Identity and Agency of Pakistani Youth and Their Families in Hong Kong

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Abstract: Mainstream Hong Kong society often sees ethnic minorities through stereotypes. This research aims to unpack the daily life and thoughts of Pakistani youths in Hong Kong. It focuses on family and marriage. Family is the most important social system in Pakistani culture, and marriage forms a family. I explore Pakistani youths' identity negotiation with the concepts of family and marriage through their experience. In-between two cultures, Pakistani youth have encountered various difficulties as well as delightful moments in identity, even though they see it as daily life. How do they make sense of their lives? This research explores the agency of Pakistani youths in Hong Kong.

Preface

When I first gained an image of South Asians in Hong Kong society, I learned the stigmatized stereotypes from the media, rather than getting to know them in person, since there is not much chance of communicating with people from different ethnicities in Hong Kong. These stereotypes may be explicit or implicit, but the boundary drawn between the mainstream and South Asians affects South Asians a lot. As part of the ethnic Chinese majority, I feel bad

about this, and I feel that I should do something. What I can do is to build a deeper understanding towards them through my academic work. Since the first project I initiated in my college life, I have been trying to understand them little by little. I am glad that I can now write this final year project on Pakistanis in Hong Kong.

While learning from Pakistanis, I found their characteristics are not the same as their stereotypes--they showed me so much kindness and hospitality, inviting me to visit their homes, cooking a lot of their signature food, and spending much time with me. Some of my informants even told me that I am the first real Chinese friend they had since they came to Hong Kong. The more I understood about them, the more variations I saw. This project can be a step showing that the boundary between majority and ethnic minorities can be permeable and perhaps gradually dissolved.

Introduction

“叉仔 印度 南亞 三個名你是但隨便揀

反正 就算 點嗌 邊個名你眼中都係犯

印度定係巴基爛坦

睇死你咪又係貪

咪撚諗住可以偷懶

因住外賣都無撚得你玩”

‘Aa Cha’ ‘Yun Dou Lo’ ‘Naam Aa Zai’

Call us however you want to

It makes no difference in how you perceive us anyway

In your eyes, we’re always the criminal, the greedy thief, the lazy ass

Low-paid jobs are all that we deserve

Food delivery? Only if we’re lucky and have not gotten fired

Lyrics from “南亞仔(South Asian Dude)” by Zain

If you were asked to imagine a Pakistani living in Hong Kong, what images would come to your mind? Are they like the lyrics mentioned above? South Asians are always associated with backward, poor, welfare abusers, criminals and “queue up gang” (Chee, 2017) among the mainstream media. The lyrics I cited above is from a song written by Zain, a Pakistani-Hong Konger and a YouTuber. He is a third-generation immigrant in Hong Kong. He wants to address the voices from the host society that Pakistanis grow up in throughout the whole song.

I was impressed by his YouTube video when I first watched it because he speaks proficient Cantonese. He uses a lot of Hong Kong slang. I cannot tell the difference between him and

other Hong Konger only through his voice and talking style. I found him more like a Hong Konger than those stereotypes. That's why I found his speciality, the contradiction with what I imagined about "traditional Pakistani".

However, Chee (2017) questions whether the successful minority models are the whole picture of ethnic minorities or just a sign of defining ethnic minorities' success in terms of assimilation and integration into Hong Kong society. She suggests that the role models of South Asians are usually more like mainstream Chinese Hongkongers rather than people having their own culture. These models are assimilated into mainstream Hong Kong society which has marked the standard of a "good ethnic minority." It further widens the gaps between mainstream Hong Kongers and the "backward" ethnic minorities and enhances the hierarchy of ethnic minorities. The majority think that they are socially and culturally superior to South Asians and judge their practices and values with little understanding. Thus, I set my topic to investigate Pakistani youths in Hong Kong.

While we are imagining who Pakistanis are, the Pakistanis themselves are also imagining who they are and who they will be. While doing research, I found that they have an imagination of what they like and who they want to be although sometimes they are still searching for answers. "One may be born into a family and a nation, but the sense of

membership can be a matter of choice and negotiation," Bryceson and Vuorela argue (2002). Pakistani immigrants are born into Pakistani families in Hong Kong. But there are many choices they can make in the midst of their life. Whether it is the Hong Kong lifestyle they want to follow or it is the Pakistani culture they like more, or even none of them, they keep choosing and making decisions to live a life of their own.

This thesis investigates how Pakistani youth negotiate their identity and exercise their agency through daily life because a person's experiences reveal who he/she is and how he/she makes sense of the world. I argue that the way they live is actualizing their agency although their culture has given them lots of restrictions. One's agency is not only shown in choosing among options that they have but also in the everyday life decisions of what they choose to commit to or rebel against. I believe that freedom lies in one's will of enacting and persisting in decisions that he or she finds morally right, as well as the unwillingness to follow some choices. This is captured in stories of Pakistani youth undergoing negotiations of their life in Hong Kong.

Since family is highly emphasized in Pakistani culture, this thesis focuses on the family and marriage system that Pakistani youth adopts. I explore their identity in Section 1. Then, Section 2 is about the Pakistani family. All of them are having a Pakistani family life with

little acculturation into Hong Kong. Their parents preserve Pakistani culture in their families, where they learn their culture. Lastly, I will discuss about dating and marriage from the youths' perspective in Section 3. We can see their struggles and worldview in such a huge topic. Through their lives and thoughts concerning marriage and family, I argue that Pakistani youths are negotiating these notions from different cultures, reconstructing their mindsets, and living a life they imagined according to their sense of belonging.

Literature Review

To create the foundation of this thesis, I base my research from the three bodies of literatures below. First, I consider Pakistani immigrants in Hong Kong, focusing on what immigrants encounter in this society; second, I examine the phenomenon of emigration from Pakistan, looking at previous research on Pakistanis. These two parts aim at giving an overview of the circumstance Pakistani youths live in and the ideologies that may influence their lives. The last part is on agency. It gives possible explanations for what Pakistani youths are choosing, and what values they consider when they make their decisions.

Immigrants in Hong Kong

Starting with comprehending Pakistanis in Hong Kong, it is crucial to know about their cultural history. Erni and Leung (2014) discuss how Pakistanis encounter Hong Kong. Their

settlement was often related to British colonial rule. They mainly participated in military service, labour, and trade. Their families then came to Hong Kong, and the next generation was born and raised in Hong Kong. They have little interaction with the Chinese because of racial and cultural segregation policies, language, and religious and socio-economy differences. There are many practices and festivals in Muslim life; a significant component constitutes their identity. It enhances their cultural and ethnic bonding with their communities. Apart from the official history mentioned above, it also highlights how religious institutions, such as Muslim schools and mosques, reshape these diasporic communities.

How do Pakistani students make sense of their Hong Kong identity? Chee (2019) provides an approach which she terms “global Hong Kong identity”. She sets her tone by explaining the citizenship issue in post-colonial Hong Kong. Citizenship education is practised in Hong Kong since 1997. She finds out that teachers aim at reinforcing the discourse of South Asian countries as socially and culturally backward and wanting them to give up their unacceptable cultural practices from their home countries. Teachers want their Pakistani students to embrace the civil culture of Hong Kong, which is different from mainland China. Yet, South Asian students choose to claim their identity to the imagined global community. In their transnational experiences, Hong Kong identity is only part of their sense of identity.

Cantonese “local Hong Kong” has been seen to reject non-Chinese in their eyes. They identify with “international Hong Kong,” which uses English as the common language. Thus, they see themselves as people living in Hong Kong and belonging to the imagined global community.

Gu et al. (2019) have found a correlation between academic achievement and ethnic identity among ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. In their perspective, academic identity is a connection to mainstream society, and many Pakistanis think this kind of connection is a betrayal of their ethnic identity. They have a "forced choice" mindset which they think they can only choose from either ethnic identity or academic success. At the same time, parents' attitude of whether they value their children's academic development is determinative of their academic identity. Ethnic minority students want to escape from the negative tags and discrimination against ethnic minorities through their academic success. In addition, Chinese-language proficiency means acceptance by the mainstream community, while native-speaker-like English means higher social status and academic identity.

Immigrating to a new country involves identity and belonging issues. Hall (1999) discusses cultural identity and diaspora. He suggests that cultural identity is constructed by the narrative of history and is an ongoing process of transformation, thus it consists of the matter

of “becoming.” A sense of “imagined community” may give some immigrants value that they can feel and name.

Emigrants from Pakistan

Salam's (2014) research on “Negotiation Tradition, becoming American” discusses how the next generation of South Asians negotiates their identity with their family in America. It states the importance of family in the identity formation of immigrants. Parents teach their children to follow traditional values and practices at home, and sometimes, this may be more traditional than people in their hometown. Thus, under the individualistic environment which emphasizes personal choice, family role expectations have created value conflicts in the children's development in the US. There are dilemmas in gender and dating, and they base their identity on family and ethnicity or on individual achievement.

In a chapter about Muslim Migrants in Austria, Stepien (2008) discusses the significant role of the family in Muslim culture and how family culture changes and continues in the migration process. She indicates that Islam is “a social system, culture and civilization.” However, emigrants are often in between two places, not belonging to the origin or to the new country. There are claims in European countries that migrants live parallel lives from the majority while only focusing on their communities and families. Stepien (2008) discusses

how families are the most important social unit in Islamic thought, valuing the role of marriage, parents, and children. Parents are supposed to teach their children social, cultural, and moral aspects with care. Children are supposed to provide shelter, support, and care to their parents when they get old. From the immigrant perspective, the modern individualistic Western lifestyle represents a culture of separateness. However, family law in Islamic law stands its ground. The collective concept and identity of Muslims have not been shaken among most emigrants. The injunctions of Islam, including prayers, fasting, and haj, are groups activities that are most highly valued. Although many of them are still following the idealization of family in their country of origin, there are still some adjustments made in the migration process. Women have more freedom in education and marriage, for example.

