

Role of the workplace in Bangladesh-born migrants' participation in Australian society

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to show how the kitchen workplace functions as a critical stepping stone or learning space that helps migrants (in this case Bangladesh-born migrants) to participate in the socio-cultural and economic milieu that distinguishes their new homeland of Australia. I have drawn upon Bangladeshi migrants' narratives to detail the accounts of those who have experienced and are currently experiencing this often obstacle prone trajectory. The participants in this study entered Australia on student visas that allow them to stay in Australia temporarily during their period of study. Those holding student visas, unlike other visa holders, cannot access many of the social benefits and services the government extends to Australian citizens and permanent residents. Thus, in the process of maintaining their visa conditions, student visa holders are solely responsible for their tuition fees, living costs and other expenses during their period of study in Australia. The participants in this study, in their attempts to contend with what seems an endless number of obstacles that confront them upon arrival in their new homeland, endeavour to earn sufficient money to support their daily requirements and study expenses. Often by accessing friendship networks, some take part-time paid work in restaurant kitchens. For many, the camaraderie they share in the kitchen workplace plays a major role in their participation process. This thesis, as well as detailing the participants' pre-migration expectations and aspirations, focuses on their settlement experiences. The participants' narratives challenge some of the extant assumptions held and espoused by migration studies and popular opinion.

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Introduction

The focus of this thesis is upon a specific segment of South Asian migration, i.e., Bangladeshi migration to Australia. This study aims to show how increasing numbers of Bangladesh-born international students seek work in commercial kitchens during their period of temporary residency in Australia. Their work and the sense of comradeship they enjoy in these kitchens - which represent a specific space in the host country - combine to provide the newcomers with a comforting sense of working in a 'home away from home'. I list these Bangladesh-born migrants' narratives under the following two headings: (1) the kitchen's role in helping them to overcome the various obstacles they encounter upon their arrival in Australia; and, (2) the kitchen's role in assisting them to participate and settle permanently in Australia after completion of their studies. In the following sections I explore the commercial kitchen as a distinctive form of space. I will explore aspects of space, allocated tasks, workflows and hierarchy in the kitchen workplace. Bangladeshi international students often start their kitchen careers as entry position workers (as kitchen hands). Over time, and as their experience widens, they ascend the various steps of the hierarchical pyramid that determines their work status, pay structure and prospects of advancement. Being part of a team not only helps them to survive in Australia financially; as well, it facilitates their access to the wider host society. In effect, they broaden their involvement with society after entering the workforce.

By taking the workplace as the central focus, this thesis looks at how and in what ways a specific group of migrants pursue their migration expectations and trajectories, in the process becoming part of the South Asian diaspora. As Clarke et al. (1990; 2009) state, the key variables which condition the outcome of South Asian migration are: the nature and period of migration; the size of the migrating group relative to others comprising the receiving society; the internal complexity of the South Asian group; their consolidation in enclaves or otherwise; the fission or fusion of South Asians in the subsequent social organisation, cultural practice and quest for political power; the politico-legal approach of the dominant community toward the incorporation of South Asians; and, the social distance between the South Asians and other segments of the receiving community (Clarke et al. 1990; 2009, p.24).

Similar to other groups of migrants, South Asians' development of communities outside of the home country encompasses five stages (see Speckman, 1965): 1) immigration (causing social disarray and anomie); 2) acculturation (a reorientation of traditional institutions and the adoption of new ones); 3) establishment (growth in numbers, residential footing and economic security); 4) incorporation (increased urban social patterns and the rise of a middle class); and

5) accelerated development (including greater occupational mobility, educational attainment and political representation) Clarke, 1990; 2009, p.3).

Exploration of South Asian migration patterns reveals that the first phase of South Asian mass migration was attributable to imperialism. Large numbers of South Asians were transported as indentured labourers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to various colonised regions around the world.

The second, current phase has occurred since early this century during which persons of South Asian descent have travelled freely and in increasing numbers to western countries and the Middle East to undertake occupations of all kinds - unskilled, skilled, entrepreneurial and professional (Clarke et al., 1990, 2009, p.3).

In contrast to these demographical and sociological overviews, sketches and studies, this thesis narrates the dynamic and colourful stories of individuals. As Das Gupta et al., state:

The narrativizations of diasporas ... highlight the diverse ways in which migrants themselves, the nations in which they have settled, and the nations of origin represent diasporic experiences (Das Gupta et al., 2007, p.137).

People leaving their countries of birth to settle in a new country is not a new phenomenon in human history. In their paper titled “Migration and Sustainable Livelihoods”, McDowell and De Hann claim that sedentary patterns in society are not the norm, and that migration is the rule rather than the exception (1997, p.1). In times of socio-economic hardship, rural dwellers move to urban areas. Some migrate for short periods of time, others move hoping to stay in their new destination permanently. Migration studies thus face considerable complexity in their attempts to gather together the various forms of migration under one overarching ‘umbrella’. The commonly posed question in migration studies is: What motivates people to migrate? There is, of course, no common answer.

Not just in popular media but also in various disciplines in academia, one often finds a tendency to classify reasons for migration under terms such as economic, socio-political and/or environmental. As a result, migration studies frequently fail to delineate clearly the details of the problems that impact upon potential migrants’ grassroots reality. In particular, they often fail to identify the trigger factors that prompt people to decide to leave their home countries. Some academics criticize this practice claiming that scholars are utilising their own selective frameworks and approaches to understand issues surrounding migration. Jackson, who summarizes these limitations, claims that “most media reports, academic studies, and novels

of the educated elite” have “ambitions to elevate generalizations about big social issues.” Thus “it is difficult to get an idea of what life is like at ground level or to get a feeling for the experiences of the people who live there” (Jackson 2013a, p.5).

As a way of remedying the problem, Jackson proposes the practice of narrative ethnography, arguing that “...empirical and ethnographic documentation can speak against the social and discursive violence that creates inequalities of presence ...” (Jackson, 2013a, p.5).

Scope of this research

This research is based upon actor-centred grassroots lived experiences, aims to give voice to a specific cohort, i.e., Bangladeshi migrants, their aspirations, enthusiasm, energy, and the successes and failures some experience during their journey towards participation in Australian society. The focus of this research is upon their personal narratives, on how they express in their own words their feelings, understanding and emotions. As well, the research aims to highlight their successes in establishing themselves in their new homeland.

The thesis includes stories of how and why these individuals chose to migrate to Australia, how they dealt with challenges upon their arrival, and how they try to make things work to their own benefit. It will provide insights into how best to guide migrants through the transitional period that is a vital part of their participation journey. In addition, the study will provide insights into the reality of adjusting to, coping with and finding one's way in a host country culture. Such insights, as I will show, may serve to critically inform Australian government policy on integration. The key question that triggered my adoption of a narrative approach to the participants is as follows: Why explore narratives when seeking to understand migrants' lives? As Vanseme states 'Personal narratives have an underutilised potential to capture the variety of migrants' experiences and the complexity surrounding their decisions to migrate' (1995, p. 412). The main purpose of this research is to explore Bangladesh-born migrants' lived migration experiences. The thesis' exploration centres upon the pathways that many international students traverse in their efforts to obtain permanent residency. As well, the role of the workplace in their participation journeys is explored. For the purposes of detailing the lived experiences of my participants it is important to adopt a narrative approach for as de Fina states:

The prototype of narrative, both in literary and conversational domain, is the story. Stories can be described not only as narratives that have sequential and temporal ordering, but also as texts that include some kind of rupture or disturbance in the normal course of events ... (2003, p.12).

Martin (2016), drawing on examples from IT organizations, demonstrates the importance of narratives as tools for shaping new staff members' understanding of an organization. In similar vein, grassroots stories describing Bangladesh-born migrants' experiences of Australian society can help to shape the understanding of future migrants to Australia.

The adoption of a narrative approach is not a recent phenomenon in contemporary migration studies. Barthes states '...[N]arrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there

has never been anywhere, ...people without narrative. [A]ll classes, all human groups have their stories, and very often these stories are enjoyed by men of different...even opposite cultural backgrounds' (1975, p. 237). Over the years narrative has been employed by many academics to explore various aspects of migrants' life experiences. As Tyldum observes: "If we want to understand why they [migrants] act as they do, we need to listen to their own accounts of their experiences and their choices" (2014, p. 60). Migrants' narratives help us to understand the real picture of events on the ground. In effect, migrants' stories about their immigration journeys (the latter being critical to the migrants' successful establishing of themselves in a new homeland) are frequently about struggles and the strategies they employ in their endeavours to cope.

Shanthi Robertson and A. Runganaikeloo observe '[T]he uncertainty and precariousness inherent in the student-to-migrant process create significant tensions in the daily lives of most student migrants...Yet, uncertainty also resulted in some strategic responses to mitigate risk and attempts to transform waiting time into opportunities' (2014, p. 208).

If their everyday lives in a new country are to be successful, the immigrants must negotiate, learn, and find ways of adapting to a new way of life. They must make certain that they have an accommodation, that they can feed themselves, and can look after their partners and/or families. Over time they develop their own agency through their everyday practices. It is imperative that they find ways of participating in/integrating with daily life in their new homeland.

Thus, as many scholars have found, migrants' personal narratives - as a powerful tool - will go some way towards understanding the reality at ground level. As Hannah Arendt writes:

When one tells stories ... one is simply giving voice to what is on one's own mind or in one's own interests. One is realizing or objectifying one's own experiences in ways that others can relate to through experiences of their own. Stories are like the coins of the realm, the currency we implicitly agree to make the means of exchange and, as such, a means of creating a viable social world. Stories disclose not only just 'who' we are but what we have in common with others, not just 'who' we think we are but what shared circumstances bear upon our lives and our fates (in Jackson 2013, p. 15).

Researching the lived experience of Bangladesh-born migrants

...[A]nthropologists struggle not only to suspend their own worldviews and enter into the life-worlds of others; they struggle with the gap between haves and have-nots, either by seeking to use their knowledge to ameliorate the conditions under which the other lives or by bearing witness in their writing, to the humanity of the other.

(Jackson, 2013 p. 200).

I, the author of this thesis, came to Australia as a migrant. My life as a migrant started in 2005 at the age of 25 when I first arrived in Australia on a student visa. My wife and I took the initiative to migrate from Bangladesh to escape what seemed to us an endless struggle, in the main attributable to limited resources and opportunities. The endless difficulties we encountered hindered the establishment of our family life in Bangladesh. After graduating with a BA degree in Anthropology from the University of Dhaka in 2003, I worked for a non-government organisation (NGO) known as “The Hunger Project-Bangladesh”, a unique organisation that trains and mobilises Bangladeshis living at grassroots level.

My NGO work equipped me to appreciate and understand various aspects of the grassroots people’s lived reality in Bangladesh. My previous study in Anthropology and work with the Hunger Project made me keen to attain a higher degree in Anthropology. However, the salary that the NGO paid me was hardly sufficient to support myself. So, after I got married I started looking for something better, i.e., a job that would pay me enough to support my family and my higher study. At that time, many of our friends were moving abroad following their graduations, hoping to secure a better standard of life in various western and European countries. On a cold and windy night in November 2005, I travelled with my wife to Australia, imbued with high hopes of building a better future in this new land.

Upon our arrival in Australia, we were immediately astounded by the intricacies of Sydney’s international airport, its highways, and the huge number of cars on its roads. We were tired: it had been a long journey. But, we were excited and relieved to feel that we had finally arrived in Australia. Our migration to Australia brought my dream closer to reality, of attaining a higher degree in Anthropology. However, almost 10 years would pass before I could start my higher degree research at one of Australia’s renowned universities. During the interim, I gained some excellent work experience which will prove valuable to my chosen field of study. At the time of our first entry into Australia as international students, our plan was as follows: for the first couple of years my wife would be the main applicant and would continue her studies. During this period, I would work to support her study, and to earn our living expenses. We thought that after the completion of her studies, my wife would be able to get a job. Then I could undertake a higher degree in Anthropology at one of Australia’s universities.

