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Experiences of Displacement, Migration, and Settlement Among Afghans in Ottawa

by

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A thesis submitted to
the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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Abstract

Anthropologists, according to Lisa Malkki (1995), Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997), have generally favoured studies of people situated in their places of birth or homelands, and have considered people/places as distinct and separate from each other. However, places/people/cultures can no longer be thought of as distinct and separate since people/cultures are moving to and settling into places other than homelands. Thus, it is necessary to examine the process of migration and settlement and its impact on people/places/cultures in order to understand the relationship between people and places. This thesis explores the connections rather than the differences between places as illustrated through experiences of displacement, migration, and settlement among Afghans in Ottawa. It looks at how the place of birth or the homeland of Afghanistan as well as the place of settlement of Canada shape the (re)formation of Afghan community and identity through the conceptual framework of diasporic community.

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Introduction

This thesis examines experiences of Afghan refugees and immigrants who have settled in Ottawa, as revealed through original interviews. It explores why Afghans left or were displaced from Afghanistan and came to Canada, and considers what is entailed in the process of migration and settlement. Thus, it highlights the political, economic and social situation in Afghanistan prior to peoples' departure; how people came to, settled into and adjusted to Ottawa; the differences between life in Afghanistan and life in Canada; whether or not Afghans think about and remember Afghanistan; and Afghans' perceptions of Canadians and their feelings towards Canada. Primarily in this thesis I look at the relationship between people and places (places of birth and places of settlement), how people make places "home" since "home" is essentially about places and people who occupy these places; and what becomes of "home" when places are no longer inhabitable and people move to and live in other locations.

Studies of people and places are abundant within the discipline of anthropology. Anthropological studies of the place of Afghanistan and the Afghan people however are not so numerous. What is known today about Afghanistan comes from research carried out by (in addition to anthropologists) political scientists, feminists, historians and human rights organizations. Generally, anthropologists have divided Afghanistan into regions occupied by different ethnic groups and generated information on these groups, particularly the Pushtuns, the largest ethnic group in the country. In comparison to other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, there are a number of scholarly writings that touch on issues of society and culture, and gender and sexuality among Pushtuns. There has also been some interest among anthropologists on non-Pushtun groups. The topics that have

been discussed in relation to the Farghanachi, the Tajiks, the Turkmen, the Uzbeks, the Hazaras and the Baluch include gender and sexuality, and ethnicity and identity. There is however very little anthropological focus on the political situation and major political events that have unfolded in the country since the 1970s. Nevertheless, a variety of sources are available on civil war that started in 1979 and lasted for over two decades, and on discussions and debates of the main parties (the Afghan Marxist regime, the Mujahidin and the Taliban) involved in this conflict. Also, human rights organizations have documented some of the effects of civil war, which includes the forced migration of Afghans to neighbouring and other countries. There is very little research conducted among Afghans who have moved on from countries of initial refuge and have migrated and permanently settled in countries like Canada for example.

Migration and settlement in general has become an extremely popular field among academics of various disciplines. Much has been written about peoples' migratory and settlement patterns, which has been largely classified under the term diasporic community (often referred to as diaspora). Diasporic communities have traditionally been defined as groups of people who were expelled or violently removed from their homelands (place of birth or origin) and forced to resettle in other places (places of settlement). Through the act of expulsion, dispersion from a centre, and resettling in different locations a group of people become a diasporic community. Despite the fact that members of a diasporic community are situated in various places, they nevertheless remain part of the diasporic community because they retain memories of and/or connections with the homeland, and with other members of the diasporic community. As a result, diasporic communities cannot fully integrate and assimilate into places of

settlement. As more and more people are being displaced from their homelands and resettling in places of settlement, the traditional definition of a diasporic community has become somewhat dated and irrelevant. Instead, the term diasporic community, and everything that it includes, is being used as a conceptual framework, rather than as a descriptive category, to make sense of and understand different histories and experiences of migration and settlement of refugees, immigrants, and migrant workers (who may not have been forcibly removed from their homelands). The conceptual framework based on diasporic communities works through notions such as places (homeland, places of settlement) and people (community, ethnicity and identity). It examines how homelands impact diasporic identity; places of settlement influence (re)formations of communities and identities; group divisions occur as different members of a diasporic community settle in places; and “home” (the “trope for the security of the quotidian, the certainty of belonging in time and space, that taken-for-granted realm of predictability and control” [Mountcastle and Danon 2001: 106]) comes to constitute *home* (homeland, the place of birth, of true cultural and social belonging) and home (the immediate/current place of settlement).

In this thesis I use the overall conceptual framework, drawn from experiences of diasporic communities, to explain and think through the process of migration and settlement of Afghan immigrants and refugees from Afghanistan to Canada. I will examine whether and how the homeland of Afghanistan and the place of settlement of Canada have shaped, directed, and controlled the (re)creation of an Afghan community and identity, look at what else besides places can make up Afghan identity and illustrate conceptions of “home” among Afghans to see if they speak of “home” as *home* (place of

true belonging) and home (place of current residence). In order to be able to consider these factors I will introduce Afghans' personal accounts of migration and settlement obtained from interviews that I conducted among first-generation Afghans, above the age of twenty, living in Ottawa. Chapter 1 presents a description of the methods I used to carry out this research and my experiences of interviewing Afghans. In Chapter 2 I will outline the literature on the history, anthropology and political economy of Afghanistan. Chapter 3 details the main conceptual framework by reviewing the existing literature on the anthropology of people and places, of migration and settlement, and of diasporic communities and identities. Chapter 4 presents a summary of the interview data; and Chapter 5 combines the main concept and data, and provides an analysis of homeland, place of settlement, community, identity and "home" as conceived by Afghans.

Chapter 1: Methodology

The research was carried out using a number of methods. I began by conducting a broad review of all the academic literature and documents from organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, available in English on Afghan refugees. Initially I was only interested in speaking with people who fled Afghanistan because of conflict (as opposed to leaving for economic or other reasons) and either received refugee status before coming to Canada, or claimed asylum upon arrival in Canada. But, I later broadened my research to include Afghans who came to Canada as refugees and landed immigrants when I found out that it would be difficult to locate and contact a sufficient number of Afghan refugees in Ottawa.

I searched for any and all available literature on the anthropology and the history of Afghanistan. After determining some of the prevalent research topics on Afghanistan, which included ethnicity, identity, gender, politics/war and refugees, I looked predominantly for anthropological works relating to migration and settlement, in particular studies of diaspora, diasporic identity and culture, and any articles/books that contained discussions on the concept of “home”. Most of the literature was found through the Carleton Library catalogue or ordered from Interlibrary Loans. While continuing with the literature review, I attempted to make initial contacts with individuals who were informed about the Afghan community in Ottawa in order to determine whether it was possible to do the research and to determine where I would find interested Afghans. I met with two people, one at Catholic Immigration Services (CIS) and the other at Ottawa-Carleton Immigration Service Organization (OCISO), who were in charge of providing services to Afghan refugees/immigrants; I also sent emails to the Canadian Afghan

Student Association and the Afghan Peace Ambassadors, two youth organizations. They suggested that I go to adult high schools' English language program and directed me to teachers who taught Dari and Pashto evening language courses.

CIS agreed to speak to Afghans who sought their services, on my behalf and tell them about my research interests. I could not directly communicate with anyone because of confidentiality agreements between CIS and their clients. CIS did warn me by saying that some people from Afghanistan may have experienced many traumatic events and therefore they were unlikely to agree to be interviewed. This statement turned out to be true because the people they asked did not want to be interviewed. OCISO was not willing to contact anyone on my behalf and adult high schools did not want to assist me. The teachers who taught Dari and Pashto invited me to attend their classes. Once I had received clearance from the Carleton University Ethics Committee, I spoke with the principal teacher about the research and what it entailed. I was told that most Afghans would be reluctant to talk to me and it would be very difficult to find even ten people. Nevertheless, the teacher was quite eager to assist me. There were very few students in the night classes on the first night that I went there. There was a fire in an apartment building where many of them lived with their families. I was introduced in Dari and Pashto to the students who were present. I was told to come back another day. On a subsequent visit I was once again introduced. Students, mostly in their teens and early twenties, were given general information about the research and were requested to ask whether their families would be willing to be contacted so that I could speak to them in person or by telephone. The host of an Afghan radio program, broadcast on Carleton

University's radio station, made an announcement on my behalf. I also sought assistance from the Afghan embassy in Ottawa.

Initially, I intended to speak with ten to fifteen Afghan couples over a period of two months and conduct at least two interviews (semi-structured and informal depending on interviewees' preferences) with each one of them (wives and husbands were to be interviewed separately). I had decided to interview couples because I wanted to see whether gender significantly influenced patterns of displacement and experiences of migration. I quickly found out that restricting myself to only couples would limit the number of possible individuals willing to be interviewed. Therefore, I decided to include anyone who was a first generation Afghan and who was above the age of twenty, in order to ensure that they experienced life in Afghanistan and could remember it. Finding people and interviewing them proved to be a challenge. I had hoped to rely on snowball sampling techniques to increase the number of contacts. The general response, from people that I had interviewed, to questions of whether they knew of others who may be interested in being interviewed was, that they knew some people but these people would not want to talk to me. As a result, I could not exercise a great degree of discretion over selecting a "representative sample". One person explained his thoughts on why I was having difficulty finding interviewees,

Honestly, most people won't want to talk to you. They have an attitude that I don't understand. We are in Canada. You can say what you want, say anything against the government and even throw things at the embassy. In Afghanistan and India, if you say anything against the government you'll be arrested, thrown in jail, killed. Here, in Canada you can express your opinion.

When asked if this was the reason why most Afghans refused to talk to me, the person replied, "I don't know. Some Afghans in Ottawa are like this."

In total, I interviewed thirteen Afghans who were offered confidentiality and anonymity. Thus, all names of interviewees have been changed. During Ramadan I had to stop interviews because people did not want to be interviewed at that time. Interviews and time spent with the person usually lasted for an entire day and therefore, I did not find it necessary to return for another interview, although there were some interviews that were completed between two to four hours. Most of the interviews took place in private residences; three were held in food courts/public areas. Interviews in private residences often ended up being a family affair. All members of the entire family, whether parent and children families or families of siblings (because parents had either been killed during civil war or remained in Afghanistan/Pakistan) were present. Semi-structured interviews turned into informal conversations and discussions over dinners. Many showed me their collection of family videos and photo albums, and posters of Afghanistan.

I was consistently asked about my ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds, and was invited to share my experiences of migration and settlement. Once the conversations or interviews were completed, I was treated to lengthy Hindi film clips and mainly the children tested my knowledge of and interest in all things and persons Bollywood (Indian film industry). Every Afghan that I spoke to watched Hindi films, Indian cable programming and listen to Hindi music, as they had done in Afghanistan before the Taliban banned televisions and radios and shut down movie theatres. I found the interviews in private residences to be the most fruitful and enjoyable because people were more relaxed and open than those who I interviewed in public areas. Those interviewed in public were interviewed alone and they were more concerned about time

and precisely their lack of time. One person responded to all my questions with one-word answers or short phrases. After an hour and a half, I ended the interview. The person, quite surprised that it had ended so soon, suggested that I change the allotted duration of the interview (three to four hours) on the letter of information and consent form. Apparently, Canada was a place obsessed with time; it was a place where time mattered and thus, three to four hours was too much time to spend talking with someone.

English was a second language for every person who I interviewed. But most could proficiently communicate in it. I had no knowledge of either Dari or Pashto. As a result, all of the interviews were conducted in English although, in some cases, it would have been a little easier if I had some basic understanding of Dari at least. When speaking to me, people used English but when they were speaking to other family members or when they were discussing between family members how to respond to a question, it was not done in English. There was an expectation that I should be able to grasp the basic essence of the conversation given the fact that my cultural background was somewhat similar to theirs and therefore, people assumed that I could speak Urdu or Hindi. None of the interviews were tape-recorded since interviewees specifically stated that they did not want to be taped and therefore I was not permitted to use any recording device. I was told, numerous times, to not replicate verbatim what was said in the interviews. Many asked me to change the wording and the structure of sentences so that, when written, the text would follow proper grammatical conventions of English. Since a tape-recorder was not used, I was sometimes forced to make point-form notes, and write down what was said in the quickest and easiest manner possible. I rewrote my notes shortly after the

interviews were completed or as soon as I could so that they would be as accurate as possible.

When I approached Afghan families who agreed to be interviewed, I was told adamantly, from the beginning, that “politics” (i.e. the reasons or the causes behind war) was a topic they were not willing to discuss. I had, even before starting the contact and interview process, consciously decided to try to avoid any specific references to war, which turned out to be rather difficult. War, and everything it encompassed and affected, did come up since it had been a pervasive aspect of peoples’ lives in Afghanistan. Some people voluntarily talked about it. There were however others who had little to say about Afghanistan, especially given the complicated and painful histories, which I was often unaware of prior to meeting them. These individuals preferred to talk about and speculate on the current political situation rather than speak of personal experiences. I started the interviews with questions (see Appendix 1) of what life was like in Afghanistan prior to people’s departure; then they were asked to describe their experiences of displacement and migration to Pakistan, India or Iran, and their general impressions of Canada. Many people felt more comfortable and were able to respond better when I asked specific and structured questions about conditions in Afghanistan before war, Afghan culture, perceptions of Canada and Canadians. I had to rephrase questions like (for example) ‘what was it like in Afghanistan before you left’ to ‘what was the economic situation like when the war started’, because peoples’ answer to the first question usually was, “it was bad.” Some people did not understand what I meant when I asked the question, what do you think of when you hear the word “home”? I remember one man asking his daughter in Dari what the word “home” meant? From his response and from what I understood,

because she used the word Afghanistan a lot when she was talking to her father, she told him that I wanted to know what he remembered about Afghanistan. In such cases, I asked people to tell me about their memories of the places, the neighbourhoods where they lived in Afghanistan while contrasting it to the places and the neighbourhoods in which they live in Canada. Before elaborating on the data obtained through interviews, I will, in the next chapter, look at the data obtained through library research of academic sources available on Afghanistan.

Chapter 2: History, Ethnicity and Conflict In Afghanistan

In this chapter I outline the historical/political context of Afghanistan and review some of the significant scholarly works written about Afghans, the political situations under which they lived in Afghanistan as well as the conditions of displacement, and the process of migration and settlement for those Afghans who fled their country.

Historical Background (see Appendix 2)

Many books and articles (for example see Jawad 1992; Ewans 2001; Vogelsang 2002) that detail the political history of Afghanistan start with a general description of the origins of various ethnic groups such as the Pushtuns, the Tajiks and the Uzbeks in the country and indicate the specific geographical regions in which each group resides; outline the migratory routes that brought them to Afghanistan; trace Durrani Pushtuns' (Pushtuns are divided into two main groups: the Durrani and the Ghilazi) rise to power; point out some of the problems and weaknesses of successive political leaders and explain the immediate conditions that contributed to the outbreak of war in 1979, which lasted for twenty years and caused the mass exodus of Afghans to other countries. Nazif Shahrani suggests that the 1979 war was not just a reaction to what is sometimes referred to as the Soviet "invasion" of Afghanistan. It was also the result of longstanding ethnic tensions and conflict as well as the realities of economic deprivation that were primarily created by the political dominance of the Durrani Pushtuns but were nevertheless continued and even exacerbated by their successors, the Mujahidin and the Taliban. Thus, it is necessary to look at the policies of various political leaders, since the formation of the Afghan nation-state, as contributing to the causes and the continuation of war that began in 1979 (2002: 717). I give emphasis to the events that ensued prior to and after the

year 1979 in order to outline the political, the economic and the social situations that caused the displacement and migration of Afghans out of Afghanistan.

The Durrani Pushtuns' control over Afghanistan, which lasted until 1978, began when Ahmed Khan Durrani who is considered to be "the father" of Afghanistan came into power in 1747. He, an Abdali Pushtun (the sub-group Abdali Pushtuns became known as Durrani Pushtuns after Ahmed Khan's death), ruled over an area that extended from the Amu Darya to the Arabian Sea and included New Delhi, Kashmir, Sind, and most of Baluchistan (Ewans 2001: 25). During his reign, most of the powerful positions and land in Qandahar were given to members of the Abdali/Durrani. In 1773 Timur, Ahmed Khan Durrani's son, gained control over the kingdom. He transferred the capital from Qandahar to Kabul in order to consolidate power and control Pushtuns; many rebelled, which coincided with external threats from Sikhs who were expanding in the Punjab and took control of Peshawar. As the kingdom began to disintegrate internally and externally, Dust Muhammad Khan, who replaced Timur in 1793, turned to Britain for assistance. Britain, hoping to use Afghanistan as a buffer zone to protect British India from Russian expansion, invaded the country, defeated the Sikhs and took Peshawar from them in 1849 (Vogelsang 2002: 255).

