



Oral History Project Interview

Arab and Muslim Women's Research and Resource Institute (AMWRRRI)

Number of Interview: EW 1.00

Date: September 23, 2019

Gender: Female

Name: Jane Doe

Country of Origin: Pakistan

Year of Immigration: Born in the United States

Abstract: Jane Doe is 21 years old and went to an international school in Saudi Arabia for kindergarten through fifth grade, and then moved back to Milwaukee. Jane identifies as a Muslim Pakistani American. She believes religion comes first, then culture, and finally nationality. Her family does identify as Muslim, but it isn't always obvious. Jane began covering with a scarf her sophomore year of high school, but her mother, sister, and other extended family members don't cover, and they aren't very active in their community, and they don't attend mosques. However, Jane is a faithful Muslim praying five times a day, and her family is immersed in the Pakistani culture, including eating plenty of Pakistani foods at home.

Key Themes: Spiritual journey, what it means individually to be a Muslim, food, marriage roles

Note: In the transcript, "I" refers to Interviewer, and "R" refers to Respondent/Interviewee.

I: My name is Emma Wyngaard and today is September 23rd, and we are going to start this interview. So, we'll start with your name, age, and your level of education.

R: [Name was omitted per interviewee's request]. Alright, I am 21 years old and I'm doing, it's my senior year, of my undergrad.

I: So, you're studying at Marquette University. And then do you have any siblings?

R: I have an older sister and a younger brother.

I: When you were growing up, where did you go to school? Like K through 12, was it public schools, community schools, private religious schools?

R: Mhm. Actually, I... from kindergarten to fifth grade I went to, an international school in Saudi Arabia and we moved back to Milwaukee around the summer before sixth grade. So, I went to public school after that. Up until the twelfth grade.

I: So were you born in the US and then you went to school in...

R: Mhm. I was born in Milwaukee. Moved to Saudi Arabia, because my dad got a job there. So, we relocated and moved back [pause] once school started to become more serious. Beause needed to get a better education, so moving. Yeah.

I: So tell me about places and buildings where you spent a lot of time during your childhood.

R: Places or buildings...

I: Yeah like, homes, schools, religious places.

R: Honestly, growing up, I mean I'm thinking, mostly [pause] kindergarten through fifth grade it wasn't much of an extracurricular type of, extracurricular activities type of life; it was more like you know school, responsibilities at home, and just focusing on schoolwork. You know, I wasn't really into sports or anything like that. We never, went to mosques over there. I don't remember being part of any, like, community, or religious community there. even when we moved to Milwaukee [pause]. My family isn't really, out there in the community. So, we don't go to, like, mosques and stuff. but we still do identity as Muslim mostly. So, that's that.

I: Okay, so, tell me about your home, your school, or some building you remember fondly, like any rooms that like really stood out to you. Who lived there, who shared the spaces, like activities that might have happened there.

R: I remember, the school system is very different in Saudi Arabia so growing up, it was more like we'd get assigned, classrooms, each grade, and there'd be like, three classrooms a grade. And you'd just be divided up among those three classrooms, and that was your class for the entire year, and what's it called, teachers would come and go, and teach classes. So, I remember that being like so normal but when I came to America was more like, you know, you're the one who moved from class to class and like that classroom was a teacher's classroom. Ours was like

more student oriented. So, we got to personalize our own classroom instead of the teacher, that they had their own offices and stuff. So that's one thing I [pause] that really stands out to me

when looking at the difference in my schooling, I wouldn't say schooling but just like the environment.

I: Right.

R: Of the school. let's go with that.

I: Okay. So, tell me how you feel about being Muslim in these different spaces, like how it was like when you're growing up or going to school in Saudi Arabia versus here.

R: So, in Saudi Arabia, it wasn't really something I ever thought about because almost everyone is Muslim, or the few classmates of mine who are Christian. But I don't remember ever talking about like religion or anything like that with them, because it was, it wasn't, a topic we all

wanted to talk about. But, when I came here, sixth through my sophomore year of high school, I didn't, like, wear the scarf, so I didn't really think too much about where I stood with my religious identity with people. [pause] But sophomore year I started covering up, until now. And I didn't ever feel a particular way because I never was presented with an opportunity that made me feel like an outcast or like, just different— I mean, obviously I knew I was different. But internally I didn't feel any, anything different.

I: Was there any particular reason, you didn't wear the scarf while you were going from sixth through sophomore year?

R: No.

I: No?

R: No reason, no one in my family covers. My mom doesn't cover, my sister doesn't. Extended family... yeah no one does. So, it's something new for my mom. She was very supportive, obviously because you know, it's a good, a good thing to do. But there wasn't any particular reason where I didn't cover. It was just, like, I felt it was time for me to... be ready for that spiritual journey, right? Everyone's on their own journey. And I was like, I'm ready to give that part of myself to religion. So...

I: Is there any reason you started to wear it again or was it just kind of like...

R: Just, to be honest, it was a very impulsive decision. But it was also something I felt ready for. You know we do it— we don't do it for other people. We cover for God because modesty is one of the biggest things. I mean, one of a really important things in our religion. And that doesn't necessarily mean that women who don't cover aren't modest. Modesty looks very different for every culture and every religious culture. So, for me I felt that that's what I thought modesty was. So that's what I thought that was really cool. So that's why I did it.

I: Ok. did you serve in the US military at all?

R: No.

I: Are you currently employed or, like, work outside of the home?

R: Yes.

I: And where is your job?

R: So right now, I'm still working at— in retail. I work at Express. And I'm going to be starting at Starbucks soon. So that's still food service, retail, whatever you want to call it.

I: Right.

R: So yeah, I do work.

I: Are you married?

R: No.

I: Engaged?

R: No.

I: Do you have any children?

R: No.

I: So how would you say you identify yourself?

R: What do you mean?

I: So, if you see yourself in terms of your religion, your culture, your nationality.

R: I think it's all just mixed into one thing. So, if someone were to say like... honestly, the order I would put it in would be [pause] I'm a Muslim Pakistani American. Do you, do you get, do you follow that?

I: Yeah.

R: So, that's what I would say. For me religion comes first, and then culture and then nationality. Whatever that means because I don't really... I'm not really patriotic. In either sense whether it's being Pakistani or being American. I think there's too much of a clash when you identify with one group more than the other, and it's just not healthy. So, I don't do it [laughs].

I: [laughs] Yeah, that makes sense. So, would you, I mean you said you don't necessarily like, you aren't patriotic per se, but is there a culture that you would say you identify with more? One

versus the other?

R: Yeah. I mean, naturally, because my family is Pakistani, [pause] we are more culturally rooted in the way we live our life. But that doesn't mean I agree with everything my culture has to offer. But I would say it is a mix between Western culture and my culture. But mainly it would be Pakistani, like, I identify with more. My Pakistani side.

I: Okay. Do you feel like the way you identify changes with where you are? Like the place you are? Like home versus school, or here versus Saudi Arabia?

R: I don't think so. I personally don't think so. But in the end, our environments change the way we interact with people. So, you show one side more than the other. So, I don't doubt that I do that, too. I like to think I maybe don't, but I think we also consciously do. So, from, for example, actually, I don't think so. I'm pretty open with my mom in terms of my day-to-day life, and you know, what I'm doing and everything. Like, I don't have to hide anything from her. [pause] Let me think about that. What was the question again?

I: Does the way... do you feel like the way you identify yourself changes with where you are?

R: No, my main answer is no because [pause] it's not that I hide that I'm from a certain place or that I have a certain background. I don't hide any of that. If it comes... if it's a topic at hand whatever, I don't try to act a certain way, [pause] when I shouldn't. Do you get what I'm saying?

I: Yes.

R: Like change myself for the comfort of other people.

I: Right.

