

**Hong Kong Unison**  
**Degree of Acceptance of Ethnic Minorities by Chinese Hongkongers**  
**Summary of Survey Results**  
**(17 March 2012)**

1. Background of Survey

Since the founding of Hong Kong Unison, we have been working towards educating Chinese Hongkongers, to raise their awareness of and cultural sensitivity towards ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. We are also committed to the advocacy of racial equality. Different groups and organisations invite us to hold Cultural Sensitivity courses and workshops, and at the beginning of every session our staff would distribute a questionnaire on the degree of acceptance towards people of different ethnicities. During the five-minute survey, participants complete the questionnaire without discussing among themselves, and handed the questionnaire immediately after completion. We collected a total of 1,862 surveys between the mid-2007 and early 2012, and the respondents include police cadets, schoolteachers and students.

2. Main Results

**i. Question 1: What is a 'Hongkonger'?**

The participants of the talks and workshops have different definitions and opinions on what a 'Hongkonger' is. However, very few of them defined it at the policy level (i.e. having the right of abode in Hong Kong). Most respondents define a 'Hongkonger' as:

- a. Chinese, with yellow skin and black hair;
- b. being able to speak Cantonese, with some specifying that it 'must be authentic Cantonese with the correct accent';
- c. a person born in Hong Kong or born and raised here, whose parents are both Hong Kong permanent residents;
- d. a long-term resident of Hong Kong, but not necessarily of Chinese ethnicity;
- e. a person with the characteristics of a typical Hongkonger, with the assimilation of certain temperaments and styles, and having some knowledge about Hong Kong; and
- f. a holder of a Hong Kong identity card.

**ii. Question 2: When someone mentions ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, what comes to your mind?**

The participants of the talks and workshops have both positive and negative impressions of ethnic minorities, but negative impressions formed the majority. There were many stereotypes:

a. *Negative, even prejudiced impressions:* Violence, hotbed of crime, aggressive, gangs, poverty, lower class, low level of culture, black, smelly (Indians), troublemakers, troublesome, noisy, South Asian youths and children are not well-behaved, Osama bin Laden, social pests, *Ah Cha/Chau Cha* ('Smelly Cha'), non-Chinese people from poor countries, people with opposite social attitudes, strong racial/religious consciousness, parents do not pay much attention to their children, thick eyebrows and big eyes.

b. *Sympathetic:* Suffering different levels of discrimination, pitiful, bullied and being treated unfairly, a disadvantaged group, major problems in understanding spoken Chinese and speaking/reading/writing Chinese, most of them are not happy with their lives in Hong Kong, the words *sun fu meng* ('hard life') comes to mind, difficulty in assimilating to life in Hong Kong.

c. *Neutral and positive impressions:* They are human beings too, they are a part of Hong Kong, Indians, Pakistanis or Filipinos come to mind, they are the descendants of other countries but born in Hong Kong, non-Chinese speaking people, they cannot speak Cantonese, their cultures are very different from Hongkongers', they have their own unique cultures but at the same time they understand Hong Kong culture.

d. *Others:* Chungking Mansions, curry, satay, Jordan.

iii. **Question 3: Indicate with a ✓ your acceptance of different races (American, African, Japanese, Pakistani, Filipino, Nepali, Indian, Chinese and European).** (Please refer to Attachment 1: Results Charts and Attachment 2: Questionnaire Sample)

On the whole, the participants of the talks and workshops have the lowest degree of acceptance for South Asians (especially Pakistanis and Nepalese) and Africans on a variety of aspects. A summary of the results is given below:

a. **Neighbourhood Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races (living in the same community, living on the same floor and sitting next to one on public transport)**

Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, scoring 63%, 63% and 64% respectively (meaning that 36–37% of respondents did not indicate their acceptance). Europeans, Americans and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 86%, 89% and 93% respectively.

b. **Educational Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races (attending the same school and attending the same class)**

Pakistanis, Nepalese and Africans are the least accepted, scoring an average of 69%, 69% and 69% respectively (meaning that 31% of the respondents did not indicate their acceptance.) Chinese, Americans and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 88%, 90% and 91%.