To this end, shortly after our arrival in November 2005, I started work in Bondi Icebergs dining room and bar (one of the celebrated restaurants in the Bondi beach area, located in Sydney's eastern suburbs). Since then I have worked continuously in the hospitality industry to support our dreams and aspirations to stay in Australia permanently. When I first joined the team working in the Icebergs kitchen, approximately fifteen Bangladesh-born migrants were working there at the time. All of them were studying in various educational institutes, pursuing their dreams to establish themselves in Australian society. Not only did I find Bangladeshis working for Bondi Icebergs: the Bondi beach area is crowded with restaurants and coffee shops. Over a period of time I met many Bangladesh-born migrants, some at the bus stop at Bondi beach, some at the train station at Bondi junction. As we were all working in hospitality and following the same trajectory, I found it very easy to start a conversation with them.

In effect, my work in the hospitality industry has allowed me to establish a network that I often allude to as 'my new kinship in Australia'. My innate anthropological curiosity prompted me to record many experiences, conversations and observations of members of this cohort's everyday lives as they navigate their individual migration journeys. This thesis thus reflects my personal interest in and knowledge of the role of workplace gained through my last ten years of ongoing hands-on kitchen work experience.

The aim of the research is to highlight the role of the restaurant kitchen as a workplace, and how it contributes to Bangladesh-born migrants' participation in Australian society. Between 2005 and 2017, I spent most of my time working in Iceberg's kitchen variously as a kitchen hand, a store-keeper and a cook. Between 2014 and 2016 I worked in another restaurant kitchen in Bondi Beach. In October 2016, I joined the staff of Macelleria's newly-opened branch in the Inner West Sydney suburb of Newtown.

Over a period of ten years, in those three kitchens I have observed more than a hundred Bangladesh-born migrants and witnessed their varying journeys from temporary migrant to permanent settlement in Australia. I have listened to their narratives about how they arrived in Australia on student visas, how they got their jobs in kitchens, why they chose the hospitality industry, their plans to stay in Australia permanently, their studies, what obstacles they faced on arrival, and the methods they employed to counter said obstacles. They shared with me their tears, sadness and struggles as well as the joy of success, their sense of pride on completion of their studies, the relief of getting a new job, the excitement of buying a property, and the equal

portions of love and stress experienced when getting married. Taken together, their lived experiences, their narratives and case studies combine to constitute the focus of this research. However, on reflection I feel that my own experience and insight as a migrant could bring unwanted bias to my findings, by extension obfuscating both the research design and the research methodology. Much of the research data is about ‘my mates’, the friends I have made over a long period of time in workplaces. The trust we have established allowed me to analyse their trajectories from the day of their arrival until they settled here permanently. Their journeys have seen them complete their studies, establish strong ties with the host (local) society, and become part of the daily fabric of this country. I engaged in and overheard conversations during coffee and lunch breaks, spent time talking about migration during walks to the bus stop, had phone conversations during holidays and enjoyed many casual catch-ups. After listening to my own personal narrative, people felt comfortable sharing their dreams, their concerns, aspects of their faith, their hatred, and their feelings of love and disgust.

For the purposes of collecting data for this research, I have focused on a smaller group of respondents. I spoke to and observed thirty-five people during a period of eight months from December 2016 to July 2017, thirty-three of whom had entered Australia on student visas. For the purposes of my thesis I conducted a number of one-on-one interviews using open-ended questions: they responded by narrating their stories. In a bid to gain insight into the long process of their participation journeys I selected three groups of participants. The first group included those who had migrated to Australia within the previous six months. They had fresh memories of their dreams and aspirations, and of all the obstacles they encountered upon their arrival. The second group included people who had worked in kitchens for more than one year, often in various positions. This group of people brought to the fore many details about the ways in which the kitchen helped them to feel part of Australian society. The final group of participants had left their kitchen jobs upon completion of their studies. They are now employed in various occupations, drawing higher salaries and feeling more settled than before.

On several occasions, I spoke with the kitchen bosses and with restaurant managers to elicit information about their perspectives regarding Bangladesh-born migrants. Rather than making notes using pen and notebook during interviews, I audio-recorded the conversations. After returning home, I listened to the recordings carefully to assist me to make transcripts. Listening to the audio recordings and writing up the transcripts gave rise to many supplementary questions. I then often. Therefore, I chose to locate this study firmly within a theoretical framework to ensure its objectivity. Additionally, to avoid any pressure on the participants to feel obliged to agree to participate in the interviews, I chose only those who voluntarily agreed

to share their stories. I made it clear to all my participants that they had full right to withdraw from the interviews without any consequences and assured them of full confidentiality and anonymity. I have not added any information to this study which in any way could either harm or embarrass them. The relevant literature that I have read contains facts, data, various theoretical approaches, and discussion especially of international migration and the process of integration in the host country. Much of the literature comprises studies undertaken in the USA, Canada and the UK.

The sensitivity of this research involved respect for privacy, respect for the workers' voluntary participation and right to confidentiality. Before conducting my study interviews I obtained approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee, Macquarie University.

Chapter 1

Growth of the Bangladesh-born migrant community in Australia

Following my arrival in Australia from Bangladesh in 2005, I was interested to know more about my fellow Bangladeshis who were already domiciled in this country. Among the many aspects of this young community that were of interest to me, the most noticeable was the rapid growth in numbers of migrants. The expansion of this community has had an impact upon the host society in both visible and invisible ways. On 13 May 2017, I visited Sydney's Olympic Park¹. I had planned to attend the Boishakhi Mela, an event organised by Sydney's Bangladeshi community. At 4 p.m. that day, when I alighted from the train at the Olympic Park Station, I could immediately sense the presence of the Bangladesh-born migrants, in the train, in the station and in the surrounding area. Almost all were all wearing traditional Bangladeshi festival costumes.

Friends and family members were speaking to each other in Bengali (louder than everyday conversations in this public space). I enjoyed what were to me perfect festival surroundings, i.e., the colourful banners, the billboards, and the signs written in the Bengali language, all designed to welcome the people and celebrate the event. As I walked closer to the main event area, which was inside the large stadium in Olympic Park, I felt myself starting to excitedly react to the presence of fellow community members. There were approximately 150 stalls selling various traditional Bangladeshi goods including clothing, Bengali language books, and many other products. Almost every stall was playing DVDs and cassettes of Bengali music, seemingly in competition with the main function sound system. Many famous Bangladeshi artists and performers had travelled all the way from Bangladesh to join in and perform live music at the Boishakhi Mela.

As time passed, people kept arriving to join the festivities. By 7 p.m. the Mela area was crowded, the scene of a huge gathering. It was the first time I had joined a huge gathering of my community people since I left Bangladesh in 2005. I literally felt that I was home again, enjoying a Mela somewhere in a Bangladeshi village. As the night proceeded, we were treated to fireworks and a laser light show. The fireworks lit up a wide area across the sky, to the joy of all creating a spectacle that resembled glittering gems sparkling and crackling. I found the

¹ Sydney Olympic Park is a large sports and entertainment complex in western Sydney. It is also known as Olympic Park but officially named Sydney Olympic Park.

expansion of the twinkling fireworks across the sky's midnight-blue canvas very symbolic. It symbolised the expansion of the Bangladesh-born community in Australia. One of the organisers told me that the event attracted more than 12,000 participants. The numbers should not have surprised me: the community did not take long to become noticeable in Australian society.

When I first arrived in Australia in 2005, the total number of my community members stood at 9,050; but, among them only 6,110 had settled in NSW (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs: 2006). Now, at one gathering alone, they can gather together 12,000 community members at one venue. This suggests that they have not only grown in numbers but in capacity as well, making themselves visible in this 'nation of migrants' (Phillips et al., 2010, p. 2). Last year during the month of Ramadan², I watched an online Bangladeshi television channel. Seated at home in a suburb of Western Sydney, I was watching a channel screening a report on Muslims breaking their fasts. The scene depicted a busy suburban street; interestingly, it was not a Bangladeshi street but a street in a Sydney suburb called Lakemba. Large numbers of Bangladesh-born migrants live there these days. If the television reporter had not mentioned the name of the suburb I could have mistakenly assumed that it was a street in Dhaka city³.

I have visited Lakemba a few times: I recall a street located next to the Lakemba railway station. On one side of the street is a row of shops; most are full of Bangladeshi grocery products, traditional foods, and ethnic clothing. The shopkeepers all use the Bengali language. Interestingly, I found a Chinese shopkeeper chanting a few words in Bengali, keen to attract the street's foot traffic. It is unarguably a Bengali culture-dominant street. The shop signs are written in Bengali, and there is Bengali scrawled on posters stuck on the walls and lamp posts. According to a recent Census, 5,050 Bangladesh-born migrants live in this suburb (ABS, 2016a). It is interesting to note that in 2001, the census listed the total number of Bangladesh-born peoples living in NSW at 6,110. However, over the last 15 years the community has grown immeasurably. Today, one Sydney suburb is home to 5,050 people. In the 2105 NSW state election, the Liberal party appointed a Bangladesh-born migrant a local candidate for this area⁴.

² Muslim's holy month, when adherents fast from sunrise to sunset.

³ Capital city of Bangladesh. During the month of Ramadan, street food and food stalls are commonly seen in Dhaka city for people to break their fasts.

⁴ Mr Rashid Bhuiyan is a business man who owns a restaurant. I worked in the hospitality industry during his journey to settle in Australia.

Just recently, on 26 January 2018, Bangladesh-born community members residing in my neighbourhood in western Sydney organised a picnic for those living in the area⁵. Unfortunately, I could not attend; however, over 600 residents attended. I still remember when I first moved into this neighbourhood in 2008. At that time, only a few Bangladeshi families lived in the surrounding suburbs. Clearly over the last decade, the numbers of Bangladeshis residing in this neighbourhood have grown rapidly.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the censuses are useful sources for obtaining an overall picture of immigrant numbers, and for tracking the growth in numbers of Bangladesh-born migrants living in Australia. In 2001, the community was still quite small with a total number of 9,050 Bangladesh-born migrants living in Australia. However, the Census conducted in 2016 revealed that currently 41,237 Bangladesh-born migrants reside in Australia as opposed to the approximately 28,000 recorded in the 2011 census. Between 2006 and 2011, the numbers showed a 72.7 per cent growth rate. Recently, Bangladesh has been included in the list of the top five countries (i.e., Nepal, Pakistan, Brazil, India and Bangladesh) whose peoples are establishing themselves in Australia (ABS, 2016b).

The discussion presented above suggests that expansion of the Bangladesh-born immigrant community in Australia is likely to continue. I will suggest that (metaphorically speaking) every unique individual (in this case the Bangladesh-born migrant) is like a free-swimming piece of coral which keeps attaching itself on a daily basis to the major or host colony just below the surface (suggesting Australia). As the coral grows and expands it starts to cluster, to resemble the shape of a reef (the growth of the Bangladeshi community). Their numerical significance is evident only in censuses or in statistics. However, those individuals actively engaged in shaping the size of the community have little space in which to share their unique stories, in which to engage in conversational story-telling about their settlement journeys. Yet, their experiences will undoubtedly prove valuable for many prospective migrants who are eager to take the same path in the future, imbued with a strong determination to make Australia their new homeland.

⁵ Mount Druitt and Rooty Hill are two neighbouring suburbs in Western Sydney. I (the author) have lived in the area since 2008 and recently observed the emergence of a Bangladesh-born migrant-run community organisation in the area; for example, Mosques (prayer facilities), a pre-school, co-operatives and grocery shops.

Student visas: a popular migration pathway for Bangladeshi migrants

In her study of “The politics of temporary migration in Australia”, Oke (2012) stresses that the student visa has become a significant component of Australia’s migration programme. As Birrel and Perry state: “Many international students harbour ambitions to seek permanent residency in the host education nation on the completion of their studies” (in Ruhanen, Robinson and Breakey, 2013, p.2).