Faced with unrelenting opposition, the British retreated from Afghanistan and reinstated an Afghan ruler Abdhur Rahman, Dust Muhammad's son. In return for British military and economic support, Rahman guaranteed that Afghanistan would remain loyal to Britain and accepted British administration (not control) over certain territories, such as Peshawar (Ewans 2001: 70). Abdhur Rahman, known as "Iron Amir", used brutal measures to gain control of areas outside of Kabul while neglecting to strengthen the

economy, build and improve basic infrastructure and social institutions (ibid 2001: 75). Durrani Pushtuns were encouraged to settle in the central region, predominantly populated by Hazaras; non-Muslims in eastern Kafiristan (*kafir* meaning non-believer) were forcibly converted to Islam and the area was renamed as Nooristan (land of light); Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen, Hazaras and even some Pushtuns who refused to accept his leadership were tortured and controlled through violence. These policies resulted in, created, or contributed to ethnic tensions between non-Pushtuns (Hazaras, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen) and Pushtuns (Jawad 1992: 15). People could not freely move to and live in any part of Afghanistan unless Abdhur Rahman granted them permission. This rule remained in place until 1964 and was enforced by the army (Vogelsang 2002: 74).

In 1893, Britain demarcated the border, known as the Durand line, between Afghanistan and British India. The Durand line arbitrary gave the eastern region of Afghanistan, predominantly occupied by Pushtuns, to Pakistan (what is today the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan). Abdhur Rahman reluctantly agreed to the division even if Pushtuns in NWFP refused to accept it (Ewans 2001: 78). Habibullah, Rahman's son and successor who was officially proclaimed as king in 1905 by the British, eased many of his father's restrictions, disbanded the secret police and concentrated on improving the economic and the social conditions in the country. He built schools, hospitals, and roads (Vogelsang 2002: 272). His successor Amanullah, who became king on 27th February 1919, sought to free Afghanistan from British influence and declared that Afghanistan was an independent nation. King Amanullah wanted to renegotiate the Durand line so that the NWFP could once again be part of Afghanistan as it had been during the era of Ahmed Shah Durrani (Ewans 2001: 87). It was hoped that a

referendum could be held so that Pushtuns in NWFP could decide whether they wanted to become an independent state or become part of Afghanistan. Britain refused to acknowledge Afghanistan's wishes. The area remained part of British India and with the partition (the creation of India and Pakistan) NWFP went to Pakistan. Afghanistan renounced or refused to recognize the Durand line (ibid 2001: 107).

In the 1950s, hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan increased over the issue of Pushtun self-determination in the NWFP. As relations worsened, Pakistan prevented the flow of goods and trade across the Pakistani border into Afghanistan. Afghanistan's economy began to crumble and the country became heavily reliant on economic and military support provided by the former Soviet Union (Ewans 2001: 108-109). Civil unrest continued, particularly among students and professionals who were unable to find proper employment. In order to quell public discontent, changes were made to the constitution. As of 1964, members of the monarchy were no longer eligible to hold political or judicial positions within the government. Certain civil liberties were increased, including freedom of the press and freedom of political expression and participation (Jawad 1992: 16). During this time, Mohammed Taraki, a *kuchi* (nomad), and Babrak Karmal, son of a wealthy governor, formed a Marxist-Leninist party known as the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in 1965. In 1967 the party split into two factions: Karmal founded *Parcham* (the banner), supported by non-Pushtuns and Taraki formed *Khalq* (the people), mainly supported by Pushtuns (Ewans 2001: 123). Numerous attempts to ameliorate the situation in Afghanistan were ineffective. A famine exacerbated worsening conditions in the early 1970s. On July 1973, Muhammad Daoud Khan, King Zahir Shah's cousin, carried out a successful coup d'état with the assistance

of the army and the *Parcham* faction of the PDPA (Vogelsang 2002: 299). Once in power, Daoud abolished the monarchy and declared himself as the leader of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. He tried to reduce Afghanistan's dependence on Soviet assistance by turning to Middle Eastern countries for financial and military support; and attempted to control and restrict the movement of political and religious opponents, such as members of the *Parcham*, the *Khalq*, and Islamic organizations (Vogelsand 2002: 300). The Soviets, wanting to retain their influential position within Afghanistan, supported and "pressured" the *Parcham* and the *Khalq* to work out their differences and reunite as the PDPA. As relations improved between the two factions, they began to recruit men, mainly Pushtuns, for the Afghan military. The Afghan military were trained by the Soviets. On April 1978 the Afghan military, backed by a reunited PDPA, killed Daoud and took control of the country (HRW: 2001).

The PDPA instituted a number of reforms in order to rebuild Afghanistan on the basis of Marxist principles (Ewans 2001:134). These reforms were mainly targeted towards people in rural areas, who were considered to be "traditional", "Islamic/religious" and lacking in formal education. Rural people considered those living in cities, especially Kabul, to be "western", "arrogant" and "unbelievers" (Jawad 1992: 18). Three significant reforms included land redistribution, elevation of the status of women, and mandatory secular education. In rural areas farmers worked the land that they rented from landowners or khans who were the political leaders of their respective villages. The well being of the village and the villagers was the responsibility of the khans. Thus, they relayed the problems and the needs of each village to the central government (ibid 1992: 9). Through the land redistribution policy, land was expropriated

from wealthy landowners and redistributed to poor landless farmers; debts between farmers and landowners were eradicated. As a result, the authority of the khans was drastically reduced (Edwards 1987: 29). In order to promote equal rights for women, the PDPA eliminated bride-price, forced marriages, the remarriage of widows, and a minimum age for marriage was set for both girls and boys (ibid 1987: 25). Moreover, under threats and intimidation, all children were compelled to go to school. Usually, in the rural areas, girls were sent to a *madrassah* (Islamic school) for a few years to obtain a basic understanding of Islam (ibid 1987: 27). These reforms were enforced or carried out by the military. The PDPA also tried to strengthen their control over the country by monitoring and minimizing all potential threats. Religious leaders, political opponents, members of professional and Islamic organizations, university professors and students were exiled, arrested, tortured, imprisoned, and/or executed (HRW Oct 2001). Many fled to Pakistan before they could be captured. Small opposition groups emerged in different parts of the country in 1978. Some Afghan military soldiers who deserted the army joined these groups (Ewans 2001: 143). They carried out protests and demonstrations. The situation in the country further deteriorated as members of the PDPA began to bicker and fight amongst themselves thereby threatening the unity of the party (Gladstone 2001: 5). On December 24, 1979 Soviet forces were “welcomed” by members of the Afghan government so that they (PDPA) could retain their political position. Those who were not part of the PDPA viewed the Soviets as an “invading” force (Ewans 2001: 149).

The resistance against the PDPA were known as the Mujahidin; they were composed of the small opposition groups that had formed within the country around 1978 as well as exiled Afghans (Pushtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras) in Pakistan, Iran, and some North

Africans and Middle Easterners. They were funded by, among others, the United States of America (US), Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran (HRW Oct 2001). Fighting between the Mujahidin and the Afghan government continued until 1992. During this time, it has been estimated that more than one million Afghans died and six million became refugees in the neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan (U.S Committee for Refugees 2002). It is the largest flow of refugees since World War II (Janata 1990: 67). The United Nations (UN) brokered the Soviet military withdrawal of 1989, which was agreed upon in 1988 in Geneva. But, it was not until 1992, when the Soviets, the US, and the Pakistanis officially terminated their military, economic and other aid programs to Afghanistan, that conflict between the Soviets and the Mujahidin ended (Ewans 2001:177). Civil war did not end with the departure of the Soviet military. Members of the Mujahidin, who continued to receive backing from governments of Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia, fought each other for powerful political positions. Between 1992 and 1994, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras fought together to prevent Pushtuns from gaining control of Kabul (Shahrani 2002: 719). During the civil war between the Mujahidin and the Afghan government, there was widespread destruction in city centres. Factories and government ministries/buildings were destroyed and people became unemployed. There were numerous reports of both women and men being raped. Women were afraid to leave their homes. They were forced by the Mujahidin to wear a burqa in public. Many families fled to rural areas and sought shelter with relatives. Some went to camps that were established for IDP, internally displaced people (Barakat and Wardell 2002: 914). By the end of 1994, fighting was restricted to Kabul and Kandahar (a Pushtun area). Meanwhile, the rest of the country formed into various “semi-independent” regions. Farsiwan (Farsi speakers) primarily

occupied the West, which was centred on the city of Herat; the northwest, populated by Uzbeks, centred on Mazar-i-Sharif; Hazaras controlled the central region; and Pushtuns dominated the east. Each region looked after its own affairs (Shahrani 2002: 720).

Some Mujahidin fighters who were disappointed with the outcome of their efforts joined with Afghan refugee students, schooled in *madrassas* in Pakistan, and religious teachers/leaders to form an organization known as the Taliban. By 1996, they had control of a significant portion of Afghanistan (Gladstone 2001: 16). The Taliban ruled according to their particular understanding of Islam. Both women and men had to dress and behave in the “Islamic” way; health and education services, particularly for women, were shut down; women were prohibited from seeking employment outside the home, except in the health sector, and they were not allowed to leave their private housing compounds unless accompanied by a close male relative (HRW Oct 2001). Thousands of civilians lost their lives during the Taliban period. The Taliban, who were predominantly composed of Pushtuns, persecuted many ethnic minorities, such as the Hazaras, the Uzbeks, and the Tajiks (Shahrani 2002:716). In 2001, the US and its allies attacked Afghanistan and severely weakened the Taliban. The UN established a transitional Afghan government lead by Hamid Karzai in 2002. From this point on, Afghanistan was deemed a safe country and therefore Afghans could no longer claim refugee status in other countries.

Anthropological and other literature on Afghanistan

The most prevalent areas of discussion in the academic literature on Afghanistan are ethnicity, gender, sexuality, identity, politics, refugees, refugee settlement and adaptation. Anthropological contributions on Afghanistan primarily focus on, but are not limited to, the Pushtun ethnic group and the ways in which pushtunwali (the Pushtun way

or the Pushtun code of behaviour) structures their society and culture. Pushtunwali entails notions of hospitality, refuge, equality, dispute resolution, honour, autonomy, and bravery (Edwards 1990: 64; Howard-Merriam 1987: 105; Christensen 1988: 8; Boesen 1986: 111; Ewans 2001: 5). In accordance with pushtunwali, Pushtuns are expected to be hospitable to each other and provide refuge to those who seek it, especially during periods of conflict, hardship or difficulty. Hospitality, in its simplest form, can be expressed by serving guests refreshments. It can also include sharing food with those who have none and providing shelter to anyone in danger (Edwards 1990: 74). Another tenet of pushtunwali states that all men are equal (in the sense that every man, regardless of his wealth or social standing, should be respected equally, every man has the same/equal right to membership in the Pushtun group) and therefore, they can participate in the *jirga* (the council) where important community decisions are made and disputes are resolved (ibid 1990: 64). All Pushtun men are considered to be equal because they believe that they are the descendants of Qaiz, a man who was converted to Islam by the Prophet Muhammad. It is the belief in a common ancestor, who became a Muslim during the time of Muhammad, that distinguishes Pushtuns from other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Members of non-Pushtun ethnic groups are Muslim converts who only turned to Islam after the time of Muhammad (Christensen 1988: 4). It is not sufficient to claim that equality exists between Pushtun men. Equality must be achieved and maintained through the fulfilment of honour. Honour, in conjunction with autonomy, independence and bravery, is upheld when a man is able to protect his property, which includes the physical house and the family, particularly the female members of his household (ibid 1988: 8). Only a brave man can preserve the integrity of his property, which exemplifies his

independence (Edwards 1990: 66). The pursuit of independence and autonomy can lead to familial and group conflict as individuals try to accumulate and reserve property and resources for themselves (Boesen 1986:113).

Women's sexuality plays a significant role in the maintenance of male and familial honour. It is believed that women are incapable of distinguishing between proper and improper social behaviour since they are less mentally and socially developed than men. Thus, women are more prone, than men, to behave inappropriately or have "indecent" relations (Boesen 1986: 113). In order to ensure virginity of unmarried girls and fidelity of married women, women's movements and behaviours are strictly controlled through *purdah*, the seclusion of women (ibid 1986: 111). *Purdah* can manifest itself in the form of a veil, headscarf, or a burqa, an all-encompassing cloth that covers the entire body, and/or seclusion of women within their homes. Women in urban centres, where there is a greater propensity to reside and mingle with non-kin and strangers, wear the burqa and remain in the home more often than women in rural areas, where residents are acquainted with each other. (Edwards 1990: 75). Of course, women do express resistance to control of their bodies and the general social view that women are "passive objects", through *landays* (oral poetry), which are sung only in the presence of other women. The songs touch on romantic love and pleasure, conflict, courage, rebellion, and female solidarity against male dominance (Boesen 1979/80: 237; 1983: 104). Some authors have suggested that the rules of *purdah*, modesty, and propriety are also applicable to men and not just women. Jon W. Anderson has illustrated, through his work on Ghilazi Pushtuns, that men must "veil" and avoid females, who are potential marriage partners, through "polite" behaviours and gestures. For example, in the presence of non-

kin females, men cover their eyes or face the wall in order to avoid eye contact with the opposite gender. Women must also conform to “polite” behaviour (1982: 402). Neither women nor men are expected to “veil” or seclude themselves, and behave “politely”, when they are with members of their own kin (mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sister-in-laws, brother-in-laws), since they cannot be potential spouses (1982: 399). Thus *pardah*, particularly the veil/*burqa*, has different implications depending on the context. It is not only used to control females/males. Rather, veiling can indicate the boundaries of kin, and non-kin (Edwards 1990: 75).

Pushtuns do not interpret and enact *pushtunwali* uniformly or homogeneously for Pushtuns, like other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, are divided into tribes and sub-tribes. Thus, intra-ethnic differences exist within ethnic groups (Pourzand 1999: 74). The practice of *pushtunwali* varies depending on the social situation/context, a family/group’s geographical location (rural/urban), and their contact with other ethnic groups (Edwards 1990: 65). Furthermore, certain aspects of *pushtunwali* concerning marriage and divorce, female inheritance, and women’s participation in religion contradict Islamic teaching. Islam stipulates that women can “accept” or “refuse” a marriage proposal and in some cases can even initiate divorce whereas according to *pushtunwali* women do not have the right to “accept” or “refuse” a marriage and they cannot divorce. Also, according to Islamic teaching, women are entitled to inherit some property. Pushtun women do not inherit any property nor can they attend the mosque to pray whereas the Koran states that women can pray in mosques. In such cases, Islamic values are to be adhered to; they should take precedence. However, matters are often settled on the basis of *pushtunwali* or in accordance with individual preference (Boesen 1979/80: 231). Generally, some form

of pushtunwali has permeated the social and cultural spheres of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan. However the term pushtunwali, an academic derivative, is used only in reference to Pushtuns (Dupree 1988: 28).

Some scholars explore other factors, not directly encompassed by pushtunwali, that shape the social lives of Pushtuns and in particular the Durrani Pushtuns. Nancy and Richard Tapper examine the ways in which Durrani Pushtuns of Northern Afghanistan use religion to justify unexplainable events. Everyday problems, which arise as a result of people's inability to conform to social norms, are viewed as the faults of individuals. Those who partake in illicit relations and behave inappropriately are considered to be shameful and lacking in honour (1988: 39). On the other hand, medical ailments, social problems and calamities are seen as an act of God and they should not be questioned. Sometimes, they may be punishments for people's sins or it may be the work of *jinn*s, supernatural evil beings that cause suffering. In either case, people are not blamed for the outcome (1988: 44). The Tappers also consider northern Durrani Pushtuns' use and assessment of food in religious events, special occasions (such as weddings where one's status could be displayed favourably), and daily meals. The food served in each context must be appropriate, or "good", befitting the persons who are serving and consuming it. "Good" food has beneficial qualities, which can be passed on to a person when it is eaten. Thus, "good" food is powerful. Food is considered to be "good" in a religious sense when it meets standards of *halal* (permitted) and *pak* (clean, pure). *Halal* and *pak* foods, which are blessed, have the power to impart blessings on people who eat them in religious settings. In special ceremonies, food should have a "good" taste, which has the power to bring happiness. The type, the quality and the quantity of the food must be reflective of

the status of the person hosting the ceremony. Otherwise, the food will not acquire a “good” taste. Everyday food is “good” when it is suitable for a person’s health, gender, and age. Such food gives the person who consumes it “physical or medical benefit” (1986: 63). In essence, the food system is a way in which the Durrani can explain social relations and their surrounding environments (1986: 74).