R: Yeah.

I: So, with that being said, are there places where you feel your best and most successfully, like, express your identity? Like where you might just be a little more open about who you are, versus

not necessarily hiding...

R: With situations or with people?

I: Either.

R: I would say, my friends... mainly. The reason I say that is because you know, you get to choose who your friends are. Right? And you get to show, not show I guess but you're... just because there is a mutual understanding about age, about the stuff we go through in life. Whether it be family circumstances or like school, or like your major or, anything really, it's a lot easier to identify with people, people who are going through similar situations, than the generation that's older than you. Not to say that they won't understand but they're taking— there's a lot more explaining behind that, and cultural clashing and, like them just not understanding the point of view [pause] that I'm coming from. So, I'll say mainly my friends, but that doesn't mean I don't identify or that I feel less comfortable with my family. It's just I prefer... I noticed myself being more open around my friends than my family.

I: What traditions of your religion or culture do you practice?

R: Traditions. Okay, starting with religious... I wouldn't say it's tradition, but it's praying five times a day. So, I try my best to do that. I think I'm semi-successful in that. What else religiously? In terms of modesty, right? Modesty looks different for everyone. Some people might not agree with what modesty looks like. Sometimes I wear the turban, sometimes I will wear the beanie. That's not a scarf but I'm covering my head right and trying to conceal. Not wearing too tight clothes, that type of stuff. I guess that would be something I practice. Another thing in terms of mannerisms was like being respectful, right? To elders, to your parents, that type of stuff. Even to people who are younger than you, because automatically think people who

are older than you deserve respect. versus people who are younger than you, but they do too.
[laughs] And culturally, I don't really... not really day to day, there's nothing I would say that's like a cultural practice. I mean, I eat Pakistani food everyday [laughs], but that's not like a ritual or like a tradition or anything like that. So, I would say more, I've leaned towards the religious side in terms of practices and stuff.

I: So, speaking of food, do you use food recipes that you, like, get from your culture that you learned from your parents or grandparents?

R: What do you mean?

I: Like do you, when you, you said you eat Pakistani food every day. Is that something you make yourself or is it something— [laughs]

R: I live at home, so I commute every day. So, I'm fortunate to have my mom. She also works. And she cooks. You know, if I cook, it's going to be a disaster.

I: [laughs]

R: And my mama don't got the patience for me to spend that time in the kitchen. That's something I need to learn on my own when I have my own space. My mom cooks so you know, it's just [pause] a lot of grains, vegetables, not a lot of meat in my family, but I know a lot of Pakistani families eat a lot of meat, regularly, my family doesn't. So that's something different from my, situation. Yeah, that's pretty much it.

I: Would you say there are any, food restrictions that you or your family, like, if you're su—

R: Well, obviously Muslims and other Muslims out there who do, but mainly we don't eat pork, right? No alcohol or anything like that. But that's not food. That's, entertainment. I would say [pause] my family doesn't, really, I don't know if you've heard of the whole eating kosher. For us eating kosher is if, in terms of meat, if it's slaughtered in a permissible way. So, you can't have the meat of a dead animal, right. If something's already dead or, like, killed, you can't have it, like, if it's been, like, lying there for a while, or whatever. So it has to be slaughtered in a particular way is what I'm getting at. I know a lot of my friends whose families are really particular about that, my family isn't, but then again, my mom doesn't eat a lot of meat anyway. She only eats chicken and that's really rare so, like, she doesn't have a problem eating out or anything, but what's it called, I wouldn't say my family is too much into the whole kosher not kosher debate in terms of meat.

I: What kind of food— so your mom you said makes a lot of Pakistani food, is that the only kind your family cooks at home or do you cook other stuff?

R: Mix it up? yeah, my mom... she will literally make anything. She'll, like, make macaroni. But every single thing, no matter what she makes, if it's like a Mexican dish or like, the standard American dish. She always incorporates South Asian elements into the cooking for that dish because it's just— it's a lot of spices that we enjoy, like, a lot of American food is very bland for us. So, just putting her own twist into it, but she does cook she, like, made pizza like last week, like homemade from scratch. lasagna is— that type of stuff. So, we'll make a lot of things, a lot of different things at the house. When I cook, I make, like [pause] I don't want to say pasta because that's very simple and generic [laughs]. But you know, the way you make the pasta, you know? It has a, I would say like a Thai twist to it. So, we do make so many other things, but mainly like day to day, it's like, South Asian food.

I: What's your favorite kind of food?

R: I don't have a favorite. I would say rice and lentils. just because it's very simple. And it's not just like dry lentils, it's like a gravy and lentils... it's really hard to explain. We call it goan lentil soup. It's like a soup but it's not, it's like a little bit thicker but not too thin, still soupy. It's so hard to explain. So, it's called goan chow ngau it's like standard, like a staple in almost every South Asian household. So, it's the simple things I like.

I: How and where do you find the necessary ingredients for the Pakistani dishes, or where does your mom find them?

R: The Indian store. It's called the Indian Bazaar. But in terms of like simple stuff, like vegetables and like rice and everything, like literally any, grocery store, but, she prefers going to the Indian store for that type of stuff. Like daily house groceries and stuff like that. We just got the regular, we go to Woodman's. I don't know if you've heard of it, but it's great...

I: Yes, it is.

R: It's really great. That's where we go.

I: Would you expect any future children you have to carry on the tradition of cooking Pakistani dishes?

R: Yes, yes. Well, I need to get there first before I would expect my children to, but I am not planning to have any children. So [pause] there will be nothing to give forward [laughs]

R: Maybe possibly. So that's that.

I: In what ways, if any, do you participate in cultural or religious community activities?

R: Nothing.

I: Nothing?

R: Which sounds really bad.

I: No.

R: No, really it does. I know. But like I said before, my family, we never really got into the religious community here. Just because we didn't vibe with them on like a human level, not on a religious level, on a human level. So that's mainly why I never, I think, got a chance to get involved in like, activities, like in the mosque or anything like that. Like, I think if we did, as soon as we came here, we were like regular and going to the mosque I would be, but I'm not just because of the circumstances. Like in the way everything happened, right? So, I mean it is what it is. So, I'm not really involved in the community in that sense.

I: Do you have any desire to, like, eventually find a Muslim community that you would want to be part of? Like, if it weren't here because you don't vibe with people here.

R: Mhm.

I: If you went somewhere else...

R: Maybe— you never know honestly, it, like, for me, I don't know. I think it'd be nice, to have a religious community to fall back on. But in the end, for me, I know religion, religion is like a communal thing, but it's also an individual thing, right? I personally like focusing on the more individual part of things, that doesn't mean I don't like helping people out, you know, or in terms of service learning, or volunteering or anything like that. And Marquette is big on that so, it's something that I'm aware of that I try to get myself into. But that doesn't mean I do it through a mosque, right?

I: Right.

R: Like helping people is helping people in the end, right? It doesn't have to be from a religious community or stemming from a religious community. It's just I like to, personally I like to focus more on the individual side of religion and helping and everything like that. But I feel like for me, it's the friends, even Muslim friends that create a community in a sense, even though it's not a larger community, but even having that I think is something that nothing and I feel like I have I have that.

I: How would you describe your religious life?

R: Moderate.

I: Moderate.

R: Moderate. I think, there's always room for improvement. But, like I said before, I try to be mindful of, like, my daily activities. We always fall short sometimes. Whether it's praying, or saying something you shouldn't have said, or doing something you should have done, or shouldn't have done. I would say it's moderate because obviously no one's perfect. But it's the intentions that count. Yeah.

I: So, you said you said— you said you try to pray five times a day.

R: Mhm.

I: So, where do you typically, like, try to pray? Like, do you do it in private, out in the open...

