CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

STRENGTHS, CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Family and Consumer Sciences

By

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

My mother, Rabeya Begum, without your constant help and taking over my kitchen, I could not even be brave enough to going back to school. Your continual support and assistance around my household have encouraged me to step forward.

My late father, Abdur Razzak, you were my strength and inspiration. You taught me how to dream big and overcome any obstacles to move forward.

My sons, Ahnaf and Afnan, you have sacrificed lots of time for this, so this achievement is not only for me but also for you two.

And lastly my wonderful husband, Anis, your encouragement, patience, and physical and mental support helped me to achieve my goal. Thank you for always being supportive and considerate.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members who supported my efforts in writing this thesis.

I am grateful to my thesis chair, Dr. JerryAnn Harrel-Smith, for her support and faith in my ability to complete this thesis. Her assistance through the whole process of this research, and her comments on the draft made the writing task manageable. Her gentle attitude and comforting assistance helped me to focus on the main task of developing this thesis. This study would have not been completed without her support.

I am thankful to Professor Ana Lucero-Liu for her advice, support, recommendation, and encouragement that motivated me to continue in the achievement of this study. Thank you for being a great mentor in achieving my goal.

I am also grateful to Professor Uma Krishnan, who understands the way I think and organize my thoughts. Thank you for your comments and suggestions. Your valuable suggestions helped me to enrich my thesis.

Special thanks to my family: my mother, who supported me and pushed me to attain my goal. Thank you for being with me and encouraging me to go for my dream. My lovely children, Ahanf Mabarrat and Afnan Rahman, who always gave me time for my study and were patient with my intensive thesis work.

Finally, I am grateful to my husband, Anisur Rahman, who encouraged me and motivated me with his love, patience, and mental support.
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ABSTRACT

STRENGTHS, CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANT FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES

By
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Master of Science in
Family and Consumer Sciences

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore Bangladeshi immigrant families’ strengths, their perceived cultural differences and its impacts on family and parenting, and their coping strategies. Bangladeshi immigrants are one of the fastest growing minority ethnic groups in the United States (Stevanovic, 2012). There have been many research studies done with Asian immigrants; but as a part of Southeast Asian sub-group, Bangladeshi families were less known. This study was an attempt to explore how Bangladeshi mothers view their cultural orientation in the process of acculturation from their own perspective. There were 10 Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant mothers residing in Little Bangladesh area in Los Angeles who participated in this study. In-depth, audio-taped interviews were conducted by using a semi-structured, open-ended guided questionnaire. Using a thematic approach, analyzed data indicated several findings that provided potential information of the research questions. The themes found from the data were: themes related to family strengths including togetherness and unity of family, support from family, and practicing religious and family values. Themes pertaining to perceived cultural differences were: interdependence vs. independence, language barrier,
and different religious and cultural norms. Major themes merged from impact of cultural differences on family were: positive relationships among family members, parenting challenges, and influence from neighborhood and school. Lastly, themes related to coping strategies were: celebrating religious rituals and holidays, socializing and communicating with family and friends, and using limited professional help and social assistance.

Several limitations arose, such as the question of generalization to other immigrant populations due to the research design and small samples; and not having had opportunity to include both parents to compare their perceptions regarding the same issues. Recommendations for research implications and future research included extended research on this population to provide support groups and intervention programs based on their needs.

Although there were some limitations, this study provided an insight into Bangladeshi families, their everyday living, family strengths, and coping strategies in the host culture.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Immigrating and adapting to a new environment generates tremendous pressure and stress in immigrant families. Since cultural and family values shape an individual’s identity, transitioning to a new environment and adapting to new cultural values create complexities and increase challenges in immigrants’ daily lives. It has been known that the majority of immigrant families experience common stressors associated with immigration, which could be related to different family and cultural norms, religious values, family functioning, and socialization in a host culture (Price, Price, & McKenry, 2010). Therefore, it is important to know the immigrant families’ strengths, perceived cultural differences, and coping strategies to understand them and provide them with the necessary support so they can overcome complexities and challenges, and maintain their family equilibrium. To explore their complications, this study will focus on Bangladeshi immigrant Muslim mothers living in the United States and their everyday experiences.

Immigrants to the United States refer to foreign-born individuals who plan to settle permanently here. It also refers to those who stay temporarily, such as students (Price et al., 2010). Foreign-born populations also include anyone who was not a U.S. citizen at birth, including those who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization (Gryn & Gambino, 2012). In their book Families & Change: Coping with Stressful Events and Transitions, Price et al. (2010) categorized immigrants as (a) economic immigrants (those who came to the U.S seeking better jobs and higher pay), (b) family immigrants (those who came to join family members), or (c) voluntary migrants (refugees who fled political violence or extreme environmental devastation in their home.
countries). According to a 2011 U.S. Census Bureau report, approximately 40.4 million immigrants, or 13% of the total U.S. population, are living in the United States (Gryn & Gambino, 2012). Immigrant families in the United States are very diverse in their countries of origin, language, socioeconomic status, religious practices, and social and demographic characteristics.

Among all immigrants, Asians are the fastest growing minority group in the United States. Approximately 25% of the total foreign-born population and 48% of naturalized U.S. citizens are Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey report, 2011). That same ACS Report stated that foreign-born Asian populations increased from 8.2 million in 2000 to 11.6 million in 2011. Of the 11.6 million Asian immigrants, 34% are from Southeast Asia, 32% from East Asia, 26% from South Central Asia, and 8% from West Asia (Gryn & Gambino, 2012). At least 60 different Asian subgroups with different languages, religious traditions, political, cultural and migration histories live in the United States (Austria, 2003; Lin & Cheung, 1999, as cited in Price et al., 2010). The great cultural diversity and geographic background among Asian immigrants has made it very complex to understand the experience each Asian sub-group faces today. It requires research on different ethnic groups individually and their acculturation process and coping mechanism. To better gain understanding of Bangladeshi immigrant families, one must understand the Bangladeshis’ background and history.

Bangladesh: Historical Background

Bangladesh is a small and independent country situated in Southeast Asia. Before 1947, Bangladesh was a part of the Indian subcontinent that was ruled by the British for
more than two centuries. British Colonial rule ended through the division of British India into Hindu-dominant India and Muslim-dominant Pakistan in 1947 (Munib, 2006). After the division, Bangladesh became the part of Pakistan known as East Pakistan. Due to “political upheaval and bitter conflict” (Munib, p. 3), East Pakistan acquired independence as Bangladesh in 1971 after nine months of bloody civil war. Bangladesh has an area of 56,977 square miles (approximately 144,000 square kilometers) and an estimated population of more than 152 million, according to a July 2012 estimate (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Among those, 89% are Muslim and other minorities are Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist (World Almanac, 2013). Also, there are several tribes living in the southeastern part of Bangladesh. About 75% of the total population live in the rural areas and depend on agriculture (Munib, 2006). Bengali, or Bangla, is the primary language, and the people are known as Bangladeshis.

Bangladeshi Immigrants in the United States

Migration from South Asia to other parts of the world began before the political partition of British India (Munib, 2006). Those emigrating from the Bengal region to America began in 1887. In the 1960s, many East Bengalis (people from Bangladesh) migrated to the United States to avoid political persecution and religious discrimination (Paul, 2008). After 1971, numbers of immigrants started to arrive in America. According to Bangladeshi-American history, 154 Bangladeshis in 1973, 147 in 1974, 404 in 1975, and 509 in 1976 arrived in the United States (Jones, 2006). By 1980, most of the approximately 3,500 Bangladeshis that had come to U.S. resided in New York, New Jersey, and California (Jones, 2006). In the early 1990s, large numbers of Bangladeshis migrated to the U.S. under the Opportunity 1 (OP-1) Visa and Diversity Visa (DV)
programs (Sultana, 2005). According to a U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service report, 175,747 Bangladeshis were admitted to the United States as legal permanent residents between 1973 and 2008 (Kibria, 2013). Most Bangladeshis (sometimes referred to as Bengalis or Bangalis) came as students, though many migrated from Saudi Arabia, Oman, Dubai, and Kuwait (Encyclopedia of Immigration, 2011).

It is difficult to get an accurate number of Bangladeshi immigrants currently living in the United States. The International Migration Research Series entitled “Dynamics of Remittance Utilization in Bangladesh” (2005) says there were about 500,000 people born in Bangladesh currently living in the United States (Sultana, 2005). On the other hand, a 2010 U.S. Census Bureau report said there are 158,556 Bangladeshi immigrants living in the United States (American Community Survey, 2010). However, resource also mentions there are about 150,000 undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants living in the U.S. Among those, about 50,000 are living in New York city and others are residing in different cities including Los Angeles (Jones, 2006).

Besides New York, a large number of Bangladeshis can be found in Los Angeles, Houston, Detroit, Miami, Washington, and Atlanta (Sultana, 2005). Southern California is considered the second largest home to Bangladeshis after New York (Jang, 2009). Although a 2000 U.S. Census report showed that there are only 1,700 Bangladeshis living in Los Angeles county, the Bangladesh consulate office estimated that currently there are 10,000 to 15,000 Bangladeshis living in Los Angles, and about 25,000 in Southern California (Jang, 2009). In Los Angeles, the Bangladeshi community is centered in the downtown area, and is involved in local organizations that reflect the political, religious, and geographic affiliation (Jones, 2006). In 2010, several local Bangladeshi
organizations came together and established a designated area “Little Bangladesh” (on Third Street and between South New Hampshire and South Alexandra avenues) within Korea town in Los Angeles as a symbol of Bangladeshi culture and identity (Villacorte, 2010).

The number of Bangladeshi immigrants is increasing rapidly. The main reasons for these migrations are usually education, economic stability, and political security (Kibria, 2011). Nazli Kibria (2011), in her book *Muslim in Motion: Islam and National Identity in the Bangladesh Diaspora*, stated that although the situation post-9/11 increased stress levels in new Bangladeshi immigrants, Bangladeshis still chose to come for one reason only: the dream of an American education for their children, although there also are people desperate to come for political and financial reasons.

**Statement of the Problem**

As a part of an Asian sub-cultural minority, Bangladeshi immigrant families, their acculturation experiences and challenges have not always been clearly distinguished in previous studies. The majority of research studies conducted on Asian immigrants have focused on better-known Asian groups such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Indian. Yet with their geographic and historical backgrounds, Bangladeshis are an important South Asian ethnic group that sacrificed lives to establish its nation’s independence, language and freedoms. With the influence of strong Muslim religious and local socio-cultural values, Bangladeshis have acquired a unique identity. Unfortunately, there are very few studies on this minority group. Although previous research studies indicate several immigrants’ complications, the findings from other Asian communities, such as the Bangladeshi community, are limited. Like other Asian
immigrant groups, Bangladeshis are one of the fastest (Stevanovic, 2012) and rapidly growing populations in the United States (Kibria, 2011). Coming from the agriculture-based traditional family to modernized Western society (Lee, 1997), Bangladeshi immigrants may face cultural differences and tremendous challenges. It is possible that because of lack of family and social support, language barriers, and different cultural and religious values they may experience higher stress level. Also, their beliefs and family value systems, and social stigma may cause them not to seek outside resources or professional help (Aujla, 2013). Bangladeshis’ cultural diversity and struggles need to be addressed to lower their stress levels and promote stable mental health. Therefore, the main reason and objective of this study is to explore Bangladeshi immigrant families’ strengths, their perceived cultural differences and its impacts on family and parenting, and coping strategies from the perspective of Bangladeshi immigrant mothers.

Purpose of the Study

Using the qualitative research method, this study will examine family strengths, perceived cultural differences and its impact on family and parenting, and coping strategies among Bangladeshi immigrant mothers from their perspective. The study objectives are as follows:

1. To explore family strengths among the Bangladeshi immigrants.
2. To identify perceived cultural differences between Bangladeshis and Americans.
3. To identify any impacts cultural differences may have on family life or parenting.
4. To identify coping strategies and positive adjustment behaviors among Bangladeshi immigrant families.

**Significance of the Study**

There is a significant amount of research addressing several vital issues among Asian-American immigrants. These include adaptation challenges, generation gaps, conflicts between parents and children, and parenting styles. Most of the research focuses on large and well known Asian countries. Although Bangladeshis are becoming more active in local activities, they are not very well known to researchers. In an effort to address this, this study focused on Bangladeshi immigrant families ‘strengths’, their perceived cultural differences and its impact on family and parenting, and their coping strategies from the perspective of Bangladeshi immigrant mothers. For this research, the qualitative approach was chosen because qualitative research is appropriate for validating people’s everyday experiences. Rather than interpretation of actions in variable and statistical language (Adler & Clark, 2011), qualitative research aspires to an empathic understanding of immigrant families’ stressors and challenges. Through this research, the aim was to generalize study results to contribute toward providing family support systems and interventions for immigration-related stress among Bangladeshi immigrants. The research primarily focused on family strengths, major cultural differences and its impact on family and parenting, and coping strategies among Bangladeshi immigrant mothers; however, the research findings and information presented here would be beneficial for understanding any other immigrants, especially Southeast Asians in the United States.

**Key Terms**

1. *Immigrants* - Immigrants refer to foreign-born individuals who plan to settle
permanently or temporarily in the United States (Price et al., 2010).

2. **Bangladeshi immigrants** - This refers to Bangladeshi-born immigrants who migrated from Bangladesh and now live in the United States permanently or temporarily.

3. **Bengali or Bangladeshi** - People from Bangladesh are called Bangladeshi. They are also known as Bengali or Bangalis because of their language, Bengali.

4. **Bangladeshi-American** - This term is refers to individuals of Bangladeshi decent who currently live in the United States, as either immigrants or citizens (Paul, 2008).

5. **Muslim** - The followers of the Islamic faith are called Muslim (Sakr, 2002). Muslims worship only one God (Allah) and follow the teachings of the last prophet and messenger, Mohammad (Sakr, 2002). Muslims believe in seven articles of faith: God’s oneness, God’s Angels, God’s books, God’s prophets, life after death, destiny, and the Day of Judgment (Sakr, 2001). Muslims’ five ceremonial duties are testimony to the unity of God (Shahada), ritual prayer (Salat), giving alms (Zakat), fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm), and pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca (Farah, 2000).

6. **Family Strengths** - A set of valuables or useful qualities of a family that makes the family special and strong. It also refers to necessary qualities required to deal with stressful or painful situations.

7. **Acculturation** - Acculturation is a complex process of change that occurs when at least two cultures continuously come into contact with one another (Berry, 1980, 1992, 1996, 2003, as cited in Awad, 2010). Acculturation level can apparent in
two fundamental ways: “immersion in or adaption of the dominant society and retention or immersion in the ethnic society” (p. 60).

8. Adaptation - Adaptation refers to the long-term change the family system makes to function successfully in different contexts (Boss, 2002 as cited in Price et al., 2010). This differs from adjustment, which is short-term change.

9. Culture - Culture refers to the accepted standardized ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, as well as the standardized skills, beliefs, values, symbols, and its meanings in common by a group of people which distinguish one social group from another (Pearson, 2010).

10. Cultural Values - This refers to the associated behaviors that are expected and shared in a particular society and represent a family and social custom. Examples include respect for elders, family cohesion, etc. (Price et al., 2010).

11. Cultural Differences - The differences between two cultural norms and values that may distinguish one social group from another. There are cultural differences between Western culture and Asian culture in areas such as language, family system, etc.

12. Individualism – Individualism is a social pattern of closely linked individuals who are independent of collectives. Individualism refers to a concept in which an individual conceives himself or herself as being autonomous and separate from others (Le & Stockdale, 2005). Individualism emphasizes independence, a sense of personal identity, self-achievement, and social recognition (Triandis, Bontepo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca, 1988 as cited in Munib, 2006).
13. Collectivism - Collectivism is a social pattern of closely linked individuals who are part of one or more collectives. Collectivism is a concept that emphasizes the welfare of group or community instead of oneself (Le & Stockdale, 2005). Collectivism refers to the cultures where interdependence and interpersonal relationships hold great importance while personal ambitions and needs are less important than family, tribe, or community needs (Munib, 2006).

14. Coping - Coping is a process of maintaining balance in the family system, which promotes individual and family growth and development (Price et al., 2010).

15. Coping Strategies - Coping strategies refer to all the ways individuals or family members “alter their subjective perceptions of stressful events” (Price et al., 2010, p. 13). According to sociological theories of coping, it refers a wide variety of actions that are either directly “changing the stressful situation or alleviating distress by manipulating the social environment” (Price et al., 2010, p.13).