Over the last 10 years in Australia, I have met many Bangladesh-born migrants who have selected study as their pathway to settling in Australia. Evidence suggests that student visas represent a popular pathway for Bangladeshis who seek to settle here permanently. As the 2016 Census reveals, approximately 26,689, - that is, more than half of the total number of those who enter on student visas - are young, aged between 25 and 44 years. For a variety of reasons, members of this relatively youthful cohort are choosing Australia as their new home. Ikbāl, with reference to Bangladeshi students notes that:

During the 2004-2009 period, many arrived in Australia on student visas and later, a substantial part of these arrivals decided to stay on by obtaining ... Permanent Residency (PR) visas (2014, p.25).

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection (Government of Australia 2017) revealed details of these young migrants’ visa status between 2008 and 2015. They show that every year on average 2,219 Bangladeshis enter Australia on temporary student visas. In other words, approximately 84 per cent of the total Bangladesh-born migrants enter Australia each year on student visas.

It is important to note that student migration visas only allow international students to stay in Australia temporarily; that is, only for the period of their studies. Moreover, as temporary migrants, international students are excluded from access to the basic social welfare services that Australia offers its citizens. Also, during their stay in Australia, they must observe certain conditions. For example, international students cannot work more than 40 hours per fortnight during the time of their studies. They must remain enrolled in a registered course, and they must put in place adequate arrangements for their health insurance. In addition, students must have sufficient financial capacity to support their studies during their stay in Australia (Government of Australia 2017a).

These somewhat stringent visa conditions strongly suggest that international students will inevitably face a series of bureaucratic obstacles when attempting to settle in Australia

permanently. Notwithstanding, the perceived opportunities available to them in Australia encourage many Bangladesh-born migrants to use student visas as a means of obtaining permanent residency. This journey, from temporary migration (on student visas) to permanent residency is rarely straightforward and often far from comfortable. It is a journey that requires young hopefuls to broaden their involvement, i.e., attempt to integrate with the prospective host country's wider society. There is no doubt that many migrants face difficulties when attempting to participate in Australian society. A migrant's journey is a diverse phenomenon clearly shaped by the migrants' agency and the obstacles they face during the process of participation.

Later in this chapter I will elaborate more fully: (a) on the reasons underpinning many Bangladesh-born migrants' decisions to migrate to Australia; and, (b) on the difficulties and issues many faces following their arrival in Australia. Specific focus is upon migrants' narratives of their lived experiences, some of which explicate the role of the workplace in alleviating the stress of the challenges that many students from Bangladesh encounter during their participation journeys in Australian society.

Reasons for migration

As earlier stated, my wife and I decided to migrate to Australia in 2005. However, as Stark writes:

It is not exclusively the individual [who] decides about migration. Rather, decisions are taken in the context of the family and the household ... [Migration] is seen as a form of portfolio diversification by families (see McDowell and de Haan, 1997, p.7).

In my case, my family supported my proposal to move to Australia. Both families (both mine and my wife's) invested money in us to help us apply for the student visas that would allow us to enter Australia. However, it was not our families who took the decision that we should move to Australia. The point I am trying to stress here is that had we migrated influenced solely by family, individual decisions and aspirations would have risked being nullified. As McDowell and de Haan observe: "...Migration studies tend to isolate individuals as rational decision makers in explaining migration..." (1997, p.3).

Further to the above discussion, Tyldum notes that: "...[The] current literature on migration presents migration as economically forced" (2014, p.68). One of the problems that arises when discussing reasons for migration from the economical view point is that the trend assumes that potential migrants would have preferred to stay in their home countries had the latter offered a better standard of life. McDowell and De Haan (1997), who draw a link between migration and sustainable livelihoods, consider migration a viable strategy, particularly for rural people facing economic hardship. Garner and Osella (2003, p. vii) observe that the extant literature often presents migration as 'a direct corollary of processes of modernisation'.

However, the literature does not answer the following question: why is it that only some (not all) people facing economic hardship choose to migrate? And, if migration is only about escaping the hardship that many people face in their home countries, why is there still huge mobility in the world's developed countries wherein people are considered to enjoy a better standard of life? Another contradiction lies in the traditional way of identifying the reasons for migration; that is, the assumption that potential migrants have no other choice but to migrate. According to this assumption, migrants are invariably victims of push-pull factors, not the active agents of their migration journey.

In the process of viewing from these perspectives, human agency risks being overlooked. Most importantly, people's capacity to overcome predicaments lacks glorification. The migrant is not the main subject: other influences and issues require investigation. However, it is the

migrants themselves who personally experience the various stages and process of migration at grassroots level; therefore, every migrant's story is shaped by his/her own capacity to deal with the frequently challenging situations they face during their relocation trajectories. In a bid to understand the basic reasons for their migration, I asked my interviewees to delineate the causal factors that prompted their migration, the links between these factors and other events in their lives, and to detail their experiences in chronological order to justify the reasons for their relocation to Australia. One participant nominated the influence of friends as the trigger factor that motivated him to migrate.

Prior to coming to Australia, I [had] been living with my parents. I had completed my graduation from a well reputed private university in Bangladesh. I had started work in a bank as a provisional officer (entry level position). It was a quiet routine life for me. I was enjoying new experiences at work [and] helping my father in his business. At that time, I often used to play cricket in our local sports ground where many other boys of various ages used to play with us regularly. Harris vai⁶ was one of them; during that time, he was preparing to migrate to Australia. He would often share with us his everyday experiences of the necessary procedure of applying [for a] visa for Australia, the opportunities and prospects in Australia. Harris vai was granted a student visa to enter Australia. After coming to Australia, he used to keep [in] contact with many of us over the phone. He used to talk to us about life in Australia, describing the shopping malls, transport system, air conditioning almost everywhere. At that point, pictures of Australia were a dream for me to migrate⁷.

(interview, Macelleria's Bondi branch, Sydney, 29.11.2017)

Another participant in this study gave a similar account of his decision to migrate to Australia. However, in his case he was motivated by someone who had not personally migrated but managed an education centre⁸ which helped students to prepare for and pass the benchmark English language test which is crucial to applying for visas in Australia or any other English-speaking countries. In my participant's words:

After graduating Bachelor of Business Administration from a university in my hometown, I was confident of getting a job in the bank sector or corporate sector. At that time, upon completion of their study, many of my year mates take some additional

⁶ Vai means brother in the Bengali language. It is very common in Bangladesh to hear people calling each other vai or apu (sister). We Bangladesh-born kitchen workers address each other as brother/ vai.

⁷ At this point in Masud's interview, his wife said that Masud often phones Bangladesh and spends hours talking to his friends.

⁸ Since I left Bangladesh, I have witnessed the trend among university student to study English in various institutions. Many institutions these days have branches across the country and often have links to foreign universities (The author).

English language course to accelerate their English skills. Thinking that skill will help me to better perform in [a] job, I also joined with them to learn English. I met an English teacher over there who inspired his students to try to explore abroad for further study and to find better opportunities. He emphasized that many of his former students are now living in many Western countries including Australia. He informed [me] that many of his students had now established themselves and many [were] on their way to [establishing themselves] in these countries permanently after completion of their studies. He also opened the opportunity by saying if we want we can speak to them over the phone about going abroad. Most of my friends could not continue the English course but I completed it successfully and scored well enough to meet the admission requirement in [an] Australian university. At that time, one of my relatives was in Australia as an international student in Newcastle University. To find out more about education, life and opportunities in Australia, I started to contact with him. He was very helpful to guide me to get admission in Charles Sturt University.

(interview, Macelleria's Newtown branch, Sydney, 7.1.18)

Bidhan provided the following narrative:

I came to Australia in 2002 to study [for a] Diploma in Information technology. During my study at Notre Dame College⁹, Dhaka my elder sister married a Bangladesh-born Italian citizen. Observing my newly-married brother-in-law, I started feeling interested in going abroad. However, after completing college I gained admission in one of the private universities in Bangladesh called American International University of Bangladesh (AIUB). I planned to study computer science. AIUB used to have a computer lab [attended by] computer science students from different branches of the AIUB. In that lab, besides work, we always use[d] to talk about [our] future careers and job prospects in Bangladesh. Senior brothers always talked [of] abroad as an option as [the] computer sector was only growing [slowly] at that time in Bangladesh and did not have enough jobs for all the graduates. Also, when studying at AIUB, I used to share accommodation with a family living next to the campus. I saw their hardship to maintain their family which scared me a lot. I always wanted to get a secure financial life. [So], when I got the chance to transfer my academic credit from AIUB to [the] University of Newcastle in NSW, I did not hesitate to move to Australia.

(interview, Icebergs kitchen, Bondi, 25.12.16)

The above two quotes serve as evidence that members of this cohort were inspired to migrate to Australia by various influences. Every individual articulates his own unique chronicle. Each participant in this study spoke of the various elements that contributed to his final decision to migrate to Australia. This series of narratives (some presented above but many omitted due to limited space) showcases two central issues: (1) they reveal the diverse influences that acted as trigger factors reifying the interviewees' decisions to migrate; and (2) their decisions to migrate

⁹ One of the very prestigious colleges in Bangladesh. Out of a few hundred thousand applicants, approximately two hundred only gain admissions to this college.

were built around prior knowledge of easy access to jobs during their study periods in Australia. Factor (2) played an important role in the pre-migration decision-making stage. Without exception, the participants in this study stated that they knew long before their arrival in Australia that international students can work part-time to earn money to pay their tuition fees and other expenses. For example, one of the participants said:

Thinking [about the] huge tuition fees and other expenses, my father first did not allow me to think about migration. However, I reversed my father's decision by committing [to pay] all the money back within two years after arrival in Australia. Upon that commitment he borrowed money to arrange my student visa.

(Interview, Icebergs kitchen, Bondi, 28.11.16)

I will suggest that workplace opportunities play an important role in the pre-migration expectations and decision-making of young Bangladeshis choosing study as a pathway to settle in Australia. As Hawthorne states 'Research evidence... suggests that migrants' early employment outcomes are powerfully mediated by the place of training, age on arrival, language ability, and credential recognition' (2008, p. 6).

Obstacles encountered upon arrival in Australia

Why is it that travellers often ask: "Can someone meet me at airport?" Why does arrival in an airport make some people anxious? Airports are simple to navigate, purposely bland, reassuringly similar. But what lies beyond the exit door is uncertain and evokes anxiety. I believe that for the newcomer, uncertainty is a part of any journey. Bangladesh-born migrants entering Australia on student visas have high hopes to settle here permanently. At the same time, they may be prone to elevated levels of anxiety, often attributable to the uncertainty surrounding their journey to establish themselves in Australia. Other migrants, e.g., people who enter on skilled migration or sponsored visas enjoy more privileges and receive considerably more assistance upon their arrival in Australia. International students do not enjoy those privileges until they are granted permanent residency. Their situation regarding attaining permanent residency is problematic compared to others: they often face countless obstacles along the way.

However, as I have discussed above, the stories of migrants themselves suggest that most of the Bangladesh-born migrants who enter Australia on temporary student visas eventually make Australia their permanent home. My own personal experience and ten years of observation

suggest that the workplace (in this case the kitchen) plays an important role in overcoming the primary obstacles many face upon arrival. Several participants mentioned this factor during their interviews when I asked them to detail the obstacles they faced and how they overcame them. Participants in this study narrated some of the difficulties they encountered upon their first arrival in Australia.