Ethnicity and Identity Among Non-Pushtuns

Other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, that have received some attention from anthropologists, include the Farghanachi (people who fled the Fergana valley of Uzbekistan during the Stalin period and who are often referred to as *muhajirin*, refugees/immigrants, in Afghansitan) the Tajiks, the Turkmen, the Uzbeks, the Hazaras and the Baluch. Anthropologists who write about these groups focus on issues relating to gender, ethnicity, and identity (Beattie 1982; Shalinsky 1984, 1986; Orywal 1985). They try to pinpoint the boundaries and markers of ethnicity, and the perceptions that individuals hold of their ethnically different neighbours. Audrey C. Shalinsky explores notions of gender, ethnic relations and the importance of marriage. The Farghanachi *muhajirin* who live in northern Afghanistan believe that women and men possess *nafs* (desire). Men have more *aql* (reason) than women and therefore men, unlike women, can control their desires. Women must be veiled and secluded in order to constrain desires, which prevent them from creating *fitna* (chaos) by distracting men from their daily responsibilities (1986: 326). However, Farghanachi men regard women from other ethnic groups as the greatest threat to order and stability. These women are considered to be seductresses (1986: 330). Farghanachi women feel that they are more likely to be harmed by non-Farghanachi men, such as Turkmen and Pushtuns, who are seen as violent and

physically abusive towards their women (1986: 331). Shalinsky also considers the purpose of kidnapping potential brides and the seemingly unfriendly negotiations of the terms of marriage between families of an Uzbek-Tajik group in the Kunduz region in northeastern Afghanistan. Hostilities prior to marriage, between the couple and the families, are symbolic. They test and assess the girl's devotion to her husband's family. Marriage illustrates the acceptance of the bride by her husband and his family (1984:1). Some inter-ethnic marriages in Kunduz, where Uzbek, Tajik and Kazakh immigrants from the former Soviet Central Asia are predominant, have become a competitive site for the display of ethnic identity. In an unfavourable marriage between an Uzbek girl and an Arab boy (a favourable marriage would have been between the Uzbek girl and an Uzbek boy), the Uzbeks use food, clothing and, most importantly, the Uzbek language to fiercely defend their Uzbek identity and to differentiate themselves from the Arabs (Shalinsky 1980: 281).

In other multi-ethnic regions in Afghanistan, where ethnic groups share similar cultural practices, language was the main marker of ethnic identity. For example, in Nimruz, a province in the Southwest, the Baluch reside with Pushtuns, Tajiks, and Shi'ite Farsi speakers (also known as Farsiwan). Dari is the language that is spoken by all ethnic groups in the region. Baluchi was only used in the presence of family members and other Baluchi (Orywal 1985: 43). In the Nahrin area of northern Afghanistan, Pushtuns, Tajiks, Absarinas, and Hazaras live together. Language, class, the sexual purity of one's own ethnic women versus the immodesty of other ethnic women were factors that were used to maintain identity, and highlight ethnic differences between the various groups (Beattie 1982: 46-47). Beattie suggests that further research needs to be undertaken in order to

understand ethnicity and identity in Afghanistan, particularly in multi-ethnic areas where different ethnic groups may have adopted other customs and practices. How do ethnic groups identify themselves? Which traditions have been maintained and which ones have not? (ibid 1982: 48). Richard Tapper states that Afghanistan cannot be neatly categorized into different ethnic groups within their respective regions as government officials, historians, ethnographers and other scholars have done. Ethnic categories and other forms of identification are in fact quite complex and heterogeneous. Three terms that are used to denote identity are *mazhab* (sect), *watan* (homeland), and *quam* (people, ancestors). Distinctions on the basis of *mazhab*, e.g. Imami versus Ismaili Shiites, and Sunnis versus Shiites, are only made in areas where there is conflict among people from different sects. *Watan* can be used to reference the place of one's birth and/or the place of current residence. *Quam* connotes one's ethnic group, descent and ancestry. Language, food, and clothing are some of the indicators of one's *quam*. Examples of *quam* include Pushtun, Uzbek, and Tajik (1989: 236). Often, ethnic groups will use these terms quite differently. Anyone who speaks Uzbek is usually classified as Uzbek. Pushtuns, in the north, use the term Uzbek to refer to all non-Pushtuns. Farsiwan, which means Farsi speaker, can be used to categorize a number of groups. Those who speak Turkic use Farsiwan to distinguish Turkic and non-Turkic speakers whereas Pushtuns will use it to indicate non-Pushtun speakers, which include Turkic speakers (1989: 238).

Politics

The political situation in Afghanistan prior to the beginning of war in 1979 and onwards has been greatly discussed by political scientists, feminists, and human rights campaigners. Some of the issues that have been written about include the history of the

formation of the Afghan nation-state (Gregorian 1969), the failure of the state to unify and centralize the country (Shahrani 1990); the existence of ethnic, religious and class differences that help to strengthen leadership of local politicians rather than the central government (Smithson 1991); state and non-state run educational programs (Majrooh 1988; Safi 1988); Soviet influence in the country (Roy 1989); methods used by various parties, during civil war, to rally mass support (Edwards 1995; Shalinsky 1993); the conditions of women before and after the Mujahidin (Pourzand 1999; Barakat & Wardell 2002) and during the Taliban period (Moghadan 2002). What remains to be researched is how violence and conflict, the Soviets, the resistance movement against the Soviets, and the Taliban have impacted the social and cultural lives of ordinary Afghans. Human rights organizations (Amnesty International, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Human Rights Watch) have given numerous accounts of the material and the economic deprivation that Afghans have experienced as a result of war and inefficient, sometimes brutal, political regimes. They have even commented on the inhospitable responses that some Afghans receive when they try to seek refuge in other countries. Pakistan, along with Iran, hosts the largest group of Afghan refugees (HRW: 2001). There has been some academic documentation of the lives of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and also in the US (Boesen 1986; Edwards 1986, 1990; Conner 1987; Howard-Meriam 1987; Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont 1988; Popal 1992; Schultz 1994; Omidian 1996; Mghir and Raskin 1999). They mostly touch on issues of temporary and permanent settlement and adaptation.

Afghan Refugees in Pakistan and the US

Inger Boesen looks at how Pushtun refugees cope with the standards and difficulties of life in refugee camps. Men can no longer be independent and autonomous as they have no tangible property, except tents, to protect and they are forced to rely on handouts. Veiling and seclusion of women are heightened as many families live among non-kin strangers (1986: 117). Pushtun refugees have expanded the concept of honour in order to come to terms with and justify their present condition. The fulfilment of honour rests not only on the enforcement of purdah but also on the refugees' support of the Afghan resistance movement against the Soviets. Members of the resistance were viewed as fighters defending or protecting the homeland (property); the Russians were "temporary occupants" of Pushtun lands (1986: 121). Pushtun refugees, as they began to adjust to their new lives, organized and transformed the camps so that they were reflective of the structure of rural society in Afghanistan. Leaders, like Afghan khans who represented their community in governmental matters, were appointed to represent refugees. These leaders, known as Ration Maliki, communicated directly with the camp staff and they were responsible for ensuring that the needs of the refugees were met (Edwards 1986: 319). Ration Malikis were eventually eliminated as a result of widespread corruption (ibid 1990: 84). Individual refugees tried to regain a sense of independence and autonomy by seeking employment among local aid organizations. Numerous families have come together to form a *jirga* so that they, rather than the camp administrative staff, can resolve problems (ibid 1990: 87). Special camps and programs have been established for women only families, who have lost male relatives in the war. These programs helped women acquire some degree of financial independence by

utilizing their skills of carpet weaving, embroidery and handicrafts production (Schultz 1994: 564).

Not all Afghan refugees in Pakistan settle in refugee camps nor are they all Pushtuns. Kerry Conner evaluates the composition of, and the motivation behind, settlements outside refugee camps. Generally, ethnicity/geographical background, political views, and educational qualifications are the three most important factors that determine settlement patterns (1987: 927). Centlivres and Centlivre-Demont explores the term 'refugee' and how it is conceptualized among Afghan refugees. There are three definitions for 'refugee': the U.N. definition, the Pushtun definition based on the notion of hospitality, and an Islamic definition. An Afghan refugee will use the definition that best describes her/his circumstance while other interest groups, such as the Pakistanis and the UN staff, try to use these classifications to control the refugees (1988: 145) Pakistan is not the only country where Afghan refugees reside. There are Afghans living in many Western countries. It has been noted that these Afghans are usually wealthy and have formal education (Howard-Merriam 1987:113; Pourzand 1999: 74). There is relatively little information on the settlement and adaptation patterns on Afghans in Western countries although there are a few studies from the US. Omidian (1996) investigates how the elderly cope with the process of resettlement; Mohammad Popal (1992) assesses communication difficulties between first-and second-generation Afghans; Mghir and Raskin (1999) study how different ethnicities cope with the traumatic experiences of war.

Academic literature that is available on Afghanistan predominantly focuses on issues of ethnicity and identity, and gender and sexuality particularly among the Pushtuns. There are also a few ethnographical accounts by anthropologists of other

groups such as the Farghanachi, the Tajiks, the Hazaras, Turkmen, the Uzbeks and the Baluch. Very little is known about some of the similarities and the differences among and between the various groups in terms of ethnicity, ethnic and cultural identification. As Hugh Beattie (1982) and Richard Tapper (1989) have pointed out, Afghans cannot be neatly divided or separated according to monolithic categories. Rather they suggest that it is important to consider how these groups have influenced each other by investigating the significance as well as the referential boundaries of terms such as Pushtun, Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara. There is also the factor of politics, i.e. the impact of more than twenty years of conflict, that need to be taken into account when looking at ethnicity, gender, culture and society within Afghanistan. It is not within the scope of this thesis to explore the differences, the similarities and the significance of ethnic categories within Afghanistan. However, I will examine (in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5) how conflict has affected ethnic categories, and identification and relations based on ethnicity as understood by Afghans living in Ottawa. In the next chapter, I will outline the general conceptual framework that will be used in considering the experiences of Afghans in Ottawa, by reviewing the literature on anthropological studies of migration and settlement.

Chapter 3: Anthropological Studies of People and Places

The phenomenon of migration and settlement, and its study, is nothing new. People have moved from their places of birth and migrated to places of settlement for centuries. Voluntary decisions to migrate, displacement arising from conflict, and forced expulsion are some of the reasons for movement.

Anthropologists have traditionally tended to favour studies of people permanently situated in their 'native' places rather than studies of people moving to and settling in other places (Malkki 1995: 508). Such a focus in anthropology is the result of what Lisa Malkki refers to as the discipline's inherent "sedentarist analytical bias" (1995: 508). Another approach, which has helped to elude studies of migration within anthropology, is the division and the separation of people and cultures based on the presumption that explicit differences exist between these groups, and therefore, they can be bounded within specific geographical territories (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a: 34). However, distinctions and separations that were once thought to be clearly present are seriously questioned as segments of people and cultures move to and inhabit places of other, 'non-native' people and cultures. Thus, as Gupta and Ferguson suggest, it is important to consider the process of migration and its impact on whomever and wherever in order to understand the relationships and connections between places, people, cultures and identity (1997b: 4). In essence what this inquiry entails is probing the construction, the assemblage, the parts of a place and a people. In this chapter, I will explore and review some of the literature on one aspect of the anthropological inquiry into peoples' migratory and settlement patterns, which is broadly categorized under the term diasporic community (usually written as diaspora). Traditionally, diasporic communities have been

defined as groups of people, who were expelled or forcibly removed from their place of birth or origin, often referred to as the homeland, and were resettled in other places. Through the process of being expelled from one location, which divides and separates a people into groups of people, and forced to resettle in numerous different locations, diasporic communities are created. Yet, they continue to think about and hold onto memories of their homelands, regardless of whether they do or do not want to return there. Diasporic communities do not fully 'integrate' into their places of settlement because they retain memories of their homelands. However, as the number of groups of people being displaced from their homelands increased (and continue to increase), the term diasporic community and everything it encompasses is being used not as a descriptive category but rather as a conceptual framework to explain and think through the process of migration and settlement of immigrants, refugees and migrant workers (who may not necessarily have been forcibly removed from their places of birth and resettled in other places). Thus, there is no one definition of a diasporic community (there cannot be nor should there be just one definition) or a definite list of particular features that clearly identify which groups of people are and are not diasporic communities since there are many histories of migration and settlement.

The Making of Diaspora

The word diaspora comes from the Greek term diaspeirian, dia meaning across or over and speirian meaning to sow or scatter seeds (Brazier and Mannur 2003: 1; Cohen 1997: ix). It was initially used by the Greeks to explain "an abrupt but natural process, the fruitful scattering away of seeds from the parent body that both dispersed and reproduced the organism", and the term was first used in the book *The Peloponnesian War*, by

Thucydides to describe the result of war in the city of Aegina as “the violent and unnatural uprooting, scattering and exile of its population across the Hellenic world” (Tölöyan 1996:10). It later appeared (circa 250 BCE) in the Septuagint, a translation of the Torah by seventy Jewish scholars, in Alexandria Egypt in reference to Jewish priests and scribes who had been banished to Babylon from 586 to 530 BCE (ibid 1996: 10; Braziel and Mannur 2003: 1). From then onwards, diaspora was commonly associated with ordinary Jewish people, not priests or scribes, who had voluntarily migrated to places such as Seleucid Antioch and Ptolemaic Egypt in search of employment and better living conditions. It was during the Greco-Roman period, when Jews fled Roman persecution and the Romans destroyed Jerusalem around 66-140 CE, that diaspora became synonymous with Jews, and in particular with forced, aggressive and brutal expulsion of Jews from their homeland (Tölöyan 1996: 11). The ‘forced, aggressive and brutal expulsion’ (what once was a defining characteristic of diasporic communities) was given new meaning as other diasporas also began to emerge through varying experiences of displacement, migration and settlement. In the 16th century an African diasporic community appeared with the advent of the slave trade whereby Africans were transported to the New World (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 2). An Indian diasporic community also emerged in the 19th century when Indians were sent all over the world as indentured labourers, to Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, Sri Lanka, East Africa, and other places (Tölöyan 1996: 12).

Defining the Term Diasporic Community

The initial definition of diasporic communities was strictly based on Jewish patterns of displacement, migration and settlement even though it was applied to a

number of different groups. Thus, William Safran formulated the “ideal or legitimate type” of diasporic communities, which included foremost the Jews, who were followed by (according to him) others such as the Armenians, the Palestinians, the Chinese, the Turks, the Maghrebi, and the Greeks. He defined diaspora as “expatriate minority communities” that could be identified by six main features which were: “a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland (understood as the historical place where diasporas originated or came from), alienation in the host...country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship” (Safran 1991 in Clifford 1994: 305). Tölöyan expands on what she calls, the “Jewish-centred definition” of a diasporic community that encompasses a large group of people who were violently removed/displaced from their natal lands or “coerced” to migrate and resettle in various locations; retain “collective memories” of the homeland through cultural practices and objects, such as the Torah or the Ramayana for example; experience discrimination and racism in places of settlement, where they are seen as a homogeneous and unified group and any ethnic/cultural differences within a diasporic community are erased; form communities and identities that are distinguishable from other communities in places of settlement; communicate with members of the diasporic community located in other places; and maintain “symbolic, ritual and religious” connections with the homeland through memories, visits, gifts (1996: 15). Diasporic communities, as Safran and Tölöyan have defined it, then are people who involuntarily migrated from their homelands and settled in different places, where they are often discriminated against. They maintain links with the homeland, either through communication with people there or with members of the diasporic community in other

places of settlement, through memories, through cultural practices recreated/reproduced in places of settlement. These memories and connections form the basis of community and identity in places of settlement.

Many scholars, including Tölöyan (1996) and Clifford (1994), have claimed that it is no longer sufficient to construct diasporic communities within a Jewish framework. They have dismissed or countered Safran's notion of the "ideal or legitimate type" of diasporic communities, contested diasporic communities' "desire for eventual return" and expanded the term to account for the multiple conditions and histories under which people migrate and settle as more and more people are being displaced or are departing from their homelands. That is, parallels are being drawn between experiences of diasporic and other (immigrant, refugee, migrant) communities in places of settlement. Nevertheless, as Brazile and Mannur notes, diasporic community is not a "catch phrase" that should be used "in an uncritical, unreflexive application" to describe all forms of movement, such as travel and tourism for example. They suggest that it is necessary to consider the factors of war, economics, "reconfiguration of nation-states (in Central Europe and Balkans for example)" that cause migration of massive numbers of people (2003: 3). Thus it is not only about displacement from the homeland; it is also about several types of and forces behind displacement. Equally important (to diasporic and other communities) of course are the social, the political and the economic conditions under which the process of emplacement and settlement occurs (Brah 1996: 182). Diaspora, "in the modern usage" involves either traditional "population categories", like the Jews and the Armenians, or a "social condition entailing a particular form of 'consciousness' [of displacement, disempowerment, involuntary migration, memories of

the homeland, discrimination in places of settlement]” among immigrants, refugees and migrant workers (Anthias 2001: 631). Therefore, rather than attempting to pinpoint who or what characterizes diasporic communities, attention has been diverted to finding the general applicability and importance of the concept in relation to issues concerning places, homelands, nation-state, people and cultures. Diasporic communities weaken the “sedentarist analytical bias” and the tendency to bound/group people into distinct geographical territories, which are predicated on precise differences. They loosen and unravel the variations, the diversity between places/people. Below, I turn to examine a number of works on diaspora.