16. Social Network - Social network is defined as “the aid and assistance exchanged thorough social relationships and interpersonal transactions.” (Berkman & Glass, 2000 as cited in Ornelas, Perreira, Beeber, & Maxwell, 2011, p. 1559) These include family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers etc.

Theoretical Framework

The study considered several family theories to frame this analysis. Adaptation is the process in which immigrant families pass through different stages. In this process, the host culture and environment, and the individual’s own family values and interaction with the surrounded community play a very crucial role in personal development and wellbeing. Therefore, Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) was
used as a primary basis of this study. Bronfenbrenner suggested that “family is one among many nested ecosystems in which the individual develops and interacts.” (White & Klein, 2008, p. 250) The ecological theory focuses on the role of different environments and how these environments affect individual and family functioning. This theory presents five distinct but related systems that influence family relationships, interactions, and individual and family development. They are: (a) the microsystem, which indicates a person’s immediate context (i.e., parents, siblings, friends, family); (b) the mesosystem, which involves relationships between the first and all other systems that affect the person (e.g., school, workplace, family, etc.); (c) the exosystem, which indirectly influences a person’s micro- or mesosystem (e.g., government agencies, community programs, parental employment settings, etc.); (d) the macrosystem, which reflects the broader concept of social, political, and ideological norms of a culture where an individual lives; and (e) the chronosystem, which involves the events and change of an individual over his or her lifespan (Pearson, 2010).

Figure 1.1. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory

Figure 1.1. shows five distinct levels of the environment: the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, microsystem, and chronosystem. Each simultaneously influences individuals. From Adolescence (p. 20) by R. S. Feldman, 2008. Boston: Pearson.
When an individual or a family migrates to another country or society, the new culture and new social norms directly influence their lives (Slonim-Nevo, Mirsky, Rubinstein, & Nauck, 2009). Through interacting in different ecosystems, individuals and families may adapt new perceptions and take initiatives to overcome some challenges that eventually help the family cope and develop. From an ecological perspective, individual-level behaviors are affected not only by personal or family characteristics but also by interactions with the larger social, cultural, and environmental context (Pearson, 2010). The study focused on how the microsystem is positively or negatively impacted by the exo- and macrosystem onto this particular immigrant population. It is assumed that immigrant families must need family and community support to overcome the challenges associated with immigration.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological approach resembles some of the features found in family system theory, especially the concept of interdependency, reciprocal interaction and feedback, equifinality, and adaptation (Pearson, 2010). Therefore, the Family Systems Theory was also used in this study. In the family systems, society is the environmental context and individual family members are the component units. White and Klein (2008) defined family system as a unit that can be distinguished from and affects its environment. Family system theory is based on several assumptions (White & Klein, 2008). They are: (a) all parts of a system are interrelated, (b) systems can be understood as a whole, (c) systems affect each other through environmental feedback, and (d) systems are not reality. There are some concepts that need to be considered to understand how families operate according to system theory (Pearson, 2010; White & Klein, 2008). Examples include wholeness of family, boundaries, rules of transmission, feedback,
degree of variety, system and subsystem, equilibrium, entropy, and adaptation.

Family system can be used to understand interfamily processes such as family patterns, functions, communications, conflicts, separateness, connectedness and adaptation to changes (Boss, 2002). In the context of family system theory, a Bangladeshi immigrant family is distinguished by its family values, beliefs, and characteristics. At the same time, it indicates the necessity of interaction with environments and requires adaptation to maintain family equilibrium.

Figure 1.2. What is a Family System?


Figure 1.2 shows the family structure that includes personal characteristics and cultural and ideological beliefs. Family interaction determines the level of family cohesion, adaptability and communication styles. The family function is the output of the interaction and family structure; the family life cycle introduces the changes into the family system (Allen, 2008; Child Welfare Manual, 2008).

Another basis of this research is the ABC-X model from Reuben Hill’s Theory of
Family Stress, which explains the relationship between stressors among immigrant families and their coping process. The family-stress framework explains that A (the provocation or stressors) interacting with B (the family’s resources or strengths) interacting with C (the family perceptions to the event or stressor) produces X (stress or crisis) (Price et al., 2010). Also, the model indicates that coping interacts with both family perceptions and resources. Coping represents people “concrete efforts to deal with a stressor” (p. 13).

Figure 1.3. The Contextual Model of Family Stress

Figure 1.3 shows how a family’s external and internal context identifies a stressful event, and how a family’s perception and resources influence the family stress level. From *Strengthening the Family: Implications for International Development* by M. F. Zeitlin, R. Megawangi, E. M. Kramer, N. D. Colletta, E.D. Babatunde, and D. Garman (Eds.), 1995, Tokyo: United Nations University Press.

This model explains how families adapt stress or crisis with the influence of their internal and external environment. Family system should adapt positive changes to overcome cultural conflicts and establish social support and resources.
**Research Questions**

According to the theoretical framework and literature review the research questions of this study are:

1. What are the major family strengths among Bangladeshi immigrant families in the United States?
2. What cultural differences do Bangladeshi immigrant families face today?
3. How do they perceive U.S. values and Bangladeshi values?
4. How do Bangladeshi mothers see these differences impacting their family relationships?
5. How do Bangladeshi mothers view these differences impacting their children or parenting?
6. What are the coping strategies families use to overcome challenges or difficulties encountered with immigration?

**Assumptions**

This research study was created based upon certain assumptions.

- All participants will answer the guided questions completely and honestly.
- Participants will be free from any pressure to participate in the research.
- Participants will be able to read Bengali and English and understand the items on the guided questions.
- The codes/themes used in the study are appropriate for interpreting the concepts.
- No errors will be made when entering or analyzing data.
- Bangladesh was a part of Indian Sub-continent. Therefore, Bangladeshi cultural assumption and assimilation maybe similar with Indian and Pakistani culture.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research on Bangladeshi immigrants is very limited. Therefore, research that examined related issues among other comparable Asian and immigrant groups and their findings are presented in this chapter.

An Overview of Asian-American Families

In order to have a better understanding of Bangladeshi-American family characteristics and their strengths, one must examine Asian culture in the context of religion and demographics.

Asian-American refers to Americans whose families originated in many different Asian countries (Lee & Mock, 2005). Geographically, Asia includes countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian sub-continent: Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam (Do, Xia, & Xie, 2013; Lee & Mock, 2005). Although there are some dissimilarities among Asian subgroups regarding language, religious beliefs, and customs, there are many similarities among all Asian cultures. Because of limited research on Bangladeshi families, the Asian family characteristics from earlier research studies were discussed. In her book Working with Asian Americans: A Guide for Clinicians, Evelyn Lee (1997) examines Asian family types and summarizes that Asian families place high value on the family unit rather than on the individual. An individual is expected to function in his or her clearly defined role and position in the family hierarchy, and reinforce societal expectations and proper behavior. Individual family members can be called on to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the family.
By examining different Asian groups and the degree of acculturation, Lee (1997; Lee & Mock, 2005) discussed five types of Asian-American families to understand the complexity of Asian-American families in the United States.

1. The Traditional Family. In this category, all family members are born and raised in Asian countries, have agricultural backgrounds, and recently arrived with limited exposure to Western culture. Family members hold strong beliefs in traditional values and practice traditional customs and “belong to family associations and other social clubs consisting of people with a similar heritage.” (p. 11)

2. The “Cultural Conflict” Family. In these families, members usually hold different cultural values. This type of family occurs when one spouse is more acculturated than the other. For example, a man may live in the United States for many years, then comes home, marries, and brings his wife who is not familiar with American culture.

3. The Bicultural Family. This type of family consists of well-acculturated parents who came to the United States many years ago and are quite familiar with American culture. Some of these people were born in the United States but raised in traditional families. They typically do not live within their own ethnic neighborhoods.

4. The Americanized or Highly Acculturated Family. Most of these families consist of parents who are born and raised in the United States. Some Asian families are highly acculturated and adapted mainstream American culture.
5. The Interracial Family or New Millennium Family. The families who have marital relationships with other race or ethnicity define this category. Interracial marriages among Asian Americans are increasing rapidly.

In discussing the Asian-American family system, Lee and Mock (2005) mentioned that family is considered a unit, and the individual is seen as the sum of all the family’s generations. “Individual family member’s and their personal actions reflect not only on themselves but also on their extended families and ancestors” (p. 274). Asian culture emphasizes harmonious interpersonal relationships, interdependence, mutual obligation, and peaceful coexistence with family members (Lee & Mock, 2005).

Western cultures promote nuclear family, independence, autonomy, and self-sufficiency; but in Asian culture, the family unit is highly valued and emphasized (Lee & Mock, 2005). “Rather than an ‘I’ identity, Asians are taught to embrace a ‘We’ identity” (p. 271). The authors explained that the centrality of the Asian family unit is reinforced by child-rearing practices, rituals, and customs such as family celebrations and meals, birth and death rites, the passing down of cultural metaphors and stories and the sacredness of genealogy records.

A study on East Indian immigrant families (Baptiste, 2005) noted that in the U.S., some East Indian (people from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) families are organized as nuclear families, while others include extended family members such as either one or both spouses. He also mentioned that some East Indian immigrants come to the U.S. as nuclear or extended family units with children of all ages, while others (primarily solo males, many of whom left their wives and children in India expecting to reunite with them later in the U.S.) come as individuals. East Indian immigrants often maintain
significant social distance from Western culture by retaining their native ideologies, values, and religious beliefs (Sodowsky & Carey, 1987), and by maintaining a distinct ethnic and cultural identity, especially among first generation immigrants (Baptiste, 2005).

Another characteristic was revealed from previous study (Aujla, 2013) that Asian families try to keep family matters within the family, although they face tremendous conflict between family members. Previous studies conducted on Asian-American and Muslim families found that there are a number of challenges holding back South Asian women from disclosing their family problems. These challenges include: social isolation, fear of deportation, language barriers, financial dependence on husband, and fear of losing children (Angew, 2000; Guruge, 2010; King, 2006; Merali, 2009; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Shirwadkar, 2004 as cited in Aujla, 2013). Other challenges that might prevent them from opening up regarding a family matter include: patriarchy, a lack of information and services, and a lack of support from their own community (Ahmed et al., 2009 as cited in Aujla, 2013).

On the other hand, in religious context, Bangladeshi Muslim families are closely similar to Pakistani-American immigrant families because they share the same religious and cultural practices. Nath (2005) described a few characteristics of Pakistani families such as extended families living together. Harmonious living is considered a moral imperative and an emphasis on collective family identity. Hospitality has a long tradition in Pakistani families. It also shows through their traditional Islamic holiday celebrations. Marriage is viewed as a union of two families rather than a union of two people (Nath, 2005). Although individuals may choose a marriage partner in Pakistan, arranged
marriages are still the standard (Nath, 2005).

Another significant study (Aston, Hooker, Page, & Willison, 2007) on 60 Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in U.K. revealed substantial information regarding responsibility for domestic duties and the influence of husband. The study objectives were to explore Pakistani and Bangladeshi women’s attitude toward education and employment, and to identify their views about marriage, children, domestic responsibilities, and leisure time. In the study, many women said that they share domestic responsibilities with their husband. Other reported men were most often seen as primary breadwinner. Some study participants reported that their husbands are supportive in undertaking house hold duties. Other women reported that their husbands view domestic tasks usually only for women. The research also found that women with higher degree and qualification would share domestic responsibilities with their husband than women with no or lower level of qualification. The study also found that most women did not want to study or work when their children were very young, and they wanted to devote their attention to their children and families.

Bangladeshi-American Family Characteristics

Today, Bangladeshi American community life “seems rich, vibrant, and diverse” (Kibria, 2013, p. 752). Because of migration to the United States, Bangladeshi-Americans are losing their extended-family tradition, yet they remain very dedicated to bringing their family members to the United States in any possible way (Khodakar, 2007). Although many immigrants do not have the opportunity living with their extended family in the U.S., they send money in regular basis to help out their extended family members in Bangladesh. Due to their religious and moral obligations, Bangladeshi immigrants send
money to take care of their older parents, siblings, and needy relatives (Stevanovic, 2012). Also, they keep close relationships with their own community through practicing rituals, observing holidays, and engaging in cultural activities. Parents from Bangladesh expect their children who were born and raised in a completely different culture to follow Bangladeshi cultural orientation (Khondakar, 2007). Bangladeshi-Americans form locality-based cultural, social, and religious associations to encourage practicing cultural traditions and to foster a sense of community (Kibria, 2013). These organizations offer celebration of Bangladesh Independence Day, cultural shows, Bengali-language classes for children, charity and disaster relief, etc. Kibria (2013) also mentions that besides community organization, there has been a growing participation of Bangladeshi Muslims in religious organizations dedicated to cultivate Bangladeshi Muslim identity through different traditional activities, e.g. sermon programs, Eid (annual holidays) celebrations, weekend retreats for families, religious discussions or classes, etc.

Based on fundamental religious belief systems, Bangladeshi Muslims believe in more authoritarian and hierarchical human relations between male and female, husband and wife, parent and child, senior and junior, and between social classes that prefer social, religious, economic, political and cultural activities separately among the cluster of the community life (Uddin, 2008). The same opinion reflects Lee’s 1997 study, in which she says,

In Eastern cultures, a well-defined hierarchy of authority exists depending on age, role, sex, and birth order. The head of the household (usually the father) makes important family decisions. However, in the West, equality tends to exist among family members and each individual’s opinion is valued. Decision-making is more democratic (p. 10).

According to Bangladeshi tradition, the wife’s responsibilities are to raise her children,
maintain her chastity, and manage the household. Husbands, fathers, and sons play the role of protector or guardian of the family.

**Family Strengths among Asian Immigrant Families**

According to Hill, family strengths refers to “those traits which facilitate the ability of the family to meet the needs of its members and demands made upon it by systems outside the family unit” (Xie, Xia, & Zhou, 2004). Each family is unique in its way and different from all other families (Olson, Defrain, & Skogrand, 2008). Although each family is different, it shares many similarities with its own ethnic groups, and similarities from outside of its ethnic groups (Olson et al., 2008). Previous research on different ethnic groups such as white families, African-American families, Latino families, Asian-American families, and Native American families identified different family strengths. In their book *Marriage and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths*, Olson, Defrain, and Skogrand (2008) defined six major strengths of Asian-American families. They discussed that although Asian-American families are very diverse, they commonly share many of the strengths of other cultural groups. The six strengths are: (a) strong family orientation, (b) filial piety, (c) high value of education, (d) well-disciplined children, (e) extended family support, and (f) family loyalty.

Xie, Xia, and Zhou (2004) conducted a qualitative research study on 40 Chinese Americans to find out their family strengths and acculturation stresses. The study revealed five family strengths. These are: (a) family support leading to achieving a renewed sense of family, (b) contextual support from friends and family members, (c) spiritual well-being, (d) communication among family members, and (e) balancing host and heritage culture (Xie et al., 2004; Xia, Do, & Xie, 2013).
A similar study conducted on Japanese-American families (Ishi-Kuntz, 1997 as cited in Xia et al., 2013) identified three strengths of Japanese families: strong family solidarity, strong feelings of obligation and commitment toward parents, and tolerance toward family diversity.

Stinnett and Detra (1985) identified six family strengths: appreciation and affection, commitment, positive communication, enjoying time together, spiritual well-being, and stress management. A study in India identified eight strengths, including five of six strengths Stinnett and Detra originally found. (Medera, Larson, & Paml, 2000 as cited in Xia et al., 2013). Besides those five, the three other strengths were: a sense of harmony, a feeling of support and overall well-being, and feelings of cooperation and dependability.

Perceived Cultural Differences among Asian Immigrants

Immigrant parents are often faced with significant challenges when dealing with various issues that vary with cultures, ethnicities, religious affiliations, immigration reasons, and other factors. Previous researchers have identified a wide variety of stressors that immigrant families may experience. According to Price et al. (2010), immigrant families face various barriers in the adaptation process, such as: (a) a lack of fluency in English, (b) a diminished social-support network, (c) conflict in intergenerational relationships, (d) a lowered socioeconomic status, (e) poor housing conditions, (f) unfamiliar U.S. societal or cultural norms, (g) family separation, (h) fear of deportation, and (i) discrimination. The authors mention that when families encounter barriers, they experience these barriers as stressors that might impact each family in different ways. Individual or specific ethnic groups have different perceptions when
dealing with these differences or difficulties that are based on their limitations and resources. To understand Asian-American immigrants’ perception of stressors, it is important to analyze the main differences between Asian and American cultures.

