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# Imagining Ethnicity

## *Role of the Montreal Bangladeshi Press in Ethnic Cohesion*

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfilment  
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the relationship between uses of the Bangladeshi immigrant press in Montreal and the reinforcement of its readers' ethnic identity. The work is based on information gathered from two Bangladeshi newspapers published in Montreal- *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta*. The study views ethnic identity as being perceived, enacted, and maintained symbolically through communication activities of ethnic group members. The Bangladeshi immigrant press is considered to be a major vehicle for its readers' perception of ethnic identity, and as a strong stimulus for its reinforcement. It is suggested that the nature and extent of use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press serves as indices of its readers' ethnic maintenance. The theoretical focus of this study is derived from the notion of 'imagined communities', which suggests that people without direct face-to-face contact, through the sharing of symbols, may imagine themselves to be a community. This study argues that through the mediation and promotion of ethnic symbols, the Bangladeshi immigrant press provides its otherwise unconnected readers with a means to imagine their affiliation with the Bangladeshi ethnic community. Frequent exposure to the immigrant press works to reaffirm that identity.

## RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse explore l'utilisation que font les immigrants du Bangladesh à Montréal de leurs journaux, ainsi que le rôle de ces journaux dans le renforcement de l'identité ethnique de leurs lecteurs. Elle est basée sur deux périodiques en langue bangla publiés à Montréal: *Probashbangla* et *Banglabarta*. L'identité ethnique peut être comprise, dans le cadre de cette étude, comme symboliquement perçue, représentée et maintenue par la communication entre les membres d'un groupe ethnique. La presse écrite des immigrants du Bangladesh apparaît comme un véhicule important de la perception de leur identité et comme une contribution à son renforcement. La nature et l'ampleur de l'utilisation de la presse Bangladeshi par ces immigrants est en outre révélatrice du maintien de l'identité des lecteurs. L'approche théorique de cette étude s'inspire de la notion de 'communauté imaginaire', qui suggère que des personnes sans contact direct puissent se percevoir comme membres d'une communauté grâce à un partage de symboles. Elle révèle que la médiation et la promotion des symboles ethniques par les journaux Bangladeshi procure à des lecteurs qui n'ont pas de liens entre eux un moyen d'imaginer leur affiliation avec leur communauté. De plus, de fréquentes expositions à la presse ethnique contribuent à réaffirmer l'identité partagée par les membres de cette communauté.



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## Preface

If you have begun reading this dissertation without any previous knowledge of Bangladeshis in Montreal or of their mass media, do not feel frustrated. I found myself in the same position when I began research on the Bangladeshi immigrant press. There is a complete absence of any research on the community or its media. It should come as no surprise that the Bangladeshi community in Montreal, and Canada as a whole, their immigration into this society, their way of life, values and cultural practices, socioeconomic position, the expression of their views and aspirations in the media, are either not, or are minimally known beyond the community. In the absence of any written documents, it is doubtful that many Bangladeshis know their community well either. Here, I shall present a brief introduction to the Bangladeshi population in Montreal from which the sample of readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press was drawn.

In describing the Montreal Bangladeshi community, its emergence, pattern of immigration and settlement, the members' motivations for immigration, their age and gender distribution, their educational, socioeconomic background back home vis-a-vis their present social situation, their basic values, etc. are considered. However, issues such as how they perceive their group identity, what their cultural preferences, practices, and interactional patterns, and their institutions and organizations are will not be addressed here. These subjects will be discussed at length later in the dissertation, with reference to the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press.

Whether it is to improve their economic lot, to have a better career, higher education, or to survive persecution because of political belief, Bangladeshis have emigrated for a long time. Previously the destinations were the UK, Sweden, Germany, France, or the Middle Eastern countries. Lately, the immigration flow has been directed towards North America and Bangladeshi immigration to Canada is a relatively recent phenomenon. According to long-time residents, the first group of Bangladeshis arrived in Canada in the mid-1960s. However, Canada Employment and Immigration Statistics indicate that the flow of immigration began in 1973. In fact, a steady flow of Bangladeshi immigration began in the early 1970s. The

political turmoil brought about by the unsettled situation following the country's war of independence in 1971 with the accompanying economic dislocation of people and their hardship, motivated many Bangladeshis to seek a better, more secure life in Canada. Over the last decade, Bangladeshis have immigrated to Canada largely in response to fear of political persecution at the hands of military or dictatorial regimes, or to alleviate economic hardship. A handful came as independent immigrants, or as sponsored family members of immigrants, but the great majority came as political refugees.

The 1992 statistics from Employment and Immigration Canada (published in 1994, the latest available at writing this dissertation) reports, the number of Bangladeshis who immigrated to Canada between 1973 and 1978, by country of last permanent residence, was between 100 and 160 persons per year. During the same period the province of Quebec received between 10 and 50 Bangladeshi immigrants each year. The province of Ontario received the highest number of Bangladeshis at that time. Both for Canada and Quebec, the flow of immigration declined significantly between 1979 and 1985. Beginning in the late 1980s the flow increased and continues to do so. Between 1986 and 1990, about 450-550 Bangladeshis immigrated to Canada each year, and the destination for 150-350 was Quebec. The years 1991 and 1992 witnessed a further rise in the flow of incoming Bangladeshis when 1063 and 1592 respectively arrived. For the same years 728 and 788 persons respectively came to Quebec. Between 1978 and 1992 a total of 6161 Bangladeshis are reported to have immigrated to Canada, and 3039 of them to Quebec. No city-wise destination breakdown of Bangladeshi immigration during this period was available.

Since the mid-1980s Quebec appears to be a preferred destination for Bangladeshis. Currently the Canadian cities with the largest concentrations of Bangladeshis are Toronto, followed by Montreal, and Vancouver. In Montreal, Bangladeshis tend to live in three areas- Parc Extension, Plamondon, and downtown. These are ethnic enclaves of working class people. Small groups of Bangladeshi elites live on the South Shore and the West Island.

Official estimates of the Bangladeshi presence in Quebec and Canada reflect a possible under-counting. One reason could be that it does not consider those who have entered this country illegally. Another source

(Montreal Deputy Mayor's speech at the 1995 Montreal Bangladesh Convention) suggests that the Bangladeshi population in Montreal is presently approximately 6000. Nevertheless, the statistical section of my dissertation is based on 1992 Immigration Canada statistics. Other information has been obtained in discussions with long-time Bangladeshi residents. Whatever the real figure, Bangladeshis are still a small group in Canada.

An imbalance in gender distribution of the Bangladeshi population is noticeable. For Canada at large, as well as for Quebec, for every female there are about two males (in 1992, the gender ratio stood at 1.8 for Canada, and 1.9 for Quebec). Recently there has been some increase in the female population. It is worth mentioning that most of the women came to Canada/ Montreal as a sponsored spouse or family member. The number of women coming as independent immigrants is negligible. The Immigration Canada statistics indicate that a majority of the population is young. Those aged between 25 and 44 years account for 58% of Bangladeshis in Canada, and for 63% of those in Quebec. There is an equal proportion of married to unmarried. Most of the married men have left their family in Bangladesh. The workforce participation breakdown for 1992 reveals that of the total population in Canada, 64% are in the work force, 13.25% are home-makers, 4.14% are children, and 15.32% are students. For the balance, no classification is provided.

The Bangladeshi immigrants have come mostly from large cities, so their lifestyle and aspirations are typically urban. A large percentage Bangladeshi Montrealers have a university degree, or have completed a college education. Their social class position in Bangladesh had been middle or upper-middle class. In Bangladesh they were doctors, lawyers, professors, accountants, defense personnel, students, businessmen, shop-keepers, and technicians.

Bangladeshis who arrived in the 1960s and early 1970s came as professionals, educators, and business entrepreneurs, and now are established in a comfortable social position. However, most of the community members who have come to Montreal in the last 10-15 years have experienced a serious status dislocation. Despite their high education, business skills, or professional training, they have managed to find work in restaurants, or factories. A few have opened small businesses such as grocery stores, restaurants, travel agencies, video clubs, or auto shops. The

professionals, unable to obtain recognition from Canadian authorities for their professional certificates, enter menial jobs to make a living. They wait to earn enough to take the Canadian professional exams to be able to practice their professions. Others have also failed to get a job, or make the career that their educational background merits. Many are unemployed or on social aid programs. There are obvious frustrations about their social advancement in this society. The median annual income of Bangladeshis is \$15,000. During the last five years, there has been some improvement in the job market but it is open to those with certificates or diplomas from Canadian educational institutions. The few who made their way through have become college and university professors, accountants, computer programmers, or have established private businesses. But generally the Bangladeshis in Montreal, in sharp contrast to their social class position in Bangladesh, are in the lower socioeconomic stratum of the Canadian society. Ironically many came here to earn a better living.

Life and the life style of Bangladeshi Montrealers is a continuation of life patterns brought from Bangladesh. The family structure and values, the interactional patterns, the cultural practices and celebrations all reflect their Bangladeshi backgrounds. The family structure of Bangladeshis in Montreal can be characterized as male-headed, two parent families. Some live in extended families with aged parents, or in-laws. High value is placed on family, marriage, and socialization practices, respect for parents and the elderly, collective concern above individual interest, hospitality, close ties with relatives, friends and neighbours, success in education and career, and economic solvency. Adherence to language, culture, and tradition is of extreme importance to this people.

Now that the Bangladeshi community has been introduced, a few words about the present study. This research idea was conceived as I completed my graduate course work and decided to study whether immigration brought any changes in mass media preferences among the Bangladeshi immigrants in Montreal. I discussed my intention with one of my professors. Her immediate response was, "why don't you focus on the Bangladeshi community press in Montreal ?" I thought about it, and decided, why not. On however small a scale, I realized, such research would contribute to the existing knowledge of the community's media. Moreover, I believed that it would give me a wonderful opportunity to get to know the Bangladeshi people here, who were not known to me personally, even as I felt an attachment to them.

At this point, the notion of 'imagined communities' struck me. Only a few years ago, I had encountered this amazing conception of Benedict Anderson. The concept provoked me and I wanted to explore it further. The urge became stronger after I started working as a sub-editor in one of the locally published Bangladeshi newspapers, and discovered a disproportionate focus and emphasis in the newspaper's content. Rather than covering the local Bangladeshi community, or the larger Canadian society, the content was overwhelmingly oriented towards life and events in Bangladesh. Letters and phone-calls from readers confirmed that they wanted more Bangladesh related items, and the newspaper fed their interests. I watched the news editor sift through the incoming material, and give top priority to Bangladeshi items. I wondered why. It was then that the connection between 'imagined communities', ethnic identity, and the immigrant press began to make sense to me. The result was this research.

## INTRODUCTION

The nature and role of the ethnic press are as diverse as the ethnic group it serves. Both ethnic press and ethnic groups reflect each other...Both periodically gauge tensions between ethnicity and assimilation.

(Lubomyr and Wynar, in Flores-Meiser, 1982, p. 85)

By choice or compulsion, people have been on the move for a long time, and so have their movements drawn significant scholarly attention over the years. The issues around immigrant communities have assumed all the more importance at the present time, when renewed theorizing in various social science disciplines stresses that for immigrants, refugees, and exiles, homeland or community is largely a moral location - an imagined state of being.

Cultural groups may have found a means, with the ethnic mass media, to realize the age-old dream of transcending time and space. The ethnic mass media, by providing exposure and attachment to a culture's shared values, norms, and interests, has facilitated ethnics/ immigrants to unite into a perceived community. In both intellectual discourse and in lay consciousness, newspapers have been viewed as a unique integrative force because of their ability to define and reinforce community affiliations and identity. Three conceptualizations of community can be located in previous newspaper research: community as a place with a distinguishable boundary

from other places; community as a social structure with a collection of institutions; and community as a process, with emphasis on participation in its events. Attention to the cognitive and affective dimensions of community relations is a recent development in the field which acknowledges that an individual can be tied to a community without physically being there or being involved in its institutions, but by identification and a strong sense of belonging (Stamm and Fortini-Campbell, 1983: pp.5-9). The new focus allows this study to explore how consumption of the Montreal Bangla language press enables readers to construct, in their imaginations, homeland and community, and how that has an effect on the perpetuation of their ethnic identity.

Despite forecasts of its inevitable demise the immigrant press- an institution begun in the 19th century- continues to play a significant role in the lives of different cultural groups. The immigrant press is not only a reflection of the feelings, dispositions, culture, and traditions of ethnic group members, it also provides ethnics and immigrants with a source of information and interpretation of events and issues in the ancestral country and the ethnic community, a means of socialization into the ethnic culture, and a forum for discussions and the exchange of ideas on issues of community concern. Most importantly, it contributes to the continuity of



a community's distinctive identity. In this context, an examination of immigrant communities and their use of the immigrant press- as a group's means to perceive and express ethnicity, its typical patterns of consumption and interpretation of community newspapers, and the relationship between the two- is an exercise worth undertaking.

#### **AREA OF STUDY:**

At a basic level, this is a study of the relationship between the use of the ethnic mass media and the maintenance of ethnic identity. The particular focus is on the use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press in Montreal and its impact on the preservation of its readers' ethnicity. The questions asked are: 1) what are the means through which readers develop and retain their feelings of ethnic identity; 2) how, and to what extent, do they use their ethnic language newspapers; for what purposes; and 3) how does their reading shape their understanding of, and preferences in, ethnicity.

This study considers the Bangladeshi immigrant press to be a significant means, and a catalyst, for our Montreal readers to perceive and maintain their ethnic identity. The principal assumption is that the extent to which readers use their immigrant press, and the purposes for which

they use it, would be related to their ethnic identity. It is argued that those who make greater use of the Bangladeshi newspapers will have a stronger ethnic identification. The study suggests that frequent exposure to the immigrant press results in the periodic affirmation and maintenance of its readers' ethnicity.

The Bangladeshi immigrant press is viewed in informational, interpretive, socialization, and entertainment roles. By carrying news from Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi community in Montreal, by interpreting events and issues from the ethnic perspective, by socializing readers into the Bangladeshi culture and heritage, and by offering recreational material, the Bangla newspapers are likely to instill a sense of ethnic distinctiveness in their readers and inspire the preservation of their ethnic culture and identity.

#### **ISSUES NOT COVERED IN THE STUDY:**

In studying the ethnic continuity of the Bangladeshi readers, one could examine how the position of the Bangladeshis in the Canadian economic and political system has an impact on their ethnic perceptions. Studying ethnicity within a political/ economic framework would certainly be an important line of inquiry, but it is a completely different intellectual

course from the one this study has taken. I have not attempted to address issues of the distribution of political and economic power in Canadian society, majority-minority relations, access to different avenues of the society, prejudice or discrimination. Nor have I tried to analyze the implications of the Canadian government's policies on immigration and multiculturalism for the respondents' ethnic identity perceptions. Rather, the intention has been to remain focused on how the respondents' understanding of ethnicity is revealed in, and shaped by, the nature and extent of their use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press.

### **CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF THE STUDY:**

Two major concepts which have guided this dissertation are that

- 1) ethnicity is a mental construct which is symbolically imagined; and
- 2) that perception and maintenance of ethnicity is a communication process. This study considers the origins of ethnic identity to be located in the minds of people. It argues that one can imaginatively construct communities, including ethnic communities, without physically inhabiting them, and without having any direct interaction with other members. An imagined ethnic linkage is possible through perceived identification with a group and its shared symbols, which provide a feeling of identity and

group belonging. Consequently, each ethnic group can be distinguished by the symbolic means by which its members come to perceive themselves as a community, and how they maintain that sense of groupness. The readers of the Montreal Bangladeshi press are viewed as perceiving and maintaining their ethnic linkage through exposure to the culture's shared symbols. The applicability of the use of the notion of symbolic ethnicity in this research is supported by the observations of social scientists (Roberts and Clifton, 1982; Mackie and Brinkerhoff, 1984) that the notion is important to an understanding of different aspects of ethnicity in the Canadian context.

The present study also sees ethnic identity as being perceived, expressed, and maintained through communication. It contends that continuity of ethnic identity can be understood by investigating the patterns and extent of ethnic group members' involvement in ethnic interpersonal and mass communication activities, and its effect on their ethnic perceptions and preferences. In relation to this study, I would argue that our readers experience, portray, and retain their ethnicity through their interactions and affiliations with the Bangladeshi community, and through their consumption of the community's mass media. I emphasize their use of the Bangla language press, which is taken as an indicator of the

perpetuation of their ethnic culture, traditions, and identity. This dissertation suggests that the use of the immigrant newspapers strengthens its readers' ethnic cultural patterns and reinforces their ethnic identity.

Along with viewing ethnic identity maintenance as a communication process, the communication relevance of this dissertation is also apparent in its reference to the readers' shared systems of communication - involving their shared patterns of information processing, as well as their shared values, norms, and institutional practices. Through this focus, this study connects culture and communication, to elucidate how a culture's unique conceptual codes and perspectives are shaped by its members' exposure to, and understanding of, messages mediated by their group media. Furthermore, this study clarifies how the (ethnic) mass media, through its selective focus of content, and through interpretation from a group's perspective, strengthens their audience's affective dispositions, which in this study are the feelings about, and preferences in, ethnicity.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

A principal goal of this study has been to explore the applicability of the notion of 'imagined communities', as a conceptual device, to the study of ethnic groups. A second motivation was to examine how symbolic

ethnicity is experienced and enacted in a given social situation for a given ethnic group. To attain this objective, I have explored why and how the respondents' understanding and practice of ethnicity, and their ethnic affiliations and identity, are symbolic in nature; and, which symbols assume significance for their perceptions of ethnic belonging.

This dissertation was also intended to be an examination of the typical mass media practices of the Bangladeshis in Montreal. However, the central interest has been to illustrate, through a focus on uses of the local Bangla newspapers, the role which the Montreal Bangladeshi press plays in strengthening ethnic group affiliations and identity of its readers.

#### **CHAPTER OUTLINE:**

Chapter 1: Traditions of Research on Immigrant Press, presents a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on ethnicity, ethnic maintenance, ethnic mass media, reading, and newspaper reading. The concepts, major conclusions, the levels and units of analysis in the referenced literature are analyzed to illustrate how this dissertation is in accord with, or departs from the existing work on the issue.

Chapter 2: Methodology of Ethnicity, describes the sample, discusses the kinds of data that were collected, and the methods of data-

collection and analysis pursued in this research, to examine the relationship between the use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press and the perpetuation of its readers' ethnic identity.

Chapter 3: Imagined Communities and Fond Imagining: The Readers of the Bangladeshi Immigrant Press, argues that the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press constitute an imagined community, and that their ethnicity is perceived and retained through an attachment to a common body of ethnic symbols. Based on data obtained from interviews with the respondents, it identifies the ethnic symbols which give them coherence and continuity as an ethnic community.

Chapter 4: Vehicle of Imagining: The Bangladeshi Immigrant Press in Montreal, is based on the argument that ethnic identity maintenance is a communication process, and that greater ethnicity is related with frequent use of the ethnic mass media. The chapter offers an analysis of the content of the Montreal Bangla language newspapers, and how they are used by the readers. The objectives of the newspapers and their choice and treatment of content are juxtaposed with the readers' reported reading motivations and preferences, to discern clues about the possible impact of the immigrant press on its readers' ethnic identity.

Chapter 5: Communication of Imagination: Uses of the Bangladeshi Immigrant Press and Ethnic Maintenance of its Readership, integrates the analysis of the content of the Bangla language press with its readers' responses, and explores the association between the use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press and the maintenance of its readers' (imagined) ethnic community. The main argument in this chapter that the impact of the immigrant press on the readers' ethnic identity is contingent on their frequent consumption of the press, and on their acceptance of its preferred understanding of ethnicity. The devices which the immigrant press uses to promote ethnicity are identified, and the extent to which its understanding of ethnicity is in accord with the readers' ethnic perceptions is explored. The relationship between the frequency of exposure to the immigrant press and the retention of different aspects of the readers' ethnicity is also examined.

After Thoughts, the concluding chapter, discusses the theoretical contributions of this dissertation and its implications and limitations. It summarizes the study's various findings, discusses emerging trends in the data, offers certain suggestions to Montreal's Bangladeshi press, and indicates possible directions for future research in the area.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE TRADITION OF RESEARCH ON IMMIGRANT PRESS

... foreign-language press as an expression of ethnic diversity with distinct social and political goals cannot be expressed by enumerations of newspaper titles or presentation of statistical data concerning the growth or decline of such a press...  
(Hanno Hardt, 1989: p. 117)

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION:

Because of the everyday reality of ethnic diversity and immigration, one of the important concerns in mass communication research is the role which the ethnic mass media can play in creating and sustaining ethnic identities. Existing scholarly work in the field indicates the issue is far from settled. It is often debated in current theoretical discourse. Of concern are the definition and approach to ethnicity and ethnic maintenance and the role of the ethnic mass media in ethnic maintenance. The debate, and the insights and approaches emerging from it, has provided a useful tradition of research and a diverse array of conceptual tools. I shall present an overview of literature on ethnicity, ethnic maintenance, and the ethnic mass media in this chapter. There will also be references to studies on reading and newspaper reading. The studies discussed here vary in terms of conceptual angles and the levels of analyses. Nevertheless, they converge

in some broad themes. I have organized the literature in those broad areas such as i. symbolic ethnicity, ii. ethnic persistence, and iii. uses of the ethnic mass media and ethnic persistence. The fourth area which I present in this literature review, under the heading reading and newspaper reading, includes two sets of studies: one which discusses the decoding of mass mediated texts; and the second, which offers insights into the determinants of newspaper reading. Although these studies do not address the issues of ethnicity or ethnic mass media use, they have been useful for the present research.

## **1.2 SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY:**

### **1.2.1 CURRENT CONCERNS IN ETHNICITY RESEARCH:**

Over time connotations of ethnic identity have changed, from implying a negative/ minority/ non-mainstream status, to something desirable and voluntary (Thomas K. Fitzgerald, 1992:p. 115). Conceptions of ethnic identity (as well as other social identities such as race, class, or gender) as homogeneous, unified and fixed essences, defined as a sort of 'collective true self' with stable, unchanging frames of reference and meaning, have been replaced by a more flexible conceptualization which

looks at its inner differences, contradictions, and fragmentation (Stuart Hall, 1991:pp. 44-45, 69).

Currently the focus of ethnicity research is on the symbolic dimension of ethnic identification. Many researchers agree that ethnic identities are more symbolic than real. Ethnicity is now viewed as a socially constructed identity, rather than as a matter of tradition and heritage. More emphasis is placed on feelings of ethnicity than its knowledge or practice. One crucial aspect of this new conception of ethnicity challenges the space-based logic of identity, upon which conventional accounts had rested.

Lisa Malkki's (1992) essay, **"National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees"**, based on her research among the Hutu refugees of Burundi living in Tanzania, is a welcome corrective to the common sense assumptions of identity. Malkki draws attention to the taken-for-granted conceptions of identity as reflected in everyday language, nationalist discourses, and scholarly studies. She challenges the naturalization of the link between people and space and calls for its re-theorizing. This requires:

...exploring widely shared commonsense ideas about roots, nations, and national identities. It means asking... what it means to be rooted in place. Such commonsense ideas of

soils, roots, and territory is built into everyday language and often also into scholarly work, but their obviousness makes them elusive as objects of study. (pp. 25-6)

Malkki finds the view that the world is a discrete spatial divisioning of territories, and that people are rooted in place, or that they derive their identity from that rootedness, irrational (p. 34). She argues that boundaries and their transgression do not necessarily imply corporeal movement of people. She explains the complexity of ways in which people construct, remember, and lay claim to places as nations or homelands, which makes the space-people link problematic. The author maintains that the implausibility of place-community link and the invention of new forms of identity and solidarity is more clearly evident in the case of those who cross borders, such as refugees, immigrants, exiles, and expatriates (p. 25). She labels identity as a 'troubled conceptual vehicle', and suggests it should be thought of as "mobile, processual, partly self-constructed, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories et cetera" (p. 37). To Malkki, to link identity only to space is, "to blind oneself to the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them" (p. 38).

There are some comparable arguments in Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson's (1992) article, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference". These researchers question the conventional accounts of identity which are based on the idea of space as a neutral grid, on which issues of cultural difference and societal organization are inscribed.

Representation of space in social sciences are remarkably dependent on images of break, rupture, and disjunction. The distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is based upon a seemingly unproblematic division of space, based on the fact that they occupy "naturally" discontinuous spaces. The premise of discontinuity forms the starting point from which to theorize contact, conflict, and contradiction between cultures and societies. (p. 6)

Gupta and Ferguson insist on the disjunction of space and culture for those who live a life of border crossings, such as migrant workers, transnational businessmen, and more so for those who cross borders more or less permanently, such as immigrants, refugees, exiles, and expatriates (p. 7). They suggest an examination of the structure of feelings that bind space, time, and memory in the imagining of communities (p. 8). The authors argue for a re-conceptualization of community and identity because, mass movements of people, sophisticated communication

technology, and the transnational flow of culture and entertainment in today's world have rendered any strictly bounded sense of community/identity untenable:

It has enabled the creation of forms of solidarity and identity that do not rest on an appropriation of space where contiguity and face-to-face contact are paramount... It is this that forces us to re-conceptualize fundamentally ... community, solidarity, identity, and cultural difference (p. 9).

The researchers emphasize that issues of collective identity have taken on a special character, and community now refers less to a bounded place than to an imagined state of being. Gupta and Ferguson note that the point at which the assumed natural connection between place and culture becomes blurred, "it becomes most visible how displaced people cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities..." (p.10). They see remembered places as powerful symbolic anchors for displaced people, such as immigrants, for the imagined construction of their communities (p. 11).

I have taken up Malkki and Gupta and Ferguson's general observation that the identity-place link is implausible in present day reality, especially in the case of immigrants; and that their attachment to

place (homeland), and perceptions of communities may be largely imagined. These researchers provided this dissertation a broad sense of how to go about thinking of the ethnicity of the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. But a thorough understanding of community as an imagined state of being, and of the role of the newspaper in its construction, was obtained from Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities'.

### 1.2.2 IMAGINED COMMUNITIES:

To date the most extensive scholarly work on imagined communities is Anderson's Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983). Written in the context of the 1978-79 armed conflicts in Indochina, this landmark book focuses on issues of nationality and nationhood. In tracing the evolution of thoughts on nationhood and nationality in various societies since the end of the 18th century, the author discusses how the nation was imagined, why and how its meaning changed over time, and the forms of imagining a nation (p. 4).

Anderson (1991) offers a working definition of a nation, describing it as "an imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". In his words:

It is imagined because members of even the smallest nation never know, see, hear from their fellow members, yet imagine themselves in communion...the nation is imagined as limited because each has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations... It is imagined as sovereign because... nations dream of being free... It is imagined as a community because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. (pp. 6-7).

It is a deep sense of fraternity or 'horizontal comradeship' which enables the imagining of communion. Anderson argues that identities of groups formed as such are constructed and imagined, rather than real. He defines such groups as 'imagined communities'. He states that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined"(p. 7).

The author considers nationalism a "cultural artefact of a particular kind", and argues that its evolution must be examined in the context of the cultural systems out of which it emerged. The cultural systems which Anderson mentions are religious communities, dynastic realms, popular linguistic communities, and modern-day nation-states (p. 12). Anderson believes that communities can be distinguished by their 'form of imagining', or the means that each community uses to structure its imagination, and represent itself (p. 7). He discusses the "forms of



imagining" of communities which have preceded the nation-state, and identifies causes that led to their decline.

In his account of the genesis of nationalism Anderson refers to several forms of representation which inspired imagining of the nation. He notes that during the Middle Ages communities came to be imagined through sacred language, written script and perceived divinity of rulers. Other elements of representation included reliefs and stained glass windows of churches, paintings, sermons, tales and relics. For modern nation states, language in the form of poetry, prose, fiction; music, art, national anthems, census and map are relevant. Anderson reiterates that it was print technology that made it possible for people to think of themselves, and to relate to others in the imagined community of the nation (p. 36).

Print laid the foundation for nationhood, Anderson (1983) explains, by enabling communication and exchange between people speaking the same language, without the requirement that they be acquainted. The availability of the ideas of forbearers in print helped build a sense of historical continuity. Besides, print created a language of power- a medium of ideology, politics, and administration (p. 45). All of these worked to inspire and develop a national consciousness.

The mass media are, in Anderson's opinion, one of the most powerful mechanisms for the imagining of nations. He notes that throughout history books and newspapers have served as the two principal means for representing nations. This dissertation is concerned with newspapers, so the discussion will be limited to the author's account of this medium. The imagined linkage brought about by newspapers, Anderson says, derives from two sources. First, the juxtaposition of events occurring at different places on the same date suggests that the characters/events belong to the collective body of readers. This implies an imagined community. Second, the readers perceive newspaper reading as a mass ceremony, and imagine simultaneous consumption/ participation by others. This enables them to think of themselves as part of a community of readers with whom they have no direct interaction (pp. 34-35). Besides, watching others consume the same newspaper in different locations - be it the subway, residential neighbourhoods, shops, work, or school - reassures the readers about the everyday reality of their imagined world (p. 36).

An analytically similar discussion comes in Anthony P. Cohen's work. Both his book The Symbolic Construction of Community (1985) , and his essay "Of Symbols and Boundaries, or Does Ertie's Great Coat Hold the Key?" (1986), provide an argument for the centrality of the

symbolic dimension of community as its defining characteristic. To Cohen the idea of community itself is symbolic, and so are there symbolic constituents of communities (1985: p. 14, 19). The author states that community is a symbolic construct, a matter of sentiment and conceptualization:

The community as experienced by its members does not consist in social structure, or in 'the doing' of social behaviour. It inheres in 'the thinking' about it. Thus community is a symbolic, rather than a structural construct.(p. 98)

Cohen's definition sees community as implying a feeling of belonging and identity and a sense of distinction, which are perceived and expressed through the creation of boundaries (1985: p. 15). He contends that these boundaries are symbolic rather than physical, and that they exist in the minds of individuals (p. 12). Community boundary, and therefore community consciousness, is maintained through the manipulation of its symbols (p. 15). He perceives communities as repositories of symbols, ranging from dress and football teams to war memorials, which distinguish one community from another, and provide community members with conceptual tools to make meaning (p. 16, 19). The shared symbols enable

the sharing of conceptual forms and provide a means for community members' perception of likeness among themselves and their difference from other groups. The perception of resemblance forms the basis of their identity and solidarity (p. 114). It is through exposure to shared symbols that individuals become socialized in a culture and acquire the values and sentiments of a group attachment (p. 15).

Anderson's general discussion of the evolution of nationalism and nationhood, or of the influence of different sociocultural processes in its emergence, is of little importance to my research. Most significant for my purpose is his conception of 'imagined communities', which forms the central theme of this dissertation. This concept finds its parallel in Cohen's views about the symbolic construction of communities. Two major arguments are made by these authors. One, that all communities, race, class, ethnicity, gender-based, can be viewed as imagined constructions, and are not necessarily marked by direct face-to-face interaction. Two, that attachment to a shared body of symbols enables individuals to imagine themselves as communities. Anderson discusses the sense of fraternity and historical continuity, while Cohen mentions a sense of belonging and distinction, which are the catalysts for the creation of communities. By integrating the conceptions of Anderson and Cohen, I have considered the

readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press to be an imagined ethnic community as constituted by their exposure to ethnic symbols. I suggest that the respondents' belief in a common ancestry, their attachment to a shared culture and its symbols, and to a common system of communication including shared ways of perceiving, interpreting and understanding, enable the construction of their imagined community.

Both Anderson and Cohen view symbols as marks of a community's distinction, which they maintain, provide the basis for its members' identity and solidarity. This observation has been applied to the present study to identify the symbols or forms which are considered relevant by the readership of the Montreal Bangladeshi newspapers for imagining themselves as a community. Anderson underscores the role of newspapers in the imagining of communities. He says that newspapers provide the imagined linkage by creating an image of communion among the otherwise unconnected readers. This view applies to the sample of Bangladeshi readers who are not necessarily connected by any network of direct interpersonal relationship, but who share an imaginatively constructed ethnic identity. One important tool providing for their imagined connection is their immigrant press. Anderson's discussion of the ways in which newspapers enable the imagining of nation permitted me to explore

how uses of the immigrant press mediates its readers' ethnic perceptions and behaviour.

### 1.2.3 SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY:

The concept of ethnicity has been with us for a long time, and is defined in various ways. Rather than reviewing the various interpretations of ethnicity, I shall discuss the perspectives behind its definition. John Edward's Language, Society, and Identity (1985) has been found relevant for this purpose. It discusses the relationship between ethnic language retention and ethnic identity. Edwards (pp. 5-10) identifies four broad themes underlying the definition of ethnicity. First, there are two views of ethnic groups. One includes the dominant group in a society as ethnic; the other equates ethnicity with minority groups, and is concerned with power and status relationship between the majority and the minority. Current work on ethnicity suggests that the ethnic-minority link is not an essential one, but rather that it is reflective of power and status relationships (p. 5).

The significance of this point is also available in Werner Sollors' Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture (1986), which focuses on the conflict between hereditary and self-proclaimed definitions of ethnicity in American society. Sollors discusses two types of definitions of ethnicity, one is inclusive, and includes the dominant group.

The other excludes the dominant group and views ethnic groups as separated from the mainstream culture (pp. 24-5). Sollors calls the exclusion of the dominant group from the definition of ethnicity 'ethnicity minus one.'

A similar view can be found in W.W.Isajiw's essay "**Definitions of Ethnicity**" (1980), which examines the definitions of ethnicity in several sociological and anthropological studies and identifies the variables included in those definitions. Isajiw's definition sees ethnic groups as having either majority or minority status in the greater society (p. 20). I agree with these authors that ethnicity is not necessarily a minority phenomenon, and that ethnic communities can be either the majority or the minority in a given society. This is not to deny that marginal status may limit an ethnic group's access to opportunities in the host society, which may, in turn, influence its members' ethnic identity perceptions.

The second perspective revealed in the definitions of ethnicity is ethnic culture. While earlier studies focused on a group's cultural content, attention is currently being paid to the concept of group boundaries. Frederik Barth makes a striking distinction between cultural content and group boundaries in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference (1969). Barth perceives that the

essence of ethnicity lies in ethnic group boundary, which marks off one group from another. These boundaries, he says, are mental, cultural, and moral, rather than physical. The author argues that the cultural content of ethnic groups may change, but the boundaries themselves may outlive the content (p. 14). Two well-known authors (Edwards, 1985: p. 10; and W.W.Isajiw, 1980: p. 23) who hold the same view note that persistence of ethnicity is not necessarily related to the continuation of traditional ethnic cultural patterns, but to a persistent sense of ethnic group boundary.

Isajiw's discussion, in **"Definitions of Ethnicity"** (1980), draws attention to the implication of the content-boundary distinction for studying ethnicity of second or subsequent generations of ethnics who have been socialized into the host society, and yet have developed an attachment to their ancestral culture. The attachment, Isajiw explains, is not to the entire ethnic culture, but to selected aspects of it.

Eugeen E. Roosens pursues the issue in Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis (1989), which is based on field studies identifying the similarities and differences between different ethnic groups in relation to the ways in which they form and maintain ethnic identity. Roosens observes that group boundaries which make a group distinct to itself and to others, are constituted not by the entire ethnic culture, but by selected



cultural features which members ascribe to themselves and consider relevant (p. 12). He further notes that ethnic persistence may preclude continuity of the traditional ethnic culture (p. 152). In a similar vein, Glazer and Moynihan (in Sollors, 1986: p. 35) maintain that ethnicity is less a matter of cultural content and more of the emotional significance attached to it. They reason that even though there may be changes to the ethnic cultural content, its emotional significance may persist. Rather than focusing on cultural content, George De Vos (1975) suggests that ethnicity studies must closely examine the why's and how's of ethnic boundary maintenance. De Vos voices this concern in **"Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation"**, an essay which discusses how ethnicity can be used for expressive and instrumental purposes in a pluralist society, and how it may or may not contribute to social instability (p. 8). Focusing on either boundary or content is, in my view, inadequate for studying the symbolic nature of ethnicity. Rather, one should look at both ethnic group boundaries and cultural content. A focus on both allows an examination of the cultural content which changes, and that which persists, as well as the ways in which boundaries are maintained. The boundary perspective of ethnicity has enabled this research to identify the selected cultural features

which the respondents find relevant for maintaining their sense of ethnic boundary.

With the exceptions of Isajiw (1981), Anderson and Frideres (1981), and Driedeger (1989), few researchers are explicit about what ethnic culture entails. The factors which the said authors have included in their definition of ethnic culture are : ethnic language use, family and marriage practices, choice of friends, neighbourhood, dress, home decor, art, dance, music, food, festivals, leisure activities and membership in ethnic religious or voluntary organizations. Their research has helped me to identify the cultural factors which the readership of the Bangladeshi immigrant press consider important for their understanding of ethnicity. In this dissertation, ethnic culture refers to ethnic language, family practices and values, endogamy, food, shopping, festivals, and contacts with, and visits to, the home country.

The third feature surfacing in the definitions of ethnicity is the objective versus subjective view of ethnicity. An elaboration of this distinction and its implications for studying ethnicity, is offered by Isajiw in two of his works- "**Definitions of Ethnicity**" (1980), and Ethnic Identity Retention (1981). The former was mentioned earlier. The latter is a study on ethnic identity retention across three generations among

different ethnic groups in Toronto. In the objective approach ethnicity is seen as given, as an inheritance. Ethnic groups are viewed as "distinct social units, independent of feelings of their member" (Isajiw, 1980: pp. 15-7), and defined in terms of race, geography, language, religion, and observable behavioral patterns including use of ethnic language, practice of ethnic traditions, ethnic friendship, endogamy, and participation in ethnic organization (Edwards, 1985: p. 7). The subjective approach argues that ethnicity is a mental construction and focuses on belief in a common descent, feelings of group belonging- a sense of identity with group members and difference from others outside the group, self-identification and identification by others, and the perception and expression of these through symbolic means (Edwards, 1985: p. 8; Isajiw, 1980: p. 15). Isajiw suggests an integration of the two approaches. Any study of ethnicity, he maintains, should investigate both the observable characteristics that distinguish one ethnic group from another, and the subjective sense of belonging (1981: pp. 2-3; 1980, pp. 15-17). Other ethnicity scholars (Anderson and Frideres, 1981; Edwards, 1985) have also emphasized a synthesis of these approaches. To explain the necessity of an integrated approach, Isajiw (1980: pp. 2-3) distinguishes between observable behavioural patterns and attitudes and feelings; while Sollors (1986: p. 35)

notes the difference between knowledge, motivation, and performance dimensions of ethnicity. An integration of the objective and subjective perspectives considers a belief in a common ancestry, a feeling of belonging, self-identification, and identification by others on the basis of certain cultural symbols as the central features of the new ethnicity.

This dissertation endorses a combination of the objective and subjective characteristics of ethnicity. I have done so in this research to identify the external (or objective), and internal (or subjective) aspects of the respondents' ethnicity. The subjective view allowed me to perceive the sample of Bangladeshi readership as imaginatively conceived and to identify the kinds of feelings which contribute to their understanding and retention of ethnicity. Using the objective approach, I have explored the types of behaviour which the respondents engage in and consider to be important for maintaining their ethnicity. An examination of both self-identification and identification by others are equally important in ethnicity research. Because the focus of my dissertation is ethnic self-perception and self-affirmation of the respondents, there is little scope for me to pursue the external definition aspect.

The fourth factor emerging in definitions of ethnicity is the debate about whether ethnicity should be viewed as given or constructed. Sollors

(1986: p. 6) uses the terms 'descent' and 'consent', to refer to the traditional and current views of ethnicity in scholarly discourse. The traditional view was descent-based, which associated ethnicity primarily with race, and which emphasized biological features, hereditary qualities and entitlements. Religion, geography, and nationality were also considered as part of the basis of ethnicity. In the consent definition ethnicity is a cultural construction, a symbolic affiliation, a matter of beliefs and feelings, and ethnic identity is a matter of voluntary choice (p. 7). Recent scholarly work stresses the need for investigation into the constructed, processual, variable, situational, and voluntary nature of ethnicity (Thomas K. Fitzgerald, 1992:p. 115). Ethnicity is now being viewed as a mental construct, and the emphasis weighed towards the ethnic group members' subjective identification rather than to their practice of ethnic culture or involvement in ethnic institutions. Of concern are their shared perceptions and feelings which derive from a culturally transmitted system of symbols and norms (Collier, Schneider, Geertz in Hecht et al., 1993; Sollors, 1986).

The principal features of this new ethnicity is most eloquently captured in Herbert Gans' notion of 'symbolic ethnicity' which is presented in his seminal essay **"Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups**

**and Cultures in America"** (1979), a study on the ethnicity of third generation European immigrants in the United States. Gans notes a new kind of ethnic involvement at the present times, where ethnics resort more to symbols than to the practice of ethnic culture, or participation in ethnic institutions. As a consequence, Gans says, their ethnicity has become a symbolic ethnicity which, he predicts, may persist for a long time (p. 193). The point of departure in Gans' formulation is that modern ethnicity works more by external symbols, by feeling of identity, rather than by actual cultural ability, knowledge or performance. Discussing European immigrants in the United States, he states that:

people are less and less interested in their ethnic cultures and organizations, and are instead more concerned with maintaining their ethnic identity, with the feeling of being Jewish, Italian, or Polish, and with finding ways of feeling and expressing that identity in suitable ways (p. 202).