R: Anywhere I can. I remember the other day, I have, classes back-to-back on Thursdays. So, it's like two of the prayers I, I would miss if— what's it called? If I didn't leave class. So, I like at some random time in class I left in Olin and, like, walked around the building to find like a secluded area so like people don't get freaked out. when I pray, so I, like, combined my prayers and I prayed them and went back to class. Something that, max, I think that took seven minutes. So, it doesn't take long. I try— I know I shouldn't— but it's just sometimes just being a girl and like the safety aspect of things doing it in public unless I'm, like, with a friend or someone I know that I'll tell them to just like wait for me and like I'll pray and I won't care where I am, then, but if I'm alone if I'm like going from place to place in a car, or just like a corner of a building, like there's a room downstairs, in the Raynor basement, they'll be all, all the Muslims know about this just like a secluded area where everyone just goes to pray whenever they need to. So we have that we also have, like, a prayer room at the AMU. But that's a little far. So that's that.

I: Alright, so you said you live with your parents and your mom does most of the cooking? Can you describe your kitchen or like how your kitchen might feel different from like your friends' kitchen?

R: It's very clean. It's very, very clean. My mom is very, she's very OCD about how she likes her— not how she likes her thing I'd say— things I say, but how clean she likes her things. It's just the cleanliness part. It's very organized and clean. kitchen... I don't know if you've ever been to a South Asian household, whether it be Indian or Pakistani, but some houses they, like, really smell strongly of spices. My house doesn't, at all like you wouldn't, you wouldn't, if you walked in you wouldn't think that you're in a Pakistani's household but like if you walk around, you would because of whatever we have up on the walls and stuff like that. decor and stuff. But it's pretty clean. It's not too big. I don't know if it's a universal thing but on our stove we put aluminum foils under the grill so that whatever falls, falls onto that and doesn't get the stove dirty so you just replace that from time to time. I don't know if white people do that, but we do [laughs].

I: My family doesn't, but I can't speak for everyone.

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: But that's a really smart idea so I wouldn't be surprised if more people did that [laughs]. What language or languages do you speak?

R: My parents speak— okay, so like the universal, like the national language is Urdu so I know Urdu. I don't know how to read or write it, but I can speak it. My parents do as well, but the region they're from in Pakistan, it's, Punjab. They speak Punjabi. So, I can understand Punjabi, I

can also speak it, but I prefer speaking Urdu, because that's the rhetoric, rhetoric I've grown up with. Like my parents would always say, my, my grandma– my dad's mom– also lived with us. So, it was like joint family system. Her, my mom, and my dad would always speak to each other in Punjabi, but then every time they spoke to us, they spoke to us in Urdu and like, I ask them

why and they said that it's– Urdu's a more civilized language [laughs]. So, apparently, it's very gangster to speak Punjabi, and it's not very civil. I don't know what that means it sounds really cool, though.

I: [laughs]

R: Yeah, so that I was learning Spanish for a while, but I don't know where that went. I can read and write Arabic fluently, but I can't speak it, in terms of like conversational, I don't know if that counts in knowing the language. But–

I: Yeah.

R: That's that.

I: What are your connections with your parents' or grandparents' homeland? So, Pakistan?

R: With my homeland, so growing up in Saudi, like, it's really close in proximity Pakistan. So, every other summer we would literally spend the entire summer in Pakistan. One summer we'd go to Pakistan and then the other summer we'd go to New York because my mom's parents lived there at the time. So, we kept close contact with our families and stuff. It's like a second home, going back to Pakistan and living the way everyone lives there. Especially the way my family lives there. We're like middle class, lower middle class. We're not from like the really, high

status family. So, growing up, it was, living in two different worlds because we were very— not sheltered I would say in Saudi Arabia, we lived a comfortable life or really comfortable life in Saudi Arabia. But that said, we weren't comfortable in Pakistan but the way just the day-to-day

living is— just looks a little different. In terms of grocery shopping and like, the way the bathrooms look over there just the day-to-day stuff, and the electricity would go out multiple times a day and like the water, what's it called? Water heaters barely ever worked. So cold water, showered with cold water was the pain so we'd have this big tub— a really big tub where we'd fill the cold water in and, like, boil it and just put it back in the bathroom and we'd shower with that. So, like living, you know, being mindful of, like, the resources around you. that's the way we kind of grew up when we went to visit Pakistan regularly. So just like little things like that.

I: Do you have any relatives there that you're still in contact with?

R: Mhm. My mom's parents live there. My mom's cousins. Her siblings actually live in Kuwait. So, a lot of our family in Pakistan, they relocated to Kuwait. So, that's where they live, but a small number of them do still live in Pakistan, so my mom still keeps in contact with them and I do as well. So yeah.

I: Have you ever encouraged any of them to visit the US or come live here?

R: My, grandparents actually used to live in New York— my mom's parents— but they got deported, because of some paperwork issues my grandfather had. So, it's hard for them to come back to the US. We've been trying for so many years, it's just not happening yet. One of my aunts, she— we really want her to come. But one of the only ways she can, I mean one of the easiest ways she can if she were to get married to someone who lives here. Her siblings, two of her siblings live here so she, one of my aunts, she always like, tries to— she applies for their visas

and stuff on, like, a sibling status or family status, but it's just not happening for us. Other than that, not really.

I: Do you read the daily newspaper?

R: No.

I: So how would you say then that you get your news about Pakistan, or does that just like, is it not really something you pay attention to?

R: I do a little bit. Some of my friends over here are really heavy into Pakistani politics. So, I'll hear stuff from them. But also, my mom every single day when she wakes up, most of most days, or most mornings when I'm around when she is, and I make her tea in the morning, chai, I make her chai in the morning, and she puts on Pakistani news every single day. Or, like, regularly. So, like, brief interactions, you know, brief experiences with that, like, you know, but it's not something I go out of my way to, know about. Other than that... social media. I have, like, news apps on my phone that I scroll through regularly, and just become really depressed. Yeah.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah. So that's the situation in terms of looking at news.

I: Are there, any political events in Pakistan that you, feel have, like, affected you?

R: No, not that I know of.

I: Do you feel, like, a generational difference between yourself and your parents or your grandparents because you grew up with the American culture?

R: Mhm.

I: Whereas... Well, I suppose you also grew up with the Saudi Arabian culture, but whereas they didn't?

R: Mhm. My... The reason I say I'm third generation is because my grandma— my dad's mom— she actually immigrated to Canada. So, she was a Canadian citizen. She lived here for quite some time. My dad was born here. So, he's an American citizen. So, that's why even if we were born in Saudi Arabia we would have been American citizens because my dad was born here. Because my brother was born in Saudi Arabia, actually. So, he's an American citizen, obviously. What was the question again?

I: Do you feel—

R: Oh, generational.

I: Yeah, generational difference.

R: Generational difference... I think with my grandparents, my mom's side more so than my, my grandma on my dad's side, because we never— I never really got a chance to live with them.

[pause] they're very cultural. My grandma was as well– my dad's mom– but she, you know, basically a single mom. She had six kids. They all passed away when they were young, and my

dad's only, son she had so she, like, raised him on her own and, you know, worked and did all that stuff. So, she knows the hustle. What it takes to– what it takes to live– live here, right? So, in that term– in that sense, she really put importance on our education and, you know, our work ethic and stuff like that and saving money and, you know, living– what's it called? A responsible life. In that sense, I think we had an understanding, but then in terms of, like, different cultural Western perspective, she was just like “nooo.” Just like little things, you know, this was in high school, like, you know, going to dances or stuff like that, or, you know, having friends that were guys. That type of stuff. I think the older we got, the more she understood. And with my parents, there's less of that, you know, cultural strictness because they know we live in a different time. We live in a different, you know, environment. You kind of have to adopt and, you know, go with the flow. So, they're not, they're– I mean, it's easier for us to get along with our parents now, since we're in college and you know, we're able to have these open conversations with them. So, I don't think there's too much of a generational gap between me and my parents. There was a little bit with my grandparents, but my dad's dad, I never really got to know him. So that's... will be unknown.