*Religious Beliefs and Social Norms*

Asian-Americans come from a variety of religious backgrounds including Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim. The differences between their religious beliefs and values and those in the United States cause pressure on immigrant parents. Muslim parents want their children to get involved in religious holidays, practices religious rituals, connect with mosques, and attend religious school to maintain their Muslim identities. But after 9/11, Muslim parents became more fearful and tended to encourage children to hide their identities at their educational institutions for fear of discrimination and hate crimes (Awad, 2010). The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee reported that in the first nine weeks after 9/11, there were more than 700 violent incidents targeting Arabs, Arab-Americans, Muslims, and those perceived to be Arab or Muslim (Ibrsh, 2003; Awad, 2010). Compared to other ethnic groups, “Muslims expose more traditions that appear to be in conflict with mainstream American culture” (Awad, 2010, p. 60). These traditions include beards for men, hijab (head cover) for women, praying five times a day, and fasting in the month of Ramadan (Awad, 2010). Due to Islam’s strong religious regulations, it could be very difficult to accept an “American standard of dating” (p. 60) that includes dresses, having a boyfriend or girlfriend, and marrying outside the faith.

Awad’s (2010) study on the impact of acculturation and religious identification on perceived discrimination for Arab/Middle Eastern-Americans indicated that religious
affiliation was strongly related to acculturation and discrimination in society. This study examined both Arab-American Muslims and Christians and reported that Muslims were more likely to affirm their identity than Christians. Muslims also reported experiencing more discrimination than Christians (Awad, 2010).

While describing religious beliefs, Lee (1997) noted that as in many Asian countries, and in Western society, religious organizations are highly respected. The priest, minister, rabbi or imam (Muslim religious leader) is a key figure in the process of understanding religious rules and regulations and solving family problems. Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants practice Islamic beliefs that strongly encourage using these religious values in their everyday lives. Religion and family are strong sources of a Muslim’s identity. In Muslim families, courtship is tightly controlled. Before marriage, dating and sex are prohibited. Offspring are taught early to consider marrying only a person who shares the same religion and culture. Among Bangladeshis, Muslims and Hindus strictly maintain their marriage relationship within their own race. Family and marriage in Bangladeshi communities are important institutions that perform many functions and play many important roles in human development and adjustment across the generations. A person’s family or guardians traditionally arrange a Bangladeshi marriage. Muslim and Bangladeshi children are highly restricted from marrying other races unless there has been a conversion to Islam. Uddin (2008) described the family and marital system in the Bangladeshi community as:

Patriarchal system through which marital tie between a male and a female is developed, and after marriage every married woman goes to husband’s house or husband’s father’s house where she is a subordinate and dependent member of the family due to prevail patriarchal authority and marital norms (p. 678).
Bangladeshi Muslim parents who are raising children in America struggle to maintain traditional values while allowing their children to pursue higher education and professional training. After exposure to Western culture, maintaining religious identification may be perceived as another challenge among immigrant parents. A study on Bangladeshi parents in Australia (Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005) stated that Bangladeshi parents highlighted the issues of children’s adjustment in school due to physical appearance and limited English language skills. At the same time, they were concerned about the loss of cultural and religious values after being exposed to Western culture in school settings.

Parenting and Childrearing

One of the common challenges among the Asian sub-group is practicing different child-rearing and parenting strategies. Rearing children within a Western culture that is so dissimilar from their original culture creates conflict within the family, especially the relationships between parents and children. The literature suggests that Asian parents traditionally practice authoritarian parenting styles and emphasize specific values and goals for their second-generation immigrant children (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007). Usually, Asian parents try to control their children and their behaviors. As a result, when it conflicts with the situation and environment, the parents demonstrate fear of losing their children and ethnic identity. A study (Inman et al., 2007) conducted on Indian parents revealed that parents think environmental obstacles and barriers within American society challenge their ability to retain the ethnic identity in their children. Inman et al. interviewed 16 first-generation Indian mothers and fathers about immigration’s influence on retaining their ethnic identity and their ability of promote a
sense of ethnic identity on their children. The results identified several factors that challenged retaining ethnic identity. Both parents mentioned that the barriers American culture present are: (a) a loss of familial support, (b) a lack of cultural continuity, (c) a lack of cultural knowledge, (d) an inability to apply their own experiences, (e) the potential for intermarriage, and (f) a lack of familial guidance and modeling. The results also mentioned that transmitting an ethnic identity to second-generation children is difficult because the children grow up and follow their American friends’ values rather than those of their relatives in India.

Like other Muslim communities, Bangladeshi children are highly valued, loved, and indulged (Khondaker, 2007). Parents strictly regulate and monitor children’s activities, especially relationships with peers. Although communication is key for parent-child relationships in the Muslim-American home, Bangladeshi-American families have problems with the communication process. Bangladeshi parents place very high academic and social expectations on their children (Begum & Khondaker, 2008; Khondaker, 2007). Bangladeshi mothers are responsible for providing academic assistance, doing household chores, and even teaching children cultural values and religion. The current economic crisis caused many mothers to start working outside of their house to help their husband and maintain a better life (Khondaker, 2007). Unfortunately, lack of time and guidance has contributed to parents losing their control over their children and their traditional culture. One early study (Khondaker, 2007) on juvenile deviant behavior in an immigrant Bangladeshi community describes how parental supervision is closely tied to the culture conflict. Khondaker’s study on New York City Bangladeshi immigrant families indicates that parents may be unable to
provide proper supervision because of their work schedules, their inability to speak English, and their failure to understand the American system. As many immigrant Bangladeshi parents work hard for long hours, they do not have enough time to supervise their children and monitor their activities. In addition to the questions of parenting, Khondaker (2007) states that due to the conflicting nature of disciplining children in the United States and Bangladesh, parents may not use the parenting strategy effectively to guide their children.

Another study (Begum & Khondaker, 2008) conducted on immigrant Bangladeshi community and their intergeneration conflict also stated that Bangladeshi parents practiced strict parental behaviors. The research showed that Bangladeshi parents wanted their children to follow the rules as they the parents established them. Parental strictness and lack of understanding of the influence of mainstream culture can result in conflict between parents and children. Due to the differences between child rearing in the U.S. and other countries, it can be very confusing for immigrant parents to follow proper parenting practices when supervising and disciplining their children (Chin, 1990 as cited in Begum & Khondaker, 2008).

Communication Patterns

As a whole system, every family has to maintain one form of communication that will define the information flow within a subsystem. Uddin (2008) discusses this in his analysis of Bangladeshi family communication patterns. To give a clear idea about Bangladeshi communication patterns, he discussed three types of communication styles: (a) autocratic communication, in which one person holds the top position in the family hierarchy and, as a result, has the most power to make any decision; (b) democratic
communication, in which all family members provide input, but one or two family members make the decisions; and (c) egalitarian communication, in which all members are involved as equal partners in gathering information and decision-making. In a Bangladeshi perspective, the head of the family, generally husbands or fathers, practice an authoritarian/autocratic communication system. However, in North America and European cultures, families follow either egalitarian or democratic communication patterns regarding issues such as age of marriage, gender norms, and the husband and wife’s socioeconomic status. Wedemyer and Grotevant (1982) found that children’s perception of open communication versus problematic communication with their parents related to disagreement and conflict.

*Language Barrier*

Learning the native language is another difficulty that immigrant parents usually face. A lack of English proficiency and limited English conversation skills could create frustration and conflict between parents and their children. A study (Usita & Blieszner, 2002) conducted on 20 Asian immigrant mothers and their daughters examined immigrant family experiences with language acculturation and communication. The results indicated that mothers and daughters are concerned about their communication patterns and communication gaps due to limited English language skills. Participants in this study also reported their personal strategies for improving communication such as relying on others for help, daughters seeking clarifications, using humor, and working on improving the mothers’ English. So, the study concluded that language barriers are challenges but at the same time are strengths when immigrant families demonstrate positive efforts for language acculturation.
Bangladeshi immigrant parents may face the same challenges because of language differences. A study (Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005) of 10 Bengali parents and four children living in Sydney, Australia examined their views, concerns, and expectations regarding the children’s transition to kindergarten. The results indicated that Bangladeshi parents worried about their children’s adjusting to the rules by which English-speaking parents raise their children. However, “they raised very specific concerns underpinned by linguistic, cultural and/or religious factors” (p. 47). All participants in the study were concerned with their children’s limited English skills, which might impact their social-emotional adjustment, school performances, and relationships with teachers and peers. Parents were also concerned about the possibility of being isolated, bullied, and victimized because of their skin color, accent, physical size, and limited English. Therefore, language differences and the inability to fluently speak the native language pose challenges for immigrant parents as well as their children. Another study (Begum & Khondaker, 2008) also indicated that parents’ lack of education and their inability to speak or fully understand English gives the children opportunity to take leadership roles over their parents. Since children know the rules, regulations and systems better than their parents, they become the interpreters of language and custom. 

*Individualism vs. Collectivism*

The issue of individualism and collectivism within the Bangladeshi immigrant community in the host country may create psychological complications (Munib, 2006). The term *individualism* applies to social pattern that emphasizes independence (idiocentric ideals), a sense of personal identity, and competitiveness regarding self-achievement and social recognition (Triandis, Bontepo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988 as
The orientation of individualism is “toward oneself and internal attributes” (Le & Stockdale, 2005, p. 682). Countries with individualist tendencies include Sweden, Australia, the United States, and other similar Western countries. On the other hand, *collectivism* refers to the social pattern where interdependence, interpersonal relationships hold great importance while personal ambitions and needs are less important than family, tribe, or community needs (Munib, 2006). Rural Bangladesh or other South Asian countries exemplify collectivist societies. In the Western individualistic culture, self-view is the independent view; the collectivistic Asian cultures hold the self as primarily a relational entity interdependent of others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus et al., 1997 as cited in Taylor, Welch, Kim, & Sherman, 2007). In these contexts, “social relationships, norms, and group solidarity are more fundamental to social behavior than an individual’s needs” (Taylor et al., p. 832). In collectivistic cultures, “relationships are based on the assumption that they are less voluntary and more ‘given’ and thus convey a greater sense of mutual obligation than in individualistic cultures” (Miller et al., 1990 as cited in Taylor et al., p. 832).

Munib (2006) stated that when Asian families from traditional collectivist cultures immigrate to an individualistic society, they endure tremendous efforts to adjust and develop individualistic characteristics. It is much easier for children of immigrants, but their parents probably retain most of their traditional collectivist traits (Munib, 2006). It definitely indicated that the cultural differences can create adjustment problems among immigrant parents who missed their social support from extended family, friends, and neighbors. Sudden interdependency may create social isolation and psychological distress among immigrant parents, especially mothers.
Coping Strategies

From the individual psychological perspective, individual coping defines direct action behaviors that deal with a stressor as sedative behavior that makes a person feel calmer (Lazarus, 1966, 1976 as cited in Boss, 2002). According to psychologist Richard Lazarus, an individual’s coping behavior may be chosen (a) to deal with the problem generated by the stress emotion (i.e., fight or flight), or (b) to control the emotion by hiding their expressions (Boss, 2002). An individual’s coping strategies depend on his/her personal resources, lifestyle, immediate environment, and the nature of the event or stress itself (Price et al., 2010). The authors described that people usually use two types of coping: (a) problem-focused coping, and (b) emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is an individual’s attempt to control a situation by gathering information, making plans, or resolving conflicts (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984 as cited in Price et al., 2010). Emotion-focused coping is an individual’s response to stress through denial, detachment, reinterpretation, and the application of religious/spiritual faith or humor (Williamson & Dooley, 2001 as cited in Price et al., 2010).

On the other hand, McCubbin used a “family coping” concept in the family stress theory, and it was used as resource (B) in the ABC-X model by Reuben Hill (Boss, 2002). Family coping is the process of managing a stressful event or situation by the family as a unit with no disadvantageous effects on any individual member in that family (Boss, 2002). The author further described family coping as “a cognitive, affective, and behavioral process by which individuals and their family system as whole manage, rather than eradicate, stressful events or situations” (p. 79). Using the family stress theory perspective, the author stated that the coping strategies used by families are classified into
three categories. They are: (a) direct action behaviors such as learning new skills, language, professorial jobs, etc.; (b) intrapsychic forms of coping, such as never showing fear, believing something to calm oneself, etc.; and (c) behaviors that control emotions generated by the stressful events such as professional counseling, keeping a diary, drinking alcohol, etc. (Boss, 2010).

_Coping Strategies among Asian Immigrant Families_

Every ethnic group has its own coping strategies based on its family, social, cultural values, and perspective. Similarly, scholars have speculated that Asian and Asian-American coping strategies are shaped by Asian cultural values and worldviews (Wong, Kim, & Tran, 2010). According to the article, Asian-American’s coping strategies can be categorized into two broad categories: (a) engagement coping, such as problem solving, seeking social support, etc.; and (b) disengagement coping, such as social withdrawal and self-criticism (Tobin, Holroyd, Reynolds, & Wigal, 1987 as cited in Wong et al., 2010). Based on these two types of coping, Wong et al. examined the relationships among adherence to Asian values, attributions about depression and perceived coping strategies among the multi-ethnic Asian-American populations. The findings showed that Asian-Americans who strongly adhered to Asian values were more likely to attribute depression to internal factors, which in turn made them more likely to prefer disengagement and less likely to prefer engagement. Moreover, “Asian Americans who attributed the solution for depression to internal causes were more likely to prefer engagement strategies and less likely to prefer disengagement strategies to cope with depression” (p. 6).

Similar results and types of coping strategies exist in a study on South-Asian-
American women conducted by Liang, and colleagues (2010). The authors discussed that to deal with stress, an individual may use problem-solving coping (PSC), social support network (SSN), or avoidance coping (AC). Individuals who use problem-solving coping have higher levels of subjective well-being, fewer psychological problems, and better physical health than those who use avoidance coping (Robbins & Kliewer, 2000 as cited in Liang et al., 2010). The study examined the relationships between strategies women from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal use to cope with discrimination, and the strategies’ relationships to subjective well-being. The study also assessed differences in the type of coping strategies used between first- and second-generation immigrants and between younger and older adults. This study found that as age increased, the use of PSC strategies decreased. The possible reason is that “as South Asian American women become older, they may find more positive outcomes by turning to their faith, rather than directly addressing or thinking about the problem” (p. 83). The study also found that second-generation South-Asian-American women use more SSC strategies than the first generation. The researchers explained that first-generation women are more likely to use coping strategies that are common to their country of origin such as reading religious books, relying on family support, etc. In contrast, second-generation South-Asian-American women may demonstrate more independence and seek help from other professionals because of their educational and socialization experiences (Liang et al., 2010).
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The in-depth, open-ended interview, a qualitative research method, was chosen for this study to explore Bangladeshi immigrant families, their family strengths, perceived cultural differences, and coping strategies from the perspective of Bangladeshi mothers. Since qualitative research method focuses on observing, describing, and interpreting peoples’ everyday experiences (Bazeley, 2013), this method allowed participants to share their views in their own words. Qualitative research is an ideal research method that allows an individual’s attitudes and behaviors as well as offering deeper insights into why individuals think and behave as they do (Aston, Hooker, Rage, & Willison, 2007). Therefore, qualitative research is appropriate for assurance meaning of family life (Daly, 1992 as cited in Xie et al., 2004).

Participants

A total of 10 Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant mothers were selected for this study. To be qualified for the study, participants had to be Muslim, Bangladeshi immigrants, mothers of children (ages 5-18), and have been living in the United States for at least one year. Due to their deep respect of their cultural and religious values, only mothers were recruited for this study. Religiously, it is not a common practice for a female interviewer to interview a male participant. So, as a Muslim female, the researcher would have free access to talk to females without any restrictions. Also, in the contemporary family system, Bangladeshi mothers are becoming more responsible for family functioning, child rearing, and imparting religious values to their children. They are now more aware of their children’s education and academic achievements, and
their own independence. All participants were born in Bangladesh and migrated between the years of 1993 and 2007. All immigrated to the United States either with their husbands or parents. Nine of the participants came to the United States with their husband, either together with a DV-visa or later as a spouse. Only one participant immigrated with her parents and later got married in Bangladesh. She brought her husband as an immigrant about four years ago. The length of their stay in the United States varied from 6 to 19 years. At the time of interviews, mothers ranged in age from 29 to 43. The family size of the participants is between 3 and 7. The number of children ranged between 1 and 3 and children’s age ranged from 1 to 18 years. Among the 10 participants, 1 had a Master’s degree from Bangladesh, 1 had a Bachelor’s degree from Bangladesh, 4 had Associate degrees from a Los Angeles community college, 2 were still going to college and taking college classes, and 2 had high school diplomas from Bangladesh and were not going to school in the U.S.(see table 3.1). Their occupational status was reported as 70% housewife, 30% working class, and 20% current student. All of the participants were born and raised in Bangladesh and came from different Bangladeshi cities.