There are three main aspects to Gans' interpretation of symbolic ethnicity: ethnicity is a symbolic construct; it depends more on feelings of identity, rather than on practice of ethnic culture; and perception/ expression of ethnicity involves attachment to, and the use of, ethnic symbols. The author views ethnicity as a mental construction, and believes

that people usually perceive their ethnic identity by affiliation with an abstract group rather than with an interacting group (p. 203).

Emphasis on the constructedness of ethnicity is typical of a number of authors. Edwards (1985:p. 8) views ethnicity as a presumed identity, a matter of belief in a common descent, a sense of groupness. Leo Driedeger subscribes to the same position, and his book The Ethnic Factor: Identity in Diversity (1989) studies the theoretical and empirical work on ethnic relations in Canada. He states that ethnic identification takes place when one believes one shares a common ancestry and sociocultural experiences with a group (p. 137). De Vos takes up the issue in **"Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation"** (1975) where the ethnic group is seen as "a self-perceived group of people who hold in common a set of traditions" (p. 9). In Life in an Urban Chassidic Community: Insulation and Proselytization (1972), a study on the maintenance of religious identity in the Chassidic community in Montreal, William Shaffir also stresses that ethnicity is an imagined concept. He views ethnic groups as being self-perceived groups, and their identity as imagined. The author explains that ethnic identity reflects how one imagines oneself in relation to an ethnic group, and also one's perception of how others within and without the group think of her/himself. Similarly Roosens (1989: p. 17) says that being

ethnic becomes possible when one sees oneself as a member of an ethnic group, and others recognize one as such.

Gans (1979: p. 203) considers that the feeling of identity and expression of that feeling are the primary ways of being ethnic. Symbolic ethnicity, he holds, is marked by a strong sense of ethnic identification, rather than active participation in an ethnic culture or organization (pp. 202-4).

This feeling of being ethnic has different labels for different scholars; they include peoplehood, 'consciousness of a kind', we-feeling, and sense of unity. Emphasizing the significance of the feeling of ethnicity, Edwards (1985: pp. 8,10) says that there is no essential mark of ethnicity other than of a persistent feeling of belonging among ethnic group members. The feeling of belonging derives more from the sharing of subjective identification with one's ethnic group, he explains, and less from the sharing of its objective characteristics. Emphasis on feelings of ethnicity is present in the work of two other researchers- Milton Gordon and Max Weber (in Driedeger, 1989: pp. 136-7). These scholars believe that a feeling of affinity and a shared sense of peoplehood arising from presumed shared cultural features and shared sociocultural experience, along with a shared belief in common ancestry are the defining features of ethnicity. For



Shaffir (1972: p. 74), ethnicity implies a feeling of unity, of being of a kind. This feeling of resemblance among ethnic group members develops from their sharing of common cultural patterns. Roosens (1989: p. 16) describes ethnicity as "how people feel themselves to be a people", adding that such feeling provides a sense of certainty in knowing one's origin and a sense of personal survival through the group's continuity over time. A feeling of continuity with the past and a sense of survival in the historical continuity of the group are also the defining characteristics of ethnicity for De Vos (1975: p. 17). Alan B. Anderson and James S. Frideres (1981: pp. 36, 48) maintain that a feeling of ethnicity arises from a belief in a common ancestry, and is manifested in allegiance to the ethnic language, culture, customs, and basic institutions. Their book Ethnicity in Canada: Theoretical Perspectives (1981) is a theoretical perspective on ethnic identity persistence and change, and ethnic relations and policies in Canadian society. Isajiw (1981) perceives ethnicity as a sense of commitment to one's ethnic group, a felt obligation towards one's group members, an attachment or associative preferences for them, and adherence to one's ethnic culture, language, customs, and values (p. 46).

Gans (1979: pp. 203-9) argues that because identity is the primary way of being ethnic, ethnicity takes on an expressive character which

depends largely on the uses of symbols. He describes ethnic symbols as comprising action or feeling, or both. By supplying feelings of belonging and pride, ethnic symbols become identity markers for ethnic group members. They create a "symbolic tradition" and enable people to fulfil their desire to "return to the imagined past" (pp. 205-8). Persistence of symbolic ethnicity depends, in his view, less on functioning groups or practised culture, and more on felt attachment to the ethnic symbols.<sup>1</sup> He considers ethnic symbols to be an indicator of persistence of ethnic groups. Gans' list of ethnic symbols includes, among other things, the ethnic mass media.

Other scholars (Isajiw, 1975: p. 134; Sollors, 1986: p. 15) also believe that, as abstract collectivities, ethnic groups require symbolic representation for the support of ethnic identity. Isajiw (in Herberg, 1989: p. 86) states that people experience ethnic belonging and express ethnic identity through symbolic means. To him, ethnic symbols are selected cultural patterns, which represent a group and give its members a sense of likeness and belonging. Roosens (1989: pp. 12, 19) also agrees that cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Implicit in this observation is the difference between the perception and practice of ethnicity. One example of the difference between practised culture and symbolic attachment to culture, in relation to this study, is that many respondents consider involvement in ethnic organizations to be an important means of ethnic continuity but not all of them are members.

traits that appear inherent to an ethnic group and make it distinctive to itself and outsiders can serve as differentiating symbols for that group. Shaffir (1972: p. 71, 171-2) subscribes to the same position. He understands ethnic symbols to be a set of common characteristics, which give ethnic group members a feeling of being alike and a sense of being distinct from other groups, and for which the group is viewed as distinct by outsiders. A number of factors have been listed by these authors, comprising both visible patterns and subjective identification, as possible symbols of ethnicity.

The notion of 'symbolic ethnicity' has enabled me to view the respondents' perception of ethnicity as symbolically constructed. I suggest that the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press experience their ethnic belonging through attachment to, and use of, a shared body of symbols. Although the concept of symbolic ethnicity is more commonly observed among third and subsequent generations, the fact that it may begin to emerge in the immigrant generation has been confirmed by scholars (Gans, 1979: p. 210). The application of this concept to this dissertation's immigrant majority sample is thus considered justified. The concept of symbolic ethnicity has informed this study to identify the symbols- both the visible markers of ethnicity, as well as subjective feelings- through

which the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press perceive, express, and maintain their ethnicity. The present study suggests that the prominent symbols in the respondents' understanding of ethnicity provide them with a feeling of identity and belonging, a sense of historical continuity, and a sense of distinction.

I have compared the symbols the relevant symbols to the respondents' ethnic perception in their present situation with the symbols which have historically shaped the evolution of Bangladeshi identity. An understanding of the historical depth of Bangladeshi identity is available in Craig Baxter's Bangladesh: A New Nation in an Old Setting (1984). Baxter traces the historic roots of Bangladesh and its people. In his account of Bangladesh's political history, from the occupation under British rule until its independence in 1971, the author discusses ethnic identity, language, history, politics, and charismatic leadership as the referents of its people's identity.

#### 1.2.4 ETHNIC SALIENCE:

One significant aspect of symbolic ethnicity is its voluntary nature. It may vary between individuals, groups, and situations. Some relevant illustrative material is presented in a paper by Marlene Mackie and Merlin B. Brinkerhoff, "Measuring Ethnic Salience" (1984), which is based on

a 1983 study about the level of ethnic identity salience in a sample of University of Calgary students. These authors introduce the concept of 'ethnic salience', which is defined as "the importance one attaches to being ethnic" (p. 117). According to Mackie and Brinkerhoff, social identities such as gender, class, occupation, religion and ethnicity are related to one another in a salience hierarchy, where some identities are considered more important by individuals than others (pp. 115-16). They observe that ethnicity is a variable whose salience is situational (p. 117). Individuals may perceive and express their ethnicity to different degree, and in different ways, under different situational contexts, depending on how important it is to them. The authors consider ethnic identity as one of several social identities at one's disposal, and that its felt importance depends on how significant it is to one as compared with other social identities.

The authors ask three types of questions to measure ethnic salience. These questions analyze three dimensions of ethnic identity: ethnic self-identification, relative salience of ethnic identity in comparison with other identities, and the centrality of ethnic identity in one's life and decision-making. Mackie and Brinkerhoff's questions on ethnic self-definition used a categorical placement approach, where half the informants chose from

given alternatives of identification and the other half were allowed free response regarding their ethnic self-perception. In the social identities approach respondents chose from a list of given social identities the one(s) they considered most important. The ethnic salience scale, by giving respondents different response alternatives, measured how important ethnicity was in their lives, and the extent to which it influenced their decision-making. Finally, these authors asked the informants to what extent they agreed with the following statement; that without ethnicity their lives would be meaningless (pp. 121-22).

Mackie and Brinkerhoff's study found that ethnicity matters more to females than to males, to working class respondents than to middle class respondents, to those whose place of birth is outside North America than for those born there, and to those whose ethnic group is less acceptable on the social distance scale (p. 126).

The notion of ethnic salience is quite useful for understanding symbolic ethnicity. The focus on ethnic self-identification in Mackie and Brinkerhoff's discussion of ethnic salience captures the notion of symbolic ethnicity- that it is primarily a feeling of being ethnic and an expression of that feeling through symbols. By pointing out individual differences in the perception of ethnic salience, these authors have aided this study in

identifying the factors which cause such variance among the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, and to determine those for whom ethnic identity is most or least salient. I have explored the relationship between the differences in the readers' perceived ethnic salience and their use of the immigrant press. The implications of individual differences in perceived ethnic salience for the readers' ethnic maintenance has also been explored. Mackie and Brinkerhoff's conception provided the background for the present study to view ethnicity as one of the categories of social identities available to the readers of the Bangla language press, and to compare their felt-importance of ethnicity and other social identities. I have adopted their measures for ethnic salience and their questionnaire to examine the respondents' perceived salience of ethnic identity. Overall, Mackie and Brinkerhoff's observations have a partial applicability for this research because their study does not refer to the use of ethnic mass media or its relation to ethnic salience.

#### **1.2.5        METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY:**

All the social sciences appear to have contributed to the study of ethnicity. Different theoretical approaches observable in each discipline have shaped the methodology, data analysis, interpretation, and the

conclusions in various ethnicity studies (Anderson and Frideres, 1981: pp. 5,7). Driedeger (1989) provides a useful framework of theoretical orientations in studying ethnicity. He uses Dashefsky's four-fold classification to provide an understanding of the principal research directions in ethnic studies. The four frameworks are: sociocultural, interactionist, group dynamicist, and psychoanalytic. The first two are of sociological orientation and use field study, survey research, and sociohistorical analysis. The latter two are psychological and basically depend on experimental and clinical studies (p. 138). As this dissertation is sociological in scope, it focuses on the two sociological approaches. This discussion is a prelude to describing the applicability of one of these approaches to the present study.

In the sociocultural approach social structure and culture are the major foci of ethnic identity. Individual behaviour is seen as shaped by, and occurring within, a social and cultural context. From this standpoint social systems define relational networks among individuals, and cultural systems define mutual expectations and norms. This approach is more concerned with the study of human behaviour than with their attitudes, perceptions, and self-conceptions (pp. 139-40). For two reasons this approach was not suitable for my research purposes. One, while this



approach considers ethnicity on the group level, my study explores it on the individual level. Two, the emphasis of this approach is on ethnic behaviour than on ethnic perceptions or self-conception; while the focus of my dissertation is on feelings of ethnicity. Although I have examined the respondents' ethnic behaviour, it has been as a means to understanding their ethnic perceptions.

The main assumption of the interactionist approach is that human beings live in a symbolic world, are stimulated by symbols, and stimulate others through symbols (p. 140). Studies using this approach usually look at the relationship between attitudes towards ethnic identification and actual activity based on those attitudes, ethnic self-affirmation, ethnic self-denial, and marginality (pp. 140-1). Driedeger (p. 140) states that the use of symbols makes it possible for people to think abstractly, to define themselves, and to create feelings and values. The interactionist approach has proved most suitable for my purposes because I am concerned with the symbolic means through which the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press imagine and maintain their ethnic belonging. This study views the Bangladeshi immigrant press both as an ethnic symbol in and of itself, and as a conveyor of other ethnic symbols. I have examined the extent to which exposure to the immigrant press and the ethnic symbols it presents

strengthens the readers' ethnic identity. The focus on ethnic self-affirmation in the interactionist tradition is another reason for its relevance to this study.

Two other sources (Haas and Shaffir, 1978; Mackie and Brinkerhoff, 1984) offer a useful understanding of the basic features of the interactionist approach. Three themes can be located in these works- selves and society are inseparable, identity is a mental construction, and symbolic communication shapes human perceptions, actions, and group formation. Mackie and Brinkerhoff (1984: p. 115) discuss a reciprocal relationship between selves (persons) and society. This view allows one to consider ethnicity as both an individual and collective phenomenon. Although the present research is concerned with analyzing ethnicity at the individual level, it has examined how collective aspects- such as norms and expectations about the practice of ethnic language, socialization practices in family and marriage- shape individual perceptions and preferences in ethnic patterns and identification.

The constructedness of identity is discussed in several papers. Haas and Shaffir's essay **"Symbolic Interaction Theory: Personal and Collective Definitions of Situations"** (1978), describes identity as constructed. These authors believe that identity develops depending on

how one imagines oneself and imagines other's image of oneself. They maintain that identity is made, remade, refined, negotiated, and reinforced through interaction with other people. Mackie and Brinkerhoff (1984: p. 115) hold a similar position in their essay on ethnic salience, stating that individuals define themselves, their situations, and interact, not in terms of what they actually are, but in terms of their conceptions of themselves and of one another. These researchers perceive self-definition and definition of others as an application of internalized positional designations including age, gender, class, race and ethnicity. To Mackie and Brinkerhoff, selves are differentiated into identities, and identities are ranked in a hierarchical order by individuals in terms of their perceived salience.

The theme of identity as a mental construction corresponds to this dissertation's view of the respondents' ethnic identity as imagined. I agree with the interactionist standpoint that identity is a self-designation, as well as a designation by others. However the focus of my study is an examination of ethnic self-identification and its affirmation, thus identification by others has not been explored. The interactionists' emphasis on the salience aspect of identity has allowed me to examine how salient ethnic identity is to the readers of the Montreal Bangladeshi press as compared with the other positional designations available to them.

According to Haas and Shaffir, it is symbolic communication which shapes human perceptions of self, of others, of their environment, defines their behaviour, enables the formation of groups, and provides the groups' continuity over time (pp. 4-5). The authors hold that by participating in symbolic structures and processes individuals acquire a culture's shared ways of thinking, believing, understanding, and behaving (p. 6). This study also argues that the respondents' ethnic identity is symbolically constructed and reinforced through their participation in various communication activities which provide exposure and attachment to the ethnic symbols of significance for them.

Despite the usefulness of the interactionist approach for this study, there is some apparent divergence between the two. Interactionists view identity construction and reinforcement as working in and through interaction with others. In this research the respondents constitute an imagined collectivity, rather than an interacting group. For this reason the applicability of the interactionist approach may be questioned. Although I do not consider the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press to be an interacting group, their socialization has been within a culture which comprises interacting individuals and groups. Their exposure to the shared symbols of the ethnic culture, I suggest, provides them with the means to

share in the culture's way of thinking and behaving. This enables them to define themselves and define and interpret the behaviour of others in the same way it is done by individuals in an interacting group.

### **1.3 ETHNIC PERSISTENCE:**

Conventional scholarly views on ethnicity were that it would disappear in the face of modern, urban, industrial conditions, and give way to religious, class-based, or some other universal identifications. Sollors (1986: p. 20-1) provides an apt description of these attitudes towards ethnic persistence using the labels of liberal, radical, and religious expectancies. These expectancies never materialized, and a major emphasis in current ethnicity literature is that ethnicity can and does persist.

**1.3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ETHNIC PERSISTENCE:** Until recently the basic approach to studying ethnic persistence was to examine the degree to which succeeding generations of ethnics had assimilated into the host society. It was assumed that immigrants would lose their own cultural traits, take on characteristics of the host culture and eventually become more similar to it. Not all scholars agree with this viewpoint. Alternative theoretical and empirical studies argue that there is evidence of continued ethnic differentiation, and

persistence of ethnic groups. In The Ethnic Factor: Identity in Diversity (1989), Driedeger presents a useful understanding of the theories of ethnic persistence. He identifies six positions: assimilation and amalgamation, modified assimilation and modified pluralism, and ethnic pluralism and conflict (pp. 34-48).

**Assimilation and Amalgamation.** These positions assume a gradual erosion of ethnic identity and a mingling and fusion of ethnic groups in the face of urbanization and rapid technological development. Robert Park is an advocate of the assimilationist view who predicts that whether immigrants take the route of accommodation and fusion or the route of conflict, the end result is that they lose their distinctive ethnic identity. Although this view has been dominant in scholarly discourse for some time, critics have pointed out that it was too deterministic. They argued that it does not account for the many facets of cultural change experienced by different ethnic groups, or the fact that not all groups lose their distinct identity. The amalgamation view, which implies that all groups will fuse into the culture of the host society, has its critics as well. It has been attacked for assuming that immigrant groups will have difficulty in resisting joining the majority group.

**Modified Assimilation and Modified Pluralism.** These theories predict that ethnic group members will retain ethnicity, but only partially or in a changed form. The modified assimilation theory, developed by Milton Gordon (1964), suggests that assimilation occurs in different ways, and at different rates. The author identifies two types of assimilation-cultural and structural. Cultural assimilation implies the immigrant group's acceptance of the larger society's language, dress, and cultural patterns. Structural assimilation involves the immigrants' entry into the social institutions of the host society. Gordon observes that more assimilation occurs in the spheres of economic, political, and educational institutions, than in the spheres of family, religion, or recreation.

The modified pluralism theory, developed by Glazer and Moynihan (1963), maintains that ethnic groups change over time, as do their ethnic cultural features. The content of their culture is affected by the host society, and that it transforms into something that is different from the traditional ethnic culture. This view suggests different degrees and areas of pluralism among different groups. It implies that while some may depend on language, culture and institutional completeness, others may rely on religion or family for ethnic maintenance.

**Pluralism and Ethnic Conflict.** The principal assumptions of these theories is that ethnic identity and solidarity can be maintained in a relatively unchanged form. Cultural pluralism theory is based on the principles of democracy, equality, and justice. It acknowledges that maintaining an ethnic way of life is a right which all people should have. It holds that many ethnic groups may have the willingness, creativity and resource to resist assimilation and to maintain their ethnic identification. The focus remains on maintenance of original, traditional ancestral culture in a relatively unchanged form. The theory of ethnic conflict is concerned with ethnic group differences and its consequences for ethnic group relations. It suggests that interaction of people with different values, norms and objectives, may lead to competition, confrontation and even hostility.

The assimilation and amalgamation perspective is unsuitable for my purposes because I am not concerned with whether, how, or to what extent the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press assimilate into the Canadian society. On the contrary, the concern is how they maintain their ethnicity, through which means, and how the immigrant press fits into the process of their ethnic retention. Nor has the ethnic pluralism and conflict approach proved useful, as I do not accept the viewpoint that traditional ethnic culture is maintained in an unchanged form. The position this



dissertation takes towards ethnic maintenance is in agreement with the Modified pluralism perspective. It has allowed me to view ethnic persistence as not necessarily related to the retention of the original culture in its totality, but to certain symbols of the culture. It also offered the understanding that the relevance of these symbols may vary from person to person, and over time. The modified pluralist view that different ethnic groups may maintain ethnicity to a different extent and through different means has allowed me to examine the symbols which are considered significant by the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, for their ethnic maintenance.

### **1.3.2 FOCUS ON ETHNIC IDENTITY:**

Current scholarly work on ethnic persistence is concerned with the retention or loss of ethnic identity in succeeding generations of ethnics. Isajiw (in Anderson and Frideres, 1981: p. 105) stresses the importance of approaching ethnic retention through a focus on ethnic identity:

... Intellectually the most fruitful way- if not the only way- to assess continuity between ethnic generations is in terms of the social psychological concept of ethnic identity... this is not to say that cultural patterns are not involved in the persistence of ethnicity across generations. Retention of any identity always requires some symbolic expression... Hence, the continuity between generations is provided not by the patterns themselves, but by the feeling of identity with the

people who have also attached meanings to the patterns, even if the meanings themselves are different.

Examining the retention or loss of ethnic identity is the most useful way because, Isajiw argues, it allows one the flexibility of not making any essential connection between the loss of ethnic identity and the adoption of host cultural attributes, or between the retention of ethnic identity and non-participation in the mainstream culture (1981: pp. 1-2).

Isajiw (1981) describes the retention of ethnic identity as the extent to which attributes characterizing an ethnic group are present in the immigrant and subsequent generations (p. 1). These attributes form two aspects of ethnic identity: the external and internal. For the external aspect, the author refers to behavioral patterns, while the internal aspect implies ethnic self-identification. He points out that the retention of ethnic identity does not necessarily mean the retention of both aspects, or all components of each aspect, to the same extent (pp. 2-3). In an earlier essay, **"The Process of Maintenance of Ethnic Identity: The Canadian Context"** (1975) Isajiw notes that ethnic continuity is dependant on the kind of commitment one retains to one's ethnic culture (p. 129). He mentions two kinds of commitment- traditional and symbolic, and four

kinds of ethnic identity retention- ritualistic, ideological, rebelling, and rediscovery (p. 131).

Ritualistic ethnic identity retention, common among the immigrant generation, implies a traditional kind of commitment to the ethnic culture. It is characterized by a high level of retention of the practice of ethnic traditions, and a low level of subjective identification with the group. Ideological identity, implying a symbolic commitment, refers to a high level of feelings of identity and a low level of practice of ethnic traditions. Rebelling identity refers to second generation ethnics, whose perception of ethnicity is removed from any kind of traditional commitment. They show a high awareness of their ethnic origin, but have a negative image of their ethnic group and tend to reject the ethnic past. Ethnic rediscovery involves a symbolic commitment and generally refers to the third generation, who, despite socialization in the host culture, have intense feelings about their ethnic identity. Selected items from the cultural past become a symbolic means of their ethnic affiliation (pp. 2-4).

One of the difficulties with Isajiw's framework is the connection he assumes between generation and ethnic identity, viewing immigrants as traditionally committed, the second generation as rebels, and the third generations as rediscoverers. Many scholars find such depictions too

simplistic. Timothy J. Meagher's (1991) article on ethnic consciousness among the Irish in Worcester, Massachusetts, discusses the fallacy of such assumptions. He argues that many members of the second generation never wish to flee their ethnic past, but strongly identify with it. Many among those willing to flee, because of prejudice and discrimination from the host society, become more militantly ethnic (p. 242). Others have also observed varying degrees of ethnic retention in the second/ third generation. While some found a sharp decline in the second or subsequent generations, others observed significant degree of ethnicity retention.

This dissertation has, to a large extent followed Isajiw's line of inquiry. I have used his indices of ethnic maintenance, described as the retention of external and internal aspects of ethnic identity, to identify various aspects of the respondents' ethnicity. However, the connection between ethnic identity and generation is not as strictly held as Isajiw does. This dissertation is of the view that not all immigrants are traditionalists, nor are all second generation members rebels, nor are all third generation members highly affiliated with their ethnic culture. I consider ethnic identity as largely symbolic for both the immigrants and the subsequent generations. Commitment to the ethnic culture can, in my opinion, vary

with individuals and ethnic groups, depending on the intervening demographic, ethnicity, and situational variables.

### **1.3.3 DESCRIPTION AND MEASUREMENT OF ETHNIC PERSISTENCE:**

Many scholars have called for an increased sensitivity towards certain issues pertaining to ethnicity: the continuity of a feeling of identity and a sense of group boundary rather than the perpetuation of ethnic cultures or institutions; the retention of selected aspects rather than the entire ethnic culture; and the importance of symbols for providing a continuity of feelings of identity and group boundary.

For a number of scholars (Gans, 1979; Anderson and Frideres, 1981), ethnic persistence means continuity of the feeling of being ethnic. This is enabled by certain shared group characteristics which members ascribe to themselves and consider significant for their identity. The authors explain that the shared features of a community make up the objective and subjective components of its members' ethnic identity, and indicate the group's potential for persistence. The symbolic means that these researchers have identified as the source and support of the feeling of ethnic identity are holidays, food, festivals, vacation and visit to the home country, interest in home country events (Gans, 1979: pp. 203-8),

ethnic language, religion, folkways and attitude towards group identity (Anderson and Frideres, 1980 :pp. 138-40).

The view that ethnic persistence means the maintenance of a sense of ethnic group boundary rather than the persistence of the original ethnic cultural content, is predominant in the work of a number of authors (Driedeger, 1989; 1985; Barth, in Sollors, 1986; Edwards, 1985; De Vos, 1975; Shaffir, 1972). They are in agreement that a sense of ethnic group boundary is perceived and sustained by the different features of an ethnic group which provide its members with a sense of resemblance to fellow ethnics, and a feeling of distinction from others. Driedeger (1985) perceives the retention of ethnic distinctiveness as a kind of voluntary separation by ethnic groups from the majority society which is made possible through the creation and maintenance of group boundaries. In his essay **"Minorities in Canadian Society: Problems, Prospects, Perspectives"** (1985), he describes the relationship between majority and minority groups in Canada. The author identifies three structural sociocultural factors-territory, institutions, and culture- and three symbolic forms of ethnic identification- history, ideology, and charismatic leadership- as the necessary conditions for ethnic persistence (1989:

p. 143). Edwards believes that a sense of group boundary can be maintained through the shared objective characteristics such as language and religion, or through subjective identification, or both (pp. 10, 48). De Vos considers that the creation and maintenance of ethnic group boundaries depends on objective characteristics such as territoriality, economic bases, religion, aesthetic cultural patterns, language, and expressive or subjective characteristics such as a sense of continuity in belonging (p. 6-17). For Shaffir (pp. 74-9), possible influences on the creation and maintenance of ethnic group boundaries are dress, history, language and insulation.

In accounting for ethnic persistence a majority of the authors explicitly or implicitly rely on the notion of 'ethnic cohesion'. Reitz presents an understanding of ethnic cohesion and its use for studying ethnic persistence in The Survival of Ethnic Groups (1980). He uses ethnic group histories and survey data to examine the strength of ethnic group solidarity in Canada's largest cities. Reitz employs 'ethnic cohesion' as a criterion and a measure of ethnic maintenance. He describes ethnic cohesion as the degree to which an ethnic group is capable of retaining its members over time (pp. 92-3). Aspects of ethnic cohesion are the factors which influence people to remain members of an ethnic group. The author

identifies six factors: in-group interaction, ethnic identification, endogamy, ethnic language retention, ethnic neighbourhood residence and ethnic church affiliation (p. 109).

The analytical framework for ethnic persistence which is used in this dissertation builds on Isajiw's ethnic identity approach and Reitz's notion of ethnic cohesion. While Reitz provided this study with the yardstick to measure ethnic persistence, Isajiw demonstrated how to go about measuring it. Using ethnic cohesion as a criterion of ethnic continuity, this dissertation has examined the aspects of ethnicity which contribute to the maintenance of the respondents' ethnic identity.

#### 1.4 USES OF ETHNIC MASS MEDIA AND ETHNIC PERSISTENCE:

Some scholars have attempted to explain the perception and expression of group identities such as gender and ethnicity as matters of communication. Dennis McQuail perceives that it is a concern of the mass media in particular. In Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public (1992), a review of studies into different aspects of the relation between the mass media and different group identifications, he includes three reasons to support his assertion. They are that the mass media



produce and transmit texts having cultural value, that they function as channels for the communication of activities of different cultural groups and that they serve as important tools for their group identification

(p. 276). A common focus of the studies on communication and group identity is the minority status of different social groups. The questions generally raised include: to what extent does a group have access to, and representation in, the mainstream mass media? to what extent is a minority group reached by the mainstream mass media? how much capability does a minority group have for in-group communication, and for becoming conscious of its shared interest and identity?

Despite its widespread availability and consumption, the ethnic mass media have not received the kind of systematic research attention they deserve. Until recently literature on the ethnic mass media has been predominantly descriptive, providing a biographical account of its emergence and growth. There has been little or no theoretical explanation of individual patterns of use, or of how such use affects the constitution or expression of ethnic diversity (Black and Leithner, 1984: pp. 22-3; Hanno Hardt, 1989: pp. 114-117).

### 1.4.1 MINORITY MEDIA STUDIES:

Work on ethnicity and the mass media in the recent past shows that the label 'ethnic minority media' has been attached to the ethnic media. Ethnic minority media generally refers to the mass media that are established and run by minority social status ethnic groups in their own language, which cater to the groups' own needs and interests. Researchers believe that the ethnic mass media emerged in response to a growing ethnoracial diversity, and the complete neglect and stereotypic depiction of ethnic minorities in the mainstream media. The terms of analysis in minority media research are the power relations existing between the majority and minority groups in a society. The majority media is understood to represent the values and ideological positions of the dominant group, which is reflected in their selective presentation of information and views which ignore or neglect the interests, concerns, values and views of the minority groups. Sharon Murphy (1974), and Clint C. Wilson and Felix Gutierrez (1985) present an analysis of the situation.

In Minorities and Media: Diversity and the End of Mass Communication, Wilson and Gutierrez chronicle the evolution of the American Indian, the Black American, the Mexican American, and the Asian American mass media in the United States. They identify several

factors which provided the impetus for these groups to launch their own media. The factors mentioned include tokenism in hiring minority journalists, negative, one-sided, stereotyped portrayals of these groups in the mainstream media, the effects of such portrayals on the self-image of the minorities, and the majority group's view of them, and their lack of access to the mainstream media to express their views (pp. 40-53).

A similar view is expressed by Sharon Murphy in her historical overview of the growth of Black, Chicano, and American Indian Press in the United States, in Other Voices: Black, Chicano, and American Indian Press (1974). She sees the rise of the ethnic mass media as an alternative voice for "correcting, disputing, and supplementing the work of the majority media" (p. 30). The author draws a connection between the negative depiction of the minorities and the prevailing social attitudes about race and ethnicity in the majority society.

The ethnic mass media which these authors studied are described in terms of their size, objectives, content, role, and financial and other problems. Of relevance to this dissertation are their discussion of the objectives, content, and role of the ethnic mass media. The ethnic mass media are motivated by several objectives including expressing concerns and voicing protests against segregation and discrimination, advancing

group interests and defending group rights, improving self-image, fostering group consciousness and pride, preserving language and culture, transmitting the news, opinion, and concerns of the group, and making people aware of community events and issues, and promoting the group's education and general welfare. To meet these objectives the majority of their time/ space is devoted to news/ information from the ancestral country, and to the events/ interests of the ethnic community.

These researchers perceive the ethnic mass media's role as teacher, watchdog, and advocate. This leadership role is reflected in the attempts these media make to preserve the ethnic culture, in the crusade for justice and equality for the group members, in the promotion of education, economic self-improvement, race pride and unity and in the interpretation of events and issues from the group's perspective (Murphy, 1974: pp. 55-81; Wilson and Gutierrez, 1985: pp. 179-92).

The above mentioned authors have been useful in my investigation of the motives for the founding the Bangladeshi immigrant press, its objectives, its content, and the implications of these in the context of its role in ethnic maintenance. An understanding of the impact of the ethnic mass media on ethnic retention requires an analysis of both their content and their use by ethnic group members. Since the consumption aspect of

the ethnic media is not a part of Murphy and Wilson and Gutierrez's account, their work has been partially useful for my purposes.

#### 1.4.2 COMMUNITY MEDIA STUDIES:

Another strand of research is based on community media. Community media stress the rights and priorities of local systems, populations, and groups over the larger units of nation, region or transnational corporations. The essence of community media lies in its concern with access and the direct involvement of community members in controlling the media. It is concerned with issues of purely local interest and responds to the needs and tastes of various communities including ethno-linguistic minorities and minorities of sexual or other orientations (Peter M. Lewis, 1984: p. 140).

William Barlow's (1988) discussion of the ethnic clientele of community radio in the United States offers some insights into the objectives of the ethnic mass media and its role in forging community cohesion. His essay "**Community Radio in the US: The Struggle for a Democratic Medium**", is based on case studies of several community radio stations. Barlow's historical account discusses two decades (1960-1980) of development of community radio in the United States. In the post-World War II period community radio stations targeted European immigrants,

and broadcast in their ethnic languages. By preserving the target groups' links to their respective home countries the community media goal was to provide the groups with a cohesiveness. Another objective of these media were to help the audience adapt to the host country (p. 83). During the same period there were stations aimed at the African-American audience which intended to support the community's culture, and the practice and preservation of its oral traditions (p. 84). In the late 1960s and the early 1970s multi-ethnic stations were established in the Hispanic and Native American communities. The programming focused on the relevant development needs of the communities concerned (p. 95). In the 1970s and the 1980s community media worked to provide information about the local government, and available educational, health, and community services to help ethnic groups make the best use possible of local services and agencies.

Barlow's general discussion of the growth of community media, their policies, regulations and funding, and problems and possible solutions, are not relevant for my research purposes. However, his observations on the objectives of community media and their role in promoting and preserving cultural traditions and ethnic group ties have been used in this study to examine the objectives and functions of the Bangladeshi immigrant press.

Despite Barlow's reference to the community media's role in ethnic cohesion, his discussion does not explain how the audience members use the community media, or for what purposes, or how their uses of the media relates to their collective identities. As such, Barlow's findings have limited use for this research.

### **1.4.3 ETHNIC MASS MEDIA STUDIES:**

The relationship between ethnicity and the ethnic mass media has generally been studied from the three perspectives of assimilation, pluralism, and dual functions. Scholars have observed that the ethnic mass media may play a facilitating role in the ethnics' adaptation to the host society, or it may contribute to maintaining their ethnic diversity, or it may serve the dual functions of enhancing assimilation regarding certain aspects of the host society and of pluralism regarding some aspects of the ethnic culture. The main argument in these perspectives is that communication patterns of ethnics are themselves indicators of assimilation, pluralism, or ethnic distinctiveness.

**1.4.3.1 Assimilation Perspective and the Ethnic Mass Media.** The assimilation view suggests that exposure to, and use of, ethnic mass media can serve as a major vehicle for the ethnics/ immigrants to learn about and adjust to the host society. In the United States, Robert Park (1922), Young

Yun Kim (1977, 1978, 1988), and in Canada, Jerome H. Black and Christian Leithner (1987), have made major theoretical and empirical contributions to this area of research.

**Study I.** The most extensive and comprehensive work on the ethnic mass media to date is Robert E. Park's The Immigrant Press and its Control (1922). It is a study of the immigrant press in the United States which discusses several immigrant newspapers- their growth and change, their content and style, their motives and functions, their success and failure, their readers and their reading habits, the background of their editors and their concerns and pressures and control of the press. The work forms part of a eleven volume book project, based on information gathered by the Division of the Immigrant Press on methods of adjustment by immigrants to the American society (pp.vii-viii). The author analyzes the immigrant press, or what he calls the foreign-language press, in the United States, situating it within the history of the United States, and of immigration, and in the context of the society's political, economic and cultural developments which have shaped the interests and attitudes of immigrants.

Park's analysis is mainly focused on the role of the immigrant press as an important element in the process of Americanization of immigrants.



He asserts that "immigrant newspapers are a power to be reckoned with in the Americanization of the immigrants" (p. 359). By Americanization, he refers to assimilation of the immigrants into the US society. For him, culture, and cultural institutions such as the immigrant press, are important determinants of the immigrants' assimilation process. He observes that the immigrant press is likely to aid rather than prevent "a gradual drift of the immigrant community toward American culture" (pp. 79, 85), by substituting for their lack of host language, and by providing a major means of information and interpretation about the American culture, its values and way of life (pp. 85, 87). In his own words:

The mere fact of residence and employment give the immigrant an interest in American events, customs, ideas. He needs some familiarity with these in order to "get along". The foreign-language press... fill this needs of its readers, and by so doing it hastens the development of this personal necessity into a general interest in America...what the foreign-language press actually does is to facilitate the adjustment of the immigrants to the American environment.(p. 87)

Despite the author's overriding concern for assimilation, some of his observations on the role of the immigrant press in preserving ethnic cultural patterns have special significance for this dissertation. Park states, "it is language and tradition... that unites the foreign populations" (p. 5),

and describes the immigrant press as "a forum of unknown readers", who participate in each other's lives through language and culture (p. 49). He explains that by providing a forum for the members of an immigrant community, the immigrant press serves as an important vehicle for the expression of, and a stimulus for, their national identity. Park maintains that it is the immigrant press which has enabled the members of different immigrant communities to maintain contact and communication with the home country and the ethnic community, and to retain their ethnic language, tradition, and organizations (p. 359). According to Park, the immigrant press, in its attempt to preserve ethnic language, ethnic culture, tradition, organizations, and national identity, may act as a brake on assimilation (pp. 55, 60).

Park's conception of the immigrant press as a forum of unknown readers affirms this dissertation's view that the readership of Bangladeshi immigrant press constitutes an imagined community, and that their ethnicity implies affiliation with an abstract, rather than an interacting, group. Further, Park's observation that the immigrant press serves as a means of expression of stimulus to ethnic identity, fits hand and glove with the present study's central theme. This study suggests that the Bangladeshi immigrant press is a principal means for its readers to structure their

imagination. It provides an important vehicle for the readers' ethnic perception, and a strong stimulus for its maintenance. By providing exposure to ethnic symbols which readers perceive as relevant for their ethnicity the Bangladeshi press creates a feeling of ethnic belonging. Park points out that the immigrant press creates and sustains ethnicity by maintaining contact and communication with the ancestral country and the ethnic community, by promoting preservation of ethnic language, organizations, and the traditions of immigrants. This has informed the present research to examine what functions the Bangladeshi immigrant press performs, and which functions are likely to have an impact on the readers' ethnic identity.

Apart from the role of the immigrant press Park discusses its emergence, objectives and content, as well as the readers' reading motivations and the factors that influence their reading. From his review of the immigrant newspapers published in the United States, he reports that the immigrant press is mostly read by recent immigrants lacking knowledge of the host language, and dependant on their mother tongue for information about the host society and their motherland (pp. 299-301, 314). Newspaper reading habits and active involvement in leisure activities are said to be positive influences on uses of the immigrant press (p. 8).

Park's discussion also aided in the examination of the factors that inspired founding of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, and those that guide its functioning. His remarks on the content of the immigrant press have been useful in examining the nature and treatment of ethnic content in the Bangladeshi immigrant press, and its likely consequences for the respondents' ethnic maintenance. Park's determinants of immigrant press consumption have allowed this research to examine who reads the Bangladeshi immigrant press more, what factors account for individual differences in reading, and how individual differences in reading relate to the readers' ethnicity.

There is one basic difference between the present research and Park's work. While his analysis of immigrant press use rests on the accounts of editors, journalists, founders, and collaborators of the press, this study is based on the respondents' reported use.

**Study II.** In both her theoretical and empirical work, Young Yun Kim has made significant contributions to the study of the ethnic mass media. She focuses on the effects of the ethnic mass media on the assimilation of ethnic group members. She uses the term 'cross-cultural adaptation' to refer to the assimilation process. Kim's conclusions are based on her survey of the pattern of interpersonal and mass communication

involvement of Korean immigrants in Chicago and other immigrant groups in the United States. Most noteworthy is her communication-adaptation model, introduced in an essay "A Communication Approach to the Acculturation Process: A Study of Korean Immigrants in Chicago" (1978), and elaborated in Communication and Cross-cultural Adaptation: An Integrative Theory (1988).

Kim's model views cross-cultural adaptation as a communication process, and human beings as open communication systems who continuously interact with their environment. To Kim the personal and social communication patterns of immigrants, their adaptive predispositions, and host environment characteristics are co-determinants of the course and outcome of their adaptation (1988: p.9). She describes cross-cultural adaptation as a process of acquiring the host culture's accepted ways of thinking, understanding, and responding to the environment. In encoding and decoding information, updating information about the self, the host environment, and the relationship between the two, immigrants gradually develop an adaptive capacity (pp. 44-5, 59). She puts it this way:

Through communication, an immigrant acquires control over change in order to cope with the new environment. Learning and acquiring ways to face the problematic situations occur

through communication, both verbal and nonverbal, and through interpersonal and mass media. (1978: p. 199)

Kim draws on Ruben's parameter of human communication to analyze the relationship between the communication activities of immigrants and their cross-cultural adaptation. She identifies two dimensions of adaptive communication- personal, or intra-personal, and social. Personal communication refers to mental activities which take place within individuals. Social communication involves interpersonal and mass communication (pp. 59-61). For Kim (1978: pp. 199-202), the extent of immigrants' participation in the host and the ethnic communication channels are the best indicators of their adaptation. She examines the immigrants' use of interpersonal and mass communication channels of the host society, as well as those of the ethnic community to assess the extent of their involvement in each.