The obstacles interviewees of this study faced upon arrival in Australia were not necessarily the same: they differed according to different contexts. Raju for example, provided the following account:

I was so excited to come to Australia. I worked for more than a year organising all the necessary papers and procedures applicants must deal with when applying for a student visa. However, when I was on board [the] airplane, I started getting nervous. I have travelled abroad many times with my family, but never by myself. I started getting nervous, many things started to come in my mind. For example, the person [who] will come to pick me up at Sydney airport. I [had] never seen him. My mum spoke to one of her friends and arranged an accommodation for one night only. Then I [would] join ... one of my friends who I met during my English course in Dhaka. I had spent lots of money to get a student visa. My mum gave me [that] money on condition that I will pay her back as my other siblings also have [to] share her wealth. Therefore, I knew I must work during my study in Australia to earn money for tuition fees and other costs. But, how I will get a job, what kind of job? I did not notice when I started to cry on the plane. I started missing my family. I stayed in Liverpool¹⁰ area one night with the ... family [of the person] who picked me [up] from [the] airport. Then next morning my friend came ... to take me with him [to] the new place. It was a shared accommodation in an apartment building in Kogarah¹¹. The room I had there was tiny and dark: no one used to open the windows of this house. I was sharing the room with another Bangladeshi guy, but he hardly spoke with me. He used to come back home around midnight and sleep until midday. The guy used to smoke inside the room which used to make me feel like vomiting and suffocating. The whole house used to smell very bad, [and it was] full of bed bugs [which] was another discomfort. We all had to cook by rotation, but I did not know how to cook. I never cooked at home. They excused my cooking [on] condition that I must pay more than others. On top of [my] weekly rent I had to pay for food, the internet and phone bills. I brought some dollars with me, carrying them all the time with me as I did not know where to keep them safe. [During the] daytime, everyone in our house used to work so for [the] first few days I could not even talk to anyone.

(interview, Macelleria's Newtown, branch, Sydney, 1.7.17)

¹⁰ A south-western suburb of Sydney, NSW.

¹¹ A southern suburb of Sydney, NSW.

Raju listed homesickness, accommodation, and having no kin group support among the difficulties he encountered upon arrival. However, Masud, another participant in this study, had some friends in Sydney; so, he enjoyed a comfortable first few days. But, he faced some other difficulties. Masud provided the following account:

When I arrived in Sydney I stayed with my friends [for the] first few days, although they hardly could spend any time to introduce me to ... life in Australia. Before [my] arrival, they told me some fancy things about [the] Australian life style, so I thought life would be much easier. But I found it hard. [During the] daytime, all [of my] house mates would go to [their] jobs and I had nothing to do at home except watch television. I brought around 2,000 Australian dollars with me and one day, one of my friends [said to] me: "As you just arrived, and you do not need to keep that much money with you, ... keep it with me and I will return it whenever you need [it]". I believed him and later found he [had] paid his tuition fees with [my] money. Later, I found [it] very hard to recover that money from him.

(interview, Macelleria's Bondi branch, 29.11.17)

Listening to these interviews made me recall my own first few days in Australia. I spoke with many people before coming to Australia, especially to the institute that was organising my wife's admission and many of their clients who had already entered Australia on student visas. The latter assured me that it was very easy to find a job in Australia. My wife and I brought 1,600 Australian dollars with us. The first few days we spent our money very carefully and wisely. We had to borrow a sizable amount of money from both of our families for my wife's admission to university. Although they have never asked us to repay it, we have always felt pressure to repay them.

I still remember how I used to carry a diary with me in my bag all the time. On the last page was a list of names and the amounts we had borrowed from our relatives. It took us almost three years to pay all those loans back. During the first few years of our studentship, to save money my wife used to walk to her university. We never spent money on coffee or tea. We still remember one of those days. It was a hot summers day. We went to Campsie¹² and on our way back we both felt thirsty. So, we went to a shop to buy a bottle of cold water. But when we saw the price - three dollars for one small bottle - we decided not to buy it. We opted to stay thirsty for another couple of hours until we reached home. Now, when I look back on those days and compare them with my present status as a manager of a well-established business (and my wife also works), we have realised the dream we envisaged. I feel in my heart that this seemingly

¹² A south-western suburb of Sydney.

impossible journey became possible due to my work in a restaurant kitchen. As Ruhanen, Robinson and Breakey state:

... [I]nternational students are often at a disadvantage when studying outside of their home country due to: unfamiliar learning contexts, different learning styles, language barriers and overcoming cultural differences, among other issues” (2013, p.1).

The narratives presented in this chapter reveal that Bangladesh-born international students invariably encounter a range of difficulties during the first stages of their long mission to establish themselves in Australia. These difficulties include home sickness, limited language skills/language barrier, lack of confidence, uncertainty, a limited circle of friends, lack of a social network; tuition fees and various other expenses and, most importantly, money owing to people back home. These difficulties often feel like a dead weight they are dragging behind them. I want to stress, however, that during the first few years, for many their workplaces (in this case, the hospitality industry) helped these Bangladesh-born international students to overcome several obstacles, allowing them to move forward, to achieve their goal to settle in Australia. In the following chapter, based upon the narratives provided by the participants, I will show how in many cases the workplace not only helps new migrants to overcome the obstacles they encounter upon first arrival, but also how the kitchen in terms of space, time, industry and camaraderie, by enhancing their sense of belonging helps them to participate in the wider host society during their time as international students in Australia. With reference to her own interviewees, Robertson states: ‘...[T]heir sense of belonging came from their close personal ties, networks and their social positioning as part of the community’ (2008, p. 106).

Chapter 2

Hierarchy and levels of steepness: The kitchen as a work space

The extant literature exploring the experience of international students in the host country inclines to provide challenging condition. On their study ‘Loneliness and International Students: An Australian Study’ Sawir et al. state:

Many international students experience loneliness, particularly in the months following their arrival. As they negotiate the process of settling into their new environment, “students’ expectations and patterns of life change...they learn to cope, to extend their social circles, and to make new kinds of friends” (2008, P.156).

Marginson et al. show the similar image of international students in Australia, they state: “[L]ack of equal respect, problems of intercultural mixing, language barriers, difficulties with finances, work, housing, healthcare, safety, migration, university bureaucracies, and loneliness are endemic to the international student experience... (2010, p. 9)”

The extant literature exploring migrants working in the hospitality industry also tends to draw a problematic picture of the kitchen work place. Alberti, who has summarized sections of the literature, states that:

Jobs in hospitality, both in the UK and internationally are characterized by poor working conditions, insecure contractual arrangements, long, anti-social working hours, very low wages and hard human resource management. ... Harassment and bullying, unpaid overtime and wages withdrawals are experienced in particular by migrant workers who comprise a significant section of the sector’s workforce, especially in London where they are often employed on casual contracts or by temporary agencies (in Alberti 2014, p. 867).

I have discussed some of those factors in the first chapter of this thesis under the section of “Obstacles encountered upon arrivals in Australia”. However, the discriminatory practices alluded to above were not found to be major factors in this study. My interviewees, although aware of racist attitudes in some sections of Australian society, had not personally experienced any form of racism in kitchen workplace. My own personal experience of the kitchen work

place reveals it to be a particular space, i.e., an environment which plays a significant role in easing the Bangladesh-born migrants' pursuance of the trajectories that will ultimately lead to their long-term stay in Australia. In this study, the kitchen work place is considered a learning space for the above migrants. As Fine claims: "[W]orking in a restaurant kitchen, one learns [the] tricks of the trade, hidden techniques or secrets recipes" (1996, p. 98). In a practical sense, kitchen workplaces - unlike many other work places - offer a variety of opportunities for their manual workers.

In time, the skills that the latter learn enable them to better their positions, i.e., to ascend the hospitality workforce hierarchical ladder. In contrast, the management in Australia's meat industry, which is increasingly employing temporary migrant workers, fails to offer its workers opportunities to learn the local language. Piller and Lising (2014, pp. 35-59), who investigated 'Australia's meat processing jobs' found that the workers rarely have enough opportunities to practice and improve their English language skills. This omission adds to the numerous complexities they are already facing given that English language proficiency is a pre-requisite for extending their visas so that they can live in Australia long-term. Restaurant kitchens provide their workers with a range of opportunities.

Like many businesses, restaurant kitchens experience a mix of both busy and quiet times. When busy, the workers may find themselves dealing with high levels of tension. They rush about shouting orders to each other; and, the resultant cacophony has echoes of a metaphorical battlefield wherein the kitchen workers are soldiers fighting to win customer satisfaction/approval, demonstrating their culinary skills and, in the process reinforcing their reputations. Conversely, the kitchen also enjoys its quiet times, for example during preparation for the service or in break time. During these quiet moments, the kitchen workplace is temporarily transformed into a place for relaxation and small talk. Yates and Major note that: "[S]mall talk and humor are the most commonly used features of workplace communication in Australia" (in Chowdhury and Hamid, 2016, p.18).

Unlike the meat processing workers, kitchen workers often have opportunities to learn local idioms and ways of doing things. Chowdhury and Hamid provide the following account narrated by one of their kitchen worker participants: "During lunch breaks, I always seek the opportunity to talk to my fellow workers from different language backgrounds so that I can get

some exposure to English...” (Chowdhury and Hamid, 2016, p.19). The kitchen workplace represents a particular space utilised in the dynamic process of migrants seeking participation in Australian society.

In their article titled “Space, Place and Social Control”, Devadas and Begg (2016) observe that in recent years space has attracted a sizable amount of research across the various academic disciplines. They state as follows: “This proliferation indicates that space matters...” (2016, p.1). Space has received special attention in migration studies as well. Studies of space contribute to a better understanding of the lived reality of migrant experiences, i.e., how various spaces in the host country are crucial both to migrants’ ease and ‘dis-ease’ of settlement, and how migrants utilize these spaces to their advantage. Spaaij (2012), who explores the degree to which playgrounds and sport have played an important role in the social integration of Somali migrants in Australia, shows how Somalis have used a specific space to create social capital that will, by extension, support their participation in the wider society.

In this chapter I will present participants’ narratives describing their grassroots lived experiences in a bid to justify my argument regarding the role of the workplace and its importance for many Bangladeshi international students. As Chowdhury and Hamid claim:

The narrative of each participant presents insights into the ways in which these migrants navigated through their work and social lives and [the] communicative strategies [they developed] to survive in the host country...(2016, p. 8).

However, before elaborating upon the role of the kitchen workplace in Bangladeshi migrants’ settlement journey in Australia, I will discuss the functionality of the commercial kitchen, and the ways in which the participants in this study fit into this space (the kitchen workplace) and by extension into Australian society.

The kitchen as space: exploring its functionality from the inside

Fine (1996) undertook his fieldwork in four kitchens in the USA in an attempt to understand the cooks' occupational rhetoric. Rather than simply interviewing cooks, he spent time working in and observing work strategies in the kitchens. He commented: "At no time did I "cook," but occasionally, when a need existed, I served as an extra pair of hands, occasionally peeling potatoes or destringing celery. Generally, I would sit or stand in a corner of the kitchen and take notes, conversing with the cooks or servers in slow periods" (1996, p. 94). The participants who contributed to my study are working (or have worked) in commercial kitchens during their time as international students in Australia. They occupy various positions from kitchen hands (or kitchen potters) to positions such as cook or manager of the restaurant. I have collected data from three commercial kitchens in Sydney. When I use the term 'kitchen' I am referring to one of these three businesses.

In the restaurant kitchen, which is the focus of this section, each worker functions within a socially-determined hierarchical space. In the words of Sachs et al.: "[When] describing restaurant work, people in the restaurant industry frequently refer to the front and back of the house to distinguish between different working spaces, jobs and workers" (2014, pp. 3-17). Typically, the front of house (FOH) and back of house (BOH) manage very different tasks in a given restaurant. The FOH team is mainly concerned with customer service. This includes welcoming customers, taking customers' orders, and serving food or drinks to the tables. It also includes workflows that ensure that the service provided by the restaurant runs smoothly; for example, polishing the cutlery and/or clearing/cleaning the tables. The FOH staff include floor manager/s, host/hostess, waiter/waitress, bartender (if the restaurant has a bar), and Barista (if the restaurant lists coffee on its menu).

