not required, but it is preferred for the purpose of my study.

Participation in my research holds little to no risk and their identity will be hidden when referred to in my study. Furthermore, I will compensate all participants by entering them in a raffle to win one of two \$50 Amazon Gift Cards at the end of my research period.

If you are aware of anyone who would be interested in participating in an interview for my research study please forward this email itself or provide my email address (jh3508@bard.edu) for them to get in contact with me.

South-Asians, much less Bangladeshis, are often not represented in academic literature. I hope that I can work towards changing that, starting with this research study. However, I can only do it by reaching out to people to help me conduct my study. I appreciate and look forward to any support from you and your colleagues.

I would greatly appreciate if you could share this email and opportunity to those eligible. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions!

Best,

Jakir Hossain

jh3508@bard.edu

Appendix D: Email Script to Interested Parties

Hello [name]!

Thank you for showing your interest in participating in my research study! Just to explain a bit about my study, I wish to study the aspirations, experiences, and attitudes of 2nd generation Bengali-Immigrants.

Please check the description of my intended research demographic and ensure you fit the criteria:

You are a Bengali Muslim

You are a 2nd Generation Immigrants (meaning you were born in the U.S. but your parents immigrated here).

You are between 18 to 25 years old

You live in NYC

If you meet the criteria, then you are eligible!

In this study, the only expectation I have for you is to participate in an interview and answer questions as truthfully as possible about the topic described briefly above. The interview should not last more than an hour. We shall discuss a suitable neutral space to conduct the interview, likely a coffee shop that is easy for you to reach.

As compensation for your time, I shall treat you to the offerings of that setting, and enter you in a raffle to win one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards.

If you are willing to continue to be a part of my study, please let me know immediately so I may work with you to schedule an interview!

Feel free to notify or refer anyone else that you believe would be a good fit for my study. I would deeply appreciate it!

Please email me at jh3508@bard.edu if you have any further questions!

Thank You,
Jakir Hossain.