I: How would you describe your political participation in the US?

R: Again, I will say very moderate. when it comes to bigger elections, obviously I'll participate I know with like, you know, smaller elections on the local level [sighs] it's something, it's something I always tell myself to be more involve– I mean be more aware about. Right? But then I think life gets in the way and then it doesn't happen. It's something I need to get better at moving forward. But I would say, for bigger stuff, I am there. For state and local situations, I'm very out of the loop.

I: When it comes to candidates who are from your own culture or religion, in what ways, if any, does that affect how you vote? Or your voting behavior?

R: [pause] Nothing has happened yet, for me. But I would be more likely to vote, obviously, because you know, supporting people from, from, from, minoritized backgrounds, right? It's something all people from minoritized backgrounds should be do, if they have the option, should do. But I think that would be more involved if that was the case.

I: [coughs] Excuse me. Were you in the United States during the Gulf War?

R: No

I: Were you in the US on September 11, 2001?

R: Nope.

I: Okay. So, we're going to move on to the topic of marriage. In your culture, how are women viewed and what is their typical role? And then, like, how is that different or comparable to men?

R: In a married life? I would say culturally, women are the caretakers of the house. The day-to-day caretakers of the house in terms of cooking, cleaning, making, making sure everyone has their laundry clean, making sure the house looks decent, you know. Not only that but making sure everyone is on their schedule. Basically, when you're a woman you become, [brief pause]

you need to be not aware of just your life but also everyone else in the house. Whether it's just your kids and your husband or they're also your in-laws. They're also your family. There's just so much added responsibility but not only that, but if you work, you're still expected to... maintain the house and still be there for everyone in the house. Make sure there's food, you know, whether or not you're cooking it every day, or if you're just cooking in bulk at least have food in the fridge, that type of stuff. I think now it's changing more so than, you know, I would say than my parents' generation. Where there's more of a mutual, contribution between the husband and the wife. but for me personally, my dad, he worked. He worked overseas— he worked with the royal family in Saudi Arabia. So, he always, always traveling, he had a travel job, so he was never home. So, my mom, for her personally, my mom had to take care of stuff inside and outside the house. Which is really hard to do in Saudi Arabia, because women can't drive. We were fortunate enough to have a close family friend who was a taxi driver, so he was our taxi driver. and we paid him and stuff, you know, compensated him for that. But you know, he was family. So, we were lucky in that sense where we had someone to fall back on when my dad wasn't there. But I would say that women are the main caregivers, caretakers of the house and the caregivers to whoever lives in the house.

I: What are some ways in which you balance your faith and your American identity?

R: There's never really a good way to balance both of them, I would say mainly it comes down to perspective and the way you think and the way you treat people. Right? The way you should talk to people... I think [pause] I think that now, not now, but like, for the younger generation, like my generation and down and even I think the generation before us. we're still trying to figure out

how to balance a Western and cultural lifestyle. Because some— for some of my friends it's basically like you're living a double life. You go home and you're a completely different person

as to what you are at school. And that may or may not be a good thing, right? Just depending on what your life looks like, that's and what your life looks like at home. For me, I don't think

there's a drastic difference, personally, from what I am like at home than what I'm like at school. I think maybe a couple years ago it was a little bit of a difference, but now more so I feel like it can be a little bit more open to my mom. So, I don't experience that too much now.

I: How did your religious or ethnic upbringing contribute to who you are today?

R: I think, naturally, I think religion just tries to, universal– universally religion teaches us to be, to try to be moral, try to be good people at the end of the day. And make balanced life choices. And I feel like that's how I've looked at my religion. And not take everything to an extreme right to incorporate everything little by little in life. Whether it's like I said praying before or whether it's like getting rid of bad habits or incorporating good habits just you know everything in moderation. I feel like, I feel like religion has taught me that. Everything in moderation.

I: So then back to the topic of marriage, what would you say marriage means to you?

R: For me... marriage is a... [pause] I'm sorry, trying to find the right word.

I: Yeah, take your time.

R: A partnership. A lifelong, committed partnership. I say that because I always– when I look at older generations and the marriage dynamics, there's always power on one side than the other, whether it's the woman or the man. And I've seen both. what partnership– well by partnership I

mean that there is a fifty-fifty, if not, you know, a little bit more, a little bit less, but there's always equal amounts of compromise on both sides, right. That's what I think a marriage should be.

I: What factors play a role in marriage?

R: What do you mean?

I: So like, the follow up question is what are the characteristics like you would look for in a husband?

R: Mhm. I would say... above everything... that he's a good person. That he identifies as being Muslim. Right. That doesn't mean he has to be super religious. But that doesn't mean he can't just, he— he just says that he's Muslim, but, like, doesn't practice, right? Because everyone's on their own journey. That's one thing for me. Because I know a lot of people who are really, really, religious. And you would think that just because someone's religious, they're really good person, but some people are really assholes, religious assholes. So that just defeats the purpose of religion. Right. So, I don't look for a really super religious person, I look for a moderate person, someone who's logical and practical, in their everyday choices in life, and then that I have a mutual understanding with. In terms of how I want my life to look like and how I— how we want our lives to look like or possibly how we want our children's live, lives to look like. Just open conversation.

I: So, would their homeland or their nationality, or whether or not they're Arab play a factor for you at all?

R: No. I personally wouldn't care. If they were from a different, cultural background, in the end it comes to whether or not you're compatible with that person on a human level. but for me, personally, I would, with my desi friends, my South Asian friends, I always tend to go back and forth with speaking Urdu and speaking Urdu or Punjabi, and English, just within one sentence. So, it's so natural for me to be part of that environment that feels like home, that I would prefer someone who was also Pakistani just so I could have that banter with them, you know? There're just certain things that can't be translated into English because they wouldn't be funny or they

just lose their context, right? In that sense, I would prefer someone who spoke a little bit of Urdu, you know, just gets the culture. but if, say, I wouldn't find a person like that, I wouldn't, like, have a problem with being with someone who's not Pakistani.

I: Would education, income or social class contribute to your decision to date or marry someone, or even like your parents, like, approval or disapproval of them?

R: I think my parents, a little bit in terms of, what's it called, I wouldn't say class, I would say, there might be a certain threshold they'd want this person to meet in terms of income. and I think that's, I think that's [inaudible] but to a certain extent, right? If someone's a really, really, good person, and you know, they're going to provide for themselves and for example, me, and they're really good person, but they just don't make, the amount of money you want them to make, that doesn't mean there's not room for growth, right? So, for me personally I wouldn't, I wouldn't say I wouldn't care. I wouldn't put too much emphasis on that. I would like that person to have some sort of education that would aid them to go further in life in terms of their career and helped and helped them— what's it called? Move forward, something, have some skills and stuff like that. In particular, I don't care what they do. It just has to be something good and not shady business, or anything like that. That's my answer.

I: Would you move because of marriage or relocate because of marriage?

R: Within the state or outside— or actually yeah, I think I would. But not too far. My, my mom's always, she's always been super far from her parents. Since she got married. She got married at fifteen. So... she's always been really far from her parents and, like, that's something— I love my mom to death and I, I really don't want to be too far away from her. Like if it's like moving to Chicago I'll do it. I don't think I'd have a problem with moving anywhere as long as I'd be able to, or I'm in a position where I'd be able to visit regularly, then, I'd be okay with it.

I: Would you ever move out of the country?

R: Um-

I: For marriage.

R: If I could take her with me. Yeah.