For a better understanding of Pakistani identity in Hong Kong, it is crucial to read about the formation of Pakistani cultural identity in Pakistan as well. Kassim (2012) explains how Pakistanis formed their cultural identity. The society was earlier not primarily Islamic—Pakistan was a part of India and a colony of Britain. After independence, Pakistan intended to build a strong national identity, and the state tried different approaches to construct it. They tried emphasizing Islamic ideology using the linguistic-ethnic approach, but this did not fully succeed. Also, the colonial influences, including modernization, nationalism, industrialization, and democracy, have had great impacts hindering the formation of Pakistani

national identity. Thus, Kassim thinks that Pakistani nationality is a lost identity. Until now, Pakistani cultural identity is an in-between identity of having Islamic background and longing to be Westernized, which represents an "Islamicate" identity.

The chapter "An 'Islamicate' Woman" (Kassim, 2012) provides an idea of Pakistani women's identity and position. Kassim suggests that Muslim women have created their own version of feminism under the framework of Islam. In Pakistan, although there are laws protecting women's right, men's patriarchal social attitudes have remained. Also, while women sometimes engaged in public protest, they were not advocating for women's rights alone, but rather for the nation. It shows that Pakistani women have a certain level of freedom. They are agents in their own way. However, because Pakistani society does not have a clear vision in seeing Pakistani women, women's position in the society is neither modern and Wester nor Islamic.

Agency

In "Agency, Gender, and Embodiment," Mahmood (2005) writes about Egyptian Muslim women following their religion as their own choice. She argues that feminism often assumes the hegemonic discourse about Islam, that orthodox Islamic tradition is patriarchal. This kind of approach to understanding Muslim practices may ignore other forms of agency. She

suggests that agency can be in the form of following Islamic practices. Feminine Islamic virtues focus on *al-haya* (shyness, difference, modesty). When women internalize these standards, it is a modality of action showing their agency, the process of cultivating *al-haya* intentionally. The embodiment of ritual practices, especially veiling, actively forms their piousness. For instance, when they are not veiling, they may feel shy. Mahmood describe her informants as "critical maker of piety." From the mosque participants' perspective, their body is a medium for following the norm, which is understood as the "docility of the body." She uses a case that a wife is more pious than the husband, which made him unsatisfied with her "backwardness." The woman made much effort and finally changed her husband. Mahmood shows that agency is broad, and can take many forms. Liberating women from patriarchal Islamic practices should not be the only perspective in understanding Muslim women.

In "Muslim American Women on Campus," Shabana (2014) writes about Muslim women in US universities. Shabana's informants have different identities and expectations apart from being Muslim. Thus, sometimes, there are contradictions between what they want and their underlying Muslim values. At the same time, the American Muslim woman identity brings them surveillance, stereotypes, double consciousness, and essentialism. It is hard to balance both sides. It is always "wrong" in either perspective. Shabana suggests there are many stereotypes of Muslim and American identities, but these identities are not inherently

contradictory. Some Muslims in the US hold the value of "just go through it" when it comes to contradictions between daily life and religion. They just choose what they want to do without planning whom they want to be because their identity is already mapped out for them. Identity can be in plural form, having more than one at the same time, as Shabana's informants reveal.

In terms of searching for whom one wants to be, there is much negotiation between morality and leading a good life. Janson (2016) discusses in his study about young Muslims that being a good Muslim involves many compromises. He uses Foucault's notion of "the technology of the self" in analyzing the relation of his informants to the Islamic religion. He suggests the motive of an individual transforming himself is his own satisfaction, not from other's perspectives. In addition, the individual does not see the transformation as his own product but as a move by God. Here, one's motivation in following the Islamic religion may be seen to be the relationship with God, a transcendence of oneself.

The literatures above provide an alternative for understanding Pakistani Muslims, focusing on agency in enacting piousness, and agency in asserting oneself as an individual between two cultures. It is a good framework to understand my informants as individuals enacting their agency and the moral rationale behind this.

Significance of the research

My research provides a glimpse into what Pakistani immigrants in Hong Kong may encounter while searching for their identity. They are situated as immigrants in Hong Kong, and as Pakistani emigrants. We have noticed the influence of family on this issue, especially in that Pakistani Muslim cultures emphasize the authority of the family. Ethnicity and religion have a degree of power in shaping the next generation's life. At the same time, being in Hong Kong, the former British colony and the current special administrative region of China, has created more possibilities in the formation of identity. The "official history" provides a brief general view understanding this topic, but it has not given enough discussion of individual experiences. However, when it comes to agency of Muslims in immigrant societies, the ethnographic literature provides findings as to how people choose and identify themselves in different environments. In order to discover their life and decisions they made, my research in this thesis focuses on the daily life struggles and identity negotiation that Pakistani youths encounter. As shown in the literature review about importance of family, I base my research on family life and practices to show their influence on Pakistani youths.

Methodology

This research aims at understanding the negotiation of identity. It is conducted through in-depth interviews and fieldwork. In-depth interviews were conducted with Pakistanis in Hong Kong whose ages range from 14 to 25. As my focus is on identity, my informants are at the life stage of undergoing negotiations between different identity issues, so that I can observe their decisions and rationale for making sense of the different values they encounter. They are mostly second or third-generation immigrants or have been staying in Hong Kong for more than two-thirds of their lives. Also, participant observation in their families is used to discover their cultural practices and interactions in daily life. I have used my personal network to ask Pakistani friends for interviews and recruited more informants by snowballing.

Summary of Informants

	Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Age of immigrating to Hong Kong	Generation in Hong Kong	Occupation	Class in Hong Kong
1	Arafaa	F	16	Born-and-raised in Hong Kong	3rd	Student (Secondary 5)	Lower
2	Shaima	F	14	Born-and-raised in Hong Kong	2nd	Student (Secondary 3)	Lower
3	Ah Man	M	22	Born-and-raised in Hong Kong	3rd	Student (University year 5)	Lower
4	Alaya	F	14	Born-and-raised in Hong Kong	2nd	Student (Secondary 3)	Lower
5	Ayra	F	25	Born-and-raised in Hong Kong	2nd	Translator	Middle
6	Saba	F	24	Born-and-raised in Hong Kong	2nd	Translator	Lower
7	Aysha	F	21	Born-and-raised in Hong Kong	2nd	Student (University year 4)	Upper-middle class
8	Ilma	F	17	2	2nd	Student (Secondary 5)	Lower
9	Souma	F	14	2	2nd	Student (Secondary 3)	Lower
10	Asali	M	17	5	2nd	Student (Secondary 6)	Lower
11	Ebran	F	16	5	2nd	Student (Secondary 5)	Lower
12	Maira	F	22	7	2nd	Waiter	Lower
13	Zimal	F	24	7	1st	Student (University year 1)	Lower

Section 1: Identity

Living in Hong Kong as 'ethnic minorities,' Pakistani youth grow up in a multicultural environment. Hong Kong is a place of ethnic Chinese dominance, and other ethnicities are designated ‘ethnic minorities.’ According to Vecchio (2021), being a teenager is a process of identity searching. My informants do not only search for their own personal identity but their cultural identity. As Jenkins (2013) mentions, identity is a negotiation of one's pursuit of their interests. They are searching for who they want to be through ethnic or cultural identity and, at the same time, searching for what life they would like to live. Growing up as a unique group or unique individual, the questions of “who I am” and “who I want to be” have come to their mind.

Jenkins (2013) uses “the map” as a metaphor to describe the process of identity. Locating oneself on the map does not determine where one will go next. It is foreseeable that Pakistani youths may know their ethnicity, but the pathway of going to another destination is up to them, even though there are sometimes constraints. Some youths, who are in the ethnic minority class, have less struggle with identity. Yet, for some informants, parents may have different identities from them. They cannot follow their parents' pathway, while mainstream Hong Kong friends or other people do not have that Pakistani background and culture. It is hard for them to know the next destination on the map. However, culture always has a

prototype of a good person or normal under the cultural values of its system. The process of negotiating identities is complicated, but at the same time, it is their daily life. So, who are they?

In this section, we will examine Pakistani youths' identifying process. When I ask them about their identity, most of them identify themselves as both Pakistani and Hong Kong people. Hong Kong is something they value, and it is their home, where they grow up. One significant identity is Muslim, and most of them relate this identity with 'their own culture' at first, but it is their priority.

Experiences and (Re)Imagination

Identity is about one's experiences, positioning, and narrative of the past. It is an imagination of belonging, but at the same time, it is real. It is an ongoing process that allows reimagination. Hall (1999, p. 226) explains cultural identity "It is something not a mere trick of the imagination. It has its histories—and histories have their real, material, and symbolic effects." Identification of Pakistani youths themselves is a narrative of what they have gone through in their growth. They imagine themselves belonging to a particular community or to more than one community, Hong Kong, Pakistan, or anywhere, because of their experiences. I am capturing the moment of identification when I interviewed them.

“I am a Pakistani. A Pakistani who lives in Hong Kong,”

—Ilma.

“I am a Hong Konger or ethnic Pakistani Hongkoner,”

—Ah Man.

“I would call myself a Pakistani Hong Konger,”

—Sadia.

“I would like to call myself more like a Hong Konger,”

—Aqsa.

“I cannot call myself a Hong Konger”

—Shaima.

The above self-introductions reflect who they see they are and who they want to be. Jenkins (2013) has mentioned that identity is related to one's preference. Because identity affects how one is treated and how one treats others (Jenkins, 2013), when one identifies oneself as someone else, it implies the picture of life and the image of whom he or she wants to be and whether they can attain it. It is about their preference at that moment, so it matters.

> Of course, I wanted to be the same as them [local Chinese friends]. My father suggested that "I'll write an application to your school so that you can wear a head scarf and trousers underneath your skirt…" It was such a big issue to me because I was like, I don't want to be the only girl who wear trousers underneath my skirt. That would look so weird. […] I just wanted to be as local Hong Konger as possible.
>
> —Aysha

Aysha is recalling how, when she was in secondary school, she wanted to be a local Hong Konger. She did not want to stand out from her friends because she used the Hong Kong cultural sense to see herself. She wanted to be a Hong Konger who dressed "normally." She wanted to be assimilated and accepted by her friends, and this shows her sense of belonging was attached to the Hong Kong local community. Therefore, she tried to fit into the imagined "local Hong Kong" culture through her outfit.