Table 3.1

Demographic Information of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>Ages of Children</th>
<th>Years in U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Momena</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18, 10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohela</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14, 10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubina</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxana</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11, 7, 1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shirin | 43 | A.A. | Housewife/Student | 3 | 1 | 12 | 17
Nabila | 33 | A.A. | Housewife | 4 | 2 | 13, 8 | 14
Rebecca | 33 | A.A. | Preschool T.A. | 4 | 2 | 11, 8 | 15
Badhon | 38 | A.A. | Preschool T.A. | 7 | 3 | 12, 9, 4 | 12
Shamima | 37 | High School | Housewife | 4 | 2 | 9, 4 | 10
Maduri | 39 | Some College | Self-employed/Student | 5 | 3 | 13, 10, 5 | 13

Note. Participants’ detail data from the demographic questions used in the interviews.

Recruitment of Participants

Participants were recruited through fliers (see Appendix E) and snowball sampling from the “Little Bangladesh” area of Los Angeles, where most of the Bangladeshi families live. The snowball-sampling technique was used for tracing suitable participants. Fliers were distributed at the Bangladesh Day Parade on April 7 and 8, 2013, arranged by the Bangladesh Unity Federation of Los Angeles (BUFLA) at Virgil Middle School in Los Angeles. Five participants were found through responses to the flier, but two of them did not meet the sample requirements. Other participants were recruited from Sirat Mahfil, a religious program about the life of the Prophet Mohammad at Shatto Recreation Center, Los Angeles, and from the Islamic Center of Southern California, located at 434 South Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles. The researcher initiated personal contact, distributed fliers, and found four participants from the Sirat Mahfil on June 16, 2013, conducted by Muslim Ummah of North America (MUNA). Also during the month of Ramadan (July 9 to August 8), the researcher met
many Bangladeshi parents at the Islamic Center who had been coming for *Tarabi* prayer (a special night prayer during Ramadan) and found two participants. The remaining participant was found and contacted personally by the researcher from the Bangladeshi neighborhood. Of those immigrant Bangladeshi mothers who expressed interest in participating, a few did not meet the criteria because they did not have school-aged children. Two of them had children going to a university or graduating from a university, and one of them had very young children. Therefore, the recruitment, inclusion and exclusion criteria processes resulted in 10 Bangladeshi immigrant mothers. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants’ names were changed, and no identifiable data were collected. The research protocol was approved by the IRB board at CSUN (see Appendix C).

**Procedure**

Appropriate IRB clearance and ethical procedure were maintained for this study. Interested participants were contacted and reviewed through personal communication and phone calls. The potential participants who met the inclusion criteria were scheduled for an interview at a convenient time and location. Some of the participants asked the interviewer to give them time after the Ramadan fast. The month of Ramadan started this year on July 9 and ended on August 8 with the big celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr. Usually, Muslim families spend their very busy and tight schedules on those days balancing work with religious rituals. Therefore, some of my interviews took place after Ramadan. On the day of the interview, before explaining the consent form, the researcher introduced herself by saying, “As a mother of two children and a Bangladeshi immigrant, I am really interested to learn about you and your family
strengths, perceived cultural differences and adjustment strategies. Please feel free to ask me any questions anytime.” Before starting the interviews, the researcher outlined the background and purpose of the research, and explained to the respondents that they were under no obligation to answer any question if they did not feel comfortable. It was also explained that the interviews were confidential and we would not name or identify any one in the report. Then participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were explained the adult consent form. Before beginning, each participant was given a consent form authorizing participation in the research and the audio taping of the interview process. The bill of rights was also explained to the participants for them to sign. After they signed consent form and the bill of rights, participants were paid a $15 Target gift card as compensation. Participants also were informed that if a participant withdraws at any time in the interview process, she still would receive the gift card. The researcher explained the study’s objectives, participation process, and the consent form. While describing written consent, it was also explained that participation in this study was voluntary and they could withdraw from the interview if they felt uncomfortable at any time. An in-depth open-ended interview was conducted. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes long. Interviews were recorded using audio recording, and personal notes to ensure credibility of data analysis.

*Measures*

Participants were asked to complete some demographic information related to each participant’s family size, age, gender, education, occupation, number of children, ages of children and number of years living in the United States. Participants were given the choice to use English or Bengali during the interview. Necessary documents were
translated from English to Bengali as well (see Appendices for Interview Questions, Flier, and Adult Consent Form in English and Bengali).

A semi-structured open-ended discussion guide was developed to use in the interview (see Appendix A) and this covered the following key areas:

- Bangladeshi immigrant family strengths
- Perceived cultural differences between U.S. and Bangladesh
- Impact of cultural differences on family relationship and parenting
- Coping strategies used by Bangladeshi mothers
- Supportive factors overcoming difficulties
- The areas Bangladeshi mothers needed help

Each key theme had a number of questions and prompts to ensure that the topics were covered effectively in the interview. One additional question “Is there anything else you would like to tell me?” was used in the interview to help draw out some of the issues that the respondents might have forgotten. It was those answers where we found some additional opinions that were very relevant to other discussion questions.

Data Collection

The interviews for this study took place between April and September 2013. All interviews were conducted face-to-face by the researcher. Interviews were conducted in different places depending on the participants’ preferences. Five interviews were conducted at participants’ homes, four at interviewer’s home, and one at the Islamic Center of Southern California. All interviews were conducted in Bengali or English based on the choice of the participants, and the typical length was between 30 minutes and 45 minutes. Five participants chose to speak in English and five chose
Bengali. Interviews were recorded using audio recording and personal notes to ensure credibility of data analysis. To ensure anonymity, no identifiable information (name, driver license, address, telephone number, etc.) was collected from any participant and fake names were given to all participants to use data. The data was being saved in a digital file in a password-protected laptop for three years.

Data Analyses

A thematic approach was used to analyze the data. The analysis was conducted by reading and re-reading the transcribed materials, reviewing line by line and identifying themes related to the original research questions. The interview data were transcribed manually, translated in English and analyzed qualitatively. Since the researcher is bilingual in Bengali and English, she translated Bengali data into English and recorded into Microsoft word process. Then translated data were organized in Microsoft office excel worksheet under different interview questions. Recorded data were coded openly (Charmaz, 2006 as cited in Hossen & Westhues, 2013) in the worksheet. Then similar ideas and concepts were identified and organized into different codes or themes. Then most similar ideas were generated into a smaller category. These categories were reviewed several times to get the study’s major themes. Some of the themes were from the original aim of the study; others emerged from the conversation and research questions during analysis.

The Role of the Researcher

I have been living in Little Bangladesh area, Los Angeles for about 13 years. Being an immigrant in the United States was very difficult for my family and me in the beginning. We are now well adjusted and trying to integrate American culture while
maintaining our own cultural values at the same time. Getting involved in education, job, and community work helped us to adjust to the new environment. During these years, I witnessed a great deal of pain, suffering, success, and challenges. At the same time, working with underprivileged families through the Head Start Program helped me to understand how much immigrant families need support, comfort, and opportunity. As a member of the Bangladeshi community, I felt that families needed support, comfort and help. Therefore, when I had the opportunity to work on my thesis, I choose Bangladeshi immigrant families.

My personal experience and my family situation created certain biases in this study. I made every effort to keep personal experiences and conversations out of the interviewing process to minimize my biases. I allowed the interviewees to express their opinions freely without expressing my own biases.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Results are presented according to the guided questions, which are closely connected to each research question. Through these questions, interviewees’ ideas and comments about family strengths, perceived cultural differences and its impacts on family and parenting, and coping strategies among Bangladeshi immigrant families are examined. Several common themes emerged from the interview data under the six different areas. These areas are: family strengths, perceived cultural differences between personal values and values in U.S., cultural differences between U.S. and Bangladesh, impacts on family and parenting, coping strategies, and supportive factors. Each theme is discussed and presented through paraphrased and sometimes from direct quotation from the interview transcripts. For each theme, I mentioned the total number of comments and ideas but did not use all comments to avoid repetition.

Themes Related to Family Strengths

By studying all 10 interviewees’ answers, four themes were found related to family strengths, such as togetherness and unity of family, support from family, good relationships and affection, and practicing religious and family values (see table 4.1). These themes were originated from the guided question 1. What are the major strengths of your family that was related to our research question 1. What are the major family strengths among Bangladeshi immigrant families in the United States?

Theme 1. Togetherness and Unity of Family

Nine participants viewed their family strengths as living together, spending quality time together, enjoying each other’s company, and family unity and bonding.
Most of them mentioned that they felt lucky that they are living together with their husband and children and had opportunity to spend quality time together as a family. They said that togetherness and family bonding make their family special. Rebecca (33) shared her story that she has been living in the United States for 15 years. She came to the U.S. with her parents. Then she went to Bangladesh to get married. It took about eight years to process her husband’s papers. Finally, her husband was able to join her here in 2009. All those years, she had been living and raising her two children by herself without her husband. She expressed that although there was a long distance between them, they had never felt disrespect, mistrust, or lack of intimacy. She also mentioned that the unity of family makes her family special. Some mothers expressed that despite their family’s busy schedules, they try to find time for their children and spend quality time together as a family. In the words of one participant, Shirin (43):

*Actually, we are three in our family: me, my husband and my son. We are very family oriented. Actually, I feel lucky that my husband comes home after work. We spend our time together. Since we have one kid, we are very much together. We spend our evening together. And also when my husband has off work, we go together for a long drive, to the park. We spend lots of time together.*

Nabila (33) stated:

*We spend family time together. We have like one day; we spend whole day together. My husband mostly works seven days. He tries to take one day off. Then the whole family goes out, goes to movie or to the park. So that’s a nice moment.*

Shamima (37) expressed:

*My husband is my main strength. When we spend time together, eat dinner together, I feel good. I like the time when my husband comes from work, we watch T.V. together. I feel good that my husband is with me. In Ramadan, we fast, pray, and break fasting together. I feel really good. Also, when I see my kids are happy in Eid celebration, I feel so happy.*
Theme 2. Support from Family

Throughout the interview, 8 of the 10 participants mentioned their supportive husband as their major family strength. They shared that the main strength of their family is their husbands and his support for the family. As one participant, Roxana (38) said,

*I think that my husband is my main strength. He gives us all his effort to make us happy. First thing is respect. He respects me as his wife. It is not only love, he gives me everything. He takes care of kids like a friend; always takes care of them. He tries his best to give us time as much as he can give us. Because in the United States we don’t have any relatives. So he is my main strength.*

In the words of another participant, Nabila (33):

*The major strength of my family is that actually me and my husband. We agree not to discuss anything in front of kids. So what happens that when I say “no” to the kids, he doesn’t tell me that why, or let them do that or let them do it. He supports me. That’s a big help. So my children know if it’s “no,” means “no.” So that’s a big strength for me. I am getting my husband’s support.*

Maduri (39) said that her husband and children are her strengths. She also mentioned that her kids’ academic successes make her happy. Few other participants also shared that their husband are very helpful and supportive.

Theme 3. Good Relationships and Affection

Seven participants shared good family relationships as their family strength. They included good relationship between husband and wife, helping each other, closeness, good communication and strong bonding between family members. As Rubina (29) shared, “We share every single thing among family members, among husband and wife. Both of us discuss everything about family matters together before making final decision.” Another participant, Badhon (38) shared, “We have good relationship. We are strong family. Strong family relationship makes our family special.”
Theme 4. Practicing Religious and Family Values

Although only four participants stated practicing religious and family values are their family strengths, all participants emphasized in another question the importance of practicing religious ritual and holidays together as a family. Most of the parents shared that they celebrate holidays and teach children religious rules and regulations to maintain their original cultural and social values in U.S. Besides religious rituals, they mentioned that teaching family values to the children such as showing good manners, respecting each other, telling the truth, and helping them become a good person also were family goals. Sohela (33) reported that she teaches her children to respect elderly, and love youngsters, and try to be truthful. She also added, “Yes, we go to mosque, go to relatives house, study and teach my kids Quran. We participate in different religious programs. We teach our kid to be respectful to others. We try our best to teach our kids social and family values.”

Another mother, Momena (43), shared that her family strength is to care for her children’s education and help them to become good people. “I think, I like about my family are: spending time with my children, take care of their education and take care of them and help them to become a good person.” Nabila (33) emphasized on teaching children Islamic studies at the early age to maintain religious values among children. She said:

*I try to keep my kids busy with Islamic studies. That’s why they enter the religion studies at very young age, when they were five. Pretty much religion teaches you what is right and what is wrong. Then we try to follow all the religious festivals. I try to explain them why do we have to follow them.*

Shamima (37) reported:
Yes, I maintain cultural values, go to mosques; teach my kids religious values; praying, fasting, and read Quran. I try to maintain hijab. Sometimes some people don’t accept it, but I am still maintaining my religious dress, Allah’s order.

Roxana (38) expressed that she felt really lucky that they have the opportunity to take their children to the mosque, teach them religious rules, and never faced any problem following religious rules.

Table 4.1

Description of Themes of Family Strengths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Togetherness and Unity of Family</td>
<td>Living together</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spending time together</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making time for each other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unity of my family</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from Family</td>
<td>Supportive husband</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision making together</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking care of kids/education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kid’s academic success</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Relationships and Affection</td>
<td>Strong family relationship</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being good friend to each other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Showing respect</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Share everything</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making decision together</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing Religious and Family Values</td>
<td>Showing good manner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help children becoming a good person</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice religion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect elderly, love</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>youngsters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust and honesty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be truthful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Examples used by participants under different themes of family strengths.
Themes Related to Differences Between Personal Values and Values in U.S.

All participants agreed that they face some differences in the United States, especially different religious beliefs, cultural and family norms, and language. By analyzing their views, three main themes were identified (see table 4.2) in this area based on the guided question 2. Have you encountered cultural differences between your personal values and values in the U.S. which was related to my research question # 2. What cultural differences do Bangladeshi families face today?

Theme 1: Different Religion and Custom

Eight participants out of 10 described religious differences in U.S. as their main concern. They mention that in Bangladesh, the majority of people are Muslim; they follow the same culture, the same holidays; but here, people have different holidays. Rebecca (33) said, “In U.S., there is diverse population, but where I grew up, there are no diverse people. We have same religion.” She also expressed, “Here, many different culture from all over the world. In U.S., we are mostly all the cultures. Yes, many ways encountered differences; the way dress up, food, different dress, and different language.” Also, participants mentioned that as a Muslim, they try to follow Islamic dress code. Sometimes people may say something negative about their clothing but they are still wearing hijab (head cover).

One participant, Badhon (38) stated that she came from Islamic culture where she used to practice Muslim religious rules, and Islamic dress code. She was raised differently in Bangladesh but she is trying to follow her faith and wearing hijab (head scarf) here, in the United States.

Another participant, Maduri (39) shared, “Our religion is different than here.
Here, we see lots of festival Halloween, Christmas, and Thanksgiving, etc. In Bangladesh, we celebrate two Eid called Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha.” Momena (42) expressed that some values are similar and some are different. She has two daughters, one who graduated from high school this year and was accepted at Princeton University. She thinks that when children are at school, they get influenced by non-Muslim culture. Although parents want their children to learn their own cultural values, they learn different values from their friends. She also mentioned a challenge regarding religious dress code, “The way we dressed in Muslim society, our children don’t want to dress like that.”

Nabila (33) echoed the thought:

*The U.S. values are totally different because if you compare with our religion. I don’t like the way kids these days, they move out very young. The way in America, see young kids get pregnant. This is becoming more normal for them; more of a culture here now. I am really scared about this thing. It is totally different than our religious values and our culture.*

**Theme 2: Language Barrier**

Six participants viewed language difference as a challenge for immigrant families. Maduri (39) said, “There is a difference between American culture and Bangladeshi culture. Here, there are many different religions, and languages. Sometimes we can express ourselves due to lack of English language skills.”