I: What factor might play a role in your decision to relocate? Like the type of city, the culture, whether or not you have other family or relatives nearby?

R: I think I wouldn't be able to speak too much on that because that all depends on the situation. And whether it's for a job, whether it's for a better living condition or something that be... something that me and my husband- future husband- feel more aligned with. Right? Or whether we want to move back to Pakistan which I don't think I would ever do. No, I wouldn't- I don't think I'd ever live in Pakistan.

I: Is there any reason for that?

R: A little bit. I feel like a lot of people are very, very, very cultural. And that's not a bad thing all the time but in certain, in certain aspects, it's very backwards. Just you know, sometimes the treatment of women and if you were to live in Pakistan some people might classify as that being religious, right? It's okay for- to treat women this way and this way. But we, they fail to realize

that the culture is so meshed into the religion and the religion is so meshed into our culture that, that's a categorical mistake. It's more, the cultural side that oppresses women than the religious side because religion, our religion has liberated women from the beginning. And just because the culture and, there isn't a separation of culture and religion over there that people, think that they're being religious but they're just being cultural, religious assholes. So, I just wouldn't be able to mesh with that type of mentality. That's why. I'm not saying a lot of people are over there like that. Bigger cities, no, but smaller cities, yeah. My parents, my family is from a smaller city, so...

I: Is that something you had to deal with or, your parents had to deal with?

R: Deal with what?

I: Like, that kind of mindset of, like, not necessarily religiously, but culturally, like you were saying.

R: That women can do this or we can't do that?

I: Yeah.

R: My mom, I don't really know if she did growing up, she got married at fifteen to move to the states shortly after. But I know none of the women in my family worked in Pakistan but because, not because they— they're not allowed to. Because there isn't anywhere in the society where women can safely work. Now things are changing; women are starting to work in, like, offices and stuff like that, they're nurses, like, you know, every— anywhere in the world. But we're starting to see more women in like retail, in retail stores and in Pakistan and stuff like that. I

would say the older men in my family would have not liked women to go out and work in Pakistan, but they would realize that if, like, for example me my sister we live here like you know that's something you need to do for your own future, right? I think they would understand that, I don't think my mom's had any experience with that because since my dad always, like had a travel job she'd always do everything on her own from, like, inside the house to outside to outside the house and typically women don't do that. Either they don't want to, either they're stopped from doing it or whatever the circumstances, the circumstances are, but my mom did everything. She actually her, her grandfather– my great grandfather– he was alive for most of my childhood, so I got to know him pretty well. He used to, he never favored the guys or the girls in the family. He'd, like, put everyone to work. Like, you know, home improvement type of work, like you know, fixing stuff around the house and my mom was really part of that growing up. So, she, I feel like that set her up, to be able to handle all the shit that came, you know, later in life in terms of taking care of the house and taking care of everything outside the house and being,

strong enough to do– and believing in herself to do that.

I: How open are your parents when it comes to marriage outside of your religious or national group?

R: I think my mom and my dad would be fine with, marrying someone who's not Pakistani as long as they're a good person and they're Muslim and everything. I feel like it's all situational. And it all depends on the child, and depends on the parent and the child dynamic whether they let their kids, marry someone either outside their religion or outside their cultural background. my sister is actually engaged to a white guy. I mean parents haven't said anything yet. So that's really like, even in the present, it's very unknown how they're going to take– or how they are taking it, how they're going to take it. In terms of when the marriage comes around and everything. So, I don't know. And I won't know until the topic of marriage comes up because my mom doesn't really talk about it. My dad doesn't either. So, that's that.

I: So, who influences your decision to... or when you decide to get engaged, get married, who would influence your decision as far as like parents, relatives, friends...?

R: Me.

I: Yeah.

R: Myself.

I: You.

R: Yeah, mainly I would say that because in the end you're the one living your life that the other person, you know yourself the best in terms of– unless your parents know you're irrational and you are irrational in terms of making your decisions, maybe it's not. Maybe you do need other people's input. But, you know, if you know yourself enough and your parents know that you're responsible, I feel like it should be, I should have the, I should have more, more say. I wouldn't say complete say but I would say more say. In the end, I don't think parents, if you do something that your parents– my parents, if I do something my parents won't like, parents always come around. They always come around. they don't have to agree with everything. They just have to be okay with the decisions being made as long as they're not terrible decisions, as long as you're not marrying a terrible, terrible person. right. As long as, [pause] and then as long as they're a good person, I don't care. I think they shouldn't even, but they might have something else to say.

I: So, cultural barriers, if– does any– do you know anyone who's faced cultural barriers because of their decision to marry someone outside of your religious or ethnic group?

R: I personally don't. But I do know of families where, you know, if the girl decides to marry someone who's not, it's use— either not from the same cultural background, and is not even Muslim, parents would kind of just disown the child, or like, you know, just cut contact with them. And I've also seen the other side of that where parents are maybe not accepting in the beginning but come around to it because, you know, no one wants to lose their child. But personally, my family I haven't seen anything like that. So.

I: So, this next question kind of ties in education with like family. So, you're at Marquette University, you're in the process, getting a college degree, what's your major?

R: I am studying social welfare and justice for my major and my minor I'm doing philosophy and law in society. I want to get into law school. So that's in the process of happening.

I: What made you choose to go that way in terms of stud— of study?

R: In terms of study, honestly, choosing the major... I don't think I had a concrete thought process because initially coming into Marquette, I wanted to do HR. But I suck at math. And to even get into the business school, I had to take two math classes and like prove that my grades were fine and then be admitted. And take all the business core and business school pre-reqs, which they have their own stuff, and take all these classes and it's, like, junior senior year when you go to your HR courses, and I'm like, what if by the time I even get there I don't like it, right?

I: Right.

R: So I decided not to go down that route and in my head, I was like, if I do end up doing– want to do HR in the future, you could take the social work route, you know, because I know a lot of people, I've heard of a lot of people and know a couple people who got into HR positions with their social work degree, right? And, so that's my initial thought process. And then I... eventually decided that I wanted to do law school because it's something I always thought about since middle school, not something I ever, like verbally told anyone that I was interested in, but I really was or I still am. I don't know what type of law I want to do, but I do know it's something I want to– I mean, I definitely know it's something I want to pursue.

I: Did the possibility or thought of having children ever influence your decision for what you want to study?

R: Not at all. I always tell my mom like “don't ever expect a grandchild from me. You're not going to get one.” She's like, “shut up.” Well, you never know in the end, I mean, I say I don't want any kids, but maybe it'll happen if I decide I like children.

I: Yeah, never say never.

R: Never say never. Shit changes.

I: Is there a career or a major that you would not choose because it might reduce your marriage opportunities?

R: No. Never.

I: Would you consider marrying a person younger than you? And–

R: Yep.

I: How much— how many years younger would you say is acceptable?

R: Well, one or two. Max. As long as there's like a mental... mutual maturity, that's all that matters. But not too young. That's... eh.

I: Would you consider marrying a person, marrying a person born and raised outside the United States? Like, for example—

R: No.

I: In Pakistan.

R: No.

I: Why?

R: Too much of a cultural difference. Too much of life, ideology difference that wouldn't be healthy in a relationship. no. That's why. There would be too much cultural clash in the way I want to live, in the way they want to live and what they expect. Because they have, you know, I wouldn't say everyone, but majority of the men have this idea of what a woman should do and

what a woman should be like. and I obviously do not fit that standard and I'm not ever going to. And I don't want that for my future. So...

I: When it comes to marriage, ever— either thinking of, like, your own potential, future marriage or, like, your parents, who makes most of the decisions?

R: Mm. For my life... or what?

I: Whichever way you want to look at it, like, what you've observed with your parents or for you— your life.