Diasporic “Collective Identity”

Much of the literature on diasporic communities questions whether and illustrates how homelands significantly impact and influence diasporic “collective identity”. It is undeniable that homelands, whether symbolic or real, serve as a point of unification for diasporic communities partly because homeland and its respective diasporic community are an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991). Benedict Anderson coined the term “imagined community” in order to explain the existence of and peoples’ fervent, zealous support for nation-states. He suggested that every nation-state thinks, acts, or “imagines”, in a uniform fashion, itself to be completely different from any other nation; differences are separated and reinforced on a mass, “collective” level through political borders. The “imagined community...is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion...communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are

imagined” (ibid 1991: 6). When people, whether diasporic or not, move outside the boundaries of their respective nation-states, they continue to think about and “imagine” the “community” of their homelands through memories or by attempting to recreate it in places of their settlement. However, members of the diasporic community, depending on their particular experiences, situations, and exposure/familiarity with different “styles” of “imagining”, have diverging views on the conception, the representation, the location, and the meaning of a homeland. The homeland could therefore serve multiple purposes for individual members within any given diasporic community.

Mark-Anthony Falzon considers the importance of the Sindhi place of origin (what is now the Sindh province in Pakistan) among the Hindu Sindhi diasporic community. He finds that Hindu Sindhis care little for the symbolic, ancient Sindh land, which has become a mere distant and somewhat irrelevant memory. Instead, they have pinpointed a place or a space for cultural production and identity formation. Mumbai is the “cultural heart” of the Hindu Sindhi diaspora; it is a place where Sindhis of various backgrounds congregate to display identity and culture, but it is not seen as a replacement for the place of origin (2003: 679).

For some diasporic communities, “myths/memories of the homeland” only become the conscious foundation of “collective identity” when they face precarious conditions within their places of settlement. Second and third generation South African Indians, whose (grand)parents were brought there as indentured labourers during colonial times, did not maintain many links with India, except through Hindi music and film. Yet, when apartheid ended and South African Indians’ position in the country was threatened, many vigorously reasserted parts of their Indian identity, through religious, political

associations connected with India and by attempting to locate familial natal towns and villages in India. Reassertion of associations with the homeland was the means by which the Indian diasporic community came to terms with their uncertain presence in South Africa (Hansen 2002: 12).

Sometimes, diasporic “myths/memories of the homeland” are realized and ‘representative’ places for diasporic communities are created. However, these realized places often fail to live up to expectations of those within the diasporic community. Upon arrival in these places, members of the diasporic community find it difficult to reconcile between “myth/memories” and reality. They generate problems and fractures, which make the perception of a “collective identity” rather implausible. Susan Pattie reflects on three notions of homeland held by the Armenian diaspora: the current Armenia, which is known as *Hayastan* in Armenian; ancient *Hayastan*, the lands which the Armenians occupied prior to the Byzantine era, and what is present-day eastern Turkey and the Caucasus; the exact town, village, region of a person’s familial origins (1999: 83). While all Armenians acknowledge that the Republic of Armenia should exist, diasporic Armenians and Armenians in Armenia differ on what and who constitutes Armenia and Armenian. Diasporic Armenians place greater emphases on ancient Hayastan to form the basis of Armenian identity while Armenians from or near the Republic adhere to the principles outlined by the Armenian state. Armenians who migrate to the US from the Middle East consider American Armenians to be “not-fully” Armenians as they cannot speak the Armenian language or because they are of mixed parentage (1999: 86). On the other hand, many diasporic Armenians who lived in the US or Europe and migrated to the Armenian Republic realize that they are unable to relate to the Armenians in Armenia,

due to cultural differences. A young Armenian couple from Cyprus found that they could not identify with the Armenian culture in Armenia because it was too Russianized whereas their Armenian culture, they thought, was more Middle Eastern (1999: 87).

Israel is a nation-state created for the Jewish diasporic community. All Jews are encouraged to move to Israel and think of the country as the Jewish homeland. (Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2001: 3). Jewish Russian university students, who have permanently settled in the “promised land”, believe that Israel is their homeland. However, they do not feel that they must always remain as Israel citizens or forsake their Russian background in order to retain their Jewish identity (ibid 2001: 11). There are of course times when members of diasporic communities participate in, support and facilitate constructions of their respective nation-states (with the likely intention of never returning or settling there) to a greater extent than people within these places. Daphne Winland examines conflicts and contestations of the creation and the preservation of Croatia. The Croatian diasporic community in Toronto make financial contributions to the Croatian nation-state, thereby upholding and reinforcing official state ideologies of what constitutes Croatia. Croatians in Croatia hold negative views about the diasporic community, who are seen as interfering in Croatia’s affairs and supporting an idealistic and irrelevant nationalist project (2002: 695).

Diasporas may change their conception of homelands in order to sufficiently justify the impossibility of return, or replace homeland with another place or objects when it is no longer tangible. Initially Arab refugees, who fled Palestine in 1948 when the state of Israel was formed and found refuge in the area that became known as the West Bank, sought the right of return to ‘the land of Palestine’, the physical place that

they had once inhabited. However, as hopes of life in Palestine faded, the refugees considered themselves to be an exiled people who wished to go to a land, a Palestine that was not controlled or determined by Israelis (Bisharat 1997: 204). Members of the Crimean Tatar diaspora in Uzbekistan cannot go back to their homeland even as they are encouraged by the Uzbek state to return. Many do not have the necessary financial and other resources needed to journey back. Nevertheless, they continue to reinforce connections to their homeland through household objects and gravestone inscriptions of ancestral places (Uheling 2001:400).

Not all places of origin encompass the totality of a nation-state nor are they the sentimental point of reminiscence and/or contemplation for diasporic communities alone. Homeland can be a nation-state; it can also be specific towns, villages, areas within a nation, which are imbued with emotions that vary on the basis of ethnicity and gender. The *Ishelhin*, a subgroup of the *Imazighen* or the Berber of the Anti-Atlas Mountains, accept Morocco as their homeland, the larger homeland and claim to be Moroccan in the presence of non-Moroccans. But, within Morocco, a true *Ishelhin* belongs to the *tamazirt*, meaning village, rural area (the homeland of *Ishelhin*), which is sustained by sedentary women and migrant men (Hoffman 2002: 928). For men who work in the city and occasionally visit their villages, the *tamazirt* is a place of the past, of nostalgia; the *tamazirt*, for women, embody the burdens and the intensive labour that accompany rural life, as well as family and social relations. Women rarely leave the *tamazirt*. They cultivate the land and supply the resources necessary to maintain the rural area, their homeland within the larger homeland of Morocco (ibid 2002: 940).

Diasporic Experiences

Diasporic communities and identities are not only dependent on “imagined” homelands. Places of settlement can make considerable contributions and offer possibilities or challenges to individual members within a diasporic community. There are many factors including “social relations of class and racism”, “state policies” on citizenship, membership and “inclusion in the construction of the nation” that determine diasporas’ experiences in places of settlement (Brah 1996: 182). Numerous parties make attempts to control and influence diasporic “imagining” by allowing them limited and specific participation in societies that they dwell in. Verne Dusenbery highlights some of the problems which arise as a result of the Canadian state’s policy of multiculturalism, defined on the basis of ethnic or national groups that maintain links to homelands, that the Sikh diasporic community faced when they tried to organize and form a Sikh community in Canada. In the 1970s, the Sikhs could not have an officially recognized Sikh community organization or any Sikh associations because they were communally identified by a religion not ethnicity; there was no specific Sikh homeland that they could celebrate connections to. The Sikh religion was not recognized by the Canadian state as forming the basis of the Sikh diasporic community. Instead, Sikhs had the choice of joining East Indian organizations and identifying with the Indian nation-state (1995: 32). Ming-Bao Yoe shows how the German state controls Chinese participation in German society. Germans are constructed as “white and clean” who are unlike “dark, unclean, disorderly and chaotic” foreigners, non-Germans, the Chinese for example (Peck 1990: 111). Only those who have “German blood” can become German citizens. The Chinese are blamed for the lack of jobs available, even though many Germans are more inclined to resent East Germans for ‘draining’ the economy but cannot speak ill of them because

East Germans, after all, are part of Germany (2001: 187). Other ways that Chinese presence in Germany is experienced is through Chinese restaurants, which house stereotypical Chinese objects such as red lanterns, and golden dragons (2001: 185). In Italy, the country that has the highest crime rate in southern Europe, African immigrants are usually targeted as the culprits of criminal activities. They are commonly viewed as inherently criminal whereas crimes committed by Italian natives are easily dismissed as non-threatening behaviour of a few unemployed youth (Angle-Ajani 2002: 41).

The racist and discriminatory treatment of diasporic communities, their sense of feeling as outsiders and not as full members of places of settlement inevitably facilitates the maintenance or retention of diasporic connections to homelands. One example is the case of Balkan immigrants in Canada who initially identified themselves as Dalmatians and Istrians. However, as episodes of racism and discrimination increased, many of the immigrants came together and formed a united Croatian community. Croatian identity was strengthened with the formation of a Croatian nation-state (Tölölyan 1996: 13).

Kurds in Turkey are reluctant to get involved in associations that politicize the issue of Kurdistan and fight for international recognition of its independence, and are hesitant to affirm a Kurdish identity especially since the Turkish state projects a construction of Kurds as “backward and ignorant” (Houston 2001: 18). There is a Kurdish television channel (Med TV) that broadcasts Kurdish music, dance, folklore and news in Kurdish and Turkish for members of the Kurdish communities located in various countries. The programming offers alternative images of Kurdish identity and culture, which differ from the Turkish state; it is a “resistance to a coercive Turkish identity” (ibid 2001: 27). Diasporic communities use “ethnic media” as a form of defiance against

negative projections of their communities. Programming typically found in “ethnic media” correlate closely with idealized versions of homeland, culture, and identity (Cunningham 2001: 143). Nevertheless, diasporic communities do interpret “ethnic media” messages and modify them to fit their specific circumstances.

Marginality is not the only diasporic encounter of migration and settlement. Places of settlement offer innovative opportunities and possibilities for social, political, cultural reformation/recreation/alteration of diasporic communities and identities. They are “potentially the sites of hopes and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure” (Brah 1996: 193). Not all members of any given diasporic community have exactly similar experiences of places of settlement. Experiences differ from one generation to the next, among ethnicities, genders and classes (ibid 1996: 194). Boundaries of diasporic communities and identities are never permanent or rigid. They are constantly in a state of flux and change; they are “constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively” (ibid 1996: 183). For, communities and identities are formed and reformed, not through “essentialist” points, but through daily interactions with others. The formation is a never-ending, incomplete “process”. It is “always in-process” (Hall 1996: 2). The “always in-process” formation of diasporic communities and identities are also dependent on other communities within places of settlement. Members of diasporic and other communities intermingle and smudge each other’s borders/boundaries of communities and identities. However, different communities can resist the blurring of boundaries, which can lead to discrimination and conflict (Brah 1996: 209).

Many scholars focus on whether places of settlement influence diasporic communities and identities by examining how diasporas adapt cultural aspects, practiced in the homeland, to lived realities in their places of settlement. Karen Pureshi looks at generational differences in cultural practices of Pakistanis in Edinburgh. Many Pakistani parents hope that their children, particularly girls, adhere to and are instilled with appropriate Pakistani values; Pakistani youth are coaxed into restricting their social relations to the family and they are bombarded with Pakistan programs that display cultural reminders (1999: 315). On the other hand, second-generation Pakistanis negotiate and mediate between demands of the local Pakistani community and the larger Scottish community. For example, some have opted for “love marriage” or a “self-arranged marriage” instead of traditional arranged marriage. Couples, who have already agreed to marry, convince their parents, who do not know that their children have found their own partners, to orchestrate the union (1999: 324).

Those who migrate to and settle in France are expected to integrate into French society and become “fully French”. North African immigrants (Franco-Maghrebis) feel excluded from French society, i.e. they do not feel “fully French” especially as the French discount and thus invalidate memories of the colonial past still lingering in Maghrebi consciousness. Franco-Maghrebis use rai music, which originated in Algeria and during the colonial times was the forum for expressing anti-colonial sentiments, to counter French constructions of Maghrebi identity (Gross, McMurry, Swedenburg 1996: 146). Descendants of Franco-Maghrebis born in France are less interested in tackling issues specifically related to Franco-Maghrebi feelings of exclusion. Rather, they have formed coalitions with other ethnic groups through rap music in order to address the

marginal positions of youth in French society (ibid 1996: 149). A similar situation also arises in the Quebec Haitian immigrant community. First generation Haitians eventually want to return to Haiti. However, while in Quebec, their efforts are placed on highlighting the differences between Haitians and people of African origin. In doing so, they hope that they can avoid the negative experiences of Afro-Quebecois (Potvin 1999: 53). Second-generation Haitians are more inclined to assert their similarities with the Afro-Quebecois youth. They feel that many of the problems that the Haitian community face are not only relevant to their community. In fact, they identify with the history of African Americans and do not consider themselves as diasporic Haitians but rather as Afro-Quebecois (ibid 1999: 62). Aisha Khan illustrates how two diasporic communities' practice of Islam is shaped by the needs of each community. Members of the African diasporic community in Trinidad use Islam as "an alternative lifestyle" that offers comfort against their social, political, and economic marginality in Trinidadian society; Islam provides members of the Indian diasporic community in Trinidad the necessary forum to evaluate, improve and better themselves (1995: 107).

Communities within a Diasporic Community

As members of a diasporic community settle into various places of residence, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain any sense of a single diasporic "collective identity". That is, it is not only the people of places of residence that individual members of a diasporic community must respond to. They must also contend with other members of the diasporic community located in different settlement places as well as the people situated in homelands who sometimes hold intolerable and ambivalent feelings toward them especially as diasporic materials for identification, such as language, religion,

political orientation, are utilized and valued differently. The Polish diaspora in Kazakhstan, who were expelled from what is now eastern Ukraine (in the 19th century this region was part of Poland before it was annexed by Russia and transferred to Kazakhstan in 1936), use Ukrainian to communicate in everyday, ordinary situations. Kazakh Polish, which is incomprehensible to Poles in Poland, is reserved for special and religious events, and is only spoken by teachers and church leaders. Nevertheless, Polish has become one of the central symbols of Kazakh Polish identity, even though Polish Poles do not identify Kazakh Poles as Poles and the Kazakhs view Kazakh Poles as Ukrainians (Szynkiewicz 1999: 82). The Kazakh diaspora in Russia often try to highlight the dissimilarities between them and Kazakhs in Kazakhstan while simultaneously underlining their links to Kazakhstan. Russian Kazakhs, unlike Kazakhstan Kazakhs, do not fluently speak the Kazakh language. Kazakhs believe that Russian Kazakhs behave in uncultured, non-Kazakh ways; Russian Kazakhs see themselves as progressive and forward in comparison to Kazakhs who are considered to be traditional and conservative (Naumora 2002: 29).

It is not uncommon for conflict and hostilities to arise among individual communities within a diasporic community especially when they threaten and criticize each other's boundaries of communities and identities in places of settlement. Haller shows how Sephardic Jews of Gibraltar come to resent Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants because they introduce Ashkenazi religious practices and beliefs to the local community. As a result, the Jews of Gibraltar, who have for generations fostered an identity connected to the Mediterranean, are being forced to alter their distinct Jewish identity (2000: 23). Naama Sabar considers the reasons behind Israeli Jewish immigrants' (in the

US) desire to form communities separate from American Jews. She found that Israeli immigrants avoided contact with American Jews and refused to observe any Israeli national holidays. On the other hand, American Jews celebrated Israeli national holidays and displayed their allegiance to the Israeli state. Many American Jews and Jews in general view Israeli immigrants in the US as traitors of the Zionist ideology that underpins the Israeli state (2002: 70). Östen Wahlbeck examines some of the obstacles that prevent Kurdish community organizations from fully servicing and meeting the needs of Kurdish refugees in Finland and England. Some Kurds were reluctant to seek help from the organizations because they did not agree with its overtly political nature, which was seen as antithetical to their Muslim faith (1991: 157). There were Kurdish refugees who even denied their Kurdish identity in order not to be associated with these organizations (1991: 161).

“Home”

Diasporic communities through the process of displacement, migration and settlement come to be in many places for short, temporary periods and for lengthy, permanent periods of time. As they settle, unsettle and resettle between homelands and other places one question that arises is where/what constitutes “home”. “Home” (especially for those who have lost access to places, things, structures (houses) and people once called home) could be an “internal space” where comfort could be found within oneself (Habib 1996: 96). “Home” can also be both the homeland (*home*), “the mythical place of desire...place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’ ”, and the place of settlement (home), “the lived experience of a locality. Its sights and sounds.” (Brah 1996: 192). It is

the place of “familiarity” and “comfort” where people think, act and behave similarly (Ahmed 1999: 330). Not all places can equally or easily become “home”. Members of diasporic community can “feel at home” in places of settlement through “the lived experience of a locality”, i.e. they could “be ‘in’ [living in]” a place. Yet, they may not consider these places to be “home”, where they truly feel welcomed, because they are constantly reminded, through racism, discrimination and other exclusionary practices, that they are “not ‘of’ [originated from]” that place (Brah 1996: 192). As a result, diasporic communities maintain a “homing desire”, which is not a “desire” for return to the homeland but a “desire” for a sense of being welcomed into, a sense of belonging to, a sense of being part “of” a place (which they once had in the homeland and want in the place of settlement); the “desire” is exemplified, satisfied, fulfilled through connections maintained with or memories retained of the homeland. The “homing desire” could be a reproduction of the diasporic community’s interpreted version of homeland culture for example (ibid 1996: 193). “Home”, like diasporic community and identity, “evolves with time” (Habib 1996: 96).

