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Information and communication technologies and migrant intimacies: The case of Punjabi youth in Manila

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Abstract

This article examines how South–South migrants use information and communication technologies (ICTs) in negotiating their encounters with traditional cultural imaginaries of intimacy. It focuses on second-generation Punjabi Indian youth in the Philippine capital of Manila. Through an ethnographic approach, it unpacks how these migrants harness technologies to steer through two particular ideals about the end-goal of intimate relationships: the Punjabi notion of arranged marriage and the Filipino notion of love marriage. I characterise how the young Punjabis use ICTs to enact what I call a 'temporarily resolution' to their migrant double consciousness about intimacy. I also describe how this temporary resolution continues to be entwined with the wider dynamics of multicultural relations in the Philippines. Ultimately, I aim to better understand the role of ICTs in migrant intimacies, especially within the realities of multiculturalism in a postcolonial city in the Global South.

Keywords

Intimacy, ICTs, migrant youth, multiculturalism, postcolonial city

This article looks into how migrants use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to negotiate their encounters with traditional cultural imaginaries of intimacy. It pays particular attention to the often-understudied 36 per cent who embark on a South–South migration and, consequently, find themselves as cultural minorities imbricated in the distinct multicultural dynamics of postcolonial societies (OECD 2011). To empirically ground this discussion, I look at the case of second-generation Punjabi Indian youth living in the Philippine capital of Manila. As part of the 67,000-strong Indian population in the capital, they belong to one of the most visible cultural minority groups in a megacity of 12.8 million (PSA 2012; Salazar 2008). And as I elaborate on later in this paper, what distinguishes their migrant condition is its entwinement with the city's postcolonial brand of racially heirarchising its cultural others (Cabañes 2014).

In harnessing ICTs to navigate through traditional cultural imaginaries of intimacy, Manila's young Punjabis are offered an opportunity to capitalise on the increasingly intensifying globalisation of intimacy. They are opened up to the possibility of having relation-ships that weave in and out of such imaginaries (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2014). This kind of ICT use does not exempt them though from having to attend to very real consequences that arise from both the dissonances and resonances of these

divergent imaginaries. They are still confronted with how traditional cultural imaginaries of intimacy are often master tropes that crystallise the political, economic, social, and moral divides between cultural communities (Padilla et al. 2007).

Broadening the discussion on migrant intimacies

This article expands the geographical remit of the existing literature about ICTs and intimacy in migration, which has been primarily focused on migrants from the Global South moving to the Global North (e.g. Baldassar and Gabaccia 2011; Mallapragada 2014; Valentine 2006). By training its lens on South–South migrants like Manila's young Punjabis, it is able to examine how technology use in intimate partnerships might be embedded in the broader dynamics of multiculturalism beyond the global cities of the Global North (see Ang 2005). The multicultural context within which these young Punjabis find themselves serves as an interesting counterpoint to other global cities because in Manila, migrants tend to be economically superior to but nevertheless still symbolically marginalised by the locals.

On one hand, the young Punjabis belong to the most recent iteration of a historical pattern of economically superior migrants moving into Manila, something that stretches back to the city's colonial past. Then, the city housed the most powerful Spanish and American officials sent to govern the Philippines as well as the wealthy European and Chinese merchants doing business in the colony and in the surrounding regions (Connaughton, Pimlott, and Anderson 1995; Irving 2010; Wilson 2004). In today's postcolonial Manila, the Punjabi Indian community as well as the Sindhi Indian and Korean communities collectively constitute the biggest number of the city's migrant entrepreneurs and students, most of whom are generally well-off compared to ordinary Filipinos (Kahlon 2017; Miralao 2007).

On the other hand, the young Punjabis also experience tremendous symbolic marginalisation. This is because Manila's postcolonial skin-tone based racial hierarchy accords both affinity and reservation to all migrants (Cabañes 2014; for comparison to other Asian cities, see Ong and Lin 2017; Ye 2016). The city's Filipinos have the most affinity and the least reservation for those at the top of the hierarchy (such as the Westerners whom they general define as American), have a middle-ground stance for those in the middle (such as the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans), and have the least affinity and the most reservation for those at the bottom (such as Indians, Middle Easterners, and, when remembered, Africans). So whilst Filipinos would generally have some affinity with Indians on account of their relative wealth and their relatively better looks – epitomised by their much-admired almond eyes and tall noses – these locals would also have a lot of reservation about them (see Lorenzana 2013). The most prevalent expression of this reservation is the derogatory stereotype of the Punjabi Indian as *bumbay*. This is the caricature of a smelly, turban-wearing, heavily bearded loan shark travelling around Manila in his motorcycle, exploiting desperately poor locals who have no choice but to borrow money or buy home appliances through their five-six (or 20 per cent interest) lending system. This is a stereotype that the Sindhi Indians, Manila's other Indian community, are generally able to avoid. Most of them are part of Manila's economic elite and therefore live in the social bubble of the city's gated communities and first world hubs (Salazar 2008).