Rebecca (33) expressed that the U.S. is a large country with a diverse population that includes different cultures, different foods, different languages and people with different skin colors.

Sohela (33) said, “Here, I see difference between personal choices, thoughts, and
living style. Social structure is different than Bangladesh. Also here, we have language
difference.”

*Theme 3: Different Family Values and Social Norms*

Eight participants shared similar thoughts about family values in Bangladesh.
Although nine of the study participants are living here without their extended family, they
emphasized family bonding and relationship among family members as their core values.

One mother, Shirin (43) reported:

*Our family is very bonded together. Like our family respect the elders: our grandpa, grandma. We respect their words, their advice. We try to stay together. We take care of our elders, our parents, grandpa and grandma. And also in our country, we don’t call our elders like brothers, sisters we don’t call them by their name.*

Shamima (37) stated, “In Bangladesh, we live in joint family. We love each other--parents, relatives. We are very close to each other.” Maduri (39) shared, “We live together with our parents, brothers and sisters. We respect our elderly; older brothers take care of his younger siblings. Children take care of their parents. They live together.” One 42-year-old stay-at-home mom, Momena shared that she learned moral values from her extended family--since childhood they have to take care of others and help others. She is anxious that children who grow up here may become more self-centered.

Table 4.2

*Description of Themes of Differences between Personal Values and Values in U.S.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different Religion and Custom</td>
<td>Different religion</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different holidays</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different dress</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different food</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different life style</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Themes Related to Cultural Differences between U.S. and Bangladesh

Three major themes related to perceived cultural differences between U.S. and Bangladesh were identified. These were: support independency in U.S., dependency on parents in Bangladesh, and freedom and security in U.S. (see table 4.3). These themes also were emerged from the second guided question and related to our research question 3. How do they perceive U.S. values and Bangladeshi values?

Theme 1. Support Independency in U.S.

Seven out of 10 participants expressed that people are very independent in the United States. Children especially are encouraged to be independent at an early age. When they become 18, children are considered adults and can make their own decisions. Independence was viewed as positive and negative by most of the participants. Some of the opinions were reported in the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Barrier</th>
<th>Different language</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need ESL class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need bilingual services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different Family Values and Social Norms</th>
<th>Extended family</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Close relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take care of each other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love each other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect elderly</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not calling elderly person by their name</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teach religion /values at early age</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Examples used by participants under different themes of perceived cultural differences between personal values and values in the U.S.
Here, we see that people are more independent. In our country, kids live longer time with their parents. Here, we see children become independent when they are 18 and they have their own things, own values; have their things independently.

Shirin (43)

Bangladeshi value is that children stay with their parents even when get older. But here when children hit 18-plus, they make their own decision. They become independent. They get separated; make their own decision. Parents don’t have any rights over their kids’ lives.

Rubina (29)

Theme 2. Dependency on Parents in Bangladesh

Eight participants shared the same concerns that in Bangladeshi culture, people, especially children, are very dependent on parents even when they become adults. One mother reported:

Actually, in our country, we grow up to be depending on our parents. In the United States, they want their children to be independent. In Bangladesh, we want to stay with our children and be with our children as much as we can. In here, they want their children be independent, and live without their parents. In our country, it is different. They want their children be with them even though they are 30, 40.

Rebecca (33)

Shamima (37) shared:

Also here, our children feel lonely because both parents are working. They miss their parents. Here, parents teach their kids to be self-dependent. But our culture, it is not practiced. In our culture everybody wants to live together. Here, kids want to be alone; they only think about themselves.

Another mother, Sohela (33) said that they want their children to live with them as like other families in Bangladesh. She said, “We will try our best to keep them with us.”

Theme 3. Freedom and Security in U.S.

Four participants expressed gratitude toward U.S. values. They mentioned that
patriotism, the rule of law, freedom of religion, freedom of choice, respect, and services for children, women and disabled people are well established in the United States which make people come here to find a better and more secure life. Shamima (37) said, “There are some values really good here, such as environment, cleanliness, truthfulness, and freedom.”

“Here, everybody have choice. Here, I can try to follow my rules and regulations; nobody will interfere with anything. That means here, we have freedom of choice,” said Badhon (38).

Few participants stated that the U.S. values were personal choice, trustworthiness, and patriotism. They mentioned that here, we have freedom of religion. Nobody will interfere with anything. People can practice any religion they want. One 38-year-old mother, Roxana (38) shared that she is very impressed to see rule of law and services for children, women and especially disabled persons. She said, “They do take care of kids; respecting women, and disable people. Those … they provide good care of them. I love all those things. It is totally different from our country.” She also claimed, “I have never seen day care or special-care center for disable people in Bangladesh. I see in U.S. they provide every single thing for disable people. But my country, I don’t see that in Bangladesh. It is not that good.” She further expressed:

*The main thing is the U.S. laws. Specially, whenever people drive on the street They follow every single rule. When people drive, they are very careful; they follow every single rule because of the tickets. My people, oh! They never ever care about all those things. They are so violent. And there are more things I like, such as cleaning thing. When I drive, I see people keep clean everything, bus stoppage etc. People in my country, it barely happens.*
Table 4.3

*Description of Themes of Cultural Differences between U.S. and Bangladesh*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Independence in U.S.</td>
<td>Children are very independent</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-initiated</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children leave their parents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex education at early age</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children are self-central</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children make their own decision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teen pregnancy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents don’t have rights</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents live in senior center</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency on Parents in Bangladesh</td>
<td>Live with parents even adult age</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depend on parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People depend on others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not self-initiated</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom and Security in U.S.</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good environment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rule of law</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Truthfulness/</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect for children, women, and disable people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Services for disable people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patriotism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Examples used by participants under different themes of perceived cultural differences between U.S. and Bangladesh.

*Themes Related to Impacts on Family and Parenting*

Four themes were found in this area by analyzing guided question 3. Have cultural differences impacted your family relationship? This guided question was mainly related
to my research question 4 and 5 which asked that how do Bangladeshi mothers see these differences impacting their family relationship and their children or parenting.

Surprisingly, all mothers said that there is no impact on family relationship. In the question of impact on their children or parenting, eight mothers out of 10 said “yes” and only 2 mothers said “no”. Also all participants shared that they don’t have any concern with neighborhood environment, but seven out of 10 participants shared that they are concerned about school environment (see table 4.4).

Theme 1. No Negative Impact on Family Relationship

All participants stated that cultural differences did not have any negative impact on their family relationships. Besides, during interviews, most of the participants shared that a supportive spouse and close relationships are their major family strengths. All interviewees answered “No” on the question of impact on family relationship.

Theme 2. Challenge in Parenting

Although there were no concerns about family relationship with spouses or any other family members, most of the parents shared concern on child rearing and parenting. Eight participants said “yes” to the impact on parenting; only two participants said “no” on the same question. Mothers expressed that sometimes they face challenges guiding and controlling their children in the way they used to be raised and brought up in Bangladesh. The main problem they encounter was conflict between the American way and Bangladeshi way. Momena (42) shared that she thinks it affected only 20% on parenting. She said, “They want freedom and want to do something independently. They want to stay out with their friends. Here, lots of school programs are usually at night. They want to go there. It is really hard for us to allow them go out night time.” Another
mother of three children, Roxana (38) stated that although cultural differences still not impacting her parenting, she is worried about the influences her kids might have after going to high school. She expressed:

_I am really worried when my kids will be going to high school. I don’t want them to accept another culture than to follow our own culture. I don’t know; I might get problem with them. I will try my best to take care of them. Definitely we live in U.S.A., we are going to respect U.S. values definitely. At the same time, I want my kids to follow our culture._

According to another participant, Shamima (37):

_My son tells me, this is a free country; you can force me for anything; you can force me to eat fruits. So I don’t like that. Free country doesn’t mean that we cannot say anything to our kids. Parents want their children to have good academic success, good eating habits, but we cannot force them for anything! In our country, parents can force their kids, and they are not going to say anything. But kids here, they will talk back. It’s a huge difference. My husband wants me to let them be, but sometimes I cannot just do that._

Most of the participants shared the same concern that the longer their children stay in school, they learn different ideas from friends and see different cultural programs, which influences them tremendously. So, as parents, they cannot accept some behaviors and they want their kids to be like them.

_Theme 3. Anxious About School Environment_

Seven participants were concerned about school environments and their children’s adjustment to the other cultural influences from school. The other three participants shared that they don’t have concerns because they tried to accommodate both cultures and have not faced any complaints from school. A couple of them were concerned about the food serve in school. Rubina (29) expressed:
Yes, I do have concern. Especially, for foods in school. The food is being served by school most of the time are not halal (not maintaining Islamic food guidelines). Also, we try to follow our religious guideline, but most of the people’s culture is different. Sometimes, they don’t want to follow our culture. They get mixed up with other people. That’s my concern; they don’t want to listen to us.

Several participants expressed that they are anxious that their children might get influenced by other children because children want to follow their friends’ fashion, hairstyles, and behaviors. They might learn different culture, inappropriate manner and habits from school. Mothers said that they truly want their children to learn religious values and manners. As Sohela (33) said, “Yes, I am anxious all the time that maybe my kids would get influenced by other children. They learn different culture from school. I truly want them to learn our religion and culture. I don’t know how long that will last.”

Theme 4. Satisfied With Neighborhood Environment

Eight out of 10 participants stated that they do not have any concerns about their neighborhood. It is because they live in a Bangladeshi community where many Bangladeshi families live. According to them, they have opportunities to socialize with Bangladeshi people; they celebrate religious and cultural events together and help each other as needed. Their children also have the opportunity to socialize with other Bangladeshi-American children and get together for social events.

Nabila (33) reported:

No. It doesn’t have any effect because, I think where I live there are more of our cultural people. I mean more of the Muslim people. So every day they associated with their kind of people. Even though they have friends, those are non-Muslims, it doesn’t affect in a wrong way. It always has a positive result from it.

Another participant, Maduri (39) said, “But if we have any problem, we talk to our neighbors; they help us when needed. Yes, we live in Bangladeshi community. … All my
friends, neighbors go to the mosque together; pray together and have fun. We enjoy all
together.”

Table 4.4

*Description of Themes of Impact on Family and Parenting*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Impact on Family Relation</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge in Parenting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children want freedom</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents want to control</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children follow other culture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow their friends</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try to teach both culture</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious about School Environment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influenced by other children</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn different culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn bad manner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with Neighborhood Environment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live in Bangladeshi</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Examples used by participants under different themes of impact of cultural differences on family and parenting.

*Themes Related to Coping Strategies*

There were very visible similarities in this area among all participants. Four main themes were found around the question #4 What helps you cope that was related to the last research question regarding coping strategies Bangladeshi immigrant families use to overcome any challenges and difficulties. All participants expressed that celebrating
religious holidays and practicing religious rituals was their main coping strategy.

Communication and consultation with family members and friends were also mentioned as coping methods. Only few participants mentioned about limited use of professional help only regarding children’s health and academic support (see table 4.5).

**Theme 1. Practicing Religious Rituals and Holidays**

All participants shared that celebrating religious holidays such as Eid- ul-Fitr, Eid- ul-Adha, Ramadan fasting, prayers, and also celebrating Bangladeshi cultural events such as Bengali New Year, Independence Day, etc., helps them to forget that they live in America. They socialized with Bangladeshi friends and neighbors, go to mosques and pray together. They feel a connection with other Muslim and Bangladeshi people and share in their happiness. Attending religious events basically gives them relief and spirituality, and helps them cope with any difficulties. While Nabila (33) was explaining celebration of religious holidays, she said,

*It’s called Eid-ul-Fitr, then it’s Eid-ul-Adha. We also have Ramadan month. It is an Arabic month when we fast whole day. Our children also like to do that. So we take our kids to the mosque where they pray. So now they are so used to it that it is not a different culture any more. It’s not like they live in America. They are very familiar with their own culture.*

Rebecca (33) said,

*We are trying to cope with the new culture. Fifteen years ago, I was really shocked. Now I am adjusted in new culture, and new challenge. I try to be strong; Also I have strong faith. I also value our culture. I also follow my religious holiday, for example- in Ramadan, we fast together, go to mosque together, 300, 400 people pray together. We don’t have any problem practicing our traditional holidays so far.*

Sohela (33) said, “We go to mosque weekly basis. We celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha and Ramadan fasting.” She also answered in another question that they go to mosque,
study Quran and teach children to read Al-Quran (Islam’s holy book), and participate in different religious activities.

**Theme 2. Socializing and Communicating With Family and Friends**

Six participants out of 10 expressed that spending time and talking to their family members, friends, and neighbors were great help to cope with difficulties, especially with family- and children-related issues. Interestingly, when I asked another similar question “what helps you the most?” nine of them shared that talking to family members including parents, in-laws, aunts, husbands, friends, and neighbors help them the most.

Rebecca (33) shared, “I talk to my family, my parent, and my husband.”

Nabila (33) mentioned that she grew up in Bangladesh and England. Currently, her mom lives in England with her oldest brother. So she usually visits her mom and brother and spends time with them once a year. She stated, “The only thing I do, when I stressed with whole thing, with children and family, I go on a vacation. I go to my mom’s place. I go there every year. That’s help me a lot.”

Sohela (33): “I get advice from elderly person (family friend), religious leaders. Sometimes I talk to my husband. We seek advice from each other.”

**Theme 3. Consulting With Religious Leaders**

Three participants shared that when they feel stressed with family or personal issues they try to talk to a religious scholar or leader (Imam) if they are available. Some of them mentioned “elderly person, community leader, or aunty;” usually those persons were chosen due to their religious knowledge and piousness in the neighborhood and the community.

Momena (42) shared, “Sometimes I go to religious leader or Imam for suggestions
and advice.” Maduri (39) shared the same, “We parents, talk to each other. We go to mosque; talk to the Imam. If there is any problem, we try to solve by following their advice.”

**Theme 4. Using Limited Professional Help and Social Assistance**

Six participants shared that they did not use any professional help, and 4 participants informed that they did not use any social assistance for coping and getting support (see table 4.5). Four mothers shared that sometimes they talk to personal doctors, family counselors, or children’s doctors, teachers, or school counselors regarding any health- or education-related concern. Three mothers stated that they used childcare and parenting classes offered by the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, which was really helpful for them and their children. Badhon (38) shared, “When my first child was born, I went to WIC program. They helped me a lot. As a new mother, they helped me to understand how my baby was growing.” She also mentioned, “I used to talk to my teacher, and my kid’s teacher. I talked to them about how to raise my kids. Sometimes, I go to counseling, family counseling.”

Shamima (37) and Maduri (39) shared that they talk to their personal doctors regarding their children’s health and behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Themes of Coping Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating Religious Rituals and Holidays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Socializing and Communicating with Family and Friends

- Talk to husband: 4
- Talk to family members: 3
- Talk to friends and neighbors: 3
- Visit family members: 2
- Go out (park / shopping): 1

Consult with Religious Leaders

- Get advice from religious leaders: 3
- Advice from elderly person: 1

Use of Professional Help and Social Assistance

- Yes: 4
- No: 6
- Talk to family doctor: 2
- Talk to counselor: 2
- Parenting class by WIC: 2
- Child care by neighbors: 2
- Yoga class: 1

Note: Examples used by participants under different themes of coping strategies among Bangladeshi immigrant mothers.

Themes Related to Supportive Factors

The guided question 5. What are the supportive factors you use to overcome any difficulties found very similar opinions from all participants to question 4. This guided question has three sub-questions that included the most supportive factors, the areas Bangladeshi mothers need help, and the ways Bangladeshi mothers should be encouraged using supportive resource and professional help. Four major themes were found around this question (see table 4.6).

Theme 1. Family and Friends’ Support

Nine participants strongly mentioned family and friends’ support as their most effective coping method. They mentioned that family members including husband, children, parents and siblings, friends, and neighbors played an important role overcoming any difficulties. Maduri (39) shared that she grew up in a big family. After she got married and came to the United States, she still maintains good relationships with
her in-laws living in Bangladesh. She mentioned that in difficult times, she talks to her friends, her parents, and her in-laws. She also said that getting advice from her parents helps her the most.

In the word of another participant, Shirin (43):

_Sometime I go to Texas, Houston, to my brothers and sisters. I visit my family every year. I feel fresh when I visit them. Last year, I went to Florida with my brothers and sisters. We went to Disneyland and many different places. I felt fresh. It detoxified me._

Another participant, Rebecca (33) reported that her family was the most supportive factors. After she got married in Bangladesh and moved to the U.S., she needed to wait almost 8 years for her husband to come in the U.S. (she visited him every year). During this time, she lived with her parents and raised her two children without her husband’s support. Her parents and sisters were by her side to help her out with almost everything.