However, when Aysha grew up, she felt different. She has been to Pakistan for a gap year, and she first felt unfamiliar compared to Hong Kong. Later, she experienced the culture of Pakistan, and she felt Hong Kong should not be the only way of living.

> I have more friends in Pakistan. I have realized Hong Kong is not the only thing, Why must I fit into the local Chinese?
>
> —Aysha

With her exposure to the Pakistani community, she reimagined her identity again. The issue that she earlier argued with her father about has become something she is willing to do now from the bottom of her heart. The deep longing of wanting to be a local Hong Konger has become less important to her because she has a higher belonging to Pakistan after her stay there. Jenkins (2013) states that identity is emotionally charged. The more emotions attached to a particular place, the more sense of belonging and identity one will find in it. Throughout her year back in Pakistan, she found out about the hospitality of Pakistanis. She enjoyed her life there. Thus, she started to embrace Pakistani culture and identity.

In Aysha's case, her imagination of herself striving for a Hong Kong local identity has changed. Even in a lecture class with more than a hundred university students, she was willing to stand out and talk about her own culture since she wanted to promote Pakistani culture and let more people know about it. Aysha's action show that cultural identity is not fixed, and changes along with one's experience and environment. To Aysha, the friends

surrounding her have been essential for her identity formation, especially in her teenage time; her peers' significantly influenced her.

Hall (1999) explains that cultural identity is fluid and always under transformation, and it is also constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth. The changes in identity and belonging do not happen in thought but in an emotionally charged memory and journey of what Aysha has experienced in Pakistan and Hong Kong. Like Aysha, other informants' experiences shaped who they are and brought them to whom they will become. There is no fixed pathway.

My informants usually identify themselves with both Hong Kong and Pakistan. They do not miss either one because both are necessary to them. Nevertheless, it is a process of negotiation. Many informants have changed the priority and meaning of each identity at different points in their lives.

Hongkonger Identity

All informants, except Shaima, think that they are Hong Kong people. But the way they saw themselves as Hongkongers differed, as we will see.

It is fundamental to understand the meaning of assimilation and acculturation to illustrate my informants' cases better. According to Wimmer (2009), Herder's assimilation theory states that breaking through boundaries between the host country and the immigrants is a long process. Immigrants must go through assimilation, integration, and absorption. Assimilation means ethnic communities moving into the mainstream through a process of intermarriage, spatial dispersion, and acculturation; then, the ethnic identity will only be a "symbolic ethnicity," and finally, sharing the same identity as the mainstream and dissolving the ethnic minorities' group identity. However, getting into the "local Hong Kong culture" and being accepted by the mainstream as a "Hong Konger" is problematic. Wimmer (2009) reckoned that even staying in a place for the third or fourth generation is still hard to recognize as locals; instead, they are ethnic minorities. Even though many informants label themselves as "Hong Kongers" it may not be the mainstream conception of Hong Konger. There are many definitions of Hong Konger identity. However, Ah Man is a particular case, one that has crossed the boundaries.

> I am a Hong Konger, or ethnic Pakistani Hong Konger. Because I was born and raised in Hong Kong, I think I am more like a Hong Konger than a Pakistani. Except for my appearance, I am a total Hong Konger inside. But, because my appearance is Pakistani, I can only add a "Pakistani" title when I introduce myself. Every part of me

> is a Hong Konger. Except for not eating pork, my growth and habits are the same as my friends, who are Hong Kongers, while I am different from others in my ethnic group. I do not have Pakistani friends, a few only, but I am not so close with them. Also, I am not pious.
>
> —Ah Man

Ah Man explains that growing up with local Hong Kong people makes him the same as they are. He has a friendly neighbour, a family with a son of similar age with him, and they suggested him to study at a local school with his son. Therefore, he studied in local schools with only ethnic Chinese people since kindergarten. Thus, he started making friends with local people and doing the same things that they did. Growing up in such a background makes him imagine his identity as no different from local the mainstream Hong Konger. It shows that lifestyle and social circle are significant determinants of one's identity and whether one is assimilated.

Ah Man is assimilated into a localized Chinese Hong Konger. In his imagination, he is within a group of local Hong Kongers. He has withdrawn from many Pakistani and Muslim practices. He found staying with Pakistanis uncomfortable because he thinks he has Hong Konger's character -- shyness, while Pakistanis are not shy. He found himself out of the

Pakistani group. He wants to belong to the Hong Konger mainstream group, and wants local people to accept him. On his Instagram, there are only ethnic Chinese friends, who comment on the Cantonese slang in his posts. They even pretended to write in Urdu in the comment, a sign of gently making fun of each other. They do not consider him a Pakistani but a Hong Konger with just a Pakistani background. The above shows that Ah Man has been assimilated into the local Hong Konger group. He is happy because he finds his identity where he is positioned. It gives him a sense of belonging.

However, not every Pakistani youth has the same experience as Ah Man. Shaima has felt the boundaries between the host society and the immigrants, keeping her living as an outsider in the Hong Kong mainstream community.

> Although I was born in Hong Kong, I don't think I'm a Hong Konger because I am different from others. Umm… in terms of family background, and not so good at Chinese… My Chinese is not okay, especially writing …. Because my parents, family, culture, habits, diets, clothing, everything is different.
>
> —Shaima

Shaima named all her differences from mainstream Hongkongers to emphasize that they are different from her.

> If I have friends in Hong Kong, I will feel stressed because I am not the same as them, and I am not enough compared with them. In school days, I stay on my seat and do my own things. When it is time to leave, I go back home.
>
> —Shaima

Shaima studies at a mainstream Chinese school, and there are no ethnic minorities, but she does not have any friends at school. Once, a Chinese classmate initiated a talk with her and made friends. She felt so happy. They shared different things. Unfortunately, the girl went to study abroad and left Shaima alone. We can see a boundary between ethnic Chinese and Pakistani from the above conversation. Shaima feels her ethnic background makes her an outsider in the Hong Kong community. It is a sign of rejection of her as an ethnic minority. She cannot find belonging in Hong Kong, where she has lived since she was born. This affects her social and psychological health. She is nervous every time she talks to local Hong Kong people. She wants to go back to Pakistan later if she has a choice. In Pakistan, she feels that she can be more active as people are of the same ethnicity (she used the word "自己人"), and she will not be afraid or nervous as she usually is at school.

Although the external situations of Shaima and Ah Man are mostly the same, she feels her sense of belonging differently than he does. She identifies herself as a Pakistani only. Law and Lee (2013) point out that after the handover of 1997, it saw “Hong Kong Chinese Orientalism” as the government focused on mainland Chinese ethnicity. They emphasized the Chinese race in Hong Kong's identity. Also, the legal process of granting Chinese identity to South Asian citizens of Hong Kong is up to the government. As a result, the identity of ethnic Pakistani as “others” has been reinforced in such a social context. Shaima feels that, so she keeps her distance from the ethnic Chinese. Her Chinese friend, who established a friendship with her, was so important because she took the move to cross that boundary. However, it did not last long. Shaima stayed as the "other" after her friend left.

There is also a hierarchy in ethnicity. Shaima thinks that being a Pakistani is not compatible with being a local Hong Konger. As Jenkins (2013) mentions, people with power manipulate false knowledge about identity to bring advantage to their group. It explains the ideology that Shaima thinks about her ethnicity, Pakistani, meaning not good enough, is false knowledge to put them in a lower position in Hong Kong society. Shaima accepts it and carries this identity with its negative label.

Yet not all informants are aware of "Hong Kong Chinese orientalism." Pakistani youths do not only fall along one identity among Hong Konger or Pakistani or Muslim identities but also may sometimes feel a more vigorous intensity of belonging while doing different things. Abu-Lughod's "Writing against culture" (1991) suggests that culture is often thought static and fixed because it gathers a group's collective characteristics. Culture has a tendency toward essentialism in pursuit of making the boundary between in-culture and other people. Thus, Pakistani youths often essentialize a culture with specific traits and correlate those things with their identity while these identities are constructed (Hall, 1999). In my findings, striving for academic success is the most significant characteristic of being a Hong Konger, and Pakistanis in Hong Kong feel a stronger sense of belonging to Hong Kong when they study hard and have good results.

Academics

From the Pakistanis' perspective, academic success is essential, and it is a characteristic of Hong Kong people. Arafaa points out that success in Hong Kong culture means studying hard. I found many Pakistani youths have internalized this ideology. Here is the conversation between Shaima and me about why she does not identify herself as a Hong Konger.

Me: What do you mean by "others"?

Shaima: Others are … classmates (Hong Kong Chinese). There are better in academics.

Me: If you have good academic result, are you a Hong Konger?

Shaima: Yes.

Also, in Alaya's case, academic success is crucial.

Me: Do you think you are different from Pakistanis in Pakistan?

Alaya: Yes, I study.

Me: So, they do not study?

Alaya: Yes, they do not concentrate on their studies.

The boundary between Hong Kong Chinese and other ethnicities is evident in these cases. There is a hierarchy at school, with the local Hong Kong students better positioned. They are usually brighter students, while Pakistanis are less adept at studying. Therefore, Alaya works hard to cross the ethnic boundary. Every preparation for exams, she still up the whole night studying. When someone does not know some answers but she knows, she feels proud. It differentiates her from other Pakistanis, she feels, because the education system in Pakistan is

poor. She gains confidence since she lives within the "Hong Konger" identity and meets the standard of being "good", which gives her a higher social position in society.

There is another explanation for this phenomenon. Gu et al. (2019) suggest that ethnic minorities in Hong Kong often have a "forced choice" mindset that assumes they have to choose between ethnic identity and academic success to become a Hong Konger. The stereotype of ethnic minorities has an image of poor academic results, whereas some do not want to fit that negative image so they study hard. This is a possible way to explain the intention of striving for academic success among ethnic minorities. Identity is fluid, but it is easy for them to essentialize Hong Kong's identity under these circumstances. They think having academic success means being a Hong Konger.