This article also contributes to the emerging literature on how migrants harness ICTs to mitigate the impact of their double consciousness on their personal relationships. Here I am referring to their awareness that they are caught up in the often-competing social norms and expectations that undergird their different cultures of affiliation (Werbner 2013). Most extant studies on this topic have been on various media platforms allowing migrants a much-needed reprieve – but then only ever momentary and fraught – from the difficulties of maintaining a family across space and time. These works already cover a wide range of topics, from recreating familial co-presence to performing transnational mothering to maintaining marital intimacy (see Madianou 2012; McKay 2016; Nedelcu and Wyss 2016). By attending to how Manila's young Punjabis use ICTs in steering through different cultural imaginaries of intimacy, this paper expands the current literature in two ways.

One is that this paper takes a step back from the phase where migrants, whether married or not, are engaged in the project of 'doing family' (Graham et al. 2012, 796). It instead attends to the preceding phase where migrants explore what intimate relationship might mean. For the young Punjabis, this exploration generally involves using ICTs to manage their experience of diverse kinds of heteronormative relationships, from casual sex to short-term flings to serious long-term commitments. It also entails using the same technologies to deal with the consequences of how different kinds of relationships are perceived by Manila's migrant Punjabi community and by broader Filipino society. As I explain in the next section, both these cultural communities have strongly gendered traditional ideals for the end-goal of intimate relationships: arranged marriage for Punjabis and love marriage for Filipinos.

This paper also brings into the conversation a different take to global intimacy (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2014). It moves away from looking at the use of ICTs within the context of distant intimacies, which emphasises the transnational element of relationships. This paper instead moves towards the equally important experience of cross-cultural intimacies, which attends to the multicultural element of relationships. Through the case of the young Punjabis, it identifies the possibilities and challenges that arise from having intimate partners who embody the tensions created by different cultural imaginaries of intimacy: from their fellow Indians who have a different caste, religion, and/or status to local Filipinos to other 'foreigners'.

To summarise, this article explores how Manila's young Punjabi Indians harness ICTs so that their intimate relationships might steer through the complex interactions between their migrant community's traditional ideal of arranged marriage and broader Filipino society's traditional ideal of love marriage. It considers the possibilities and limitations of how they can use such technologies to elide their migrant double consciousness of these traditional ideals. It also attends to whether and how their technology use might be imbricated in the broader dynamics of multicultural relations in the city.

Conceptualising ICTs and migrant intimacies

In this article, I posit the notion of ICTs as a 'temporary resolution' to capture how migrant youth use technologies in deploying digital barriers that momentarily mitigate their migrant double consciousness of intimate relationships. This notion builds on Shaun Moores' (2004) concept of the 'doubling of place', which describes how the new

media of the early 2000s made it necessary for people to confront and negotiate with the plurality of social conventions found in the new media space and in diverse everyday world spaces. The temporary resolution I talk about partly inverts the premise of the doubling of place. It argues that today's vast array of technologies has allowed young people to enact digital barriers between their bold explorations of intimate relationships and the traditional demands of their other social relationships. That said, this temporary resolution still partly echoes the premise of the doubling of place. It emphasises that the digital barriers that young people enact are at best tenuous, as their experiences of intimate relationships inevitably remain inscribed within broader social dynamics.

For Manila's young Punjabis, using ICTs to enact a temporary resolution is central in their attempts to steer through traditional ideals about intimacy held by their migrant com- munity and Manila's broader Filipino society. As I discuss later on, these young migrants use a combination of social media and dating apps to claim continual belongingness to their cultural community whilst exploring intimacies beyond its boundaries. But first, I first flesh-out the two traditional ideals of intimacy that the young Punjabis face: arranged marriage for the Punjabi migrant community and love marriage for the broader Filipino society. I also explain how the concept of polymedia can allow us to better understand the affordances that ICTs offer young Punjabis in instantiating a temporary resolution to their experience of being caught in-between arranged marriage and love marriage.

Migrant intimacies in multicultural Manila

Broadly speaking, intimacy can be conceptually defined as 'the quality of close connection between people and the process of building this quality' (Jamieson 2011, 1.1). The concrete intimate experiences of Manila's young Punjabis, however, are also inscribed in the broader dynamics of multiculturalism in the Philippine capital as a postcolonial city in the Global South. In particular, their experiences are entwined with two competing desires that characterise their migrant life. One is that they want to belong to the Punjabi community, as it offers protection against the symbolic marginalisation of the broader Filipino society. The other is that they want the freedom to participate in broader Filipino society, which offers the promise of experiences that lay outside the con- fines of their migrant community (cf. Bauman 2001 and his reflections on the competing desires for the security of and the freedom from one's community).