The BOH encompasses most of the behind-the-scenes sections. This is where the food is prepared, cooked and plated before being served to customers. The BOH typically comprises a head chef, a sous chef, assistant to the chef, and the kitchen hands. Some kitchens may include cleaners in the BOH team to do the heavy cleaning when cooking is finished for the day. For example, at the Icebergs restaurant, members of the kitchen team do the basic cleaning after every service. A cleaner team is responsible for cleaning the entire floor and other heavy cleaning; however, at Macelleria's kitchens they do not have any separate position as cleaner.

Here the kitchen hands do most of the cleaning after every service. Although the two teams (FOH and BOH) manage very different tasks, some restaurants may have staff who work in both areas; for example, at both Macelleria branches, the owner and the managers often work in both sections. They both serve the food to the customers' tables and listen to the customers' feedback. Occasionally, they roster themselves to work in the BOH; on these occasions, they cook meals. On occasions when the BOH team runs short of staff or suddenly the kitchen becomes very busy, they will seek extra help.

On these occasions, often the owner or manager will step in to help. However, at the other restaurants (the Icebergs dining room and the bar at Bondi) I have never seen any FOH staff work in the kitchen. But, on many occasions I have seen head chefs personally seeking customer feedback or introducing themselves to the guests. Irrespective of whether both teams are led by one person or two, ultimately the two teams have one goal. As James suggests: "A kitchen's function is to provide objects (meals) on time and within budget achieving the desired outcomes of satisfied customers and profit" (2006, p.2). The kitchen workplace is, therefore, a complex integrated system comprising many interrelated fragments. Each fragment plays its part in the construction of a combined system. The sum of the parts functions together in organic solidarity through functional interface. In effect, the team members support each other in the interests of achieving one integrated whole.

Hierarchy and levels of steepness in the restaurant kitchen

As Gross states: "Cooking, because of its ambiguous position within the world of work, [is] linked to production, service, and management" (in Fine 1996, p. 93). Therefore, as a workplace, the kitchen includes widely diverse sets of tasks including ordering the right ingredients, storing them, food preparation, waste management, cooking (frying, boiling, grilling, baking), and finally dish washing. Fine (1996: 93) pinpoints four sets of rhetorical strategies that cooks rely on. In doing so he argues that cooks can draw on images of being professionals, artists, businessmen, or manual labourers. Cooks depend to some degree on other occupational domains from management to dish washers. Every commercial kitchen is a combination of a group of staff who by working together cohesively make the kitchen functional. Depending on its size and capacity, every restaurant kitchen has a system of

hierarchy and associated levels of hierarchical steepness. As the research in general suggests, all hierarchies have degrees of steepness.

Here I will stress that in the two restaurants with which I am familiar, I have observed stages of mobility that help dishwashers and/or kitchen hands ascend to other levels of the kitchen hierarchy. Tareq's narrative provides an insight into how the kitchen workplace helps novices to learn new skills, allowing them to navigate the hierarchical steepness and in the process become essential parts of the integrated functionality of the team.

I first met Tareq in 2016 when I was working in the kitchen at Macelleria's, a restaurant in the seaside suburb of Bondi. Because he is neither tall nor very short, people could mistakenly think he is a schoolboy. Every time I shared a conversation with him he had a smile on his face. At that time, Tareq was working as a cleaner for a sub-contractor in a building next to Macelleria's Bondi branch. I met Tareq many times. We shared meals together during our lunch breaks and enjoyed many conversations. He was studying accounting at the time. After I moved to Macelleria's Newtown branch, we lost contact. One day, the manager of Macelleria Bondi's kitchen rang me asking if Macelleria's Newtown could offer Tareq a job. His sub-contractor boss had lost his cleaning contract so Tareq needed to find a new job. The building management would not allow him to work in another business in the same building. At the time, Macelleria's Newtown was newly opened and needed workers to fill various positions. So, we hired Tareq, offering him work as a kitchen cleaner. Although he was new to kitchen work, he was a quick learner.

Over the last few months, while working in Macelleria's Newtown kitchen, Tareq has not only graduated with a Master's degree in Professional Accounting from Charles Sturt University, NSW; as well, he has become one of the core members of Macelleria's Newtown's kitchen management. He has done very well and having little trouble ascending the hierarchical ladder in Macelleria's kitchen. Whenever he notes a vacancy suited to his immediate grading he steps up to apply. Last month, when Macelleria's opened another branch in Melbourne and announced they would take three key staff members from the Newtown branch, Tareq filled the gap at Macelleria's Newtown store. These days he has a huge workload. He manages the BOH at Macelleria's Newtown. He has become skilled in all sections of cooking, i.e., food preparation, and ordering and receiving supplies for the kitchen. Last week (14th February

2018) I attended Macelleria's management meeting, representing the Newtown team. At the meeting, the directors decided to offer Tareq a full-time position, confirming how much they appreciated both his work record and value.

Tareq's career is no exception: his is one of many scenarios that occur in commercial kitchens every day. In fact, all the participants in this study utilised their kitchen hand positions as entry to the industry and into other careers. The majority do not necessarily stay in the same position for extended periods of time. During my fieldwork, I counted more than thirty Bangladesh-born migrants working in the three above-mentioned restaurants. Although they all entered the hospitality industry via the entry level, i.e., as dishwashers or kitchen hands, they now hold various positions in the business. One of Macelleria's branches was managed by a Bangladeshi who a couple of years back became an Australian citizen. During the 11 years I have worked at Icebergs, I have seen more than 100 Bangladesh-born migrants working in kitchens during their time as international students. Over time I realized that the majority had entered the kitchen as kitchen hands and worked to pay for their studies and everyday life expenses in Australia. I asked my participants to explain why they chose to work as kitchen hands or to do kitchen work generally. One of the participants replied:

We all start as kitchen hands. What else we can start with! Every kitchen needs kitchen hands. You start as [a] kitchen hand then if you want to learn cooking you will have plenty of opportunities to move on and [be] promoted to other sections (interview, Komol Giri, Macelleria's Newtown. 2.7.17)

In a group interview I conducted with three participants, all of whom I had worked with for more than four years at Icebergs, they spoke of how and why they had chosen to work in kitchens during their time as international students.

Interviewer (thesis author): Why are kitchen jobs popular among Bangladeshi students?

Kamrul: [They are] very easy to find. You do not need much experience: the only thing you need is attitude.

Interviewer: Could you please explain how attitude helps?

Kamrul: You have to be ready to do any job in [the] kitchen. They [the chefs] may say (often in a demanding way) do that, clean that, wash that, bring me that. You just answer, "yes chef".

Hasan: Kitchen work also goes well with your study. You go to university for four days or three days: the rest of the days you can work. Kitchen work also pays good money; but, the hours are long. If you can get weekend shifts you don't need to worry about tuition fee as they pay double payment for weekends.

(Group interview with Alam, Kamrul and Hasan at Hasan's home 6/12/16)

Apropos of the labour or manual aspects and of how kitchen entry-level positions are appropriate for international students, one of my work colleagues at Icebergs once commented:

You do not need to bring your head [brain] to work as [a] kitchen hand. Leave your head (brain) for your study and bring your body to work. It is just a ‘yes chef’ job.

(interview, Munir, Icebergs, July 2009)

Munir was very good at using humour to make his workmates feel better. During my first few days of working in the kitchen, seeing my confusion about accepting the reality of work as a kitchen hand, he advised me as follows: “If you worry too much about your own health and status, your bank account will lose its health and status. So, if you want a healthy bank account you have to overcome hesitation.” After Munir left Icebergs to better his career, I met two of his brothers who also worked in the Icebergs kitchen during their studies in Australia.

Although kitchen hands play an important role in the total functioning of a restaurant, due to the job’s perceived nature the position does not attract many Australians. Oke argues to the effect that temporary visa holders- including those holding student visas - are supplying labour for jobs “[c]itizens [are] unwilling to do” (2012, p.85). In their study undertaken in Singapore on temporary migrants’ work, Rubdy and McKay found a similar trend. “... [F]oreign workers [are] hired today for jobs Singaporeans themselves are unwilling to take up...” (2013, p.157). Rubdy and McKay, with reference to the nature of temporary worker’s jobs, term it the ‘3 Ds’, i.e., “dirty, difficult and dangerous.” 2013, p.159). According to Wright and Pollert: “The hotel and restaurant sector is known for its high labour turnover and the ready availability of temporary or casual work that attracts students, migrants and others seeking short-term financial rewards” (2006, p. 2). During my approximately 12 years working in these three commercial kitchens, I have never seen an Australian apply for a dishwasher or kitchen hand position. In other sections of BOH and FOH we often find Australians seeking employment in various areas. Some positions in the hospitality industry are highly appreciated and are often sponsored by print, electric or social media; for example, the popular TV programs ‘Master Chef’ or ‘My Kitchen Rules’.

The point I am making here is that manual workers, both in the hospitality industry and commercial kitchens rarely get exposure. On occasions when we dine in restaurants, we as

customers acknowledge the presence of the unseen workers, the kitchen hands for example. The presentation and services managers employed by all restaurants carefully keep this bottom rung of the hierarchical spectrum safely behind closed doors. But, away from the public eye, the kitchen hands' focus is on preparing the meal, keeping the workflow going, task after task, until it gets to the expected point of handing over to the FOH to carry the food to the customers' tables. As Anderson and Brown claim: "[I]n the prototypical pyramid hierarchy, information travels up through hierarchical levels until it reaches the group leaders. The leaders integrate ... [all] diverse information and make the relevant decisions" (2010, p.5). However, owners of businesses, managers and/ or team leaders are always conscious of the contributions of those employed to do the lower rung tasks. Many times, I have witnessed owners, managers and team leaders express their appreciation to their fellow workers for their hard work.

The following interview with Robert Marchetti conducted by the national daily, *The Sydney Morning Herald* emphasized the significance of menial positions in a restaurant:

[Mostofa has] been with me forever - he is without a doubt a really important part of the kitchen," says Mr Marchetti, who began his career as a kitchen hand at age 13. Like thousands of kitchen hands, prep cooks and waiters, Mr Alam is part of the army of unsung heroes of the Sydney restaurant scene that rarely receives public acknowledgment. Mr Marchetti says his crew of overseas workers are among the most loyal and proud in the empire, which includes North Bondi Italian Food and restaurants in Melbourne. "When we have our Christmas parties they all come and they're the first ones to wear a suit and a shirt," he jokes.

George Pompei, whose eponymous pizza and gelato bar is down the road from Icebergs, said the kitchen staff have a "willingness to learn and a preparedness to get involved", a propensity sometimes lacking in more experienced staff.

Mr Marchetti agrees, recalling an experience with a former employee of a three-hat restaurant. "Within a week he upset a couple of our kitchen hands and we got rid of him."

As acknowledgment of Mr Alam's hard work, last week Mr Marchetti and his partners helped him buy a secondhand car to ferry around his wife, a lawyer, and two young daughters.

(*The Sydney Morning Herald*. 06/10/2010 reporter, Melissa Singer)

The above report is just one of the examples among many. I have seen kitchen hands and those in similar positions often being rewarded by those further up the hierarchical ladder; and, they

have been supported in many ways. During my time at Icebergs, I have often seen company executives give staff expensive gifts in recognition of their contribution to the team work.

The role of the kitchen workplace in overcoming post- arrival obstacles

Many of the people I interviewed spoke of the obstacles they faced following their arrival in Australia. Their plans to study depended heavily upon how they could successfully overcome these hurdles so that they could continue their resettlement process. Securing a job and starting to earn money in their new environment would help them to overcome the financial obstacles that threatened to impede their advancement. And, when I talk about obstacles upon arrival, I found it was not just a list of obstacles but also a state of mind attributable to the uncertainties newcomers experience, e.g., threats to their chances of successful resettlement. Unfamiliar social settings, having no kin-based support system, and limited access to social support and social capital render the situation even harder for migrants' post-arrival (as we saw in Raju's narrative in Chapter 1 of this thesis).