There are a few studies that investigate what becomes of places called “home” when people temporarily or permanently move from there. Kim Matthews explores the differences between homeland and places of settlement, and the relationship between place and identity among Asian (Indian and Pakistani) Muslim immigrants in Canada, who came from Central and East Africa. Most immigrants saw Africa as their birthplace and as the place of the past. Canada was the future, a place of possibilities and opportunities (2002: 81). But it was not so much a geographical place that mattered. Rather, what was important was a place, the mosque, where it was possible to express

their religious faith and partake in cultural practices (2002: 73). Nicole Constable examines how *home*, the Philippines, has changed for Filipina domestic workers as a result of their temporary stay in Hong Kong. Many of the domestic workers were reluctant to return *home* because it required sacrifices that they were unwilling to make, such as forsaking friendships and newfound independence (1994: 206). *Home* demanded too many changes to their lives; it was a place that they had to “fit back into” (1994: 207). Mountcastle and Danon illustrates some of the complicated notions of *home* that warfare produce. Numerous “Yugoslavians” were displaced and dislocated during the war. Upon return, what once constituted *home* and homeland were no longer conceivable or tangible. Houses encompassed pain and suffering; homeland represented something new. It was a politicized place based on ethnic distinctions (2001: 107).

The term diasporic community was once used only to describe a specific category of displacement, migration and settlement. But now it is also used as a general framework to explain and think through the process of settlement, (re)formations of communities and identities that are built around memories and lived realities of multiple places among different groups of people such as immigrants, refugees, and migrant workers. Therefore, as stated earlier, diasporic communities “in the modern usage” involves either traditional “population categories”, like the Jews, or a “social condition entailing a particular form of ‘consciousness’ [of displacement, disempowerment, involuntary migration, memories, discrimination in places of settlement]” among immigrants, refugees, and migrant workers (Anthias 2001: 631). As such, I do not define Afghans in Ottawa as a diasporic community, a traditional “population category”, but as a people with a diasporic “consciousness”. In the next chapter, I will describe Afghans’ (immigrants and refugees)

experiences of migration and settlement in order to question whether and examine how factors that form diasporic communities and identities shape the community and identity of Afghans in Ottawa, their place of settlement. The factors that diasporic communities and identities depend on include: the conditions under which diasporas migrate from the homeland and settle in places of settlement; “collective” myths/memories of symbolic and real homelands which are mediated by diasporic experiences in places of settlement; exclusionary practices that constantly remind diasporas that they are “in” but not “of” places of settlement which leaves a lingering “homing desire” and positive practices/aspects of settlement places that provide new opportunities and possibilities; differences and multiplicities, that are dependent on ethnicity, class, age, of ever-changing and incomplete diasporic community and identity in places of settlement; the complication of the notion of “home”.

Chapter 4: The Data on Experiences of Displacement, Migration, and Settlement Among Afghans in Ottawa

The purpose of this chapter is to examine in depth some of the important and most common points that arose in my conversations and discussions with Afghans living in Ottawa. I begin by providing brief and relevant biographical information on the people I spoke with, which will be followed by a general summary of personal narratives of conditions of displacement, as well as the process of migration and settlement. The summary details the lives as well as the living conditions of Afghans in Afghanistan before 1979, the Mujahidin and the Taliban period, in places of refuge or transit in Pakistan, India, and Iran, and in the place of settlement in Canada. Thus, it reflects opinions and thoughts of first-generation Afghans, four women and nine men, in Ottawa.

Background Profile (see Table 1: 55; Table 2: 56)

Out of the thirteen interviewees, five were Tajiks, four were Pushtuns, one was Hazara, one was Tajik-Pushtun, and two were “Afghans” (they identified themselves as “Afghans” rather than as Tajik or Pushtun or Hazara). Ten of the thirteen were from the city of Kabul (primary place of residence), one was from Mazar-i-Sharif, one was from the province of Logar (70 kilometres south of Kabul) and one was from Nagrahar province (close to the Afghan-Pakistani border). All are Muslims.

Seven of the thirteen (two women and five men) were married and all of these seven, with the exception of one, had their spouses and children with them in Canada; only one married woman did not have children. Married individuals' ages ranged from 32, 35, 36, mid-forties, 45, and 46, to late forties (approximate). Out of the seven, two were unsure of their birth dates and hence their ages because their parents had not recorded their date of birth. According to them, it was not a common practice to mark

birth dates in the “olden days”. The remaining six (two women and four men) are unmarried. The ages of unmarried individuals ranged from 25, 28, 22, 26, and 26 to 32. Unmarried individuals came to Canada with their immediate family (siblings and/or parents). Two of the unmarried came with younger siblings; one man came with his parents and siblings; three came alone.

Four out of the thirteen interviewees are Canadian citizens. Two out of four have been in the country for over seven years, one for thirteen years and the other for sixteen years. Six out of the thirteen are landed immigrants; they have been in the country for two, three or four years. Only two came as refugees; one has been in Canada for two years and the other for five years. One man came to Canada and sought asylum. He has been living in the country for three years and has been granted refugee status but is still waiting for his landed immigrant papers.

People began to migrate from Afghanistan in the early 1980s. The earliest date of departure for those I interviewed is 1981, two years after the 1979 Soviet “invasion” of Afghanistan. Others left in 1987 and 1989. Nine left in the 1990s, during the end of the civil war between the Mujahidin and the Afghan government and during the rule of the Taliban. One left in 2000 just prior to the US attacks on Afghanistan. Everyone fled to Pakistan. From there, one woman went to Iran, one man went to Holland and another three went to India; one man subsequently went from India to Iran. Pakistan was the first choice for many because, according to them, it was the closest to Afghanistan. People lived in that country for six months, two years, three years, four years, six years, and eleven years. Initially, everyone who remained in Pakistan stayed in refugee camps and later tried to find apartments/houses in the city centre of Peshawar through other Afghan

refugees, friends and relatives who had come to Pakistan before them. Only one man and his family went to Islamabad because his wife was able to transfer her employment position with the United Nations (UN) in Mazar-i-Sharif to Islamabad. Another woman found employment with CARE as a media officer; a man worked in a local NGO and his wife worked as a nurse in the refugee camps. Those who were employed in Pakistan had a relative degree of financial independence, which allowed them the freedom to search for adequate living quarters. Out of the three that went to India, two lived there for ten years and the other lived there for two years. In India, no one lived in refugee camps because there were none. Each person had to find their own accommodations, which usually consisted of shared apartments. For the first couple of months, they were forced to support themselves. However, once they were given refugee status, the UN provided financial support. The man who went to Iran from India lived there for two years; a woman and her husband lived there for four years. They stayed in houses with relatives who had been there prior to their arrival. People stayed in Pakistan, India or Iran for as long as it took them to receive the necessary immigration papers from Canadian embassies. First they had to be accepted as refugees by the local UN representatives before they could apply for papers from any western countries. Generally, only the educated and/or wealthy Afghans, who are a small minority, go to western countries (Pourzand 1999: 74).

The majority of Afghans that I interviewed are from middle-class, educated families. Thus, the interviewees represent a small segment of the population in Afghanistan. Family professions in Afghanistan of *fathers* of interviewees included university professors, high school teacher, doctor, businessmen in pharmacy and

electronics, and calligrapher. *Mothers* of interviewees were usually unemployed housewives, although one had worked as a teacher. Out of the thirteen *interviewees*, eight have acquired one or more degrees from university. Two men and one woman have acquired Bachelors in Agriculture from Kabul University. In Afghanistan they, with the exception of the woman who left the country just after completing her degree, had worked in the government. One man has a Bachelor in Engineering (Kabul University) another has a Masters in Engineering (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi), one has a Bachelor in Journalism and one has a Masters in Music (from Holland). There is one woman who has a teaching degree. The remaining five do not have a university degree either because they (two men) left Afghanistan while in primary/secondary school or because they (two women and one man) were unable to complete their programs, which were a Bachelors in Dari literature and a Medical degree, due to the outbreak of war and the Taliban's edict that forbade women from pursuing an education. Once in Canada, many found that Canadian employers did not recognize their degrees and they were unable to find employment that reflected their qualifications, although the musician was able to set up a music school. Everyone initially attended English language classes and then men worked or continue to work as a shop assistant, janitor, cleaner, store manager, taxi driver. One man set up a pizza shop and another has an Afghan radio program. Three of the four women work. One works as a food demonstrator, another works in a pizza shop, and one works in a non-profit film production company. Three people, of whom two do not have university degrees from Afghanistan, are attending adult high school with the intention of pursuing a university degree; one man is completing his Bachelors.

Table 1: Biographical Information on Interviewees

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Highest Level of Education	Marital Status
Zalmai ¹	Tajik	Male	46	Agriculture (Bachelors)	Married
Fakoor	Tajik	Male	32	Engineering (Masters)	Unmarried
Zahir ²	Afghan	Male	late-forties	Agriculture (Bachelors)	Married
Iskander	Pushtun	Male	35	Music (Masters)	Married
Osman	Afghan	Male	22	High school Diploma	Unmarried
Frebah	Tajik	Female	28	Agriculture (Bachelors)	Unmarried
Mirwas	Tajik	Male	26	High school Diploma	Unmarried
Matteen	Pushtun	Male	36	Journalism (Bachelors)	Married
Badria	Tajik	Female	32	High school Diploma	Married
Babur ³	Pushtun	Male	45	Engineering (Bachelors)	Married
Palwasha	Hazara	Female	mid-forties	Education (Bachelors)	Married
Yasir	Pushtun	Male	26	High school Diploma	Unmarried
Asma	Tajik-Pushtun	Female	25	High school Diploma	Unmarried

¹ Nahid, Zalmai's wife who left Afghanistan in 1999, was present during my interview with her husband.

² Gulalai, Zahir's wife, was present during my interview with her husband.

³ Frogh, Babur's wife, was present during my interview with her husband.

Table 2: Summary of Interviewees' Migratory Routes and Dates

Name	Date of Departure from Afghanistan	Primary Transit Country/ Countries	Date of Arrival in Canada	Citizenship Status in Canada	Total number of Years in Canada
Zalmai	1981	Pakistan, India, Iran	1988	Citizen	16
Fakoor	1987	India	1997	Citizen	7
Zahir	1989	India	1991	Citizen	13
Iskander	1990	Pakistan	2002	Landed Immigrant	2
Osman	1991	Pakistan	2002	Landed Immigrant	2
Frebah	1995	Pakistan	2001	Landed Immigrant	3
Mirwas	1995	Pakistan	1997	Citizen	7
Matteen	1997	Pakistan	2000	Landed Immigrant	4
Badria	1997	Iran	2002	Refugee	2
Babur	1999	Pakistan	2001	Landed Immigrant	3
Palwasha	1999	Pakistan	1999	Refugee	5
Yasir	1999	Pakistan	2001	Refugee	3
Asma	2000	Pakistan	2001	Landed Immigrant	3

Afghanistan before 1979

People spoke about Afghanistan before 1979 with great adulation. Their memories and recollections of Afghanistan were usually about events, situations, objects, things, people, sights, sounds, and smells that were not and could not be found in Canada. Particular importance and emphasis was given to memories of childhood and university life. That is, people recounted what they missed and longed for about the country of that specific time. Afghanistan was talked about, often positively, in comparison to Canada, which was usually though not always referenced negatively. The Afghanistan before 1979 was also discussed and differentiated from the Afghanistan after the outbreak of civil war. In general, it seemed that before the conflict between the Afghan government and the Mujahidin began, Afghanistan was a hospitable, pleasant and inhabitable place. It was, according to the interviewees, a country of wealth with numerous economic opportunities, and social and cultural possibilities. People had prosperous businesses, plenty of money, cars, and grand houses with lush gardens. One man, whom I shall call Zalmai, said, "even poor people had jobs and houses. They could afford to feed and look after their families". It almost resembled a place of paradise where nothing went wrong and difficulties, suffering and hardship were non-existent even though it is well known that Afghanistan was not a very economically developed country even before civil war broke out.

Those who had jobs in Afghanistan said that working for the government was ideal because they could individually determine the pace and the number of hours devoted to work, and daily tasks that needed to be completed. Top government employees (only two of the interviewees) were given chauffeurs and cars. They had work

assistants who prepared snacks/food for hourly tea breaks, and free meals that could potentially be unlimited and often unplanned if so desired. Yet Babur, an engineer, and Zahir, who had worked in the Ministry of Agriculture, said that “the communist government” expected civil servants to attend communist meetings but they did not like to go. The government on four different occasions arrested Zahir’s father, who owned and managed two pharmacies. Nevertheless, he also reiterated the benefits of working for the government.

People stressed the innocence and the carefree nature of childhood and fondly remembered their days spent in schools or universities. As teenagers, during leisure time, they socialized with friends at restaurants and parties. Some men, then boys, even risked infuriating their parents by going to forbidden places such as bars and sampling alcoholic drinks. Swimming became a tolerable and comforting distraction to the pain and the agony of fasting during the month of Ramadan. A number of people talked about the Kabul air, which was exceptionally clean, the water, which had a refreshing taste, and the food, which was abundant. There were delicious mouth-watering fruits, savoury nuts, which could be bought at fragrant, lively markets. Many spent their time visiting their extended family members. Family visits were not prearranged or scheduled, which was quite normal and expected. Visitors were always welcomed and they were offered delectably edible items, without being asked whether they actually wanted anything. Female interviewees said that they kept themselves happily busy and lead meaningful lives by looking after their children, preparing family meals, and finding a balance between family and jobs. People also said that they had plenty of opportunities to

organize as well as attend social gatherings, weddings, and religious festivals. As Iskander simply put it, “Life was good...we had freedom.”

From the Mujahidin Onwards

Descriptions of Afghanistan after the beginning of civil war drastically contrasted with (re)constructions of Afghanistan before 1979. People spoke of dramatic changes that occurred in the country as well as to their lifestyles. Everyone agreed that the situation went from “good” to “bad” when the Mujahidin began to fight the government in 1979 and the country was turned into a battlefield. Badria, a woman in her thirties who left Kabul in 1997, did say that “at the beginning when the Mujahidin came to Kabul they were liked but then they started to kill people and so, people had to leave the country”. It has been documented that the Mujahidin were initially welcomed (ibid 2001: 6). For this reason people talked about economic and social changes without directly blaming or attributing it to the Mujahidin, which was not the case with the Taliban. Many spoke of daily life becoming a struggle as material goods and resources were no longer easily accessible even if a person had the necessary financial means; restrictions were placed on people by the government and parents strictly controlled movement and activities of their children. Some did not go to their jobs for fear of being attacked or shot at, and thus, financial problems ensued. Nassim Jawad does note that the Mujahidin were responsible for “violation of human rights” in Afghanistan (1992: 19). Social events, weddings and large get-togethers ceased to occur. Women could not freely walk in public. Mujahidin demanded that husbands escort their wives when they were in public. Sisters and brothers had to stand separately and they could not communicate openly. While more research needs to be done on Mujahidin ‘styles of ruling’, Barakat and Wardell do write about

some of their “violations of human rights” particularly among women (2002: 914). While conditions under the Mujahidin were “bad”, everyone adamantly claimed that they worsened when the Taliban took hold of power in Afghanistan (1994-1995).

The Taliban

People generally had a tendency to speak of the Taliban as “stupid”, “idiots”, “fundamentalists”, whose beliefs and practices were foreign to Afghans’ beliefs and practices (this distinction was voiced loudly) and were directly held accountable/responsible/blamed, unlike the Mujahidin, for the economic, social and political deprivation of the country and the resulting experiences of hardship and suffering. Many were critical of the images of Afghanistan (which according to interviewees erroneously associated Taliban and terrorists with Afghans especially since Taliban were “fundamentalists” and Afghans were not) that were broadcasted on television during the US attacks on Afghanistan. Frogh, Babur’s wife who once in a while interjected her opinions and thoughts during my interview with her husband, told me, “no one in Afghanistan knows who the Taliban are. They’re foreigners- Pakistanis and Saudis”. And then she aptly asked me, “Have you ever heard of an Afghan terrorist?” Everyone talked about what life was like in Afghanistan, vividly with examples and specific situations to illustrate their points, during the Taliban even if they had already left the country before that time. It seemed that the Taliban was the worst disaster that took place in Afghanistan. They made daily life impossible.