Being an ethnic minority in Hong Kong is challenging as there are boundaries between the host country and them, and this shows how hard it is to be identified as Hong Konger. Yet they have another side of choice, the Pakistani side. It is also complicated, but they are paying efforts to live out whom they want to be in their imagination.

Pakistani Identity

> I am a Pakistani. I am a Pakistani living in Hong Kong.… Being a Pakistani is important to me.
>
> —Ilma.

My informants often referred to "our culture" as Pakistani culture. It may be because I am a local Chinese Hong Konger, and I am asking questions about Pakistanis so that they speak to me like a representative of Pakistani culture. But what makes them feel so attached to their Pakistani identity even in the non-religious context of Hong Kong?

Their religion, Islam, may answer this question. Pakistan is an Islamic country, and all my informants are Muslim. Their parents practice much Pakistani culture at home, and their family brought them to the mosque to learn the Quran when they were young. Their family celebrates Pakistani festivals such as Ramadan and Eid. At home, they have traditional *halal* food. Also, they attend gatherings talking about religion:

.

> We would learn much from those kinds of gatherings and my parents sometimes would invite people into our home, such as scholars and their wives, and they would preach. And then, they would also invite other people that they know. The men would

> gather in the mosque and the women would come to our home. Everyone would get together. So, there might be twenty or thirty people, and we were just talking about religious things, and they were preaching about religion. I think that gave me more exposure to religion.
>
> —Aysha

Aysha said that her parents want to preserve the traditional Pakistani culture in their home. They practice their religion at home and expose her and her siblings to the religious context. Many other Pakistani families also have religious gatherings at home. Ilma told me that relatives always come over to her house, and they talk about spiritual matters. Although she does not understand everything she hears, she has learned much from them. My informants experience Pakistani community life through religious activities. Islam is what brings them together.

Pakistani identity is something they value, as experienced through standard practices in their everyday life. According to Jenkins (2013), imagined groupness comes from daily life experiences, and religious rituals and other forms of practices construct this sense of groupness. Family passes on their traditional culture to the next generation, as I will later discuss, and parents create for their children a Pakistani life in Hong Kong. This constructs

their cultural identity and sense of belonging to the Pakistani group. This gives them a sense that those who do the same things belong to the same group. It justifies my informants' identity as part of the Pakistani community.

"Pakistani culture" and Islam

Pakistani youths refer to Pakistani culture as "traditional Pakistani culture" and relate it to Islam. Thus, their Pakistani identity is based on Muslim identity. Aysha described Pakistani culture to me first in the interview. She shared many Muslim practices and her parents' teaching with her, as mentioned above.

Yet, sometimes, there are discrepancies in the imagined community. Aysha has experienced that Pakistan was not how she imagined.

> Actually, in my family, we try to maintain Pakistani culture and our religion as well because we are Muslims, so it's something we have been trying to hold on to.…They (Aysha's parents) have been trying to preserve the culture they left with. But then, behind the scenes, actually the culture is still evolving. But then we don't like that.… We are still holding on those traditional values. Obviously, they are not the exact same ones (as the "traditional" ones). There are generations, there are changes in culture

> and practices as well.... I've noticed that Pakistan has become more modern, and more Westernized. Because of that, I feel a bit unfamiliar as well. It is an Islamic country, and I am not sure why people are becoming so Westernized. They are sort of proud of being Westernized.… Personally, I also want to hold on to my culture and I am very proud of my culture.
>
> —Aysha

Aysha's parents tried to preserve what they know as Pakistani culture when they immigrated to Hong Kong. So, Aysha's understanding of Pakistani culture was according to traditional Islamic concepts. However, when Aysha went to Pakistan for an extended stay, she realized that what her family taught her was not what was actually in Pakistan. Pakistani culture is not that traditional and not that Islamic. She did not understand this place and felt distanced from her "home."

She told me she experienced being questioned a few times when she strictly did religious practices.

> My sister, she started doing the hijab, she started covering her hair in Pakistan. Even family friends, they were like "Huh, why are you doing that?" I mean it's a religious duty. It's not something to be surprised at.
>
> —Aysha

She was shocked because her family and friends were surprised about her sister doing her religious duty in an Islamic country. These people's reactions contradicted what she had learned about Pakistani culture. She thought that Pakistani culture should be according to traditional Islamic rules, and its Westernized culture was out of her expectation. She said, "I thought I wouldn't have to explain myself so much after coming here (Pakistan). But still, there is some explanation I had to do. People are still curious about why someone is following Islamic duties strictly." She gave much explanations to her friends from Hong Kong mainstream culture since they did not know about Islam. Yet, she also had to do this in Pakistan, a place having the "same culture" as hers. It made her disappointed.

The disappointment comes from the discrepancy of understanding Pakistani culture in terms of what identity is based on. "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style they imagined," Anderson (1982, p.6) stated. Pakistan is imagined as a traditional Islamic culture from my informants' perspectives. They think

Pakistani culture is moving away from tradition. Aysha felt lost after going to Pakistan because it contradicted her imagination of Pakistani culture, values, and identity.

The discrepancy does not happen only in Aysha's mind or other immigrants' perspectives. It happens because there is no hegemonic discourse on the cultural identity of Pakistan. Kassim (2012) mentions that since Pakistan was a colony of Britain, the society was not built on an Islamic basis but became an "Islamicate" society developed with foreign Western ideologies and systems. Islamic identity could not bring unity to the nation; thus, their cultural identity has been replaced with an "Islamicate" identity. As a result, there is an identity shift between traditional and modern ideologies inside Pakistani national identity. Pakistanis nowadays live in an Islamicate identity with Western influences, which is different from what Aysha imagined.

Nonetheless, Aysha's understanding of Pakistani identity represents many other Pakistani immigrants' views on identity issues. Ayra and Saba share the same feeling with her in their cultural identity of being Pakistanis with a strong Muslim identity. Saba said she is a Pakistani Hongkonger and Ayra said she is more on the Hongkonger side. They both recognize themselves as Pakistani with different degrees of belonging; they are strong in their

Muslim identity. They differentiated culture from religion. Here, Saba talks about the dowry culture in Pakistani culture, which they think is not from their religion:

> But then, Pakistan has so much taken it as they are following religion, but it's not in religion. When I told my mom I will not do the dowry, she says "what would people say. Blah, blah, blah…" They always think of what people will say because of the culture, but they don't know what God says. They are not following the religion, probably. They shared their faith with me saying it was important to them in their life.
>
> —Saba

I have heard from a few informants that they think many Pakistanis follow culture but not their religion. Usually, the older my informants are, the more reflection on culture and religion they offer, and their identity as Muslims is more salient than that of being Pakistani. They want to be good Muslims rather than excellent Pakistani, although many Pakistanis follow "culture," as they mentioned. But why are Pakistanis in Hong Kong standing out from their culture and wanting to be more "Muslim"?

Islamic "traditional Pakistani culture" in Aysha's and other informants' perspectives is something meaningful as an immigrant in Hong Kong. In a diaspora study of Muslims,

Moghissi (2006) points out that Muslim immigrants often form a sense of Muslim collective identity and solidarity when they feel the host country is inhospitable. It may prevent them from integrating into the host country. Moghssi also stated that they tend to identify their cultural values and practices emphasizing Islamic values within their originating country. They imagine the Islamic community through "long-distance nationalism." This explains Pakistani families' emphasis on Islam and "traditional Pakistani culture," preserving it even better than people in Pakistan. They relate those Islamic practices and values to Pakistani ethnicity because it helps them form a sense of ethnic belonging and solidarity in Hong Kong not merely because they feel "homesick" but also their need for belonging (Erni & Leung, 2014). Pakistani immigrants' life in Hong Kong constructs the style of "Pakistani culture" to my informants. So, Aysha felt distanced when she realized how Pakistan had changed. She wanted to uphold "traditional Pakistani culture" in her mind for her identity.

In their perspective, especially Aysha's, "Pakistani culture" is fixed with traditional Islamic culture, which she learned in Hong Kong, and thinks is more authentic and original. As mentioned above, her understanding of "Pakistani culture" relating to Islamic culture has shown the notion of cultural essentialism as Abu-Lughod suggests.

> But now (after being in Pakistani for a year), I am just like, no it's fine, if I'm not doing something because of my religion. My religion is my priority….Over the years, I have reclaimed my identity as a Muslim person as well.
>
> —Aysha

After experiencing "traditional Pakistani culture" and "modern Pakistani culture," Aysha found that "Pakistani culture" is fluid. Pakistani culture is changing. The notion of "culture" is tricky. It is not what Aysha thought initially, but it is still Pakistani culture. Now, she still thinks she is a Pakistani, but after all these experiences, she has reclaimed her identity as a Muslim, which is her priority. It does not mean that she is less Pakistani, but only that Muslim identity is more important to her after her extended stay in Pakistan. It gives her a sense of belonging, showing her preference and who she wants to be.

Other Pakistani youths I interviewed also live in a "Pakistani culture" that they imagined. "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (Anderson, 1982, p.6) Although there are different lives in Pakistani culture, if they imagine they are in communion, collectivity is essential to them as ethnic minority immigrants in other countries.

In my research, many informants correlate Pakistani identity with Muslim identity. At the same time, they often reclaim their identity as Muslims and differentiate themselves from the culture. Pakistani youths in Hong Kong have experienced different degrees of Islamic life, giving them a different imagination of Pakistani culture and Islam. Abu-Lughod (1991) writes that culture can be changed and learned. There are no fixed characteristics of Pakistani culture either in Hong Kong or Pakistan. The "Pakistani culture" my informants have in mind comes from the community's imagination, and Pakistani culture is different in every Pakistani perspective. Moreover, their understanding of culture and identity can be changed over time. The negotiation of culture and identity shows Pakistani youths' choices and preferences on whom they want to be, and it is their biggest agency in life. Even though they assert their identity as ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, they have a chance to maintain their identity of being a Muslim and prioritize it.