The present study has benefitted from Kim's indices of ethnic interpersonal communication which were used to identify the factors which characterize the respondents' ethnic relational network and community involvement. The indices suggested by Kim have also been used in the questionnaire formulated for this research. This study ascribes to the same view as Kim's- that the extent of one's communication activities is

indicative of one's community involvement. This study argues that the extent to which the respondents use the Bangladeshi immigrant press indicates the extent of their ethnic ties and identity. Kim's observation has also allowed me to examine the relationship between the respondents's frequency of use of the immigrant press and their ethnic identity perceptions and practice.

But most useful for this dissertation is Kim's reference to cultural identity. The author suggests that enculturation, or the process of acquiring and internalizing attributes of one's culture, is a communication process.

She explains:

As individuals mature in a given cultural milieu, their internal conditions incorporate the essential experience of value systems, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as the concerted communication patterns of their culture... such internalized cultural attributes in turn, provide an invisible bond with other members who also have internalized the same cultural attributes... (1988: p. 48)

Through socialization individuals come to understand and internalize a culture's shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and communication patterns of thinking, feeling, interpreting, and behaving. This results in the development of a cultural identity. Kim states that a group's cultural patterns, rituals, institutional practices and symbols are different modes of

communication which serve as an expressive and interpretive means for individuals to perceive and express their ethnic identity (pp. 46-8).

I have appropriated Kim's concept of cross-cultural adaptation and her views on cultural identity formation. This study suggests that the ways in which the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press perceive, express, and maintain their ethnicity is a matter of communication. I consider that the ethnic identity of the readers is constituted and enacted symbolically through their participation in a common system of communication which comprises a shared pattern of information processing and a shared body of ethnic symbols.

Kim perceives two possible role for the ethnic mass media- an adaptation facilitating function in the short term, and an ethnicity maintenance function in the long term (1988: pp. 118-122). Her study found that the ethnic mass media was used more by the married, the elderly, the less educated, the lower socioeconomic status individuals, the recent immigrants, and by those lacking host language skills. The author observes that those who use the ethnic mass media more make less use of the host mass media and are less adapted to the host society. Kim also predicts a decline in the use of the ethnic mass media over time, and an increased use of the host media (pp. 126-7). The influences on ethnic mass



media use which Kim mentions has guided this study to examine the factors which affect the respondents' use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press and the kind of influence they have on their use patterns.

**Study III.** Canadian scholars Jerome H. Black and Christian Leithner are also concerned with the role of the ethnic mass media in immigrants' assimilation process. Their 1983 Toronto survey of immigrants and Canadian-born descendants from different ethnic groups is reported in an essay, **"Patterns of Ethnic Media Consumption: A Comparative Examination of Ethnic Groupings in Toronto"** (1987). The focus of this study is the temporal decline in ethnic mass media use between the immigrants and the Canadian-born among various immigrant groups, and the determinants of their use (p. 21). Temporal decline in ethnic mass media use is analyzed in terms of such variables as generation of immigration, length of residence, proficiency in host language, ethnicity, and type of ethnic media (print, broadcast/ electronic). Individual differences in ethnic media consumption patterns are studied in terms of sociodemographic factors including age, education and gender (Black and Leithner, 1987: p. 23).

Black and Leithner's major finding is that the first generation immigrants tend to make more use of the ethnic mass media than the

Canadian-born generations (pp. 24, 26). The inter-generational decline in ethnic media consumption exceeds the intra-generational decline among the immigrants. The authors identify age, length of residence, and ethnicity (measured in terms of ethnic self-identification and ethnic ties), as the most important predictors of ethnic mass media consumption by immigrants. In the immigrant generation a higher use of the ethnic mass media was observed among the women, the more aged, the less educated, the recent immigrants, and those lacking host language skills (pp. 29-31). For the Canadian-born, ethnicity were found to exert the most influence, followed by education, and exposure to Canadian television (p. 34).

Because of the generational decline Black and Leithner observed in its consumption, they consider the ethnic media to be basically an immigrant media. For the temporal decline observed in its use, these researchers see the ethnic mass media in an adaptation facilitating role during the initial period of immigration (pp. 35-6). Based on their findings, that felt ethnicity does not decline abruptly between generations and that ethnicity has a positive impact on ethnic media use, they predict the long-term survivability of the ethnic mass media (p. 34).

Black and Leithner's indices of ethnic media use have generally informed this research. They suggest a strong positive association between

felt ethnicity and the extent of ethnic group ties balanced with ethnic mass media use. This affirms this dissertation's hypothesis that use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press stimulates and strengthens its readers' ethnic group ties and ethnic identity. I have used Black and Leithner in this study to examine how the use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press relates to the readers' ethnic identity, their preferences in ethnic behaviours and interactional patterns, and whether their consumption of the immigrant press reinforces these. Their emphasis on the relatedness of gender and ethnic mass media use allowed me to examine how significant an impact the respondents' gender has on their preferences and use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. Further, Black and Leithner's suggestion of long-term use of the ethnic mass media enabled the present study to assume a sustained use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, and to view it as a means of continued reinforcement of the readers' ethnic identification.

**1.4.3.2 Pluralism Perspective and Ethnic Mass Media.** Studies from the pluralist perspective focus on the influence of the ethnic mass media on the retention of different aspects of ethnicity. Work from this standpoint considers the very existence of ethnic media as evidence of the persistence and distinctiveness of ethnic groups (Subervi-Velez, 1986: p. 73).

**Study I.** Of the studies from pluralism perspective, Jeffres and Hur's study of the European ethnic groups residing in Cleveland, United States, was found most useful for the purposes of this research. These researchers explore the relationship between the respondents' socioeconomic status, communication, and the persistence of their ethnicity. Their findings are reported in an essay, "**Communication Channels Within Ethnic Groups**" (1981). They examined the channel preferences of the respondents for news of the home country and the ethnic community, the influence of demographics and ethnicity on channel preference and media use patterns for these functions. The authors studied the respondents' use of the interpersonal and mass communication channels of the host society and of the ethnic community (p. 115).

Their analysis identifies determinants for the use of ethnic interpersonal and mass communication channels. A set of variables is also specified for measures of the objective and subjective aspects of ethnicity. The demographic variables investigated include age, gender, occupation, and education (pp. 120-1).

These researchers stress that greater ethnicity is related to the choice of the ethnic media as the preferred channel for news of the home country and the ethnic community. Their conclusion is that the ethnic mass media

strengthen ethnic group ties and supplement ethnic interpersonal communication channels to reinforce ethnic identity (p. 118). Based on their findings, Jeffres and Hur report that higher socioeconomic status individuals tend to prefer the host mass media for news of the home country and the ethnic community. For the same function, the less educated, those with lower socioeconomic status, fewer years of residency in the host country, those residing in urban ethnic neighbourhood, the ethnic spouses, and members of smaller ethnic groups rely on the ethnic mass media (pp. 115, 126).

Observations made by Jeffres and Hur were valuable for the present research in several ways. One, their work supports the main argument of this dissertation, that use of the ethnic mass media plays an important role in ethnic maintenance. Second, Jeffres and Hur observe that the ethnic mass media maintain ethnicity by supplementing and strengthening ethnic interpersonal channels. I have used this observation to examine the relationship between the respondents' frequency of use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press and the extent of their ethnic relational network and ethnic community participation. Third, by identifying indices for the objective and subjective aspects of ethnicity, Jeffres and Hur have enabled this study to explore the extent to which the use of the Bangladeshi

immigrant press maintains different aspects of the respondents' ethnicity. Four, Jeffres and Hur's assertion that greater ethnicity is related to preference for an ethnic communication channel, was used in this research to compare the relationship between the respondents' preference for the Bangladeshi immigrant press and their preferences in ethnic behavioural patterns and identification. Using Jeffres and Hur's suggestion that preference for the ethnic media as the preferred channel for news of the home country and the ethnic community is indicative of ethnicity, this study has examined the respondents' preference for the Bangladeshi immigrant press for these functions and compared it with their preferences in, and practice of, ethnic cultural patterns, and their ethnic self-identification. Finally, Jeffres and Hur provided useful guidelines in preparing the questionnaire for this research. This study departs from Jeffres and Hur's study in that social stratification is not considered to be the most important determinant of ethnic media use, rather it receives the same attention as any other demographic or ethnicity variable.

**Study II.** Frederico A. Subervi-Velez offers an overview of the literature on communication research conducted within the context of pluralism. His work is on Hispanics and other ethnic groups in the United States and is presented in his article **"The Mass Media and Ethnic**

**Assimilation and Pluralism: A Review and Research Proposal with Special Focus on Hispanics" (1986).** Velez found that the Spanish-language media was more commonly used by the women, the relatively elderly, the lower socioeconomic status individuals, those with lower number of years of residency in the host country, and those with greater preference for the ethnic language. The author observes that the impact of education and gender on ethnic mass media use varies across media types. Education is positively related to the use of ethnic radio, negatively to the use of ethnic television, and not significantly related to the use of ethnic print media. Women prefer television, and men prefer newspapers. Velez concludes that there is a direct connection between the use of the ethnic mass media and ethnic identity (pp. 82-4).

Velez's discussion of the influences on ethnic mass media use has helped this study to identify the determinants of consumption of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. His emphasis on the relatedness of use of the ethnic mass media and ethnic identity lends support to this dissertation's claim that the use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press is an important tool for its readers' perceptions and maintenance of ethnic identity.

**Study III.** Raymond Breton's study of institutional completeness is based on a study of thirty ethnic organizations in Montreal and their

contributions to ethnic cohesion of the groups concerned. The findings are reported in an article, **"Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants"** (1964). The author observes that the more institutionally complete an ethnic group is, the stronger its members' ethnic group ties, and the lesser its contact outside the group. Breton measures ethnic institutional completeness in terms of the number and diversity of the institutions an ethnic group has. To Breton the presence of ethnic mass media (he mentions ethnic press in particular), is an important component of institutional completeness. He states that it makes a significant difference in ethnic in-group relations.

Breton's concept of institutional completeness, the indices of its measurement, and his focus on the ethnic press were useful for this dissertation. It allowed me to measure the ethnic institutional completeness of the Montreal Bangladeshi community, of which the readership of the Bangladeshi immigrant press is a part. I have explored Breton's suggestion of a positive correlation between ethnic institutional completeness and ethnic ties by examining the relationship between the institutional strength of the Bangladeshi community in Montreal and the ethnic ties of the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press.



**Study IV.** Asghar Fathi (1973) surveyed Arab immigrants in a Canadian prairie city about their use of the Arab short-wave radio broadcast from abroad, and its consequences for their ethnic identity (p. 201). The findings are reported in a paper, **"Mass Media and a Moslem Immigrant Community in Canada"** (1973). The study hypothesizes that the language and culture of today's ethnic groups are less in danger of extinction because advance communication technology facilitates contact and communication between people of similar cultures. He maintains that there is a close connection between an audience's ethnic group affiliation and its communication behaviour (p. 228). Fathi's major conclusions are that both ethnic interpersonal and mass media channels provide continuity to ethnic groups, and those who have high exposure to the ethnic media also tend to maintain their ethnic identity.

His study found that the Arab radio broadcasts strengthened the respondents' ethnic identity and ethnic group solidarity by providing an attachment to the home country, to the ethnic community, and to the ethnic language (pp. 201-3). Drawing on C.R.Wright's (1960) definitions of the functions of the mass media, Fathi identifies four functions served by the Arab radio broadcasts: surveillance (collection and dissemination of information), correlation (interpretation and prescription), transmission of,

and socialization, in culture, and entertainment. He analyzes the influence of each of these functions of the ethnic media in relation to the respondents' ethnic maintenance (pp. 211-22).

Fathi observed a negative correlation between his respondents' exposure to the Arab broadcasts and their exposure to the Canadian mass media. He found that the young, the married, the less educated, those with lower occupational status and fewer years of residency in Canada were more exposed to the ethnic mass media (pp. 202-3, 209-10).

Fathi's discussion of the influences on ethnic media use aided this study in a general way. Of relevance, for my research purposes, are his views of ethnic interpersonal communication and the ethnic mass media as important means of ethnic continuity, as well as his observation of a strong positive relationship between ethnic ties, ethnic identity, and ethnic communication behaviour. These observations affirm this dissertation's view of the Bangladeshi immigrant press as a major vehicle for its readers to maintain their ethnicity. They also lend support to this study's assumption that extent of the readers' use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press is indicative of the extent of their ethnic group ties and involvement. The author's suggestion of a positive correlation between the frequency of exposure to the ethnic mass media and ethnic identification was explored

in this study to examine the relationship between the frequency of use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press and its readers' ethnic self-identification, and their perceived ethnic salience. Fathi's reference to the four functions of the ethnic mass media enabled this research to identify the functions which the Bangladesh immigrant press performs to provide ethnic continuity of its readership.

**Study V.** Wsevolod W. Isajiw's (1981) survey of ethnic identity retention across three generations, among different ethnic groups in Toronto seeks out ethnic mass media users in each generation (p.ii). Discussing his study in Ethnic Identity Retention (1981), he identifies a set of factors for measuring the subjective and behavioral aspects of the respondents' ethnicity. Isajiw perceives ethnic mass media use as a behavioral aspect of ethnic identity and considers it to be an important means of ethnic identity retention (p. 31). He states that the ethnic mass media retains ethnicity by serving three functions: providing a means of contact and communication with the ethnic community, interpreting events and issues from an ethnic group's perspective, and offering artistic presentations. Ethnic mass media use is an indicator of ethnicity retention for Isajiw. He contends that it is an ethnic pattern by itself, and that it is also a means of retaining other ethnic patterns (pp. 31-2).

Most crucial for this study are two of Isajiw's observations: one, that ethnic mass media use is a behavioural aspect of ethnicity; and, two, that ethnic mass media use is an ethnic pattern which enables the retention of other ethnic patterns. Using Isajiw, this dissertation considers the uses of the Bangladeshi immigrant press as an ethnic behaviour which serves as a means of exposure to other ethnic aspects, and which strengthens its readers' ethnic feelings, attitudes, interactional network to reinforce their ethnic identity. Apart from this, Isajiw's study was of partial use for this research because of its certain gaps and lapses. Isajiw does not explain which variables account for his respondents' ethnic media consumption, nor does he state which ethnic patterns are affected by the consumption. Second, his focus is on decline in ethnic media use in the second and third generation, and he pays inadequate attention to ethnic media use patterns in the immigrant generation.

**1.4.3.3 Dual Perspective and Ethnic Mass Media.** In this third perspective two roles are attributed to the ethnic mass media- to facilitate adaptation, and to preserve ethnic identity. One of the proponents of this view is Stephen Harold Riggins. He states that it is a matter of debate whether or not to view the ethnic mass media in a cultural preservation function, or to see it as enhancing assimilation. In his article "**The Promise**

**and Limits of Ethnic Minority Media" (1992)**, the author maintains that the ethnic mass media may serve as a tool for ethnic identity retention, and that they may also contribute to the ethnics' adaptation to the host culture. He explains that the ethnic media may promote assimilation in terms of certain values while preserving group identity in other respects. He believes that the probable long-term effect of the ethnic mass media is neither total assimilation nor total ethnic maintenance, but a compromise between the two (p. 276). He sees the possibility of variation in the dual role of the ethnic mass media over time, and with the nature of the ethnic group concerned (p. 4). Riggins suggests that indications of the ethnic maintenance function of the ethnic mass media is most clearly revealed at the level of its content- in story topics, headlines, lead paragraphs, photos and allocation of space (pp. 2, 282-3).

Two parallel roles for the ethnic mass media are also discussed in other sources, including the Special Senate Committee Report of the Mass Media (1970: pp. 179-83), Report of the Canada's Ethnic Journalists and Writers' Club (1986), and Sally Miller's (1987) book Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook. In each report the ethnic mass media are perceived as facilitating the integration of

newcomers to the host society, and as expressing and preserving their ethnic culture, values and identity.

These perspectives on the dual role of the ethnic mass media have not been explored in relation to the Bangladeshi immigrant press because its minimal Canadian content does not suggest a role in adaptation. However, Riggins's views on the ethnic maintenance function of the ethnic mass media has allowed me to examine the content of the Bangladeshi immigrant press for evidences of its role in ethnic continuity of the readership.

## **1.5 READERS AND READING:**

In this section, I discuss two studies which do not address ethnicity or ethnic mass media, but which have an important bearing on this dissertation. The first study is on the reading or interpretation of the mass media messages, and the second discusses determinants of newspaper reading.

### **1.5.1 READING OF MASS MEDIATED MESSAGES:**

An enlightening discussion of how readers engage in the process of reading is available in David Morley's concept of 'preferred reading', an idea he borrows from Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding/ decoding model. The

framework is presented in The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding (1980), a work based on his study of the British Television programme "Nationwide". A substantive analysis of his study also appears in Television, Audiences, and Cultural Studies (1992).<sup>2</sup>

To Morley meaning construction in communication is an interaction between the internal structures and mechanisms of the text/ message/ programme, and the cultural background of the reader/ receiver/ viewer (1992: p. 75). It depends on both how the message is structured, and on the codes and frameworks which readers bring to the reading of the text (p. 92). Morley argues that media messages are structured in a certain way which invites readers to make a particular reading or a range of readings. This he calls 'preferred reading'. However, the audience members can always produce a meaning which is different from the one suggested by the message/ text/ programme's discourse (p. 84). This is because the audience's acceptance of media messages depends on the extent to which they are in

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<sup>2</sup> The central idea in one of Morley's later works, Family Television (1986), is also the collective dimension of television viewing and interpretation. The focus is on everyday family context, and how that influences viewing choices, patterns, and meaning production. He brings together issues of use and issues of interpretation, and integrates the textual aspects of the media with the audience's conceptual codes and patterns of consumption.

accord with the cultural codes and frameworks which they inhabit and bring to their reading of the text.

To analyze how audience members in different socioeconomic situations interpret the messages of "Nationwide", using Hall's (1980) encoding/ decoding model, and Parkin's (1973) treatment of class structures as the basis of different meaning systems, Morley suggests three decoding positions: preferred reading, negotiated reading, and oppositional reading. He explains that in the preferred reading readers may interpret the message as preferred by the media, and fully absorb the meaning. With negotiated reading one may take the meaning broadly as encoded, but bring modifications to it. In oppositional reading the reader may bring an alternative framework to the preferred reading (pp. 92-3). According to Morley, decodings may vary with sociodemographic factors, cultural identification, and content topic (pp. 97-8).

I have adopted Morley's framework of 'preferred reading' to identify and analyze the message mechanisms used by the Bangladeshi immigrant press in promoting ethnicity, and the extent to which its preferred reading of ethnicity is accepted by the readers. Morley has also been useful in the present study to account for variances in the readers' acceptance. However, this dissertation has departed from Morley in two respects- while his unit



of analysis is the group, mine is the individual. Second, while his analysis of decoding considers socioeconomic status as the main explanatory variable, I have looked at various demographic and ethnicity variables to explain individual differences in decoding.

### 1.5.2 NEWSPAPER READING:

Most newspaper research can be considered applied research of various kinds- audience analysis, readership studies, psychographic and life-style research, content analysis, readability studies, and studies on graphic design (Michael Singletary, 1994). Some of the common questions asked in newspaper readership studies are- Who subscribes? Who reads? What do they read? How often they read? How much time they spend in reading? Why do they read? What do they like and why? Leo Bogart offers a very useful understanding of some of these issues in Press and Public: Who reads what, when, where and why in American Newspapers (1989). This book is based on a series of surveys conducted between 1977 and 1983, on newspaper readership in the United States. The author discusses the declining circulation of American newspapers in the 1980s in relation to newspapers' sources of revenues, their place in the lives of Americans and their reading habits, the practices and assumptions of editors, and other criteria. Of particular significance for the present study is Boggart's

discussion of determinants of newspaper reading. He discusses the frequency of newspaper reading, the thoroughness of reading, content choice, and the influence of social and demographic characteristics in these regards (pp. 6-7).

Measuring frequency of newspaper reading is an important concern for Boggart. To measure frequency of newspaper reading rather than asking whether one reads it regularly, sometimes, or not at all, the author suggests that one should ask when the newspaper was last read -yesterday, last weekday, to derive a specific response (p. 77). Boggart analyzes the extent of newspaper reading by examining the time spent in reading, the thoroughness of reading (glancing, scanning, thorough reading), and the number of newspapers read (p. 154).

Bogart remarks that newspapers are generally read more frequently by the relatively more aged, the married, the better educated, higher income individuals, those with no children at home, those with more adult members in the family, those more involved in the community, and those active in leisure activities. The author found that frequent newspaper readers usually are subscribers, read more thoroughly than others, spend more time reading, and read more than one newspaper (pp. 78-80). The frequent readers also tend to value the news or information content of the

newspaper rather than features or entertainment, and prefer newspapers over television. Content preferences arise from motivations for reading (pp. 85-87).

While Bogart's study deals with newspapers in general, this research focuses on the newspapers of a particular ethnic group. Despite the ethnicity factor involved here, Boggart's discussion provided useful insights for examining the respondents' pattern of consumption of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, their preferences in, and motivations for, reading it, and the factors which cause individual differences in reading. Boggart has also been useful for formulating questions on the uses of the Bangla language press.

## 1.6 CONCLUSION:

With this tradition of ethnicity and ethnic mass media research in view, this dissertation will now illustrate and establish its main contention, that the uses of the Bangladeshi immigrant press act as a stimulus to reinforce its readers' ethnic perceptions, preferences, and identity. To begin with, in the next chapter I shall present a discussion of the data and methodology of this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY OF ETHNICITY

... the combination of sound theoretical propositions, careful methodology, and the consideration of the cultural context can lead to the advancement of our understanding of media effects across cultures.

(Steven H. Chaffee, quoted in Korzenny et al., 1992: p. 3)

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION:

Discussing the diverse array of approaches to ethnic identification and persistence, Alan B. Anderson and James S. Frideres (1981: pp. 5,7) observe that each research project must be evaluated in terms of its theoretical objectives, its methodology, and its data analysis. These are an indication of how each scholar studies ethnicity, the ways one perceives it, the unit of analysis one adopts, and the conclusions that one is likely to draw.

This chapter will discuss the kinds of data upon which this dissertation is based, how they were collected and analyzed, and some of the difficulties encountered in analyzing the data. But before that a few words on the theoretical orientation that informed the analysis and approach of this dissertation are required.

This study is heavily influenced by the theory of symbolic interactionism and modified pluralism. The interactionist approach allowed me to study the ethnic identity of the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press in relationship with their group symbols, and to explore how they mediate the imagining and affirmation of their ethnicity. A modified pluralism orientation enabled this study to view the ethnic maintenance of the respondents as related to the retention of certain aspects of the ethnic culture, rather than of the culture as a whole.

## **2.2 DATA COLLECTION:**

### **2.2.1 SAMPLE:**

The data for this dissertation are derived from a study conducted in Montreal between September and December, 1995. Fifty respondents were chosen from a total of 6000 Bangladeshis living in Montreal. The basic criterion for selecting the respondents was readership of the Montreal Bangladeshi immigrant press. I attempted to have as diverse a sample as possible, in terms of the respondents' age, gender, generation, marital status, education, occupation, income, length of residence in Canada and language skills. I felt that a diverse sample would more clearly account for the differences in their use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, as well as

of their ethnic identity perceptions. However, an under-representation of women, the elderly, and second generation Bangladeshis could not be avoided because, as has been discussed in the preface of this dissertation, an imbalance exists in the composition of the population itself. As my sample approximates representation of the different categories in the current Bangladeshi population in Montreal, I believe that the results of this study are valid until proven otherwise by future research work.

### **2.2.2 KINDS OF DATA COLLECTED:**

Four kinds of data were collected for this research. The first set comprises information on the sociodemographic background of the readers, including age, gender, education, occupation, income, language skills and leisure activities. A second set is on the respondents' pattern of consumption of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. This includes their reading motivations, frequency of reading, preferences in content, thoroughness in reading the preferred content and the perceived usefulness of the immigrant press for different functions. Another set of data concerns the readers' use of the Canadian mass media. It involves information about time spent with the media and content preferences. The fourth data-set is about the respondents' ethnicity. The kind of information obtained includes length of residence in the host country Canada, skills in its two

official language, generation of residence in Canada, preferences in various aspects of the ethnic culture, preferences in ethnic interaction, and preferences in ethnic identification. A fifth set of data concerns the content of the two Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers.

From the first and second sets of data, I examined how the respondents' demographic characteristics influence their use of the immigrant press. Comparison between the first and the fourth data-set allowed me to determine how the readers' demographic background is related with their ethnic perceptions and behaviour. By comparing the second and the fourth data sets I was able to explore the relationship between the respondents' uses of the Bangladeshi immigrant press and the maintenance of their ethnic identity.

### **2.2.3 HYPOTHESES:**

My major hypothesis is that those who make frequent use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press are likely to emphasize their ethnic identity. Other hypotheses deriving from it include, readers who use the immigrant press more are also likely to have more contact with the home country, have more interest in its history, as well as in its current events, have more ethnic friends, have more participation in ethnic community events, have

more involvement in ethnic organizations, and to attach more importance to the practice and retention of ethnic culture.

## **2.3 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION:**

Data for this dissertation were collected through content analysis, and interviewing.

### **2.3.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS:**

I analyzed the content of twelve issues of *Probashbangla* and eleven issues of *Banglabarta*, to assess the newspapers' position on ethnic maintenance. Issue dates sampled for *Probashbangla* are between December 16, 1993 and October 27, 1995. Dates for selected *Banglabarta* issues are February 21, 1994 to April 29, 1995, at which time it temporarily suspended circulation. I looked at the content categories and the treatment they receive in these Bangla language newspapers. Detail of the content analysis will be discussed in chapter IV, which deals with the uses of the Bangladeshi immigrant press.

### **2.3.2 INTERVIEWING:**

I chose interviewing as a method of inquiry because of several advantages it offers. It provides a dialogic environment for the respondents to talk freely about their experiences, beliefs, values, and feelings, and



report their behaviours. This would not be possible to the same extent with other methods. Interviewing makes it possible to observe not only what the respondents say, but also how they say it. It also allows a researcher to clarify questions put to the respondents, and, in the case of incomplete answers, to probe for more data.

**Building Contact.** No convenient list of Bangladeshis was available, neither in the form of a directory, nor as a subscription list for the newspapers studied. To contact the respondents, I initially visited four Bangladeshi grocery stores in Montreal - one in downtown, two in Parc Extension, and one in Plamondon area. These are the stores where most Bangladeshis shop for groceries and collect the Bangla language newspapers.

I returned to the stores every weekend for six weeks to have an idea as to who the prospective readers of the newspapers I was studying are. I also hoped to make some contacts to begin to draw a sample. I approached the shoppers, introduced myself, explained my intention, my study area, and sought their cooperation. Some ignored me, or expressed their disinterest in the issue. Some said that they did not want to talk about their feelings of ethnicity, or their opinion of the immigrant press. The reason was that Bangladeshis are a small community in Montreal, and they

worried that their views would somehow be circulated in the community and cause them unwarranted embarrassment. I had to assure them by offering a commitment not to breach their confidentiality. My initial problem was finding people who would agree to talk about themselves, about their use of the immigrant press, and about their ethnicity. However, most of the shoppers at these groceries did offer to help. They agreed to be included in my sample, and also proposed to introduce me to other prospective respondents. I collected the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of my initial contacts and of the people they introduced me to, and set up appointments to interview each of them.

**The Interview.** The readers of *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta* were interviewed regarding their consumption of these newspapers and their ethnic perceptions and practice. A single questionnaire, administered by myself in person, was used for interviewing. I had a feeling that the respondents, despite their proficiency in English, might feel more comfortable speaking in their native tongue. So I prepared the questionnaire and conducted the interview in Bangla. The questionnaire was later translated into English and forms part of this dissertation (see Appendix I). The interviews were based on a combination of fixed alternative and open-ended questions. I was aware that fixed alternative

questions might elicit responses which the respondents would not otherwise have given. This problem was eliminated by keeping the 'other' response option in all close-ended questions.

The interviews were scheduled on a weekly basis. Daytime was not suitable for many respondents, as they either worked, looked for work, or went to school during that time. Most informants preferred weekend evenings, between 7 and 10 p.m., when they would be home. Each interview took between an hour and an hour and a half. I used a tape recorder during the interviews to record the nuances of what the respondents said and how they expressed themselves. It allowed me to have verbatim transcripts of what they said. A few expressed discomfort at talking with the tape recorder on, and said it made them feel self-conscious. I turned off the recorder when there were such requests and took notes instead.

The interviews were carried out in an informal and friendly atmosphere. I was very much encouraged by the respondents' keen interest in the interviews, and by the cooperation that they extended. Although I interviewed one person per household, other members eagerly listened, and sometimes made interesting comments on certain issues. Many of the informants wanted to know whether this research was purely an academic

concern, or if it would somehow contribute to the interests of the Montreal Bangladeshi community. Some requested that data regarding their use of the immigrant press be made available to the newspapers concerned so that could be better informed about the readers' expectations. I had to assure them that I would do my part, so that they did not feel their interview sessions were time misspent.

The interviews were very interesting. The respondents seemed to enjoy it, and so did I. Many of them brought up issues related to the confusions and contradictions surrounding the ethnic identity of Bangladeshis. Their personal frustrations about job and career advancement in Canada, or worries about their children's upbringing in a western culture were also brought up. Besides, the current political situation in Bangladesh was a frequent subject in a majority respondents' conversation. I had to divert them politely from Bangladesh politics to the specific question asked, to keep the interviewing process going. When the interviews ended I often found myself engaged in a lengthy discussion about Bangladeshi politics, or the local Bangladeshi community issues. And yes, traditional Bangladeshi food was always an attractive conclusion to the interviewing sessions.

I want to share with readers an interesting experience I had while visiting the respondents for interviewing. Entering most of the households gave me a feeling of having entered a 'mini Bangladesh'. There was a Bangladeshi calender, map, or painting hanging on the wall, Bangladeshi handicrafts and decorative pieces on the television or on the wall cabinet, Bangladeshi music playing which was turned down as I entered the house, Bangladeshi books on the book shelves; back issues of Bangladeshi newspapers lying around. I did not have the opportunity to enter the interior of the house beyond the living room. If I could, it might have given me a closer look at how these respondents' ethnic feeling finds expression in their domestic realm. Particularly, it would have been interesting to see how the second generation respondents relate to their ethnicity. I wonder how they decorate their rooms? Would they have a poster of a Bangladeshi movie star hanging on their walls? Or would it be a poster of some Canadian singer or hockey player? This would have provided information about what Canadian-born Bangladeshis feel attached to, and how it relates to their ethnic identity perceptions.

Besides interviewing 50 readers, I also interviewed Kabir Uddin, the editor of *Probashbangla*, *Banglabarta* editor Mr. Mamunur Rashid, and one sub-editor from each newspaper, as recommended by its editor. I asked the

editors about the newspapers' founding and their present situation, their circulation, finances and readership. They were also asked about issues that are considered important for the newspapers to cover, as well as why and how they define what is important, and what they perceive the role of the newspapers to be. I sought information from the sub-editors about the criteria for content selection and the kinds of requests they received from the readers regarding content.

## **2.4 DATA ANALYSIS:**

### **2.4.1 METHOD OF ANALYSIS:**

This dissertation required a research method which would gauge the respondents' perceptions and feelings of ethnicity as they are expressed in various communicative forms. Qualitative analysis offered such an interpretive mode. By allowing a focus on the readers' thoughts, sentiments, and communication activities, a qualitative approach enabled this study to explain how ethnic symbols influence their conceptual categories, maintain their cultural forms and lifestyles, systems of values and meanings, and crystallize their ethnic identity. This approach has also helped me to explore the immediate and the wider historical and cultural

contexts of the respondents to understand the meanings which they perceive in their cultural symbols.

Although qualitative analysis predominates in this dissertation, some level of quantification was found to be more suitable for analyzing and interpreting the content of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, and the extent of its use by the readers. I have also made use of quantitative methods in certain areas of the study where I felt it would better explain aspects of the respondents' ethnicity.

#### **2.4.2 UNIT OF ANALYSIS:**

This dissertation has used the individual as the unit of analysis to examine and account for variations in the respondents' ethnic perceptions and practice, and the differences in their pattern of consumption of the Bangladeshi immigrant press.

#### **2.4.3 EVIDENCE:**

Two factors count as evidence of the immigrant press' role in ethnic maintenance of its readership. One is the emphasis on ethnicity in the content of the Montreal Bangladeshi press, and a majority readers' acceptance of it. The second is a positive correlation between the readers' frequent exposure to the immigrant press and their greater preference for different aspects of ethnicity.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION:

In discussing the methods of inquiry and analysis, I have made constant references to the relationship between the nature of the data and the issues addressed in this research. An attempt has been made in my data analysis and interpretation to provide an understanding of the Bangladeshis' feelings of ethnicity, as revealed in the readers' comments, or in the newspaper content. I may not have completely succeeded in this effort. It was difficult to translate into English the typical meanings of expressions in Bangla language. Often the exact translation for the Bangla words could not be found, and I compromised with the closest match. Even with proper translation it was not easy to provide a sense of the culturally pervasive themes which are entwined in the words.

With the methodological guidelines before us, the research concerns of this dissertation - the respondents' ethnicity, and their consumption of the Montreal Bangladeshi press - can now be discussed. In the forthcoming chapter I shall investigate how the respondents perceive their ethnic identity and what factors influence their ethnic cohesion.



## CHAPTER 3

### IMAGINED COMMUNITIES AND FOND IMAGINING: THE READERS OF THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT PRESS

... community is a symbolic, rather than a structural construct... The distinction of communities, and reality of their boundaries lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them...

(Anthony Cohen, 1985: p. 98)

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION:

The displacement of the space-based logic of culture, communities, and identity in recent theorizing, and the emphasis on the salience of imagination in their construction (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Malkki, 1992), has provided the context for viewing ethnic communities as imagined constructs, constituted by a feeling of identity and belonging, deriving from an attachment to a shared body of symbols (Anderson, 1991; Cohen, 1985; Gans, 1979). Selected aspects of an ethnic culture which give members a sense of resemblance among themselves and distinction from other cultures, may serve as differentiating symbols for its imagination and representation, and consequently, as indices of its ethnic cohesion and continuity.

The present study views the readership of the Bangladeshi immigrant press in Montreal as an imagined ethnic community. It is considered an imagined community because the readers are not connected by any network of direct interpersonal relationship, but by an imaginatively constructed ethnic identity. The distinction of this imagined community stems from its belief in a common ancestry and a sense of identity and group boundary which are experienced and expressed through various symbols of the ethnic culture.

This chapter identifies and examines the symbols which emerged as relevant for the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press in perceiving themselves as an ethnic community. The symbols, which I refer to as 'forms of imagining' (a term borrowed from Anderson, 1981), mediate the ethnic identity and affiliation of the readers, and their attachment to these symbols enables the maintenance of their imagined (ethnic) community.

The ethnic identity perception of the respondents has two referents. One is situational, related to their present location in the Montreal Bangladeshi community; the other refers to the historical past of their ancestral country, Bangladesh. I begin with a sketch of Bangladeshi history, to provide an understanding of the historical roots of Bangladeshi identity.

### **3.2      THE HISTORICAL REFERENTS OF BANGLADESHI IDENTITY:**

This brief historical account unravels how Bangladeshi identity and its general contour, evolved as a consequence of the social, cultural, and political conditions in the past and present Bangladesh. In the process it will identify the symbols which have historically assumed significance in shaping the ethnic perceptions of its people and their quest for identity. The purpose of presenting this material is to demonstrate the historical significance of the symbols which surfaced as the basis for the respondents' ethnic perception and maintenance.

Located in the north-eastern corner of south Asia, Bangladesh is one of the world's newest states, independent only since 1971. 'Bangladesh' translates into 'land of the Bangla-speaking people', who are the world's eighth largest language group. Craig Baxter (1984: p. 1) points out that the ancient name 'Vanga' evolved into 'Banga' or 'Bengal', and later 'Bangladesh'. Historians have used the name Bengal to refer to the alluvial plains at the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers which comprise the present-day Bangladesh and the Indian provinces of West Bengal and Assam. The word 'Bangla' refers to the national language of Bangladesh, and the language of West Bengal. The term 'Bangali' designates a person

whose ancestral home is Bangladesh or West Bengal, and whose mother tongue is Bangla. In English both the language and the nation are called Bengali. I will refer to the nation and the language as Bangali and Bangla respectively. Bordering the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is surrounded on three sides by India, with which it shares common borders and also its culture and history. Bangladesh is a densely populated country with a population of over 125 million, living in an area of 144 thousand square kilometres.

Bangladesh is linguistically and religiously homogeneous. Among the ethnic groups, Bangalis are the majority (98%); Biharis number around 250 thousand, and the tribal population is less than a million (Canadian Global Almanac, 1996: pp. 323-4). Except for the few Biharis, and the tribes, Bangla is the mother tongue of everyone. Bangalis are a branch of the Indo-Aryan race which migrated to the eastern part of India during the second century B.C. (Ibid., p. 6). The name 'Bihari', deriving from the Indian province of Bihar, refers to the Urdu-speaking Muslims from Bihar who migrated to Pakistan in 1947. Most went to the western wing of Pakistan, with a few going to its eastern wing which is now Bangladesh. After the independence of Bangladesh some returned to Pakistan, a few integrated into Bangladeshi society, while others are in refugee camps

awaiting their repatriation to Pakistan. The tribal population includes the lowland tribes such as the Garos, Santhals, and the hill-tracts tribes such as the Maghs, Chakmas, and Tripuras. Almost 83% of the Bangladeshi population is Muslim, 16% Hindu; Buddhists, Christians and others comprise less than 1% (Canadian Global Almanac, 1996, p. 323-4).

### **3.2.1 PRE-INDEPENDENCE BANGLADESH:**

Historically and politically the lives of Bangladeshis are marked by the experience of almost two hundred (1772-1947) years of British colonialism, followed by 25 years of subjugation under Pakistani rule. In the aftermath of independence there was persecution at the hands of military rulers, and movements and bloodshed for the restoration of democracy. To Baxter (1984:p. 1), the history of Bangladesh reflects two of the greatest cleavages on the Indian sub-continent. First, the Hindu-Muslim antagonism, which in 1947 resulted in the partitioning of India into India and Pakistan. Second, the discordant relationship between the two wings of Pakistan, which led to a war and culminated in the independence of Bangladesh.

In 1947 present-day Bangladesh (then known as East Bengal) formed the eastern province of Pakistan, which was carved out of India on the basis of Muslim-majority settlement. The people of East Bengal, mostly

Muslims, were persuaded to join Pakistan with the assurance that a complete break with India was their only guarantee of freedom from Hindu economic domination. Muslims and Hindus in India had a long history of strained relations. After the arrival of the British rulers the Muslim power declined while the more commercially inclined Hindus prospered. Thus the mostly poor Bangali Muslims were easily persuaded to form a Muslim state- Pakistan. By joining Pakistan the Bangalis experienced a double separation. Not only was there a physical separation of 1000 miles between the two wings of Pakistan, there were also language differences separating the two peoples, and underlying differences in culture. Moreover, the Bangalis of East Pakistan felt torn apart as a people, separated from their fellow Bangalis in West Bengal.

The euphoria of independence was short-lived for the Bangalis. The vast linguistic and cultural differences between the two peoples of Pakistan became apparent almost immediately; and religion proved to be inadequate to hold the two peoples together. Within a year of Pakistan's independence the West Pakistani rulers attempted to smother the Bangla language, obliterate the Bangali culture, and began to systematically impose its own culture on the Bangalis. Deep-seated cultural prejudices against the Bangalis became apparent. The West Pakistanis tended to look down on

the Bangalis as lesser Muslims, descendants of converts and not of the same direct lineage as their own ancestors who had brought Islam to the country. The Bangali's love for their language and culture was considered pro-Hindu, pro-Indian, and unpatriotic. West Pakistani rulers emphasized that Pakistan was an Islamic state, and its people were Muslims first, and anything else afterwards. But Bangalis thought otherwise. They believed in a wider cultural nationalism, which rose above the religious differences between Hindus and Muslims, and the geographical/ political barriers between themselves and the Bangalis of West Bengal. The Pakistani rulers could not accept this cultural-linguistic loyalty, and considered it un-Islamic. Although 56% of Pakistan's population - the Bangalis of East Pakistan- spoke Bangla,<sup>3</sup> the Pakistani ruling elite proclaimed Urdu the state language of Pakistan. They justified the decision by maintaining that Urdu was sanctified by Islam, and Bangla was a pagan language, meant only for the "lesser" Muslims. Anyone opposing the decision was considered an enemy of the state of Pakistan. Attempts were made to change the Bangla language by forcibly replacing the Bangla script with Urdu's Arabic script.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Zunaid Kazi's web page on internet <http://WWW.asel.udel.edu/~Kazi/bangladesh/Akram.html>, 23rd March, 1993

The Bangalis were conscious and proud of their cultural and linguistic heritage, and refused to toe the West Pakistani line. Arrogant assertions and actions on part of the Pakistani rulers reinforced their sense of community, and they soon realized that religious uniformity could not compensate for the larger cultural needs. They demanded that the Bangla language receive an equal status with Urdu. When this was denied by Pakistani rulers the people protested and mass movements were built over a number of years despite official repression and sanctioned killing.