Results are similar when the respondents were asked if they accepted having their children attend the same school and class with people of different races. The least accepted are Pakistanis (67%), Nepalese (68%) and Africans (69%), meaning that 31–33% of respondents did not indicate their acceptance. The most accepted are Chinese (87%), Americans (89%) and Japanese (89%).

**c. Work Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races as colleagues**

Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, scoring 69%, 69% and 70% respectively (meaning that 30–31% of respondents did not indicate their acceptance). Chinese, Americans and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 89%, 89% and 91% respectively.

**d. Personal Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races as friends**

Pakistanis and Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, scoring 69%, 69% and 70% respectively (meaning that 30–31% of respondents did not indicate their acceptance). Chinese, Americans and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 89%, 89% and 93% respectively.

Results are similar when the respondents were asked if they accepted their children having friends of difference races. Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, scoring 69%, 69% and 71% respectively. Chinese, Americans and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 87%, 87% and 93% respectively.

**e. Personal Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races (as relatives and marriage partners)**

Africans, Nepalese and Pakistanis are visibly the least accepted, scoring only 19%, 20% and 20% respectively. Results are similar when respondents were asked if they accepted their children having relatives and spouses of different races, with Africans (31%), Nepalese (32%) and Pakistanis (33%) the least accepted. This means that 67–81% of respondents did not indicate their acceptance. Americans, Japanese and Chinese are the most accepted, scoring an average of 68% (72% for their children), 72% (74% for their children) and 79% (80% for their children) respectively.

**f. Average score for degree of acceptance of different races on all aspects (with 13 as the highest score)**

Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, with all three groups having the same score of 7.6. Americans, Chinese and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 11.1, and 11.2 and 11.4 respectively.

**3. Discussion**

Whether in specific areas of life or in general, the results of this survey show that the degree of acceptance of South Asians, Southeast Asians and Africans among Hongkongers is lower than their acceptance of the Chinese, Europeans, Americans and Japanese. This observation matches with the results of the Census and Statistics

Department's 2008 survey on 'racial acceptance',<sup>1</sup> which indicated that most Hongkongers have a low degree of acceptance of South Asians, Southeast Asians and Africans. More research is needed to determine if this is due to skin colour, religion and culture, economic status or any other reasons.

It is notable that the majority of respondents have a subjective, as well as narrow and exclusivist definition of what a 'Hongkonger' is. One-quarter of respondents feel that 'Chinese', 'Cantonese-speaking' and 'born in Hong Kong/born and raised in Hong Kong' are prerequisite qualities of a Hongkonger. In fact, there are over 400,000 persons of non-Chinese descent living in Hong Kong and a substantial number of them do not understand Cantonese, nor were they born and raised in the city. Such exclusivist views indirectly result in ethnic minorities in Hong Kong not being treated with the same fairness like other Hongkongers.

A considerable number of respondents also harbour negative and stereotyped associations towards Hong Kong's ethnic minorities, e.g. 'crime', 'poverty', 'low level of culture', 'smelly (Indians)', 'troublemakers', 'troublesome', 'social pests' and 'Ah Cha/Chau Cha ("Smelly Cha")'. There are also superficial associations like 'Chungking Mansions', 'curry' and 'Osama bin Laden'. These negative labels reinforce people's prejudice and discrimination against certain ethnic groups, even to the point of exclusion and marginalisation. This does not help in creating a racially inclusive and harmonious society.

According to the latest population census, South Asians and Southeast Asians are still the major ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong. The number of Pakistanis had increased 38.4% from 11,111 in 2006 to 18,042 in 2011. There is also an upward trend in the number of Africans in Hong Kong. Although there are no serious racial conflicts or violence in Hong Kong, individual's views of ethnic minorities will affect their professional judgment and actions. This is especially significant given that the majority of our survey respondents were police cadets and teachers, people who hold influential positions in society. Hong Kong Unison believes that the government and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) should implement a targeted community education effort to increase awareness and interaction between mainstream society and the different ethnic groups. Negative labelling should be reduced and there should be more mutual respect and tolerance. Hong Kong will then be a genuinely diverse and harmonious metropolis.