I have written about Pakistani youths' identity struggles and negotiation. They choose who they want to be according to their experiences. Identity can be changed, and there can be more than one identity. Hong Kong is a place where mainstream and ethnic minorities have clear boundaries. It is hard for my informants to live in such an environment. There are cases of informants assimilated into Hong Kong culture, and some may find their satisfaction in academic excellence. Some may live a life of a pious Muslim. It is their choice. Teenage

years are the phase they are searching for what is meaningful to them and what is not. Some preferences may be experimenting, but all experiences are meaningful to them because they live out their identity imagination, refine their pathways, and then reimagine again. This is how identity is negotiated.

Identity can be plural. It can be Pakistani Muslim as well as Hongkonger. As an American Muslim has said (Shabana, 2014, p.11-12), “they do that not because they're un-American, but that's what their beliefs are.… Similarly, I can be Muslim and live in America.” Shabana (2014, p.12) states that "Muslim identity or religiosity is not inherently opposed to being an American." My informants can have more than one identity, but they may think that they have to fulfill all expectations to identify themselves with a particular identity. There are different expectations from these cultures. Arafaa has told me that she felt it was not easy because she wanted to fulfil expectations from both sides, including worshipping God and following her dreams, and striving for academic excellence to become a teacher. It shows her efforts to be a better person from both perspectives.

Section 2: Family

Identity is the place one searches for their location on the map, as Jenkins (2013) maintained. In that case, the family places an individual into a particular area of the map. Family is essential because it brings the individual a place and helps him/her build up the sense of where one is located and gives them an imagination of who they are. My informants' families have fewer acculturation levels in Hong Kong, at least this generation's parents do. I would say that most of my informants have a Pakistani family life in Hong Kong.

> In my family, we try to maintain the Pakistani culture a lot, and our religion as well, because we are Muslims. It is something we are trying to hold on to. My parents as immigrants, when they immigrate to a new place, they want to preserve their culture as much as possible.
>
> — Aysha

Family is the first place an individual meets when one comes into the world. Its decisions affect where one grows up and what condition one lives under. My informants' families all have decided to travel abroad to a new place. The family then has become the first and fundamental agent transmitting and representing their home culture. This is the importance of family to the next generation of immigrants. Salam (2014) talks about the importance of

family for immigrants in the book "Negotiation Tradition, Becoming American." South Asian families in the United States face the same immigrant and cultural preservation situation. The traditional culture, especially gender ideologies and family norms, is transmitted to the next immigrant generation through socialization in the family. In this section, I will show how family works in the host society, Hong Kong, how it affects individuals, and how individuals, especially the next generation, exercise their agency under family influences, as shown in their interactions with family.

Hong Kong-style Joint Family

> Eighty percent of our family members are in Hong Kong. We moved here in pursuit of a better living. But when there is a wedding, we all go back to Pakistan for celebration because it is our home and our tradition. It is so happy to travel together.
>
> — Maira

Many Pakistanis see family as a unit and lifestyle. So when they consider Hong Kong for living, they will live with the whole family. Like Maira, she and her family live Pakistani lives in Hong Kong. To her, family is a community, her daily life, and a platform to live with the Pakistani culture. As mentioned in section 2 about how the government and media write about ethnic minorities' gathering under Covid, the mainstream Hong Kong people may not

understand their lives. Here, I will use my field visits under Covid to show their concept of family in that context, different from mainstream Hong Kong people.

In March 2022, the number of Covid cases in Hong Kong was high. My parents did not let friends or relatives come over to my home. I understood the situation, but still, it was hard for me to stay home long. By then, I had contacted Ilma for an interview. I remember that I called her on the phone to ask whether we could meet under Covid. Before the call, she asked me to wait for a moment because she was leaving for her cousin's home. I wondered why, if there were over 50,000 cases per day, she was still allowed to go to her cousin's house. I kept this question in mind, and was a bit jealous of her freedom.

Later, we had a chance to meet up. When I was interviewing Ilma at her housing estate, a few people passed by; she greeted them and told me they were her cousins and said I might see them at her home later that day. That evening, we arrived at her home. The living room is so huge among Hong Kong public estates, with a double-sized bed and so many sofas which can hold up to nearly twenty people in the living room. This 5-person family only has two rooms. That means having less personal space but allowing big family gatherings. It reflects the daily activities of this family: their family relationship is close. They share their lives with extended family. I first met her mom, who was cooking the meal. The portion of rice could

feed more than ten people, but I did not see that number of people at home except five of us, Ilma's cousin, Zimal, and her sister, Maira, her mom, and I. When we all had finished our meal, a man came in. He was Ilma's cousin, who was different from the one we met while interviewing that afternoon. He came in as if it was his home, but he only lived in the same housing estate. I believe that he comes here for dinner quite often. While he was enjoying his dinner, he called his wife and son in Pakistan. Ilma shared that his child was the little boy in her WhatsApp icon. Talking about the baby boy, everyone at this home was excited.

The above living style is, in fact, a norm in Pakistan, although it is uncommon to see in Hong Kong. In Pakistani culture, people usually live in a joint family, including their in-laws and cousins in the household, while Hong Kong flats are too small for this. Many Pakistani families live in nuclear families but with frequent contact with their in-laws and cousins (So, 2011). In Ilma's case, they are still living with their cousin and in-laws, but not that many people are in a flat as compared with Pakistan. I term it the Hong Kong-style Pakistani joint family. Due to the limitation in Hong Kong, the style of joint family has adapted to it. Thus, some of Ilma's cousins come over for dinner frequently, without living together. When I contact Ilma, she is always at her cousin's home, and she goes there nearly every day. It is their living style. Through their interactions and joy, I feel they treat all extended family members as their beloved ones and have support from each other.

A joint family is not easy to retain, especially in Hong Kong. As So (2011) states, "the formation and continuity of joint family residences depends upon family harmony, resources, financial circumstances, and the separation of family members…" Also, she mentions that some Pakistani families have changed to nuclear families due to Hong Kong's housing context. Some of the extended family members live in another public housing estate far away due to the arrangement of the government, so they cannot contact that frequently. The spatial limitations and housing arrangements of Hong Kong made many Pakistani families difficult to remain in a joint family. Giving up cultural traditions and living in a nuclear family is a way to live in Hong Kong. However, a joint family retains cultural traditions in festivals, practices, and the concept of family and gender role relationships (Weiss, 2006). Ilma's family chooses to adapt somewhat to the Hong Kong-style joint family but keeps their familial linkages as fully as possible. It shows what they think is important and what they want in their lives. I see that Ilma enjoys her family life a lot. It reproduces Pakistani culture to Pakistani youth and socializes them about the importance of family.

Family as the Most Important Social Unit

Family from Pakistani Muslims' perspective is a bit different from what Hong Kong people understand. Weiss (2006) mentions that the Pakistani family works as a basis of the social system. It is not merely a living place but provides protection and identity to individuals. Furthermore, honor and shame come from one's family, and family loyalty is thus highly

emphasized. Stepien (2008) points out that life planning and decisions, including marriage, parenthood, and parent-child relationship, are family-centered in Pakistani Muslim culture. It shows how they interact, their responsibilities to their family, and role-taking in the family system (Stepien, 2008).

My informants shared their stories with family, which I found precious, especially in this self-centered era. In particular, the supportive role within a family has been distributed to different family members, and some are divided by gender. As Cuno (2009) states, embodied morality is formed under the economic system of the Pakistani Muslim context. In Islam, men have access to the public workplace, so they pay more effort into earning money, and women's labor should be paid for in the family. Mohammad (2012) also mentions that women's social responsibilities and expectations are doing feminized activities that are caring and nurturing in a family. Each contributes according to their gender role and position in the family.

The role of a mother is to take care of children. Alaya's mother is a perfect example of Pakistani mothers' care for their children. Alaya is concerned about her study a lot. She recalled the last preparation for an exam; she stayed up all night for revision. Her mother accompanied her. Alaya's mother explained to her that because Alaya was afraid of ghosts

when she went to bed late, she wanted to attend to Alaya at night. Her mother cooked something for her and sat on the sofa for the whole night. Alaya's mother sacrificed her own time to support Alaya, although she thinks that health is more important than studying. Pakistani family relationships are illustrated through this example.

How the daughter feels is shown in how she treats her mother, emphasizing filial piety, especially when their parents get old (Stepien, 2008). My informants' parents take care of their parents by accompanying them in person. One day, Ilma and her mother chatted with me after dinner. Ilma's mother talked about family in Pakistani culture. Because she does not know Chinese or English, Ilma narrated what she said for me:

> My mom's mom is old, right? She still has her mom. After my Form 6, she is going to go back to her mom to be with her. Mom said she didn't want to leave her mom alone. She wants to be with her, even though my mom's sisters are there, but still, they have their kids to take care of, so they cannot take care of my grandmom that much. So, my mom wants to go to Pakistani and be with her, because she misses her a lot….We cannot leave them alone, it's really sad. We love them so much. They helped us a lot.
>
> — Ilma

Ilma's mother shared her plans for the future. She said because she has been married and followed her husband to Hong Kong and formed a new family, her responsibility is to her new family. She did not have a chance to spend time with her mother. But now, her children have grown up, so she can choose to take care of her mother. From Ilma's mother's perspective, all considerations are about her family, mother, or children. Her decision is based on her youngest daughter Ilma's graduation time, which means she is mature enough to be without her mother or a while. Her role of being a caretaker of her children will be less critical so that she can take up another caring family position. Their family ties are strong, which is different from Hong Kong, where the elderly are commonly taken care of by domestic helpers or elder centres. After her mother spoke, Ilma added:

> When my mother is old, I'm going to take care of her, never leave her alone. I love her so much. That's how Pakistani families work.
>
> — Ilma

Her mother's way of treating Ilma's grandmother is how Ilma learns filial piety and Pakistani family culture.