In a fiery demonstration on February 21, 1952 police, on orders from the central government, opened fire on protest marchers. Many Bangali students, intellectuals, professionals, and peasants were killed in the shooting. Ultimately, the Pakistani government capitulated and recognized Bangla as one of the two official languages of Pakistan. February 21st, known to Bangalis as 'Bhasha Dibash' (language day), is remembered every year in Bangladesh. A monument "Shahid Minar" (Martyrs' Monument) was built in memory of the martyrs of the language movement.

Although the language issue was resolved the Bangalis still remained politically and economically subservient. The Pakistani government, dominated by the West Pakistani elite, imposed a form of colonialism on



the east. The Bangalis were discriminated against for admission to posts in the administration, armed forces, civil services, as well as to technical and higher education. Foreign trade, the division of export earnings and the allocation of funds for development became subjects of serious dispute between Pakistan's two wings. So too was the issue of constitutional arrangements, which resulted in unequal Bangali representation in the national assembly. What started as a movement for the preservation of the Bangla language and culture transformed into a movement for the autonomy of East Pakistan. Time and again, the Pakistani regime tried to repress the movement with the use of force.

The Bangalis stood firm in their quest to shape their own political destiny. After years of movements, and years of dictatorial rule by the West Pakistani authorities, general elections were held in December 1970. The Awami League, a political party from the east, received a massive mandate for its charter of autonomy in the election. It won an absolute majority in the Pakistan National Assembly. The Pakistani government ignored the election results and refused to hand over power which led to a constitutional deadlock. The Bangalis began an indefinite non-violent, non-cooperation movement which paralysed the central government. It infuriated the Western leaders to such an extent that, on the night of

March 25, 1971 the Pakistani Army (which had been secretly paratrooping soldiers in the past few months) cracked down brutally on the unarmed Bangali civilians of East Pakistan. The genocide unleashed by the Pakistani forces over nine months left 3,000,000 people dead, 100,000 women violated; while another 10,000,000 had to flee to India as refugees<sup>4</sup>. In the words of Sisir Chattarjee (1972: p. viii), the genocide had "put even Hitler and Goebbels to shame, and never perhaps in the history of mankind such inhuman and barbarous brutality has been invoked by the rulers in the name of safeguarding the integrity of the nation." On March 26, 1971 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of East Pakistan's main political party, the Awami League, declared the independence of East Pakistan and named the new country Bangladesh.

The Pakistani army crackdown catapulted the civil disobedience by Bangalis into full-scale armed resistance and guerilla warfare. After nine months of war, on December 16, 1971 Bangladeshi freedom fighters, assisted by the Indian army, forced the Pakistan occupation army to surrender. The day is marked as 'Victory Day', and proudly celebrated in Bangladesh every year.

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<sup>4</sup> Sources for statistics on genocide and refugees: National Geographic, September, 1972; and Newsweek, 27th March, 1972 respectively.

### 3.2.2 POST-INDEPENDENCE BANGLADESH:

The national yearnings of the Bangalis found their societal expression in the emergence of Bangladesh, a state based on a common language and cultural heritage. Since winning independence in 1971, as Baxter (1984:p. 114) points out, the country's political history has been marked by an unending cycle of military rule, with short intervals of civilian governments. In its 25-year history, the country has had 15 years of army rule with three coups, 18 coup attempts, and two presidents have been assassinated, indicating a level of instability which has been difficult to bear.

After independence the first government was led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who espoused Bangali nationalism. After its bitter experience of Pakistan's religion-based national identity, the government opted for secularism as a principle of the state. This was done with the intention of allowing for a fuller expression of the population's ethnic homogeneity. With the fall of the government in 1975, following a military coup during which Mujib and most of his family members were killed, Ziaur Rahman, a general-turned-president came to power. He rejected Bangali nationalism, alleging that it had a pro-Indian bias, and replaced it with a territorially defined Bangladeshi nationalism which designated anyone residing in

Bangladesh as Bangladeshi. This decision provoked serious controversies and confusions over ethnic versus territorial definitions of identity; a debate which is still unresolved. Zia also expunged references to secularism from the constitution. God and country were one holy unity for him, upon which national consciousness was to be based. Subsequent governments maintained the same line, suggesting that Bangali identity and secularism are not in conformity with Islam. They emphasized upholding Islam and expressed solidarity with the Islamic world. General Zia was assassinated in a coup in 1981. Another General, Ershad, who seized power from the civilian government in 1982, amended the constitution and proclaimed Islam as the state religion.

These military or quasi-military rulers who governed Bangladesh from 1975 until 1990, attempted to rehabilitate those individuals or groups who opposed the independence war, or who had collaborated with the Pakistani army. Through manipulation of information and media control, they distorted the history of independence to keep the new generation ignorant about what had really happened. They also tried to generate identity confusion by stirring up anti-Indian and religious sentiments. Threats, persecution, imprisonment, and secret killings- all means were adopted by the authorities to weaken the ethno-linguistic

identity of the people, and to remain in power. It is no surprise that Muslim fundamentalists and anti-independence forces gave these governments their total support. With government backing they, through their party platforms, also attempted to make religion an issue.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism did not materialize in Bangladesh because of a growing mass movement of students, intellectuals, and cultural activists, coupled with the successful mass literacy and social awareness programmes which these groups undertook in the rural areas. Over the years, the people have categorically rejected the politics of religion. Despite all the attempts by different governments and the fundamentalists, Baxter (1984: p. 31) observes that religion in Bangladesh remains a personal matter, more prevalent in government rhetoric, than in daily life.

In 1990 a pro-democracy movement unseated military dictator General Ershad from the presidency. The country's first genuinely free election followed and the civilian government of Khaleda Zia, the wife of former president Ziaur Rahman, was formed. But the leader of the main opposition, Sheikh Hasina Wazed, accused the governing party of corruption and vote rigging. She demanded that Khaleda Zia resign, and handover power to a non-partisan care-taker government which would hold

a new election. A two-year long campaign and a political stand-off which incapacitated the Zia government ended with her resignation in March 1996. At the time of writing this dissertation, Sheikh Hasina's Awami League has won the election, and is due to form the new government. It is the same party which led the country's war of independence and championed secularism and ethno-linguistic identity. It will be interesting to see if, after being out of power for 21 years, they pursue the same ideology, and what the consequences will be for the identity perception of the people.

### **3.2.3 HISTORICAL REFERENTS OF IDENTITY:**

Homogeneity, in terms of language, religion, and a small territory contribute to the cohesion of the Bangladeshi people. Besides, the shared sense of historical continuity, especially "the baptism of fire, that is the independence war", which the people experienced, has proved to be the strongest unifying force for the people of Bangladesh (Baxter, 1984: p. 113).

**Ethnicity.** In 1947 the Bangalis were faced with the choice of remaining Indian, or of becoming part of Pakistan. During this period religion was the most salient feature of their identity. But the Bangali spirit was awakened by the Pakistani rulers' repression of the Bangla language

and culture. Through their struggle for the preservation of their culture and language, it became clear to the Bangalis that while religion was important, their ethnicity, language in particular, was crucial to their identity. During the independence war of 1971 ethnicity became a far more forceful determinant than religion. Through this struggle Bangalis became a nation even before they acquired their independence from Pakistan and gained a territory of their own.

In post-independence Bangladesh questions about whether ethnic or national identity should take precedence continue to confront the people. I mentioned earlier that two conflicting sources of identity cause this dilemma. On the one hand, there is Bangali nationalism, an ethno-linguistic identity, forged through linguistic and cultural affiliation and common historical experiences with the Bangalis in the Indian province of West Bengal. On the other hand, there is Bangladeshi nationalism, a territorially defined national identity, which considers anyone Bangladeshi who lives more or less permanently in Bangladesh and participates in its social, economic, political life.

Some people in Bangladesh assert that they are both Bangali and Bangladeshi, and find no contradiction between the two identities. Those adhering to Bangladeshi nationalism argue that the very word Bangali

refers to both the Bangalis in Bangladesh and in West Bengal, and thus confers no distinct identity on the Bangladeshis. They consider the two Bangalis, residing in the two countries, to be different. Moreover, they allege that Bangali nationalism implies exclusion of those who live in Bangladesh, but are not Bangla-speakers, such as the tribal people. These two types of identity expressions are common in Bangladesh.

**Language.** Historically, language was, and still is, the basic component of the Bangladeshi identity construction, and it is considered to be the quintessence of Bangali. For Bangladeshis it is the binding force of their culture and nationalism. During the language movement and the independence war it became a crucial symbol of nationalism and emancipation. Language created the Bangali nation and the country of Bangladesh, and gave it its solidarity and uniqueness. In independent Bangladesh language remains the same crucial binding chord of the people. The country's constitution made Bangla the state language. It is everywhere- on street signs, auto license plates, commercial sites, government offices and documents, in text books, and in the school as the medium of instruction. Roles and actions, practices and performances, aspirations and despair, emotion, sentiment, passion, Bangladeshis express everything in their language. Although Bangla no longer faces any threat



of suppression, still at every national event a renewed pledge is made to uphold Bangla in every sphere of life. This is the Bangladeshis' way of acknowledging the significance of their language, as well as showing their gratitude to martyrs of the language movement.

**History.** The Bangladeshis earned their freedom after experiencing years of oppression, and many political and cultural resistance movements. A large number of people staked and lost their lives for Bangladesh to become a reality. Throughout the development of the nation, history itself has acted for cohesion of the people, and provided them with a sense of identity and continuity. For the present-day Bangladeshis history, and the recent past, is a highly emotional matter. They are obsessed with history. In national celebrations, intellectual seminars, politicians' speeches, literature, or in private discussion, references to history are amazing. History pertaining to Bangalis in general, and Bangladesh in particular, is a significant part of Bangladeshi identity perception and expression.

**Politics.** The experiences of political turbulence under British colonialism as well as under Pakistani rule, and the constant political trauma and movements to restore democracy in post-independence Bangladesh, have kept Bangladeshis forever concerned about, and interested in, various aspects of the country's politics. In intellectual

discussions or as a pass-time, politics has always been, and continues to be, a common concern.

**Charismatic Leadership.** Baxter (p. 115) observes that charismatic leadership is an additional important unifying force for Bangladeshis. During different periods of history Bangalis rallied behind a leader who crusaded for a specific cause and guided the nation's quest for identity.

**Religion.** Despite efforts of some governments and Muslim fundamentalists, religion did not emerge as a symbolic meeting ground for the shaping of a Bangladeshi identity. Throughout history the majority of Bangladeshis considered, and continue to consider, religion as a personal matter. They believe each person may have her/his own idea of what constitutes proper religious behaviour. They do not perceive it as a system to be imposed on people, and abhor religion-based politics.

In summary, it may be said that the major symbols which historically shaped identity perceptions of the people of Bangladesh are ethnicity, language, politics, history, and charismatic leadership. In the coming section I shall describe the factors which are relevant to the ethnic identity of the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press in Montreal, and how they are represented in it. Suffice to say at this point, the Montreal Bangladeshi community is generally viewed by its members as an

overseas extension of the homeland of Bangladesh. All Bangladeshis, at home or abroad, are considered to be members of a single community. Only a handful express a double allegiance- both to the native country and culture and to Canada.

### **3.3 THE MAKING AND MAINTENANCE OF THE IMAGINED ETHNIC COMMUNITY:**

This section offers a descriptive analysis of the symbols through which the readership of the Bangladeshi immigrant press experiences and expresses its ethnic identity. These symbols are considered constituents of the readers' imagined ethnic connection, and are taken as the ways in which the "imagined community" is constructed and maintained. The symbols referred to include both external emblems or observable behaviour, as well as internal characteristics and subjective feelings of identity. While discussing the symbolic components in each dimension, I shall explore their salience for the making and maintenance of the respondents' imagined ethnic community.

#### **3.3.1 OBJECTIVE FORMS OF IMAGINING:**

Objective markers of ethnicity which surfaced in my interviews include: the use of ethnic language; family and marriage practices;

consumption of ethnic food; celebration of ethnic festivals; preferences in purchases; contact with, and visits to, the home country; ethnic group friendship; ethnic neighbourhood residence; participation in ethnic community events; membership in ethnic voluntary organizations; attendance at ethnic school, attendance at ethnic mosque, and the use of the ethnic mass media. For convenience of discussion, I have classified these symbols under three broad categories- ethnic culture, ethnic interaction, and ethnic institutions.

**3.3.1.1 Ethnic Culture:** The culture of ethnic communities is a symbolic source of proud identification. Under ethnic group culture, scholars (Driedeger, 1989; Anderson and Frideres, 1981; Isajiw, 1981) have often subsumed ethnic language use, family and marriage practices, choice of friends, neighbourhood of residence, dress, home decor, art, dance, music, food, festivals, leisure activities and membership in ethnic religious or voluntary organizations. My description of ethnic culture includes language, family, endogamy, ethnic food, ethnic festivals, and purchases from ethnic shops.

**Language.** The significance of language in the constitution of a culture is well-demonstrated by Edward Sapir (1933):

The mere fact of a common speech serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language. (Edward Sapir, 1933: p. 159)

Language is important for an ethnic group not only as a tool of communication, but also as a fundamental expression of a group's collective identity, and a means of ensuring its maintenance. Many scholars (Park, 1922; Shaffir, 1972; Reitz, 1980; Isajiw, 1975; Anderson and Frideres, 1981; Driedeger, 1989) have labelled language the best indicator of current, and continued, ethnic cohesion, and have argued for a strong positive correlation between ethnic language retention and the development and reinforcement of ethnic consciousness. Questions of language retention in this dissertation were considered from three view points- the ability to read and write Bangla, the frequency of its use in everyday life, and the significance attached by the respondents to their children's or potential children's knowledge of Bangla.

All of the respondents, including those of the second generation, can read and write Bangla. The Canadian-born generation learned it from parents, and at the Bangla Sunday schools they attended when they were young. Bangla is reportedly used by everyone for communication at home. It is also used with in-group friends, at community gatherings, when

writing or calling family members or friends in Bangladesh, and in reading Bangladeshi newspapers, magazines, and books. Almost 66% reported that they read Bangladeshi newspapers regularly; 54% said they have read some Bangla books, and 72% have read some Bangla magazines during the last three months.

The use of Bangla is obvious for this sample. More noteworthy is the symbolic value of Bangla - the significance attached to its use and retention. This is not unexpected because for many ethnic groups the expressive role of language attains more significance than its instrumental role (Isajiw, 1981: p. 20). When the respondents were asked what they considered the most important aspect of Bangladeshi culture, 84% mentioned that the Bangla language is the essence of being Bangladeshi. The readers made frequent references to the language movement of 1952 and language loyalty was expressed as a mark of respect to the martyrs who had enshrined their language rights. They expressed a felt obligation to uphold and retain that proud heritage.

All respondents also consider it extremely important that the practice of Bangla be retained; 80% feel that their children or potential children must know and use Bangla. They perceive language as the basic means for children to identify with Bangladeshi culture. It is through

learning and practising Bangla, they believe, that children will come to know and develop appreciation for other aspects of their culture. One parent says: " the children must know Bangla. On this issue I cannot compromise. I don't want to communicate with my children in English or French. That way, they will miss the nuances of our culture, which can be expressed in Bangla alone... and without Bangla there cannot be a real bond between myself and the children." Most parents see it as a moral and parental obligation to teach their children to read and write Bangla, and to encourage them to practice it. Respondents from the second generation also expressed intense pride in their ethnic language ability, and considered that its retention is important.

The data indicates that the use of Bangla is retained irrespective of age, education, generation, length of residence in Canada or host language skills. Use of Bangla does not appear to interfere with the respondents' knowledge and/or use of English. Almost 98% of the sample can read and write English comfortably; they have learned it at school from their childhood. Their motivation to learn French seems less intense. Only 36% of the respondents reported knowing French. Among the others, there are those who have been in Canada between ten and twenty years and still have little or no knowledge of French. Being from the Indian sub-

continent may explain the greater fluency in English than French. As noted earlier, historically language has served as an identity symbol for the Bangladeshis, and has been the basis for the founding of Bangladesh. For this Montreal Bangladeshi sample as well, Bangla is more than a means of communication, it is a symbol of ethnic identity. Retention of Bangla also functions as a means for increased ethnic group interaction, for preserving ethnic culture, and for strengthening ethnic identity.

**Family.** Ethnic behaviour in the family and the family's attitude towards the maintenance of ethnicity, may form a strong foundation of ethnic cohesion (Herberg, 1989: p. 183). For this sample of Bangladeshi readers, family serves as a powerful agent of adherence to the ethnic culture, and as a reinforcement of ethnic identification. The respondents feel that the family values of mutual love and obligation, sharing, and solidarity embody the highest ideals of human life, and are therefore of central importance. The Bangladeshi immigrants brought with them to Canada the social codes which define family life in Bangladesh, and the modes of family interrelations learned in the home country remain important influences in their lives in Montreal. The concept of familial obligation is considered very important. Providing for the children's material needs and education, guiding them about their responsibilities,



their behaviour within the family, as well as their social interaction and social attitudes, and arranging for good marriages, are all understood to be important parental obligations. Respect towards parents and elderly family members, emotional and financial support of parents in their old age, making economic contributions to the household, consulting with parents in matters such as choice of a career, of a spouse, or leaving the parental home, are all viewed as obligatory for the children. Together these obligations create a strong parent-child bond, and give parents strict control over their children's socialization. From early on children are taught to value and respect parents and the elderly. They are sent to Bangla schools, and are told about the history of their ancestral country. Parents try to instill in their children a pride in their language, culture, history, and to stimulate an attachment to Bangladesh. One parent remarks, " I taught them to read and write Bangla, taught Bangla poems, songs and dance... I kept telling them about important events in our history, our national heroes, our brave fight for independence, so that they know they are no bohemians, they have a rich tradition to be proud of... my children have promised me they will go to Bangladesh every year to serve our dear motherland in whatever way they can..."

By observing regular celebrations of the different festivals at home the children also learn basic Bangladeshi customs. They are encouraged to socialize with peers of Bangladeshi descent and with other fellow countrymen in Montreal and to attend and participate in community events. Almost 66% of the respondents reported that their children always accompany them to Bangladeshi community celebrations and cultural events. When children come of age, their parents discuss with them the Bangladeshi norms regarding dating, leaving the parental home, and marriage customs. As part of a close-knit community, parents prefer that their children date someone from the same ethnicity. Leaving the parental home before marriage is considered totally unacceptable. Most second generation interviewees appear to appreciate these family values, and to accept the family socialization practices without objection. As one respondent puts it, "... to an outsider it may appear to be too rigid, too much parental control, no freedom for children, but I have learned through my experiences that the guidance, the strong moral support, and security that a Bangladeshi family offers, really make a lot of difference..."

These examples indicate that Bangladeshi parents exercise a tremendous influence on their children's behaviour and interactions, their attitudes towards others, and towards their ethnic identity. For the children

the sense of Bangladeshi-ness is filtered through their familial experience. This is where they learn their ancestral language, traditions and customs, and come to know important group symbols.

The family socialization trends of these Bangladeshi readers are in fact similar to those of other ethnic families in North America, where the commonly observed practices include ethnic language use by parents and children when speaking to each other, sending children to ethnic schools, strict supervision and control of children's friendships and personal relationships (Isajiw, 1981: p. 83). Family is one of the primary conduits for ethnic identity creation in the Montreal sample. The strong family ties and parental supervision work to keep ethnic language and customs alive, influence family members' community participation and friendship networks, and serve as a nucleus for a continuous reinforcement of their ethnic identity. Ethnicity for these Bangladeshi individuals is a family affair, a "collective practice and celebration of ethnic heritage" (Herberg, 1989: p. 184).

**Endogamy.** Endogamy is another practice which functions to maintain a sense of ethnic uniqueness. A number of ethnicity scholars (Herberg, 1989: p. 184; Driedeger, 1989; Isajiw, 1981) believe that it

marks the "initiation of the family" as an agent of ethnic practice and continuity.

In the Montreal Bangladeshi group endogamy continues to be the norm and the rule among those who are married. Even those who are not yet married express preferences for Bangladeshi partners. They feel that the common basis of language and culture which endogamy provides is essential for a proper communication and understanding between spouses. Parental approval of the choice of spouse is also considered crucial by a majority of our sample, though some think that marriage arrangements should be left to the person concerned. Even if it is one's own decision, all emphasize that marrying their own kind is of great importance. These views reflect marriage values and practices in the culture of the homeland.

In Bangladeshi culture the proposal of marriage is initiated by the groom's party and marriages are arranged by the parents. When it comes to finding spouses for themselves, or for their children, Bangladeshis in Montreal follow the same strategy they would have used at home. Matches are arranged into known families, or to those families known to their friends or relatives. A groom or bride from Bangladesh is preferred over prospective local brides and grooms. This is especially true in the case of brides. Bangladeshi girls born or raised in Canada are perceived as less

perfect (or less submissive?) as wives and daughters-in-law. Locally raised brides are not satisfactory for many, and making marriage trips to Bangladesh is a frequent practice. Matters of compatibility between spouses raised in two different social contexts, and its consequences for conjugal relationship are not of serious concern. Recently, locally arranged marriages are gaining acceptance, though inter-marriages are still frowned upon.

The degree of endogamous marriage within an ethnic group indicates its potential to hold on to an ethnic heritage and to create the next generation of ethnics (Herberg, 1989: p. 184). The absolute endogamy among these Bangladeshi respondents contributes to their ethnic identity reinforcement and to a large degree, to their ethnic maintenance. Through mutual influence of the spouses, ethnic language and ethnic customs are practised on a daily basis and are retained. Old values are kept alive, in-group friendships and social interactions are strengthened, and participation in community events and organizations is enhanced. In a family with both parents from the same ethnic background, ethnic culture is more smoothly transmitted to the next generation and its persistence is ensured.

**Ethnic Food.** Herbert Gans (1979: p. 205) notes that ethnic food is a "ready source of ethnic symbolism", and an important part of ethnic traditions. More than any other cultural pattern, consumption of ethnic food can be retained across generations (Isajiw, 1981: pp. 35-41). All of the respondents were asked about the kind of food prepared in their home on a daily basis. A majority (88%) responded that they prepare Bangladeshi food regularly, as well as for special occasions. They additionally asserted that to be "pure Bangladeshi" meant not being able to do without traditional Bangladeshi food. To them no other cuisine substitutes for their own ethnic menus. One said, "my taste buds respond to one kind only-Bangladeshi food". For this sample, ethnic food forms one of the basis of being Bangladeshi. Irrespective of the length of residence in Canada, this feeling is common to both immigrants and those born and brought up in Canada.

**Shopping.** Closely associated with food practices among certain ethnic groups are shopping activities. But this was not found to be the case in the Montreal group, where Bangladeshi food stores were singled out by only 34% of the sample. Otherwise people's shopping was dependant on the availability and quality of goods, and physical proximity to the stores.

**Festivals.** Herbert Gans (1979: p. 205) mentions the celebration of festivals as a major means of practising and maintaining ethnicity. Festivals are a ritualized symbol for ethnic groups (Driedeger, 1989: p. 161) to create a sense of belonging and an ongoing tradition. For the Montreal Bangladeshi readers, festivals are a part of their cultural identification. When asked how often Bangladeshi festivals were celebrated in their homes, 72% of the informants reported they celebrate them regularly, while another 12% do so occasionally. Among the festivals celebrated at home are cultural and religious anniversaries. Respondents further mentioned participating in celebrations arranged by friends or by community organizations. These celebrations are a place for children to learn about ethnic customs and a means for all to perfect their practices.

**3.3.1.2 Ethnic Interaction:** This category comprises home contacts and home visits, ethnic friends, ethnic neighbourhood residence, and participation in ethnic community events.

**Home Contacts and Home Visits.** One way in which ethnic ties are maintained is through correspondence with, and visit to, the home country, during which many facets of ethnic identity are reconstituted and reinforced (Gans, 1979: p.208; Isajiw, 1975: p. 135). The Montreal Bangladeshi group has a high degree of contact with Bangladesh through

frequent phone calls and letters to family members, friends, and relatives. About 81% mentioned writing to or calling family members at least twice a month, while 54% communicates with friends and relatives once every five to six weeks. Visits to Bangladesh are another aspect of contact, much looked forward to by all. Because of the high cost involved only 40% had made a home visit since arriving in Canada. Among the 60% who have not returned are those who came as political refugees and are fearful of persecution if they go back. A lack of Canadian permanent residency papers is another reason why they do not travel. Nevertheless, most of these individuals expressed a strong desire to go to Bangladesh, and mentioned working long hours to save enough money to go home on an extended visit as soon as the opportunity arrives. Of the 40% who do travel, 26% visit Bangladesh once every two to three years on a regular basis. Maintaining contact with the home country, or a desire to do so, are common among both newcomers and long time residents, immigrants as well as Canadian-born children who regularly call or write to their cousins, uncles, aunts or grandparents. A positive association was observed between the respondents' home contact, their desire to visit the home country, and their ethnic identity. Contact with Bangladeshi friends in Montreal and



visits to their homes appears to function as a proxy for the respondents' absence from Bangladesh.

**Ethnic friends.** Despite opportunities to associate with persons outside one's ethnic group, a significant portion of many ethnic group members, including both immigrants and successive generations, often tend to maintain close friendships within their own group. This is particularly true in North America, where cohesion of different ethnic groups is most apparent in the choice of ethnic friends (Isajiw, 1981: pp. 20-1). Respondents in our Montreal sample maintain close friendship networks with their own group members. Irrespective of generation, length of residence, education, or age, the closest friends for most are of Bangladeshi origin. Of those interviewed, 64% said their closest friends were Bangladeshi, 28% maintain a mixed friendship circle, while best friends of Canadian origin are reported by only 8% of the sample. The same pattern was reflected when respondents were asked about their interaction with neighbours. This suggests that a majority of the respondents are encompassed by their ethnic group networks. This almost exclusive ethnic friendship network is likely to strengthen the practice and retention of ethnic language and culture, enhance participation in ethnic leisure pursuits, increase involvement in community organizations and events, and

thus, reinforce the ethnic identity of Bangladeshis living in Montreal. Like other researchers (Reitz 1980; Jeffres and Hur, 1981; Driedeger, 1989), we have found that informants with more ethnic group friends have tended to develop a stronger ethnic identification.

**Ethnic Neighbourhood Residence.** Successful maintenance of ethnic language and culture often depends on an ethnic group's control over a given geographical space. Since not all ethnic groups are able to maintain exclusive control over a territory, they tend to form residential concentrations (Driedeger, 1989: p. 159). Ethnic neighbourhood residence is a strong means for fostering ethnic cohesion, and it may have a significant impact on ethnic-group ties, retention of ethnic language and customs, and ethnic consciousness (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965; De Vos, 1975; Reitz, 1980; Anderson and Frideres, 1981; Herberg, 1989).

A common feature of North American cities is that certain areas have come to be identified with certain ethnic groups. Bangladeshis in Canada also tend to live near their own kind. There is a territorial concentration as well as a residential concentration by Bangladeshis. Most Bangladeshis live in three cities- Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. In Montreal the Bangladeshi population is concentrated in three areas- Parc Extension, Plamondon, and downtown. These neighbourhoods are marked

by Bangladeshi groceries, clothing stores, video clubs, jewellery shops, recreational facilities, car rentals and automobile and electronic repair shops.

The Bangladeshi readers were asked about their perception of the composition of their neighbourhoods. About 54% said that they think they live in a Bangladeshi neighbourhood, 30% said that they were in a mixed neighbourhood of various ethnic groups, and 16% reported living in an English Canadian residential area. About the same percentage distribution was reflected in their interaction with neighbours. Those residing in an ethnic neighbourhood were found to have more in-group friends than others, to be more involved in ethnic voluntary organizations and ethnic leisure pursuits, and more conscious and vocal about their ethnic identity.

The residential concentration of these Bangladeshi readers is, in effect, likely to develop in them a sense of belonging to the larger Bangladeshi ethnic community in Montreal, and, by extension, in Canada. This voluntary social isolation tends to restrict their out-group interactions, and to increase in-group interaction, strengthening their ethnic ties and identity. Furthermore, Bangladeshi neighbourhoods allow for the practice of ethnic language and customs in everyday life, with the strong possibility of their retention. It enables the sustenance of ethnic institutions, which,

in fulfilling the residents' material and cultural needs, keep their social interactions within the community.

**Attendance of Ethnic Community Events.** Major occasions for Bangladeshi community events in Montreal are Independence Day, Language Day, Victory Day, Pahela Baishakh- the first day of Bangla calendar year - and other historical and religious anniversaries. Activities include the laying of floral wreaths at make-shift monuments, seminars and meetings, cultural shows and competitions, sports events, dinners, car rallies, and picnics. Respondents were asked if they attended community events, and about the frequency of their attendance. Parents were asked whether and how often the children accompanied them. Aside from these occasions, participation in mainstream events was also explored. About 62% of the group reported attending ethnic community events, of whom 44% mentioned that they always attend, while the rest got "usually". Of the various community events, the largest attendance rate (58%) is for cultural shows, including concerts, theatre, or dance performances. In 66% of the cases, parents mentioned always taking their children with them. Cultural events were also found to be very popular among the second generation, with 66% of this group attending regularly, and the rest occasionally. Canadian cultural events which attract Bangladeshis include the annual

Fireworks, the Jazz Festival, and the Just for Laugh Festival. However, only 12% mentioned attending mainstream events.

Attendance at community cultural events provides the occasion and stimulus for the Bangladeshi readers to experience, express, and affirm their ethnic identification. The venue of cultural shows furnishes a meeting place for kinship interaction and for social bonding. Interest in, and frequent attendance at, community cultural events keeps the community's social relationships intact, and lessens the group's interest in joining mainstream events and activities. Exposure to Bangladeshi performing arts doubtlessly develops an awareness of, and appreciation for, their cultural uniqueness, and this further reinforces their ethnic identity.

**3.3.1.3 Ethnic Institutions:** Ethnic institutions are another powerful mechanism which contributes to the creation and maintenance of ethnic boundaries. Institutional completeness, or the degree to which an ethnic community has developed its own institutional network, may serve as an indicator of its cohesion (Breton, 1964: p. 196). The more institutionally complete an ethnic community is, the higher its level of in-group communication, the greater the likelihood for its retention of ethnic language and customs, and the higher its use of the ethnic mass media (Isajiw, 1975: p. 130; Driedeger, 1989: p. 160; Herberg, 1989: p. 97). By

keeping social interactions within the group, and by providing a continuity of ethnic culture, ethnic institutional completeness can reinforce ethnic identity.

If the presence of church, welfare, educational, cultural organizations, and the mass media are the marks of a community's high institutional strength (Breton, 1964), then the 126 registered institutions which Montreal Bangladeshis maintain, including welfare, religious, cultural, educational, financial, business organizations, and the mass media, represents the community's moderate degree of institutional completeness. Through the goods and services they offer, or the activities they organize, these Bangladeshi institutions make the local Bangladeshis more aware of their ethnic culture. By providing for greater interaction among the group members, they stimulate and strengthen their sense of ethnic distinction.

The availability of ethnic organizations is simply a prerequisite for wishing to preserve an ethnic identity. Redecki (1979: pp. xvii, 227) points out that individuals who are affiliated with such organizations are likely to demonstrate a strong sense of ethnic identity, and through their membership reinforce that identity. Through their activities ethnic voluntary organizations provide the context for the expression and sharing of ideas among fellow ethnics in their own language, meet their desire for

familiar customs and cultural practices, create an ethnic awareness and pride, which all strengthen their ethnic identity.

Bangladeshi voluntary organizations in Montreal have a common basis of identity which is evident in their Bangladeshi names, their language of communication- Bangla, their exclusive policies which limit membership and participation to Bangladeshis, and in the focus of their activities. Their activities reveal an emphasis on the practice and retention of their ethnic language, traditions and customs, and its transmission to the immigrants and successive generations. Through their range of activities they provide a setting for contacts among local Bangladeshis and serve as centres for their sociocultural and recreational activities. Through these, they facilitate in-group interaction, create bonds of identity among members, accentuate their sense of ethnic distinctiveness, and serve as sources of affirmation of their ethnic identity.

In our sample, participation was measured by asking respondents if they were members of any voluntary organization, and if so, of what type. A total of 56% reported being organization members, of which second generation respondents comprise 12%. Most (42%) are members of cultural and youth organizations, 10% are involved in political organizations, and 4% in regional organizations. Their activities range from

organizing meetings and cultural shows to participating in them. Considering the respondents' wide range of involvement in cultural organizations, youth associations, ethnic schools, and the ethnic mass media, they are considered to play an influential role in the community's ethnic cohesion.

**Cultural and Youth Organizations.** Cultural organizations and youth associations emphasize the practice and preservation of Bangladeshi culture and customs. This is achieved through the celebration of cultural and historical anniversaries, periodic cultural performance events of Bangladeshi songs, dance, theatre, and recitation, lectures, conventions, and discussion meetings about Bangladeshi history and culture. Often these organizations sponsor scholars and entertainment performers from Bangladesh to appear at such events which serves as an added attraction to members, as well as to non-members, and works to secure their attachment to the ancestral country and culture. One of the principal goals of these organizations is to entice the second generation to attend and participate in their events.

The rate of involvement of the informants in our sample indicates that for many ethnic voluntary organizations function as a means to maintain cultural distinctiveness. These organizations are very likely to



confine their social network within the community. In fact, only 4% reported membership in any mainstream organization. For the second generation exposure to Bangladeshi traditions and customs through membership in these organizations is likely to broaden their interest in other areas of their ethnic culture, and to strengthen their ethnic identity. The ethnic values learned in the family are also likely to be reinforced in the process. Overall, membership in Bangladeshi voluntary organizations has been found to be positively associated with the respondents' ethnic identity.

**Ethnic School.** According to Isajiw (1981), Driedeger (1989), and Reitz (1980), attendance at ethnic schools can be a significant influence for ethnic group cohesion. Currently there are two Bangladeshi Sunday schools in Montreal which attempt to infuse in the immigrants' children, and the Canadian-born Bangladeshis with an understanding and awareness of Bangladeshi culture and history. The schools are active in teaching the children to read and write Bangla, and to take pride in it. Integrated with language lessons are lessons on Bangladeshi history, basic customs, and traditional songs and dances. To encourage children, the schools often arrange cultural shows and competitions which include the participation of their students.

This study found that 66% of the Canadian born respondents attended Bangla schools during their childhood. Seventy five percent of the parents in this sample reported having sent, or presently sending their children to ethnic schools. Most respondents consider Bangla schools to be very important for the transmission of Bangladeshi culture and customs to their children or potential children. Those attaching significance to Bangla schools and to their children or potential children's knowledge of ethnic language and culture, also emphasized their ethnic identification. For the children, Bangladeshi cultural values and customs learned in the family are likely to be reinforced by their attendance of Bangla schools. The Bangla school, as a place for meeting other Bangladeshi children of their own age, will probably bring them into closer contact with their ethnic culture and community, and enhance their ethnic identity.

**Ethnic Mosque.** Religious practices are another, even if less important, component of ethnic identity. Researchers (Driedeger, 1989; Anderson and Frideres, 1981; De Vos, 1975: p. 13; Shibutani and Kwan, 1965; and Gordon, 1964) believe that the practice of folk beliefs, as well as of universalist faiths, including the major religions of the world, can strengthen ethnic consciousness and forge ethnic group cohesion. These

researchers have affirmed that the extent of attendance at a common place of worship can serve as an indicator of the degree of ethnic cohesion.

Bangladeshis in Montreal have four mosques, the community has yet to establish its own temple and church. So, my discussion is limited to mosque attendance. The mosques offer daily and weekly services every Friday, as well as special services for religious festivals, weddings, and funerals. Respondents were asked about the frequency of their mosque attendance. Overall, their attendance is very low and irregular. One possible reason may be the average respondents' young age. About 52% reported not going to the mosque at all, among the balance, only 18% attends regularly on a weekly basis. For others mosque attendance is occasional. Not only does this sample show a low mosque attendance, the relationship between it and their ethnic maintenance is insignificant. In my discussion of Bangladeshi history I noted that religion never assumed more importance than ethnicity during the nation's entire history. This is also true for this sample. Perhaps, because these individuals grew up in a religiously homogeneous society with an overwhelming Muslim majority, religion never formed a conscious border of their identity.

**Ethnic Mass Media.** To many (Subervi-Velez, 1986; Jeffres and Hur, 1983), the very existence of the ethnic mass media is evidence of the

persistence of ethnic groups. The nature and extent of media use are therefore often used as an index of their ethnic maintenance (Kim, 1988). The present study considers the Bangladeshi immigrant press as an institution through which the Bangladeshi world-view is constructed and reinforced. The immigrant press contributes to the maintenance of the imagined community of its readers. The following two chapters will examine how this "imagined" connection is created and nurtured, through an investigation of our Montreal group's readership of their newspapers.

### **3.3.2 SUBJECTIVE FORMS OF IMAGINING:**

The subjective dimension of the respondents' ethnicity is composed of such symbols as interest in the home country and perceived salience of ethnic identity. A section on ethnic identity salience includes ethnic self-identification and perceived centrality of ethnicity in life and decision-making.

**3.3.2.1 Interest In The Home Country:** This category involves interest in the ancestral country's history and current events.

**Sense of Historical Continuity.** Knowledge of and interest in one's history, and the ways in which it is remembered and celebrated, are important means by which ethnic identity is symbolically reinforced (Shaffir, 1972: p. 77; Gans, 1979: p. 207; Driedeger, 1989: p. 161). For

our sample of readers, reminiscing about Bangladeshi history is a major way of conceiving and expressing their ethnic belonging. They are proud of their history and love to remember it. Whenever there were discussions about how much ethnicity matters to the respondents and why, or why they feel that it is important that their language and culture be kept alive, they were observed to build some connection with their history. The events of recent history which the Montreal sample mentioned most often are the Language Movement of 1952, the mass uprising in 1969, the general elections in 1970, the Independence War in 1971, the overthrow of the first government in 1975, the army rule during the 1980s, and the current movement for the restoration of democracy. Knowledge of a shared history and a proud remembering give this group of readers their sense of ethnic distinction. History inspires their ethnic identity, it is, as well, the source of its reaffirmation.

**Current Events in the Home Country.** Another link with the home country is forged by attention to current events "back home". Affairs in the homeland assume symbolic significance for many ethnic group members and become the focus of their ethnic orientation and identity (Gans, 1979: p. 206). I have explored this dimension by asking our Montreal Bangladeshi readers to explain how, and to what extent, they

keep informed about the prevailing situation in Bangladesh. The readers expressed a high degree of interest in the current political events in Bangladesh. The omnipresent political turmoil in Bangladesh causes and sustains its people's concern for, and interest in, politics. The same is true for these expatriate Bangladeshis. During the interview sessions the informants' enthusiasm about Bangladeshi politics often exceeded the scope of the questions put to them.

In this sample, interest in home country political events is common to both men and women, and this is irrespective of education or length of residence. Only second generation Bangladeshis have less interest because they lack knowledge of the home country's political background. Their interest in home politics leads the respondents to make frequent contact with Bangladesh, as well as with individuals in the local Bangladeshi community. They furthermore supplement the locally available information by reading Bangladeshi newspapers sent from Bangladesh. In the process of satisfying their interest in political events of the ancestral country, the ethnic identity of these Bangladeshi readers is nurtured and reinforced.

**3.3.2.2 Salience Of Ethnic Identity:** Ethnic identity tends to be expressed and acted upon depending upon its felt-importance as compared

with other social identities (Mackie and Brinkerhoff, 1987: pp. 115-16), and may vary with individuals, groups, and situations (Gans, 1979: pp. 202-3). This study has examined the differences in the perception of ethnic salience among the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press and identified the factors causing such variance. Each of the respondents was asked three sets of questions designed to explore three aspects of ethnic identity salience- ethnic self-identification, relative salience of ethnic identity as compared with other social identities which they may have, and the felt centrality of ethnic identity in their life and decision-making.

**Ethnic Self-identification.** The basic determinant of ethnic identity is the acknowledgement of one's ancestry (Isajiw, 1975: p. 135). One half of the sample were asked a close-ended question: how do you usually think of your ethnicity? The response options were- Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi-Canadian, Canadian, and other. The second half were asked 'How would you define your ethnicity?' The answers they provided were later coded as Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi-Canadian, Canadian, and other. The reason for using the two types of questions was to investigate whether the respondents' replies varied widely when they were given a free choice as against a restricted choice. This was deemed to offset any bias due to the closed line of questioning. A second question asked the respondents how

they would like their children to identify themselves. Again, the options were-Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi-Canadian, Canadian, and other.