#### 4. Suggestions

Hong Kong Unison believes that discrimination stems from prejudice and ignorance. It is learnt, not congenital. Sustained and systematic civic education can change this. Below are our suggestions:

##### **1. The Home Affairs Bureau and EOC should design a civic education curriculum that highlights the characteristics and circumstances of individual ethnic groups. By**

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<sup>1</sup> The Census and Statistics Department's *Thematic Household Survey Report No. 39*, in which information relating to 'racial acceptance' was collected.

providing targeted education to the mainstream public, prejudice and discrimination against ethnic groups with a low degree of acceptance like the Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese will be reduced.

2. The Hong Kong Police Force should reinforce professional cultural/racial sensitivity training for its frontline constables. Additions should be made in the behaviour and discipline sections in the *Police General Orders* and *Procedures Manual* to ensure that police constables are free from racial discrimination and possess cultural sensitivity when they perform their duty.

3. The EOC can also consider developing and writing a 'Racial Harmony in Schools' teaching kit/curriculum with the Education Bureau (EDB), and implement it as a pilot scheme for three years in all secondary and primary schools in Hong Kong.

4. The EDB should include content on cultural sensitivity and racial harmony in the General Studies curriculum in primary schools and the Liberal Studies curriculum in secondary schools. Schoolchildren will be able to learn to respect the uniqueness of different races and cultures right from primary school level, and grow up with the qualities and worldviews that befit the citizens of the world.

5. The EDB and teacher training bodies should reinforce professional racial sensitivity training for teachers, and provide schools with the support and resources to hold activities that highlight racial harmony.

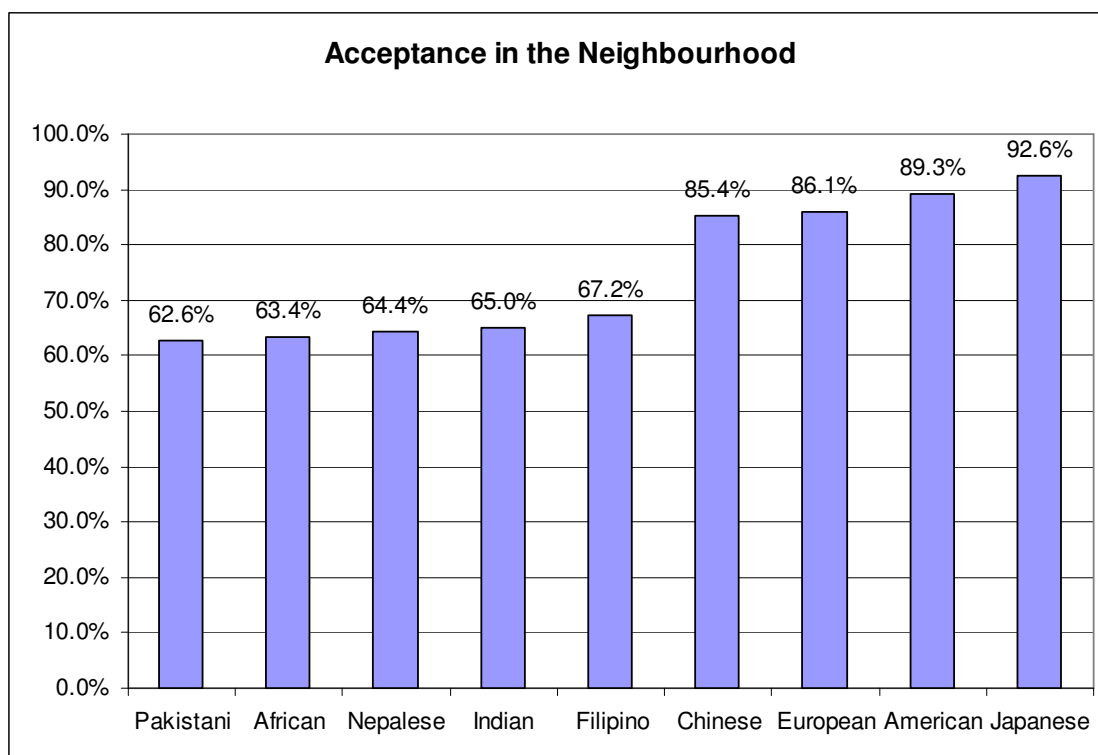
6. The EOC should draw up as quickly as possible the code of practice on education under the Race Discrimination Ordinance.