Since forming and living in a family is vital to their culture, Pakistanis tend to marry early in

pursuit of having a better family relationship. Ilma's mother told me that Pakistanis get married in their mid-twenties or earlier but not after thirty because they want to grow up together with their children. They want to have children when they are young and have much energy. I was impressed by this. In Hong Kong, having babies in one's thirties is a norm as parents can provide a better living for their children. However, in Pakistani culture, accompanying children's growth is more important than what they can provide for them materially.

The family role is distributed to more family members in a joint family than in a nuclear family. For a female's role in a family, in Ilma's family's case, her mother is the chief taking care of the large family. Her rice cooking is massive, enabling her to plsy this role. When I asked Ilma if she knew how to cook, she said she knew nothing, but she would learn the skill when she gets married. Ilma's cousin, Zimal, was sleeping when Ilma's mom was cooking. She studies medicine. Although women have the role of taking care of the family, Zimal's husband is not in Hong Kong, and she is focusing on her studies; the role of cooking falls onto Ilma's mother.

On the other hand, men's role is to earn money in the public domain. The man who came for dinner after work was taken care of by Ilma's mother, although he is not a direct nuclear

family member. He came in and sat down on the sofa, and Ilma and Zimal served him food. People at that home feel familiar and usual with that situation. In this case, I did not have a chance to ask about financial arrangements in co-living. But I can share Ebran's case to give a brief picture of how role distribution ties people together in a joint family. Ebran's father travelled back to Pakistan to take care of his sister's family. Ebran's aunt became a widow, so her father and uncle stayed in Pakistan for a few years to support her family financially. A male's role is to provide economic support to a family, not only to his nuclear family but to the joint family. Pakistani families have a precise role allocation. Money and care, gender role and family are distributed to different people.

Through living together, the Pakistani elder woman, Ilma's mother, takes up the role of taking care of the joint family, modelling this to the next generation. Maira and Zimal are comparatively older among the second generation of this family. They know cooking skills, while Ilma told me that she is still learning as she is the youngest and has not married yet. Here, we can see the socialization process of gender roles in different life stages.

Family as Agent Preserving Muslim Practices

Islam is another thing that constitutes Pakistani identity. Most Pakistanis are Muslims; they see religious practice as part of Pakistani culture. So, the family is a place to establish their

spiritual life, and parents are the ones to introduce the cultural practices to the next generation. As Stepien (2008) notes, Islam commands parents to teach and guide their children to walk within Islamic belief. From my informants' perspective, Muslim practices consist of praying five times per day on time, reading and understanding the Quran, wearing the right clothing, and fasting. My informants' parents brought Muslim practices into their families.

All informants were brought to the mosque by their parents when they were children. Usually, the mother takes up the role of getting them to the mosque between the ages of 3- 12 years old; girls may stay home after childhood. Going to the mosque was boring from a child's perspective. They had to sit properly in the mosque for an hour reading the Quran; since the Quran is in Arabic, they could only read it, but they did not understand the meaning of Arabic. Nonetheless, there was no other choice. If they stopped reading, they would be beaten by teachers in the mosque. They were forced to go to the mosque and retained their culture because of their parents.

As a child, they have their own way of showing their agency. They often rebelled against their parents since they did not understand the meaning behind going to the mosque. Arafaa pretended to be sick every day. Her mother knew that she was acting out every single time

and said, “we can leave home when you stop pretending.” She never succeeded in lying. Under the parent's will, a child does not have much choice when they are young, and parents try to guide them to a life that they think is good. Muslim parents bring the religion to the next generation and educate their standard of a “good person,” following the Quran. Children's reactions can be different. Arafaa, chose to rebel and show her will since she strongly resisted the “boring” practice when she was young. Aysha’s family had another experience. Her parents are strict about following Muslim practices, yet she feels the weight of Muslim identity and even wants to pass it on. Her father prays five times per day, and her brothers are woken up at 5 a.m. for the first prayer. Every Sunday, her father gathers the whole family to read stories of the prophets, and her parents want their children to learn the life qualities of prophets. Sometimes, her father invites scholars and guests to come over to her home and discuss their beliefs.

> From my perspective, my parents have a huge influence [on me]. They worked very hard. Even when relatives come to our home and visit [the night before], when it is time for prayer, he would ask the boys to get up and pray together. About keeping the fast, that is something I have never thought of missing on purpose. Watching my parents, watching my brothers, it has instilled in me that these practices are very important. That is something I want to preserve and pass on to my future children as

> well.
>
> — Aysha

Parents' influences and attitudes toward religion are the prototypes for their children. Their children observe how their parents practice religion and evaluate how they want to place these things in their own life. Aysha's family has well preserved their religion and culture through family interactions. She sees her parents' priority and perseverance in the faith. Her parents have tried hard to instill their values in Aysha's generation, and she finds it is worth passing on to the next generation.

Separation from Family

Because family is essential, Pakistanis take care of their extended families; parents may not be present when their children are in need.

> As a child, I feel a bit neglected. I mean I feel bad… I was like, I have to take my IGCSC, my A-level, but my mom was leaving me. How can you do this? Even though they are here in Pakistan not by their own choice.
>
> — Aysha

Although, in some cases, Pakistani lives in a joint family, not all feel the closeness with their family members. Because of their immigrant background, many informants' parents travel back and forth between Pakistan and Hong Kong. Some of this travel is related to property issues; some is related to family issues or immigration policy issues. This may cause separation between parents and child, hindering their relationship and the children's growth. In immigrant families, Qin (2006) suggests that disengagement with parents greatly influences an adolescent child's life because it is the time that they need the most guidance and support from their parents. They face acculturation, a language barrier, and other issues in immigrant life, which make their life more difficult. To Aysha, her parents' leaving her and her siblings at home for a long time was hard.

When I was interviewing Ebran, she told me that her father had died three months ago. Yet, they had not spent much time together due to their separation. Ebran recalled that her father was in Pakistan most of the time and only stayed in Hong Kong for five months. He traveled to Pakistan for his business and to take care of his sister's family, which meant being separate from Ebran's family for an extended time.

> Me: Would it be better if your dad was here? What about you and your siblings?
>
> Ebran: My younger sister missed him a lot. But for me….To be honest, I'm okay

because he was not here [Hong Kong] before either.

Me: Did you want your dad staying here more?

Ebran: Yes.

Me: What did it mean to you?

Ebran: He would have spent more time with us.

In this conversation with Ebran, I felt her mixed feelings. On the one hand, she felt sad about her father's death. Seeing her mother crying, she accompanied her and cried with her mother. On the other hand, she told herself that because her father had been absent, there was really no difference from before when it came to her feeling. When we talked about her father, she said, "he had little time staying at home because he did not like Hong Kong. Why, I have no idea….I never asked him." She associated his time spent with family in Pakistan with his disliking Hong Kong while her family was in Hong Kong. She could not control her father's will, and the time he spent with them. Yet, she said the most crucial thing in a family is "togetherness." The past family life was not what she desired. For her, "father" is distanced, separated, and yet gone.

Nonetheless, Ebran tried her best to fill the gap in her family. After her father died her mother had to work; since she is the elder daughter at home, she took up the role of a mother by

taking care of her younger sister and brother while studying. Sometimes, her brother and sister were naughty and noisy, and she had to teach them and comfort them. Taking up this role is her way of contributing to the family. She continued to be the strong daughter, taking care of her family and accompanying her mother when she felt lonely.

However, separation may not lead only to disengagement. Aysha lived with her elder brother and her helper alone in Hong Kong for a few years. It was the time she faced exams and different life decisions. She felt neglected by her parents. However, she traveled to Pakistan and stayed with her parents in 2020. She now has another perspective on understanding "separation."

> Since we are a bit apart, we have more personal space, but then we also cherish our time together more… If I wanted to come back, of course I could have come back to the university [in Hong Kong]. But because my mom said to me, “don’t go back (to Hong Kong)” I feel at ease. I feel her support. My priority is always my family. Especially in big decisions, I value them more.
>
> — Aysha

Although it was hard for my informants when their parents were not there, my informants

became more mature and learned to adapt to different circumstances. For Aysha, she has come to see the bright side of the separation. During her time alone, she felt the value of her family, so when they got back together, she cherished the time they had together and expressed more about her feelings to her family. For Ebran, she took on the role of mother and shared her mother's work. She learned to take care of her younger siblings. The second or third generation of Pakistani immigrants faced separation, but they did not give up on their family relationships. They changed their perspective and learned more about love. It is how the Pakistani youths' resilience is shown in hard times.

We have investigated how Pakistani immigrant families in Hong Kong work as a basic social unit of their Pakistani Muslim life in Hong Kong. Family is the daily life of these Pakistani youths, where they experience love and care, as well as some unpleasant feelings, learn Pakistani values and culture, and practice their belief. Family reflects and shapes who they are, affecting the imagination of their dating, marriage, family life, and identity, as I will now show.

Section 3: Dating and Marriage

Family influences a person significantly, including what they think about marriage. In Pakistani culture, a new family is formed after marriage, and it determines how culture is

reproduced. Thus, one's perspective on marriage is significant in showing his/her identity.

In the world of neoliberalism with freedom of dating and marriage, Muslims keep their norm and practices practicing arranged marriage. Arranged marriage is *halal*, permissive in Islamic law, while dating is *haram*, forbidden in Islamic law. There are many restrictions on marriage, and some in the outside world may see these practices as unacceptable. Do Pakistani youth live a life of their own free will? In this section, I will discuss the dating and marriage norms in the Pakistani community in Hong Kong by discussing a few cases about their perspectives on dating and marriage.

What is marriage and dating in Pakistani culture?

Arranged marriage is the norm in Pakistani culture. According to Rytter (2013), second-generation Pakistani immigrants put marriage in three categories: forced marriage, arranged marriage, and love marriage. Forced marriage means not having the agreement of both young people; arranged marriage is under negotiation and consent of the parent and child; and love marriage means young people fall in love and marry of their own choice. Parents may or may not be involved in the last type of marriage.