To claim the security of their Punjabi community, the young migrants need to show that they subscribe to the ideal of arranged marriage. This entails believing that intimacy should build towards a heteronormative partnership not with a person of one's own choosing, but with someone approved by one's parents and by the Punjabi community at large. This is often thought to be a relatively conservative ideal, as it is based on longstanding community norms. Traditionally, arranged marriages are only valid if they follow these social tenets:

> (1) [t]he marriage must be within the caste group but outside the gotra or clan, in accordance with the four gotra rule prohibiting marriage within the father's, mother's, father's sister's and mother's sister's gotras (and therefore in their villages)

> (2) that bride-givers are inferior to bride-takers, that the woman must marry 'up', both socially and economically, that the giving of the *daaj* (dowry) makes the marriage honourable and transfers a daughter's share of family wealth and that the bride is expected to live in the groom's household, and not vice versa. (Thandi 2013, 234)

Meanwhile, desiring freedom for the young migrants translates to exploring elements of broader Filipino society's ideal of love marriage. In this ideal, intimacy is expected to lead to two individuals making a free choice to enter into a heteronormative partnership that entails a 'life-long commitment of total conjugal intimacy and self-giving [to each other]' (CBCP 1997, 544). This is often construed as the relatively 'liberated' ideal because of how it seems to map on to the increasingly influential Western ideal of modern love, which also posits the agency of the individual as the central element in choosing whom to pursue close relationships with. As Illouz (2012) explains,

> Choice is one of the most powerful cultural and institutional vectors shaping modern self- hood; it is both a right and a form of competence. If choice is intrinsic to modern individual- ity, how and why people choose – or not – to enter a relationship is crucial to understanding love as an experience of modernity. (Illouz 2012, 19)

The very real differences between these two traditional ideals make it difficult for Manila's young Punjabis to hold off on the choice between the security of their community and the freedom to explore beyond it. In the realm of intimacy, the demands of the former (i.e. to accede to the community as setting the parameters for who is a suitable partner) clearly does not square with the demands of the latter (i.e. to be able to choose whom wants to be close with). What makes suspending this difficult choice even trickier for the young migrants, however, is the complexity that characterises the Punjabi and Filipino communities' practices of intimacy in the everyday. These communities both negotiate with their own traditional ideals in ways that are at times oppositional and at times parallel to each other.

In many migrant Punjabi communities, it is common for the practice of intimacy to be a watered-down version of the ideal of arranged marriage. Punjabi parents do convey early on to their children that in entering intimate relationships, they should still follow the traditional tenets of caste restrictions as well as family and social status compatibility (Kang 2015). These parents put pressure on their female children to follow traditional gender norms and to toe the line because women are symbolically thought to be the carriers of their culture (Sheel 2005). They also put pressure on their male children through material means, saying that they will lose their share of the family's patrilineal inheritance (Lee 2014). But then again, Punjabi parents have increasingly allowed their children a kind of intimacy that cedes some ground to the growing influence of the Western ideal of modern love. They have slowly but surely become open to the idea of close relationships that have a companionate and emotional element to them (Twamley 2012). This flexibility from the Punjabi parents has meant that, in practice, they give their children some leeway in choosing whom they want to marry, as all long as they select someone who still fulfils their community's tenets of acceptability. This flexibility can also extend to some parents consciously turning a blind eye when their children have intimate – and even sexual – relationships

with ‘unacceptable individuals’, as long as these are kept hidden from the community and are superseded by an appropriate relationship when the time for proper marriage finally arrives.

For the broader Filipino society, their supposedly more ‘liberated’ ideal of love marriage is actually circumscribed within the conservative Catholicism that continues to pervade the Philippines. In the privacy of their everyday lives, young Filipinos, most especially those in urban centres like Manila, do have increasingly ‘Westernised’ practices and attitudes towards sexuality. Despite continuing to see themselves as Catholic, a growing number of them have intimate relationships that run the gamut from casual sex with strangers, premarital sex with serious lovers, to even cohabitation with non-married partners. Rather than being dogmatic and valuing ‘right believing’, these youth are often practical and think more about ‘right living’ (Cornelio 2016). In public discourse, however, there is still a strong censure for being liberal about sexuality. The best kinds of intimate relationships are still imagined to lead towards sacramental marriage consecrated by the Church. This kind of marriage, coupled with the centrality of upholding the nuclear family, is thought to be one of Filipino society’s highest cultural values. This cultural imaginary also finds itself expressed in legal terms. The Philippine constitution explicitly argues for the sanctity of the family and enshrines it as the foundational unit of Filipino society. Philippine law also leaves the country as the last one in the world, save for the Vatican, that does not allow for legal divorce (Collantes 2016).