## Appendix A: Results Charts

### a. Neighbourhood Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races (living in the same community, living on the same floor and sitting next to one on public transport)

Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, scoring 63%, 63% and 64% respectively (meaning that 36–37% of respondents did not indicate their acceptance). Europeans, Americans and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 86%, 89% and 93% respectively.

(See chart below)

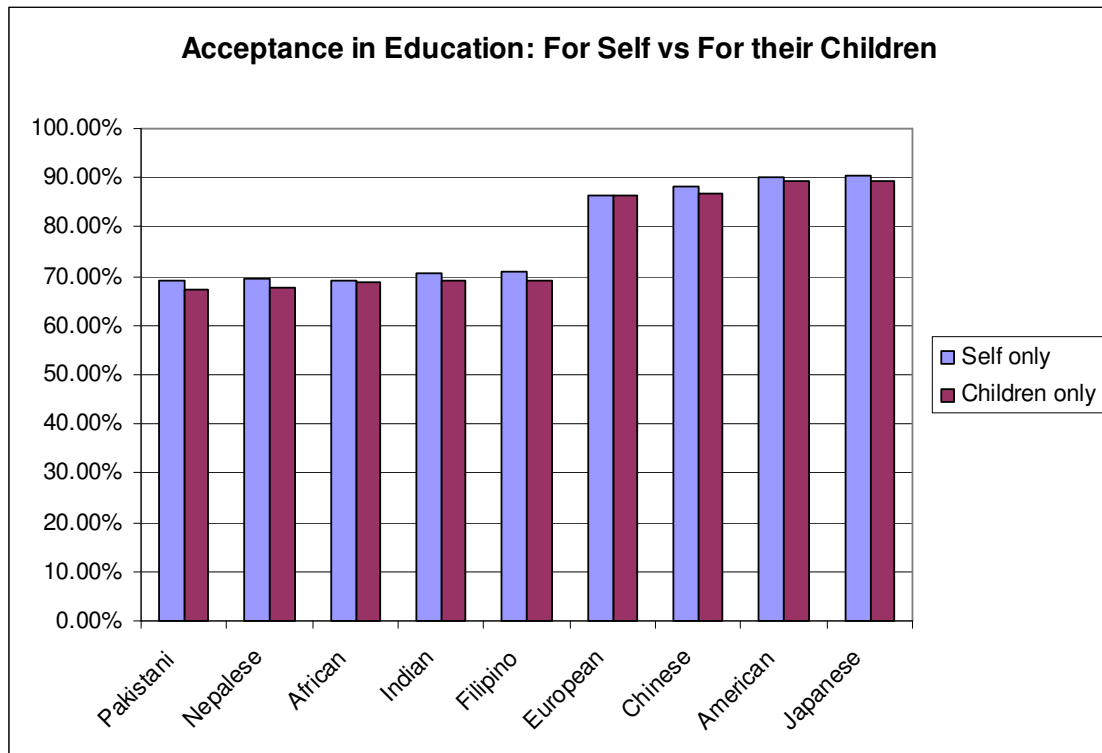


### b. Educational Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races (attending the same school and attending the same class)