**Table 1. Ethnic Self-Identification**

Categories of Identification	Percentage of Readers (Total number of readers= 50)
Bangladeshi	64
Bangladeshi-Canadian	28
Canadian	0
Other	8

In response to the questions on ethnic identification, Table 1 shows that almost two-third (64%) of our sample identified themselves as Bangladeshi. This included 50% of the second generation respondents. Another one-third (28%), including half of the second generation, opted for the hyphenated Bangladeshi-Canadian identity. Only a small group (8%) chose to identify themselves as either world citizens or human beings. None chose the Canadian label. The data indicates that in terms of self-identification, ethnic identity has the highest salience for this sample, and Canadian identity the lowest.

Though respondents express strong preferences for their own designation as Bangladeshis, they appear flexible about how their children



identify themselves. About 68% said that they expect their children, or potential children, to identify themselves as Bangladeshi-Canadians. They see it as only natural, but, at the same time, expect the children to know, practice, and respect their ethnic language and customs, and love their ancestral country. One parent has this to say:

My children are raised here, go to school and have made friends, they have developed an attachment to this society and people. It would be unwise of me to deny or ignore that. I don't want to take that away from them. But, they ought to know where they come from, who they are, what is valued in our culture, and what not...that they feel connected to Bangladesh and Bangladeshis in Montreal remains ours, parents' responsibility.

Bangladeshi identity does not mean the same thing to all respondents. The main variants prevalent in the Montreal community are illustrated by the following explanations: identity as loyalty, as patriotism, as historical identification, as family values, and distinctness of being. A look at the respondents' comments will aid in understanding the feelings which work behind their identity perceptions.

Respondent I considers ethnic identity to be a matter of loyalty to the motherland, opting for any other identity is a breach of that loyalty:

I came here and adapted to the society for practical reasons, but there is no question of giving up my identity... I didn't

sing the Canadian national anthem during my citizenship oath... I see Bangladesh as a poverty-stricken mother who stands in front of a dilapidated hut, weeping and waiting for her children who are away from home... I cannot erase that picture out of my mind...

Respondent II emphasizes patriotism as exemplified by gratitude to the martyrs who established the country:

The bloodshed and sacrifice in the language movement, in the independence war was to establish our unique identity, our distinct entity... The least I can do to respect our martyrs, our heroes is to proudly proclaim myself as a Bangladeshi.

Respondent III notes the richness of their history and tradition:

No country in the world gave so many lives to establish their right to speak their language, to establish their freedom... the family values in Bangladesh, the love, devotion and concern for family, for friends, relatives, and fellow countrymen, is nowhere else to be found. Our rich culture...our literature, songs, dance, poetry, defines our distinct being. I treasure it all...In body and mind I belong to Bangladesh.

For Respondent IV, family is a reference point of ethnic identity orientation:

I love Bangladesh a lot, and always try to expose it in my class presentations...yet my love for Bangladesh is no match for my parents'. I am amazed by the patriotism, the love they have and express... They make me realize Bangladesh is

something very special which can inspire so much love and commitment... I, too, am drawn by this magnetic pull.

Respondent V prefers ethnic identity because of a perceived ambiguity of a hyphenated identity:

I don't mean to disrespect the label Bangladeshi-Canadian... but it doesn't really mean anything, no real commitment to either culture... I don't want to be a cock with a peacock tail, I am who I really am... One's self-respect and dignity comes from a clear perception of one's roots. My ancestral heritage nourished my roots and made me what I am today...I am a Bangladeshi.

For those who identify themselves as hyphenated Bangladeshis there are three types of explanation given: geographical location, an inside/outside categorization of identity, and duality.

Respondent VI stresses the situational importance of identity:

I don't live in memories, I live here and now, in Montreal... so my commitment is both to where I am and to where I came from... I know the feeling of being a foreigner in any society... I don't want to remain an outsider where I plan to spend the rest of my life.

Respondent VII draws attention to the public/ private, and the situational dimension of identity:

I like to think of myself as a Bangladeshi-Canadian, perhaps more Bangladeshi than a Canadian. Maybe if I live here for 20 years or more I will feel more Canadian... when I am outside on the street, at my workplace, I am just another Canadian... when I am among other fellow countrymen, at

home with my family, or alone, my Bangladeshi self takes centre stage.

Respondent VIII takes pride in a dual identification and acknowledges the advantages it offers.

I believe both cultures have an influence on my viewpoints, perceptions,...maybe not to the same extent, but both are present. I cannot separate one from the other. I have adopted what I like from each. I take part in festivals of both...I am a go-between my ethnic community and my Canadian acquaintances... This is nice, I can remove misconceptions of both about each other.

**Table 2. Relative Salience of Ethnic Identity**

Identity Source	Percentage of Readers (N=50)
Ethnicity	60
Gender	12
Religion	2
Resident of Montreal	-
Resident of Canada	4
Double Response	22

**Relative Salience of Ethnic Identity.** According to Roosens (1989: p. 16) and Reitz (1980: p. 109), the felt salience of one's ethnic identity determines the strength of one's ethnic identification, and can be of more significance than the expression of ethnic identification itself. To compare the importance respondents attached to their ethnic identity in relation to other identities, I asked them to choose from a set of given social identities the one they consider to be most important. The response categories were: 'myself as an ethnic person', 'myself as a female/male person', 'myself as a religious person', 'myself as a resident of Montreal', and 'myself as a resident of Canada'. Table 2 shows that 60% of the sample considered their ethnicity to be the most relevant mode for self-identification. Fourteen percent opted for gender as the most important identifier, and the rest offered double responses.

**Centrality of Ethnic Identity in Life and Decision-Making.** A final method of ranking the salience of various self-identity designations required respondents to select one of three statements. They were:

1. My ethnicity is of minor importance for my life, compared to other aspects of my life.
2. My ethnicity is important for my life, but no more important than certain other aspects of my life.

3. My ethnicity is of central importance for my life, and would, if necessary come before other aspects of my life.

Congruent with the previous self-identification, 62% of the sample acknowledged that ethnicity is of central importance to them. Only one third of the group considered ethnicity of relative importance.

The second set of questions was designed to determine the salience of ethnicity in familial decision-making, for such issues as choice of spouse, children's socialization and friendships. Four options were offered:

1. I seldom make such decisions based on my ethnicity.
2. I sometimes make such decisions based on my ethnicity, but not most of the time.
3. I feel that most of my important decisions are based on my ethnicity, but usually in an unconscious way.
4. I feel that most of my important decisions are based on my ethnicity, and usually in a conscious way.

In matters of major decision-making, 62% reported that their decisions are based on their ethnicity. Among this group 26% mentioned that ethnicity works unconsciously, while 36% of respondents claim that ethnicity is a conscious choice factor. They explain these distinctions in the following manner:

Maybe in the way we Bangladeshis are raised...the values instilled us since childhood have remained in the back of our mind. It is like the built-in set-up of a computer. To make decisions you don't have to turn on the ethnicity switch. As soon as you have started thinking about a decision to be made, the built-in set-up works by itself.

When one keeps one's nation ahead of everything else, that undivided respect and commitment gives a sense of direction that can never go wrong. Whatever we say or do in a foreign country, everything represents Bangladesh. So I have to be very cautious about my decisions, and its consequences, so that I do not tarnish the image of my country and people for my personal well-being.

**Perceived Distance between Ethnic and Host Culture.** To determine whether there was a perceived distance between Bangladeshi and Canadian culture, respondents were asked what similarities or differences they observed between the two. This question was intended to examine the commonly reported finding that the closer one feels to one's ethnic group, the further one tends to feel from out-groups (Driedeger, 1989:p. 162). About 80% of our respondents claimed that the two cultures and the two societies were completely different. The most salient differences mentioned were: family set-up and family values, values about marriage, relationships and sex, and respect and care for elderly parents. This study found that the

more one perceives differences with the Canadian culture, the stronger is one's ethnic identification.

**Table 3. Ethnic Identity Preferences Across Sample Categories**

<b>Sample Category</b>	<b>Percentage of Category</b>
<b>Gender:</b> Male	69
Female	81
<b>Marital Status:</b> Married	70
Single	56
<b>Generation:</b> First	87
Second	50
<b>Level of Education:</b> Univ.	73
College	53
Less than college	40

Based on all of the measures discussed, the comparison of ethnic identity preference in Table 3 indicates that ethnic identity is more salient for the females, the married, the more educated, and the immigrant generation. One possible reason for the female's greater emphasis on the relevance of ethnicity may be their social isolation. In Bangladeshi families, where children and household work are mainly the women's responsibility, they have less opportunity to participate in the workforce, as well as less involvement in outdoor leisure activities. Consequently, this relative social isolation probably makes the female respondents fall back on their ethnicity.



The same table also shows that a large proportion of second generation Bangladeshis (50%) still consider ethnicity important for identity formation. Despite their limited knowledge of ancestral customs and traditions they express a strong emotional attachment to their ethnic identity and culture and stress the importance of its retention. However, this salience is smaller in comparison to the first generation.

The finding that more educated emphasize their ethnic identity more is quite interesting. It accords with prior research findings (Anderson and Frideres, 1981: p. 109) that both those of higher education, and conversely those of limited education, express the most interest in their ethnic identity. The probable reason for this finding in the Montreal sample is that highly educated Bangladeshis have not had the upward social mobility- in terms of career and income - which their educational background would normally warrant. The lack of access to these opportunities in the host society has alienated members of this community and inclined them to take mental refuge in ethnicity to bolster their pride and to be comforted. Interestingly, neither occupation and income nor length of stay in Canada are significant influences on the respondents' ethnic self-identification or perceived ethnic salience.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION:**

This chapter began with the argument that the readership of the Bangladeshi immigrant press in Montreal can be viewed as an imagined community, with its ethnicity being symbolically perceived and expressed. Our evidence indicates that shared symbols do, in fact, contribute to the creation of such an imagining. The most salient symbols constituting the Montreal Bangladeshis' imagining are: ethnic self-identification, perceived ethnic salience, interest in current politics and history of the home country, home contacts, language, family, endogamy, ethnic friends, festivals, attendance at community cultural events, and use of the immigrant press. The upcoming chapter will describe how the Bangladeshi immigrant press reconstructs Bangladeshi ethnic affiliations in Montreal, and where it places the greatest emphasis when drawing its symbolic map for its readership.

## Chapter 4

### VEHICLE OF IMAGINING: THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT PRESS IN MONTREAL

Each of these little communities is certain to have some sort of co-operative or mutual aid society, very likely a church, a school, possibly a theatre, but almost invariably a press. There is no language group so insignificant that it does not maintain a printing press and publish some sort of periodical. (Robert E. Park, 1922:pp. 6-7)

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION:

Imagine visiting two locations in Montreal - a Bangladeshi grocery store and a Bangladeshi home. In a Bangladeshi store you cannot miss the racks of Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers standing near the entrance. When visiting a Bangladeshi home you can expect to be treated with traditional Bangladeshi hospitality. And, if you are a new immigrant from Bangladesh you will likely be offered back issues of the Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers lying on a shelf or beneath the coffee table. No matter what their size or quality, these newspapers can offer interesting insights into the thoughts and concerns of their readers.

This chapter investigates the ethnic mass media consumption behaviour of the Bangladeshis in Montreal by spotlighting how the two

locally published Bangla newspapers- *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta*- are read. A brief historical overview of the Bangla language media in Montreal is offered to provide a broader context for the emergence of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. This leads on to a discussion of the newspapers themselves: their founding and objectives, their general features, their content and treatment, and their uses. (Illustrations of items in various content categories of the Montreal Bangladeshi press is presented in the relevant section of this chapter, as well as in Appendix II.) A final segment discusses the Bangladeshi readers' consumption of the Canadian mass media and how it affects their use of the immigrant press.

#### **4.2 BANGLA LANGUAGE MEDIA IN MONTREAL:**

The Bangla language media in Montreal is a cause of pride for the city's Bangladeshi community. Currently there are two weekly newspapers, *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta*; one weekly radio program *Rajanigandha* which is broadcast from the multi-ethnic radio station; and two bi-weekly television programmes on the ethnic channel- *Image du Bangladesh* and *Bangla Vision*.

For our purposes the term Bangladeshi immigrant press will refer to all those Bangla language newspapers and magazines which are owned,

published, and staffed by the members of the Bangladeshi community in Montreal. The term 'immigrant press' is used rather than 'ethnic press' because the local Bangladeshi press is founded, managed, and run primarily by immigrants. The first Bangladeshi initiatives to publish in Bangla began in 1970, when the first leaflets, posters, and brochures were being circulated in the community. The leaflets and posters informed people about upcoming concerts, picnics, and cultural shows organized by the community, visits by performers or political leaders from Bangladesh, openings of grocery and clothing stores, restaurants, or a jewellery shop, repair and counselling services, or sale of a product. Brochures were also brought out by Bangladeshi cultural organizations to promote performance events, or for various national day celebrations including Bangla new year's day, Language Day, Independence Day, or Victory Day. Although these early printing ventures were for publicity purposes, they certainly paved the way for Montreal's Bangladeshi newspapers.

Since then two growth periods can be distinguished in the development of the Bangla language press in Montreal. The first covers the years between 1982 and 1992, while the second covers the period from 1993 onwards. Publications from these two periods are referred to as the press of the first and second decade.

The first Bangla periodical came out in 1982. It was the quarterly *Banglar Mukh (The Face of Bangla)*, and was published by a nationalist association called "Bangladesh Association of Quebec". This hand-composed publication pasted up clippings collected from various newspapers from Bangladesh and reprinted them. Certain sections were even hand-written. Four or five issues were published before it folded due to a lack of financial resources. In 1985 a monthly literary magazine *Dhrupad (Style)* started publishing. The purely literary magazine failed to create enough appeal among the readers and it stopped publication after three or four issues. Another literary magazine *Chinnoh (Sign)*, co-edited by Khaled Mubin, Kabir Uddin, and Mohammad Khasru, appeared in 1990. Although registered as a quarterly, only two issues have been published in the last five years. In 1992 a monthly newspaper *Matribhumi (Motherland)* came out under the editorship of Mizanur Rahman, a local businessman. Only two issues were produced before financial crisis ended its existence. These early periodicals had minimal resources and staff, infrequent publication, and an early demise. Copies of most of these have not been preserved.

Since 1993 there have been attempts to publish newspapers for the growing number of Bangladeshis in Montreal. Immigrant newspapers

published in or after 1993 are considered to be the press of the second decade. On 16th December 1993 *Weekly Prohashbangla (Weekly Diaspora Bangla)* was founded by Kabir Uddin, who also acts as its editor and business manager. Another weekly newspaper *Weekly Banglabarta (Weekly News of Bangla)* made its first appearance on February 21, 1994. Its first editor was Rafique Bhuiyan, who was with the newspaper for only the premiere issue. Mamunur Rashid took over from the second issue, with Wahid Uddin as his executive editor and business manager. Financial problems caused the newspaper to suspend circulation in April 1995. In December 1996 it started publishing again, with the founding editor Bhuiyan returning to share the editorship with Rashid. The latest entry into the Montreal Bangladeshi immigrant press is a monthly titled *Patrika (Journal)*, edited by Faruk Faisal. It began trial publication in September 1995 but in January 1996 it moved to Ottawa, where it began publishing on a regular basis.

Five Bangla radio programmes and two television shows complement the Bangla newspapers. The first radio programme, *Ajker Bangladesh (Bangladesh Today)*, aired at the beginning of 1990 on CFMB Radio Montreal, and was produced by a sociocultural organization, "Bangladesh Today". By the end of the year a Bangladeshi youth organization, "Anindya

Jatrik", began producing their show *Uttaranga* (High Waves) for the same station. Financial crisis caused the first to perish within a couple of months, while the latter survived for a year. During 1992 and 1993 two other programmes, *Shonali Dheu* (Golden Waves), and *Shapla Shaluk* (Water-lily), aired on CKUT Radio McGill. The first was produced by Shah Alam Khan, an ex-journalist, the other by a group of cultural activists. Both closed due to management problems. Shaila Mahmood, a local singer, started her show *Rajanigandha* (Tuberose) in 1995. This is the only Bangla radio programme still being broadcast in an hour-long weekly format.

Bangla-language television has two bi-weekly news-magazines on the ethnic channel. *Image du Bangladesh* has been on air since 1982; it is produced and hosted by Dr. Hedayet Ullah, a professor at Vanier College. *Bangla Vision*, produced by businessman Murad Hossain, began broadcasting in 1994. Also included in the community media are the now extinct telephone journals, which used telephone answering machines to produce pre-recorded news and music on a weekly or fortnightly basis. There have been three tele-journals: *Idaning*, produced by the Bangladeshi theatre group "Theatre '88"; *Swashata Bangla*, run by cultural activist Kamrul Hossain; and *Swatadip*, a production by immigration lawyer Rezaur Rahman.



### **4.3 BANGLA LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS IN MONTREAL:**

As noted in the previous chapter, reading of the immigrant newspapers is an important tool for the readers' construction and maintenance of their ethnic identity. As such, the upcoming analysis of the Bangla language press provides the framework to elucidate and confirm the connection between consumption of the immigrant press and its readers' ethnocultural retention. This study is concerned with aspects of the Bangla language press which help us to understand its role in the ethnic continuity for the readers. Such an understanding is possible with an examination of the motivations for the founding the press, its intended function, its general features, and its present condition, its content and how it is offered, and the reading motivations and choices of the readers.

Studies on the immigrant press in different places at different times have concluded that the founding of ethnic newspapers have been primarily a phenomenon of immigration. A definite correlation was found between the flow of immigration and the number of immigrant newspapers started or stopped at a given time (Park, 1922: p. 318). A steady flow of immigration has ensured a sizeable readership with at least an average education which is necessary to maintain the minimum circulation. To get started and keep functioning another fundamental requirement is to have

financial support, as well as scholars, thinkers, and writers in the community willing to contribute in an intellectual capacity. While these factors set the context, a strong desire for attachment to the home country, concern in its events, and demand for information in the native tongue led to the founding of the immigrant press (p. 319).

Many immigrant newspapers were founded and financed as the mouthpiece of a political movement, a religious group, or a nationalist organization. However a significant number were personal missions (Ibid. p. 271); started on the initiative of an individual in a leadership role, with her/his network of friends and acquaintances. The individual was usually an intellectual or businessman from the immigrant community who was educated, and possibly had some journalistic experience in the home country, and intended to put it to use and earn a living by establishing a newspaper. More often than not the individual assumed an all-in-one role at the newspaper- the owner, editor, publisher, advertising salesman- and was involved in every phase of its operation (Miller, 1987:p. xv; Murphy, 1974: pp. 58, 82).

The historiography of the immigrant media and of the immigrant press in particular, also indicates that the primary objective of these newspapers is to provide a means of contact and communication with the

home country, the ethnic community, and the host society. On the one hand, its intent is to educate readers about the group's history, customs, and traditions, foster their ethnic consciousness and pride, strengthen their ethnic group cohesion, and preserve their ethnic language, culture, and identity. On the other hand, it seeks to socialize readers into the new environment of the host country and help them adapt. The press is meant to give the community a voice by serving as a forum for discussion and the exchange of opinions, by mirroring its concerns, by advancing and defending its interests, and by interpreting issues from the group's perspective (Barlow, 1988: pp. 83-101; Velez, 1986: p. 73; Wilson and Gutierrez, 1985; Murphy, 1974: pp. 62-90; Park, 1922: pp. 12-3, 55,254, 301,359).

These observations are expected to generally apply to the Bangladeshi immigrant press in Montreal as well. It is assumed that the size of Bangladeshi immigrant population, a desire for contact with and information on Bangladesh in the mother tongue, the presence of individuals in leadership roles, and of intellectuals and entrepreneurs in the community, would be significant influences on the founding of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. It is also likely that maintaining contact and communication with Bangladesh and the Montreal Bangladeshi

community, reflecting and upholding community interests and concerns, acquainting community members with the Canadian society, and preserving the community's language, culture, and identity would constitute the main objectives of the Bangladeshi press. Now, let us see what is peculiar about the founding and objectives of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, and does it compare with what previous researchers have found.

Individual enthusiasm was the driving force behind the founding of Montreal's Bangla language press. The key people involved were Kabir Uddin and Mamunur Rashid, who would be publisher/ editors of *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta*. Kabir Uddin is a science graduate from Bangladesh in his late 30s. He worked in the private sector back home, and had no professional background in journalism. Uddin's journalistic career began after he arrived in Montreal in the mid 1980s and worked as the local correspondent for two Bangladeshi newspapers from New York. In 1990 he co-edited a locally published Bangla literary magazine and, between 1992 and 1993, he anchored a Bangladeshi radio show. During this time he was also associated with a Bangladeshi theatre group. His involvement in journalism and cultural activities resulted in a large network of contacts and information.

Mamunur Rashid holds a Master of Arts and is in his late 50s. He held administrative positions in broadcasting while in Bangladesh which earned him a living, but his real passion was writing. He has to his credit several articles, poems, and short stories. This knack for writing led him to editing a news magazine in a southern district of Bangladesh. Rashid came to Montreal in the early 1980s and began organizing community cultural activities, and contributing articles to community newspapers and magazines published in the United States. His reputation as a writer and editor earned him popularity in the Bangladeshi community, and a wide circle of friends. Added to this, his large collection of books and Indian classical music, drew to him many social workers, writers, former political party members and cultural activists, and made his home the site for daily meetings of the community's intellectuals.

Both Kabir Uddin and Mamunur Rashid saw themselves in leadership roles, and as representatives of the well-educated section of the community they perceived their responsibility as meeting the community's various needs. As the Bangladeshi population increased in the late 1980s, the desire for an attachment to Bangladesh and the Montreal Bangladeshi community developed, and a demand was created for the community's own mass media. Kabir Uddin and Mamunur Rashid considered that it was

their moral obligation to realize the popular demand and establish a Bangla language newspaper. Uddin says, "the growing population was a strong stimulus for me. Observing how Bangladeshis craved information about daily events in the home country, and the extent of their phone calls to Bangladesh for that purpose, I realized the need for establishing a Bangla newspaper."

Aside from the urge to satisfy the community's desire for ties with the homeland with a vernacular newspaper, cultural consciousness was another decisive influence on the emergence of the Bangladeshi press. Rashid explains, "the experience of immigration brings with it some degree of cultural tension. I felt that this could be pacified by providing the immigrants with a medium of communication which would serve as a means of defining and affirming their ethnic identity." Along with the moral commitment, the perceived need, and an heightened cultural awareness, a desire for a positive reputation in the community was also a significant motivation for the founders. For Rashid and Uddin the idea of a Bangla newspaper in Montreal seemed to be a lucrative business investment. Considering the ongoing immigration of Bangladeshis to Montreal, their concentration in a few areas of the city, and the growing community businesses, these gentlemen felt that Montreal would be a

viable place for a newspaper business. The success which local stores experienced in selling Bangla newspapers from Bangladesh and New York was also a powerful stimulus.

The founding of *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta* was also dependant on funding to get the newspapers started, and on the presence of intellectuals in the community. The would-be editors held meetings with Bangladeshi businessmen, writers, and members of community organizations and cultural groups to discuss the establishment of a Bangla newspaper, and sought their moral and financial support. Inspired by the commitment of financial support from the business people and assurances of cooperation from cultural organizations and writers, the Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers were launched with much fanfare.

The editorial in the maiden issue of *Probashbangla* explains the significance of its founding:

... the number of Bengalis in different Canadian cities is continuously increasing... every Bengali craves for news about the home country. The more realistic would argue why do I need daily news about the country where I do not live and (may) never return (permanently)?...the picture of the ever-changing Bangladesh society is latent in its daily news. Exposure to that picture maintains our mental bond with the country, the society, its culture. So, for those who want to be in touch with the mother country, there is no substitute for a Bangla newspaper...

(*Probashbangla*, December 16th, 1993)

A deep sense of linguistic and cultural pride was expressed when the first issue of *Banglabarta* placed its launching within the long tradition of Bangla journalism:

Bangla is now a world-wide recognized language-the beloved mother tongue of 220 million people. 'Samachar Darpan' published by the Fort Williams College was the first newspaper in Bangla. Banglabarta is the newest entry to that continuous tradition of Bangla journalism...the number of Bangladeshis in Canada is increasing day by day. So, a regular Bangla newspaper has become inevitable.  
(*Banglabarta*, February 21st, 1994)

Upon the launching of *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta*, their editors charted out the course they would pursue. The acknowledged mission of the Bangladeshi immigrant press was to maintain constant links with Bangladesh and the local Bangladeshi community, to develop and foster the readers' sense of ethnic belonging, and preserve their ethnic language, culture, traditions, and identity. It stresses the intention to educate the Canadian-born immigrants about the history, values and customs of their ethnic culture, and to inspire their ethnic pride. This is apparent in a *Probashbangla* editorial:

How many nations have a tradition like ours? ... Awakening cultural consciousness in the Canadian born generation is a noble cause. It is our responsibility to develop a passion for



our roots in them, and encourage them to devote their talents and skills to the preservation of our glorious cultural heritage.  
(*Probashbangla*, February 3rd, 1994)

Another expressed intent of the newspapers is to orient newcomers to the social realities of Canadian society. In announcing the launching of *Banglabarta*, the editor promised that his newspaper "would provide useful information on the new society and help Bangladeshis adapt to it". The editors of the Bangladeshi immigrant press wanted their newspapers to provide the community with a voice and a forum for discussion and exchange of opinion on issues of community concern, reflect on its interests, problems, and accomplishments, interpret events and their relevance to the community, help cultivate and promote the community's art, culture, and businesses, and advance its general welfare.

As maintaining ethnic ties, language, and culture have been major motivations for the establishment of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, and constitute its main purpose of functioning, the prospects are that the use of the press will have an effect on readers' ethnic maintenance. Further, as the individuals involved in its founding and functioning feel strongly about preserving ethnicity, their personal convictions and opinions are likely to be powerful influences on the readers' ethnic perceptions.

Even though the Bangla language newspapers have high goals, they are marked by a general disorderliness, financial instability, and lack of policy. A quick appraisal of its present state is deemed necessary because its survival has important implications for its role in ethnic maintenance. To have an impact on the readers' ethnic continuity, the Bangla newspapers have to survive and circulate.

Prior research suggests that a lack of order and stability are typical of the presses of all recent immigrant groups. Most of the newspapers start without a sound business plan or survey, they run on shoe-string budgets and meet operational costs with donations from individuals and charitable foundations, or from benefit events (Park, 1922: pp. 76,367). Allocation of limited resources means that the newspapers lack skilled newsmen, technicians and adequate equipment, can only maintain a small staff who are usually volunteers with paid full-time job elsewhere, and are involved in all of the phases of production (Barlow, 1988: pp. 82, 91; Murphy, 1974: pp. 56-8; Park, 1922: p. 177).

The operation of the Bangladeshi press strongly resembles these research findings. Kabir Uddin and Mamunur Rashid, the editors of *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta*, jumped into their newspaper ventures based on feeling of obligation towards the community. There was no feasibility

study, no business plan for sustained financial support, and no survey of the prospective readership; so things began to crumble soon after the launching of their newspapers.

The newspapers started their operation dependant on donations and advertisements from community business. However, the weak business community could not sustain the cost beyond a few issues and the editors were left on their own. They emptied their pockets, struggled to secure help from friends, and arranged fund-raising concerts to deal with the crisis. A price-tag was attached to the once free publications. To curtail costs, the offices shifted to the editors' homes, the wire-service subscription was cancelled, and first-hand reporting was reduced to a bare minimum. The staff was trimmed, and now comprises mostly volunteers, who are students or have paid job elsewhere. Yet, the editors regret, nothing seems to work. The accumulated loans, the overdue bills, and the unpaid staff mean that their newspaper project is precarious. The Bangladeshi immigrant press today is limping, struggling to survive on contributions from friends and well-wishers. Both Uddin and Rashid feel that the business community has provided as much support as possible, and cannot do more. The newspapers can only be saved, they believe, with government subsidy and grants, and support from mainstream business.

The absence of a well thought-out business plan, dependence on shaky community businesses, and a small readership, make these Bangla language newspapers perilous ventures. Any effect of the immigrant press on its readers' ethnicity will depend on whether or not it manages to endure this financial stringency.

#### **4.4 THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF BANGLA LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS:**

*Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta* are tabloid weeklies, directed at the Bangladeshi population in Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa. The newspapers claim an average circulation of 2,000 copies in Montreal. *Banglabarta* has a comparatively better educated readership. It is scholarly in tone and offers discussion and debate about literary and political affairs. *Probashbangla* is more a medium for those with average education. It tends to be commercially oriented and it often resorts to sensationalism to attract readers.

In terms of the range of issues covered, *Banglabarta* is broader in scope, but is not read as extensively as *Probashbangla*. Reasons may include the former's poor print quality and complex language. The newspapers have a common focus of a weekly round-up of day-to-day events in Bangladesh,

but they differ in their interpretation of issues. The reason is that, despite claims for neutrality, they support the ideology of one or the other major political parties in Bangladesh. Although different in tone and tenor, both espouse nationalism, and share the goal of upholding and preserving ethnic culture and identity.

**Table 4. Structural Comparison of the Bangla Language Newspapers**

Name of the Newspaper	Size of the Newspaper	Number of Pages	Nature of Composition	Use of Colour	First Page
Probashbangla	6 col., 43cm x 28.5cm	16-24	Computer-composed	Usually on front page	1-3 photos, combination of 1, 2, and 4 col. headlines
Banglabarta	5 col., 38cm x 29cm	12	Computer-composed	Black and white	1-2 photos, sketches; combination of 1, 2, and 3 col. headlines

Table 4 provides information about the look of the newspapers. Probashbangla uses a 43 cm x 28.5 cm, 6 column format, and has publishes between 16 and 24 pages. Banglabarta is a 38 cm x 29 cm, 5 column

newspaper, and has 12 pages. Both newspapers are computer composed. The first page of Probashbangla is usually bi-colour, and carries 1-3 photographs, and a combination of 4, 2, and single column headlines. Banglabarta is all black and white, except for the last issue, which had the front page in colour. Its first page commonly consists of 1, 2, and occasionally 3 column headlines, one to two photographs, sketches, and drawings.

#### **4.4.1 CONTENT OF BANGLA LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS AND ITS TREATMENT:**

The motivations which led to the establishment of the Bangladeshi immigrant press and its declared goals are to maintain the ethnic identity of the readership. And, what better place to look for indications about it than its content.

Researchers of the immigrant press have stressed the importance of examining its content for at least two reasons. First, it provides an index not only to the interests, thoughts, social attitudes of its readers, but also to their ethnic culture, values, norms, and traditions (Kim, 1978: p. 202). Second, the ethnic mass media's goal to maintain ethnicity is most obvious in its content (Riggins, 1992: p. 82). In the opinion of more than one author (Riggins, 1992; Kim, 1988; Park, 1922), depending on the kind of

content offered, the immigrant press can accelerate assimilation or maintain ethnicity. It can either keep its readers' interest focused on the home country, the ethnic community, or it can develop their interest in the host society. According to Riggins (1992: pp. 282-4), an attempt to empower the ethnic group is often apparent in the story topics, the ranking of issues, the disproportionate allocation of space, the headlines, and the photographs.

Different studies on the immigrant press (Kim, 1978: p. 203; Murphy, 1974: pp. 63-4; Park, 1922: pp. 93,110,117-9) report that its content commonly comprises news, editorials, articles, interviews, literature, sports, announcements, advertisements, and photographs. News and editorials are based on events in the home country, the ethnic community, and in the host society. News and editorials in most newspapers of recent immigrants are focused exclusively on the homeland. Rather than focusing on the group's life in the host society, they tend to direct the readers' attention to home country events, particularly in its politics, and try to sustain their interest in it (Murphy, 1974:p. 82; Park, 1922: pp. 79, 270 ). Community news is about the personal activities and accomplishments of immigrants, formal activities of ethnic organizations and social and political issues which are relevant to the community as a

whole. Coverage of the host society includes its major events, information on job opportunities, laws and regulations affecting immigrants, social assistance programmes and benefits available, advice for dealing with government agencies, and income tax tips. These are intended to help newcomers integrate into the new society. There are also informative articles about science and politics, the immigrant group's culture, history, population, organizations, and its interests and concerns. Interviews generally focus on problems and achievements of community members. Sporting events in the immigrant community, the home country, or mainstream society also appear. Births, deaths, and upcoming events and activities in the community are publicized, as are the community's businesses.

Previous studies on content and its treatment in the immigrant press give hints as to what kinds of items we might expect in the Bangladeshi immigrant press. It also allows us to assume that the contents of the Bangladeshi press will be geared towards promoting ethnic culture and accentuating the ethnic identity of its readers. A look at the contents of the Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers will reveal the influences that are at work on the readers' ethnic perceptions, values, and preferences when they read them.



The Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers carry news, editorials, articles, literature, sports, entertainment, announcements, advertisements, and photographs. For the convenience of discussion, I have divided the contents into four broad categories: news, opinion, sports and entertainment, and photographs. Advertisements published in the Bangladeshi press are almost exclusively by community businesses, so they were excluded from the analysis. The discussion of content uses both a description of the content types, as well as excerpts from the newspapers.<sup>5</sup> I have provided illustrations for each type of content. Further examples are presented in Appendix II.

The different content categories were analyzed to determine whether they were Bangladeshi, local Bangladeshi community, Canadian, or international in scope. The configurations used to examine the treatment of the various categories of the immigrant press are: number of items, space allocation, and first page placement. These measures are useful because they provide an estimate of the prominence which the ethnic country and community receives in the immigrant press. This schema also helps to examine, in each information and opinion category and its sub-divisions, how the immigrant press intervenes ethnic maintenance through its

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<sup>5</sup> The newspapers are in the Bangla language, and all excerpts presented here are translations.

emphasis in terms of volume, position, and tone of the items. Preferential treatment of items about Bangladesh or Bangladeshi community in Montreal would mean the newspapers accentuate the preservation of ethnicity.

**4.4.1.1 News.** A lion's share of the news coverage in the Bangladeshi immigrant press is about Bangladesh, with a heavy concentration on the country's current political situation:

#### **96-hours Strike Ends: 3 Killed, More than 100 injured**

The 96-hour general strike called by the Awami League, Jatiya Party, and Jamaat, to demand the resignation of the ruling BNP government, and elections under a care-taker government, ended October 19th. Three were killed, and more than a hundred injured on the second day of the strike. Despite pressure from donor countries, intellectuals, and the business community, neither the opposition nor the government has changed their previous positions.  
(*Probashbangla*, October 20th, 1995)

#### **AL Chief to Announce Formula for Care-taker Government**

Awami League chief and leader of the opposition in the country's parliament, Sheikh Hasina, will announce her formula for a care-taker government in her public meeting at Panthapath on June 7th. According to party sources, a joint meeting of the opposition parties following the Eid will decide on the final proposal for constitutional amendment, and the form of the care-taker government.  
(*Banglabarta*, May 17th, 1994)

The *Probashbangla* editor says, " We are not immune to the events taking place in Bangladesh; our families, friends, and relatives are still living there, and what affects them affects us here. Hence, our emphasis is on Bangladesh, especially its politics."

Other Bangladeshi news items include reports on annual celebrations, government action and policy decisions, development projects, state of economy, law and order, education, and natural calamities.

### **Language Day Observed**

The nation paid homage to the Language Martyrs today by vowing to realize their dreams and goals. Thousands of people gathered at the foot of the Martyrs' Monument before the zero hour. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia laid the first floral wreath at the monument at one minute past midnight. The government has chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate the occasion. Different organizations will hold rallies, concerts, theatrical presentations, recitations, and discussion meetings.

(*Banglabarta*, February 21st, 1994)

### **Aid Groups Pledge \$2 billion to Bangladesh**

The recently concluded meeting of aid groups in Paris pledged a \$ 2.10 billion grant to Bangladesh for the coming fiscal year. The amount received for the current fiscal year was \$ 2.15 billion. However it should be noted that Bangladesh's revenues have increased during the last three years, and 30% of the earning has been invested in the development sector. (*Banglabarta*, May 6th, 1994)

News about the local Bangladeshi community reports on events and gatherings organized by different community groups, activities of various community organizations, visits by celebrities from Bangladesh, announcements of births, deaths, weddings, accidents, accomplishments in the community.

### **Bangladesh Youth Forum Celebrates First Anniversary**

The Bangladesh Youth Forum of Canada held a discussion meeting at 3270 Goyer on October 22nd to mark the first anniversary of its founding..The president of the organization, Zahirul Islam, said that the organization was established for the welfare of the community, and to contribute to the practice and cultivation of the Bangladeshi culture.

*(Probashbangla, September 30th, 1995)*

### **Menon in Montreal**

Workers' Party Chief Rashed Khan Menon, the famous student leader of the 1960s mass movement, is currently in Montreal on a three day visit. Various community organizations hosted a joint reception on November 27th. Speaking at that occasion, Menon urged all Montreal Bangladeshis to unite, irrespective of party affiliations, to pressure the ruling government to restore democracy in the country.

*(Banglabarta, November 30th, 1994)*

Items included in Canadian news deal primarily with immigration policies or the flow of Bangladeshi immigration to Canada:

### **AIDS Test For Prospective Immigrants**

Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi is reviewing a proposal that would require all applicants for Canadian permanent residency status to have an AIDS test. The minister said that testing the prospective immigrants for AIDS is perfectly legal, and that the issue is under consideration by his department. (*Banglabarta*, May 6th, 1994)

### **Immigrants to Go Through Lie-Detector Test**

Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi said that he is reviewing a proposal for the introduction of a lie-detector test for prospective immigrants to screen out false refugee claims. The minister disclosed this during an interview on the CBC Newsworld last week. (*Banglabarta*, May 17th, 1995)

The occasional presence of Canadian politics and festivals are noted when they are major events- the federal/ provincial election, or the Quebec referendum, the International Jazz Festival.

### **Quebec to Decide its Future with Canada**

The much discussed Quebec Referendum will be held on October 30th. Quebecers will cast a Yes or No vote to decide their future, as well as the province's political destiny. The Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chretien, in a televised speech on October 25th, urged all Quebecers to vote No. He said that Canada is the envy of the world because of the peace, security, and quality of life that it guarantees. "Let no Yes vote bring any confusion in our shared dreams and achievements", the Prime Minister added. (*Probashbangla*, October 27th, 1995)

International news covers only burning issues of the period. This usually includes wars, elections, the United Nations' peace missions, or natural disasters.

### **Mandela Wins Elections: A New Era to Begin in South Africa**

The African National Congress, led by the great leader Nelson Mandela, has won a majority of seats in the recently concluded national elections in South Africa. Mandela will officially take over as President on May 10th. This is the first time in South Africa's history that voting in the general elections was open to all races.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

### **PLO-Israel Signs Treaty: Autonomy for Gaza and Jerico**

The PLO and Israel have signed an agreement following a tripartite meeting on May 4th, with the mediation of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher. As a result of this agreement, Gaza and Jerico will receive autonomy, and there are prospects for establishing Palestinian rule in the West Bank in the near future.

*(Banglabarta, May 17th, 1994)*

**Table 5a. Treatment of News in the Bangla Language Newspapers**

Newspaper	Number of Different Types of News Items as % of Total No. of News Items (Total news items: PB - 398; BB -395)	Space Allocation for Different Types of News Items as % of News- Hole (News-Hole: PB - 25,746 sq cm; BB -24,451 sq cm)	First Page Placement % of Different Types of News Items
	Bd. Com. Ca. Int.	Bd. Com. Ca. Int.	Bd. Com. Ca. Int.
Probashbangla	79 10 3 7	74 15 2 7	36 0 50 14
Banglabarta	41 7 19 22	37 13 29 18	79 15 25 21

Note: Abbreviations PB= Probashbangla, BB= Banglabarta, Bd= Bangladesh, Com= Community, Ca= Canada, Int= International

The treatment of news in the Bangladeshi immigrant press (presented in Table 5a) shows that in terms of all the measures used- number of items, space allocation, and first page appearance- Bangladeshi news surpasses community, Canadian, and world news in both the newspapers. Community news receives little attention, while Canada is almost invisible in the news coverage of the Bangladeshi immigrant press.

In *Probashbangla*, of a total of 398 news stories, 79% qualified as Bangladeshi, 10% as community oriented, 3% Canadian, and 7% international. For *Banglabarta*, 41% of its 395 news items are on Bangladesh, 17% on the Montreal Bangladeshi community, 19% on Canada, and 22% international. *Probashbangla* devotes about three-quarters

(74%) of its news-hole (25, 746 sq cm) to Bangladeshi news, 15% to community news, 2% to Canadian, and 7% to international news. Space distribution is relatively balanced in *Banglabarta*, yet the focus remains on Bangladesh. Nearly 37% of its news space (24, 451 sq cm) is occupied by Bangladeshi news; community news accounts for 13% of the space, Canadian 29%, and international news 18%. More than one-third (36%) of *Probashbangla's*, and more than three-quarters (79%) of *Banglabarta's* Bangladeshi news appears on the first page. Less than a quarter (15%) of *Banglabarta's* community news made the first page, and for all the issues sampled, *Probashbangla* had no community news on the front page. Half of *Probashbangla's* and a quarter of *Banglabarta's* Canadian news is placed on the first page. Fourteen percent of *Probashbangla's*, and 21% of *Banglabarta's* international news made first page items.