However, their workplace can bring opportunities to make new friends, learn new skills and, most importantly, to help them get their confidence back. Take Raju's story for example. Raju's state of mind was so unsettled that he cried. He thought he may have to go back without completing his study. His access to the social services was limited, and he had to endure unhealthy living conditions. His kitchen work place played a major role in remedying this dismal scenario. During an interview, Raju said:

A few weeks after my arrival in Australia, when I was not sure I will be able to survive in Australia or not, I finally got a job in a kitchen in Miranda, to do their dish washing and food preparation. I was available for work anytime and was ready to do any work they asked me to do. After [a] few shifts, I understood [that the] chefs and other co-workers started liking my work. They started offering me meals, ... giving me more shifts and asking me to do various kinds of food preparation besides dish wash. They pay me good money, [and my] salary goes [in]to my bank account weekly. Soon after settling in this job I moved into another house still in Kogarah. I [had] already paid my two semester fees. But, most importantly now I can feel the dream I have to settle in Australia is not impossible.

(interview, Macelleria's, Newtown, Sydney, 1.7.17).

Raju demonstrates above how his state of mind improved after he started work. As Fine states: Restaurant kitchens are shaped by whether the chef promotes emotional stability and interpersonal harmony among the crowded group of workers or whether workers accept these claims often through teasing or jokes. Kitchens in which employees felt they were treated with respect operated with more deference than those in which workers believed that a politics of preference was operating (2010, p.364).

When one works in a restaurant environment, it is important to work together as a team, to foster a community spirit. The Bangladeshis who I have observed and with whom I have worked exhibited an extensive sense of community in the workplace. They drew upon their own customs and practices to maintain good working practice in the kitchen environment. The several ways in which I have personally seen this displayed include how they address each other and their colleagues, how they handle stressful situations within the kitchen environment, and how they come together in times of need. I found them to be friendly and aiming to learn as much as they possibly could about the environment they were working in. Often, they bring food or snacks to share with others.

Demetry (2013: 10) alludes to kitchen work, especially during the quiet time of day, as a form of “camaraderie”, a playful work atmosphere wherein staff members are friends rather than simply co-workers. They socialize and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere in the workplace. When a new Bangladeshi staff member (or a person of any nationality) joins the kitchen team, he is welcomed affectionately and guided through his tasks amicably. The kindness extended to all staff members is obvious to new employees: it plays a significant role in the initial stages of their adjustment to work in Australia. As Raju observed: “Now I can feel [that] the dream I have to settle in Australia is not impossible.”

The ways in which the kitchen workplace eases the migrants' settlement process

Unlike permanent residents, international students working in kitchens technically do not have long-term residence in Australia. Their temporary work permits can be terminated in line with their visa conditions. Often kitchen workers with temporary stay visas experience uncertainty and instability as they await the granting of their permanent settlement in Australia. However, this study suggests that the knowledge, skills, the relations they establish with their employers and the credibility they acquire when working in the kitchen workplace during their temporary residency constitutes a form of capital. Working in kitchens is one means of gaining long term stay in Australia. In many cases, work place management intervenes directly to get permanent residency for temporary resident employees. But, the transition process from student visa to permanent residency in Australia is lengthy and often problematic. For many it risks being prolonged if immigration rules change or additional requirements need to be addressed. Masud commented:

At the time of my first arrival in Australia, migration rules [were] comparatively easier. [A] student could stay in Australia permanently upon finishing his study. But how unlucky I was... the rules got changed to harder just after my arrival. It is already 10 years [and] I still could not get my residency done.

(interview, Macelleria's Bondi branch, 29.11.17).

In my own case, it took nine years to obtain permanent residency. During my field work in 2017-18, I found six Bangladeshi migrants who had been waiting for more than seven years but still could not get permanent residency. This long waiting period can often prove very expensive. Students are required to pay tuition fees, and medical and living expenses. The camaraderie they experience in the workplace helps them to survive this difficult period. Take, for example, the case of the two brothers Israt and Nusrat. I first met them at Icebergs in 2007. They had come to Australia to study accountancy. While they were studying, both worked for Icebergs. In 2011, Israt started work at Macelleria's Bondi branch. In 2016, when Macelleria opened their Newtown branch, his brother Nusrat joined the team working there. Today the brothers are the two main administrators in BOH at Macelleria's Newtown branch. As BOH administrators, their duties range from hiring new employees, training new staff, ordering the right products, organizing the cold room, and compiling staff rosters.

To quote Fine, they have learned that “knowledge is personally situated through experience-based expertise...” (1996, p. 98). Macelleria’s owner recognises the value and contributions of these two brothers. In 2017, the business sought to obtain 457 visas for them. In January 2018, when Macelleria’s opened a third branch in Melbourne, the owner promoted them, appointing them both in Melbourne branch as managers in recognition of their knowledge, skills, and sincerity. Two years ago, they both visited Bangladesh and married there. Today, both are living in Melbourne. Israt’s wife is expecting their first child. One of the company’s directors - who has a personal beachside residence in Victoria - surprised Israt by offering both he and his wife a week’s holiday at their residence. This gesture was in recognition of Israt’s hard work and commitment during his first few days at Macelleria’s Melbourne branch.

In their article titled ‘The experiences of ethnic minority and migrant workers in hotels and restaurants: strategies and necessities’, Wright and Pollert (2006) claim that workers are often exploited. They offer little resistance to their employers whose goal is to maintain cheap labour. Wright and Pollert state: “... [A]n important group in this industry feeds into a cycle of exploitation and vulnerability” (2006, p. 2). It is interesting to note that many of the participants in the above-mentioned study (10 out of 48) were Bangladesh-born temporary migrants living in the UK. For the purposes of this study, I examined the same space in Australia through grassroots narratives and found that discrimination and vulnerability were not major concerns of my interviewees. Rather, they viewed the kitchen workplace as a special place of survival in an often-unfamiliar Australian milieu. For this and other reasons, the kitchen as a space demands critical investigation.

Ruhanen, Robinson and Breakey, with reference to the internship/ work experience component of international students’ degrees, state that:

This particular aspect of the curriculum allows students to actively engage in a foreign culture; having the opportunity to grow their skills in a new and unfamiliar environment and exposing themselves to a range of other employees and guests than they might not have otherwise experienced (2013, p.1).

The participants in this study considered their kitchen work a ‘stepping stone’ in what often seemed to them an impossible journey from initially being international students to becoming citizens of Australia. The workplace allows international students to actively engage with a

foreign culture, i.e., that of the country to which they migrated for study. Ruhanen, Robinson and Breakey further stress that for international students, work in a foreign land provides an “opportunity to more fully understand and appreciate the scope of host-guest relations, as well as differing cultures and norms between countries” (2013, p.1). The above narratives demonstrate the degree to which the camaraderie exercised in the kitchen workplace helps Bangladeshi migrants to overcome the series of obstacles they encounter upon arrival. In effect, it goes towards restoring their confidence. Also, in the long term, the kitchen workplace opens up opportunities for them to learn (and benefit from) new skills. And, more importantly, it equips them to climb the hierarchical ladder that is implicit in the kitchen workplace. Tareq, Israt and Nusrat’s narratives reveal how the acquisition of new skills is often rewarded. When I was contemplating how to conclude this chapter, I found a narrative in my field notes in which one of my participants said: “[The] kitchen workplace is for us [Bangladesh born migrants] like [a] stepping stone.” I sensed what he meant by this. In a bid to get more information from him I asked him to explain what he meant by ‘stepping stone’? He answered as follows: “During [the] rainy season, when [the] rain makes the walkways muddy and uncomfortable to walk on, people often put some bricks or stones to make steps to cross the muddy area”.

Similarly, during life as an international student in Australia, when one cannot find any support and is seemingly facing difficulties on all fronts, for a while it seems impossible to stay in Australia permanently. Obtaining work in a kitchen provides a much-needed stepping stone. It helps one to make friends, to learn about things one previously did not know, e.g., money, identity, hierarchy and space¹³. As my interviewee said: “Its helps you to survive, Mostofa vai. You tell me how many Bangladeshi students could complete their study in Australia without work?” Many people look upon work solely as a source of income. But for many Bangladesh-born international students the workplace is something else. One of our friends, who used to work with us long ago, nowadays works for the United Nations. He is economically well off. He sent his recently arrived younger brother to Macelleria’s Newtown branch. I said to our friend jokingly:

¹³ I have translated it as space. However, the word my participant used was *thai*, a commonly used term in our country meaning ‘refuge centre’. For example, if someone is walking and suddenly rain starts falling and he/she shelters underneath a tree to avoid getting wet, the tree is a *thai* for that person. Bangladeshis also use this word to denote shelter or protection.

Why do you need to send your brother to work in the kitchen to earn money? You already have huge amounts of money”.

He replied: “As you know it is not money only, I do not mind how much you pay him, but the matter is that he will learn many other things there that even his University would not be able to teach him.

(Personal communication, Macelleria’s Newtown branch, 11.12.16).

In the next chapter I will discuss how Bangladeshi migrants utilize the term ‘participation in Australian society’ to shed light on and make better sense of the role of the workplace in Bangladesh-born migrants’ participation in Australian society.

Chapter 3

Participation in Australian Society

The lived experiences of participation in Australian society of Bangladesh-born migrants that I witnessed during my time working in three of Sydney's commercial kitchens, and the conversational story-telling I engaged in with members of my community, revealed how deeply these migrants appreciated the role of the kitchen workplace during their migration trajectories in Australia. Among the many successes attributable to the valuable support they received during their participation process was their success in gradually becoming part of the host society, their ability to contribute to various branches of society, their building of relations with their immediate society and, by extension, with the host nation in general. In this chapter, I will explore this process of gradual participation of the members of this cohort in the wider setting of Australian society.

There are many popular terminologies in migration studies designed to brand the settlement of migrants in a host society; for example, integration, assimilation and/or acculturation. In my endeavour to highlight the empirical findings of this study I have opted to use the term 'participation' in this discussion. But, I will briefly revisit those popular terminologies before delineating the multiple ways in which the subjects of this study understand their participation in Australia's broader community. In this section, I describe how to varying degrees my participants overcame the seemingly myriad obstacles and uncertainties that confronted them on their arrival in Australia. Many of the participants in this study have to some degree widened their horizons in the host country. I will discuss how these newly-arrived migrants built their lives beyond the limitations of student visas, became involved in the wider society, and gradually transitioned into becoming productive members of society.

Popular terminologies employed in the study of migrants' settlement in a host society

Migrants' involvement in - or becoming a part of - their host societies is a well-researched area of study. It was found that "much research has been conducted on migrants focusing on their settlement success, social integration as well as their sense of wellbeing" (Chowdhury and Hamid, 2016, p. 22). However, the term 'integration' is open to question. Robinson, expressing

his concern regarding the term, argues that it is “a word used by many but understood differently by most” (1998, p.118). Makki, who investigates the settlement experiences of Iraqi Shiite refugees in Australia writes: “The term Integration is an ambiguous term, subject to varying interpretations” (2014, p.41). Bint Shafiq (2016), who explores Bangladesh-born migrants’ settlement experiences in Australia, states:

Migrant settlement is a complex issue and there is no agreed definition of this concept. More importantly, the objective of settlement has been changing over time. In order to explain the settlement process of migrants in host countries, scholars have proposed different theories which feature numerous terms. Important among them are assimilation, acculturation, integrations, adaptation and multiculturalism (2016, p.24).

The term ‘integration’ in migration studies is often explained as a dynamic process in which all members participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations. A minority group’s integration with the mainstream society is often considered a ‘two-way process of adaptation’ involving both migrants and members of the established community. According to Anthias, ‘integration is a highly ideological notion because it assumes integration into a given social fabric. It is a two-way process with responsibilities on both new arrivals and established communities’ (2003, p.6). Extant studies show that these two parties respond to integration differently albeit trying to achieve the same goal.