Manila’s young Punjabis experience this tension between the actual practice and the traditional ideals of intimacy in both the Punjabi and Filipino communities as a dynamic of reinforcement. Both these communities tolerate individuals enacting sexual liberalism in the confines of their private lives. But this is a thin tolerance predicated on individuals not undermining the valorisation of marriage as an end-goal of intimacy and the overall heteronormative sexual conservatism that predominates public life. This tolerance is also anchored on traditional and conservative gender norms; both communities give it more freely to males, who are imagined to be more aggressive and active, and less freely to females, who are supposed to be more reticent and reactive (e.g. see Eviota 1992; Purewal 2010). This is slowly but surely changing though in the face of the growing influence of ‘Western’ ideas that challenge the strict delineation of masculinity and femininity (Bulbeck 2009). In order for the young migrants to hold on to both security and freedom in their practice of intimacy then, they would often need to work with the complications of these heavily gendered conditions.

Migrant intimacies and the mediation of ICTs

Since the difficult choice in the intimate lives of Manila’s young Punjabis is shaped by the city’s multicultural dynamics, it is crucial to conceptualise ICTs as also being imbricated in these same dynamics. A useful way to think about these technologies then would be via the notion of polymedia. This characterises ICTs as an ‘an emerging environment of communicative opportunities that functions as an “integrated structure” within which each individual medium is defined in relational terms in the context of all other media’ (Madianou and Miller 2012, 170). In so doing, polymedia moves us beyond a focus on the individual constraints of each medium towards an emphasis on the social and emotional consequences of choosing among them. It should enable us to see the links between how the young migrants use ICTs to momentarily elide the

choice between arranged marriage and love marriage and how they are embedded in the particular multicultural dynamics of Manila (for studies that use a similar approach to looking at ICTs and intimacies in particular cultural contexts, see McDonald 2016; Spyer 2017; Venkatraman 2017).

Based on the notion of polymedia this article looks at the specific ways that Manila's young Punjabis harness the affordances of ICTs – particularly of social media and dating apps – in their relationships within the multicultural dynamics of Manila. One such affordance that I will focus on is scalable sociality (Miller, Costa, Sinanan, and Haynes 2016). This pertains to the wide range of social communication choices that ICTs offer its users. Two scales are involved here: one from the most public to the most private and second from the largest group to the smallest group. At one end of both scales would be public broadcasting, characterised by the most public communication with the largest group. And at the opposite end would be one-to-one conversations, characterised by the most private communication with the smallest group.

ICTs also offer the capacity for facilitating attainment (Miller and Sinanan 2014). The theory of attainment argues that we should not think of technologies in general – and ICTs in particular – as disrupting our existing ways of being. We should instead see them as enabling us to achieve something that might not have been previously achievable, but was nevertheless already latently in us. This concept makes us think of technology not merely as possessing particular characteristics, but also as enabling aspects of ourselves that we already have somewhere in us.

Finally, ICTs invariably place its users at the mercy of 'networked privacy' (Marwick and boyd 2014). This points to how the level of privacy of any activity enacted via these digital technologies is dependent not only on how users manage their information-control function but also on the shared social norms and social ties that users have with the other people whom they are connected via these platforms. No matter how well users filter the privacy settings of particular media platforms – most especially social media – it only takes one person in their social network to break the implicit trust amongst users and take a screen grab of a post, tweet, or message and reveal it to people who are not supposed to see that particular content.

Methodology

I took an ethnographic approach to this research, situating media and communication practices in the broader context of people's everyday lives (Gillespie 2005). To do this, I conducted life story interviews with a total of fifteen second-generation Punjabi youth in Manila. Here it is important to note that this research began as an offshoot of a preceding project looking into the lives of Manila's Indian and Korean migrants, including that of young Punjabis. In the earlier project, I already conducted interviews with 6 young Punjabis out of a total of 17 Indians, all of whom were in their early to mid-twenties at the time of the interviews in 2011. Although intimacy was not central to this earlier project, it was in doing these interviews that I realised how much these young Punjabis were caught in between the traditional ideals of arranged marriage and love marriage. I returned to these research participants in 2014 to conduct follow-up interviews, this time asking more focused questions on how they used ICTs in navigating through these ideals. Through snowball sampling, I conducted semi-

structured life story interviews with another nine young Punjabis, all of whom were also in their early to mid-twenties at the time of the first interviews. Apart from the interviews, I had ongoing informal conversations with the fifteen research participants of this current project, all of which carried on up to 2016.

I also did participant observation across 2014 and 2015. In an attempt to overcome the limitations of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), I attended Punjabi weddings across two key sites. In May 2014, I joined a daylong wedding in the central Sikh temple of Manila. Following up on this, in December 2015, I also joined a weeklong wedding celebrated across the Punjabi cities of Ludhiana and Amritsar in Northern India. During these observations, I sought to characterise the transnational Punjabi community vis-à-vis Manila's broader Filipino society, both of which provide the social context wherein the young Punjabis participating in this research would use ICTs to navigate through different cultural imaginaries of intimacy.

On enacting a temporary resolution

All the young Punjabis who participated in this research said that holding at bay the difficult choice between the traditional ideals of arranged marriage and love marriage was the issue of their young adult lives. They were, after all, in their early to mid-twenties when I first interviewed them and so fell within the age range where Indians are expected to start thinking about settling down (Brown 2006).