Social institutions collapsed. The quality of education, health care, and other essential services deteriorated. People’s houses were destroyed. For those whose houses remained intact, they felt like prisons. Badria portrays her daily routine. “After eating

breakfast at seven in the morning, I went to my relative's house and hid in their basement and stayed there till seven in the evening. I felt scared and sad because all I could hear was the sounds of gunshots, artilleries and bombs. I thought about when we'll die.”

Feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness, horror, insecurity, helplessness and death overwhelmed many especially as they learned of family members being injured or killed. Osman, on his daily walks to school, saw bloody bodies being pulled out of crumbling buildings. Frebah describes the environment as, “it rained everyday...bullets, shrapnel, and other bits and pieces fell from the sky and dropped on the ground, on people, on buildings like rain.”

Everything became worse; life became unbearable, especially for women, when the Taliban took control of the country. Parents, who had female children, worried about the impact of the lack of education and other services for girls. Babur, a father of three girls and one boy, said, “I wanted to leave because I was afraid for my children. What would happen to them if they couldn't go to school?” Women were told to resign from their jobs or face death. The Taliban beat Nahid, the wife of Zalmai, whose ankle was accidentally exposed when the wind blew her burqa. Men also told me that they hated the Taliban because they were forced to grow beards, wear kurta pyjamas (long shirt and pants) and attend daily prayers at the mosque. Zahir, who had left Afghanistan in 1989 said, “the Taliban force you to pray five times a day. Everything has to be shut down during prayer time. Before the Taliban, people found their own way to the mosque. I only prayed during the month of Ramadan, when it is important to pray.” Musicians and artists were unemployed as the Taliban firmly enforced a ban on art, music, theatre, television and radio. Indeed, as Mirwas stated, “life was tight...Afghanistan was about war and destruction.”

Ethnicity

There was also the issue of ethnicity, which no one brought up until I made a point of it. Many books that relay the history of Afghanistan mention ethnic tensions present in the country without giving any reasonable explanations for the cause of these tensions, except to point to the political dominance of Pushtuns (see for example Naby 1988; Jawad 1992; Ewans 2001). While some were reluctant to discuss it (because it was “politics”) people did say that ethnicity became important after the Mujahidin, and the Taliban further highlighted ethnic differences. When talking about ethnic tension, people used the terms Mujahidin and Taliban interchangeably; there were no distinctions made between either group. But, ethnic tensions were attributed to “foreigners [Britain, Iran, Pakistan] who tried to control Afghanistan [by supporting and funding certain segments of the Mujahidin and the Taliban]”. Zalmi remarked (others also made similar comments), “Ethnic and religious conflict happened because of the Pakistanis who told Pushtuns that Afghanistan was their land and therefore they should have complete control over it. Iran told Shiites [Hazaras] that they should have more power in Afghanistan.” Asma, who said very little about her personal life but was eager to talk about “politics” mentions,

There’s a lot of ethnic conflict in Afghanistan. The Pushtuns always fight with everyone and they say that Afghanistan is for them and they say that Tajiks are from Tajikistan and Hazaras are from Iran because they’re Shiites. They’ve been in power for a long time, they sold the country to England and invited others into the country and now the Pushtuns are in power again. Hamid Karzai is a Pushtun. The ethnic tensions and hatred started after the Mujahidin and the Taliban. There were Pushtuns on the bus who cut the throats of all Hazaras because of their religion.

It seemed to be the case that ethnicity was a problem when “politicians, people with guns and power” were involved. I was told that ethnic intermarriages were not unusual before the Mujahidin. Interviewees gave examples of their relatives who had married outside their ethnic groups. Two of those I interviewed were from mixed ethnic backgrounds. Asma is Tajik-Pushtun and Babur is married to an Uzbek-Tajik woman. There are two ethnographic accounts of ethnic intermarriage, which come from Audrey Shalinsky’s (1984 and 1980) studies of bride kidnapping (1984) among Uzbek-Tajiks and factors of ethnic identity in the Kunduz province of Afghanistan (see Chapter 2). It is difficult to ascertain what ethnic conditions were like in Afghanistan before the Mujahidin because there is very little literature on the subject. From the literature review in Chapter 1 it became evident that more research needs to be done on the differences, the similarities and the relationships between various ethnic groups, and the significance and the meaning of ethnicity in Afghanistan. Also, more research needs to be done on the social effects of the Mujahidin and the Taliban. As civil war continued both the Mujahidin and the Taliban attacked, robbed and humiliated specific ethnic/religious groups, such as the Hazaras, the Tajiks, the Uzbeks, Sunnis and Shiites. Claims of “ethnic cleansing” by the Taliban can be found in Shahrani 2002. Palwasha, a Hazara woman, explains,

Before the Mujahidin, everyone was an Afghan. But after they came you’re ethnic name became important. The Mujahidin used ethnicity to make everyone hate each other. Tajiks (not all) decided that Hazaras shouldn’t walk the streets and they should be killed. The Mujahidin started to rob Hazaras’ houses and kill Hazaras.

Reasons for Leaving

People decided to flee Afghanistan either during the Mujahidin or the Taliban in order to seek a better, more secure life for their families. The journey to the Pakistani

border was quite arduous, dangerous and expensive. "Escape" by night was preferable. However, this was not possible. It took approximately two days and two nights to travel, by foot and vehicle, from Kabul to the Pakistani border. People moved on foot, with other families, until they were able to find a car/truck that would take them to Pakistan. Some ran for their lives as bullets were shot in their direction. Osman describes his journey to Pakistan.

We left when the Mujahidin were at their extreme level of resistance (1991). They were very strict in terms of movement of people from Kabul. If people were seen travelling or moving, they were shot at. We travelled by bus and then by foot. A man carried me through the water on his shoulders. We [parents and siblings] were running while missiles were shot at us. It took us two nights and two days to go from Kabul to Peshawar.

At the Pakistani border, the Pakistani police harassed many people. The police had a tendency of slipping small packages of drugs into people's pockets, and then threaten to take them to jail unless they were willing to give money. Amnesty International has cited the harassment of Afghan refugees by Pakistani police (Report 29 June 2001). Harassment ceased once the police were given money and people were let into the country. Once in Pakistan, many registered with the local UN refugee agency that directed them to refugee camps.

Pakistan

Nine people stayed in Pakistan. People told me that the refugee camps were overcrowded with Afghans and the poorest of Pakistanis, who tried to live on aid handouts. In one camp, where Frebah stayed for 2 months, there were between forty to fifty thousand families living together. The UN encouraged people to settle in areas outside the camps and offered financial and technical assistance to those who were

interested in building their own mud houses. Camp conditions were quite bleak, depressing and unsafe. Many educated Kabulis sat idle, as there were few employment prospects. Frebah and Frogh volunteered as a teacher and a nurse within the camps in order to remain active. They felt that they had a responsibility to offer their education/skills/services to help their people. Frebah also told me that the camps could be very dangerous, especially for children. There were Afghan children who worked as street vendors, in either their parents' stalls or in Pakistani-owned stalls, selling fruit and other small items. Parents closely watched their children since Pakistanis and Arabs were known to frequent the camps recruiting anyone, particularly teenage boys, who wanted to join *madrassas* or become soldiers, defending Afghanistan. These people were disliked; they were considered to be "fundamentalists", who practiced a form of Islam that was unfamiliar to Afghans. Yasir, who was from Nagrahar province where the majority of residents were Pushtuns, said that there was one positive aspect to camp life. "It brought Afghans of different ethnicities together and taught them how to respect each other and live side by side", [which of course did not turn out to be the case in Ottawa (see Chapter 5: 87)]. Louis Dupree writes of "sometimes hostile and sometimes friendly" relations between Afghan ethnic groups in Pakistani refugee camps. He suggests that there was a "growing sentiment of we're all Afghans" (1988: 32).

Life outside the camps also had its challenges. People were constantly harassed and threatened with jail sentences by police and "corrupt" government officials looking for any means to earn money. I was told that ordinary Pakistanis were quite hospitable and kind, although some, in Islamabad and Peshawar, did resent and despise Afghans for taking jobs that Pakistanis could do, such as working with NGOs for example, and using

limited resources available. Nevertheless, there were Pakistanis who pretended to be Afghans so that they too could receive aid and handouts, and have the chance to apply for immigration papers from western countries. The city of Peshawar was considered to be very expensive. Apartment rents were unmanageable, even for those who worked with NGOs. Asma received a monthly salary of \$100 (US) from CARE and she still could not support her grandparents and siblings. Parents could not afford and some did not want to send their children to Pakistani schools. Babur refused to send his children to Pakistani schools and settled for poorly funded and run Afghan schools because he said, “I know Afghans who let their children go to Pakistani schools. But their children can’t speak Dari or Pashto. They only know Urdu.” Medical assistance for Afghan refugees was also limited. People were reluctant to go to already congested Pakistani hospitals. They had to be satisfied with inadequate hospitals that were set up just for Afghans.

Despite many of the difficulties most, particularly Pushtuns that I interviewed, did agree that Peshawar was “like home” because it was ethnically, culturally and linguistically similar to Afghanistan. The majority of Pakistanis in the city were Pathans (British variant of the term Pushtun). Two people, Babur (a Pushtun) and Mirwas (a Tajik) adamantly made it known that Peshawar was part of Afghanistan (“the British had cheated them”) and that Afghanistan did not recognize the Durand line (see Chapter 2). Generally, everyone disliked Pakistan but they were willing to tolerate it so long as they did not have to return to Afghanistan. Mirwas strongly said, “it was hell on earth. If I had a choice, I would have never gone there. I don’t ever want to go back there. It’s some of the same conditions in Russia and Iran [he has never actually been to either Russia or Iran]”. Osman, like the majority, was thankful that he no longer had to live in a war-zone.

Regardless, he said, “It wasn’t our homeland. It was a refugee life there. No matter how affluent and comfortable you were, you were still a refugee. It was hopeless. You couldn’t get access to post-secondary education, couldn’t run a business, always targeted by the police.”

India

Three people went to India. India was seen as antithetical to Pakistan. People knew about police harassment in Pakistan because they had to go through the country before coming to India. Or they had heard stories about it. When compared to Pakistan, the living conditions in India were better. Life was safer and calmer. Everyone spoke highly of the country. They recounted warm, happy, pleasant memories of their lives in India. People expected to be, but were not, harassed on the streets by policemen or government officials like they had been in Pakistan. Children were able to go to Indian schools and learn English and Hindi. Zahir said, “I didn’t think I was in another country. I liked it too much. The people were nice; they were friendly. I thought that I was still in Afghanistan. The food and the culture were just like Afghan food and culture. No one bothered me on the streets.” Gulalai, his wife, concurred and remarked, “My neighbours always woke me up and greeted me with tea in the morning. They taught me how to make dhal and I made pilaf for them. Even if people were poor they were nice.” The couple felt that “people were so nice” because of the way Indians responded to and treated Afghans, even when things went wrong. Indians were compassionate and understanding. They tried to avoid conflict. One embarrassing incident was described in order to prove their point. This particular family liked to eat a lot of meat and initially, they were not aware of the fact that “Indians [Hindus] did not eat meat [beef]”. Many of

the bones were thrown in the garbage, which was ransacked by dogs. The bones ended up in the courtyard of the housing compound, and on the streets. The landlord came to collect the rent. He told them that the neighbours had been complaining about the bones and, while he personally did not care, the neighbours were quite upset. The family apologized profusely to the landlord and their neighbours, and pledged never to dispose of the bones in such a manner.

Zalmi also elaborated on his views of India. "I love India. In India there is no middle class; there is the very rich and the very poor. Rich people stay with rich and poor hang around with poor. So, everyone treats each other nicely, because they're on an equal footing." He had been living in a fairly poor area beside a woman and her two sons, who treated him "like a member of the family". "India was not like Afghanistan and Indians were not like Afghans", Fakoor said. He had left Afghanistan in his late-teens with his family and had obtained two degrees from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. According to him,

When you're living in India you don't appreciate what you have, only when you leave India do you realize how great the country is. In India I saw that people from different religious and cultural backgrounds could live together without fighting. There was a mosque, a mandir [a temple] and a church in the same area. People went to worship without yelling at and worrying about what others [of different faiths] were doing.

While everyone liked India, they all shared the same sentiment that "no one wanted to leave their homeland and start a zero life in another country." They left India because jobs were scarce and they did not wish to remain "a refugee forever".

Iran

Only two people went to Iran, Badria who came from Pakistan with her husband and Zalmai who came from India. Zalmai went to numerous countries (Pakistan, India, Iran, Nepal, Turkey) in search of jobs and to get illegal passports to “escape” to any western country. He travelled to France with his illegal passport but was deported by the immigration authorities at the airport. Badria and her husband went to Iran to “visit” a mosque in 1997 and did not return to Afghanistan. Iran was different from Afghanistan. Things were cheaper there; apartments were cheap. Zalmai (who was in Iran between 1981 and 1983) said, “It was an economically stable country. But you couldn’t have access to or benefit from the country’s prosperity.” Zalmai could not find a job. He believed that the Iranian government purposely discriminated against Afghans and made sure that they were as miserable as possible while in the country. According to him, “Iranians think that they are the most superior people in the world and Afghans are the lowest with no education, no jobs. When you don’t have your own land, it’s difficult.” Badria’s husband, who left Afghanistan six months before completing his Engineering degree from Kabul University, was not allowed to enrol in any Iranian university. She mentioned that Afghans lived in areas that only housed other Afghans. Iranians lived separately. Some Iranians were openly hostile towards Afghans.

Canada

Many did not make a conscious decision to come to Canada. In Pakistan and India people heard about some of the western countries that others were attempting to migrate to. Immigration papers were sent to Australia, Canada, England, and the US. Canada was usually the first country to respond and so the decision was made to migrate to that

country. There were quite a number of people (eight interviewees) who already had family in Toronto, Montreal or Ottawa. Relatives, with assistance from Canadian church groups, sponsored five individuals. Some people decided to live in Ottawa and not Montreal or Toronto because they did not want to live in a big and noisy city. Everyone had very high expectations of Canada because it was known as an economically developed country. People expected to get jobs that were similar, in terms of income at least, to ones they had in Afghanistan. But many found that their Afghan university degrees were not recognized in Canada. Canadian professional employers were reluctant to hire them because they lacked Canadian experience. Zahir, who had worked in the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture in the 1980s, said,

Before coming to Canada I thought that I would get a good job in Canada because Canada has a lot of agriculture. When I got here I applied for a job and they told me that I had to have Canadian experience. I had to study for three/four years. I couldn't afford to go to school. I had to support my family.

Babur who has an engineering degree said, "I went to apply for a job. They told me that I was overqualified for this job. But I still couldn't get the job because I didn't have any Canadian experience".

Not Living Up To Expectations

Generally most people did say that it is wonderful to live in Canada (Frebah said, "I was happy to come to heaven") because it is a multicultural country where "everyone had rights and value human life" and so many people from different cultures live together. It is a country unlike Afghanistan; it is a "place of peace and tolerance, where people know how to live together without fighting". "Canadians were peacemakers." Osman said,

Canada is multicultural. You have peace of mind. It's home sweet home here but it wasn't home in Afghanistan. Canada is home because you can become Canadian. To be able to come from a dangerous environment and be able to pursue an education and have a peace of mind which is important. Multiculturalism is important. It's a model for other countries. It sets an example on how to build relationships.

Mirwas explains his feelings for Canada.

I like Canada. I love to be multicultural. Everyone is happy. That's the way it should be. You should be able to taste little bit of food from different parts of the world and not just stick to your own food/country. This is the only way to grow and not be a destroyer.

Zalmai said,

I've nothing left in Afghanistan. My mother has passed away. Only my father and my brother remain. When I first came to Canada, I had to start from zero. If I go back to Afghanistan I would have to start from zero again. I've a life in Canada now. This is my home. In Canada my kids have a good life. Canadians treat me as an equal. Life is safe here.

Even though people enjoyed living in Canada, many told me that they missed Afghanistan a lot. During the night they dreamt about and longed for the Afghanistan before 1979. Daily happiness and strength came from memories of childhoods spent in Afghanistan among family and friends. Frebah poignantly mentioned, "I miss Afghanistan. I think about it a lot. When I close my eyes, I dream about my childhood, my friends, schools, my mother's cooking and her warm hugs. It's like scenes from a movie but when I open my eyes, I think to myself 'oh, I'm in Canada'." Romanticized memories of Afghanistan did impact people's impressions of and feelings toward Canada.

For many, Canada has not completely lived up to expectations. People are somewhat disappointed and frustrated by how life has turned out. Many told me that the

English language has become a permanent, insurmountable barrier that prevented and continues to prevent them from getting well-paid jobs. They devoted many years to acquiring and improving English skills, but it never seemed to be enough. Parents and guardians pointed out that Canada is good for children but not so for adults. It is an ideal place to bring up children because it is peaceful; the education system is much better than ones in Afghanistan or Pakistan; there are plenty of future opportunities/options available. Children can learn English very fast, and adapt to the culture very well. They have lots of friends and can easily find jobs. As Matteen put it, “For adults it is a struggle. I’m always looking for better jobs and it doesn’t matter how well I speak English, there are some things that I can never understand.” People also said that “Canadian culture” was difficult to adjust to. Those who did not have children were more likely to highlight the fact that in Canada, they had the opportunity to study and get jobs.

