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Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person in Hong Kong

I interviewed my friend Waleed Waseem who has lived in Hong Kong for 18 years. He is originally from Pakistan but moved to Hong Kong as a child with his parents. When I interviewed him, we talked about norms in local society. It is much different than the U.S. Everyone here has different mannerisms. Hong Kong locals have the tendency to be shy in public settings. I noticed that around campus. Waleed is not a native Cantonese speaker. He speaks English as his first language. He also speaks Cantonese and Punjabi, a native language of Pakistan. One of the bigger things I noticed when communicating with locals was their ability to understand English at a high level. Hong Kong locals start learning English at an early age, which gives them an advantage over the older generations in the business setting. I noticed the more educated the person, the better their English was. This was an obvious finding. However, some locals in the more traditional areas of Hong Kong spoke no English at all.

One of the biggest findings I noticed here in Hong Kong was the absence of crime. Crime here is almost non-existent. When I asked Waleed why crime was so low compared to the U.S., he said the gun control laws made crime low. Guns and their usage in Hong Kong is non-existent. It is almost impossible to obtain a gun without being in the military or the police force. I asked Waleed about the habits of the locals and what was different. The locals like to converse in abnormal ways. Singing and dancing at late hours of the night are common on campus. If I were to give advice to an incoming abroad student, I would tell them to invest in some good earplugs. I didn't understand the concept of the students socializing ways but Waleed said it is normal for them to do those types of things. I asked Waleed what type of lifestyle does he live while at home. He said he lives on an island next to the airport. It is normal for students to live on the outskirts of the city. It is much cheaper than being in the heart of the city. Rent in Kowloon Tong where HKBU is located would

cost the renter over one million HK dollars a year. That's without owning the property. Kowloon Tong is the most expensive part of Hong Kong, which has its good parts and its bad parts. I would rather live in the more traditional areas of Hong Kong. Kowloon Tong reminds me of the U.S. There are many differences between Hong Kong and the U.S. However, there are some surprising similarities that make Hong Kong seem like home. I would like to think Hong Kong will be my second home once I establish myself after graduation.

There are many cultural similarities and differences. Waleed has grown up in a Pakistani home. Our childhoods were completely different. However, we get along great because we have the same values when it comes to life and how it should be lived. Our cultures are so different that I had no idea what language he spoke when he would call home on the weekends. Hong Kong has such a diverse population that many of the world's languages can be heard regularly while traveling on the MTR (the local subway system). His native foods are also quite different. I grew up eating a wide range of foods. Waleed grew up the same way. Hong Kong has hundreds of different kinds of cultural foods. We both can relate to having a great pallet for delicious foods.

When it comes to our outlooks on life and everything that has to do with becoming a mature adult, Waleed and I have similar viewpoints. We both want to become the best possible person we can be while having the best time with friends and family. Our values are also quite similar. Having a friend who is so diverse is a luxury. I can learn new things from him that I may not have known before coming to Hong Kong. We both have our differences but our similarities are overwhelming. It's nice to have met a great friend who believes in the same ways of life as myself.

I knew Waleed pretty well before this interview. So my experience talking to him didn't change much. I had a great perspective before this. The first two months were incredible. I experienced so many new things that have changed my life. When a few of my friends from Linfield said it would change the way I looked at life I didn't believe them. I have become a different person in a good way by being in this type of environment with Hong Kong locals and

exchange students. I am so glad I picked Hong Kong. It has been such a great experience and one I will always remember. Every student who goes to Linfield College needs to study abroad. It's a once in a life time opportunity that will change the way life is lived. I have come out a better person with real world knowledge just by living in a country completely different than my own. Having a wide range of knowledge about other parts of the world can only benefit one's life.

Interviewee : Waleed Waseem (friend)