At the time that I first talked to them, the young migrants all thought that having an arranged marriage was a fact of their lives that was difficult to get away from. Attending a daylong wedding at Manila's central Sikh temple gave me some insight into why this was the case. I was with Jaspreet (26, male, car salesman) at this event. While we joined in on what he called a 'small and simple' feast for 200 at the temple's dining hall, he explained how special these weddings were for migrants like him. Gesturing towards all the happy faces of the couple's family and friends who travelled from all over the Philippines and from Punjab, Jaspreet said that even in their less extravagant Manila version, 'weddings really make you feel like you belong. You know we don't get enough of that [from broader Filipino society]'. But when I asked him at another occasion whether he himself was ready for an arranged marriage, he said, 'For now, I try not to think about it. But I know I'll have to, sooner or later.'

This hesitation was common to the young migrants. This was understandable in light of their serious exploration of a key underpinning of the traditional ideal of love marriage: individual choice. All of them revealed their involvement in a colourful range of intimate relationships with an equally colourful range of partners. Importantly, these relationships were all heteronormative, with the participants unanimously and sometimes vigorously claiming that anything other than this was unthinkable. There was, for example, Rajit (28, male, entrepreneur) who enjoyed having casual sex with Filipinas whom he matched with on Tinder; Manvir (29, male, advertising strategist) who had his heart broken at the end of a serious two-year relationship with his Christian Indian girlfriend; and Gurpreet (24, female, university student) who was already thinking about marriage with her Nigerian boyfriend from university. It is no surprise then that the young migrants sought to elide thinking about what the future held for them. They instead wanted, at least for the time being, to reap the benefits of

showing their belief of arranged marriage whilst also exploring individual choice as a key underpinning of love marriage.

Some of the young migrants talked about their situation breezily, choosing to momentarily dismiss the seriousness of the choice that they had to eventually make. Ishwinder (26, male, IT specialist) for instance, had been told by his parents not to dare think about anything than having an arranged marriage. They warned that not only would he be disowned, but that, as is often the case, that he would lose his right to inherit his share of the family's large tracts of farmland back in Punjab. Because of this, Ishwinder told me, 'It's going to be very hard for me to escape having an arranged marriage.' Nevertheless, he followed this up with a nonchalant, 'But for now, I want to enjoy my life. I don't want to think about getting married for as long as I can.'

Some of the other young migrants expressed greater exasperation with their situation. Manvir (29, male, advertising strategist), for one, was unhappy with how his parents and their friends continually interrogated him about when he was going to marry. They did not know, of course, that he was still nursing a bruised heart because his Christian Indian girlfriend could not accept that he would never be able to introduce her to his parents. This is why Manvir said with a sigh, 'It's such a hassle to be [a second generation migrant] Indian sometimes. I don't think I'll ever have an uncomplicated relationship ... My children will be lucky because I'll know better than to force our traditions down their throats.'

It was within this context that the migrants used ICTs to enact a temporary resolution from having to think about the end-goals of arranged marriage and love marriage and, instead, to try and make the most out of the experience of having intimate relationships that wove in and out of these ideals. For one, the young migrants echoed the concept of scalable sociality, as they created digital barriers by bifurcating their performances on social media (see Miller 2016). To show their belief in arranged marriage, they turned to the more public-facing elements of social media. Through broadcast communication, they sought to show the broader public that they were 'good sons' or 'good daughters' who respected the wishes of their parents and the norms of their community at large. Meanwhile, they explored the element of personal choice in love marriage through the more private-facing elements of social media. The ability to conduct one-to-one mediated conversations facilitated their immersion in the experience of building close relationships with people who were beyond the dictates of the Punjabi community's traditional tenets.

Entwined with the above, and affirming the theory of attainment (Miller and Sinanan 2014), the young migrants also used the affordances of ICTs to enact a cosmopolitan experience of intimacy. They were able to materialise the possibilities offered by their migrant double consciousness, managing to have intimate relationships in ways that drew on the complex juxtaposition of the traditional cultural imaginaries of intimacy of the Punjabi and the Filipino communities. They kept alive their claim to arranged marriage through their astute use of the more public-facing elements of social media. And with this as a digital barrier from prying eyes, they also kept active their explorations of love marriage in general and modern love in particular through their careful use of the more private-facing elements of social media.