Money, Family, and “Social Relations”

People said that Canada is a country that places too great of an emphasis on money and “time management” at the expense of family and “social relations” whereas in Afghanistan, family and human interaction are valued over money. In Canada, time is strictly managed because “time is money”. Every activity has a specific allotted time. Gulalai, who had worked as a lawyer in the Afghan Ministry of Law, got a job in a grocery store when she first came to Canada. She said,

The Chinese lady I worked for, she was very strict with me. She told me to do one thing after the other, and asked why I had gone to the washroom and told me that I could only go to the washroom during break. I said that I couldn’t do this, even if God leaves me to die without food. It was too stressful and now I’m sick. I have anxiety attacks and I don’t work. In Afghanistan I had a job in the morning and then went shopping, looked after the children and visited family. I was too busy. But here I have nothing to do. I just think about the future. I’m depressed.

Employers do not accept visiting family as valid reasons for time off from a job and in order to take time off, advanced warning must be given. Babur said that he was not given enough vacation days so that he could spend time with his family. Even if people wanted to make social visits, they must call beforehand to ensure that someone will be at the house to receive the guests and to confirm that the visit is appropriate at any given time. Furthermore, a host must not assume that guests will drink or eat something that is being offered. They must be asked whether they would like to have snacks and/or drinks. In Afghanistan, people live in extended families, which guarantees that someone will always be at the house. Therefore, a person can make visits without appointments, guests can stay as long as they like, and they are served meals without being asked; they can expect to receive 'hospitality'. Babur who had returned to Afghanistan on a CIDA contract position, went to a village that had been bombed recently. The local village woman served tea, in different teacups, to everyone on the CIDA team. When they inquired why there were so many different teacups, the villagers responded by saying that most had lost their belongings in the attack. The women went around collecting teacups from different houses so that tea could be served.

While Canada was good for children, in terms of education and employment prospects, many parents were troubled by the lack of concern for family and how it would impact their children. Parents said that in Afghanistan children are taught to respect the male head of the household. They have to obey their parents, live with them even after marriage and take care of elderly parents. It is difficult, in Canada, to maintain unity within the family. Children move to far away places when they start university. They do not feel any responsibility to aging parents who are left on their own. One

customer asked Zalmi, who used to be a taxi driver, why he had come all the way from Afghanistan to drive a taxi in Canada. Zalmi told his customer that it was the only job he could get at the time. He needed to work to send money back to his father. The customer asked why he sent money to his father. Shocked and perplexed, the taxi driver did not respond to what he thought was a bizarre question. Later, he said, “my father looked after me when I was young. I’m his son. He gave me money, food, car. Now, *I’ve to give a reason* for sending him money. I don’t understand this kind of thinking.”

Parents feel that they are unable to teach children proper values, and monitor their behaviour. If parents try to discipline their children, then they are sent to jail. The Canadian government is seen as “putting its nose in family business” and preventing parents from fulfilling parental obligations. “Children use this against parents and threaten them.” Zahir, a father of five, had been working all day. He came home and found out that his son had broken the family curfew. At 12:15 am, when the boy entered the house, his father asked where he had been and why he had come home so late. Without giving a satisfactory explanation, the boy ran out of the apartment and into the streets. The infuriated father grabbed the first thing near him, a baseball bat, and followed the boy down the street with it. A neighbour who had witnessed this event through an apartment window, called the police. The police was about to remove the father from the house for abuse but before he could be taken away, the son intervened and told the police that the arrest was not necessary. After recounting this story, Zahir commented, “I’m his father. I take care of him. I love him. I know everything about him but I can’t punish him.” Zalmi, a father of three children, also made similar observations,

I’m a father. I take care of my daughter, when she’s hurt I’m hurt. I do everything for her because I love her. When she’s sick I take care of her. I feed her, cloth her,

send her to school. She's my responsibility. The Canadian government has handcuffed mothers' and fathers' hands behind their backs and I can't do anything.

How Canadians are Perceived

Many felt that Canadians' lives were too busy, too busy to even have "social relations". People's interactions with each other were limited to "hi" and "bye". No one held dinner parties or came to visit. The only Canadians that came to Afghans' houses were ESL volunteers. Thus, most remained in their houses and thought of their relatives in Afghanistan and other countries. Asma, who has no relatives in Canada except her younger siblings, said,

In Afghanistan people come over to the house anytime they like without appointments and here in Canada people only say hi and bye. Relations are closed and not very open or friendly. Canadian people are not very friendly. Only some Canadians come to my house on the weekends to help us with our English. They work in the military.

People talked about how much they missed their relatives and important religious events, such as Ramadan and Eid, became painful and difficult to get through because people had to spend those times on their own without any family. Yasir said,

Life in Canada is very routine. I get up, go to work [building maintenance], come back. Sleep and go to work again. I don't go out much because I have to work all the time otherwise, I can't support myself or my family back home. Even if I've Afghan friends I can't see them much because I've to work all the time. I miss my family. I don't have anyone to talk to. My apartment is supposed to be home, where I live, but I don't feel like I belong here [in Canada].

Palwasha, who works at a pizza shop, used her job to mask her sense of isolation and boredom. "I work all the time because I'm alone. Even when I get off work, I sometimes help at my workplace or workmates because I've no one to go home to."

Some people talked about their experiences of racism and discrimination. Frebah was sitting close to a group of teenage boys on a bus. An Arab woman wearing a hijab entered the bus. When the teenagers saw her, they covered up the vacant seat near them with schoolbags. The bags were removed and the seat made available as soon as a “Canadian woman” entered the bus. From then onwards, Frebah has made every attempt to avoid teenage boys. She also felt that Canadians tended to ignore her. When she was working at Wal-Mart, few people bothered to assist her with problems even if she asked for help. She found that her problems were addressed only after other employees were taken care of. Zahir felt that he had little “privacy” and “freedom/democracy” in Canada.

There’s no democracy in Canada, no freedom like in Afghanistan. I own my house [in Canada]. I pay property tax every month but I can’t have a party in my own house. If I have a party and there’s too loud noise, the neighbours call the police and they come. I tell them that this is my house. I’m having a party, the policeman will say that “sir, this is my job. It’s the law. I’ll come and give you a warning.

He also said,

In Canada I don’t feel like I belong here. I want to go back [to Afghanistan] after the children get jobs. My father has passed away but my father’s house is still there. My brother is looking after it for me. I can get my old job back maybe. There are lots of jobs and even better now with computers and technology. My children may not come back with me. In Afghanistan, children have too many responsibilities. They have to look after the parents, but here after eighteen years, children move out on their own. I don’t feel like I belong here. For example, I’ve two neighbours. I only say hi and bye to them. We don’t have any social relations with them. Back home we have social relations. There is too much racism in Canada.

There were others who did say that they had not experienced any form of racism or discrimination.

Afghans talked about and illustrated feelings of displacement by describing what it was like to live temporarily as refugees in Pakistan, India and Iran. They also talked about their expectations as well as the realities of the process of settlement. Some of the common themes of settlement include employment, family, loneliness, isolation, discrimination, multiculturalism, peace, tolerance, memories, longing and nostalgia. In the next chapter I examine how these themes relate to Afghan diasporic “consciousness”.

Chapter 5: Making Sense of the Data. The Configuration of Diasporic “Consciousness” Among Afghans in Ottawa

In this chapter, I trace the configuration of the diasporic “consciousness” of Afghans in Ottawa. I classify Afghans in Ottawa as a group of people with a diasporic “consciousness” in order to indicate that they are not a traditional “population category”, a diasporic community. Nevertheless, their experiences of displacement, migration and settlement correlate with diasporic experiences of similar processes. Thus, the general conceptual framework used to explicate what makes diasporic communities and identities is also useful and relevant in thinking through concepts of community and identity in relation to Afghans. The formation of an Afghan diasporic “consciousness” can be understood by looking at how the conditions under which displacement occurred shape “collective identity”; how the conditions of emplacement/settlement construct perceptions of settlement place; negative and positive aspects of settlement place that simultaneously create a “homing desire” and “the site of hopes and new beginnings”; the problems of drawing the boundaries of an Afghan community; and the complication of the notion of “home”.

Afghan Diasporic “collective identity”

Symbolic or real homelands, as Safran (1991), Clifford (1991), Tölöyan (2003) and others have suggested, significantly influence diasporic “collective identity”. Yet, as I have shown in Chapter 3, there are multiple differences within any given diaspora on representations or “memories” of homeland which impact “collective identity”. Furthermore, Brazile and Mannur state that it is important to consider the factors, whether economic, social and/or political, that cause people to migrate (2003: 3). For Afghans in Ottawa, who are only one segment of what makes up the larger Afghan

diasporic “consciousness”, “collective identity” is based not just on homeland/Afghanistan but on a particular representation/“memory” of Afghanistan, that of shared or “collective” narratives of displacement resulting from the wars. Everyone that I spoke to told me about, or made the implication that they knew what it was like to directly live in Afghanistan during that time (which should not be misunderstood as people falsely claiming that they were in the country) even though only six people still remained there after 1994/1995. The rest were either in Pakistan, India, Iran or Canada. Mostly what people talked about was the ‘skewed’ religious stance of, and the violence used, by the Taliban, stories and reports of which were widely circulated in the media and on the Internet during the US attacks on Afghanistan (2001-2002). Thus, through easily and publicly available documentation of the atrocities committed by the Taliban, people shared in and personalized violations of religious freedom, which is exemplified by Zahir’s comment of forcing people to pray five times a day as opposed to allowing individuals the choice to pray when they felt it to be necessary (see Chapter 4: 61). Similarly, Brian Axel illustrates how the Sikh separatists use the Internet to circulate images of disfigured Sikh bodies (that were believed to be disfigured by the Indian state) to the Sikh diaspora. In doing so, purported violence by the Indian state is used to form Sikh “collective identity” and gain the diaspora’s support for the establishment of Khalistan, the Sikh homeland (2002: 412).

Publicized images of the Taliban were not only personalized. Especially those who fled during the Mujahidin also used them to highlight the distinction between the Mujahidin and the Taliban in order to give an added emphasis to the extraordinary suffering and destruction created by the Taliban. The emphasis was given to the Taliban

by referring to them as “fundamentalists” and by distancing them (with for example Frogh’s question of “have you ever heard of an Afghan terrorist?” see Chapter 4: 60) from what Afghans, not the media, understood to be Afghanistan. When I asked people who left before 1994/1995 why they fled Afghanistan, the usually response was, “there was war you know. The situation was bad and so we left.” No one told me what the Mujahidin did or what they were like except Palwasha who briefly spoke of how the Mujahidin’s attitudes towards woman were slightly equivalent to the Taliban’s policies on women. While there is very little academic literature on the beliefs, and the backgrounds of members of the Mujahidin, Barakat and Wardell write about unemployment, sexual violence and enforcement of wearing of the burqa during the Mujahidin period (2002: 914). On other hand, people did talk about specific aspects of the Taliban, such as lack of education and health care that made the country uninhabitable. Through the distinction of generalization of the Mujahidin versus detailing of the Taliban that gave credence to and justified flight, people were able to be part of the most recently publicized conflict in and its resulting displacement from Afghanistan. As such, displacement during and after the Taliban (more so than during the Mujahidin) forms “collective identity” of the Afghan diasporic “consciousness” in Ottawa.

Afghan Diasporic Experiences

Places of settlement, much like homelands, are very much a part of the diasporic “consciousness” since they can either challenge or provide opportunities for (re)formation of communities and identities. Diasporic experiences in places of settlement are dependent on the social, political, and economic conditions under which the process of emplacement/settlement occur (Brah 1996: 182). They are also based on

whether and how diasporic communities interact with other communities located in these places (ibid 1996: 209). Afghan perceptions of Ottawa are influenced by the conditions of their emplacement/settlement, which in turn impact the plausibility of the existence of an Afghan community (as it had been in the homeland). Also, constructions of Ottawa are determined by their experiences of and interactions with other communities located within this place. The conditions of settlement include low-income employment, permanent language barriers, and practices that threaten to disintegrate the family, which together combine to create unfamiliar circumstances/situations (such as inadequate displays of 'hospitality', a lack of "social relations" and a reliable social and financial support network). These new circumstances/situations threaten and question the fundamental principles, that of educated and middle class, hospitality and family/"social relations", underlying the Afghan community (at least the Afghan community in the homeland of Afghanistan). As such, it has become evident to the particular group of Afghans that I interviewed that they cannot recreate in their place of settlement the exact community of their homeland. Therefore, Ottawa was viewed rather negatively, as a place that generates feelings of disappointments, frustration, discontent, vulnerability, alienation, isolation and loneliness.

Many, like Zahir and Babur (see Chapter 4: 70), talked about the disappointments, frustrations, and the sense of vulnerability of not being able to acquire sufficient employment and having to cope with poverty and a social class that they had been unaccustomed to in Afghanistan. These feelings are clearly illustrated by Gulalali's comment (the woman who had practiced law in Afghanistan but in Canada was forced to work in a small grocery store) of wanting "to die" because she was constantly told what

to do and did not even have the choice to decide something so simple as going to the washroom (see Chapter 4: 72). Furthermore, everyone that I interviewed spent a great deal of time expounding and musing over the state of “social relations” and the many forces that threatened to disintegrate family unity in Ottawa. “Time management”, and the obsession with money (because “time is money”) were seen as a hurdle that effectively prevented proper and acceptable formations of “social relations” with not only family members but also with those outside the family. ‘Hospitality’, the very basic custom of socializing and behaving was considered to be unnecessary and irrelevant in Canada. Even its simplest form of offering unexpected guests refreshments was seen as awkward and unsuitable. Advanced warnings by phone calls or booked appointments were needed in order to be able to see or visit others. Parents felt that they could not discipline or instruct their children, as they had been and had learned to do so in Afghanistan. Parental authority and parental status were not protected and enforced. Rather the Canadian state undermined them by “handcuffing mothers’ and fathers’ hands behind their backs”. “Social relations”, family, and ‘hospitality’ are all part of cultural aspects that have been brought from the homeland but have to be adapted to the realities of “time management” and “time is money” in the place of settlement. In chapter 3, I showed how second-generation members of diasporic communities contest and interpret homeland practices that first-generation (parents) hold on to and try to enforce. Here on the other hand, it is first-generation Afghans, whether parents or not, who are speaking of the difficulties of settling in and the changes that may or may not need to be made in order to adjust to the new place of Ottawa. They illustrate the initial process and all that it entails of emplacement- the feelings of loss, alienation, isolation, loneliness, and

discontent. Of course, settlement is not only about Afghans settling in and adjusting to Ottawa. It is also about others, mainly Canadians, and their demonstrations of receptivity or unreceptivity towards Afghan immigrants and refugees.

“Social relations”, more precisely the lack of, and some episodes of racism and discrimination summarized the extent of how Afghans felt about the level of receptivity they experiences in Canada. These factors were spoken of as barriers between Afghans and Canadians, which suggested to Afghans that they were not Canadian; they created a separation between the two groups because Afghans had “social relations” but Canadians did not. Many, like Asma and Zahir for example (see Chapter 4: 75) said that “social relations” consisted of little more than “hi” and “bye”. “Social relations”, talking, socializing, making friends and visiting and staying with them, of course is one of the ways in which anxieties and worriers of coming to a new place are reduced by making people feel as if they are being welcomed into and belong in the neighbourhood/place. It eases the newness of a place and allows people to cope with the differences, whether perceived or real, between the place that they left and the place that they are currently in. People found that Canadians were not very friendly, inviting or neighbourly. The Canadians that came to visit them were language tutors, and the ones that Afghans went to visit could only be seen with scheduled appointments that had allotted time durations. Thus, the only Canadians that people came in contact with were those who were employed to provide a service. These Canadians were fulfilling the requirements of their positions, which created professional relations not “social relations”; and in doing so they were reorienting or redefining the fundamental structure that governs “social relations”, any relations and interactions in general, that of ‘hospitality’.

In Chapter 2, it was explained that ‘hospitality’, as part of Pushtunwali, could entail a simple gesture of serving tea to a more serious gesture of minimizing conditions of hardship, difficult and conflict by those who are in a more fortunate situation. Also, ‘hospitality’ is expected of be shown to anyone without making them ask for it; it should automatically be offered. Through ‘hospitality’, all relations are in some way social, which is not to say that different kinds of relationships do not exist in Afghanistan. They continue and connect people even after the immediate period of contact and interaction. On the other hand, Afghans perceive that relations in Canada do not have a sense of obligation that even in the slightest way possible hold people together beyond the point of when these relations occur. Afghans have no one to automatically rely on should anything go wrong especially given the fact that very few have extended family members in Canada. Family was in Afghanistan a guaranteed and dependable source of financial support and social networks because children have a responsibility to their parents without question (Hanifi 1973: 47). But, in Canada many, like Zahir and Zalmai (see Chapter 4: 74-75) feared (however real or perceived this fear maybe) that the familial support network has the potential to erode, dissolve and dissipate as children are seen to have more rights and protection under the state than parents.