When discussing migrants’ settlement in their host country, many scholars use the term ‘social inclusion’ when explicating issues pertinent to migrant settlement experiences. For example, in their study titled “Linguistic diversity and social inclusion” Piller and Takahashi (2010) use the term ‘social inclusion of migrants’ when discussing the latter’s economic wellbeing. Van Krieken, in his paper titled “Between assimilation and multiculturalism: models of integration in Australia” discusses the concept of social integration and its practical realisations in an Australian setting. He alludes to assimilation as a forceful political policy employed by British authorities when dealing with aboriginal Australians. Van Krieken writes,

The original ambition of the British administrators of the colony of New South Wales was somehow to absorb the Aboriginal population into white society, relying heavily on the mechanism of converting them to Christianity (Van Krieken, 2012, p, 501).

Thus, understanding the various terminologies is not without its tensions. In the Australian context, tensions arise for a wide variety of reasons. For example, post-WW2 Australia witnessed the segregation of mainly European migrants from the mainstream society. People contemplated migrants from ‘non-Anglo’ cultural backgrounds cautiously, often with considerable unease. They saw a need for state guidance that would facilitate newly-arrived migrants’ assimilation into mainstream Australia and counter segregation. Partly in response to popular sentiment and divisive public opinion, the Australian government developed policies aimed at supporting migrant integration as a means of dealing with the nation’s changing cultural milieu. But, the unstable categorizations and assumptions underpinning these policies soon ignited heated debate. As Schiller and Çaglar observe:

All terms that speak about migrant social connections – integration, inclusion, assimilation, incorporation, and transnationalism – are politically influenced because they are shaped by particular national discourses about migration. the focus...[here] is upon individuals, the networks they form, and the social fields treated by their networks. ...[social] fields are understood not as special networks but as systems of social relations composed of networks of networks that may be locally situated or may extend nationally or transnationally (2009, p.179-180).

Anthropologists, many of whom were openly critical of the government’s policies, are cautious when using the terms ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ in the Australian context. In recent times, in a bid to eschew the complexity surrounding the terminology, many use the empirical term ‘well-being’ when discussing migrants’ comfort in a host society. For example, in his book titled *The Wherewithal of Life: Ethics, Migration, and the Question of Well-Being* (2013), anthropologist Michael Jackson studies three migrants’ experiences, employing the term ‘wellbeing’ to understand their circumstances and success stories. In his book, Jackson describes his own personal understanding of ‘wellbeing’ which he experienced when visiting the city of Melbourne (Victoria, Australia) where he had lived 50 years earlier:

Suddenly and unaccountably, I was filled with a quiet yet overwhelming joy at simply being alive. Was it because I had lived for a year in this city almost fifty years ago, painfully alone and unsure of my direction ... It seemed at that moment nothing short of a miracle that I existed, let alone that I was happy. Yet I felt no sense of having earned this state of wellbeing (Jackson, 2013, p.224).

The reality is, that the ways in which individuals experience their settlement as a different dynamic are shaped by a set of factors that determine the ways in which they experience their

everyday lives. At the grassroots level, the settlement experience can vary depending upon the disposition and level of accommodation of the individual. Therefore, the above-mentioned terms often have their limitations when portraying migrants' grassroots feelings and understandings integral to becoming part of the host society. I will suggest that using these terms can downplay valuable feelings, understanding, the achievements of migrants and their willingness to become part of the host society. Most importantly, such terminologies may fail to demonstrate accurately the flavour of this study, i.e., the on-the-ground daily work reality in which participants in this study have laboured tirelessly to become part of the host society.

When discussing the Bangladeshi migrants' grassroots narrations of their gradual familiarization with Australian society, I have opted to use the term 'participation'. Participation is about establishing oneself; and, by extension, it is about survival in a new setting. My interviewees' narratives explicate their experiences and how the latter impacted on their everyday lives when they first arrived in Australia. Starting from their time of arrival, migrants must negotiate, learn and adapt to new ways of life, acquire new knowledge, skills, and establish new networks. As soon as possible, they must endeavour to find a roof. As suggested earlier, they must make sure that they can feed themselves and look after their partners and/or families. They develop their own agency through these everyday practices which enable them to participate, and to become active in everyday life. Only then can they finally experience some sense of wellbeing.

In this study, the subjects' participation into Australian society is measured according to various outcomes; for example, fluency of English language, higher education, professional employment, permanent residency, citizenship, higher incomes, starting family life, buying a property, establishing ties with the local community, and becoming part of the social fabric of the new homeland. Perhaps more importantly, their feelings about overcoming the uncertainty engendered by the prospect of a temporary stay (only) in Australia. Based on the above understanding of migrants' establishment in a host society, the following discussion will delineate Bangladesh-born international students' gradual participation in Australian society.

Migrants' stories

I often attend my daughters' school assembly¹⁴. As well as being impressed by the children's many remarkable features, it is their singing of the national anthem that always amazes me. A hall full of 'kids' will suddenly go silent. You could hear a pin drop. Then they start singing the national anthem. The school is privately run by South Asian migrants, mainly Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Fijian migrants. The students are mainly of South Asian descent and all are from Muslim communities. As a parent, I am sure we (those who attend the assembly) would not be able to sing the whole anthem. But these children articulate the national anthem courteously. An overarching emotional feeling suddenly dominates the hall environment as they sing "Australians all let us rejoice, for we are young and free...". They are only little, but some put their right hands on their chests indicating respect for the land and the message of the national anthem.

A hall full of kids, some may have been born here, some may have been born overseas and migrated with their parents. Now they are successfully adapting themselves to the local education system. I had not noticed when my eight and six-year-old daughters memorised the whole national anthem. But they sing every word from their hearts. I have a different anthem in my heart: "My golden Bengal, I love you. Forever your skies, your air sets my heart in tune as if it were a flute...". We memorised the Bangladeshi national anthem in our childhood without much effort. Like the national anthem, I often think that my children seem much more cognisant of many aspects of Australian society than I am. For example, whenever we drive past the Nepean hospital in western Sydney, they gesticulate and shout "That's the Nepean Hospital. We were born there". This hospital has become part of our family history in Australia: all my kids were born in this hospital. Like the structure of the Nepean hospital, many more buildings and addresses are becoming part of our lives. For example, the kids' school, local shopping centre, our local street.

As the second generation, they show their affection with unique gestures. They identify local plants, flowers, birds and cultural artefacts using their Australian names whereas I still use

¹⁴ Two of my daughters are studying year 4 and year 3 at a community-based Islamic school in the Rooty Hill area.

Bangladeshi terms when identifying them. I still read Bangladeshi newspapers and follow the Bangladeshi national news and events. My kids cannot even read Bengali, although at home they speak some Bengali¹⁵ words with us. But, when talking to each other they use English. They are more aware of local and national events like Australia Day, Harmony Day and Easter. The terms ‘golden wattle’ and ‘opals’ are more meaningful to them than they are to me. The second generation’s participation in local society comes much more naturally, similar to when I grew up in my little village in Bangladesh. As Burnett (1998, p.18) observes: “Migrants’ settlement is a process which takes place gradually”. Bouma (1994) defines settlement as “an ongoing process by which migrants make the transition from life in one country to life in a new country” (p. 38).

As a migrant and participant in this process, I see my personal experience as a first-generation migrant participating in the local society as different from the second generation’s participation process. In October 2017, we moved into our newly-bought property after 12 years of living in a rental apartment. We feel much more incorporated into our own property and address than we did in our previous accommodation. We feel that this address is part of a dream that has been with us since our pre-migration expectations. Also, the process we went through when buying the property not only gave us a sense of belonging but connected us with many local systems. For example, our home loan required us to make a long-term commitment to the loan provider. Along with many others today, any news relevant to interest rate changes make us feel uneasy. In more recent times I have started reading the local newspaper. Also, gradually many lines of communication are developing, i.e., with the local city council, civic services and with our neighbours.

As our kids continue to grow, every year we are learning more about local education systems and relevant issues, e.g., the NAPLAN test, the OC test and/or admission to a selected school. Many hitherto elusive social facilities and functions are starting to become familiar to us. For example, every day we become more familiar with the local society amenities. Last month my wife rang the local council asking to change our domestic bin after we found our bin was broken. Prior to that when we used to live in a unit, we never thought about the lines of bins in the service area. I know a couple of local plumbers and who is cheaper compared to others. At our

¹⁵ Parents often call it Benglish (code-switching Bengali and English words).

local masjid (mosque, Islamic prayer centre) I often find myself enjoying a social chat with others after prayers. I can feel my social network starting to expand in my new neighbourhood.

It is not only me, however. Many of my mates; for example, Mizan, Masum, Bidhan, Kumar, Mehdi, Azman, Munir and Mahmudul are examples of migrant participation in Australian society. Although all the above workers came to Australia as students, with the passage of time they have successfully established themselves in this land. Upon completion of their studies, they left the kitchen workplace to pursue professional careers. During my field work, I visited some of my colleagues, interested to gain an understanding of their degree of participation in Australian society. Mizan was my mentor at Icebergs during the time we worked there as kitchen staff.

When I first started work there, Mizan helped me to learn about the work. We share many memories of our time working together in the Icebergs kitchen. At the time, Mizan – who was an IT student - was a skilled and experienced kitchen worker. Whenever a new Bangladeshi kitchen worker joined the team, Mizan was responsible for his training. Last year, during my fieldwork for this study, I met Mizan again after years of having no contact. Seated in a coffee shop in Lakemba, we revisited our memories. Today Mizan lives in Lakemba with his wife and five-year-old daughter. He works as an Educational Technology Coordinator for the Department of Education NSW. His job is to assist school teachers to integrate technology in the classroom. He spoke about how important it is to learn and adapt information technology for school students, about technical aspects, and the importance of his work. IT is not one of my greatest interests. But, one thing I understood from his conversation was that my long-time workmate and mentor at Icebergs is now a confident IT person, loves his work, and contributes to society via his education, knowledge and passion.

Masum, a former work colleague at Icebergs, is now a physician. He recently returned to Sydney after working for approximately four years in a regional area of NSW. He bought a property in Lakemba and lives there with his four kids and school teacher wife. Besides their fulltime work, Masum and his wife are involved in many social and community activities.

Bidhan lives in Canberra with his wife and one child. In 2016 I drove to Canberra to spend Christmas eve with them and to conduct Bidhan's interview for this study. Nowadays he lives

in the newly-established residential area of Coomb in Molonglo, Canberra. His beautiful house is on the banks of the Molonglo River. One day, during my visit to Canberra, after enjoying a big feast at Bidhan's house, we took a walk along the river bank together with all our family members. The kids were happy admiring the natural beauty of the area, grazing kangaroos on a canvas of natural beauty, a perfect setting to catch up with a friend with whom I shared many memories. Suddenly a special happiness swept over me upon seeing my mate's successful achievement and comfortable lifestyle. There was a time when both of us experienced really hard times, had to work hard to earn extra money. Bidhan used to come to work straight from a long day at university. After we finished our jobs at 3 o'clock in the morning, we had to run to catch the bus. Our tired bodies wanted to resist but we were painfully aware that if we missed one bus we would have to wait one hour for the next bus. After arriving home, he could hardly rest as he had to be at university early the next morning. During exam time his routine seemed even more demanding.

We all knew that this time would not last forever. Soon after completion of our study, and after we gained permanent residency, conditions would change for the better. Today Bidhan, as a senior Microsoft Dynamics consultant at Fujitsu, has a well-paid job. As well as his stunning house in Canberra, he has another property in the Sydney suburb of Liverpool. His professional commitments do not stop him from participating in social and community work. He volunteers with Cricket Australia, taking cricket to school level. He is also an active member of the local community, helps with the celebration of the religious festival/Puja¹⁶. A couple of months after our visit, Bidhan was awarded a gold medal in recognition of his work at Fujitsu. The news made me recall Bidhan's narrative. He spoke of work skills, team work, and how his experience of working under pressure at Icebergs always helped him in his new career as an IT person.