**4.4.1.2 Opinion.** Since the Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers are individual ventures, it is no surprise that they carry more opinion than information. As the editors/publishers are self-selected, their control over the selection and interpretive process is kind of obvious. This influence is notable in the opinion pieces of these newspapers which includes editorials, letters to the editor, interpretive articles by local columnists, feature reports and interviews, and literature.



Editorials in the Bangladeshi immigrant press are about the current political situation in Bangladesh, the importance of maintaining ethnic language, culture, and traditions, socializing Canadian-born immigrants into the ethnic culture and raising their cultural awareness, anniversaries of national heroes, and annual celebrations.

### **Political Deadlock Worries Countrymen**

The 96-hour general strike by the opposition has brought no apparent change to the country's political instability. However, there are indications that the intellectuals, acting as peace-brokers, have been able to narrow the differences between the opposition and the government. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, in a recently held press conference, expressed her intention to make clear offers to the opposition with a view to resolving the deadlock.

(*Probashbangla*, October 27th, 1995)

### **Let Our Children Know Who They Are**

Children are the future of our nation. So, besides giving them a proper education, we should help them develop a clear insight about themselves. We have noticed that the second and third generation immigrants often suffer from identity crises. If our children can speak Bangla and are introduced to the Bangali culture, they will have no such dilemma. Children's knowledge of our language, culture, and history are imperative for creating in them a sense of distinction and self-respect, for giving them a guiding light for their lives ahead.

(*Probashbangla*, January 16th, 1994)

Readers' letters to the editor are generally about their longing for Bangladesh. Sometimes they contain comments about errors or omissions in the newspaper's coverage.

A week ago I opened my mailbox and saw a yellow envelope. It was from the Immigration Office. I read it, and realized my days of anxiety were over. It was my permanent residency in Canada. I was overjoyed, but that feeling was short-lived. Suddenly I remembered my mother, my friends, the places I used to go... everything felt so far away. A new chapter of my life is about to begin, which may bring me economic solvency, a secure life. Still, why do I feel like I am bound by a chain of gold?

*(Banglabarta, June 21st, 1994)*

My short story was published in your last issue. To my utter dismay I found that the mood of the story was completely ruined by several spelling mistakes. If readers have to stumble every step of their reading, how are they going to enjoy the piece I wrote with so much sincerity. I hope that you will look into the matter and see to it that such mistakes are not repeated in your newspaper.

*(Banglabarta, October 28th, 1994)*

The articles by local columnists offer an analysis of the political situation prevailing in Bangladesh. They also remind readers of the contributions of national heroes and martyrs, and of important events in the nation's history.

### **Can A Fair Election Be Guaranteed?**

A complicated political situation has arisen in the country surrounding the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The two major political parties, particularly their leaders, are responsible for most of the problem. They are the ones who have incapacitated the parliament, and only they can restore it... The things that these two groups have said thus far about the form of elections have raised serious doubts as to whether the elections will be democratic. An active election commission is not enough to ensure a fair election. In order to function effectively the commission needs a democratic environment. (*Probashbangla*, October 27th, 1995)

### **Bhasani: Another Name for Our Collective Struggle**

It has been 18 years since Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani passed away, but the role he played in the emancipation of the oppressed and the dispossessed people of Bangladesh will forever shine in our memory. There may be debates about his achievements but not about the sincerity of his intentions. Bhasani always stood beside the peasants and workers in their struggle and kept their revolutionary spirit alive. Through his life-long fight against injustice and oppression, Bhasani awakened and forged our national consciousness. (*Banglabarta*, November 30th, 1994)

Feature reports and interviews commonly focus on achievements of community individuals in education and career, and their immigration related problems.

### **A Bangladeshi Success Story**

Abu Nayeem Asfaquallah earned his diploma in Computer Science last July from the Dawson College. Nayeem topped

the list in his class. Immediately upon finishing school, he joined the Centralized Mortgage section of the Bank of Montreal. His talents and expertise in the field resulted in the position of programmer analyst for the Canadian National Railway. Nayeem came to Canada in 1988. Besides his job, Nayeem is actively involved in the community's organizational activities.

(*Probashbangla*, October 20th, 1995)

Short stories and poems written by local Bangladeshis comprise the literature segment. The setting or context of the literature pieces is almost always Bangladesh, and the depicted characters are Bangladeshi.

### **I Do Not Understand Politics**

In my off periods I go to Restaurant Senorita-  
Both for those mouth-watering samosas,  
and to talk to Nader Ali.

Nader Ali complains, the strikes have made business difficult,  
how shall my family survive?

Will there ever be peace? I could not reply.

I have heard speeches and slogans,  
watched processions go by,  
still, I know not Nader Ali...

(*Banglabarta*, Poem, May 6th, 1994)

### **Mother, Don't You Know?**

At last our train reached the Kamlapur station. I felt too tired  
to look for a rickshaw, not to mention bargain the fare. But  
I had to rush, since our hostel gate closes at eight o'clock.  
Before I left home to come back to school, Mother held me  
in her arms, and asked when I will visit her again...

(*Banglabarta*, Short story, October 28th, 1994)

Since opinion pieces never appear on the first page of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, an analysis of their prominence was carried out in terms of the number of items and space allocation.

**Table 5b. Treatment of Opinions  
in the Bangla Language Newspapers**

Newspaper	No. of Different Types of Opinion Pieces as % of Total No. Of Opinion Items (Total No. Of Opinion Items: PB -148 ; BB -172)				Space Allocation for Different Types of Opinion Pieces as % of Total Opinion-Space (Total Opinion-Space: PB -50,586 sq cm; BB -43,813 sq cm)			
	Bd.	Com.	Ca.	Int.	Bd.	Com.	Ca.	Int.
Probashbangla	52	33	5	8	48	37	5	8
Banglabarta	52	20	2	6	71	20	2	6

Note: Abbreviations PB= Probashbangla; BB= Banglabarta; Bd= Bangladesh; Com=Community; Ca= Canada; Int= International

As is shown in Table 5b, Bangladesh is a highly visible subject in the opinions section of both newspapers, comprising more than half the number of their items in this category. In terms of space, *Banglabarta* emphasizes Bangladesh more than *Probashbangla* does. While the former allocates about two-third of its opinion-space (43, 813 sq cm), the latter gives nearly half of its space (50, 586 sq cm) to opinion related to Bangladesh. The Bangladesh community receives better attention in the

opinions segment than it does in the news. It makes up 33% of *Probashbangla's*, and 20% of *Banglabarta's* items, and occupies more than one-third of the former's, and less than a quarter of the latter's opinion-space. Canadian and international items are only marginally present in the opinions category.

**4.4.1.3 Sports and Entertainment.** This section includes reports and analysis of sports and entertainment events and personalities. Sports coverage primarily highlights tournaments and competitions in Bangladesh, presents a weekly overview of results and scores, and the participation of Bangladeshi players or teams in international events and competitions.

#### **Abahani DAMFA Cup Champion**

Last year's runner-up Abahani Krira Chakra won the DAMFA cup soccer championship by defeating Brothers' Union 1-0 in the final match held at the Dhaka stadium May 31st. Abahani's Iraqi striker Nazar scored the solitary goal in the fourteenth minute of the first half.

(*Banglabarta*, June 7th, 1994)

#### **Bangladesh to Participate in Asian Youth Soccer**

The Bangladeshi under-19 team is going to Saudi Arabia next month to participate in the Asian Youth Soccer tournament. Bangladesh will face Saudi Arabia in their first match on June 4th. On 6th and 7th of June it will play against Syria and Hong Kong.

(*Banglabarta*, May 17th, 1994)

Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers also carry reviews or reports on major world events, particularly for soccer, cricket, athletics, and chess.

### **World Cup Soccer: Germany goes down to Ireland**

In the qualifying round of world cup soccer reigning champion Germany lost to Ireland 0-2. Irish Striker Cascarino scored the first goal in the 31st minute, while the second goal came in the 68th minute from substitute player Kelly. This is the first time in the last six years that Germany has lost on its home ground. In the final round of the tournament Ireland will play against Italy, Norway, and Mexico.

(*Banglabarta*, June 7th, 1994)

### **Mandela Cup Cricket in December**

The four-nation Mandela Cup Cricket tournament will be held in South Africa this December. Besides the host country, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and New Zealand will take part in the tournament. Each team will play two matches against each other team, and the two leading teams will play a three-game series for the final.

(*Banglabarta*, May 6th, 1994)

Entertainment items generally report on cultural events in Bangladesh such as the release of a new movie, television drama, or stage play, the opening of a book fair, art exhibition, film or poetry festival, or award-giving ceremonies for film, art, or literature. There is an analysis of past and present trends in arts, music, and theatre in Bangladesh, reviews

of Bangladeshi books and movies, and interviews with prominent Bangladeshi writers, artists, and film-makers.

### **Humayun Ahmed Emerges as Film Director**

Popular playwright and novelist Humayun Ahmed has made his debut as a director in the film "Aguner Poroshmoni". The shooting of the film, based on one of Humayun's novel, began April 24th at a location 40 kilometres from Dhaka. Famous television stars Asaduzzaman Nur and Bipasha Hayat will play the lead roles.

(*Probashbangla*, August 5th, 1994)

### **Bangla Theatre in the Post-Independence Years**

That political independence has a profound impact on a nation's culture is clearly evident in our post-independence theatre. Drama is characterized by its contemporaneity, and hence political changes affect its theme and form. Our drama, specially in stage-plays, embodies the spirit of our war of independence. It reflects our fight against autocracy and religious fundamentalism and our efforts to establish the democratic rights of the people.

(*Banglabarta*, April 29th, 1995)

With regard to the local Bangladeshi community, cultural events are reported, critical appreciation of community cultural events and cultural organizations is offered, and career sketches of community performers are presented.



### **Dancing to the Rhythm of "Amra Kojon"**

The Montreal Bangladeshi band "Amra Kojon" presented its concert on November 5th. The event, held at the Vanier College Auditorium was filled with youthful exuberance. The programme, scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m., was delayed by more than an hour. The organizers should be alert about maintaining time in their future events. ... The singers sang well, however their performance would have been more lively if they had memorized the lyrics. Shuvra was the main attraction of the evening. He simply captivated the audience, who danced to the rhythms of his music. Much credit is due to Sajid on lead guitar, and Sarwar on drums.

*(Banglabarta, November 30th, 1994)*

### **A Bangladeshi Song-Bird**

Taslima is a song-bird who flew from a summer country to a winter land. As flowers keep blooming to enchant us with their beauty, so does her melodious voice continue to enthrall us. In her childhood Taslima set sail on the wings of music. Since joining national television as a staff artist, she has performed in almost all the popular variety shows and has earned wide acclamation. Here in Montreal she made a number of appearances in stage concerts. She has plans to establish a music school in Montreal to pass on to the new generation the wealth she has treasured for years.

*(Probashbangla, October 27th, 1995)*

Major international events such as the Academy Awards are reported. The Hollywood stars and other celebrities of international repute also appear on the entertainment pages.

### **Brosnon- the New James Bond**

Pierce Brosnon, made famous by his television series "Remington Steel" is the new Agent 007. Sean Connory popularized the character of James Bond in 1962, and Brosnon is the sixth person to share in this glory.  
(*Banglabarta*, June 21st, 1994)

### **Arsenio Bids Farewell to Television**

Arsenio Hall has been there on the small screen five days a week for the last five years. He broke free from the conventional talk show format to create his own style. His last show was broadcast on May 27th. Why has it been taken off the air? Well, Arsenio says he wanted to end the show when it was still popular.  
(*Banglabarta*, June 7th, 1994)

Canadian events such as the International Jazz Festival or the International Film Festival are sometimes briefly mentioned in the entertainment columns of Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers.

### **Montreal Jazz Festival on the Way**

The countdown has begun for the International Jazz Festival in Montreal. The festival will be held from June 30th to the 10th of July. As always, the venue is Place des Arts and its adjacent areas- the heart of the city's cultural events. Since this is the 15th anniversary of the festival, it is expected to be even more attractive and colourful.  
(*Banglabarta*, May 6th, 1994)

### International Fireworks Competition

The 10th Benson and Hedges International Fireworks competition will be held from May 28th to July 31st at Montreal's LaRonde Amusement Park. The participating countries are Sweden, host country Canada, Japan, Italy, Spain, South Korea, Australia, the United States, and France. (*Banglabarta*, May 17th, 1994)

**Table 5c. Treatment of Sports and Entertainment in the Bangla Language Newspapers**

Newspaper	No. of Different Types of Sports and Entertainment Items as % of Total No. Of Sports and Entertainment Items (Total No. Of Sports and Entertainment Items: PB -142; BB - 139)				Space Allocation for Different Types of Sports and Entertainment Items as % Total Space for Spots and Entertainment (Total Space: PB - 16, 942 sq cm; BB - 11, 942 sq cm) %			
	Bd.	Com.	Ca.	Int.	Bd.	Com.	Ca.	Int.
Probashbangla	50	22	0	26	40	23	0	36
Banglabarta	48	5	4	41	54	7	1	37

Note: Abbreviations PB= Probashbangla; BB= Banglabarta; Bd= Bangladesh; Com=Community; Ca= Canada; Int= International)

Table 5c demonstrates the emphasis Bangladesh receives in sports and entertainment in both *Probashbangla* and *Banglabarta*. About half of the items in these newspapers are Bangladesh oriented, covering 40% of *Probashbangla*'s and 54% of *Banglabarta*'s allotted space (16, 942 sq cm, and

11, 942 sq cm respectively) in this category. Ranked after Bangladesh is world sports and entertainment, accounting for 26% of *Probashbangla*'s and 41% of *Banglabarta*'s items, and having more than one-third the assigned space in each. Entertainment and sports in the Bangladeshi community is moderately present in *Probashbangla*, covering about a quarter of the total items and space for the segment. Its presence is marginal in *Banglabarta*. Sports and entertainment activities in Canada are almost absent in both newspapers.

**4.4.1.4 Photographs.** Photographs appearing in the Bangladeshi immigrant press were classified as news photo and photo features. Photos accompanying items on current events and issues were considered to be news photos. Whereas, photos appearing with articles and interviews, and those which were an item by itself- such as those depicting a season or life-style, were considered photo features. Photographs in Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers can be observed mostly in the sports and entertainment sections.

**Table 5d. Treatment of Photographs  
in the Bangla Language Newspapers**

Newspaper	No. of Different Types of Photographs as % of Total No. Of Photographs (Total No. Of Photographs: PB - 104; BB - 47)	Space Allocation for Differnt Types of Photographs as % of Total Space for Photograhps (Total Space for Photographs: PB - 2,632 sq cm; BB - 7,252 sq cm)	First Page Placement of Different Types of Photographs
Probashbangla	Bd. Com. Ca. Int. --- --- 28 52 4 13	Bd. Com. Ca. Int. --- --- 14 52 9 23	Bd. Com. Ca.Int. --- --- 23 10 20 7
Banglabarta	21 40 17 21	26 49 6 17	30 26 37 10

Note: Abbrevations PB= Probashbangla; BB= Banglabarta; Bd= Bangladesh; Com= Community; Ca=Canada; Int= International)

Photographs is the only category where, both in terms of number of items and space, the local Bangladesh community receives more attention than Bangladesh's (see Table 5d). Nearly 52% of *Probashbangla's* (of 104) and 40% of *Banglabarta's* (of 47) photos are community related, and in each they cover about half the space allotted (2,632 sq cm, and 7252 sq cm respectively) for photographs. On the measure of the number of photos, the second priority for *Probashbangla* is Bangladesh, and third, international items. *Banglabarta* has equal number of Bangladeshi and international photos, but it allots more space to the former. Canadian photographs rank last for both. In making first page items, *Probashbangla's* first choice is

Bangladesh, while for *Banglabarta*, it is Canada. However, the latter's preference for Canadian photos is negated by the small space devoted to it.

A content analysis of the Bangladeshi immigrant press was designed to determine its primary focus, and what that implies about the ethnic maintenance function of the press. The analysis revealed that the press follows events in Bangladesh more closely than anything else. This high engagement with Bangladeshi events and issues, stands in sharp contrast to its minor attention to the local Bangladeshi community, and minimal or non-existent interest in Canadian society. It is not only in the volume of content, but also in its preferential placement that this gap is apparent. Bangladesh related items far exceeds community, Canadian, or international items in most content categories. Community items are prominent with photographs only, while items of Canadian orientation are moderately present only in the news section of *Banglabarta*.

Looking at the content of the Bangladeshi immigrant press, it is clear that it fulfils its pledge of maintaining a constant link with Bangladesh, and of promoting and preserving ethnic culture and identity. However, it does not fulfil its promised objective of providing useful information of every kind to help immigrants become acquainted with

Canadian society and adapt to it. The data indicates that the immigrant press offers only the kind of information and opinion which nurtures the readers' desire for ethnic belonging. The presence of content which exclusively emphasizes the current events, politics, history, and culture of Bangladesh is very likely to have an impact on reinforcing the ethnic identity of its readers.

The content which the Bangladeshi immigrant press offers to its readers, and the ways in which it is tailored to influence ethnic perceptions of its readership has been discussed. But content can have the effect desired only when it is read by the readers.

#### **4.5 READERSHIP OF THE BANGLADESHI NEWSPAPERS:**

Table 6 (see next page) provides a profile of the readership of the Bangla language newspapers in terms of age, gender, marital status, education, income, occupation, length of residence in Canada, language skills, and number of adults in the household.

**Table 6. Readership of the Bangladeshi Immigrant Press**

<b>Readership Variable</b>	<b>Percentage of Total No. Of Readers (Total No. Of Readers= 50)</b>
Gender:	
Male	78
Female	22
Age: 18-24 years	16
25-34 years	54
35-44 years	24
45 years+	6
Marital Status: Single	50
Married	48
Divorced	2
Education: less than high school	6
high school	4
college	30
university	60
Occupation: unemployed	28
blue-collar	26
white-collar	22
student	20
housewife	4
Income: \$15,000 or less	74
\$15-25,000	16
\$25-35,000	6
\$35-45,000	4
Language skill: only Bangla	2
Bangla & English	62
Bangla, English, & French	36
Length of residence: 1-5 yrs.	62
5-10 yrs.	18
10-15 yrs.	6
15-20 yrs.	12
20 yrs+	2
No. of adults in the house:	
1 person	22
2 persons	26
3 persons	20
more than 3 persons	32



Most (54%) respondents are in the 25-34 year-old age group, and 24% are between 35 and 44. The readership is composed of more males than females, men are 78% and women are 22% of the total population. First generation immigrants outnumber the second generation by a ratio of almost about eight to one. While the former constitute 88% of the population, the latter is 12%. There are an almost equal number of single and married people among the readers; 50% are single, 48% are married, and 2% divorced. The prominence of young males among the respondents is understandable given that Bangladeshis are a relatively new immigrant group. The Bangladeshi population in Montreal has more young than old persons, more men than women, and more immigrants than Canadian-born.

A majority of the respondents are highly educated; 60% have a university degree, and 30% have completed college. Under the Bangladeshi education system there are five years of primary, five years of secondary, and six years of post-secondary education- two years in college, and four years in the university.

Among the readers sampled for this survey most (28%) are unemployed, 26% are blue-collar workers, 22% hold white-collar jobs, 20% are students, and 4% are housewives. Blue-collar workers are primary

industry and factory workers, while white-collar workers are in sales, clerical and administrative positions, or professionals. The average annual income of most respondents (74%) is \$15,000 or less; 10% earns over \$25,000.

A sizeable section of the readership (62%) has been in Canada between 1 and 5 years, 18% have been here between 5 and 10 years, 18% between 10 and 20 years, and 2% longer than 20 years. The last two groups include second generation immigrants, who were born and raised in Canada. A majority of the readers (62%) are fluent in both Bangla and English, 36% know French, and for 2% Bangla is their only language of communication.

About half of the readers (52%) have three or more persons living with them. Another 26% live in a two-person household, either with spouse or a room-mate, and 22% live alone.

The readers offered multiple responses for leisure activities. The activities mentioned most are: going out with friends, or visiting friends or neighbours, reading books, listening to music, watching television, and going to the movies.

#### **4.6 USES OF THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT NEWSPAPERS:**

Researchers of ethnicity (Kim, 1988; Black and Leithner, 1987; Isajiw, 1981; Jeffres and Hur, 1981; Fathi, 1973; Park, 1922) regard the use of the ethnic mass media as an indicator of ethnic retention. In their view a greater emphasis on ethnic identity is related to a preference for, and use of, the ethnic mass media, and heavy use of the ethnic mass media reinforces the ethnic identity of the users. Various studies mention age, education, occupation, income, gender, years of residency in the host country, host language skills, and exposure to host mass media as the major influences on ethnic media practice.

This study hypothesizes that the ethnic maintenance by the readers of the Montreal Bangladeshi press constitutes a communication process. I suggest that exposure and attachment to the ethnic symbols, which generate and sustain the respondents' feeling of ethnic identity, takes place and is maintained via participation in various ethnic communication channels. I particularly emphasize that a committed reading of the Bangladeshi immigrant press is a major means for its readers to maintain their ethnic distinction. In this connection, previous research studies have allowed me to infer that the extent of the respondents' use of the immigrant press and their preferences for the medium and its content, will

determine its effect on maintaining their ethnic differentiation. The Bangla language press is emphasized over other ethnic channels available to the Montreal sample because, compared with the Bangladeshi broadcast media, it has a larger audience among the local Bangladeshi population. Hence, there is greater likelihood that it will have an impact on the way its readers perceive and maintain ethnicity.

This dissertation's argument for the relatedness of communication and ethnic continuity has been aided by Kim's (1978: pp. 199-202) communication model of cross-cultural adaptation and her perspectives on enculturation. Kim perceives cross-cultural adaptation as a communication process, and the immigrants' communication patterns as the best indicators of their adaptation to the host society. The extent of immigrants' use of the interpersonal and mass communication channels of the host society and the ethnic community, in her opinion, provides an assessment of their degree of involvement in each. On enculturation Kim (1988: pp. 46-8) states that through communication one acquires and internalizes a culture's shared values, beliefs, norms, institutional practices, and communication patterns which inspires the development of their group identity.

I have examined the respondents' nature and extent of use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press by asking the basic questions: Who are the

readers? How frequently do they read the immigrant press? What motivates them to read it? What do they prefer to read in it? What is their preferred channel for different kinds of information? How useful do they think the immigrant press is for satisfying their various information needs?

Previous studies have identified the major determinants of ethnic media use patterns to be: frequency of reading, content preference, and channel preference. These measures provide the appropriate tools for examining the use of the immigrant press. They also indicate the implications of the use of the press for its readers' ethnic maintenance.

#### **4.6.1 FREQUENCY OF READING:**

The frequency of reading the Bangladeshi newspapers is important to examine because frequent use of the press have prospects for reinforcing the readers' ethnic identity.

According to Boggart (1989: pp. 80, 154), having read a newspaper yesterday can serve as a standard measure for predicting reading frequency. In his opinion, yesterday readers tend to be frequent readers. Since the Bangladeshi newspapers appear only once a week, this study extended his measure to include those who have read the newspaper in the last week, in the last two weeks, and for more than two weeks as frequent readers.

**Table 7. Frequency of Reading the Bangladeshi Immigrant Press**

Frequent Readers				Infrequent Readers		
Last Read	Yester-day	Last Week	2 Weeks Ago	1 Month Ago	2 Months Ago	More than 2 Months Ago
Number of Readers (Total=50)	10	21	2	7	5	5

Table 7 indicates that frequent readers make up 66% of the total sample. Infrequent readers are those who read the immigrant newspapers a month ago, or prior to that, who constitute 34% of the sample. Most respondents in this study are frequently exposed to the Bangladeshi immigrant press.

Readership studies (Velez, 1986; Black and Leithner, 1987; Jeffres and Hur, 1981; Kim, 1988, 1978; Park, 1922) suggest that the immigrant press is used more frequently by women, the older age group, the married, the less educated, the lower socioeconomic status individuals, the recent immigrants, and those lacking host language skills. Frequency of reading also increases with reading of books and magazines, leisure pursuits, and the number of adults in the home (Boggart, 1989).

**Table 8. Frequent and Infrequent Readers  
of the Bangladeshi Immigrant Press**

Readership Variable	Total No. of Readers in Each Category	No. Of Frequent Readers in Each Category	No. Of Infrequent Readers in Each Category
Gender: Male	39	25	14
Female	11	8	3
Age: 18-24 years	8	5	3
25-34 years	27	19	8
35-44 years	12	6	6
44 years +	3	3	0
Marital Status: single	25	15	10
married	24	17	7
divorced	1	1	0
Education: less than high school	3	1	2
high school	2	2	0
college	15	11	4
university	30	19	11
Occupation: unemployed	14	8	6
blue-collar	13	6	7
white-collar	11	11	0
student	10	7	3
housewife	2	1	1
Income: \$15,000 or less	37	23	14
\$15-25,000	8	5	3
\$25-35,000	3	2	1
\$35-45,000	2	2	0
Language skill: Only Bangla	1	1	0
Bangla & English	31	22	9
Bangla, English & French	18	10	8
Length of residence: 1-5 years	31	18	13
5-10 years	9	8	1
10-15 years	3	2	1
15-20 years	6	4	2
20 years+	1	1	0
Number of adults in the house:			
1 person	11	6	5
2 persons	13	7	6
3 persons	10	7	3
3 persons+	16	13	3

Contrasting the frequent and infrequent readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant press we find that women rather than men, the married, the younger age group, the better educated, those with higher occupational status, the immigrant generation, especially the recent immigrants, tend to be more frequent readers. Table 8 indicates that nearly 72% of the female readers, and 64.% of the male readers read the immigrant newspapers frequently. Women are probably more frequent readers because of their relative social isolation as compared with their Bangladeshi male counterparts. The expected role of women in Bangladeshi family, or society generally, restricts them to the confines of the home. Children and household chores remain their responsibility. They have a lesser participation in the workforce and less involvement in outdoor leisure activities. Under such circumstance reading newspapers is one of the few occasions when they take some time for themselves. So they want to make the most of it.

This research also found that the frequent readership comprises 57% of the under-35 age group, 70% of the married, and 60% of the single respondents. The better educated read more frequently, 57% of the frequent readers have a university education and 33% have a college degree. The higher occupational status group - the white-collar



respondents- is also prominent among the frequent readers, making up 33% of the category. They are followed by the unemployed (24%), the students (21%), the blue-collar workers (18%), and the housewives (3%). The high frequency of reading by the unemployed is primarily because of the free time they have. It may also be related to their higher educational level. Most of them have a university education, and had a professional career back home. Those with a higher income are frequent readers. Nevertheless, it is the group with the lowest income (earning \$15,000 or less annually) who are the majority (69%) in the frequent readership category. So, income has no influence on the frequency of use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. The reading frequency of this group is perhaps better explained in terms of their high level of education. Of the 23 readers in the least income bracket, 12 have a university degree, and nine have a college education.

Frequent readers are most often newcomers to Canada. People who have been here between one and five years make up 54% of the frequent readership. However, it would be premature to deduce that a decline in reading frequency is correlated to an increase in length of stay. Because, nearly 21% of the frequent readers have been in Canada for more than 10 years, and 15% for more than 15 years. These figures are significant.

Second, the second generation immigrants make up 12% of the regular readership. On the basis of these findings, it is fair to say that first generation immigrants are more frequent users than the second generation, but the latter are also significant users.

Frequency of use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press is not significantly related to fluency in English, but, to some extent to French proficiency. It may be mentioned here that most readers learned English from childhood as a second language. Some learned French during their stay in other countries before their arrival in Canada. This survey found that knowledge of French is greater among the infrequent readers. About 30% of the regular readers have fluency in French, compared with 47% of the infrequent readers.

The frequent readers are likely to have more adult members in the home than infrequent readers. In this sample, 60% of the frequent readers live with three or more adult members. Frequent readers are more active in leisure pursuits, the most common of which is reading books, especially Bangladeshi books.

To recap: education, occupational status, number of adults in the home, leisure activity, and book reading are positively related with the respondents' exposure to the Bangladeshi immigrant press. Age, knowledge

of French and length of residence in Canada are negatively related to frequency of reading. Women, rather than men, and first generation immigrants, rather than Canadian-born, are more frequent users.

#### **4.6.2 CONTENT PREFERENCE:**

The Bangladeshi readers' preferences in content was analyzed by asking them to specify a) their motivations for reading, b) their interest in different content categories, c) the thoroughness in reading the contents of their choice, and d) their expectations about the coverage of their preferred content. Such an analysis should reflect whether the readers' reading motivations and interest in specific contents influence their overall preference for the immigrant press, and their frequency of use. If items of Bangladeshi orientation are read more frequently and thoroughly than other items, and more of it is expected, then it may be assumed that exposure to the Bangla language press will intensify its readers' attachment to their ancestral country, culture, and reinforce their ethnic identity.

Previous research into immigrants' reading motivations indicates that their press is commonly used for news of the homeland, for information about the host society which is required to be able to adapt to the new environment, and for satisfying their desire for expression in the mother tongue (Park, 1922: pp. 9,11). Our findings support several of

these points. Majority readers say that what motivates them to read includes current information about Bangladesh, reading in Bangla, and information on their community in Montreal. They read primarily for information about Bangladesh, in particular its political situation. The desire to be informed about the current political events is understandable considering the ongoing political unrest in the country. To many keeping informed about events in the home country is "a source of personal satisfaction". Apart from their interest in home politics, like all expatriate Bangladeshis, the respondents are very homesick, and want to be in constant contact with the home country. The immigrant press provides one means to accomplish that.

An equally powerful motivation for exposure to the Bangladeshi immigrant press is a strong desire to read in the mother tongue. One respondent says: "it gives me a wonderful feeling of attachment to my country and culture... I feel I am contributing to keep Bangla language and culture alive." A teen-aged respondent choked with emotion when she said, "When I was in Bangladesh I did not realize what Bangla really meant to me. But after coming here, I would trade anything to get a cassette with Bangla songs, or a Bangla book... being able to read a Bangla newspaper here makes me ecstatic."

Interest in knowing what is happening in the local Bangladeshi community is another important motivation for Bangladeshi readers. One who considers reading about the local Bangladeshi community as being a part of the community and sharing in its concerns, says "we are so far away from the home country and near ones... all Bangladeshis here are like a family. Through reading the community newspaper, we can maintain this big family."

If desire to be in touch with the home country and the community, and attachment to the ethnic language and culture are prime motivations for the readers of the Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers, then it should surface in their choice of content.

To assess the respondents' content preferences I asked them which item(s) they like to read most, and how frequently and thoroughly they read the item(s) of their choice. The response options offered for reading frequency of preferred content are, read always, sometimes, rarely, or never. To examine the thoroughness in reading the preferred items, respondents were asked whether they read all of it, part of it, glanced through, or ignored it.

The item which most readers find appealing is the news about current events in Bangladesh, especially the political events. In order of

appeal, other preferences are analyses of Bangladeshi politics, local Bangladeshi community news, and entertainment and sports in Bangladesh. Home country and ethnic community news are preferred by both the early and recent immigrants irrespective of gender. Analysis of Bangladesh politics appeals to all immigrants, men and women, but more so to newcomers. Sports and entertainment events in Bangladesh are most desirable for recent immigrants. The Canadian-born generation is more interested in local Bangladeshi community news and entertainment, and prefers it over other items. The items that are of lesser interest to the Bangladeshi readers include Canadian news, international news, and advertisements. The preferred items are read more frequently and thoroughly.

The respondents' preference for specific content determines, to a great extent, their overall pattern of consumption of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. Frequency of reading and time spent reading increases with choice of Bangladeshi news, analysis of political events in Bangladesh, and local ethnic community news. The observed high preference for, and exposure to, content related to the ethnic country, culture, and community, is likely to support and maintain the readers' ethnic identity.

Researchers on ethnicity (Gans, 1979; Isajiw, 1975) considers that interest in the home country is a source of ethnic identification. This enables us to assume that there will be a close connection between the respondents' extent of interest in the home country and their desire to maintain ethnic identity. The readers' perception of the amount of information on Bangladesh, the ethnic community, and Canada, and their expectations regarding it, provides an estimate of the extent of their interest in the home country.

I asked the respondents what they thought about the amount of information on Bangladesh, the local Bangladeshi community, and Canada; and which of these they would like to see receive more coverage. The response options given for the amount of information are: too much, adequate, and not enough. About 75% of the readers think there is not enough information on Bangladesh. One frequent reader says, "considering the small volume of our newspapers, the amount is okay; but there is no detailed analysis about the current crisis in the politics or economy of Bangladesh... it's too little...after reading the newspapers I still make phone calls to my family or friends for more details." Nearly 78% of the readers believe that the information on local Bangladeshi community is adequate, but there is not enough useful information. One reader complains, "too

much space is filled with only cultural activities of the community. What about the problems we face in adjusting and raising our kids in a new culture, or in getting a job and education, or knowing what opportunities are open for us."

Many readers (42%) find the amount of information on Canada to be inadequate. "We are living in this country, we need to know what is going on around us because it affects our lives", a respondent pointed out. Nevertheless, most (58%) think that the amount of information is adequate. One of them justified that "such information available in the Canadian TV or newspapers, and we can always look there."

The type of content which both frequent and infrequent readers, and both early and new immigrants expect to see more in the immigrant press includes current news on Bangladesh, and analysis of Bangladeshi politics. Along with Bangladeshi items, the new arrivals want guidelines for newcomers. The early arrivals expect suggestions for personal and community development. The better educated readers, both early and new immigrants, expect the future issues of the Bangladeshi immigrant press to have more coverage of economic initiatives in Bangladesh and more international politics. The readers' expectation for more information on



Bangladesh indicates that they are keenly interested in their home country and wish to maintain their ethnic affiliations.

#### **4.6.3 CHANNEL PREFERENCE:**

Jeffres and Hur (1981: pp. 118-9) affirmed that a preference for the ethnic channel for news of the home country and the ethnic community, and its perceived usefulness for the same, are indicative of ethnic maintenance. The channels they examined are the ethnic mass media, host mass media, and personal contact. Their study found that when seeking information about the home country and ethnic community, those with higher education and higher socioeconomic status preferred mainstream newspapers and magazines, and those with less education and lower socioeconomic status preferred interpersonal communication and the ethnic mass media (pp. 122-3, 130).

Preferences in the Bangladeshi immigrant press were examined by asking respondents which channel they are most likely to use for different functions: keeping in touch with Bangladesh and the local Bangladeshi community, information on issues and events in Canada and the rest of the world, making decisions and forming opinions, and for information on job, education, social services, and leisure activities. For the said functions, the readers were also asked to rate the perceived usefulness of the immigrant

press on a scale of very, moderately, marginally, and not at all useful. The channel choices given to the respondents were: mainstream television/ newspaper/ radio, the Bangladeshi immigrant press in Montreal, the Bangladeshi immigrant press in New York, Bangladeshi newspapers from Bangladesh, concerned offices and agencies, friends and neighbours, and correspondence with Bangladesh.

**Table 9. Perceived Usefulness of the Bangladeshi Immigrant Press for Different Functions**

Type of Information	% of Total No. Of Readers Who Find Very Useful ( N= 50)	% of Total No. Of Readers Who Find Moderately Useful	% of Total No. Of Readers Who Find Marginally Useful	% of Total No. Of Readers Who Find Not Useful At All
Bangladeshi News	30	58	10	2
Community News	60	22	18	0
Canadian News	0	12	70	18
International News	0	4	84	12
Job, Education, Services & Leisure Activities	0	6	6	88
Aid to Making Decision & Forming Opinion	0	26	12	62

Table 9 shows the perceived usefulness of the immigrant press. One third (30%) of respondents ranked the Bangladeshi immigrant press as very useful for news of the home country. However most (58%) consider it to be moderately useful, for them Bangladeshi newspapers from Bangladesh are better sources of information. Other preferences include Bangladeshi newspapers from New York and correspondence with the home country. As Bangladesh is rarely covered in the mainstream press, or any host mass medium for that matter, these media are not a choice for these readers. A preference for the Bangladeshi immigrant press for news of the home country is common among early immigrants while relatively recent immigrants prefer Bangladeshi newspapers from Bangladesh. The probable reason is that newcomers are interested in the latest and detailed information about the home country, and such extensive coverage is available only in newspapers from Bangladesh. Socioeconomic status does not influence the choice of the immigrant press for home country news.

For information on the local community, 60% of the respondents find the immigrant press very useful while nearly 22% thinks it is moderately useful. Personal contacts and immigrant broadcast media are the other sources used for this purpose. The immigrant press is most preferred for community news by the better educated, the higher

occupational status individuals, and the relatively recent immigrants. The early immigrants depend more on personal contacts with friends and neighbours.

For news and information on Canada and the rest of the world, Canadian newspapers and television are the most preferred sources. About 70% of the sample perceive the immigrant press to be marginally useful for Canadian news, and 84% for international events and issues. Irrespective of length of residence in Canada, this perception of usefulness is common among the better educated, and the higher occupational status respondents.

For making decisions and forming opinions, and for information on employment, education, legal matters, social services, and leisure activities, the respondents depend mostly on Canadian newspapers and television, followed by personal contacts and contact with concerned organizations. In making decisions and forming opinion about 62% of readers, and for information of job, education, available services, and leisure facilities, 88% ranked the immigrant newspapers as not useful at all. Education, occupational status, and length of residence in Canada emerged as significant influences on a preference for the Bangladeshi immigrant press and its perceived usefulness. A majority readers find their Bangla language

newspapers useful for news of the home country and the ethnic community, so it is expected that frequent exposure to the newspapers would strengthen their ethnic ties and identity.

#### **4.7 USES OF THE CANADIAN MASS MEDIA:**

To complete our profile of Bangladeshi readers, this section briefly explores their exposure to Canadian information sources. This examination serves two purposes: it allows us to determine how exposure to the host mass media relates to their use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press; second, this provides an understanding of their current mass media consumption pattern.

The respondents' consumption of the Canadian mass media was measured in terms of their frequency of exposure to, the time spent with, and content preferences in Canadian newspapers, television, radio, books, and magazines. Their choice of newspaper content was examined in terms of exposure to news, sports, business, the arts and entertainment. An analysis of preferences in Canadian television examined the respondents' exposure to the categories of news, public affairs, documentaries, drama, comedy, variety and game shows, and sports. Content of radio was categorized as news and entertainment-oriented. A classification of the

content of the Canadian mass media was required to explore whether a preference in one or the other was related to exposure to the immigrant press. Table 10 provides a picture of the respondents' frequency of use, time spent with, and content preferences in the mainstream mass media.

**Table 10. Use of the Canadian Mass Media**

	Users of Canadian Newspapers as % of Total Bangladeshi Readers (N= 50)	Users of Canadian Television as % of Total Bangladeshi Readers	Users of Canadian Radio as % of Total Bangladeshi Readers	Users of Canadian Book as % of Total Bangladeshi Readers	Users of Canadian Magazines as % of Total Bangladeshi Readers
<b>Frequency of Use:</b>					
Not At All	0	4	38	56 (read in last 3 months)	68 (read in last 3 months)
Not Everyday	38	0	26		
Everyday	62	96	36		
<b>Time spent everyday:</b>					
Less than 1 hour	83	45	77		
1- 2 hours	12	43	16		
More than 2 hours	3	10	5		
<b>Content Preference:</b>	News - 54 News & Sports - 29 Arts & Ent. - 9 Business - 6	Comedy - 28 News, PA, Docu - 24 Drama - 22 Variety & Games - 14 Sports - 8	Info-61 Ent.-38		

When the respondents' exposure to different channels of the Canadian mass media is compared we find that their use of television is the greatest, newspaper reading is moderately high, reading of magazines is high, book reading is moderate, and radio listening is extremely low. This resembles, to some extent, the mass media consumption trend of Canadians in general, who have a high preference for television; about 48% of the population ranks it above newspapers and radio.<sup>6</sup> About 69% of Canadians read newspapers daily and spend an average of 53 minutes reading daily newspapers on week days, and 66 minutes on weekends. Nearly 62% of the Bangladeshi respondents read everyday, and majority of them spend, on average, less than a hour. Canadians who read newspapers frequently tend to be male, over 35, and have a high education and high income. A strikingly similar trend is observed among the Bangladeshi readers of the Canadian press; the frequent readership is mostly male (64% of the males against 54% of the females), in the over 30 age group, and with a higher education and higher occupational status. Also included among frequent readers are the not so recent immigrants.

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics on the mass media consumption pattern of Canadians were obtained from Statistics Canada, *Television Viewing in Canada* (1990), and Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981).

These people spend more time with Canadian newspapers as well. Overall, Canadian-borns are less frequent readers of the mainstream newspapers than the first generation Bangladeshi immigrants.