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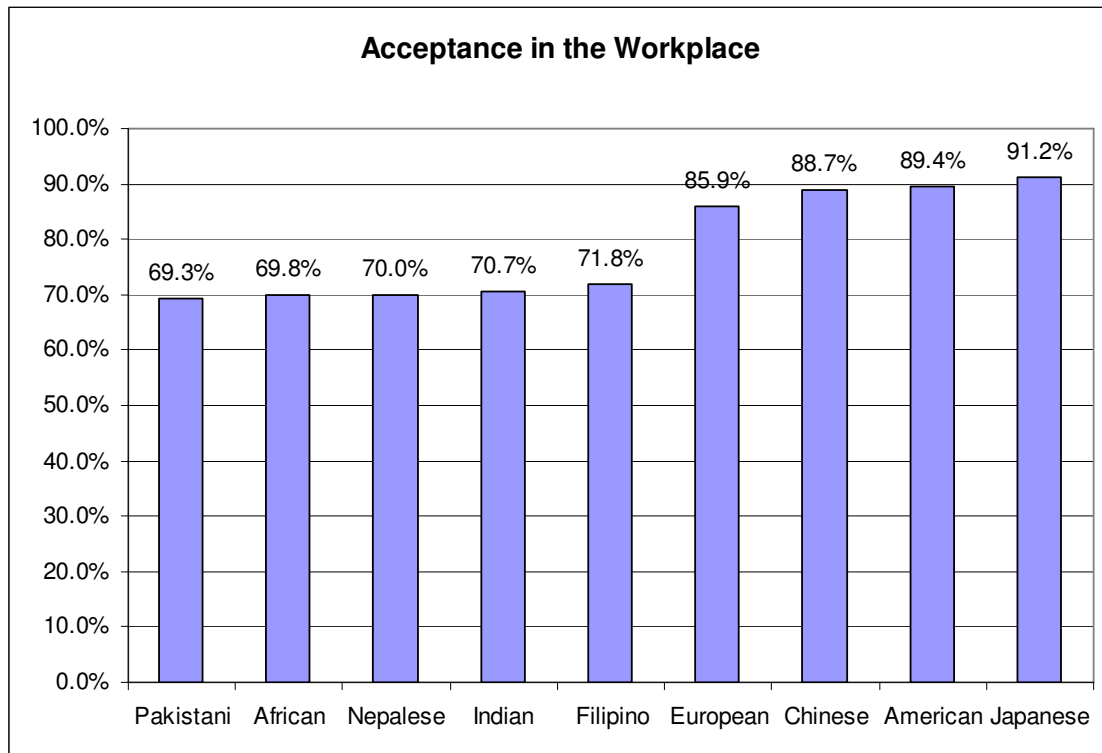
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c. **Work Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races as colleagues**

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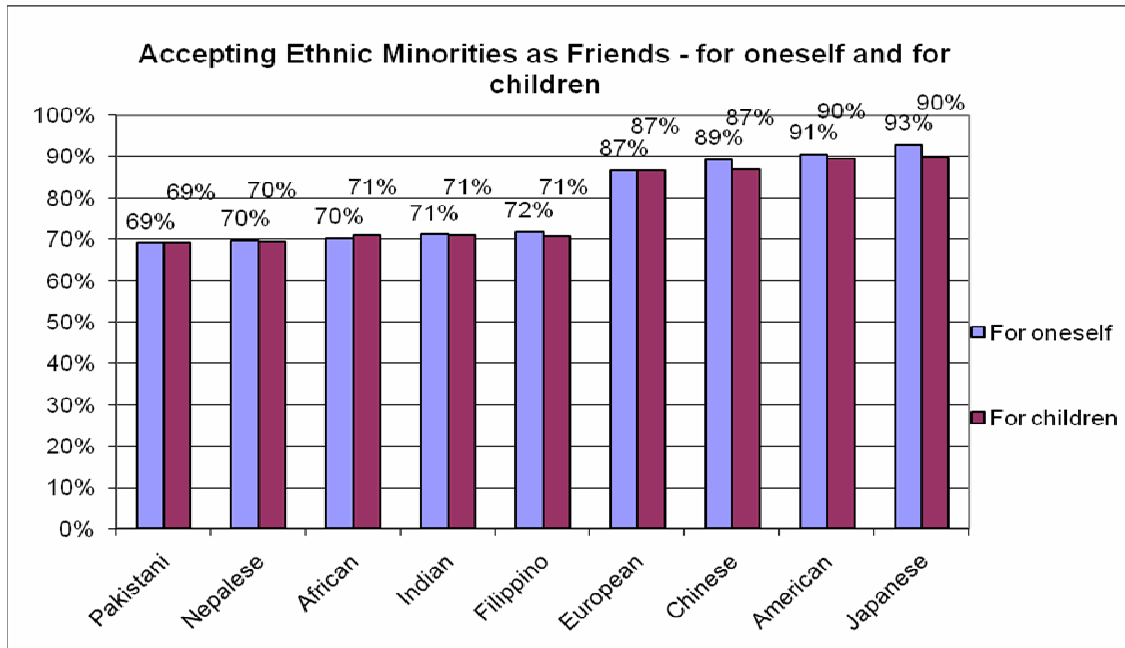
(See chart below)



d. **Personal Level: Average score for degree of acceptance of different races as friends**