Gurdit (27, male, call centre agent) is an interesting case in point to show how scalable sociality and attainment work in the young Punjabis' use of ICTs. Like all of the young male migrants I interviewed, he was fiercely proud of his Indian heritage. Amongst all of them though, Gurdit was the one who can be perfectly described as a 'man's man'; he dressed in Manila hip-hop wear, walked with a street swagger, and often spoke in Taglish (a mix of Tagalog and English) peppered with crisply delivered Tagalog cuss words. On Facebook, he had a lot of posts about his pride in his Indian-ness and his belonging to his Punjabi community. Many of these posts mirrored his performance of the hypermasculine temperament of the Punjabi male. Examples of this included posting a meme riffing on the English mantra of 'Keep Calm and Carry On' and saying 'Hell I'm Punjabi and We Don't Keep Calm' as well as the nationalistic chant '*Hindustan zindabad*!!! (Long Live India!!!)'. Strikingly though, the public version of his Facebook wall– the one that the Punjabi community could see – was completely devoid of any posts that hinted at his many intimate affairs with Filipinas. Through Gurdit's disturbingly hypermasculine performances and equally disturbing erasure of his connections with women, his public communication online meant to maintain the viability of his arranged marriage and, consequently, his connection to his migrant community.

In our one-to-one conversations, Gurdit would speak more freely about his many Filipina partners. It was clear that for these affairs, the private-facing elements of ICTs were more useful. One of Gurdit's favourite stories to tell was his experiment with a relatively obscure social media app called Tango. Apart from the usual messaging features, what made this app interesting for him was its 'find friends nearby' function, which enabled him to locate other Tango users in the vicinity. He explained that by randomly chatting with several women, he was able to hook up with a single mother, whom he described as 'a kind of girl I've been wanting to try'. Gurdit said that he thoroughly enjoyed his initial trysts with her. He proudly regaled me with their sexual encounters in the most dangerous and exciting of places, the highlight of which was at a public car park. The novelty wore out after a month, however, so Gurdit subsequently blocked the woman from his Tango account and moved on to some other new affair. Commenting on his strategic use of apps like Tango and his equally strategic move of keeping the women he met away from his more public social media accounts, he said that he did very well to maintain his image with the broader Indian community: 'They know I'm a bad boy, but still think that I'm really a good boy'. With his one-to-one mediated conversations furtively hiding behind his public communication, he could then carry on with his explorations that extracted from love marriage the element of free choice.

Quite interesting as well was the rather different experience the young female migrants had in harnessing the scalable sociality of ICTs. Their use of these technologies broadly paralleled the kind of bifurcation done by their male counterparts. However, how they engaged with the private-facing elements of ICTs brought out a strikingly gendered element at play (see Nguyen, Chib, and Mahalingam 2017). Like many of the other females, Suki (28, female, journalist) said that she followed the everyday rules of communication in her mediated conversations. This was not because she was afraid of being found out, but because she thought doing otherwise would have made her less desirable to potential male partners. As Suki explained, being a 'proper female' in her online chats was crucial 'so that guys [saw her] as someone to pursue, not some easy girl they can just disrespect'. Such a perspective is clearly rooted in

gendered prescriptions for what an ideal Punjabi woman should be: honourable, modest, and reticent (Vir 2006). These prescriptions, of course, parallel the equally gendered Filipino trope of the ideal woman as Maria Clara: shy, demure, and self-effacing (Sanchez 2015).

One thing that Suki did was to let the males take the lead in initiating conversations. She said, 'I don't want to be seen as overeager. I mean, yes I'm available, but I don't want to be that available.' Many of the young male migrants agreed with Suki on this. In my conversations with them, I often heard the opinion that when a female initiated an online conversation, then that usually signalled that she was sexually aggressive. And with some logical leap, they also thought that this signalled that the female would be up for anything. Quite importantly, the male migrants said that they would frown on this aggressiveness if it came from Punjabi women, but not necessarily if it came from Filipinas. The latter were apparently more 'Westernised' and also more eager for Punjabi males like them, what with them having greater wealth and better looks than Filipinos.

Suki also made sure that she would only be available in 'respectable' social media platforms. In both Manila's Punjabi and Filipino circles, this meant having accounts only with 'wholesome' apps like Facebook and Instagram. A female on an explicitly dating-oriented app like Tinder could be easily and unjustly be judged as highly sexual and promiscuous. When I asked Suki whether she had Tinder on her mobile phone, she replied, 'Oh no! No way! ... Guys on Tinder expect a certain kind of girl. I'm not that girl.' This stood in contrast to the experience of young male Punjabis, who said that they could use any social media platform they wanted without giving a thought to how other people online viewed their desire for sex. This also seemed to be different from the young male Punjabis' experiences with some Filipinas, whom the males claimed to become bolder in exploring their sexuality if it were with 'foreigners' like them instead of with their more judgmental Filipino counterparts.

On the breakdown of a temporary resolution

The young Punjabis whom I talked to all saw themselves as veritable experts on using ICTs to momentarily resolve the difficult choice between the ideal end-goals of arranged marriage and love marriage. Because they saw their parents and their community elders as digital dinosaurs, they were confident in their ability to create digital barriers that would allow them to practice intimacy in their own terms. In a contradictory movement, however, these young migrants also acknowledged that the resolutions that ICTs provided were premised on a number of tenuous broader social dynamics.

