

# RUTGERS

School of Nursing

## 'Daughters' will not listen': A qualitative study of Pakistani parenting practices

Patricia Hindin PhD, CNM, RYT 200 Associate  
Professor Rutgers School of Nursing

Rubab Qureshi MD, PhD Associate Professor Rutgers  
School of Nursing

Sabrina Chase PhD Assistant Professor Rutgers  
School of Nursing

## INTRODUCTION

- “*Doodon nahao pooton phallo*” a common blessing bestowed on young women in many parts of South Asia
- Translation: ‘May you bathe in milk and bloom among sons’ (milk = motherhood, and sons = prosperity)

## BACKGROUND (Census, 2010)

- Asians comprise 6% of the United States population
- Asians comprise 26% of all foreign born
- 3.4 million South Asians
- South Asian ancestry
  - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka
- 363,699 self-identified individuals of Pakistani origin.
- Largest numbers residing in New York, Texas, California, Illinois, New Jersey and Virginia.

# BACKGROUND: PAKISTANI IMMIGRANTS (Census, 2010)

- Median age in 2010 was 29.
- 70% living in family households that included children under eighteen years of age.
- 3% living with relatives older than 65 years
- Nearly half were foreign-born.
- The size of this population in 2010 was almost double that of the 1990 census.

# SIGNIFICANCE

- Immigration poses unique challenges for parents from South Asia by juxtaposing their cultural beliefs with a different set of values which can create occasion for intergenerational conflict and tensions within families. For example:
  - Conflicts may arise when parents arrange or force their children, particularly girls, into marriages in an effort to preserve cultural norms (Anitha & Gill, 2009).

## BACKGROUND: PAKISTAN

- Pakistani culture is collectivist or interdependent.
  - The self is perceived as part of the collective, rather than being seen as strictly autonomous; obedience and conformity are highly valued (Stewart et al., 2000).
- Parents consider it their religious duty to raise children in accordance with commonly accepted social norms (Stewart et al., 2000).

## BACKGROUND: PAKISTAN

- Honor (*izzat*) is a critical collectivist value; family honor and social image are sacrosanct and must be protected (Tan, 2012).
- Honor is mediated by gender.
- Marriage is considered an important parental obligation or '*farz*' (Zaman, 2014).

# Pakistani school girls





## BACKGROUND: PAKISTANI MIGRANTS

- Pakistani immigrants may adhere to ‘old fashioned values’ (Shaw, 2004)
- Integration into host society may be slow (Qureshi, 2012; Shaw, 2004).
- More likely to live in nuclear families or larger intergenerational families, marry at an earlier age, and they are less likely to cohabit or divorce (Shakari, 2013; Shaw, 2004).
- Kinship ties are strong, with most marriages arranged with families living in the United Kingdom and Pakistan, or the U.S. and Pakistan (Qureshi, 2012; Shakari, 2013; Shaw, 2004).

## BACKGROUND: PAKISTANI MIGRANTS

- Pakistani immigrant parents of girls report concerns regarding Western influence over their daughters (Shakari, 2013).
- Religion often remains central to Pakistani immigrant life( Qureshi, 2012; Shakari, 2013.)

# Pakistani Students Association Rutgers



## RESEARCH FOCUS

- What are Pakistani migrant mothers' concerns about raising daughters in the United States?
- The purpose of this study was to explore how Pakistani migrant mothers adapt their parenting practices post-immigration to the United States.

# THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

- Sociocultural adaptation frameworks were used.
- Redfield et al.'s classic definition of acculturation: “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936).
  - Changes evolve at the individual and group levels and involve shifting attitudes and subsequent behavior modifications (Berry, 2005).

# THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

- Berry (1976) identified
  - adjustment,
  - reaction
  - and withdrawal as strategies for adaptation.

## METHOD

- Qualitative method with open ended interviews.
- Sample: Census 2000 data were used to identify locations in New Jersey with the highest Pakistani immigrant populations.
- 26 Pakistani immigrant mothers were recruited from these areas by snowball technique
- Setting: Homes of the participants in urban and suburban New Jersey.
- The study was approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board

## METHOD

- Data Collection: Open ended interviews, narrative style.
  - The interviewer was a bilingual Pakistani female immigrant.
  - Interviews lasted up to 2 hours each, and multiple interviews were conducted with each participant.



# CREDIBILITY and TRANSFERABILITY

- Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and peer debriefing.
- Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the interviewer, a trained bilingual qualitative researcher, and back translated to ensure validity.
- A bilingual Pakistani collaborator assisted in the transcription phase and a second independent collaborator reviewed sections of coding and analyses.
- Themes were discussed with participants and colleagues for congruence.
- Thick descriptions were used to address transferability.

## METHOD: DATA ANALYSIS

- Interview data were transcribed
- Content analysis was conducted
- Themes were generated.

## LIMITATIONS

- Reflexivity was addressed by narrative style interviews, independent analysts in the transcription phase, coding and analyses phases of data analyses.
- Note that only mothers' points of view were collected; fathers and children were not included in the study.