Both Bangladeshis and Canadians have heavy exposure to Canadian television. An estimated 96% of the Bangladeshi respondents, as against 78% of the Canadian population, watch it on a daily basis. Nearly 88% of the Bangladeshi viewers watch between one and two hours of television each day. On the other hand, on a typical day Canadians spend an average of three hours (191 minutes) watching television. For Bangladeshis, television viewing is high for both men and women, daily viewers include 97% of the male and 90% of the female respondents. Among Canadian users, women have the highest level of use. Television is watched by Canadians primarily for entertainment, although news-oriented programmes rank very close in terms of appeal. Canadians spend most of their viewing time watching drama (29%), news, public affairs, and documentaries (24%), comedy (14%), variety and game shows (11%), and sports (6%). Nearly the same pattern holds for Bangladeshi viewers, whose main choices in order of preference are comedy (28%), news, public affairs, and documentaries (24%), drama (22%), variety and game shows (14%), and sports (8%).



Of the mainstream mass media, Canadian radio is the least popular among Bangladeshi respondents. Only 36% of them listens to it everyday, and 77% of those for less than an hour. Compared with television, Canadians spend less time with radio. Still, during an average day they spend more than three hours (about 185 minutes) listening to radio. For both the communities women are more frequent listeners to radio than men. Bangladeshis show a preference for information-oriented content in the mainstream radio rather than entertainment items.

The Montreal Bangladeshi sample reads fewer Canadian books and magazines than Canadians do. About 56% of Bangladeshis (including 60% of the males and 47% of the females), as compared with 72% of Canadians, have read a book in the last three months. Canadian magazines have been read in the last three months by 68% of Bangladeshi readers (69% of the male and 64% of the female respondents), and 78% of the Canadian population.

The moderately high use of the Canadian mass media by Bangladeshis is a sign of wanting to become acculturated into their new host society. However, researching this aspect is beyond the scope of this dissertation because its main focus is the Bangla language newspapers. One engaging finding of this study is that the frequency of reading the

Montreal Bangladeshi newspapers is positively related with exposure to Canadian newspapers and television news. The association is clearly evident in that about 73% of the frequent users of the immigrant press, as against 54% infrequent users, also read Canadian newspapers, and watch Canadian television news daily. Use of the immigrant press tends to decrease with exposure to Canadian television entertainment and radio. However, exposure to mainstream television entertainment does not sharply divide between frequent and infrequent users of the immigrant press, which radio use does. About 42% of the frequent readers, and 47% of the infrequent readers, are viewers of mainstream television entertainment, while 24% of the frequent readers listen to mainstream radio broadcasts on a daily basis, and 58% of infrequent readers do so.

This positive correlation indicates that the Bangladeshi and Canadian media are used for complementary purposes. The Bangladeshi newspapers sustain the readers emotionally by enabling them to maintain their ethnic ties. The Canadian mass media, on the other hand, is used for their daily life exigencies, and for orientation into the new society.

Another interesting point to note is the respondents' general preference for the print medium. Those who are frequently exposed to the Bangladeshi immigrant papers were also observed to be intense readers of

mainstream newspapers, books and magazines. Reading the Bangladeshi immigrant press can thus be viewed as deriving from the respondents' general preference for the print medium. This may be due to the long newspaper reading tradition which these readers brought with them from Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, despite the relatively low rate of literacy the newspaper is the medium most people turn to. If they themselves cannot read the newspaper, someone would read it to them, or they would gather the information from someone who had read it in a newspaper. The Bangladeshi weekly news magazine "*Jai Jai Din*" estimates that 518 (including dailies, weeklies, and monthlies) newspapers are published in Bangladesh (*Jai Jai Din*, October 11, 1994). Such a high growth in the print medium was, perhaps, inspired by people's high interest in, and trust of, the same. Its worth mentioning here that the broadcast media in Bangladesh have always been under complete government control, and, due to their biased coverage have lost credibility with their audience. Bangladeshi newspapers, being mostly in the private sector, are free of government control and are able to express independent viewpoints.

#### 4.8 CONCLUSION:

The findings indicate that motivations which led to the founding of the immigrant press and its decided goals are to provide continuous contact with Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi community in Montreal, and to uphold and preserve ethnic language, culture, and identity. This is reflected in the high visibility of the ancestral country, and ethnicity-related matters in the content. The readers also turn to the immigrant press from a desire to maintain a constant link with the ethnic country, community, and culture. This aspiration determines their frequency of exposure to the press, their choices from its content, and the appeal of the press itself. Two conclusions can be drawn from these findings. One, that the immigrant press attempts to promote and preserve ethnicity. Two, that the respondents read the Bangla language press to affirm their ethnic identity. The heavy exposure of the respondents to the Bangladeshi immigrant press, their high preference for its ethnic content coupled with the massive dose of ethnicity in the content of the press, allows us to infer that use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press will play an important role in shaping and maintaining its readers' ethnic identity. The next chapter will explore these indications in greater detail, examining the correlation between use of the

immigrant press and variables that are indicative of the readers' ethnic identity.

## CHAPTER 5

### COMMUNICATION OF IMAGINATION: USES OF THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT PRESS AND ETHNIC MAINTENANCE OF ITS READERSHIP

... using ethnic media is an indicator of ethnicity retention, not only because such activities are ethnic patterns in their own right, but also because they are a means to retaining other ethnic patterns.

(Wsevolod W. Isajiw, 1981: p. 31)

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION:

That the mass media play a role in reinforcing existing preferences and attitudes of people has now been empirically established (Korzenny et.al, 1992: p. 1). However, how mass mediated messages affirm affective disposition in ethnic group members regarding their ethnicity has not yet been fully resolved. Consequently, the issue of the impact of the ethnic mass media on ethnic preferences and identity has come under more scrutiny in current scholarly work.

Current studies perceive ethnic maintenance as the retention of a feeling of identity and group boundary (Driedeger, 1985, 1989; Herberg, 1989; Barth, in Sollors, 1986; Edwards, 1985; Anderson and Frideres, 1981; Isajiw, 1981; Reitz, 1980; Gans, 1979; De Vos, 1975; Shaffir,

1972). The communication patterns of ethnic group members are regarded as indicators of their assimilation or differentiation. Greater ethnicity is associated with a greater use of the ethnic mass media, and its frequent use is said to strengthen and preserve ethnic ties, language, culture, tradition, and identity (Kim, 1988; Black and Leithner, 1987; Jeffres and Hur, 1981; Park, 1922).

This dissertation has postulated that our group of Bangladeshi readers derive and retain their feelings of ethnic identity through exposure to various ethnic symbols, enabled by their participation in ethnic communication. To argue this proposition the pattern of their Bangladeshi interpersonal activities have been demonstrated in Chapter 3. And, since this study is concerned with the imagined dimension of ethnic maintenance, Chapter 4 focused on an investigation of their exposure to the Bangladeshi mass communication media. The preceding chapter provided evidence that Montreal readers use the local Bangladeshi press to maintain contact and communication with the home country, as well as with their Bangladeshi friends and associations in the local community. Through it they acquire and internalize the shared values, norms, and communication patterns of their culture. They also use it as a source for the interpretation of issues from the immigrant group's perspective, and for

ethnic entertainment. We additionally saw that the Bangla press is a more important medium than the Bangladeshi broadcast media because it is more accessible, and because it offers more Bangla language information. Thus, we can say that it has a great impact on the way its readers think about and maintain their ethnicity.

So far we have inferred the effect of the Bangladeshi press from its content. But the content only suggests what might affect the readers' perceptions. For a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the Bangla language press on the readers' ethnic identity, both its content and the readers' views about the issues which are offered in the content must be investigated.

## **5.2 ROLE OF THE BANGLA LANGUAGE PRESS IN ETHNIC MAINTENANCE:**

Evidence obtained through content analysis provides clues that the Montreal Bangladeshi press champions ethnicity by using certain message mechanisms. To check on these clues, and to determine how effective the mechanisms are in influencing readers' ethnic identity, I have integrated an analysis of content of the Bangla newspapers and an analysis of their readers' response. I have examined both how its messages are structured



and the ways in which the same issues are understood by the readers. It is expected that the readers will be receptive to the Bangla press to the extent that its meaning of ethnicity is aligned with their meaning of ethnicity. The readers are likely to fully or partly accept, or even reject the readings preferred by their press. A complicity between the reading of ethnicity invited by the Bangla language press and the readers' ethnic perceptions will attest to its role in ethnic maintenance. I would argue that those who are more receptive to the messages of the immigrant press, and more frequently exposed to it, would have stronger ethnic identifications.

#### **5.2.1 THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE FRAMEWORK:**

To demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between content and reading in meaning creation, this dissertation has used David Morley's (1980) notion of 'preferred readings', an idea he borrowed from Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding/ decoding model. Morley states that media messages invite a particular reading or a range of readings through the manipulation of their content structures and internal mechanisms. He perceives that meaning in mediated communication emerges from an interaction between the message mechanisms, which prefer certain reading(s), and the codes and conceptual frameworks which the audience brings to the reading. The author argues that media messages cannot be

used in any way one wishes, because the readers are constrained by the directions and closures within the structure of the messages. He notes that the structures of closure are not always or totally effective, and that a message encoded in one way may carry a different meaning for the audience if it is interpreted in a different way than which it was encoded (p. 84). He explains that the ways in which audience members respond to media messages depends on the extent to which they fit with or contradict the cultural codes and frameworks they inhabit by virtue of their situation in different sociocultural backgrounds (pp. 77, 86, 89). In the first phase of his two-fold analysis of the British television programme "Nationwide", Morley examines the message mechanisms in the concepts and categories of the text. He then investigates how its messages are received and interpreted by groups from different sociocultural backgrounds (p. 93). Morley's conclusion is that, depending on socioeconomic position, involvement in different cultural frameworks and identity, the reading/viewing context, and perception of nearness/ distance to the issue, audience members may assume three decoding positions: 1. Preferred or dominant reading, where the meaning may be fully taken within the interpretive framework which the message prefers; 2. Negotiated reading, where the meaning may be broadly taken, but where the audience may

modify the message in relation to its own context and experience; 3. Oppositional reading, where an alternative interpretation is imposed on the preferred reading (pp. 89, 97-8).

According to Morley, the various mechanisms which the mass media use to secure a preferred reading may be explicit- headlines, facts, pictures, commentary- or implicit, such as latent messages about social values and ideologies, or arguments and interpretations suggesting what the important events and issues are, and how to think about them, as well as certain modes of identification with the audience (p. 84). Using Morley, I shall identify the devices which the Bangladeshi immigrant press uses to advance ethnicity, and compare its suggested reading to the readers' perceptions, to determine the extent to which readers accept the preferred understanding of ethnicity, and which factors explain the extent of their acceptance.

### **5.2.2 EXPLICIT MECHANISMS OF THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT PRESS AND ITS DECODING:**

The selection and treatment of content in the Bangla language newspapers is a major overt device by which they promote ethnicity. Analysis of the content in the Bangladeshi immigrant press indicates that news and analysis about the current political situation in Bangladesh are the most frequently covered topics, receiving 72% (out of 34,979 sq.cm.)

of *Probashbangla's* and 49% (out of 41, 269 sq.cm.) of *Banglabarta's* column space for the categories. The Bangla newspapers insist that keeping oneself informed of Bangladeshi politics is important:

Politics keeps our country going. There is no way to separate our lives from the political events in Bangladesh. We should be eager to know what is going on, not only because our near ones are still there, but also because of our love and concern for the country.

(*Probashbangla*, October 28th, 1994)

Our data on the readers' content preferences (Ch.4) revealed that 84% prefer Bangladesh political news, while 66% find the analytical articles on home politics most appealing. Bangladesh politics is of overriding concern for all recent immigrants, and especially for the better educated, those with higher occupational status, and the relatively younger age (below 40) group among them. Gender makes no difference in this regard. These readers clearly endorse the significance which their press attaches to home politics. One respondent comments:

Bangladesh and its politics is in the forefront of our thoughts. We were there until recently, our families and friends are still there. Just because we are here, we can't wash our hands off, and not care about our country any more. Keeping informed relieves me of a lot of anxiety...it also has a pleasure of its own.

The early immigrants, despite their strong preference for Bangladeshi politics, go on to make a negotiated reading. One reader feels:

Considering the ongoing political instability in the country, our concern about home politics is natural. But we should also be aware of the immediate concerns in the community, and our newspapers can play a role in this respect, and provide guidelines for individual and community development.

Many students, irrespective of length of residence, also partially concur with the importance placed on Bangladeshi politics. They point out what they see as gaps in the press coverage, and suggest modifications to its preferred framework:

We would like to have a complete picture of our politics. The items do not give a clear sense of what it all means for the future of the country, and for us here... We are equally interested in knowing how our community is faring here? What are our major concerns? What kinds of problems do newcomers face, and how do they cope? What is the overall situation of Bangladeshis in Canada? The newspapers can look into these issues.

The unemployed immigrants give some credence to the immigrant press' claim that knowledge of home politics is important. However, the immigrant press' tilt towards events in Bangladesh remains acceptable to

them. The prominence of better educated people in this group leads them to suggest that:

Life is not politics alone... development initiatives, science and technology, and environmental issues in Bangladesh concern us as well, and should come up in our newspapers.

Some readers with a lower occupational status, irrespective of length of residence in Canada, find Bangladesh politics to be of little relevance in their present circumstances. They make a clear oppositional reading:

Preoccupation with home politics is not going to find us jobs, put food on our tables, it is not going to take us anywhere. Our concern should be issues and problems in our community, the events of this society... things which affect our lives.

The Canadian-born readers, perhaps because of their experiential distance from the discourse of Bangladeshi politics, assume a disengaged, rather than an oppositional reading. They barely comment on the issue.

### **5.2.3 IMPLICIT MECHANISMS OF THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT PRESS AND ITS DECODING:**

In analyzing the latent devices which the Montreal Bangladeshi press uses for structuring a preferred reading of ethnicity for its readership, I have examined the themes which are presented repetitively and the ways in which the readers are addressed.

**5.2.3.1 Recurrent Themes in the Bangla Language Newspapers:** The Bangladeshi press in Montreal strives to define for its readers what it means to be a Bangladeshi, and why retaining that identity is important. It does this through a repeated emphasis on certain themes, and the shared symbols of the ethnic culture inherent in them. These themes and symbols are offered to the readers as frameworks to think within, and to construct the meaning of their ethnicity. I shall discuss these themes and compare them with what the readers consider important for their ethnic cohesion and continuity. The related themes are subsumed under four broad headings: allegiance to the home country, ethnic community ties and involvement, practice and preservation of ethnic culture, and upholding and maintaining ethnic identity.

**Allegiance to the Home Country.** The Bangladeshi immigrant press projects a love for Bangladesh as a matter of allegiance, and defines it as the first duty of all Bangladeshis. It stresses that this allegiance requires constant contact and communication with the ancestral country, and an active interest in its events. An appeal is made to the readers' nostalgic feelings, their yearning for attachment to the family and friends left behind:

Maybe you are sitting alone by the side of the St. Lawrence river, with the sun setting before your eyes. You look up at the sky and wonder, would this cloud flow to Bangladesh, would it whisper into the ears of my near ones that I miss them? And, suddenly your eyes are filled with tears...  
(*Banglabarta*, November 30th, 1994)

The evidence in Chapter 3 indicates that a majority (81%) of the Montreal readers maintain regular correspondences with the homeland, and many (24%) make frequent visits. It is the immigrants, both old and new, particularly the married, the women, and the over 30 age-group who most value their connection with the home country. Their decoding thus corresponds to that of their immigrant press. A yearning for the motherland is echoed as a reader remembers Bangladesh:

We are no longer in Bangladesh, it is within us now. I close my eyes and I am there...singing with my sister on our roof on a moonlight night filled with the sweet scent of pomelmoose, watching the sail-boats on the Buriganga river, taking a stroll by the crescent lake with my friends, watching a television drama with my parents...everything beckons me...

The unmarried immigrants and the Canadian-born generation, while acknowledging the importance of contact with Bangladesh, stress on their present circumstances:

I realize very well that keeping in touch with our folks and friends back home is a wonderful way of telling them that I



love and remember them. I make phone calls and write once in a while... I have a living to earn or am busy with school. There are so many things to take care of, I can only keep as much link with Bangladesh as my situation allows...

None completely denied the significance of maintaining continuous contact with Bangladesh.

A part of the immigrant press' suggestion of allegiance to Bangladesh is its frequent and extensive coverage of current events in the country, particularly its politics, which encourages the readers' involvement:

The lack of idealism and morality on the part of our leadership has worsened the political situation in the country...the people are overwhelmed with crises of every kind... These people are very close to us. It is absolutely impossible not to be concerned about them. At this critical juncture in our nation's life, we can generate new hope in our people by letting them know it is our common struggle, and extend our unconditional support for their demands. (*Probashbangla*, January 6th, 1995).

The readers' concern for current Bangladeshi politics derives from their commitment to the homeland. As mentioned in the previous section, a high percentage of the readership has an absorbing interest in the country's current affairs, and many are particularly interested in its politics. The better educated, the higher occupational status individuals, and the relatively young among the recent immigrants, express the

strongest preference for home politics. They share their immigrant press' perspective totally about home politics being of great significance for the Montreal Bangladeshis. One reader expresses his concerns:

Will there be a positive change in the overall political situation in our country? Are we going to have a leadership that will rekindle hope and inspiration in our hearts, and lead us to this change? It is a cause for great concern. If we, expatriate Bangladeshis, can take organized action, maybe we will be able to bring about some positive changes in our country.

A sense of their present location is a crucial consideration for the long-time immigrants, the students, and the unemployed. Their concern for the homeland is paralleled with a concern for the well-being of their community in Montreal and their situation in the Canadian society. Their response, from a negotiated position, is expressed in such views as:

Our concern for the country's political future is something we can never give up, but we are here now, we also need to think about the psychological pressures on the newcomers, about the arrangements that can be made individually or through our community organizations to provide them with guidelines...about how the basic needs and problems in our community can be met...We have made Canada our new home, its events and issues... economy, politics, law and order...concerns and affects us in our daily lives. The newspapers should focus on these issues too.

The immigrants with lower occupational status make a negative evaluation of the worth of the home politics presented in their immigrant newspapers. They perceive it as irrelevant in their present situation, and offer their own assessment of what is worth thinking about. As one reader puts it:

Obsession with Bangladeshi politics obscures the real issues in our community, like jobs, education, and career opportunities. It blinds us to issues in the Canadian society, such as the economy. Concern for Bangladesh politics will neither facilitate our individual advancement, nor our community development. We need to focus more on our community, and get to know the Canadian society and its systems better.

The second generation does not show much interest or appreciation for Bangladesh politics because it does not connect with their live experiences. Their response is generally one of silence and occasional superficial comments, which manifests unwillingness to engage with the issue.

**Ethnic Community Ties and Involvement.** The Montreal Bangla language press encourages an association between Bangladeshis and asks readers to share each other's concerns. It attempts to create a community consciousness by publicizing community events and urging readers to participate. It also reminds them of their responsibility to retain ethnic

culture, and encourages their involvement in community institutions for that purpose.

Don't be a stranger to your fellow countrymen. There are so many of us out there, why not go and say hello. Say how you feel, try to know what is on her/ his mind. This is how we can make our expatriate life easier. Let us all unite in the shade of the red and green flag.

(*Probashbangla*, August 5th, 1994)

Our congregation at community events is a wonderful experience. They generate a wave of joy and delight in our hearts. They allow us to relax and unwind, to relive the moments we left behind in Bangladesh... assure us of our combined presence in the new land, and help us preserve our culture, tradition, and group solidarity.

(*Banglabarta*, November 30th, 1994)

The group is called Jhankar... It wants to orient the new generation to our culture, and inspire their appreciation for it. It deserves our recognition and support for their laudable role in preserving our culture and tradition.

(*Probashbangla*, August 5th, 1994)

The data about ethnic cohesion in Chapter 3 revealed that community ties are an important means for the Montreal readers to maintain their ethnic identity. For most (64%) of them, their intimate friends are Bangladeshi, some (44%) frequent the community events enthusiastically, and many (56%) prefer direct participation in community affairs through membership in its organizations. Recent immigrants in

higher occupational positions, irrespective of gender, age, and education, express a marked preference for ties with fellow ethnics. They articulate their feelings in terms of comfort and assurance:

In this expatriate life a strong community is a source of encouragement and support. When we are among other Bangladeshis, we can be ourselves... it lessens our pain of separation from our homeland, and our loved ones. This comforting feeling cannot be found by any other means.

Old immigrants with higher education and occupational status, students in general, and the Canadian-born generation, while accepting the significance of ethnic bonding, also make the point that:

We need to share experiences with other immigrant communities, how they have survived and prospered in this society. Moreover, to prepare ourselves to reach the development phase of the Canadian society, we should mingle with the mainstream population to become full participants in the social process. It also would be a wonderful way of knowing the people and culture of Canada.

Immigrants in lower occupational position clearly distance themselves from the emphasis on ethnic group ties fostered by the Bangla newspapers. Their comments emerge around the issue of survival in a new environment:

The first concern in our life now is the question of survival in the new society. At school, work, or business, we cannot

survive if we intend to maintain a Bangladeshi island within the Canadian society. We have to come out of our self-made confinement, and interact with the mainstream population.

For the new immigrants, particularly the better educated among them, participation in ethnic community events is a highly valued experience, and a means for retaining ethnic culture. This feeling is irrespective of age, gender, marital status, or occupation.

Community events, for us, are like an oasis in a desert. If not for these events, we would not be able to quench our thirst for Bangladeshi songs, dances, drama, and art, or bond with our countrymen. They are a gust of freshness in our otherwise dull lives... they tell us, we... our culture, are very much alive.

Long-time immigrants with a higher education and higher occupational background, a majority students (both among the newcomers and old residents), and the second generation immigrants, share the Bangla language newspapers' perspective that attendance at community events is a significant means of community attachment. At the same time they are critical about the current forms and purposes of the events.

Our events are directed exclusively towards the Bangladeshis. The range and reach of these can be expanded, by adding a French or English segment to the performance events, or by inviting audiences and performers from different communities. Rather than focusing on concerts, picnics, or

dinners, we need more discussion meetings, seminars, and workshops to guide us in our community development.

Less educated new immigrants and old immigrants in low ranking occupations disagree with the implied emphasis on community events in their press. They frame their comments by raising questions about time, worth, and convenience:

Where is the time for this kind of indulgence in our difficult life? What is the use of going to these programmes? Meeting people? I know many already... What is the use of going when I can rent a video and watch Bangladeshi performances in the comfort of my own home?

Active involvement in ethnic organizations is emphasized more by the recent immigrants, particularly by the better educated, the under 35 age group, and the unemployed. They endorse the cultural orientation which underlies the immigrant press' message in this regard:

Protecting and preserving our culture and community's interest is a solemn duty. But many of us hesitate to come forward, worrying that we cannot do much individually, which is true. But involvement in a Bangladeshi organization would make our voices more powerful, and our efforts more effective.

The better educated, the married, and women among the relatively long-time residents, the students among both the newcomers and old

immigrants, and many Canadian-born also stress the importance of involvement in community organizations, but they express reservations about the prevailing types of organizational activities. They feel that the focus of the organizations should be changed:

Until now our organizations have been engaged in arranging celebration of festivals, organizing cultural performance events, or in running performing arts schools. We are a new community in Canada, and our institutions need to have concrete programmes oriented towards community development. We should think about offering basic training in computers, French courses, and other vocational training, about setting up a data-bank of jobs, educational and career opportunities available here, having a community centre with recreational facilities, a library...Our press should point these out, and provide guidelines and suggestions.

The less educated, and the lower occupational status immigrants accept the preferred reading of organizational participation so long as it does not demand their commitment. Their feelings reflect a position at the dominant end of oppositional reading:

I appreciate what they are doing. But it is not the only way... If we have a love for our culture and the community, we can serve in our individual capacities. Moreover, organizations may not be as effective in inspiring our commitment to the culture as our families are...



**Practice and Preservation of Ethnic Culture.** To instill a sense of pride in their cultural distinctiveness in the readers, the Montreal Bangladeshi press reminds them of their linguistic heritage, and urges them to use and preserve their language and culture. Passing the ethnic culture on to the subsequent generations is defined as a moral obligation for all, and especially for parents.

Bangla is our proud heritage. Our national poet Tagore established the Bangla language in the world community by winning the Nobel prize in 1913. In 1974, our first head of the state, Sheikh Mujib, made us very proud by delivering his speech at the United Nations in Bangla. Language gives us distinction and a feeling of fellowship. Our resolve should be to practice and preserve Bangla through writings and publications, through festivals and celebrations.  
(*Banglabarta*, February 21st, 1994)

If we want to preserve our culture the new generation should be our prime concern. Our children must know they are the inheritors of a rich cultural tradition. As conscientious Bangladeshi parents, it remains our responsibility to tell them about it...This will cause them to discover their roots, which will develop their knowledge and appreciation of the culture.  
(*Probashbangla*, February 3rd, 1994)

Data on our readers' ethnicity in chapter 3 confirms that language is the most important aspect of the ethnic culture to a majority (84%), who attach tremendous importance to its practice and preservation. Their children's knowledge of the ethnic language and culture is a vital concern

for many (80%). Immigrants in general stress the practice and retention of ethnic culture. The feeling is most predominant among women, the married, the over 30 age group, and those with a higher education and higher occupational status. They express their preference in the ethnic culture in the following ways:

The arrival of February reminds us not of spring, but of February 21st... Our minds are filled with gratitude towards our Language Day Martyrs, who established our right to speak our tongue. The best feeling about thinking of myself as a Bangali is a sense of belonging to a rich tradition. We must preserve Bangla.

The practice of our culture helps us realize our true identity, and enables us to maintain our distinction... Outside the family, our children have little scope to learn about our culture and language. We should always communicate with our children in Bangla and encourage them to practice it, and make them aware of the history of our ancestral country, our values, and customs. This will make them sure of their identity, and develop in them a compassion for Bangladesh, Bangla, and Bangladeshis.

The immigrant students, and some Canadian-born identify with the values and sentiments of the ethnic culture, but bring their own sense of cultural preservation to a negotiated reading:

Celebrating our roots and practising the culture are no doubt important, but more important is the awareness of our traditions and heritage, and reflecting on them for inspiration

to build our community. The survival of our culture depends not only on the practice of its customs, or on the celebration of its festivals, but also on its enrichment through exposure to, and exchange with, other cultures. We can maintain our culture and still get to know the culture and way of life in Canada so that there are no cultural tensions or misconceptions... The children and the young generation should know both the Bangladeshi and the Canadian culture, but the choice and the extent of practice should be left to them.

The views which the immigrants in lower occupational positions express reflects a sense of pessimism about their current situation, rather than a rejection of the value their immigrant press and other Bangladeshis attach to the ethnic culture.

We are forever indebted to our martyrs who gave their lives so that we could speak Bangla, have our own country, and practice our culture. But, an emotional hang-up with culture, and refusal to see beyond it does not make sense. Has it helped keeping ourselves isolated like this? Look at our position in this society, when it's hard enough making ends meet, does culture not take a second place?...

**Upholding and Maintaining Ethnic Identity.** Time and again the immigrant press reminds its readers that no matter where they are, it is their ethnic identity that gives them distinction. It suggests that to be committed to Bangladesh is to uphold their ethnic identity under any circumstances. To uphold ethnic identity readers are urged to remember

their ethnic roots. The Bangla language press provides information about the historical development of the nation to furnish a sense of an ongoing tradition.

Bangladesh is ours, and we are Bangladeshi. No matter how far we go to survive political persecution or economic hardship, at the end of the day our hearts yearn for Bangladesh. We are Bangladeshi, and only Bangladeshi. (*Banglabarta*, August 12th, 1994)

The brave fight our ancestors fought against British imperialism, in the Khelafat movement, the peasants' movement, the Pakistan movement, the language movement of '52, the mass uprising of '69, and the independence war of '71 sharpened and strengthened our sense of identity as a nation. (*Banglabarta*, February 21st, 1994)

This study has determined that a felt salience of ethnic identity is a crucial component of the Bangladeshi readers' ethnicity. Data in Table 2 (chapter 3) shows that a majority (64%) of the sample proclaims ethnic identity and attaches tremendous importance to it. It also demonstrates that a large percentage of our readers (60%) prefer it over other social identities, and an equally significant group (62%) considers it to be central to their lives. Table 3 (chapter 3) confirms that it is mostly the recent immigrants, particularly women, the married, and the better educated, who strongly affirm and express their Bangladeshi identity. This feeling is

irrespective of age or occupational status. Some long-time residents and Canadian-born readers also share this sentiment.

Bangladeshis are the best in the world when it comes to patriotism and sacrifice for the nation. The fight for our language and independence has left no doubt about our unique identity. Bangladesh is our country, it is the country of our ancestors from whom we inherited our identity and endurance as a nation. That spirit lives in me and million others who will forever feel proud to be Bangladeshi.

Local identification assumes greater significance for immigrants who have been in Canada for more than ten years, for some students both among the newcomers and old immigrants, and for some Canadian-born. Their sense of dual loyalty is evident in their response. One reader justifies:

Bangladesh is the land of birth for many of us, but Canada has given us a new life. Neither can we deny our roots, nor can we deny our existence and life in Canada. It is natural to have feelings for both. I feel equally excited and proud when I find that a Bangladeshi or a Canadian has earned international recognition in her/his field.

No fully oppositional response was apparent from the Montreal sample regarding ethnic identity. Some of the readers born in Canada place more emphasis on their membership in the Montreal Bangladeshi community and in the Canadian society, than on their ancestral country. Their identity preference is expressed as:

Our first responsibility is towards our community, and the larger Canadian society. This does not mean forgetting or denying my roots, or not loving Bangladesh.

**5.2.3.2 Mode of Identification with the Readers:** The immigrant press is readily identifiable by their use of the word 'Bangla' in their names. The name "Banglabarta" means information on or about Bangla (or Bangladesh), while "Probashbangla" means expatriate Bangla (or Bangladesh). The word 'Bangla' is often used as an abbreviation for Bangladesh. The very names of the newspapers are intended to create an instant bond with the readers and to awaken their ethnic consciousness.

In addition to their names, to get the preferred meaning(s) of ethnicity across, the Bangla language newspapers attempt to establish an identification with readers through the frequent use of the addresses 'we citizens' or 'fellow Bangladeshis'- referring to the home country Bangladesh, and 'we Bangalis'- referring to the nation speaking the ethnic language Bangla, or 'we the expatriate Bangladeshis'- referring to the Bangladeshi community in Montreal. These addresses imply a oneness on many levels- a shared identity and belonging, a shared heritage of culture and history, and a shared loyalty to the ancestral country and culture.

Instances of how the Bangla language press works to build identification with its readers follow:

We are talking about us, the Bangladeshis, the Bangalis. Our life in the western society has enriched us in education and wealth, but above all, we are Bangladeshis. We are a nation of brave warriors, learned scholars, wise thinkers, and passionate writers. We fought for our independence and our cultural and language rights. We continue to fight injustice, oppression, poverty, and natural disasters...  
(*Probashbangla*, March 1st, 1995)

Away from the echoing green stretched from Tekhnaf to Tetulia, we have developed a community by the Atlantic which is strong in nationalistic spirit, and distinct in culture and identity. We need to stick together, and keep our beloved country, language and culture above everything else.  
(*Banglabarta*, August 12th, 1994)

Our discussion in the preceding section indicates that it is largely the recent immigrants with a higher education, notably women and those who are married, a section of the old immigrants living in Canada for less than ten years, and some in the new generation, who inhabit the subject position 'Bangladeshi citizen' or 'Bangali nation' which their newspapers construct for them. They take pride in this sense of belonging, and perceive it as representing their distinct being.

In my waking hours, as well as in my dreams, I am Bangladeshi. Our long tradition of language and culture has

given our nation a proud identity, a wealth, which as a conscious Bangladeshi and a Bangali, we should preserve and hold high.

An exclusively Bangladeshi identity does not completely agree with the views of long-time immigrants, and some readers among the students and in the new generation. While acknowledging their national identity, they connect it to their present reality, and share the 'we' which defines them as both Bangladeshi and members of their ethnic community in Montreal. Their interests and concerns encompass both:

We are proud to be Bangladeshi. We cannot, and should not, forget who we are. But we are here now, and the community here, its hopes and fears, its problems and prospects, are our concern too.

Some of the Canadian-born readers are not comfortable with the Bangladeshi/Bangali identity. Their sense of identity centres around their membership in Canadian society, but it includes their Montreal Bangladeshi community, which brings an alternative reading to the preferred identification of the Bangla language press.

This is my home...the air, the sky, the places, the people whom I have known since childhood, are closer to me than anything else. My friends, whether from Bangladesh, here, or from anywhere else, my relatives living here, the Bangladeshis whom I know here are all important to me. So too is the well-



being of this society and the people, including those from Bangladesh.

**5.2.3.3 Summary:** We have seen that the Montreal Bangladeshi press advocates ethnicity by appealing to the ethnocultural values, norms, and assumptions which it holds in common with its readers. Thus the definition of ethnicity implied in the press and its mode of identification with the readers, largely comply with the readers' understanding of the same. However, the sharing of the ethnic culture does not lead the readers to a complete acceptance of the reading preferred by their press, or a uniformity of reading. This is manifested in the different levels and the extent of their acceptance or rejection of the suggested reading. The factors which emerged as significant influences on their interpretation of ethnicity are, age, gender, marital status, education, occupation, and length and generation of residence in Canada. As we have seen, the understanding of ethnicity which the Montreal Bangla press prefers generally has total acceptance among the recent immigrants, especially among women, the married, and for those with higher educations and occupational backgrounds. A glance at Table 8 in chapter 4 confirms that these are as well the individuals who constitute the frequent readership of the Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers. The inference is that the readers who

make frequent use of the Bangla language press would accept its preferred reading more than others would, and would consequently manifest stronger ethnic identifications. For evidence in support of this thesis, let us examine how the frequency of exposure to the Bangladeshi newspapers relates to the readers' ethnic ethnicity.

### **5.3 USE FREQUENCY OF THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT PRESS AND ETHNIC MAINTENANCE OF ITS READERS:**

The ethnic symbols which give the Montreal Bangladeshi readers coherence and continuity as an ethnic group have been identified (in Chapter 3) as ethnic language, family, endogamy, ethnic food, festivals, ethnic friends, attendance of community events, attendance of ethnic school, home contact, interest in home country politics, history, and perceived salience of ethnic self-identification. It will be interesting to explore attachment to which of these symbols is being stimulated and maintained by the consumption of the Bangladeshi immigrant press. This can be contemplated by a comparison of ethnic perceptions and practices of the frequent and the infrequent readers of the press. Before doing so I would like to briefly bring up the two other measures of use of the

immigrant press, content preference and channel preference, to see how they compare with the respondents' ethnic identity retention.

### **5.3.1 CHOICE OF ETHNIC CONTENT AND ETHNIC CHANNEL PREFERENCE IN ETHNIC RETENTION:**

This study found that readers who prefer Bangladesh and community related items, and expected more of them, also have more contact with the home country, interact more with ethnic friends, attend more community events, and place more stress on their ethnic language and identity. Bangladeshi and community information is preferred and sought out more by frequent readers. The findings of this dissertation also demonstrate that readers who consider the immigrant press as more useful for Bangladesh and community related news and information also place greater emphasis on their ethnic identity. The perception of usefulness of the Bangladeshi immigrant press is more common among the frequent readers.

From these findings we can say that the positive effect which the choice of ethnic content and preference for the Bangladeshi immigrant press have on the readers' ethnic identity hinges on their frequency of exposure to it. This returns us to use frequency which, in my view, is the

most useful index for determining the impact of the Bangla language press on the ethnic continuity of its readership.

### **5.3.2 FREQUENCY OF USE OF THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT PRESS AND ETHNIC RETENTION:**

This dissertation has discovered two tendencies among the respondents: one, that a majority have intense feelings about their ethnicity and exhibit strong preferences in maintaining their ethnic affiliations and identity; and two, that many of them make frequent use of their ethnic language press. The study has also found individual differences in the respondents' ethnic feelings and behaviour, as well as in their extent of use of the immigrant newspapers. Since the immigrant press is a principal means for the readers' exposure to ethnic symbols, it is expected that differences in their ethnic perception and practice would be related to the variances in their frequency of consumption of the press. I would argue that a strong preference for ethnicity would associate with a high exposure to the immigrant press. This correspondence, if established, would enable us to confirm that use of the Bangla language press has a positive impact on the ethnic continuity of its readers.

Prior research suggests that those who are frequently exposed to the ethnic mass media have a greater tendency to maintain ethnic identity.

Frequent exposure to the ethnic mass media has been found to sustain ties to the home country, strengthen ethnic relational network, foster the practice and retention of the ethnic language, the ethnic culture and traditions, and affirm feelings of ethnic identity (Kim, 1988; Black and Leithner, 1987; Isajiw, 1981; Fathi, 1973, Park, 1922). Let us see how does the frequency of consumption of the Bangladeshi immigrant newspapers relate to different aspects of our readers' ethnic identity.

**Table 11. Frequency of Consumption of the Bangladeshi Immigrant Press and Ethnic Maintenance**

<b>Aspects of Ethnicity</b>	<b>% of Frequent Readers (Total No. of Frequent Readers = 33)</b>	<b>% of Infrequent Readers ( Total No. Of Infrequent Readers= 17)</b>
Language:		
Essence of Identity	91	76
Children's Knowledge of Bangla	84	70
Reading of Bangla Books	70	53
Family Values	94	82
Endogamy	88	82
Ethnic Food	88	88
Ethnic Festivals	76	65
Ethnic Friends	66	59
Ethnic Community Events:		
Attendance	67	59
Taking Children Along	41	17
Involvement in Ethnic Organization	58	53
Attendance of Ethnic School	84	76
Ethnic Neighbourhood	58	53
Home Contact	84	70
Home Visit	42	35
Interest in Home Country Events	88	76
Sense of Historical Continuity	81	65
Ethnic Identity Salience:		
Self-Identification	69	52
Over Other Identity	73	59
Centrality	67	53
Influence on Decisions	63	58

Data in this study confirm the suggestions of empirical literature (Park, 1922; Fathi, 1973; Kim, 1988) that uses of the ethnic mass media sustains ties with the home country. Those who make frequent use of the Montreal Bangladeshi press have frequent correspondence with Bangladesh, and make frequent visits to the country. Table 11 demonstrates that about 84% of the frequent readers, as opposed to 70% of the infrequent readers maintain frequent contacts with the home country. Forty-two percent of the frequent readers and 35% of the infrequent readers make regular visits to Bangladesh.

It was also found that the extent of use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press is related to the readers' extent of community involvement. Researchers on ethnicity (Kim 1978; Fathi, 1973) have noted similar patterns in their studies. The more one is exposed to the Bangla language press, the stronger one's community ties- more ethnic friends, more participation in community events, and more involvement in community voluntary organizations. Table 11 demonstrates that the closest friends are of Bangladeshi origin for 66% of the frequent readers, and for 59% of the infrequent readers. Regular participation in community events is observed among 67% of the frequent, and 59% of the infrequent readers. Parents who take their children with them to community events comprise 41% of

the frequent and 17% of the infrequent readers. Membership in ethnic voluntary organizations is more common among the frequent readers. An estimated 58% of the frequent readers, and 53% of the infrequent readers hold memberships in ethnic organizations. Attendance at ethnic schools is considered important for the transmission of ethnic culture by 84% of the frequent and 76% of the infrequent readers. Ethnic neighbourhood residence does not have a significant correlation with use of the immigrant press. Fifty-eight percent of the frequent readers, and 53% of infrequent readers, live in Bangladeshi neighbourhoods. However, consumption of the Bangla language press appears to be related with interaction with neighbours of the same ethnic origin. Interaction with Bangladeshi neighbours is mentioned more by the frequent readers (60%) than those who make irregular use (42%) of the immigrant press.

Use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press stimulates the practice and retention of the ethnic language, culture, and customs. Those who use the Bangladeshi immigrant press more also exhibit a greater preference for the practice of ethnic language and culture. Ninety-one percent of the frequent readers and 76% of the infrequent readers perceive their ethnic language as the essence of their identity. To 84% of the frequent and 70% of the infrequent readers it is very important that their children or potential



children know the ethnic language. Frequent exposure to the immigrant press influences the readers' general preference for reading materials in the ethnic language. Seventy percent of the frequent and 53% of the infrequent readers reported having read a Bangla book in the last three months. The frequent readers (94%) place more emphasis than the infrequent readers (82%) do on the maintenance of Bangladeshi family socialization practices. Endogamy is viewed as essential by 88% of the frequent and 82% of the infrequent readers. Ethnic festivals are celebrated more by those who read the immigrant press frequently (76%) than by those who are infrequent readers (65%). Reading the immigrant press has no bearing on the consumption of ethnic food. Ethnic food is consumed on a regular basis by 88% of both the frequent and infrequent readers.