The young migrants were certainly aware that the digital barriers that shielded their private-facing online activities were heavily reliant on the dynamics of networked privacy (Marwick and boyd 2014). To illustrate, Ishwinder (29, male, IT specialist) often posted intimate photos of him and his long-term Filipina girlfriend on his Facebook wall: them affectionately holding hands, hugging, and snuggling. He would then ensure that his privacy filter was set to 'friends except', making his posts visible to most of his Facebook network but not to specific members of their Punjabi community. Although he tried to be brazen about it, he also admitted that in ensuring the privacy

of these posts, he had to take for granted that his close cousins and his other friends would not tell on him to the Punjabi community elders.

Many of the young migrants were also worried about what they referred to as the 'auntie network'. This pertained to the gossip grapevine connecting their parents to the other elders in their Punjabi community. And it was something that, as Jaswinder (28, female, entrepreneur) put it, '[spread] news faster than whatever social media you can think of'. The issue here was that in exploring romantic relationships, the young Punjabis necessarily had to go beyond communicating with their partners via ICTs and, as such, beyond the protection of any digital barrier. In the case of Jaswinder, she had occasional dates with Filipinos. On these occasions, she would be wary about older relatives or community elders catching her going out with these men and telling on her to her parents. Despite the affordances of ICTs in the young migrants' mediated communication then, these technologies could do nothing for them if they ever did encounter a member of the 'auntie network' in a face-to-face setting.

Above all, however, the temporary resolution that ICTs afforded the young migrants proved to be time-bound. Once they hit their late twenties, the pressure they got from their parents and from their Punjabi community to enter into an arranged marriage intensified exponentially. Consequently, holding off on the difficult choice between this and love marriage became an increasingly difficult proposition.

Towards the conclusion of my fieldwork in 2016, 10 of the 15 young Punjabi participants could not but already confront the choice between arranged marriage and love marriage. In the end, an overwhelmingly 6 of these males and 3 of these females had an arranged marriage. It appeared that the need for the security of their community trumped the need for the freedom to establish a life beyond its confines. This was especially the case with the males, who stood to lose a lot – both materially and symbolically – if they chose to reverse their priorities. This decision was especially painful for those who were in serious and committed relationships. Illustrative of this is Rajvir (26, male, car salesman). Although he had yet to make the choice when my fieldwork concluded, he was already at the throes of beginning this process.

During my fieldwork in Ludhiana and Amritsar in Northern India, I observed how Rajvir, himself on a visit at the time, rediscovered how wealthy and well respected his family was. The trip reminded him of what he would give up if he chose to challenge the ideal of arranged marriage. In Manila, his family rented a small and non-descript terraced apartment in an ordinary neighbourhood. In Ludhiana, they owned a large and modern mansion in a gated community reminiscent of American suburbia. Beyond this, amongst their Filipino neighbours in Manila, Rajvir's family was a marginal presence. In Manila's Punjabi community and in Punjab itself, their family was a leading clan admired by many. During Rajvir's stay in Ludhiana, many neighbours actually visited for a courtesy call, especially since his family had not gone back to Punjab for almost five years.

But then again, Rajvir also had a long-time Filipina girlfriend. They had already been a couple for three years and their lives had grown increasingly entwined. In the last year and a half of their relationship, they had, in fact, started living together; they were deeply loyal to each other and shared the good (such as their many travels abroad), the bad (such as the utility bills), and, of course, the bed. True to Rajvir's longstanding

loyalty to his girlfriend, he was constantly in communication with her throughout his whole stay in Northern India. When he was in the presence of his Punjabi elders, he would covertly communicate with her through iMessage or Facebook Messenger. When only Rajvir's cousins and his friends were around, he would then feel free to do a furtive Skype or Viber video chat with her.

Despite Rajvir's loyalty to his girlfriend, remembering his family's status within the transnational Punjabi community seemed to have pushed him to actually consider having an arranged marriage. A small but significant part of this consideration was fear that he would lose his inheritance. A bigger part of it was fear that he would bring shame to his family. The biggest part of it, however, was Rajvir's need for a community wherein he could truly belong. This was, of course, a shared sentiment amongst the young migrants and was something that Jaspreet (26, male, car salesman) previously crystallised by explaining the 'special feeling' he had about the daylong Punjabi wedding we attended in Manila.

Indeed, one of the reasons why Rajvir was in Punjab was to attend the lavish weeklong wedding of his male cousin. Costing a total of approximately GBP 205,000.00, this wedding involved daily parties, each of which hosted at least a hundred guests. It culminated in a Bollywood-themed event at a so-called 'wedding palace' the size of a small park, featuring more than 50 dishes that represented the different regions of India, served by an army of wait staff pushing around trolleys of food and drinks, and attended by over a thousand well-wishers. Like Rajvir, this cousin of his grew up in Manila and only rarely visited India. But as Rajvir observed, 'If I marry Indian, then [the community would] also celebrate me like Karan [the cousin]. I'd belong. If you grew up as an outsider, you'd know how great that feeling would be.' Still, he said that it would be heartrending to leave his girlfriend. As he put it, 'I'm not even sure if I'd be strong enough to really go through with it. I can't imagine breaking [my girlfriend's] heart.'