Nabila (33) reported that her husband is the most supportive factor. She also said,

_Then I would say my friends and family, because we all try to keep our kids socialize into our own events and culture. So it is easier for them. They used to the language also. They speak in own language. We try to keep them together, so they can speak their own language. So my friends help me a lot._

Participant, Badhon (38) said, “Sometimes my husband helps me. We talk to each other about our problem, our family situation and our economic situation. When I talk him about these things, I feel relief. Talk to my husband helps me the most.”

**Theme 2. Religious Support**

Five participants mentioned religious support as the most effective factor. Three of them stated praying to God helped them the most; two of them shared that talking to a
religious leader and getting their advice helped them, too. Sohela (33) expressed, “We also pray to God for good life.” Shamima (37) shared, “First of all, I pray at night to God for help. I think deeply at night. If I need to make a decision, I think and pray. I get good solution in the morning.”

**Theme 3. Need of Multi-purpose Community Based Organization**

All participants shared the same opinions when asked, “What the areas do you think should offer help?” All participants agreed that mothers need community-based organizations that would offer in Bengali classes such as education, parenting, health related or other issues. They need support for jobs, education, childcare, legal advice, etc. They wanted to have a place where they can get resources, assistance and support for all kinds of problems immigrant families face today. Nabila (33) shared:

*I think we should offer them, like a have a Bengali community or something like that here. Where parents can go and seek for professional help. Somebody can Speak Bengali and English, so it is easier for them to interpret. Some people have lack of communication. They don’t know what to say, so they stay home quiet. We should have Bengali community where they can get any types of help, baby sitting, if they need job, especially for Bengali women. For kid, like Bengali classes, Arabic classes; they should have something like that. So women going to get more confident. They will get more jobs. They need something like that.*

Badhon (38) said, “They need counseling. They need opportunity to talk about their problem. We need to help them to find job, encourage them for education.”

Shamima (37) reported:

*We should support for (financial) hardship. If they don’t have legal documents, we should help them to become legal or U.S. citizen. We can inform them about where they can get help and support they needed. When we have problem with our kids’ school, we can advice them about good school.*

Rebecca (33) shared the importance of social assistance and resources for Bangladeshi
families. She said that she regretted not knowing anything about community college or any other social assistance. If she knew about all that long ago, her life could be different now.

Theme 4. Need of Individual and Group Engagement

All the research participants emphasized on individual and group engagement for encouraging immigrant families to use social assistance, professional help, and other resources. Seven of them mentioned that we should discuss the need of getting help to mothers through individual interaction, or home-to-home service, in their own language. Three of them thought that we should explain and discuss benefits collectively; we even could include community leaders, teachers, or professionals in this encouragement process.

One participant, Nabila (33) suggested:

*What I think for those people, we need home-to-home service. Like maybe they have somebody coming home, speaking to them one-to-one. They feel confident. There will be somebody supporting them, somebody will help them. If they confident they will come out.*

Shirin (43) said:

*Actually, I see most of the mothers are not literate. They can’t help their children. Actually, parents need support of some kind, like educational support. They face so many problems. They need help from an institution, such as ESL class. Some school offer ESL class; we need that kind of help.*

Another participant, Sohela (33) stated, “We can talk to them in person. Sometimes we can ask teachers to encourage them. We can contact with educational professional and scholars to help us.”
Table 4.6

*Description of Themes of Supportive Factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family and Friends’ Support</td>
<td>Support from husband</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support from family members</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visit family members</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go out with family</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Support</td>
<td>Praying to God</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious leaders</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need of Multi-purpose Community Based Organization</td>
<td>Organization for job, education, training etc.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal Support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health insurance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes/ workshops</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need of Individual and Group Engagement</td>
<td>Home visits</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal contact</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion sessions/meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional advice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explain benefits</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide resources</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Examples used by participants under different themes of supportive factors and the areas needed help.

The final guided question was allowing for additional comments if the participants had anything else to say. Three of them had no other comments, but the other seven participants shared their opinion for Bangladeshi families. Their reported opinions (data) were considered relevant to this research question. Most of them stated the need to build a support system so they can help each other and assist each other when facing difficulties. Also they mentioned that they should spend more time with children and maintain their religion and culture. According to one participant, Maduri (39):
As a mother, we should support each other to raise our children. Due to cultural differences sometimes our children don’t want to listen to us. So we should spend more time with them. They get different cultural values; we want to pass them our cultural values, so that they can maintain our original religion and culture. We should connect with our community. We should make our community strong and help each other with education, health, medical and finance, etc. Sometimes, we need psychological support, we should support each other.

Another participant, Badhon (38) reported:

_In American, we are growing our family by our own. In Bangladesh, we grow up with lot of people. Here it is a little bit different. Sometimes, we are stressed with family situation that we need help. Also we need psychological support, because sometimes we are over stressed. We need help but we don’t know how to get help. That’s why we need to talk to each other. We need to go to the support center to get help._

Momena (42) expressed, “We should live a good life here. They should stop gossiping about other people. We should help each other; spread our helping hands to each other.”
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to use the qualitative research method to explore Bangladeshi immigrant families to find out their family strengths, perceived cultural differences and its impact on families and parenting, and their coping strategies.

Substantial answers were found from the research questions. The results of this study provided needed information on all six research questions. The totals of 22 themes were found based on 6 guided questions. From those results, the major themes were identified and discussed below that related to the study objectives and support the research questions. These are: themes related to family strengths (togetherness and unity of family, support from family, practicing religious and family values); themes related to cultural differences (interdependence vs. independence, language barrier, different religious and cultural norms); themes related to the impact on families and parenting (no negative impact on family relationship, challenge in parenting, and influence of school and neighborhood), and themes related to coping strategies (celebrating religious rituals and holidays, communicating and socializing with family and friends, and limited use of professional help and social assistance). Different family theories and its implications are discussed along with discussion of findings.

Discussion of Findings

The main research findings were divided and discussed into four categories that are related to the research questions and study objectives: Bangladeshi immigrant family strengths, perceived cultural differences, impact on family and parenting, and coping strategies among Bangladeshi immigrant families.
Bangladeshi Immigrant Family Strengths

This qualitative research on 10 immigrant Bangladeshi mothers identified several family strengths from their perspective. They are: (a) togetherness and unity of family, (b) support from family, (c) good relationships and affection, and (d.) practicing religious and family values. Among those findings, the researcher combined a few ideas and formed three main findings.

Togetherness and Unity of the Family

Togetherness or the sense of unity of the family was mentioned as a main family strength by all participants. Participants shared that being together as a family in the United States is their main strength. Due to immigration status and legal documents, there are many families facing challenges and having a difficult time being with their families. Therefore, being with the family members is viewed as a blessing within Bangladeshi families. According to the participants, togetherness is not only living together, it also means love and affection, spending quality time together, enjoying each other’s company, having close relationships among family members, and being committed to each other. These special qualities make their family special and strong.

Support from Family

Supports from family members, especially the husband, children, parents, brothers, and sisters were identified as another significant strength. Eight out of 10 participants viewed their husband as the major strengths of their family. They shared that a supportive and respectful husband, taking care of the family, finding time for children and spouse, being a good friend, and sharing thoughts and making decisions together make their family very special. Few participants shared that their parents and siblings also
provide help as needed. During any crisis or problem, they consult with their family members who may not live with them but still give emotional and financial support to them. According to Bangladeshi tradition, husbands, fathers, and sons play roles of protector or guardian (Lee, 1997). Usually, support from a family and relative is a well-known characteristic of Asian-American families. Although most of the Bangladeshi families are not able to live in an extended family in the United States, they tend to maintain regular communication with other family members living in Bangladesh or other countries and try to bring them here in any possible way. Even when older parents come to visit their children, they feel valuable while taking care of grandchildren and helping their children in their daily living (Hossain & Westhues, 2013).

**Practicing Religious and Family Values**

Religious and family values were identified as an important strength within Bangladeshi families. Participants stated that they emphasize their specific family values and religious values and culture, including practicing religious rules and regulations, respecting elderly and loving youngsters, showing good manners, being trustworthy and honest, and teaching children becoming good people. All participants shared that they want their children to learn Bangladeshi and Islamic culture and have a Muslim identity. For this reason, they celebrate religious rituals and holidays together to give their children a sense of identity. Consistent with previous literature, this study’s participants seemed to affirm their cultural and religious identities to maintain original values in the family. A study on 16 first-generation Asian-Indian mothers and fathers also identified the importance of engagement in cultural celebration and activities in retaining an ethnic identity (Inman et al., 2007). In that study, parents mentioned some strategies such as
modeling, maintaining religious and spiritual practices, going to temple with children, teaching prayers, observing religious holidays, and engaging in religious discussion to transmit their ethnic identity to their children. In this research, we found the same voice of Bangladeshi mothers. They shared that by teaching their children reading Quran, taking them to mosque, praying and fasting together, observing important religious holidays, teaching them family values such as respect, love, and being truthful, they are trying to maintain their family values and identity. Their efforts of maintaining religious and family values are considered family strengths.

Based on this research, three main family strengths were found: togetherness and unity of family, support from family, and spiritual well-being by practicing religious and family values. This finding is very relevant to previous research on diverse families and the Family Strengths Model. An International Family Strengths Model (Asay & DeFrain, 2012) was developed from an analysis of 18 different countries, which represented a diverse sample from much of the world. From this research and from other previous research (Asay & DeFrain, 2012; Xie, Xia, & Zhou, 2004), six major qualities were identified: appreciation and affection, commitment, positive communication, spiritual well-being, and the ability to manage stress and crisis. Also, my findings were closely related to strengths that others found in other Asian families. Olson, DeFrain, and Skogrand (2008), in their book Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths, discussed six major strengths of Asian-American families. They discussed that although Asian-American families are very diverse; they commonly share many of the strengths of other cultural groups. The six strengths are: strong family orientation, filial piety, high value on education, well-disciplined children, extended family support, and
family loyalty.

Xie, Xia, and Zhou (2004) revealed five family strengths: family support leading to achieving a renewed sense of family, contextual support from friends and family members, spiritual well-being, communication among family members, and balancing host and heritage culture (Do & Xie, 2013). This study results on family strengths were harmonious with some aspect of the Family Strength Model, Asian American family strengths, and Chinese American family strengths. Therefore, our findings of three main family strengths: togetherness or unity, family support, and practicing religious and family values are very similar to previous research.

*Family Strengths and the Family System Theory*

The findings of Bangladeshi immigrant family strengths are also supported by the family system theory. According to family system theory, family members are interconnected and operate as a group (Olson et al., 2008). The authors described that people are best understood by understanding their families. An individual’s change depends on how a family changes. One concept of system theory is that each family represents a special unity of its own (Boss, 2002). According to Boss (2002), the collection of family members is not only a specific number of people but the representation of relationships, shared memories, successes, failures, and inspirations. She explained that when there is a problem, the whole family becomes more than the sum of its individual parts, it takes an extra strength that works as a joining force that pulls the family in the same direction. That’s how interconnectivity, support, interaction, and unity make a family strong and ensure family growth and survival. Therefore, Bangladeshi families’ togetherness, sharing thoughts, supporting each others, and having a spiritual
well-being are the characteristics of their family system and that make their family special in their own way.

_Perceived Cultural Differences_

Major findings revealed in this area were: interdependence vs. independence language barrier, and different religious and cultural norms.

_Interdependence vs. Independence_

Most of the participants agreed that children in U.S. are more independent than children in Bangladesh. Most of the participants were anxious about their children becoming more Americanized and maybe leaving their parents when they grow up. They expressed that in Bangladeshi culture, children are dependent on parents—living together with parents even when they become adult or older. When parents become older, they depend on their children as well. So, the family members are interdependent to each other. Leaving elderly parents in a senior care center is considered an unethical and nonreligious activity. According to the study participants, the concept of independence has both positive and negative sides. Some respondents expressed that it is positive that children are very independent, taking care of themselves and making their own decisions; but at the same time, they worry that they as parents will lose control over children and cannot make any decisions for their children once they turn 18. This difference is becoming an issue among Bangladeshi families. According to the participants, children in Bangladesh take care of their parents, siblings, and needy relatives. Parents are responsible for raising their children until they become older and get a job, the same way children are responsible taking care of their parents in old age. Taking care of older parents and younger siblings is viewed as an ethical and religious obligation (Stevanovic,
A recent study (Stevanovic, 2012) on remittances and moral economies of Bangladeshi immigrants in New York found that Bangladeshi immigrants are morally obligated to send money to support older parents and their siblings. The study showed that taking care of family members’ financial needs referred to the concept of family etiquette or showing respect to elders as part of their family obligations.

The study results also consistent with previous studies on the culture of individualism and collectivism (Le & Stockdale, 2004; Munib, 2006; Taylor, Welch, Kim, & Sherman, 2007). The issue of individualism and collectivism within the Bangladeshi immigrant community in the host country may create psychological pressure (Munib, 2006). The term individualism applies to cultures that emphasize independence, a sense of personal identity, and competitiveness regarding self-achievement and social recognition (Triandis, Bontepo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988 as cited in Munib, 2006), in places such as: Sweden, Australia, the United States, and other similar Western countries. On the other hand, collectivism refers to the cultures where interdependence and interpersonal relationships hold great importance while personal ambitions and needs are less important than family, tribe, or community needs (Munib, 2006) such as in Bangladesh or other South Asian countries. In the Western individualistic culture, the self-view is the independent view; the collectivistic Asian cultures hold the self as primarily a relational entity interdependent of others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus et al., 1997 as cited in Taylor et al., 2007). Therefore, the finding of interdependence vs. independence as a perceived cultural difference is comparable to the study on cultural differences between East and West.
Language Barrier

The language barrier was also mentioned as a cultural difference between Americans and Bangladeshis. Several participants mentioned their difficulties were lack of English language proficiency. They said that due to their limited English language skills, they have difficulty helping their children with their homework, and communicating their medical needs to professionals. To overcome this barrier, they emphasized the need for an ESL class, and any social assistance and services be provided in Bengali for Bangladeshi parents.

This study’s result on language barrier is supported by the previous studies on Chinese immigrant families (Xie et al., 2004), Asian immigrant mothers and daughters (Usita & Blieszner, 2002), and on Bangladeshi immigrant parents living in Sydney, Australia (Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005). A qualitative research Xie, Xia, and Zhou (2004), identified several acculturation stresses that were viewed as barriers to adjusting to a new environment, and a language barrier at an early stage was one of them. Usita and Blieszner, (2002) results showed that mothers and daughters are concerned about their communication patterns and communication gaps due to limited English language skills. Bangladeshi immigrant parents face the same challenges because of language differences. Another study (Begum & Khondaker, 2008) results also indicated that parents’ lack of education and their inability to speak or fully understand English gives the children opportunity to take leadership roles over their parents. Price et al., (2010) indicated some barriers immigrant families face in the adaptation process, and a lack of fluency in English was one of them. Therefore, language barrier is considered a valid finding of perceived cultural differences among Bangladeshi immigrant parents.
Different Religious and Cultural Norms

Study results indicated that Bangladeshi immigrant mothers viewed different religious and cultural norms as a main cultural difference between the U.S. and Bangladesh. Participants are concerned about passing religious faith and values to the next generation. For that reason they are trying to maintain their customs and norms in the U.S. They are celebrating different holidays, maintaining Islamic dress code, praying, going to the mosques, fasting during Ramadan, and doing all of these together as a family to motivate and encourage their children to practice their faith. Previous research on Arab/Middle East Americans (Awad, 2010) stated that more Muslim traditions appear to be in conflict with American culture. Daily activities such as wearing hijab (head cover), praying, fasting, and having a strong religious faith could make it very difficult to accept American norms such as having more of the body uncovered, having a boyfriend or girlfriend, cohabitating, and marrying outside the faith.

In her discussion on Asian families, Lee (1997) noted that Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants view religion and family as the strong source of Muslim identity. Courtship and sex before marriage are strictly prohibited in Bangladeshi families. Bangladeshi children are highly restricted from marrying other races (Lee, 1997). Bangladeshi parents also think that after exposure to Western culture, it becomes a challenge for children to maintain their religious identity (Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005).