There is evidence of Bangladesh-born international students extending their boundaries while still facing uncertainty regarding their futures in Australia. Many expand their roots in this country beyond their initial student visas, reunite with their families, and continue to strive to fulfil their expectations. Take Kumar for example. He married when he was working at Icebergs; at that time, he was still a student. After his wife joined him in Sydney, she too started work in a restaurant kitchen. Kumar continued to work at Icebergs during his studentship.

¹⁶ Hindu religious practice

However, following the completion of his studies he moved to another kitchen workplace in the Bondi beach area and managed his sponsorship from there as a skilled cook. Last year, after getting their residency, they bought a residential property. When I spoke to Kumar last month, he told me that they were expecting a baby. He also helped his younger brother to come to Australia.

Unlike Kumar, many of the Bangladeshi students I have worked with came to Australia with their spouses; Biplob, Masud and Kamrul among others. Often, they built their family lives during the time they were studying and working in the kitchen workplace. Hasan, Nur, Bidhan, Aziz, Israt and Nusrat are among many who married during their studentship. Once having overcome the obstacles they faced upon first arrival on student visas, many Bangladesh-born international students start their family lives in Australia. In February 2018, during my field work for this study, Dipto, who works at Macelleria's Bondi branch, got married in Bangladesh and was planning to bring his wife back with him to Australia.

In sum, the complex trajectories that migrants navigate are commonly experienced by many temporary migrants living in Australia. Piller and Lising's study titled "Language, employment, and settlement: temporary meat workers in Australia" reveals a similar trend. "[All of] the participants had spouses and/or children who they had left behind in the Philippines and who they longed to be reunited with. All of them dreamed of extending their contracts beyond the initial four-year period and settling permanently in Australia with their families" (2014, p. 53). During my many years of working in a kitchen workplace I have witnessed countless examples of Bangladeshi migrants striving to settle, build and expand their lives during their period of temporary stay under their initial student visa conditions.

Chowdhury and Hamid (2016) observe that working-class Bangladesh-born migrants in Australia - despite having limited English proficiency - exercise their agency, in the process navigating their work, social and economic survival in the host country. In many cases, Bangladesh-born international students come to Australia after having completed higher degrees or with work experience from the home country. Wright and Pollert (2006) note a similar trend among Bangladeshi community people working in kitchens in the UK.

"It was notable that seven out of the nine Bangladeshi workers interviewed had degree-level qualifications from their home country. Some also had other professional work

experience abroad, including work as a college lecturer, a development worker with an NGO, and as a travel agent” (2006, p.2).

Therefore, starting their family lives comes as no surprise; it is their capacity to overcome the initial obstacles they encounter and continue on their course of life, all of which becomes possible because they work during their studentship. It seems almost impossible for a Bangladesh-born international student to get married and start a family without undertaking part time work in Australia.

The kitchen workplace offers support to its employees, often extending benefits to them in many ways. Take Mehdi for example. Mehdi is a newly-appointed manager at Macelleria’s Newtown branch. A Moroccan-born Australian citizen, before joining Macelleria’s he worked for a renowned restaurant chain that has successfully established many branches not only in Australia but overseas as well (in London and Dubai). Mehdi used to work for the main branch where he enjoyed a good relationship with the owner of the business. In a conversational narrative we shared recently, Mehdi spoke of how his relationship with this company helped him to get a work visa and a work permit for his brother.

After I established myself in Australia, I wanted to bring my younger brother here to work with me. We [had] been trying to get an Australian visa since long. We tried many ways to get a visa for any European or Western countries. My parents and myself spent some money for him to establish himself in Morocco but that also did not work. As he is growing older and needs to start earning money, my parents [are] always ... very stressed for his wellbeing. Every time I speak to my mother she asks me to do something for my brother. Last week I spoke to the company owner who I worked with for many years and we have [a] good understanding. The boss happily agreed to give him a job in [the] Dubai branch. I told my brother all about ... work in a kitchen. He is a smart guy, so I know he will not take long to be on top of his work. Also, the manager [of the] Dubai branch is a very good friend of mine. We have worked together since long in a kitchen in Sydney. I requested him to look after my brother. I know my brother will get favour from him.

(Personal communication, Mehdi, 27.2.18, Macelleria’s Newtown.

Every day, as migrants in a new land, the knowledge we accrue, the skills we acquire, the family lives we start, the networks and friendships we build and lifestyles we embrace gradually strengthen our attachment to and involvement in the host society. For example, I still remember when I first arrived in Australia with my wife on student visas. I was scared: the prospect of an

unknown future was making me feel uneasy. This year (2018), after having lived for 13 years in this land, we have booked a flight to Bangladesh. I am experiencing a similar type of unease. A feeling of ‘scariness’ is revisiting me. I am taking my family to visit my homeland-, the country in which I was born and spent my first 25 years. My extended family members are still there, many of my friends, and my in-laws. Will many things have changed since I left? Do I feel uneasy because I have become so used to life in my new homeland? Am I apprehensive because this time we will travel with our four children who hardly speak a word of Bengali and have never been there before? I am not sure.

But I can see my wife starting to worry about things, packing something extra, every day groceries, for example, milk powder, childrens’ breakfast cereal, and kids’ basic medicines. I know that during our visit to Bangladesh, we will be constantly thinking of the things we left behind. Our house, cars, my job, study, the university campus, the kids’ schools, their homework, Naveen’s¹⁷ OC test and admission to a selective school, home loan repayments, utility bills, and the mailbox will remain our concern. Our vegetable garden in which we grow most of our household vegetables will be constantly on our minds. And, I already feel that when we leave Bangladesh to return to Sydney in mid-July, although sadness will be there - saying goodbye to our parents and families - as we approach Sydney, joy and happiness will be in our hearts. We will be happy to return home, to our place in western Sydney where we have spent the last 13 years. The kids will go back to school, they will see their friends, and we will catch up with our neighbours. I will meet my work colleagues, go to the university, the library, and the local Masjid. I know that before long we will be totally immersed in everyday life in Sydney. The same city that was unknown to us 13 years ago is now a place of comfort, related to our identity. We have become part of Australia’s social fabric.

In this chapter, I explored the role of the workplace and the degree to which it facilitates migrants’ participation in Australian society. I have explored Bangladeshi migrants’ grassroots associations, the trajectories they traverse when striving to settle in a new country, and their capacity to participate in the wider host society.

¹⁷ My daughter Naveen is preparing for her OC test in the hope of gaining admission to an opportunity class.

Conclusion

The relevance of this thesis is two-fold: 1) It explores Bangladeshi student-migrants' trajectory experiences in Australia; and, 2) It draws upon interviewees' personal narratives to delineate their experiences. AS Hayden White states: '...[N]arrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted' (1980, p. 6). In this thesis, using grassroots narratives I have explored the role of the kitchen workplace in the lives of young Bangladeshi students seeking to settle permanently in Australia and, by extension, to become part of a new and growing youthful South Asian diaspora. South Asian migration was originally attributable to imperialism; that is, to the period of British colonial rule of the Indian sub-continent (1858-1947) when large numbers of labourers were sent abroad as indentured workers to western and Middle Eastern countries. This policy signalled the beginning of the South Asian diaspora. The present study explores a comparatively recent phenomenon, i.e., a young Bangladeshi cohort entering Australia on student visas. Representative of one segment of today's contemporary South Asian diaspora, their numbers continue to grow with each passing year (ABS, 2016, Iqbal: 2014, p. 25; Bint Shafiq, 2016, p.10).

The narratives reproduced in this thesis reveal that increasing numbers of youthful Bangladeshis are choosing to study in Australia's educational institutes. But, student visas, or temporary stay visas, do not guarantee that holders can extend their stay in Australia after completion of their studies. The somewhat rigid visa conditions frequently render the newcomers' experience of obtaining permanent residency fraught with apprehension. In addition, the obstacles they encounter upon arrival, the uncertainty surrounding their visa conditions, their states of mind after having lost the benefits of family networks' support and understanding combine to make international students' lives difficult, particularly on first arrival.

In Australia, many Bangladeshi students choose to work in restaurant kitchens or in the hospitality industry as a means of earning money to support their studies. The interviewees' narratives of their lived grassroots experiences that are reproduced in this study designate the kitchen workplace as a camaraderie-oriented space, a friendship networking sphere in which new student arrivals learn to interact and, by engaging in conversational storytelling, learn from others how to overcome any primary obstacles they encounter upon first arrival.

Vansemb (1995) states that personal narratives reveal individual experiences in a social context; in the case of this thesis, those of Bangladeshi students working in an Australian kitchen context. The aforesaid narratives, which confirm the value of the narrativization of these newcomers' experiences, not only throw light on their personal migration experiences; as well, they demonstrate that amicable and supportive workplace conditions can contribute profitably to the newcomers' participation in the wider host community. As De Fina and Tseng observe in their paper titled 'Narrative in the study of migrants', "telling stories is a way of sharing and making sense of experiences in the recent or remote past, and of recounting important, emotional or traumatic events and the minutiae of everyday life" (2016, p. 381). The narratives reproduced in this thesis 'challenge the misperception that student mobility is an unproblematic transient phenomenon' (Findlay et al., 2011).

As I have suggested earlier, international students entering the country on student temporary stay visas have limited opportunities to become active participants in the host society. In the initial stages, few move beyond their educational institutions. Student visas do not guarantee an extension after the initial visa expires. For this reason, international students are viewed as temporary migrants. Theoretically speaking, their lifestyles are limited, evident in their initial restriction to their educational institutes. However, for some, in time the kitchen workplace provides opportunities for them to engage as fully as possible with the labour market in the host country. In effect, the workplace plays a highly significant role in the settlement process of newly- arrived migrants.

Restaurants and commercial kitchens, an obvious feature of Australian society, feature in this study as dynamic spaces. Restaurant kitchens have specific entry level employee positions; for example, kitchen hands or kitchen cleaners. This study shows that Bangladesh-born international students in Australia willingly undertake these jobs so that they can earn extra money to support their studies and overcome primary obstacles.

The narratives reproduced in this study confirm that the kitchen workplace provides many opportunities for young Bangladeshi workers to learn veiled culinary techniques, cooking skills and management skills. Gradually these workers come to play an essential role in the kitchen work space. In many ways, both parties in the workplace, i.e., employer and employees gain considerable benefit from each other's input. In this work sphere, we see kitchen workers bonding together in a form of collective identity, sharing a 'we-feeling' or 'we-consciousness',

terms implying some form of collective identity (Faist, 2000). Members of this specific group of migrants commit to pursuing their migration expectations, in the process becoming part of the ever-growing South Asian diaspora in Australia. Robertson stresses, there is a dearth of sociological research into the nature of the student visa migrant process (2008, p. 98).

I believe there is still much to be done in this area if we are to understand how a workplace plays a strategic role in newcomers' participation in a host society. In the case of Australian society, many hitherto untold features and functions of the kitchen workplace need to be illuminated. Only then will we appreciate the contribution to society of this one specific environment (the kitchen workplace), and how it helps another environment (Bangladesh-born student migrants) to achieve a purposeful whole. If these stories are left untold, true accounts of the contribution of this industry (the kitchen workplace) may be left untold, obscured by the popular media or stereotypical observation. Therefore, Grassroots narratives of migrants into the host society need to be heard.

The role of the kitchen workplace is like an unread novel gathering dust on our bookshelves. Future studies could consider exploring the specific dynamics of the kitchen workplace, i.e., how migrant workers use their agency to further their participation in the host society. Future studies could contrast and compare kitchens as work spaces in other states of Australia. Their findings may help newcomers to familiarise themselves with important tools that will facilitate their participation in the host society. And, even more importantly, they could serve as a guide, i.e., show government how to form more sympathetic policies that will 'de-stress' the migrants' transition process. Only then will young migrants entering Australia on student visas feel some sense of security - welcome to participate in Australian society.

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