Here I would also like to talk about Nam (26, female, entrepreneur), the outlier amongst the young Punjabis who had married. Unlike the others, she chose her Filipino boyfriend of four years. A key reason was that in contrast to the likes of Rajvir, Nam's family was not very wealthy. Neither were they at the centre of Manila's Punjabi community. And Nam herself, being female, did not stand to inherit anything from her parents. Consequently, prioritising her relationship with a partner whom she loved did not seem like a completely bad choice. There was also the fact that being with her partner presented her with brighter future opportunities. Nam's partner was, after all, a middle class professional who was lined up to take a prestigious job in the Southern California in the U.S.A. They could start a brand new life there.

For Nam, ICTs provided her a way to visually materialise this choice that she made to break with the Punjabi community. Despite the comparatively stronger community imperative for Punjabi women to be the bearers of their cultural tradition, Facebook, in particular, allowed her to manifest her attainment of something that she had long desired (see Miller and Sinanan 2014). Talking about the how she publicly posted her wedding photographs, Nam said emphatically, 'This is really my way of telling [the Punjabi community], "F*ck you! Yeah, f*ck you and no thanks for all crap you've given my family!"' But then again, Nam was only able to do this when she had become completely cut off from the Punjabi community and largely estranged from her family.

She had moved to her new marital home, in a faraway neighbourhood in San Diego that had few Punjabis and a sizeable Filipino-American community.

Conclusion

This article looked into how migrants use ICTs to negotiate their encounters with traditional cultural imaginaries of intimacy. I focused specifically on second-generation Punjabi Indian youth from Manila and their use of technologies to navigate the complex interactions between their migrant community's ideal of arranged marriage and broader mainstream Filipino society's ideal of love marriage. Positing the notion of ICTs as a temporary resolution, I conceptualised how the young Punjabis might use a combination of social media and dating apps to enact digital barriers that mitigated their migrant double consciousness of intimacies.

One important insight from this research is that whilst ICTs did allow Manila's young Punjabis to enact digital barriers between their bold explorations of intimacy and the traditional expectations of others in society, these barriers tended to be tenuous. The ways in which these young migrants harnessed technologies were still heavily imbricated in the complicated interplay between Punjabi and Filipino intimacies. In bifurcating their social media activities, for instance, they did not only hold on to the heteronormative ideals of arranged marriage and love marriage. They also established a sexually conservative public image as a cover for their more sexually liberal private practice of intimacy. This is, of course, something that paralleled the reinforcing dynamic of how Punjabis and Filipinos dealt with the tension between their traditional ideals and their actual practices of intimacy, which was all about touting sexual conservatism in public and tolerating sexual liberalism in private.

Meanwhile, the way in which the young migrants carried out their one-to-one mediated conversations also paralleled the similarities and differences of the Punjabi and Filipino communities' gendered expectations. For one, all of them held the deeply problematic claim that it was impossible to think beyond heteronormative arrangements. In line with this, the Punjabi males acted hypermasculine, aggressive, and active, whilst Punjabi females acted traditional, reticent, and reactive. At the same time, the young Punjabis' conversational practices also carried perniciously negative judgments of Filipinos. Punjabi males, in particular, expected Punjabi women to be more feminine than their more go-getter Filipina counterparts. These Punjabi males then went on to explain the aggressiveness of Filipina women by saying that males like them were more attractive than the less well-off and less handsome Filipinos. Punjabi females also thought that they were following the traditional ideals of being a woman better than Filipinas. This made the Punjabi women's intimate practices much more conservative and, unfortunately, more circumscribed than their male counterparts.

The other important insight from this research pertains to the breakdown of the digital barriers enacted by Manila's young Punjabis. Here, it was the inexorable passage of time that drew the young migrants closer to their late twenties, exponentially increased the social pressure to get into an arranged marriage, and, consequently, negated any affordances that ICTs offered in holding off on this decision. The young migrants each had to do their own calculus of what they valued more: the security offered by their migrant community or the freedom to live their lives beyond this.

Many of the young Punjabis made the painful decision to give up on the possibility of being with someone they had chosen to love and to instead marry someone on the basis of their appropriate caste, religion, and status. They gave up some of their freedom for the promise of some more security. And the reason for this goes back to the city's distinct multicultural dynamics, wherein Indians are simultaneously economically superior to but symbolically marginalised by Filipinos. For young migrants to marry a Filipino would be to jump into the unknown. Might their partner be a 'gold-digger'? Might broader Filipino society come to accept them? These questions could only be quelled if a young migrant loved a partner deeply enough to take the risk, and also perhaps if being with the partner presented opportunities that could be greater than staying with the Punjabi community.

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