Impact on Family and Parenting

Three major findings in this area were found: no negative impact on family relationships, challenge in parenting, and influence from school and neighborhood.
No Negative Impact on Family Relationship

No participants identified a different cultural environment as having a negative impact on relationships between husband and wife. Surprisingly, most participants shared that their husband and his support are their family strength. Because no extended family members are helping here in the United States, both parents share responsibility to take care of children, oversee their children’s education, and any other family matter. Most of the participants are housewives that maintain household works and family needs. But they expressed happiness to see their husbands as a main provider, and considered them as a main supportive factor.

Previous study (Aston, Hooker, Page, & Willison, 2007) on Bangladeshi and Pakistani women in U.K. revealed almost similar information regarding responsibility for domestic duties and the influence of husband. In the question of caring and domestic responsibilities, study revealed that many women particularly those with higher education or qualification shared domestic responsibilities with their husband, while others those were housewife held more traditional views of women as homemaker.

No participants shared any family conflict between husband and wife, or between any other family members. The reason could be the nature of Asian families’ characteristic- keeping family matter within the family. Previous studies indicated that there are a number of challenges holding back South Asian women from disclosing their family problems. These challenges include: social isolation, fear of deportation, language barriers, financial dependence on husband, and fear of losing children (Angew, 2000; Guruge, 2010; King, 2006; Merali, 2009; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Shirwadkar, 2004 as cited in Aujla, 2013). Other challenges that might prevent them from opening up
regarding a family matter include: patriarchy, a lack of information and services, and a lack of support from their own community (Ahmed et al., 2009 as cited in Aujla, 2013).

The current study’s participants did not mention any family conflict or issues that might increase stress in the family system except child rearing and parenting concern. Future research is definitely needed in this area.

*Challenge in Parenting*

Difficulty with parenting and raising children in the United States create challenges among Bangladeshi parents. According to the mothers, children here want more freedom, want to be like their friends, and want to go out with peers whereas parents want control over their children, want their children to be like them, and maintain good manners and academic success. Therefore, these challenges sometimes provoke pressures within the family.

Asian parents traditionally practice authoritarian parenting styles and emphasize specific values and goals for their children (Inman et al., 2007). Asian parents try to monitor their children and their behaviors out of fear of losing their children and ethnic identity (Inman et al., 2007). South Asian parents perceive their children’s autonomy negatively and they may interpret this as their failures as parents (Sharif, 2009). In discussing South Asian parents, Ross-Sheriff, Tirmazi, and Walsh (2007) stated that South Asian immigrant parents encounter difficulties in parenting their children in the United States due to different filial and cultural expectations. They mention that South Asian parents share some common concerns such as loss of children to U.S. culture, loss of parental authority over children, including disciplining them; and loss of authority of select children’s mates (Baptiste, 2005 as cited in Ross-Sharif et al., 2009).
Begum and Khondaker (2008) and Khondaker (2007) stated that Bangladeshi parents practice strict parental behaviors. Bangladeshi parents strictly regulate and monitor children’s activities, especially relationships with peers. Begum and Khondaker (2008) also stated that Bangladeshi parents try to socialize their children to follow the rules as the parents establish them. They mentioned that due to the conflicting nature of disciplining children in the United States and Bangladesh, parents may have difficulty using effective parenting strategies that they are used to, to guide their children.

*Cultural Influence from School and Neighborhood*

All participants were from the Little Bangladesh area of Los Angeles, and all had been living in the Bangladeshi neighborhood for quite a few years. All participants shared their satisfaction with the neighborhood environment. The reasons for their satisfaction are: children are able to socialize with other Bangladeshi children on a daily/weekly basis, families can celebrate any festivals together with other families and friends, and parents can get help when needed, such as dropping off or picking up children from school or child care. One mother shared that although her children socialize with Bangladeshi children, they do not have any problem with other children in the neighborhood.

However, several mothers expressed anxiety about the influence from school. They were worried that their children might learn different cultural values from schools and the people who attend there. Children spend most of the time at school and want to follow their friends’ fashions, hairstyles, languages, etc. Bangladeshi community members expressed fear about their teenagers becoming “Americanized” (Begum & Khondaker, 2008). A study on immigrant Bangladeshi communities in New York City and intergenerational conflict (Begum & Khondaker, 2008) pointed out the similar
findings that Bangladeshi parents prefer their children to associate with only children from the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh). They stated that Bangladeshi parents do not allow their children to socialize with Hispanic or African-American children because they feel that when their children associate with other cultural groups they will behave, dress, and use vulgar language in the same way.

**Bangladeshi Families in the Context of the Ecological Theory**

According to Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory, five levels (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) of environment continuously influence individuals. A person is influenced by each level of the system, which is distinct but interrelated. Each member of each Bangladeshi family is influenced by these systems. There is no doubt that the way family relationships, values, and interactions influence children or adults in the particular family, in the same way schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and mosques influence them. Freedom and security in the United States help them to be more optimistic about their lives, but at the same time perceived cultural differences, fear of losing identities, and fear of losing children create a tension within the family system. When governments provide necessary help in considering and understanding the families’ value systems, the families will adjust to a new environment more effectively.

This study tried to examine how macrosystem positively and negatively affected the microsystem. Like other immigrants, a Bangladeshi family’s home environment, living situation, family relationships, school, workplace, ideology, society where they live in, agencies, governments, different programs such education and health definitely influence an individual or a family. Finally, with the influences of all the systems and
through the historical time period or life span (chronosystem), an individual or an entire family changes its perception and life dynamic. For example, Rebecca (33) shared how the environment and the interaction with different systems had impacted her perception. She shared that when she came here with her parents as an immigrant, she was 18 years old. She was the oldest daughter of three daughters. Her parents didn’t let her go to school because they feared she would lose their religious values. She finally started going to school after she got married. Although her husband was living in Bangladesh, he encouraged her to learn English and go to school. Now, she and her parents have realized that due to a lack of knowledge and resources, she couldn’t get a higher education. She wants her children to be more educated and succeed in their lives. Recently, Rebecca finished her Associate degree in Child Development and is working as a preschool teacher assistant. Her workplace, teaching experience, training, college classes, and interaction with co-workers helped her reshape herself and find different strengths. She is now determined to help her children follow religious values and American cultural values so that they can adjust here very well and maintain their ethnic identity at the same time.

All participants believe that their relationships with their husband and children, togetherness, beliefs, and cultural orientations have positive impacts on their children’s futures. Although there are several difficulties and differences, they will overcome any challenges through their family support and the positive use of provided resources. Definitely, the success of family life is related to the condition of the larger society (Pearson, 2010). Survival of the family depends on how successfully families are in responding to the changes in society (Pearson, 2010).
Coping Strategies among Bangladeshi Immigrant Families

Three main findings were revealed in this area. These are: celebrating religious rituals and holidays, socializing and communication with family and friends, and limited use of professional help and social assistance.

Celebrating Religious Rituals and Holidays

Celebrating different religious rituals, events, and holidays was identified as the major coping strategy among Bangladeshi parents. All the participants expressed that attending religious programs, going to the mosques, celebrating holidays, and praying and fasting together give them a sense of relief and unity. A couple of parents expressed that they pray to Allah (God) for solution and mental peace. They also mentioned that because of they live in a Bangladeshi community, they have the opportunity to enjoy all the major holidays together with families and friends. Previous research on mental-health issues and coping strategies indicated similar results to this study. Studies with Asian American (Koss-Chioino, 2000 as cited in Dow & Woolley, 2011) reported that the majority of families used religious counselors, traditional healers, and family members rather than mental health professionals. Many existing research indicate that people from various culture and religion use spirituality as a powerful apparatus for their well-being (Dow & Woolley, 2011). A study on South-Asian-American women (from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal) conducted by Liang, Nathwani, Ahmed, and Prince (2010) identified three types of coping: problem-solving coping (PSC), social support network (SSN), or avoidance coping (AC). This study found that as age increased, the use of PSC strategies decreased. The study explained that as South Asian American women
become older, they may turn to their religious faith and use more SSC strategies than the first generation. The first-generation women are more likely to use coping strategies that are common to their country of origin such as reading religious books, relying on family support, etc. In contrast, second-generation South-Asian-American women may seek help from other professionals because of their educational and socialization experiences (Liang et al., 2010).

**Socializing and Communicating With Family and Friends**

Nine out of 10 participants used socializing and communicating with family members and friends as their coping strategies. During any difficult situation they talk to their husband, get advice from family members, especially parents or older siblings, and visit family members. Most of the study participants live in apartment buildings surrounded by other Bangladeshi families, so when they face any problem, they share with close friends, elderly neighbors, or religious leaders. If the problem is very personal, they might share with immediate family members or religious leaders.

**Using Limited Professional Help and Social Assistance**

Using professional help is the least likeable coping method among Bangladeshi immigrant families. The few mothers who shared their participation in professional care said it was usually limited to their children’s health and education. The few mothers who stated using Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs used them for parenting classes related to neo-natal and infant care. Research conducted on South Asian parents and their ethnic identity and parenting stress (Sharif, 2009) stated that when Asian parents seek counseling, it is typically related to ethnic identity and parenting stress (Almeida, 1996; Juthani, 2001; Segal, 1991; Sharma, 2000 as cited in Sharif, 2009). The study
proved that South Asian mental health patients tend to be reluctant to seek out professional help due to cultural stigmas and an emphasis on keeping family matters within the family (Almeida, 1996; Segal, 1991; Sharma, 2000 as cited in Sharif, 2009). Another study (Aujla, 2013) revealed that social stigmas, gender roles, and children’s well-being are individual factors could be considered primary reasons for not seeking professional help.

*Coping Strategies and the ABC-X Model*

Reuben Hill’s ABC-X model presented the scientific inquiry of family stress (Boss, 2002). His stress theory focused on several independent variables: A for the event or stressor, B for family resources or strengths, C for perception or meaning of the event, and X for the degree of stress or crisis. According to the ABC-X Model, families’ responses to the X (stress and crisis) is based on two significant factors: a family’s perception or definition of the event, and family resources. Family resources and perceptions of the situation influence how the family will view stress and how it will manage its family balance. Based on these concepts, Price et al. (2010) described two factors that influence a family’s ability to respond to stress and maintain family balance. They are: family integration, and family adaptability. Family integration refers to family strengths, such as unity within the family, common interests, and affection for each other. Family adaptability is a family’s ability to change and negotiate family roles and responsibilities.

Per the study participants, their families’ integrations and strengths (togetherness, unity, affection, trust, and support) made them strong and helped them to cope and adjust to the new environment. Relationships with family members, relatives, friends, and
neighbors helped them to cope with different stressful moments. The study (Price, et al., 2010) suggests that if they use available resources and respond to the change individually and collectively, they will be able to manage the crisis and stress more effectively.

Bangladeshi families’ coping strategies are considered resources; however, they need to be more familiar with other resources. If we could provide federal, state, and community resources for them; if different agencies would develop more intervention programs such as support groups, mental health services, workshops, and educational information designed for families, it would be the best way to help them cope with stressful situations. Bangladeshi immigrant families’ coping strategies in the context of the ABC-X Model could be explained by with by the figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Bangladeshi Families’ Stress Model Based on ABC-X Model

Figure 5.1 shows Bangladeshi mothers’ perception, and resources may define their stressful events and situation which directly influence their stress level. This figure is developed based on the ABC-X Stress Model by Boss, 2002).
Limitations

This thesis will add to the understanding of the Bangladeshi-American families; however, certain limitations to the study exist.

- All the participants were from Los Angeles area, and most of them have been living in Los Angeles for more than 10 years. So, their experiences may vary from other participants who live in different cities, where they have limited access to a Bangladeshi community and their original cultural activities.
- This study used qualitative methods, which might limit generalization of the results to the general public or other Asian ethnic groups.
- This study included a small sample size of 10 mothers that would not represent other Bangladeshi immigrant mothers in the United States.
- Interviews were conducted only with mothers to view their perspective; in the future, similar investigation should include both parents to compare their perceptions.
- Interviews were recorded using audiotape that might impact participants’ willingness to be open and expressive.
- Cross-translation was not being used in the data analysis process.

Implications

The findings have implications for professionals working with minority ethnic groups and showing interest in multicultural counseling. Community social workers, mental health professionals, and policy makers should identify and re-examine common assumptions about this ethnic group. They should evaluate and improve parenting programs and other intervention programs for the Bangladeshi community designed to
maintain their cultural identity. Considering cultural differences, issues, coping strategies and supportive factors, policy makers could provide community-based intervention programs in English and Bengali. Also, parents, in partnership with local government and non-profit organizations, could establish for Bangladeshi parents a parental support group to provide necessary assistance in arranging resources such as mental-health services and parenting classes or workshops. Several recommendations arose from the guided question, “Which area do you think need help?” such as the need for multi-purpose community-based organizations, individual and group engagement (support groups, one-to-one service), bilingual services and resources, and community and professional engagement. These would help encourage families to step forward and acquiring positive adjustment behaviors.

Future Research

Although results of the study provide some indication of Bangladeshi family strengths, their coping strategies, and significant influences of cultural differences on family life, findings may be examined in the future through replication in different parts of the research. This research was an attempt to explore Bangladeshi immigrants. It could be extended to find out more insight of family relationships, parenting styles, communication patterns and positive-adjustment behaviors among Bangladeshi immigrant families living in different parts of the United States and other Western countries. The themes from the study’s results may not allow more comprehensive understanding of family relationships, or family conflict or parent-child relationships, but it gives us an idea of Bangladeshi family dynamics and perceptions toward adjustment behaviors and supportive factors. Future research should include both parents and their
coping strategies to examine how they maintain their adjustment behaviors in the acculturation process.

Conclusion

Bangladeshi immigrant families are less known among many previous studies on Asian American families. Although Bangladeshis are a small ethnic minority group, this population is rapidly growing in some areas of the United States. In recent years, the establishment of a “Little Bangladesh” in Los Angeles demonstrates that they are a strong immigrant group. Struggling with different challenges in new an environment, Bangladeshi families are trying to keep their kinship and close family bonding together by focusing on their children’s education as their survival dream in America. For that reason, this qualitative study explored Bangladeshi immigrant families to identify their family strengths, perceived cultural values and its impact on family and parenting, and their coping strategies from the perspective of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant mothers.

The study results provided substantial information for the research questions. From the participants’ perspectives, identified family strengths are: togetherness and unity of family, good relationships affection, family support, and practicing religious and cultural values. Parents reported several perceived cultural differences between the U.S. and Bangladesh such as different religion and custom, language barrier, different family values and social norms, security and freedom in the U.S, and the idea of interdependence vs. independence. Participants stated no negative impact on family relationships when discussing the impact of cultural differences on family and parenting. However, they mentioned that it has impacted their parenting and parent-child relationships. Parents also expressed their concerns about the influences at school but not with their Bangladeshi
neighborhoods. They said that they feel comfortable and satisfied living with other Bangladeshis because of the support and cultural orientation they receive. The coping strategies found in this group were: religious rituals and holidays, socializing and communicating with family members and friends, and limited use of professional help and social assistance. The respondents had a tendency not to use professional help. They only would use professional or other help when the issues relate to their children’s health, education, or their parenting. All findings are closely similar to previous studies on Asian-American or South-Asian-American families. The group of parents who participated in this study mentioned no conflict or family problems, unlike other Asian groups. Their identified family strengths, and coping strategies might have positive impact on family relationships.

The findings suggest social workers, mental-health providers, and policy makers should re-examine their values and belief systems, and provide intervention programs designed for this ethnic group. Governmental and non-governmental agencies should provide bilingual English and Bengali services to overcome difficulties and strengthen families. For this purpose, more research on family and marital relationships, mental health, parent-child conflict or relations, and transmitting ethnic identity are needed. The future research must include both parents, not just mothers, and children with different religious backgrounds.

Despite the limitations, this study will help us understand Bangladeshi immigrant families, their cultural and religious values, family characteristics and strengths, and coping and adjustment behaviors. People from all around the world come to the United States for freedom, security, and a better life. They struggle but, finally, find ways to
adjust in their own unique ways. I hope that the diverse populations will make the United States more colorful and attractive. This research was a small effort toward that dream.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Interview Questions (English)

I. Demographic Information

- Age: ________________
- Education: ____________
- Occupation: ____________
- Family size: ____________
- Number of children: ________________  Age of the children________________
- Number of years in the United States ________________

II. Guided questions

1. What are the major strengths of your family?
   a. What do you like about your family?
   b. What makes your family special?