Afghans did have positive feelings towards Ottawa even though they highlighted what they considered to be many of the negative aspects. These positive feelings are an acknowledgment of the opportunities and possibilities that have arisen as a result of migration to and settlement in a new place, which they thought they would never be able to have because of the political situation they faced in Afghanistan. Thus, Ottawa represents “the site of hopes and new beginnings” (Brah 1996: 193) that places of

settlement can potentially offer. Many parents stated that Ottawa was good for children because they could have a life there that they would never be able to have in Afghanistan. There is proper education and therefore they can easily find jobs. Also, many, like Osman, Mirwas and Zalmi (see Chapter 4: 71) regarded Canada as “heaven” because it was peaceful and multicultural. It was a place where “everyone had rights and human life was valued” and people with different cultural backgrounds could tolerate each other and live together. Values of tolerance, harmony, peace were emphasized and linked to multiculturalism so that they could identify with all those who make up and are part of it—other immigrants, refugees, and minorities who, like Afghans, are from different parts of the world and have different cultures but they can live in Canada. In doing so, Afghans are able to bridge, to some extent, the barrier that is perceived between themselves and Canadians; and they can insert and begin to situate themselves within Canada. Gross, McMurry, Swedenburg (1996), and Potvin (1999) illustrate (in Chapter 3) how Franco-Maghrebi and Quebec Haitian youth form alliances with French youth and Quebec youth of African origins to oppose their marginal positions in their respective societies. Likewise, Afghans while not forming any visible alliances have nevertheless found an avenue through which they can make connections with others in Canada.

The Afghan Community in Ottawa

Diasporic communities in places of settlement are recreations and reconstructions (which can be directed and controlled by interest groups like the state for example) of homelands. They are based on cultural practices and the “style” of “imagining” that were part of the homeland before people migrated from there, becoming a diasporic community, and settled in other places. Yet, as Brah (1996) and Hall (1996) point out, it

is difficult to speak of just one community, in the place of settlement, that is representative of the histories and experiences of all members that make up the diasporic community. Furthermore, as shown in Chapter 3, different members or groups of people within any given diasporic community will contest each other's interpretation and usage of cultural and other materials that they brought from the homeland and adapted to their particular needs. Conflicts can arise creating communities within the larger diasporic community. Due to differences and divisions based on factors of ethnicity and age for example, the definition of the boundaries of a community is "always-in-process" (Hall 1996: 2). The Afghan community in Ottawa exemplifies this "always-in-process" state partly because irresolvable ethnic cleavages persist which has led to the view, among Afghans that I interviewed, that "there is no Afghan community in Ottawa"; and partly because of the Canadian state's policy of multiculturalism that structures and defines communities within Canada. Despite the claim that "there is no Afghan community", there are a few informal organizations such as a mosque, language classes, a youth group (to be discussed, below) that provide services and try to meet some of the needs of Afghans in Ottawa. Yet, these groups alone do not seem to make up or have not been successful in uniting Afghans. Thus, it remains to be seen as time passes how the Afghan community or communities will develop.

It is difficult to concisely outline how ethnicity factors into the "imagined community" of Afghanistan. As illustrated in Chapter 2, most of the existing anthropological and other literature on Afghanistan has generated information on different ethnic groups, mainly Pushtuns the largest group, within the country without giving much consideration to how these groups are positioned in relation to each other

and how war has affected relations. Nevertheless, it became evident from the historical background relayed in Chapter 2 that Pushtuns have been in power for a considerable period of time and they have carried out certain policies that have discriminated against other ethnic groups. Also, many of the non-Pushtuns that I interviewed did speak about how the Mujahidin and the Taliban created ethnic tensions. Some, like Zalmai, Asma, and Palwasha (see Chapter 4: 62-63) did underline the primacy of Pushtuns, which has given them the opportunity to “always fight with everyone” and sell or “invite others into the country”. Regardless, non-Pushtun interviewees (five Tajiks, one Hazara, one Tajik-Pushtun) said that so long as politicians were not involved and politics were not discussed, ordinary people of different ethnicities had amicable relations; they (the interviewees) tended to identify as Afghans first and then Tajik, Pushtun and so on. Pushtuns (four in total) and two self-identified “Afghans” that I interviewed downplayed the importance of ethnicity. They were likely to deny that any ethnic problems existed although they hinted that foreigners and Afghan politicians and “people with guns” liked to fixate on the issue of ethnic tensions. Yet, ethnic tensions were also evident, among ordinary people not politicians, when Afghans in Ottawa tried to form a community organization in 1995. The organization, before it was established, was given the name Afghan United Association. People came together; meetings were held; a constitution was drafted; ballots were cast for community leaders. A Pushtun was elected as the leader. But Tajiks refused to accept him because they felt that he would not be able to properly represent them. Pushtuns and Tajiks divided, and they would not come to a consensus on who should be the leader. A community organization did not surface. Therefore, it is rather improbable to suggest that differences do not exist on the basis of

ethnicity. There is an insurmountable split between Pushtuns and non-Pushtuns that makes the formation of an Afghan community organization difficult.

Since a community organization did not exist people told me that “there was no Afghan community” but there were Afghan communities in Toronto and Montreal. Afghans equated community with community organization because to them a community means having or not having an organization that represents all ethnicities, cultures and political views, and that arranges public events, social gatherings and celebrations. Their understanding of community is predicated on the Canadian state’s multicultural policy, which stipulates that ethnicities and cultures are to be arranged according to their places of origin and ‘represented’ by an organization that demonstrate the link between ethnicities/cultures and the homeland (Dusenbery 1997: 742). There is no room for considering differences within ethnicities of any homeland; actual realities that may be present are erased and erroneously masque the diversity of “imagining”. In the case of Afghans, ethnic differences (brought from the homeland) that could not be resolved were present and as a result a community organization did not and could not be created.

Even though there is no officially recognized community organization there are groups (a mosque, language classes and a youth group) that have been formed by Afghans. People (who had been involved in the attempted formation of the Afghan United Association and were disappointed with the results) decided to rent a common space where Afghans, regardless of ethnicity, could come together and pray. This space has become a mosque in a rented apartment building that is open five times a day. All those who live in the apartment building, other nearby apartment buildings and houses, use it. Afghans, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Indians and Somalis frequent the mosque. They

contribute money to pay for the rent and any other expenses. In the mosque there are classes held for boys above the age of six and for girls below the age of fourteen. Two teachers teach a total of fifty to sixty children about the Koran. These students pay for the lessons so that the teachers can receive a salary. Also, Dari and Pashto language classes used to be held within the mosque; they have been moved to a high school and are held in the evening. Besides the mosque, there is a youth group that was started in 2003 known as the Afghan Peace Ambassadors (APA). Most of the members of the group are Afghan and non-Afghan university students; there are a few high school students involved as well. The APA tries to disseminate information about and increase awareness of Afghanistan among Canadians by being part of university cultural shows and organizing talks and arranging posters. These groups have not generated a sentiment or feeling of community. This is largely due to the fact that the people I interviewed did not use these services. Parents, whether Tajik or Pushtun, did send their children to the language classes but no one went to the mosque because they did not live close to it. Only one person was involved with the APA. It would be interesting to research whether ethnicity is a significant issue among members of these groups, how they define the Afghan community of Ottawa and how their work help continue the “always-in-progress” formation of the Afghan community in Ottawa.

Home (the true place of belonging) and Home (the current place of residence) Make “Home”

Afghans have gone through the process of displacement, migration and settlement. They have fled from their homeland of Afghanistan, temporarily resided as refugees in Pakistan, India or Iran, and permanently settled in Ottawa, Canada, their place of settlement. Thus, they have been settling, unsettling and resettling in multiple places or

homes (places of immediate residence). As a result “home” for Afghans has become a complicated term that is instilled with feelings of childhood innocence, economic and social/familial comfort and security, anxiety, war, sadness, peace, tolerance, disappointment, frustration, longing, nostalgia and hope. These feelings are derived from memories of the place they once inhabited and lived realities of the place they now inhabit. The conception of “home” among Afghans is based on the mundane and the ordinary of everyday life in Canada as well as in Afghanistan prior to 1979. “Home” represents what once was and now is, and what once happened and now happens. That is, “home” is made up of *home*, the homeland of Afghanistan where people felt they were once a part of and truly belonged, and *home*, the place of settlement that of Canada. When I asked people to describe their definitions of “home”, many said that it was a place that had not be touched or destroyed by conflict; and it was a place where they could live without worrying about “bullets, shrapnel, and other bits and pieces falling from the sky and dropping on the ground, on people, on buildings like rain” and get on with daily activities of life such as going to school for example. Others said that “home” was where “you had a good economic life which settles you’re future. If you have a good job then you get retirement money and you don’t have to worry about the future.” “Home” for many was also a place where they could see, spend time and communicate with members of their immediate and extended family. It is necessary to consider what life was like in Afghanistan and what life is like in Canada in order to understand why people have constructed “home” with these particular features.

People fled Afghanistan because of war that made everyday life impossible. They lost their jobs and were fearful of how deteriorating social institutions and services would

impact their families. Temporary refuge was found in Pakistan, India or Iran. Yet, nobody wanted to remain there as refugees because for them a refugee meant being in a state of “hopelessness, helplessness, and homelessness”. Any problems that they faced in these countries were attributed to their status of being a refugee, of being “homeless” and of being “helpless”. Thus, “home” could not be a place of temporary refuge where they were refugees and had no control over their surroundings. People migrated to Canada with hopes and expectations of finding and recreating everything they once had and later lost in Afghanistan. Jobs, protection of family integrity and respect for parental status/authority were not found. Instead many had to deal with inadequate “social relations”, lack of hospitality and episodes of racism that reminded them that they were not completely a part of and fully belonged in this place. But many also realized that Canada was “the site of hope and new beginnings” because they could rebuild their lives, their children could access proper institutions and suitable employment, and enjoy peace, tolerance and respect for human life. Since, home, Ottawa, the place of settlement, has not entirely lived up to expectations and has not fulfilled needs created from flight from Afghanistan, people are left with a “homing desire”, a “desire” for everything that once encompassed *home* (Afghanistan prior to 1979). “Homing desire”, according to Avtar Brah, is that “desire” to have all the necessary resources, materials, people (friends and family), emotions that is required to make a place comfortable, dependable, routine; it gives that place a feeling of *home* (1996: 193). A place where “homing desire” can be fulfilled ultimately and absolutely makes that place “home”, the combination of *home* and home. For Afghans, the “homing desire” is the “desire” for proper social relations, and familial and financial security, which they do not have in Ottawa. Thus, *home* is

Afghanistan, all the good, happy and idealized memories of the Afghanistan of 1979 that are dreamt about during the night and occupy daydreams. It is the Afghanistan of that time because then people had everything that now constitutes the “homing desire”. But, it is not the Afghanistan of today because no one, with the exception of Zahir, wants to return there. “Home” is Canada and memories of Afghanistan that fulfill what is lacking in Canada. Since home is tied to two places, everyone felt that their identities were also connected to these places. Those who recently came to Canada usually said that they were Afghan because they did not yet have Canadian citizenship; those who came here during the 1990s, said that they were both Afghan and Canadian. They were Canadian because it is the country where they live. At the same time, they said that they could not forget Afghanistan because “it is where [they] were born and so, [their] blood runs through there”.

Conclusion

Afghan diasporic “consciousness” in Ottawa is represented by a “collective [group] identity” that is based on shared and personalized narratives of the conditions of displacement from the homeland of Afghanistan; the importance of the place of settlement of Ottawa in providing challenges as well as opportunities to rebuild life and recreate community based on practices and beliefs (hospitality and the primacy of family) brought from the homeland; the diversity in the “style” of “imagining” (based on unfavourable ethnic relations between Pushtuns and non-Pushtuns) which prevented the formation of an Afghan community organization and any sense of a community; and the identification of “home” as being made up of *home*, memories of Afghanistan before

1979 when they truly and comfortably belonged in a place and home, the place of Ottawa where everyone lives.

In order to illustrate the formation of the Afghan diasporic “consciousness” in Ottawa, I began by providing a review of academic literature available on Afghanistan in Chapter 2, which showed that much of the anthropological focus has been on issues of society and culture, and gender and sexuality among the Pushtuns, the largest ethnic group in the country. It also became evident that topics of ethnicity and identity, and gender and sexuality have been researched in relation to other ethnic groups (the Farghanachi, the Tajiks, the Turkmen, the Uzbeks, the Hazaras, and the Baluch). However, anthropologists have tended to ignore the political situation in the country and have neglected to examine how ethnic relations have or have not changed as a result of civil war. I touched on the area of ethnicity when conducting interviews with Afghans. Many were reluctant to speak about it but nevertheless told me that the Mujahidin and the Taliban, politicians and “people with guns” were responsible for creating ethnic tensions. But of course ethnic tensions did seep through and affected how ordinary Afghans interacted with each other, which was exemplified by the fact that ethnic differences could not be resolved preventing the formation of an Afghan community organization in Ottawa.

During interviews I also asked people to recount their experiences of migration from Afghanistan and settlement in Canada, summarized in Chapter 4, which was examined within the conceptual framework of diasporic communities. Diasporic communities, as shown in Chapter 3, were once defined as people who were expelled from their homelands and forced to resettle in other places. But they nevertheless retained

memories of and links with the homeland and therefore they could not fully integrate into places of settlement. As the number of people being displaced from homelands and resettled in new locations began to increase, attention was diverted from trying to pinpoint who or what defined diasporic communities. Instead parallels were being drawn between experiences of migration and settlement of diasporic and other groups of people, such as immigrants and refugees. Diasporic community became not a descriptive category but rather a conceptual concept that is utilized to consider and think through the process of migration and settlement. I have used the concept of diasporic community to look at how community and identity among Afghans who have migrated from their homeland of Afghanistan and resettled in Ottawa, their place of settlement.

There were certain points or subject matter that came up while researching and during interviews that I did not explore further given time constraints, the difficulty of finding interviewees, and the scope of the thesis. As I have stated, the issue of ethnicity and ethnic relations as it had been conceived before and as it has been conceived after 1979 among Afghans in Afghanistan is one category that needs to be researched further. More research also needs to be done on the Mujahidin and the Taliban, the differences between these groups and how Afghans have viewed them. Another possibility is the contestation of the Durand line. Is North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in Pakistan still considered to be part of Afghanistan by Afghans and if so, who among Afghans (Pushtuns and/or Tajiks) think of it as part of Afghan territory? Other questions that need to be considered include, to what extent does hospitality regulate relations; what are the limits of hospitality; Why are Hindi movies popular in Afghanistan and how do these films shape their understanding of India. Specifically within the context of Canada, it

would be interesting to examine why Afghans in Toronto and Montreal for example have been able to successfully create community organizations but not Afghans in Ottawa. It would also be useful to look at the different kinds of community organizations (in Ottawa) such as the language classes, the youth club, and the mosque, how these groups provide a sense of community and identity, and whether ethnicity plays a factor.

Appendix 1: Sample Interview Questions (key questions/themes used to probe)

1. Background: language, religion, ethnicity, education, profession.
2. Describe your living conditions in the Afghan city where you lived.
3. Generally, describe the relations between the various Afghan ethnic groups.
4. Are there any differences between the people who live in Afghan city centres and the people who live in the countryside (describe the differences if there are any)?
5. Describe the relations between men and women. Describe what is appropriate behaviour for a female, a male.
6. Why did you pick Canada and Ottawa?
7. Did you come with family members? Are there any family members left in Afghanistan? If so, do you keep in touch?
8. Describe, what you think, it means to be a refugee. Are you still a refugee or has your legal status changed?
9. What has your experience of Canada been? How have others treated you?
10. There has been significant coverage of Afghanistan recently. Do you think it was a proper representation of Afghanistan?
11. Describe some of the differences between Afghanistan and Canada.
12. Do you think about Afghanistan? What do think about that place?
13. What do you think of when you hear the word home?

Appendix 2: Important Historical Dates and Events

1978 PDPA Marxist regime comes to power.

1978 Opposition groups against the PDPA form. They become known as the Mujahidin. Afghans start leaving the country.

December 24 1979 Soviet forces enter Afghanistan to support the Afghan Marxist government.

1979 Civil war between the PDPA and the Mujahidin begin.

1989 The Soviet military withdraws from Afghanistan. Civil war continues between different Mujahidin groups.

1992-1994 Fighting between Pushtun and non-Pushtuns.

1994-1994 The Taliban enter Afghanistan.

1996 The Taliban take control of a significant portion of Afghanistan.

2001 US and Allies attack Afghanistan.

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