An obvious connection has been observed in this study between frequent use of the immigrant press and its readers' ethnic self-identification. Those who are frequently exposed to the immigrant press also tend to emphasize their ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is considered salient by 69% of the frequent and 52% of irregular readers. About 73% of the frequent readers and 59% of the infrequent readers prefer their ethnic identity over gender, religious, and other social identities. Ethnicity is of central importance in life to 67% of the regular readers and to 53% of

the infrequent readers. Nearly 63% of the frequent readers and 58% of irregular readers make important decisions based on their ethnicity. The affairs of Bangladesh have more appeal among the frequent readers (88%) than the infrequent readers (76%). History of the ancestral country inspires ethnic identity in the frequent readers (81%) more than it does in the infrequent readers (65%).

The above findings give us a clear indication that frequent consumption of the Montreal Bangladeshi press has a reinforcing effect on various aspects of the readers' ethnicity. Table 11 confirms that the aspects of ethnicity which are reinforced most through frequent use of the Bangla newspapers include the perceived salience of ethnic identity, interest in the home country's current affairs and history, the perception of ethnic language as essential part of one's ethnic identity, the perceived importance of children's knowledge of the ethnic language, preferences about children's exposure to the ethnic culture, intent to maintain family socialization practices, contact with the homeland, interaction with friends and neighbours of the same ethnic origin, and the celebration of festivals.

### **5.3.3 SUMMARY:**

If using the ethnic mass media is an indicator of ethnic retention (Fathi, 1973; Jeffres and Hur, 1981; Subervi-Velez, 1986), then the

intense exposure of our Montreal readers to their ethnic language newspapers suggests a high degree of ethnic identity retention. This has, in fact, been proven in the positive correlations observed between the frequent use of the immigrant press and its readers' ethnic perceptions and preferences. For our purposes, the most important trend revealed in this study is the finding that frequent exposure to the Bangla language press helps the readers retain their feelings, convictions, and preferences about ethnicity and ethnic ties more than their practice of ethnic culture, or their participation in ethnic institutions. We can conclude from this that the Bangladeshi immigrant press provides continuity for its readers' ethnicity on different levels. It provides continuity for their feelings of attachment to the ancestral country and the ethnic community, a continuity of their preferences in ethnic language, culture, traditions, and values, and a continuity of their ethnic consciousness and identifications.

#### 5.4 CONCLUSION:

This chapter was intended to elucidate the role of the Montreal Bangladeshi press in reinforcing and maintaining the ethnic identity of its readership. I have argued that the impact of the Bangla language newspapers on the ethnic identity of their readers depends on two things:

the readers' acceptance of the readings of ethnicity invited by their press, and their frequent exposure to it. This study has found evidence that readers who read the immigrant press more accept the readings preferred by the immigrant press more, and exhibit stronger sentiments about ethnic identity. In addition, it has also discovered that the Bangla language press reinforces the readers' imagining (perceptions and feeling) of ethnicity more than its practice. Therefore, there is strong evidence to suggest that use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press works as a stimulus to the maintenance of an imagined ethnic identity of its readership. Through the mediation and manipulation of ethnic symbols, the Montreal Bangladeshi press creates an "image of communion" (Anderson, 1991: p.36) in the minds of its readers, whose frequent exposure to the press strengthens and maintains that imagined community.

## AFTER THOUGHTS

Men live in a community in virtue of things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common.

(John Dewey, 1944: p. 4)

### INTRODUCTION:

In this concluding segment of the dissertation, I shall briefly review the major issues raised in this study, and discuss the contributions it has made to the existing state of research in the area. Further, I shall take a passing look at the previous chapters to identify the notable trends revealed in the data, and point out the limitations of this research. In addition, I shall make some suggestions for the Montreal Bangladeshi press, and suggest possible avenues for future research in the field.

This dissertation has been a quest to understand how the use of the Montreal Bangladeshi press reinforces and sustains its readers' ethnic identity. The fundamental argument has been that the Bangla language newspapers are an important vehicle for, and stimulus to, the construction and maintenance of the readers' ethnic affiliations and identity. I argued that the readers' ethnic continuity can be understood by investigating the extent of their consumption of the local Bangladeshi press. I hypothesized

that those who read the Bangla newspapers more frequently would have stronger ethnic identifications.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:**

The relatedness of ethnic mass media use and ethnic identity retention has been reiterated in the work of many authors. What this dissertation adds to the existing understanding of the issue is that it has combined the notions of 'imagined communities' and 'symbolic ethnicity', and added to it a communication dimension. This allowed me to view the readers of the Bangla language press as an imagined community, whose ethnicity is symbolically perceived and maintained through communication. I suggested that the readers derive and maintain their feelings of ethnic belonging and identity through a perceived affiliation with their ethnic group and its shared symbols, during the course of their participation in various ethnic interpersonal and mass communication channels, particularly their use of the immigrant press.

This study has attempted to advance the prevailing research on ethnic mass media which is limited to a description of overt communications behaviour. I have offered an additional dimension of communication by examining the respondents' perceptions and subjective

feelings. The present study is also significant in that, rather than deducing the effect of the ethnic mass media either from its content or from the readers' response, it has examined the interaction between the two to account for its impact.

By offering an in-depth understanding about what is unique about the Montreal Bangladeshis' interaction with the ethnic mass media, as well as their perceptions and practices of ethnicity, this work hopes to contribute to the development of research on Bangladeshi ethnic mass media in Montreal and Canada, and the consequences of its use for the audience's ethnicity.

This study also has implications because little systematic analysis has been made of individual patterns of consumption of ethnic mass media, or the role of ethnic mass media in ethnic maintenance in the Canadian context (Black and Leithner, 1987; Mackie and Brinkerhoff, 1984; Edwards and Doucette, 1987). Alongside the general neglect of ethnic mass media research in Canada, it is also remarkable that there is a lack of any kind of inquiry into the Bangladeshi ethnic mass media in Montreal or Canada as a whole. Although this dissertation does not claim to have compensated for that huge gap, it can be seen as a first step in that direction. Much work still remains to be done. I believe the present study

will compensate for the absence of any survey of the readership of the Bangladeshi immigrant press in Montreal. I hope that it will inform the editors and journalists of the Bangladeshi press about who their readers are, what their preferences are, and their objections and expectations about the content, and inspire a response to these issues.

Rapid technological changes and the social transformations associated with it, has, in recent times, pushed newspaper research to the margins. All the buzz is about television, Cable TV, and computers. In this context, this dissertation's focus on newspapers will hopefully create a renewed interest in the medium, which is apparently modest and less extensive, but which nevertheless is of considerable importance in affirming individuals' bonds to their communities.

### **REVIEW OF THE STUDY:**

The opening chapter reviewed the existing theoretical and empirical work in the areas of ethnicity and ethnic mass media use, and examined their relevance for this study, which guided my choice of method of inquiry and analysis. A discussion of this was presented in the second chapter. I operationalized the notions of 'imagined communities' and 'symbolic ethnicity' in chapter 3, to argue that the readership of the Montreal



Bangladeshi press is an imagined community whose ethnicity is symbolically perceived and maintained. Using data from interviews with the readers, I identified the symbolic means by which the readers conceive and maintain their imagined community. In addition, to provide a broader context for understanding the depth of the readers' ethnic identity, I discussed the symbols which have historically shaped the identity of the Bangladeshi people. The symbols which surfaced as most significant for the ethnic cohesion and continuity of the Montreal readers include, ethnic self-identification, interest in the home country's current politics and history, correspondence with the homeland, perceived salience of ethnic language, of family and marriage practices, ethnic friendship, ethnic festivals, participation in ethnic community events, and use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press.

Chapter 4 paid exclusive attention to the content and use of two Bangladeshi newspapers for an understanding of the impact it might have on the readers' ethnic perceptions and preferences. This focus on the immigrant press derived from my understanding of ethnic maintenance as a communication process, and its concurrent argument that greater ethnicity would be related to a greater preference for and use of the immigrant press. To develop this argument, I examined the contents

offered in the immigrant press, which kind of issues received most emphasis, and how the readers used the press. The content analysis disclosed that the Bangladeshi press transmits and promotes ethnic culture and identity, as was reflected in its high engagement with, and preferential treatment of, Bangladeshi events and issues, and in its marginal involvement with the Canadian society. Interviews with the editors provided supplementary explanations regarding the goals of the newspapers, and their choice and emphasis of the content. An analysis of the readers' patterns of consumption of the immigrant newspapers was carried out in terms of use frequency, reading motivations and choices, and perceived usefulness of the press. The analysis revealed that the readers were frequently exposed to the newspapers, that content related to the ethnic country and culture had the most appeal for them, and that the immigrant newspapers were considered to be useful for news and information about the ethnic country and community.

The final chapter integrated an analysis of content and readers' response to illustrate and establish the relationship between the reading of the Montreal Bangladeshi press and the retention of its readers' ethnic identity. For this purpose I identified the explicit and implicit devices which the immigrant press uses to promote ethnicity, and compared it

with the readers' understanding of, and preferences in, ethnicity. I pointed out the extent to which the framework of the immigrant press was accepted, by which readers, and the factors which caused individual variance in acceptance. Second, I examined how the frequency of exposure to the immigrant press was related to the readers' ethnic maintenance. This was accomplished by comparing the extent to which the frequent and the infrequent readers maintained their ethnicity. Additionally, I singled out the aspects of the readers' ethnicity which were maintained through frequent use of the immigrant press. The data indicated an overall correspondence between the preferred reading invited by the immigrant press and its readers' ethnic perceptions. It also made evident the high degree of correspondence between frequent use of the immigrant press and strong ethnic preferences and identification by the readers. These findings led to the conclusion that the readers who read their immigrant press more frequently accept its preferred understanding of ethnicity more, and are more inclined to maintain their ethnic identity.

This dissertation does not suggest that the immigrant press is a principal determinant of its readers' ethnic identity retention, rather that its mediation of ethnic symbols has a significant influence on the creation

and maintenance in the minds of the readers of a feeling of ethnic identity and group boundary.

### **EMERGING TRENDS IN DATA:**

The data indicate that the young, and higher occupational status immigrants use the ethnic mass media more, and have a stronger ethnic identification. This contradicts findings of previous research (Subervi-Velez, 1986; Black and Leithner, 1987), that the use of the ethnic mass media is common among the older age group, and those with lower socioeconomic status. Although the negative association between the Bangladeshi readers' age and their use of the immigrant press may suggest an overtime decline in use, this may not be the case. The reason is that the younger age group is a majority in the sample as well as in the overall Bangladeshi population in Montreal.

Other important trends revealed in this study include the fact that education plays an important role in exposure to the ethnic mass media, and for strong ethnic perceptions and identity. This partially accords with Anderson and Frideres' (1981) observation that ethnic group members with a higher education, or conversely with a lower education, exhibit stronger ethnic identification. A consequence of this positive association

between education, ethnic media use, and ethnic identity may be that the better educated would take a leadership role in spreading information about the ethnic mass media to the community. This would inspire more use of the media and reinforce its members' ethnic identity.

As many researchers have pointed out (Park, 1922; Kim, 1978; Velez, 1986; Black and Leithner, 1987), the association between fewer years of residency in the host country, generation of residence, and ethnic mass media use has been confirmed in this study. The negative impact of age, length of residence, and generation on use of the Bangla language press as observed in this study may suggest a decline in its use, and consequently, a diminishing impact on the readers' ethnic identity. However, no definite conclusions regarding this can be drawn at this point because Bangladeshis are a recent immigrant group in Canada, and these factors have yet to take shape as determining influences.

Another trend observed in many works, and repeated in this study, is the effect of gender on ethnic mass media usage and ethnic maintenance. Mackie and Brinkerhoff (1984: p. 126) noted that female ethnic group members emphasize their ethnicity more and make more use of the ethnic mass media. Women in our sample of readers make more use of the immigrant press, and they stress their ethnicity more than men do. The

probable reason is that they are, as expected by their culture, more occupied with their domestic roles and responsibilities. This results in their lesser participation in the workforce and outdoor recreational activities. The social isolation this causes leads them to stress their ethnicity more than the male members of their group.

One interesting finding which emerged from this dissertation was that our Montreal sample prefers the community's print media over its broadcast media. It is interesting because the empirical literature (Black and Leithner, 1987) often mentions an infrequent use of the ethnic print medium, or abstention among ethnic group members. For Bangladeshi readers a preference for the ethnic print media may be a continuation of an old newspaper reading tradition, which they have brought with them from Bangladesh to the Canadian setting. This could also be, as mentioned by the respondents, a consequence of their dissatisfaction with the Bangladeshi ethnic broadcast media.

Ethnicity scholars (Black and Leithner, 1987; Velez, 1986; Kim, 1988) have observed an inverse relationship between use of the host country mass media and use of the ethnic mass media. This study discovered a different trend. It found a positive correlation between readers' exposure to the immigrant press and their consumption of the Canadian

mass media. This implies that even if the readers' consumption of the Canadian media increases over time, they would continue to use the Bangla language press as well, and the immigrant press would remain a continuing influence on their ethnic perceptions and identity.

This study found that the Bangladeshi respondents meet most of the criteria suggested by scholars (Isajiw, 1981; Anderson and Frideres, 1981) which enable ethnic groups to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness in Canada. They exhibit a strong ethnic identity and a weak Canadian identity, have their relational network mostly within the ethnic community, and have minimal contact with mainstream society, avoid inter-marriage, maintain close contact with the home country, are relatively concentrated in a few provinces or provincial regions, are employed in occupations where contact with fellow ethnics is likely, have limited entrance into institutions of the Canadian society, have diverse ethnic organizations available to them, and are extensive users of the ethnic mass media. All these suggest that the ethnicity retention potential of our group of readers is high within the Canadian society. The data has confirmed that use of the ethnic language press enables readers to retain selected aspects of their ethnic culture.

The probability of long-time survival of the Bangladeshi immigrant press is also reflected in the results of this study. It is indicated in Bangladeshi readers' continued practice of Bangla, and its high use of the ethnic mass media. However, the survival potential of the immigrant press is also contingent on its ability to resolve its present financial crises.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:**

The influence of age, generation, and length of residence on the respondents' use of the immigrant press, or their ethnic perception, could not be firmly predicted. This is due to the limited presence of long-time residents, Canadian-born and the older age group in the sample, as well as in the original Montreal Bangladeshi population. A better assessment would require a replication of this study on a larger scale, with a sample which includes more women, the older age group, the long-time residents, and the Canadian-born. I feel that the data in the present study also need to be tested with other ethnic groups here, as well as for those in a different social context. Considering the under-representation of women, the aged, and the second generation, our sample is not fully representative. As such, the evidence gathered in this study should be seen as indicative possibilities.



A proper assessment of ethnic continuity requires that the same group be observed over an extended period of time. Due to time constraints of the present study, trends about the respondents' ethnic identity retention have been inferred from their stated ethnic preferences at a particular point in time.

I acknowledge another limitation of the study because of the complete absence of any research on the Bangladeshi community in Montreal and its mass media. The availability of such data would have allowed me to remain more focused on the issues at hand.

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT PRESS:**

What came out of readers' evaluation suggests that the immigrant press needs to be more responsive to community needs and interests and act in an informed manner. This would require more qualified personnel with a sound knowledge of journalism and of their community. The press should acknowledge its readers' expectations for a more thorough analysis of its news and opinions, for explanations of their relevance for the community, for more information which is useful in their daily life situations, and for a more readable language.

Content analysis of the Bangla language newspapers revealed that the issues and concerns of the local Bangladeshi community require more consideration. A focus on events and issues in Montreal and the larger Canadian society is also necessary.

Support from the community and mainstream businesses is essential for the press to be financially viable. The newspapers themselves also have to develop sound business plans.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:**

This study has confirmed that the Montreal Bangladeshi press is widely used by its readers, and that it is a significant influence on their ethnic identity. However, to extrapolate this result for the Bangladeshi population across Canada or throughout North America, further research is required on Bangladeshis in other Canadian cities, and in the United States. A comparative analysis of situations in different locations may better explain aspects of readers' use of the immigrant press and their ethnic perceptions, which has been offered in this dissertation.

Another avenue for future research is the use and role of the Bangladeshi broadcast media. Further, research on general media use and access by Bangladeshis in Canada and in the United States, would provide

useful knowledge about the community's mass media practices. One may also look into how the Bangladeshis' exposure to the mainstream mass media affects their ethnic identity.

The present study is based on data collected on one ethnic group at one point in time. A more complete assessment of ethnic continuity and ethnic media practice, can be made by studying different ethnic groups at different points in time. Research into the effects of gender and other social identities on ethnic media use may also prove to be interesting ventures to pursue.

#### **FINAL REMARKS:**

Having drawn together the loose ends of this dissertation, I would like to offer my final thoughts on some of the issues which figure prominently in this study. First, is the issue of ethnic identity as it pertains to the Bangladeshi readers. Ethnic identity for Bangladeshis is almost inseparable from their national identity. These identities were indistinguishable historically and continue to be so. One explanation may be that for politically independent groups, ethnic identity tends to coexist with national identity (De Vos, 1975: p. 11).

Second, I would like to emphasize the importance of communication in the study of communities. The role of communication, especially of the mass media, has been addressed in some community studies. As Hardt (1975) points out, the overriding concern in most such work is the role and effect of mass media in different social contexts, rather than the role and functions of individuals as communicators. Such studies view communities as spatial and populational concepts rather than as a mental construct which is defined in and through communication. Communication- seen as a means of understanding oneself in relation to one's environment, as an act of participation in, and a sharing of, reality with others, as a process of acquiring a culture, its norms, values, rituals, symbols, and its ways of perceiving and responding to the environment- provides a unique perspective on the community and its members' interests, goals, reasons for existence and identity.

Although communities are based on communicational relationships, the nature of that communication may not necessarily be direct face-to-face contact between members. Rather, the perception of community, and of sharing in its experiences and life patterns, can occur in the minds of individuals through the use of symbolic means. Through exposure and attachment to shared symbols people may perceive their belonging to one

community or another. This is where 'imagination' plays a role in constituting community.

This brings me to my third point, which is about the implications of imagination in today's world. An analysis of the ideas contained in images (especially those mechanically produced), the imagined (as in Anderson's imagined communities), and the imaginary (in the sense of a constructed landscape of collective aspirations), reveals a new role for imagination in social life (Appadurai, 1990: pp. 4-5). Appadurai states that imagination can no longer be seen as mere fantasy, escape, irrelevant contemplation, or pastime. It has become a social fact, a form of culturally social practice, and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility . Imagination has implications for all kinds of actors, in different historical, sociocultural, and political situations - ranging from nation states, multinationals, diasporic communities, sub-national groups based on religion or politics, to close-knit groups such as villages, neighbourhoods, families, and even the individual (pp. 6-7). Today many groups and individuals live in a world or community which is often constituted through their imagination. Ethnicity and mass media are two of the basic building blocks of our imagined worlds.

Finally, some reflections on my position as researcher of culture. Although I have studied respondents from my own linguistic and cultural background, the study cannot be seen as a complete account of the culture and its people. Nor can it be dismissed as lacking an objective and distanced reading. As I perceive it, one's cultural background does not equip one with the ability to provide an 'authentic' account of that culture, neither does it remove the awareness of one's subject position. Rather, in studying a community the issue remains as vigilance on the part of the researcher, be s/he one who grew up in the community, shared in its experiences, or one who did not. This dissertation is the end product of a dialogue between myself and my group of readers; I have made no attempts to efface either of us from it. What I did attempt was to remain alert to my readers' and my own positions, and to reflect our discrete understanding of issues addressed in this study.

## APPENDIX I

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### I. General Information about the readers:

- a. Age (present): i. 18-24, ii. 25-34, iii. 35-44, iv. 45-54, v. 55 +.  
(at the time of immigration): (as above)
- b. Sex :
- c. Marital Status: i. single, ii. married, iii. separated, iv. divorced, v. widowed.
- d. Education: i. less than high school, ii. high school, iii. college, iv. university.
- e. Occupational category: i. Blue-collar
  - ii. White-collar
  - iii. Unemployed
  - iv. Student
  - v. Housewife
- f. Income: i. less than \$ 15,000 annually,
  - ii. \$ 15-25,000,
  - iii. \$ 25- 35,000,
  - iv. \$ 35-45,000,
  - v. \$45-55,000,
  - vi. above \$55,000.
- g. Household Structure: number of adult members in the home
- h. Length of Residence in Canada:

#### II. Questions on Use of the Bangladeshi immigrant press:

- 1. Which of the following newspapers do you read?
  - a. Probashbangla, b. Banglabarta, c. Both.
- 2. How do you get the newspaper(s)?
  - a. subscribe, b. borrow from friends/ neighbours, c. buy/pick up from stores, d. borrow from friends and buy.

3. When was the last time you read this/these newspaper(s)?  
 a. yesterday, b. last week, c. two weeks ago, d. one month ago, e. two months ago, f. more than two months ago.
4. Which of the following do you read in this/these newspaper(s) and how often?

always sometimes rarely not at all

- a. News:  
 Bangladeshi  
 Canadian  
 Community  
 International
- b. Opinion:  
 Editorial  
 Letters to the editor  
 Analytical articles on Bangladeshi politics  
 Features  
 Literature
- c. Sports and Entertainment:  
 Bangladeshi  
 Canadian  
 Community  
 International
- d. Ads

5. How thoroughly do you read the following?

Read All Read Part Glance at Ignore

- a. News:  
 Bangladeshi  
 Canadian  
 Community  
 International
- b. Opinion:  
 Editorial  
 Letters to the editor  
 Analytical articles on Bangladeshi politics



## Features

### Literature

### c. Sports and Entertainment:

#### Bangladeshi

#### Canadian

#### Community

#### International

### d. Ads

6. Which items do you like most in the newspaper(s)?

7. Which items do you prefer least in the newspaper(s)?

8. What do you feel about the amount of information on the following?

Too much   Adequate   Not enough

a. Bangladesh

b. Canada

c. BD community

9. What kind of content would you like to see more of?

10. From which of the mentioned sources are you likely to have information about the following: (Cdn TV, Cdn Nps, BD Nps coming from Bangladesh, BDi Nps coming from New York, BDi immig. press in Montreal, BDi immig. broadcast media in Montreal, Personal Contact, Other)

a. Current World events

b. Issues/Events in Canada

c. Issues/ Events in Bangladesh

d. Community events and issues

e. Consumer info

f. Job/career info

g. Available social services

h. Leisure activities

11. How useful is this/ are these newspaper(s) to you for the following:

Very Moderately Marginally Not at all

- a. Current World events
- b. Issues/Events in Canada
- c. Issues/ Events in Bangladesh
- d. Community events and issues
- e. Consumer info
- f. Job/career info
- g. Available social services
- h. Leisure activities
- i. Making decisions and forming opinion

12. For which reasons are you likely to read this/these newspaper(s)?

13. Do you read any newspaper other than this one?

- a. yes (specify), b. no

14. How much time do you spend with the following Canadian mass media on an average day? What do you usually read/ watch/ listen to in these media?

- a. Newspaper, b. Television, c. Radio,  
d. Books and magazines

15. Have you read one or more books in the last three months? (Yes/No; if yes, in which language)

16. Have you read one or more magazines during the last month? (Yes/No; if yes, in which language)

17. How do you usually pass your leisure time?

- a. go out with friends
- b. go to movies
- c. go to sporting events
- d. visit friends/ neighbours
- e. read books
- f. watch television
- g. other (mention)

**III. Questions on ethnic identity:**

18. How do you usually think of yourself?  
a. Bangladeshi, b. Canadian, c. Bangladeshi- Canadian, d. Other (for half of the sample) or How would you define your ethnicity? (for the second half)
19. How would you like your children to identify themselves?  
a. Bangladeshi, b. Canadian, c. Bangladeshi- Canadian, d. Other.
20. How important do you think it is that your children know your ethnic language and customs? a. very important, b. of minor importance, c. of some importance, d. relative (explain).
21. Which of the following is most important to you?  
a. yourself as an ethnic person, b. yourself as a male or female person, c. yourself as a religious person, d. yourself as a residence of this city, e. yourself as a resident of this country.
22. How many times have you visited your home country since you came? Do you wish you could go more often?
23. Do you have family back home?  
a. Yes. b. No  
if yes, how often do you write / telephone? (Regularly, occasionally, never)
24. Do you keep contact with your relatives/ friends back home?  
a. Yes. If yes, how often do you write/ telephone? (Regularly, occasionally, never)  
b. No.
25. Which of the following languages do you know?  
a. English, b. French, c. both, d. None.  
b. Are you interested in learning the language you don't know? (yes, no)
26. What language is spoken in your home?

- a. Bangla only, b. Bangla and English, c. French and Bangla, d. English and French

27. What kind of food is usually prepared in your house?  
a. traditional Bangladeshi, b. English, c. French, d. mixed, c. depends (explain).
28. Would you say your close friends (with whom you spend time, can talk about different issues, personal problems) are mostly  
a. Bangladeshi, b. Canadian, c. of other ethnic origins, d. mixed.
29. Would you say you live in a neighbourhood that is  
a. Bangladeshi, b. Canadian, c. of other ethnic origins, d. mixed.
30. With which of the following neighbours you most frequently interact:  
a. Bangladeshi, b. Canadian, c. of other ethnic origins, d. mixed.
31. Where do you usually shop (for food, clothing, other merchandise) ?  
a. Bangladeshi stores, b. Canadian stores, c. depends (explain).
32. Are you a member of any Bangladeshi organization?  
a. Yes. If yes, specify what kind  
b. No.
33. Do you go to the mosque/church/temple?  
a. Yes. If yes, how often (regularly, sometimes, seldom)  
b. No
34. Do you attend community sociocultural events?  
a. Yes. If yes, how often (usually, always, sometimes, rarely)  
b. No.

35. Do your children accompany with you to the community events? How often?  
a. always, b. sometimes, c. rarely, d. never
36. Do you observe Bangladeshi cultural/ religious festivals at home?  
a. Yes. (usually, always, sometimes)  
b. No.
37. Are you interested in Canadian cultural shows/ sporting events taking place in this city?  
a. Yes. If yes, do you attend? Yes/No.  
If you attend, how often?
38. What differences and/or similarities do you find between Bangladesh and Canada, between Bangladeshis and Canadians?
39. What do you value most about Bangladeshi culture?
40. To what extent are your important decisions based on your ethnicity? (e.g. children's education, choice of spouse)  
a. seldom, b. sometimes, c. usually in a conscious way, d. usually in an unconscious way
41. Your ethnicity is  
a. of minor importance compared to other aspects of your life.  
b. important, but no more important than other aspects of your life.  
c. of central importance, and if necessary it will come before other aspects of your life.

### **III. Questions for Editor/ Journalists?**

1. When was the newspaper founded?
2. Was it an individual or group initiative?

3. Did it come out as an independent newspaper or a mouthpiece of any organization? Is it still independent or affiliated with any organization?
4. What were the motives behind its founding? What are the goals it seeks to achieve?
5. What is the circulation of your newspaper?
6. Who are your readers? Specify (in terms of age group, gender, occupation, recent/ early immigrants etc.)
7. How do you select the content of your newspaper? Based upon what criteria?
8. What kinds of issues/ events do you emphasize and why?
9. What do you think your readers are interested in reading? How do you make such assessments?
10. What kinds of content do you consider important for your readers and the Bangladeshi community? How do you arrive at such decisions?
11. What are the main problems your newspaper has faced or is facing?
12. Have you ever conducted a survey on your readers? Do you consider it important?
13. Were you in a journalism career before bringing out this newspaper? (Here and back home)
14. Do you currently hold any other job than the editorship of this paper?

## APPENDIX II

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### I. NEWS:

#### i. Bangladeshi News:

##### Current Political Situation in Bangladesh:

A dawn to dusk general strike was observed throughout the country on April 26th. The Awami League, and the Jatiya Party called the strike in support of their demand for national elections under a care-taker government, and for the cancellation of the election results for the Magura-2 constituency. Sheikh Hasina, the chief of Awami league and leader of official opposition, said that the partisanship and incompetency of the ruling party forced her party to call the strike.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

The duration of cease-fire in the Chittagong Hill Tracts has been extended until July 15th, after talks between Janasanghati Samity, the political wing of the Shanti Bahini, and the government. Janasanghati leaders said that their movement for the autonomy of the hill tract people and their land-claims would continue.

*(Banglabarta, May 17th, 1994)*

##### Economy:

Bangladesh has exported garments worth 3.5 billion taka in the first half of the current fiscal year. Finance minister Shamsul Islam presented this information during a question and answer period in the national parliament.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

##### Law and Order:

The police have planned to launch a special search mission throughout the country to recover illegal weapons. The law and order situation in the country has collapsed as a result of the possession of illegal firearms by many people. The authorities believe that there are more than five hundred thousand firearms in the country. It is feared that the use of

illegal weapons will assume serious proportions once the parliamentary elections are announced.

*(Probashbangla, October 27th, 1995)*

### **Annual celebrations:**

The birthday of Masterda Surya Sen, a stalwart of the anti-colonialism movement in the undivided India, was celebrated on April 22nd. Meetings, seminars, and cultural programmes were held in remembrance of Surya Sen in his home town Patiya, as well as in the rest of the country.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

### **Government Action:**

Prime Minister Zia has reshuffled her cabinet on the 18th of October. Former student leader Shahjahan has been appointed deputy minister for Shipping, Ministers M.K.Anwar and M.A.Mannan have been transferred from their current ministry, while Keramat Ali has been appointed minister without portfolio.

*(Probashbangla, October 20th, 1995)*

### **Education:**

The government has recently announced its programme for the advancement for women's education, which will be implemented over the next six years. The programme includes free education at the primary level, and scholarships to cover the students' tuition and book purchases.

*(Probashbangla, July-August, 1994)*

The Secondary School Certificate examinations under four education boards began May 2nd. Seven hundred thousand students are appearing at the exam this year.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

### **Natural Disaster:**

The severe cyclone which hit Cox's Bazaar on May 2nd has left at least 106 people dead and more than a 1,000 injured. The storm, blowing at a speed of 250 kilometres per hour, lasted for five hours. Many houses



collapsed, trees were uprooted, and crops destroyed. About 700,000 people live in this 400 kilometre wide bay area.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

### **Development Projects:**

Japanese industrialists are taking active measures to establish an industrial zone near the port city of Chittagong. This project, aside from establishing export-oriented industries, will contribute to sectors such as housing, hotels, electricity, telecommunications, and education. A consortium of Japanese industrialists will bear the cost of this project.

*(Probashbangla, July-August, 1994)*

### **ii. Bangladeshi Community News:**

#### **Organizational Activities:**

The BNP Canada held a discussion meeting May 1st at 7295 Querbes in remembrance of Independence Day and May Day. Speakers at the meeting called on all expatriate Bangladeshis to work together to preserve the sovereignty of the country. They further said that our independence would only be meaningful when the rights of the workers are established.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

The cultural organization "Bangataranga", in a press release, informed that it is taking initiatives to publish a telephone directory of Bangladeshis living in Montreal. Those interested are requested to contact its office at 7642 Durocher.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

#### **Festivals:**

The Bangladeshi community in Montreal will observe Eid-ul-Adha on Saturday, May 21st. The main Eid congregation will be held at the Olympic stadium.

*(Probashbangla, May 6th, 1994)*

## Death:

Aftab Ahmed, a renowned Bangladeshi educator and philosopher, died of heart attack at a Toronto hospital yesterday. He was aged 59... Mr. Ahmed came to Montreal in 1973 and began his career as a professor at the Dawson College, where he worked until his death. His body will be buried tomorrow at the Laval Muslim Cemetery.

(*Probashbangla*, July-August, 1995)

## II. OPINION:

### i. Editorial:

The demand for fair polls under a care-taker government is nothing new or unwarranted in Bangladesh politics because we have seldom seen a fair election in the 23 years of our independence. It is a matter of irony that the political parties, which demand free and fair elections, are not ready to guarantee one when they assume power...

(*Probashbangla*, July-August, 1994)

Our heritage is a wealth to be treasured and cherished. In language and literature we have towering personalities like Tagore, Nazrul, Dr. Shahiduallah; in architecture there is F.R.Khan; Dr. Yunus in Economics... And how many nations can match the patriotism and sacrifice of Surya Sen, Sheikh Mujib, and the million martyrs of our language and independence movement? Let our heritage be an inspiration to restore our lost glory, and to realize the dreams of our heroes and martyrs to build a prosperous Bangladesh.

(*Probashbangla*, February 3rd, 1994)

In this expatriate life, more than anything else, we need love, peace of mind, and moral support. So, a healthy home and a happy family is very important for us. We came here to provide ourselves and our families with a better life. For that, the family needs to be the driving force. We have to set standards for ourselves and our children based on our cultural values of care, compassion, and sacrifice.

(*Probashbangla*, April 16th, 1994)

As always, the dawn of Bangla New Year in the country saw the historic site of Ramna park bustle with the joyful crowd. Bangali women in red and white saris, and men and children in traditional dress assembled and sang merrily to welcome Pahela Baishakh. As always, people rushed to the Baishaki fair, bought the hand-fans, flutes, masks, and savoured the traditional rice and hilsha dishes, home-baked cakes and pies, puffed rice, and sweetened parched rice balls. Shops offered their customers sweets for the ceremonial opening of their new accounts-books. Here, we may not be able to do all this, but we can surely keep the festive spirit alive. We should celebrate the new year and other festivals because it is a way of celebrating our nationhood.

*(Probashbangla, April 16th, 1994)*

## ii. Analytical Article:

Bangali leader Fazlul Haque made his Pakistan proposal during the 1940 Lahore Convention of the Muslim League. The proposal suggested that two Muslim majority states be established, one with the provinces of Bengal and Assam, the other with Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, and North West Frontier provinces. But the Muslim League leaders omitted the 's' from the word "two states", culminating in the creation of one Muslim state Pakistan. So the Bangali people had to struggle for another 24 years to become independent.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

Only two days before they surrendered on December 14th '71, the Pakistani occupation army kidnapped the best sons of our soil at gun point and killed them mercilessly. They killed our artists, journalists, professors, philosophers, doctors, lawyers, litterateurs, to destroy the intellectual backbone of our nation. Let us salute our martyred intellectuals.

*(Probashbangla, December 16th, 1993)*

## iii. Letters to the Editor:

Our children have not witnessed the language movement or the independence war. Moreover, there are attempts by anti-independence elements to distort our history. So it is difficult for them to have a clear idea about why we fought the war, why three million martyrs laid down their lives. Banglabarta can play an important role in raising their

consciousness. I would request that a regular section for children be introduced soon. This way the new generation would not only develop their Bangla language skills, but they would also be able to know our true history.

*(Banglabarta, May 17th, 1994)*

#### **iv. Literature:**

**Short Story:** I was at the New Market when I unexpectedly ran into her. I saw Lata after 16 years, still I recognized her instantly. She looked enchanting in her green hand-loomed sari, and as usual she had a matching green dot on her forehead...

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

### **III. SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT:**

#### **i. Bangladeshi Sports and Entertainment:**

##### **Sports:**

Sylhet clinched the Pepsi Cup National Cricket championship with a dramatic one run victory over Dhaka University. In the 80 over match, Dhaka University piled up 304 for 8 wickets. In response Sylhet were 395 for 8. The three heroes for the Sylhet victory are Suru, Bulbul, and Atahar.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

##### **Entertainment:**

An exhibition of paintings and sketches by Sultan, the famous sub-continental artist, was recently held at the Gallery Tone. Art critic Sadeq Khan inaugurated the exhibition. Thirty of Sultan's works, depicting various aspects of rural life, was on display.

*(Probashbangla, February 3rd, 1994)*

## **ii. Bangladeshi Community Entertainment:**

### **Cultural Events:**

Shetu Cultural Forum is organizing a cultural show June 11th at 7:30 p.m. at the Place St. Henri Auditorium. The programme "Hoichoi" will include a variety show, a drama entitled "Hainer Anagona", and a lottery. Admission is \$5, and tickets will be considered as lottery coupons.

*(Banglabarta, May 17th, 1994)*

The sociocultural organization "Bangataranga" arranged a colourful programme at the organizations' Parc Extension office April 16th to welcome the Bangla New Year's Day. The programme had two segments. In the first, local artists sang traditional songs including Jari and Sari. In the second half participants were offered various kinds of home-made cakes and pies.

*(Banglabarta, May 6th, 1994)*

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# সাপ্তাহিক প্রবাসবাংলা

সাপ্তাহিক প্রবাসবাংলা  
বিশ্ববাসীতে প্রকাশিত  
মূল্য: ১.০০ টাকা  
ফোন: ৫৯৫-৫৯৫৫, ৫৯৫৬, ৫৯৫৭, ৫৯৫৮, ৫৯৫৯

WEEKLY PROBASHBANGLA VOL. 2 ISSUE 6 AUGUST 1995 CANADA

## একোয় সকল প্রচেষ্টা ব্যর্থ মন্ত্রিয়ালে দু'টি সম্মেলন হচ্ছে

কনফারেন্স টিমে: কাজী আলম বাবু

১. ৩ আগস্ট মন্ত্রিয়ালে দু'টি সম্মেলন হচ্ছে। এতে অংশগ্রহণ করছেন বাংলাদেশ সরকারের বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রি ও কর্মকর্তা।  
২. প্রথম সম্মেলনে প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে বক্তব্য রাখছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী শ.খ. হুসেইন শাহরিয়ার হান্নান।  
৩. দ্বিতীয় সম্মেলনে প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে বক্তব্য রাখছেন বিদেশ মন্ত্রণালয়ের সচিব।  
৪. এই দু'টি সম্মেলনের উদ্দেশ্য হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের বর্তমান নীতি ও কর্মসূচি নিয়ে আলোচনা করা এবং আগামী দিনের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় পদক্ষেপ নির্ধারণ করা।



৫. এই সম্মেলন দুটির মাধ্যমে বাংলাদেশ সরকারের বর্তমান নীতি ও কর্মসূচি নিয়ে আলোচনা করা হয়েছে।  
৬. প্রধানমন্ত্রী শ.খ. হুসেইন শাহরিয়ার হান্নান প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে বক্তব্য রাখেন।  
৭. বিদেশ মন্ত্রণালয়ের সচিব দ্বিতীয় সম্মেলনে প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে বক্তব্য রাখেন।  
৮. এই দু'টি সম্মেলনের উদ্দেশ্য হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের বর্তমান নীতি ও কর্মসূচি নিয়ে আলোচনা করা এবং আগামী দিনের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় পদক্ষেপ নির্ধারণ করা।

**কামাল আহমেদ**

কামাল আহমেদ হলেন বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একজন উচ্চপদস্থ কর্মকর্তা। তিনি বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রণালয়ে কাজ করেছেন এবং সরকারের উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করেছেন।

**সেপে আবারো কন্যা!**

সেপে আবারো কন্যা! এই শিরোনামটি বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একটি উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির অংশ। এই কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকার কন্যাশিক্ষার গুরুত্ব তুলে ধরছে এবং কন্যাশিক্ষার মাধ্যমে দেশের উন্নয়ন সাধন করা যায়।

**শিক্ষার প্রদর্শন করা**

শিক্ষার প্রদর্শন করা হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একটি উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির অংশ। এই কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকার শিক্ষার গুরুত্ব তুলে ধরছে এবং শিক্ষার মাধ্যমে দেশের উন্নয়ন সাধন করা যায়।

**সাংসদদের আসন**

সাংসদদের আসন হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একটি উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির অংশ। এই কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকার সাংসদদের আসনকে আরও সুসজ্জিত করে এবং সাংসদদের কাজে সহায়তা করা যায়।

**দুটি রুট প্রতিষ্ঠা**

দুটি রুট প্রতিষ্ঠা হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একটি উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির অংশ। এই কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকার দুটি রুট প্রতিষ্ঠা করে এবং দুটি রুট প্রতিষ্ঠার মাধ্যমে দেশের উন্নয়ন সাধন করা যায়।

**বিমান সার্ভিস চালাবে**

বিমান সার্ভিস চালাবে হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একটি উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির অংশ। এই কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকার বিমান সার্ভিস চালাবে এবং বিমান সার্ভিস চালানোর মাধ্যমে দেশের উন্নয়ন সাধন করা যায়।

**সরকার প্রত্যেক ব্যবসায়ীর মাধ্যমে**

সরকার প্রত্যেক ব্যবসায়ীর মাধ্যমে হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একটি উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির অংশ। এই কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকার প্রত্যেক ব্যবসায়ীর মাধ্যমে দেশের উন্নয়ন সাধন করা যায়।

**আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে**

আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একটি উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির অংশ। এই কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকার আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে দেশের উন্নয়ন সাধন করা যায়।

**সিলেট বিকাশ চালু**

সিলেট বিকাশ চালু হলো বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একটি উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির অংশ। এই কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকার সিলেট বিকাশ চালু করে এবং সিলেট বিকাশ চালানোর মাধ্যমে দেশের উন্নয়ন সাধন করা যায়।

**ওমেগা**

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