# FINDINGS

- Description of the sample

<b>Sample</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Median age</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Average number of children</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Girls</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Boys</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Average years married</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Average Years in U.S.</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	
<b>High school</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Bachelor's</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Master's</b>	<b>4</b>

# THEMES

- **Theme 1. Mothers' Gender Role Socialization in Pakistan**

“My mother collected beautiful stuff for my marriage. She started soon after I was born. She collected embroidered bed covers, dinner sets and gold jewelry.” (Participant #1)

“I finished my matric [10th grade].... barely so. You know girls' education is not as important as boys'. It is not like I was going to work after marriage anyway.” (Participant #2)

# THEMES

- **Subtheme: Gender preference for boys**

“I did not have a preference for a boy or a girl, but in Pakistani society they prefer boys. I might have wished in my heart somewhere, but Alhamdulillah [all praise is for Allah] I did not really wish for any particular sex. It was the first baby so it did not matter if it was boy or girl. I did not make any mannat [wish].” (Participant #19)

# THEMES

- **Theme 2. 'Daughters will not listen'**

“I don't think, if I had a daughter that she would listen to me. I mean she would want to dress like the girls around her. I will be telling her to wear longer shirts that covered her back and not to wear deep neck shirts. I wear a scarf all the time. No, not a hijab [full head covering] just a scarf so that my chest area is covered, but would a daughter listen?” (Participant # 5)

# THEMES

- **Subtheme: Differential parenting for boys and girls**

“Boys do all kinds of things. Stay out late, but I cannot imagine what I would do if my daughter came home late. It is alright for boys but girls have to be protected by the family.” (Participant #5).



# THEMES

- **Theme 3. Adapting Religious Practices of the Family**

“Who would have thought I would be in a mosque this often”.  
(Participant # 10)

“Alhamdolilla [all praise for Allah], my children attend two days, Saturday and Sunday, of Islamic School. They are taught the basic tenets such as the five pillars of Islam: salat [prayer], fasting [in the month of Ramazan], zakat [obligatory payment of a portion of income to deserving poor] hajj [pilgrimage to Mecca once in lifetime] and shahada [the oneness of Allah]. They are taught about the fiqah and tajweed [reading the Quran with proper Arabic enunciation].” (Participant # 16).

## DISCUSSION

- The Pakistani mothers in our study adapted their childrearing strategies to better fit their new environment after immigration.

## DISCUSSION

- **CULTURAL PRACTICES** that were rooted in religion and identified more with religious persuasion rather than their ethnic heritage.
- **RELIGIOSITY** increased noticeably compared to up bring in Pakistan.

# DISCUSSION

- Participants exhibited **some degree of assimilation** by **selectively adapting** to the larger societal culture.
  - Study participants gave their daughters more freedom than they would have had in Pakistan, such as allowing them to wear western clothes, within limits, and attend co-ed schools.
  - They chose to trust that their daughters would carry on their traditions, but reinforced traditional concepts by encouraging whole-family participation in mosque-centered activities and attendance at Sunday schools.
- A minority of study participants adopted more **reactionary strategies**.
  - Some mothers felt that their duty to educate their children as the next generation of Muslims required a more rigorous practice of Islamic teachings and a strongly religious lifestyle.

# CONCLUSION

- The complaint that “daughters will not listen” reflected the fear of losing deeply entrenched cultural traditions and led to the adoption of protective behaviors in order to ensure the preservation of those traditions.
- Mothers’ convictions that their daughters would be responsible for carrying their traditions into the next generation shaped maternal decisions to emphasize religious education, modest dress and the importance of marrying within the culture.
- While such protective mechanisms sometimes put families at risk of separating from their host society (Berry 2005), they offered Pakistani mothers a sense of comfort as they attempted to balance new opportunities with traditional family values.

# REFERENCES

- Anitha, S., & Gill, A. (2009). Coercion, Consent and the Forced Marriage Debate in the UK. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 17(2), 165-184. doi: 10.1007/s10691-009-9119-4
- Berry, John W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 697-712.
- Berry, John W. (1976). *Human ecology and cognitive style: comparative studies in cultural and psychological adaptation*: John Wiley New York.
- Census. (2010). Fact Sheet. In U. S. C. Bureau (Ed.).
- Qureshi, R. (2012). *Experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and post-partum period in urban and suburban immigrant Pakistani women*: NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY.
- Redfield, Robert, Linton, Ralph, & Herskovits, Melville J. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. *American anthropologist*, 38(1), 149-152.
- Shakari, Yasmine. (2013). *Family, Socialization and Migration in Norwegian-Pakistani Families*. University of Oslo.
- Shaw, A. (2004). Immigrant families in the UK. *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Families*. Malden ua: Blackwell, 270-285.
- Stewart, Sunita Mahtani, Bond, Michael H, Ho, LM, Zaman, Riffat Moazam, Dar, Rabiya, & Anwar, Muhammad. (2000). Perceptions of parents and adolescent outcomes in Pakistan. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 18(3), 335-352.
- Tan, Leslie Xiao Ting. (2012). *Emotions and the family*. Wesleyan University.
- Zaman, Riffat Moazam. (2014). Parenting in Pakistan: An Overview *Parenting Across Cultures* (pp. 91-104): Springer.