2. Have you encountered cultural differences between your personal values and values in the U.S.?
   a. What are the U.S. values?
   b. What are the Bangladeshi values?
   c. Do you see any difference in the new environment?
   d. Do you maintain your original religious and social values/customs in U.S.? If so, how?

3. Have cultural differences impacted your family relationship?
   a. Has it impacted in your parenting?
   b. Do you have any concern about your children and their adjustment in school and within neighborhood?

4. What helps you cope?
   a. Do you and your family celebrate traditional/ religious holidays/events?
   b. Do you seek professional help?
   c. Do you use other resources or social assistance?
   d. What other sources do you use?

5. What are the supportive factors you use to overcome any difficulties?
   a. What type of support help you the most?
   b. What are the areas you think should offer help?
   c. How can we encourage families to use supportive resources and professional help?

6. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
সাক্ষাতকারের প্রশ্নাবলী

১. জনতাত্ত্বিক তথ্য

- বয়স-----------------
- শিক্ষা----------------- 
- পেশা------------------ 
- পরিবারের আকার----------
- ছেলেমেয়ের সংখ্যা------------------ছেলেমেয়ের বয়স------------------
- কত বছর ধরে আমেরিকায়------------------

২. দিক নির্দেশিত প্রশ্নাবলী

১. আপনার পরিবারের প্রধান শক্তিসমূহ কি?

* আপনার পরিবারের কোন বিষয়টি আপনার পছন্দ?

* কিসে আপনার পরিবারের বিশেষতা?

২. আপনার ব্যক্তিগত মূল্যবোধ এবং আমেরিকায় মূল্যবোধের মধ্যে কোন রকম সাংস্কৃতিক ভিন্নতার মুখোমুখি হয়েছেন কি?

* আমেরিকান মূল্যবোধগুলো কি কি?

* বাঙালী মূল্যবোধগুলো কি কি?

* নতুন পরিবেশে আপনি কি কোন ভিন্নতা দেখতে পান?

* আমেরিকায় আপনি কি আপনার মূল ধর্মীয় এবং সামাজিক মূল্যবোধ মেনে চলেন? যদি তাই হয় , কীভাবে?
৩. সাংস্কৃতিক ভিন্নতা আপনার পারিবারিক সম্পর্কে প্রভাব ফেলেছে কি?

* এটা কি আপনার সন্তানি লালন পালনে প্রভাব ফেলেছে?

* স্কুলে এবং প্রতিবেশীদের সাথে মানিয়ে নেয়ার ব্যাপারে আপনার ছেলেমেয়েদের নিয়ে আপনার কি কোন উদ্বেগ আছে?

৪. মানিয়ে নিতে কি আপনাকে সাহায্য করে?

* আপনি এবং আপনার পরিবার ঐতিহ্যগত/ধর্মীয় চূড়ান্ত/উৎসব উদযাপন করেন?

* আপনি কি পেশাগত সাহায্য চান?

* আপনি কি অন্য কোন সাহায্য অথবা সামাজিক সাহায্য ব্যবহার করেন?

* আর কি কি সাহায্য সহযোগিতা আপনি ব্যবহার করেন?

৫. কোন সমস্যা থেকে উদ্ধারে আপনি আর কোন কোন সহায়তা উপাদান ব্যবহার করেন?

* কোন ধরনের সহায়তা আপনার জন্য কোন সহায়ক হয়?

* কোন কোন যোগ্য সহায়তা থাকা উচিত বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

* সহায়ক তথ্য এবং পেশাগত সাহায্য ব্যবহারের ক্ষেত্রে কীভাবে আমরা পরিবারসমূহকে উৎসাহিত করতে পারি?

৬. আপনি কি আমাকে আর কিছু বলতে চান?
APPENDIX B
IRB Approval Letter


Re: “Strengths, cultural differences, and coping strategies among Bangladeshi immigrant families in the United States” Research Protocol

Dear Mr. Rahman:

Enclosed is a copy of the cover sheet of your approved Human Subjects Protocol Form. Please note that approval for this project will expire on 12/31. If your project will extend beyond this date, you must contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects at least one month prior to the expiration.

If you have any questions, call this office at 818-677-2901.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Selvon, Compliance Officer
On behalf of
The Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects

Suzanne Selvon, MPA
Compliance Officer
Research and Sponsored Projects
California State University, Northridge
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330-8232
Phone: (818) 677-1391
Main Office Phone: (818) 677-2901
Fax: (818) 677-4691
suzanne.selvon@csun.edu
University Hall 165
Departmental Mailcode: 8232

On 1/17/13 12:05 PM, "csun.edu" & "csun.edu" wrote:

This email was sent from "IRB@CSUN.EDU" (IRB@CSUN.EDU).

Reply to: IRB@CSUN.EDU

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APPENDIX C

Human Subject Protocol Approval Form

Student Researcher
HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTOCOL APPROVAL FORM
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHridge

1. Title of research: Strengths, cultural differences, and coping strategies among Bangladeshi immigrant families in the United States.

2. Principal Investigator: Roleya B. Rahman
   Major or Department: Family Studies

   Email Address: roleya.rahman214@mycsun.edu

4. Co-Investigators: 1. Jerry Ann Harrel-Smith, Ph.D. Student: Faculty: ○
   2. Ana Lecero-Liu, Ph.D. Student: Faculty: ○
   3. Uma Krishnan, Ph.D Student: Faculty: ○

5. Name of Faculty Advisor: Jerry Ann Harrel-Smith, Ph.D. Faculty Adviser: ______

6. Projected Dates of Data Collection:
   Begin Subject Recruitment/Data Collection: 12/1/12. End Data Collection: 2/1/12

7. Course prefix and number for thesis/grad. project 696C. Course title: Thesis

8. Check one: ○ Unfunded □ Funded Name of Funding Source: Date (to be) submitted: ______

9. History of Protocol: ○ New □ Continuing (Previous Approval Date: ______

10. Existing Data: Will this study involve the use of existing data or specimens (Data/specimens currently existing at the time you submitted this project)? Yes □ No ○ If Yes, attach documentation indicating the authorization to access the data if not publicly available and if accessing from an agency outside of CSUN.

11. Subjects to be recruited (Check all that apply)
   a. ○ Adults (18+ years)
   b. Minors specify age
   c. ○ Cognitively or Emotionally Impaired Persons
   d. ○ CSUN Students
   e. ○ Others (describe) ______
   f. ○ Using existing data, no subjects will be recruited

12. Data will include (check all variables that apply): You must specify all of this information in the Project Information form.
   a. □ names of people
   b. □ email address
   c. □ street address
   d. □ phone numbers
   e. □ age
   f. □ gender
   g. □ ethnicity
   h. □ marital status
   i. □ income
   j. □ social security number
   k. □ job title
   l. □ names of employers
   m. □ types of employers
   n. □ physical health report
   o. □ Other, specify: education, occupation, number and age of children, number of year living in U.S.A.,

13. Will subjects be identified by a coding system (i.e., other than by name)? Yes □ No ○
14. Is compensation offered? Yes □ No ○
15. If yes, describe (e.g., gift cert., cash, research credit). $15 Target Gift Card
16. Number of Subjects: 10

CSUN Office of Research and Sponsored Projects
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, Revised 10/06
17. Method of recruiting (elaborate in Section 2 of Project Information Form): Flyer, email, word of mouth

18. Will there be any deception (that is, not telling subjects exactly what is being tested)? YES ☐ NO ☑ (Provide justification for deception and explain how subjects are debriefed in Section 2 of the Project Information Form)

19. Potential Risk Exposure (Check all that apply): ☐ Physical ☐ Psychological ☐ Economic ☐ Legal ☐ Social ☐ Other, describe: N/A

20. Data Collection Instruments (Check all that apply)
   a. ☐ standardized tests
   b. ☐ questionnaire
   c. ☑ interview
   d. ☐ other (specify)

21. Recorded by (Check all that apply)
   a. ☑ written notes
   b. ☑ audio tape
   c. ☐ video tape/film
   d. ☐ photography
   e. ☐ classroom observation

22. Administered by (Check all that apply)
   a. ☐ in person (group setting)
   b. ☑ in person (individual)
   c. ☐ telephone
   d. ☐ electronic mail/website
   e. ☐ mail
   f. ☐ other (specify):

23. Findings used for (Check all that apply)
   a. ☑ publication
   b. ☐ evaluation
   c. ☐ needs assessment
   d. ☐ thesis/dissertation
   e. ☐ other (specify)

24. Are drugs or radioactive materials used in this study? YES ☐ NO ☑
   If yes, list the drugs or radioactive materials used in Section 1 of the Project Information Form and provide a detailed description of each, with justification for its use.

25. Are any medical devices or other equipment to be used in this study? YES ☐ NO ☑
   If yes, describe in detail the medical devices or equipment to be used in Section 2 of the Project Information Form.

26. Did you attach a copy of any questionnaire(s), survey instrument(s) and/or interview schedule(s) referred to in this protocol? YES ☑ NO ☐

27. Is a letter of permission for subject recruitment attached (if recruiting from an agency outside of CSUN)? YES ☐ NO ☑

28. SIGNATURES: Refer to page 1, General Instructions, Letter D, before signing.

[Signatures]

FOR SACPHS AND RESEARCH OFFICE USE ONLY

[Signatures]

CSUN Office of Research and Sponsored Projects
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, Revised 10/06
APPENDIX D

Adult Consent Form (English and Bengali)

California State University, Northridge
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECT

Title of Study: Strengths, Cultural Differences, and Coping Strategies among Bangladeshi Immigrant families in the United States

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM
Researcher:
Rokeya B. Rahman
Department: Family and Consumer Sciences
Telephone Number: 213-840-5425
Email: rokeya.rahman.214@my.csun.edu

Faculty Advisor:
Jerry Ann Harrer-Smith, PhD
Executive Director,
Child and Family Studies Center @ CSUN
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences
California State University, Northridge
18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge, CA 91330
Telephone # 818-677-3131

PURPOSE OF STUDY
The purpose of this study is to explore Bangladeshi immigrant family strengths, perceived cultural differences, and their coping strategies in the United States from the maternal perspective.

SUBJECTS
Inclusion Requirements
You are eligible to participate in this study if you...
• are at least 18 years of age or older
• mother of children ages between 5-18
• Muslim
• immigrated from Bangladesh at least one year ago
Exclusion Requirements
You are not eligible to participate in this study if you
- are not 18 year of age or older.
- are not Bangladeshi immigrant
- are not living in U.S for at least one year.
- are not Muslim and a mother of children between the ages 5-18

Time Commitment
This study will involve approximately one hour of your time.

PROCEDURES
You will be asked some demographic questions by the interviewer; then you will participate in
an in-depth interview (approximately 1 hour). Interview will be recorded using audio recording
and personal notes due to the credibility of data analysis. Also recording will be helpful for inter-
translation, review specific words, and maintaining proper concentration between the interviewee
and the interviewer.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts
associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS
Subject Benefits
You will not directly benefit from participation in this study.

Benefits to Others or Society
Studies indicated that immigrant families encounter various challenges that affect their family
functioning, relationships, and mental health. Through this study, we will explore Bangladeshi
immigrant families, their strengths, perceived cultural differences, and coping strategies. The
study also will find out what type of strategies and supports do they need. The study results will
be used to develop an intervention program to assist Bangladeshi community to overcome any
challenges and to increase awareness of positive adaptive behavior which will help them to
strengthen their family relationships.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT
Compensation for Participation
You will receive $15 dollar Target gift card for participation.
Costs
There is no cost to you for participation in this study.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES
You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately. The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Subject Identifiable
• All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed at the end of data collection.

Data Storage
• All research data will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected
• The [audio/video recordings] will also be stored in a secure location; then transcribed and erased at the end of the study.

Data Access
The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention
• The researchers intend to keep the research data for approximately 3 years and then it will be destroyed.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you are unable to reach a member of the research team listed on the first page of the form and have general questions, or you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT
You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

I agree to participate in the study.

_____________________________  ____________________________
Subject Signature                    Date

_____________________________
Printed Name of Subject

_____________________________  ____________________________
Researcher Signature                Date

_____________________________
Printed Name of Researcher

C.S.U. Northridge
Human Subjects Committee
Approved: 2/12/12
Valid After: 2/12/17


Kulika Roygiri

Ganesh College

Bangladesh National University

The Department of Economics

Professor M. H. S. Islam

Faculty Chairperson

Student: University of the People

Department of Economics

Project Title:

To study the impact of economic growth on economic development in Bangladesh

Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the relationship between economic growth and economic development in Bangladesh. The analysis will be conducted using econometric techniques and statistical methods. The results will be presented in a comprehensive report, which will be submitted to the Bangladesh Economic Journal.

Keywords:

Economic Growth, Economic Development, Bangladesh

References:


• Awareness of the specific purpose of the study.
• Submission of informed consent to the investigator.

**Time Commitment**

This study involves an estimated commitment of 1-2 hours per participant.

**PROCEDURES**

Participants will be asked to complete a survey and participate in an interview. All data will be collected in a secure and confidential manner. Participants will be compensated for their time.

**RISK AND DISCOMFORTS**

No significant risks or discomforts are anticipated. Participants will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**BENEFITS**

Participants will receive financial compensation for their participation.

**ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION**

Participants have the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT**

An explanation of the compensation for participation will be provided to participants.

**COSTS**

No costs are associated with participation in this study.

This study is approved by the Ethical Review Board and is conducted in accordance with all relevant ethical standards.
Page 3 of 4
আর্থিক ফেজের গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে চাই হয়।

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Page 4 of 4
APPENDIX E

Flyer (English and Bengali)

Be a part of CSUN Family Studies Research On Bangladeshi Mothers!

Are you a Bangladeshi Muslim Immigrant?
Are you a mother of children ages 5-18?
Have you been living in the United States for at least 1 year?

If so, you are invited to participate in a research study and receive

$15 Target Gift Card.

The purpose of the study is to explore how Bangladeshi mothers perceive their family strengths, cultural differences, and cope with their difficulties. The research will be conducted by Rokeya Rahman (CSUN graduate student). Participants will be asked several open-ended questions in a face-to-face audio-taped interview at their homes or other convenient places. Please be a part of this research and share your thoughts and experience.

For more information please contact
Rokeya Rahman
213-840-5425, 213-381-6316
rokeya.rahman.214@my.csun.edu

This study is approved by IRB, California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330. Phone: 818-677-1230
বাংলাদেশী মায়েদের উপর CSUN’র পরিবার বিষয়ক গবেষণায় অংশ নিন!

আপনি কি বাংলাদেশী মুসলিম অভিবাসী?

আপনি কি 5-18 বছর বয়সী সাতান স্ত্রীর মা?

আপনি কি অন্যতম: পত্ন এক বছর বয়সী যুবকে কমবাস করছেন?

যদি তাই হয় তাকে, আপনি এই গবেষণা কর্মে অংশ নিতে এবং 8 ১৫ টাইমেটে নিফট কর্ড এক্স করার জন্য অমরিট।

এই গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য হচ্ছে বাংলাদেশী মায়ের জীবনে তাদের পরিবারবাদ রক্ষা, সাংস্কৃতিক বিড়াল উপাদান কর্মক এবং কল্যাণ পরিব্রাহ্মণের সাথে জীবনে তারা বাপ বাড়ির জন্য তার 
অনুসন্ধান করা। বেকেমা বহামান (CSUN গ্রামুড়টি মাজার) এই গবেষণা পরিচালনা করবেন।

অংশগ্রহণকারীদের আগের রাক্ষিত বিএম সুবিদার খানে মুম্বাল্ক বসন অতিক্রমে প্রশ্ন চিহ্নের উপর বিড়াল খোলামোল মশুম করা হবে। অনুরূপ পূর্বক এই গবেষণায় অংশ নিতে আপনার জিহাত এক্স জিহাত শেয়ার করুন।

অধিকার তথ্যের জন্য, অনুরূপ পূর্বক কোয়ালামোল করুন:
বেকেমা বহামান
২১৩-৮৪০-৪২৫, ২১৩-৬৮১-৬৩১৮
rokey.rahaman.214@my.csun.edu
এই খানে বাম বসন, নোমোইলিই ডেই ইয়ুনাজমাটি, নরিক (CSUN)
১৬১১ নলিভ ডিপ, নলিভ, ডিই ৯১৩০০
ফেল ৪১৩-৬২৫-৩৩১ কর্ক অমরিট।

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