R: I witnessed my aunt getting married. It was like an arranged marriage situation where she was like, okay, this is a potential guy. She was like alright I'll get to know him. She eventually said yes. But I felt like, I don't know if it was true or if I was, I was a little younger at the time too, I don't know if I felt like the families were making more of the decisions, but then that was like, these two people are living together, right? Why are the families making decisions for them? because in the end, they try to make sure that the families will get along with the families, but they don't always have to get along because there's always going to be problems with your in laws. On either side. Always I've never seen any in laws, in— in-law relationship that doesn't have... shit between them. So, and in the end if we let the two people make a decision about their life either way, there's always going to be problems with the extended family, so why not let them, right? That's how I saw it. I don't think that's maybe necessarily how my aunt experienced it. Because, you know, she comes from that culture. That's what she's seen her entire life, right. So maybe that was normal for her [inaudible mumble].

I: What is your opinion on dating?

R: Dating in a western context? No. In terms of, you know, just openly being with someone and, you know, intimacy and everything like that. I don't have a problem with, for other people, but for me, I don't know. it just depends. Dating in terms of getting to know someone, and spending time with them. Yeah, I think I can [inaudible].

I: Do you think the internet and Facebook and social media make it easier for Arab and Muslim Americans to meet their future spouse?

R: Yeah, I think it can. but also, I think, like any other person dating on social media or whatever, you always see a side of the person that's very polished and beautiful. So, I think in that sense, it might be problematic, BUT it is a good outlet for those who have stricter parents, right? They want to try to get to know this— know someone on their own and then bring it up to their parents. It'd be easier in that sense because they have an outlet to try to meet people, right? So I think it's a good thing, but it also has its negatives.

I: Do you think community events, or centers, or weddings are places where people tend to see a potential spouse and proceed from there.

R: A hundred percent. I haven't experienced it. I recently went to my friend's wedding who graduated from dental school like last year. He got married. [pause] He had a segregated wedding, but then he also had like a mixed section where, like, all his friends, his white friends and everyone who came, for him, so we were all there. But typically, weddings are where a lot of the matchmakers find potentials for people they know or relatives they know or someone they know who's looking for either possible for a guy or girl. Yeah, it's very big in our culture. “Oh, I saw someone who might be a good match for you.” So, like, that type of situation.

I: Okay. How is marriage in America different than your parents' or grandparents' way of marriage?

R: It's very individual, it's very— everyone has agency and who they want to date and then who they want to end up marrying. Right? I think there's little to no pressure from parents. So far as I know, like Americans interfering in their kids' marriage, because I think they have an understanding that two people are getting married, they want to live their life together. We're not living with them. So why bother them? They might not LIKE that person. But they'll TOLERATE them. Right. I think. I think that's a good element. That's an element that I like of the Western world, to a certain extent. I still think there— and people are civil. For the most part, right?

I: [laughs]

R: I don't know. Maybe there are situations where people are not civil but for the most part from what I know people are civil, right? And that's what I want. If there was ever a situation where I choose someone who my parents don't completely agree with... so that's my answer.

I: In a family which has more than one daughter, er— in a family that has more than one daughter, do you think the marriage restrictions and the process are different between the oldest daughter and the youngest daughter?

R: I think there would be. Just because I have an older sister and she's a little bit of a rebel. Parents may try to be more strict with the oldest child whether it's a girl, and I think maybe whether it's a girl or a guy just because it's the first child you know, it's their guinea pig for raising the child. So, as they get as they like, you know, grow older and have more kids, they

start to become more lenient, not just for the sake of becoming more lenient, but just understanding that, you know, times are changing, and that they can't control everything. So, yeah, I think there is definitely a difference in how parents treat an older child and a younger child, not because they like one better than the other it's just because, just because of the circumstances of them being the first child. Maybe they weren't that equipped, knowing how to raise a child properly. So, that's I think, yeah, there is a difference.

I: With your older sister engaged, do you think you'll experience any of that in your family?

R: What do you mean?

I: Like, do you think your parents will react one way with her marrying a white guy like you said, versus you marrying someone like you said you're looking for someone of Muslim faith.

R: Hmm. I think they'd be... happier. But in the end, you never know who's going to come my way, right? If it's someone from a different city, they have a little bit of a different cultural practices they might just not get or they could also be set different you know, like Christianity, there's like, the Catholics, you know, so many different sets. I don't know how much intermingling there is between the sets. I'm assuming, there's a lot. but now more so than before there's intermingling with the different sets in Islam. So, maybe I don't know how my parents would react to that, but, that one might be something they might have conflict over.

I: So, moving on to more of a focus of parenting, in what ways, if any, do you think boys should be or are raised differently than girls?

R: I think boys are more, they're expected to do less around the house, I think. That if an older woman, older Pakistani woman, sees the guy doing something around the house, she'll be, "Oh no, no, let me do it. Let me do it," you know? My brother actually, me and my mom put him on chores, so he does stuff around the house, you know? Making sure he's not going to not do stuff, you know, take care of himself, or like you know, do dishes or just like little things around the house and I just— stuff anyone should do. My— one of my grandma's actually one time saw him doing such and was like, "No, no, let me let me do it for you" I'm like, "NO, you let him do it," [laughs] you know? So just like having them understand that it's okay for a guy to do that right? Because they just don't think it's normal for a guy to do that because they should do stuff outside the house and be productive in that way. So that's a difference.

I: What aspects of Pakistan culture did, you like experience as you were growing up?

R: I think... [pause] respecting our elders was one of the big things. Even if they were wrong, we weren't allowed to question them. In that sense, I feel like that's a little bit of a negative thing about the culture where, you don't, like, challenging authority. By authority I mean older people because it's not respectful. They see just challenge— they just, I feel like the culture just sees challenging as disrespect when it's really not that, right? Beause there's a respectful way to disagreeing. There's a disrespectful way to disagree. but culturally the thing both either, or is disrespectful. Entirely. So that's one thing, I think I noticed growing up a lot.

I: And then your parents, what languages do they speak?

R: You asked me that.

I: Did I?

R: Mhm.

I: Okay

R: Urdu and Punjabi.

I: Oh, yeah, that's right. We covered that when we were talking about what languages you spoke. So, are those languages primarily spoken at home?

R: And English.

I: Did you-

R: All of them together. One sentence.

I: Did your parents encourage you to work? Either in like, their place of employment like their stores? Or did they, or elsewhere like discourage you from working?

R: In high school yeah, they didn't want us to work. Even though a couple times I tried I was like, "Oh, why we get a job?" Nope, still just focus on your school. And once we got to college, they were like okay you can work now. It wasn't that— because they didn't want us to work. They just wanted us to make sure we were focusing on our school. And that's pretty much it. There was no like, "oh, you're a woman, you can't work" that type of situation, just purely educational

reasons.

I: And then, so what role would you say that they played in your education, like helping you with homework, after school activities?

R: None of that. Even when we moved here, my dad was still working overseas. So, he recently just moved back. I think like a year ago. My mom was never familiar with the school system here, so it's basically me and my older sister just figure out, you know, figure out the system on our own type of situation, you know, reach out to people in the school who could help us. And then my younger brother, he's a sophomore now in high school, so like he has us because we went through that so I feel like he's better equipped than we were, in terms of having somebody you can fall back on at home if he needs help with homework and stuff, we're there for that. But I could never really ask that for my mom, and she never ever checked my report cards or went to any of my parent teacher conferences. Not because she didn't care. She cared but she knew I was fine. She knows I was doing what I was supposed to. She didn't feel the need to follow up with teachers and be like, "Oh, what is she doing? What is she not doing?" Because I was doing just fine. I was doing great. So, she was absent for that, but I don't think it was a bad thing. I think it was just because she wasn't familiar. She was never familiar with this system for years. So, and she never finished high school. So that's just what the circumstances were and, I mean, everything's great. So, we're good.