There are “good” and “bad” conceptions of marriage and dating issues in Pakistani culture.

My informants had a lot to share with me. Apart from saying they have to marry Pakistani Muslims, they mention that dating is forbidden. I believe it is the most significant difference between the Pakistani norm and mainstream Chinese culture in Hong Kong, and it is something they are concerned about. Ilma shares that girls are not allowed to go out with boys unless it is something academic-related. Saba is engaged. Sometimes, she goes out with her fiancé, but there should be another person with them as well, usually an elder person, and physical touch is not allowed. Aysha points out that in Pakistani culture, dating and liking someone are both "bad," but Islamic law only states that dating is forbidden.

> Because Hong Kong is actually quite small, when one person finds out something, they will spread it, especially aunties. So, I think for our own protection, I do not have many chances to interact with [Pakistani boys].
>
> — Aysha

Since Aysha's parents are well-known in the Pakistani community, to keep her and her family's name clean, her family protects Aysha, and does not let her interact on her own with male members of the Pakistani community. Thus, she is quite careful about love and dating. The effect of being gossiped about in Pakistani society is vast, showing that boundaries between females and males are something highly emphasized in the Pakistani community.

Perspectives on Dating

Qur'an states that believers should pursue behavioural chastity and modesty, no forms of fornication and adultery are allowed, and dating is also forbidden in the Muslim community (Mir, 2014). Yet, Pakistani youths are living in Hong Kong, which is not a Muslim society. The learning environment, peers, and media all are a temptation to them. Usually, the first thing my informants tell me about is rules, but it is another case regarding experiences. In my observation, living in such a contradiction, there are two perspectives on dating. The first one is being assimilated into the mainstream dating culture; the second one is trying to make sense of and accept Islamic law in marriage.

Longing for romantic love is something in common to both these perspectives. In Denmark, second-generation Pakistani immigrants often highlight that romantic feelings should be the basis of marriage, including companionship and emotional closeness; they think love marriage is vital to modern identity (Rytter, 2013). Of course, dating and marriage culture in Demark is different from Hong Kong. Most Pakistani youths in Hong Kong are still a bit conservative about this topic. They emphasize the goodness of arranged marriage, which I will touch on later. On the other hand, their desire for a romantic relationship is apparent in how they talk. These two perspectives are how they choose to make sense of different dating systems.

When Ah Man talks about his sister considering marrying a guy without dating him first, he shares his opinion:

> I think this relationship is okay because they like each other. However, about this tradition, it is not so important to me. It is prosperous in Hong Kong, and it is weird for them to keep this tradition. I think it is better to meet a person he/ she likes, and then date.
>
> — Ah Man

Ah Man is assimilated into mainstream Hong Kong social norms. He has adopted the values of dating culture. He finds Pakistani marriage tradition to be backwards and believes that marriage should be based on mutual liking and going through a process of dating. Ah Man is now in a relationship with a Hong Kong girl he met on a dating app. He does not want to follow Pakistani rules concerning dating. Ah Man does not care much about the Pakistani community, and his parents do not much restrict him. Also, in growing up he has been surrounded by Hong Kong people, so he has adapted to the more "modern" dating pattern.

The other perspective is making sense of and accepting the Pakistani marriage tradition and rejecting dating. Most informants reject dating, since their Muslim identity is strong, as

mentioned in the first section, and they try to make sense of these Islamic laws. In my interview with Ilma, she explains her views on dating:

> I see that Hong Kong people have dated many times which is not okay. They should concentrate on their study [while they are in school] and date later, in their twenties. But this is their choice….There are so many bad effects of dating. For example, if they break up, the girl finds another boy, but the ex is still not over the girl. He may blackmail her…It's really bad. What if the boy makes the girl pregnant and the boy doesn't want a baby?
>
> — Ilma

Most secondary-school female Pakistanis understand dating in this way: it is dangerous, unstable, uncertain, and irresponsible. This reflects how Pakistani culture sees dating. It is *haram* because the people involved may hurt each other. My informants value responsibility in a relationship and believe that once they get into a dating relationship, their partner's emotions and physical purity should be protected. If there are changes after committing to a relationship, it is unbearable. Ballard (2008) points out that Muslims are socialized into a culture of prioritizing obligations to others over personal choice. Under such a marriage system, they have a high sense of security because they submit themselves to obligations in this marriage and kinship system. Conversely, the more individualistic style and freedom of

Hong Kong may not consist of those values that Pakistani youths were educated to adhere to in a relationship.

However, the second perspective also includes some cases of acculturation to Hong Kong. These informants follow Islamic law not to date, but they will tell their parents when they like someone. Aysha said to me that liking someone is *halal* in Islam. Although liking and dating are seen as very bad in Pakistani culture, Aysha told her father that she would tell them when she meets someone she likes. Even though her father was shocked by what she said, she thinks she is doing right as she does not want to follow Pakistani culture without a legitimate reason. Another informant, Ayra, said this to me:

> I think it is very difficult to find someone who you want to spend your life with….I don't think you will be able to… .This is my feeling… I don't think I can find someone who is going to be there for you and have understanding.
>
> My mom said as long as I like someone, and the other person and I respect each other, we can tell our parents that we want to get married or be together. They don't have any objection on it. I haven't found that one, so I'm still looking…

Ayra is acculturated in Hong Kong. She said that she was more like a Hong Konger when she

introduced herself. Ayra's family came from a more open-minded town in Pakistan, as she mentioned. Her mother did not urge her to marry or find someone for her. She can meet people she wants and marry anyone she thinks is nice, but she does not call it “dating.” It is a communication process with parents because parents control the marriage issue. This acculturated marriage style has transformed to less involvement of parents, but parents still have the authority to determine whether to allow it.

Moreover, Ayra thinks she may not get married in the future, which is very unusual in Muslim culture. According to Mahmood (2005), there is much pressure on a woman not to stay single in a society that considers heterosexual marriage a compulsory norm. Society will reject a woman if she does not marry. Although she is in Hong Kong, she is still a Pakistani Muslim woman; it takes courage to say that she wants to be single.

To my understanding, Ayra does not want to get married simply because she has the freedom to say so. Rather, it is related to her family background. She grew up in a broken family. When she was young, she and her mom were abused by her father. Now, she lives with her mother alone. Her brothers followed her father and returned to Pakistan. Her distrust of males was rooted in this since she was a child. She mentioned that her Hong Kong friends encountered many bad men. It is part of why she did not want to get to know any men in

Hong Kong. In her case, the acculturation of her family gives her the freedom to choose what life she does not want. If she had to marry a man without a high level of trust, just because of the pressure of cultural norms, she may well end up living in pain. In Hong Kong Ayra has the agency to resist a cultural norm, and to choose to not live a life she does not like.

Temptations on Liking and Dating

To what extent rules are followed differs from person to person. O'Brien (2012) discusses his informants' decisions when it comes to Muslim dating: "For these relationships to be *halal* in designation -- and in practice regarding the more serious violation of pre-marital sex -- allowed the youth to tinker around the edges of this central and centring religious concept." My informants have shown to explore around the edges of this religious concept before marriage. Yet, they have a limit for themselves.

One day, interviewing Ilma, we talked about food. Suddenly, she asked if I had a boyfriend, and she said she saw that on my Instagram. She was so happy for me because she remembered that I told her I was waiting for somebody that suited me the last time. After chatting about some other topics, she talked about the relationship again:

> I met one guy in Discord (a communication platform), but he is Mexican-American.

> We've been talking for two days. I didn't tell Mom. I don't want to tell anyone.… I told him that I'm Muslim, and he said he didn't care if I was Muslim. "I'm Christian," he said. "I'm not that religious." Maybe because he is from America, I thought he may have discrimination [against me], but he didn't.
>
> — Ilma

The first time we talked about her perspective on dating, she spoke about rules. This time, she shared her own experiences. Dating and liking someone are forbidden, so she did not feel comfortable sharing this at first. She told me that only one of her Pakistani friends knew it, and even her parents did not know about this because it is sinful. However, she told me that she initiated that topic intentionally because she knew that I was in a relationship. It shows her interest in dating and liking someone, yet she cannot talk about it openly in her cultural world. She felt safe to tell me because my cultural background is different from hers.

She told me that actually, she has had a few liking and dating experiences from secondary three until now, secondary five. She knows the rules prohibiting dating, but it could not stop her from thinking about this topic. Her reaction to liking and dating topics echoes Rytter's study (2013) of Pakistani youth in Demark. Under the "modernized" environment and media socialization about perspectives on dating, they are influenced by those discourses that say

relationships should be based on romantic love. Through the interaction with that Mexican American, she feels accepted by him. He does not care about her religion, so she feels he is a kind person. Within her circumstances, she is trying to explore love and relationships on her own, and meeting online, which is better than meeting in person so that she may avoid surveillance and judgments from people in her community.

Aysha, on the other hand, was more conservative:

> If I were to compare to you as a local person, of course, I can't be following the same thing….If you are dating, I cannot be the same as you. But then, you know when you are younger, you are a bit immature and you were like "everyone has a boyfriend." But now, I'm just like, no it's fine.
>
> — Aysha

Aysha studied in a mainstream school where mostly her classmates were Hong Kong people. She found it was hard to live in such an environment. Aysha chose not to develop friendships with boys so that she could avoid liking someone. It shows her devotion to her religion. Young Pakistanis in Hong Kong are attentive to love and dating affairs but react differently to this curiosity and emotion.

When dating is a sin

Ilma shared her experience with dating after telling me about her recent crush:

> I've actually dated a guy. My mom doesn't know about it, or my dad. But then we broke up. I told him it's not working out. It was in secondary three. After we broke up, I saw that he dated another girl. It's like he is a playboy. He is a Nepali, a Christian. He was nice and kind. He kissed me. I feel so regretful because we cannot touch any boys before marriage. So, I think I committed a sin. But then, my God will forgive me.
>
> — Ilma

In Muslim practices, dating and physical touch are *haram*. O'Brien (2012) describes in his research on Muslim-American dating that a Muslim girl in a relationship with an American boy stopped the relationship because she did not want to be disloyal to her parents and wanted to be a good Muslim. Seemingly, being a "good Muslim" is critical from the young Muslim immigrant's perspective. O'Brien (2012) suggests "being good" means "keeping it *halal*" in relationship issues, and this mindset can be witnessed in Ilma's experience. She broke up because she wanted to be a good Muslim and stay *halal*.