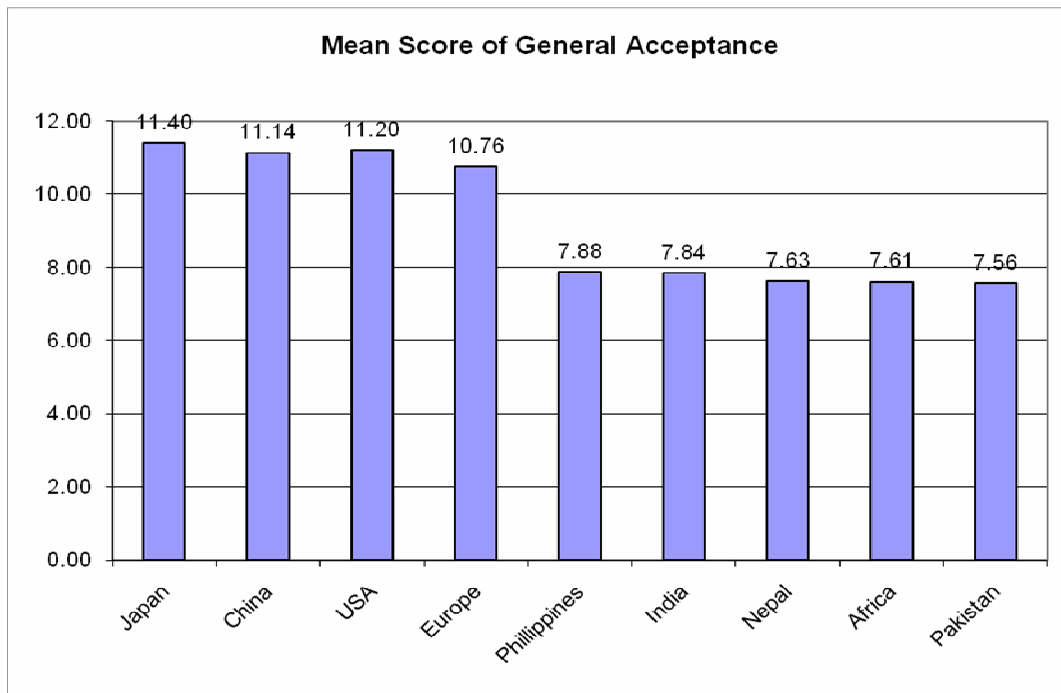
Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, scoring 69%, 69% and 70% respectively (meaning that 30–31% of respondents did not indicate their acceptance). Chinese, Americans and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 89%, 89% and 93% respectively. Results are similar for respondents' acceptance of their children having friends of difference races. Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, scoring 69%, 69% and 71% respectively. Chinese, Americans and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 87%, 87% and 93% respectively. (See chart below)





**e. Average score for degree of acceptance of different races on different levels (with 13 the highest score)**

Pakistanis, Africans and Nepalese are the least accepted, with all three groups having the same score of 7.6. Americans, Chinese and Japanese are the most accepted, scoring 11.1, and 11.2 and 11.4 respectively. (See chart below)



Appendix B: The original questionnaire is in Chinese. Below is a translated version.

By HK Unison on date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: M / F

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: Chinese / Non-Chinese

Part A

1. What is a “Hong Konger?” \_\_\_\_\_
2. When you hear “ethnic minorities in Hong Kong,” what impressions do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Part B

Please mark with a ✓

	American	African	Japanese	Pakistani	Filipino	Nepalese	Indian	Chinese	European
1. I accept living with _____ in the same neighbourhood.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. I accept living with _____ on the same floor.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. I accept studying with _____ in the same school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4. I accept studying with _____ in the same classroom.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. I accept sitting next to _____ on public transportation.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6. I accept being colleagues with _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
7. I accept being friends with _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. I accept _____ marrying my family members.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
9. I accept marrying _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
10. I accept having my children studying with _____ in the same school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
11. I accept having my children studying with _____ in the same classroom.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
12. I accept having my children be friends with _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

13. I accept having my children marry  
\_\_\_\_\_.

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