I: When did you start driving?

R: Seventeen or eighteen. My sister and I, we both took our driver's ed together. She took it when she was a senior, I took it when I was a junior, and it was— that's late either way, because people usually take it sophomore year. It's just we didn't have an extra car. and we just didn't feel— like we didn't have places to go. With me, well neither of us had a job at the time. So, once

we started driving, my sister got a job, and we shared a car. So, she'd have it most of the time because she worked, and stuff and I just had after school activities, and I had... and that's it.

I: How did your par– parents feel about your driving? Were they, like, encouraging of you getting your license?

R: Yeah!

I: Discouraging?

R: Yeah, no, they were fine. My dad, he wasn't here for that part of my life. But my mom was she was very scared when we were still learning how to drive, and she was in the passenger seat. She jus– she just doesn't have the patience for that. I think it was a difficult for her at the time, but you know, she doesn't have to deal with that anymore because we're fine, but she never discouraged us from getting a driver's license or anything like that. It was just something we had to do. So, we did it.

I: Did your parents influence your choice of career or major in college at all?

R: Nope, not at all. Not a single bit. And I think they did when I decided to do what I wanted to do, they were like, “Okay, why do you want to do this? Are you going to do like, what are you going to do, what are you going to be like a social worker?” I'm like, “What if I do? Why is that bad?” You know? But, you know, they understood that, you know, whatever I'm going to end up doing, I'm gonna– I'm gonna be fine. I'm going to make good decisions about what, whatever I end up doing so... they were really on top of me or my sister to do that because, you know, just standard traditional career paths for a lot of South Asians is becoming a doctor, going into engineering, doing, what's it called? Being, doing business or a worker for things you know, just

because I took that path and the, you know, the social work route because I do plan on working and taking a gap— gap year or two to work and get experience and then go to law school. Most likely I'm going to be working in my field, right? And they're fine with that, so.

I: Here at Marquette, are you involved in any religious or cultural organizations?

R: No. I was freshman year. I was on board for the MSA, but I only did that for that year. But [brief pause] I know there's a certain appeal to be part of like on boards and stuff for these religious organizations. But I just don't feel that it's my, my thing. Or that I feel comfortable doing it so that's why. That's mainly the reason why I don't do it, but I don't have anything against anything. it's just a personal preference. So that's why I'm not.

I: In any way does your religion or culture, like, influence who you choose to hang out, with your friends with?

R: A little bit, yes, but I don't really think so. Because I have a lot of friends who, you know, drink and, you know, do stuff, that I wouldn't that doesn't mean I'm not friends with them, you know? That's just the difference of the way they want to live their life and the way I want to live

my life. That doesn't mean I can't be friends with them. So, as long as they're in general good people, I'm fine. As long as they're not, you know, terrible people and like two-faced and all that stuff. And I don't vibe with that, so...

I: Did you ever make it a point to make sure you had at least some friends who are of the same culture or religion as you?

R: Hmm. When I moved here in sixth grade, actually, one of my only friends from sixth grade through high school, she's white. And she's still my friend, we're still in contact, we see each other regularly. She studies, she's in school at Oshkosh so... I never had a single Muslim friend, my entire high school, you know, so I didn't have like an external influence of even wearing my scarf, you know, I didn't have that influence around me. And I still, you know, took that route took that path for myself. So, I didn't ever make it a point to have certain types of friends or friends that looked a certain way. I kind of just went with the flow and then when I started college, that's when I, that's when I started to have more friends who were from the same similar either religious or cultural background. So...

I: So, when it comes to the importance of religion and culture, like how important would you say that is in choosing a marriage partner? You said you wanted someone of Muslim faith, but so culture isn't necessarily important to you?

R: Not necessarily important to me, but like I said before, I do tend to speak in my language quite often within my sentences, even if it's half in English and the rest of it I'll finish it Urdu or I'll finish it in, or if I'm speaking Urdu and I'm going to finish it in English. I can't do that with someone who's not from the same cultural background. So that's something, I like, I would like to have. Personally.

I: Okay, so the next section focuses on your parents again. So, who are your parents?

R: What do you mean? What do they do?

I: Yeah, like their names. yeah. Then the next questions are about current status. So, working, retired, so...

R: So okay, so my dad, he was born in America, raised here somewhat, and somewhat in Pakistan so like, moved back and forth quite a bit. He is a nurse. That's what he did. He went to college. He's one of the first men in our family to went, go and graduate college and all that. And me and my sister will be one of the first women in the family to, graduate college. So that's exciting. But he's a nurse in terms of degree. So that's how he worked for the royal family; he was a personal nurse. And when he came back, he got into real estate and stuff like that. So, he's doing that on top of, doing his nursing job. So, flexibility with his profession, and my mom most her life, she was a stay-at-home mom and Saudi Arabia, she actually worked at fashion boutique for while with her friend. And, and for I think maybe five or four, maybe six years now she's been— no, maybe five. Between four to five years, she's been working in retail, she works at Sephora. She recently just got hired for, assistant manager position at Francesca's but their previous manager who hired her, she was like, "I want you, come here." So, she's doing good for herself, and keeping busy and stuff like that. So, she doesn't have any like, credentials in terms of schooling. But she works, now.

I: What is their, well, you said your mom doesn't have any schooling. Oh, I guess that covers the question and your dad went to school for nursing...okay, never mind.

R: You're fine [laughs].

I: How would you say that they— or how do you think they would identify themselves? Like you said you are—

R: Pakistani.

I: Pakistani?

R: My dad, my mom, she would most definitely say she's Pakistani my dad, he'd say American. He's more on the is more on the western side of things. western side of life. So, I think he would identify more to his American side, but I don't think he would, hide that he's from Pakistan or his background is from Pakistan.

I: Do they often talk about Pakistan? Or... like anything...?

R: My mom does. My mom does. my dad not so much. I mean, he told me— they talk about, like, their experience growing up and how it was so different and stuff, but not like growing up in Pakistan or anything like that.

I: Okay, are there any, like, specific historic events like the Great Depression or like major wars in the Middle East, that your parents ever talked about or like that you specifically remember, like, how they responded to them?

R: Not really. But I do remember my mom saying, I think she was she was definitely born in Kuwait. But they had to move because I don't know what war it was. There was some war going on in Kuwait around the country when she was born. So, technically, you could say she's from Kuwait but her birth certificate says she's from Pakistan. But nothing ever, nothing, never talked about anything being like a big dramatic change in their life or, something that influenced their life decisions or anything like that. Nothing that I know of.

I: And then next questions are about your grandparents. So, did your grandparents immigrate to the US?

R: My grandma– my dad's mom– actually immigrated to Canada. I don't know about my dad's dad, if he got citizenship in America. I didn't get to know him that well, so I'm not sure about that. But my grandma was a Canadian citizen. And my dad was an American citizen. Because he was born here. So, yeah that's it. My grandparents my mom's side, no, they're not.

I: What are the names of your grandparents or your grandma who immigrated to Canada?

R: She, [laughs] we call her, we never call anyone by their name, so it's Mukhtar. Her name was Mukhtar, Razoul. So, yeah.

I: Do you know about when they immigrated from?

R: When she moved here? No. I have no idea.

[Short interruption: interviewer's roommate walked in and said, "Hey."]

I: Do you know, like what kind of job she had before she immigrated? And if that, like...