The above conversation shows that when a Muslim girl has dated, she must go through the process of comparing her experiences with religious rules and understanding. Ilma has taken a few steps to stay *halal* in relationship issues. She dated, sinned, stopped, and asked for forgiveness. After two years, she is now making sense of her previous experience. The man dating another person means that he is not committed to the relationship with her. She thinks that dating is unstable and changeable, while she seeks a high level of commitment and stability. To her, the boy she was dating does not reach the "good man" standard, and the relationship was not what she desired religiously. She has been negotiating between her desire to have a dating relationship and her religious belief. Yet, her experience strengthened her piety toward Islam and proved to her that Islamic rules are correct. She told me that she makes more sense of Islamic rules when she reflects on herself. This experience has redirected her on the route of who she wants to become. Being pious does not mean internalizing all rules without thinking. Instead, it means having room to hesitate and refine one's heart and continue her belief. It is how Ilma enacted her agency.

The consequence of dating is enormous from young Pakistani girls' perspective. Ilma told me that her sister Maira had dated before marriage, and her parents realized this. They think he was not suitable, since he did not propose to her daughter by asking them officially. He did

not seem concerned about her parents, and so her parents eventually forced them to separate. This love affair that bloomed a few years ago was hidden from the community. The chastity of a girl is also the honor of her family.

Arranged Marriage

Of Rytter's (2013) three types of marriages, forced marriage has the least personal choice, and love marriage has the most personal choice. Forced marriage is the worst from my informants' perspective. Arranged marriage, on the other hand, is a marriage based on an agreement of both sides' parents. The man's side proposes to the woman's side, and the female's parents decide whether to accept or reject the proposal. My informants told me that for arranged marriages parents usually ask for children's consent and preferences in the Pakistani community in Hong Kong. They accept the approach only when it meets the requirement of their children.

I asked Ilma's mother about her sister Maira's marriage, and Ilma transmitted her mother's views for me:

> First, Mom said that before she gets to know him, she wants his family information, how they live, and if he is also an educated person. Mom also gets to know him, to

> see that he is really kind and helpful, and his family is kind and helpful, you know. So, that's why my Mom arranged that for her. My mother asked my sister, and my sister got to know him. We got to know him from a tea party. We asked his family to come here. My sister saw him. Then, the marriage happened.
>
> — Ilma's mom

Their mother chose a person for Maira with Maira's agreement. It is important that he is a nice and educated person. It implies that they think a good person in their standard means they will be easier to have a happy marriage. This is different from Hong Kong mainstream culture, where people usually emphasize whether they like the person or not, and whether they can get along well on their dates.

Arranged marriage takes less effort in building up the relationship between the couple before marriage, while the responsibility of marriage and family is more extensive than in Hong Kong. Their mother first looks into the man's family to see if they are nice. She not only said that the man is nice but also his family because marriage is not just about the relationship between the couple, but also the family. Ballard (2008, p.50) writes of South Asian marriage that "more demanding links of mutuality bind parents, patrilineal offspring and offspring into all-consuming corporate networks." I earlier discussed how the Pakistani family works in a

joint family, with a close connection with family and extended family. We see here that the Pakistani kinship continues through Maira's marrying a man of her parent's choice. Maira is satisfied with her marriage, and Ilma feels optimistic about an arranged marriage of her own as she trusts her parents' choice.

Even though Pakistani marriage works under parents' arrangement, the agency of the married couple is also considered, although it is somewhat different from the personal choice emphasized in more individualistic cultures. However, it shows how people make sense of their options and strive for life satisfaction. There is much uncertainty in the individualistic world. People can constantly be changing, seeking a relationship that may end at any time because individualistic cultures emphasize personal choice and will. But arranged marriage is engaging with the whole family. A higher level of commitment and obligation in a relationship gives them stability. Thus, freedom of choice is not the only way to assert one's agency in life. One may also be committed to Islamic values, and devote oneself to marriage within the guidance of one's parents and family.

Love in Arranged Marriage

One day at Maira's home, all the ladies were sitting in the living room. I asked them what love is. Maira and Zimal were excited to speak about this topic, since they are both newly

married. Here is the conversation:

Zimal: Love is blind.

Maira: For arranged marriage, some men are good. It depends on your parents.

Zimal: When we talk about marriage stuff, it's the same all over the whole world.

Maira: You are asking about "love," right? I think after marriage is good. I think because in love before marriage, you know each other very well, you know what the boyfriend eats, what he wants, and what he thinks, everything you know already.

Zimal: There is nothing special.

Maira: You've already known everything. What is so special? You don't want to learn about each other.

Maira: When you get married, you don't know that person. You take time to learn that person, about what he thinks, what he needs, what I need. It takes time. And then, time becomes special, and you will love each other. (Through) learning and spending more time together… After marriage, half of your life is spent learning about each other. I think this is more important.

Zimal: In relationships, even (before) marriage or after marriage, it's all about compromises. You are doing compromises in so many things, with each other, with families. Sometimes you're not ready and you don't do this, but you have to do it for your partner with you. The most important thing is compromising in relationships, I

want to say.

Zimal and Maira have married recently. When they reflect on their marriage, they both believe there is love in an arranged marriage. They also believe that arranged marriage without knowing their husband in advance is better than knowing their husband before marriage. Learning about each other in marriage creates love, they say, when they spend time accompanying each other; this is the most remarkable thing in their relationship. In Rytter's study (2013), he discusses “arranged marriage” and “love marriage” as two categories, although he states they overlap. From my informants’ perspective, their arranged marriage is a love marriage. Being arranged by parents does not mean less love in the relationship because they think love happens when they understand, accompany, and compromise.

Compromising is another highlight in their conversation about love. Unlike mainstream Hong Kong or Western dating styles, they are willing to compromise and love their partner before they know each other well. In mainstream society, people believe in their choosing, after which there is love, and they can proceed to the next stage, “love marriage” (Rytter, 2013). Shabana’s (2014) research on Muslim American women at college finds they are assimilated and interested in dating, romance, sex, and courtship under peer pressure. They want to be “experienced” in sex and dating to pursue their happiness, and to be accepted in mainstream

American culture. American Muslim girls, in that portrayal, are different from my informants. My informants' values and longings in the relationship seek to make sense of Islamic law and follow it.

To conclude, while a few of my informants are assimilated into mainstream Hong Kong culture, most Pakistani youth I interviewed are choosing arranged marriage. However, despite the term "arranged marriage," love still plays an indispensable role in these marriages. Unlike the instant gratification people may pursue in neoliberal societies, the Pakistani youth I interviewed think and believe that knowing another person in marriage makes the marriage more precious and reliable.

The concept of marriage and family in Pakistani culture carries many obligations. Being a spouse in a marriage means more than romantic love, since personal choice is less critical in the family system (Ballard, 2008). They learn to sacrifice for their spouse and their extended family members. Not many of the youth I interviewed have attempted to date, so the family formation and kinship system are still preserved. Most informants follow Islamic law and avoid dating, but there are some temptations. Some experienced dating, and accept the practice, like Ah Man. Some have tried dating and later returned to Muslim practices. This reveals their pathway to finding their identity. It is not a one-way road to the end, and there is

trial and error. My informants reimagine who they want to be after experiencing different things in their paths in life..

Conclusion: Pakistani youths are…

In this paper, I have discussed Pakistani youths' identity, then their families and marriage/dating lives, hopes, and experiences. The first section showed how Pakistani youths' identity is always changing as they are living in between the secular culture of Hong Kong and the Islamic culture of Pakistan. There is an obvious boundary between the Hong Kong mainstream and ethnic minorities. Some have been highly assimilated into mainstream Hong Kong culture, while some have made efforts in uphold their Muslim values. We have seen how Muslim identity is something holding Pakistani ethnicity together in Hong Kong. Yet, there is a discrepancy in the notion of "Pakistani culture" which brings them some struggles in searching for identity. I argue that it is not necessary to fulfil all characteristics of "Pakistani culture" to name oneself a Hong Konger or a Pakistani or a Muslim; people may have multiple identities.

Then, in section two, I showed the importance of family in shaping my informants. Being born in a Pakistani family gives them close familial relationships. They learn that everyone has a role in the family, and they prioritize family. This affects their own formation of family

and choices in dating and marriage, as I explore in the last section, about Pakistani youths' dating and marriage perspectives and experiences. The majority of my informants were willing to follow the Islamic law of not dating, although there are temptations. To my informants, the Pakistani norm of arranged marriage is stable and responsible. Marriage is not only about the couple, but about the large family of both husband and wife. My informants emphasized understanding and compromising in the process of marriage. I argue that my informants' struggles in dating, devotion in arranged marriage, or choosing their own spouse are enacting their agency, agency in the process of negotiation.

Identity correlates with how people treat someone (Jenkins, 2013). Therefore, I asked at the beginning: If you were to imagine a Pakistani in Hong Kong, what image would come to your mind? Having seen a group of people who have social stigmas, I hope this paper brings some other images of Pakistani into readers' minds. Jenkins (2013) argues classification of people is multidimensional, and it can be inconsistent. Identity does not determine what one does. After understanding Pakistani youths more fully, I found diversity in this group. Group identity can be imaginary, but it is not merely imagined. Pakistani youths have something in common, yet they are not homogeneous. Most of them are still preserving their Pakistani culture with an emphasis on Muslim identity. Some are more acculturated or assimilated into mainstream Hong Kong culture. They are not born or preset with their identity; rather, their

family background, social circle, and exposure to different cultures influence each one of them in their unique routes to finding their own identities.

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