R: She didn't work before she was married or anything like that when she moved actually, just because she was in like, a single parent type of situation where she was still married to her husband, but they just weren't on good terms. And he wouldn't, he wasn't financially, supportive of her and my dad, and so she had a lot of factory jobs, you know, at some point. At some points she'd be employed and they– she wouldn't have any money for anything. And she always talked about all the people that like helped her get to where she was. And you know, she was like, I don't know how I would have survived if you know she'd stand, she'd be standing outside of, you

know, grocery stores in Canada. And like some family, any family, they'd just offered to buy her entire groceries, for her and my dad. She was like, just little things like that if people never helped me out, I wouldn't have been able to do anything. You know, get her on top. be on top of her. I don't even know. She was such a strong woman. she kept in contact with every single person she could she had, she still, I still have her telephone book, her number book. So many numbers. So many numbers. Eith— Either people she kept in contact with or people she knew and there's so many people that she, she was like, I wish I still knew the names of the people who helped me, you know? So she worked factory jobs mainly. Other than that, nothing that I know of.

I: Do you know, like how she paid for her trip fare to get to Canada?

R: Work, probably work.

I: Do you know, like, the reason for her immigration?

R: Nope. No idea.

I: So, was it just her and your dad that immigrated, or did she immigrate with other members of the family?

R: Honestly, I don't know. I have a feeling... I don't want to say anything because I don't know. She probably moved here with her husband. I think all her kids before my dad had passed away, either right after they were born or like couple years after or, whatever the situation was. So, she did not move here with my dad or anything she, because he was born in the US. So, she must have stayed there for a while, right? And she actually had a child after my dad who also passed

away. But I don't know who she came with or why they came, or what the situation was, but in general, I can assume it's for a better life, better financial life to be able to, you know, send money back home to your family, or, you know, have a better future for your kid... in terms of opportunities and education.

I: So, her marriage, do you know if it was an arranged marriage or not?

R: She, I think– I'm pretty sure it was an arranged marriage. I do know that she was my grandfather's second wife. So, he was prev– he was previously married, but I think her– his wife passed away or something or they divorced or whatever the reason was, she was, what's it called? His second wife. I don't– I, it probably was arranged. There is no way there way it wasn't arranged.

I: Do you know where they settled once they got to the US?

R: New York. I knew they lived in New York for a while. I knew– I know they lived in Texas, because that's where my dad went to school, in Texas, so.

I: Okay, we're going to switch topics again and discuss cultural clothing. So do you have any traditional or cultural clothing that you wear regularly or just have?

R: Yeah, so our traditional clothing, they're cultural salwar kameez. Salwar is like the bottom half, like pants. And kameez is like a shirt. Salwar kameez is our traditional clothing. but now everything is like– we have little qatars, qatars are like, like shirts. Flowy shirts. This would be considered a qatar [interviewee's gestures at shirt she's wearing]. I wouldn't say per se its traditional, because it's more like a modern style, but our traditional clothing our, like, salwar

kameez are imported from India. Like saris, I don't know if you're familiar with what saris are, our like for weddings and stuff, our lehngas, it's like a skirt with, like, a blouse. so, that's pretty much it.

I: So, like what aspects of the cultural clothing do you wear? Like regularly, like, every day and then like, is there like I guess anything that's yeah, for special occasions like weddings like you

were saying?

R: Mhm. Every day not so much. I do have a lot of shirts that are qatars that are from back home and stuff. they're very colorful, I'm not a very colorful person. So, I don't wear them that often. but I have a lot of those. And in terms of fancier clothes, weddings or birthday parties or any event or our religious holiday, I don't know if you know Eid, so we dress up for those. Then we have like fancier, garments for that– I have pictures and stuff I can show you, so you have like an image.

I: Yeah, sure.

R: Yeah.

I: So how do you feel when you were like your cultural clothing?

R: Very pretty. I feel like a queen. honestly, to be completely honest, when you see our cultural clothing, like hung up on, like, a hanger you're like, what is this? Like?

I: [laughs]

R: That would look hideous. But like if you wear it, it's so gorgeous. Because it's just the way that things are so, right, sometimes they look baggy, or like they look like they wouldn't fit right but everything fits really nice. If it's tailored, right, obviously. I just I love, I love dressing up, dressing up. I love wearing my cultural clothes because they're so pretty number one and number two, it's just... it's different, right. And you just embrace that.

I: Does it mean anything special to you where, like, why would you hold it to, like, a standard of importance?

R: You know, it's— I feel like, it's something you, it's something you can hold on to. It's something that's timeless, right? [brief pause] and it's, it's a way to... identify yourself on a level of appearance, right? My mom sometimes she'll go grocery shopping and wearing salwar kameez she'll like, you know, not fancy or anything just like normal everyday cotton type clothes. But they're salwar kameez. She has no problem. Like, I never had a problem I was never embarrassed to, like, walk around with her or anything because you know, it's something you—it's part of your culture and you shouldn't be embarrassed at that. You say America is like, you know, very open and embracing the different cultures and you know, why not be comfortable instead of, what's it called, embarrassed. Something as simple as your cultural clothing, just because it looks different than everyone else's.

I: Does anyone influence you to wear cultural clothing or is it just—

R: My mom. She doesn't push it on me but, you know, she does it makes me want to do it. Yeah, it's just subconsciously, right, it's not something we ever talk about or anything but it's something

like, I just know. So.

I: So, does that mean your mom wears a lot of—

R: She does.

I: Traditional dressings.

R: She does. Yeah. When she's not working or anything, when she's at home she'll be wearing traditional, everyday lounging around clothes, and she'll run errands in that and that's fine.

I: Has she passed any of that down to you? Like any of her traditional stuff?

R: Her clothes... I mean, we all me, my sister, and my mom are relatively the same size. My mom is, like, the skinniest out of all of us, but a lot of our cultural clothing there are loose fitting, so it's easier for me and my sister to fit in them, too. So, we all share everything, even down to our shoe sizes. So, that's never an issue with us. So, it's not a, an issue of passing down; it's like we all just share what we have.

I: Do you purchase a lot of your own clothing, then?

R: My cultural clothing?

I: Yeah.

R: No. It comes from Pakistan, because my mom goes every year to see her parents for like a month and a half, or my aunt will go or my grandparents— my aunt's in-laws will go or her

parents will go, so there's always stuff coming from Pakistan and us taking stuff there. We never buy it from here we always buy from Pakistan. So.

I: So, since you and your sister and your mom share a lot is your and your sister's cultural clothing, does it ever seem more modernized than your mom's?

R: Yeah, yeah. we don't really wear anything on like a day-to-day basis. My mom does. But mainly me and my sister always dress up for functions, for events and stuff. So obviously it is modernized. It's, you know, it's cute. Not to say my mom's clothes aren't cute, but that's more of a dress and what salwar kameez are supposed to look like.

I: Okay, well, we're pretty much at the end.

R: Awesome.

I: So is there anything else about your...

[Short interruption: interviewee receives a phone call.]

I: So yeah, anything else about your history, your experiences or your family's that you would want to include in the interview?

R: I think I pretty much covered everything.

I: Okay. Are there any particular services, or resources that you think the Arab and Muslim Women's Resource and Research Institute should provide to meet the needs of, like, communities of Arab and Muslim women?

R: Like what? [laughs] I don't have anything in mind.

I: Okay.

R: I think Enaya is looking for something specific.

I: Yeah, she doesn't specify so...

R: We're good on that.

I: Okay [laughs], and yeah, the last thing is just do you have any other family or friends that you think it would be beneficial to interview?

R: No. Maybe my sister, I don't think she'd be cool with that. Because she doesn't really identify with her cultural side more. I don't know if that's a perspective you guys would want.

I: Yeah, I can definitely talk to the professor about it.

R: Alright. Yeah, I don't have anyone else in mind.

I: Alright, well thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences.

R: Any time.

I: It's very valuable.

R: Thank you.

I: And if you need to contact me for any reason or Enaya since you know who she is, then like you can feel free to do so.

R: Any time.

I: Yeah. Thank you.