HOLDING ON TO KINSHIP IN A GLOBAL NEOLIBERAL WORLD; PERSONHOOD, PLACE, AND AFFECT IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN LAHORE, PAKISTAN

By

Sara Tahir

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ABSTRACT

Scholars agree that improvements in communication and transportation technologies, and the integration of national economies into a global market in new ways, characterize the distinctive era of globalization. The changing scale, volume, and velocity of global connections have transformed even the minutiae of everyday local life, so that the global and local are embedded in the ways people live out their daily lives and make decisions pertaining to it. In trying to map out how the global mobility of people in urban Pakistan, in both physical and virtual ways, affects their sense of place and personhood, this dissertation conducts an ethnographic investigation of the transnational social relations and narratives of people living in Lahore. Speaking with varying demographics in Lahore, it explores the aspirations and motivations of people in urban Pakistan that shape their desire to go abroad or stay in Pakistan, and the effects on people in Pakistan of the migration of relatives abroad. By delineating these aspirations, motivations, and effects, this dissertation brings to light the friction between global and local ways of being and how that tension is experienced differentially in line with factors such as gender, class, and generation.

This dissertation studies transnational social relations, material exchange, and digital communication among people in Lahore and their relatives abroad to understand how these practices enable them to maintain a sense of place and personhood, even as they simultaneously also shape a politics of place and belonging, in an imperial global neoliberal order. It takes inspiration from anthropological, sociological, philosophical, and cultural studies theoretical frameworks of place, personhood, and affect, and builds upon scholarship in transnational migration, globalization, and kinship studies. It illustrates the operation of kinship

and affect as people in Pakistan, and some of their diasporic counterparts, try to hold onto a sense of place and personhood in a globalizing world.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IMF	International Monetary Fund
WTO	World Trade Organization
ICT	Information and communications technology
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
BSS	Beaconhouse School System
CIS	Colombo International School
LUMS	Lahore University of Management Sciences
UAE	United Arab Emirates
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
MSU	Michigan State University
ITU	Information Technology University
FCU	Forman Christian University
GOP	Government of Pakistan
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ISM	International Student Mobility
IHE	International Higher Education
UK	United Kingdom
DHA	Defence Housing Authority
TCS	The City School
LDF	LUMS Discussion Forum

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
KFC	Kentucky Fried Chicken
QAU	Quaid-e-Azam University
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
BBDO	Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
VPN	Virtual Private Network
K-pop	Korean popular music
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
DKNY	Donna Karan New York
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease
O-Level	General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level
A-Level	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
FAST/NUCES	Foundation for Advancement of Science and Technology/National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Naveen: "Let's talk about Pakistan for a minute. Pakistan as a brand. How would you build that?"

Atiya (looking tired and overworked but speaking assertively): "Oh the resilient people, people who keep showing up, no matter what, and I'm not talking about political acumen or anything like that. People. Who. Just. Show. Up. Imagine the problems the common man or woman has to go through-

[Naveen nods in agreement with a serious expression, like a therapist listening to a patient with absolute attention]

- Infrastructure, poverty, inflation. Umm cost of living isn't- its not even a "First World term." She gives a knowing smile as she continues, "for us, it is very very real. Still, they get up and they smile, and they show up every day."

Naveen (with an expression of awe and wonder, shakes her head in disbelief): "I know, how do they do it?"

Atiya: "Where do you get that? I mean, you know, the First World countries, they take more antidepressants, or maybe we can't afford them, otherwise we would've been taking them (laughs cynically). But the point is that there are these people, our people (puts hand on chest), the Pakistani people- are…they will invite you in their home and they will make you sit down and they will not let you leave until you eat or drink something from there. You have to have that chai, you have to have that food with them-

[Naveen nods emphatically in agreement]

-no matter if they don't have enough to share, they will not close the door on you, and that's what – you know there was another book, I think, which is called Pakistan; A Hard Country, I think I have mentioned it before, it says the reason that Pakistan continues to exist is kinship, that we have this sense of bonding with each other that, okay, fine I'll help you (speaking in a tone of resignation masked as endurance)." (Zaidi 2024)

VCast, the channel, page, and/or account (depending on whether you view it on YouTube, Facebook, or Instagram) on which this video clip was posted describes itself as 'a modern media company giving visibility to Pakistan's business and thought leaders'. The company has 22.7 thousand subscribers on YouTube, 30.1 thousand followers on Instagram, and 236 thousand followers on Facebook. The video clip transcribed above has received the most engagement on Instagram with 4831 likes, 142 comments, and 2455 shares. The video clip

involves two protagonists, Naveen Naqvi and Atiya Zaidi. Naveen Naqvi is a female journalist who once worked for the US-based National Broadcasting Company in Islamabad as well as for Dawn News, Pakistan's first English-language news channel. Atiya Zaidi is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and creative director for the Barton, Durstine & Osborn (BBDO) branch in Pakistan. BBDO Worldwide is a global marketing agency that has garnered global acclaim and won international awards. The clip begins with Naveen Naqvi posing a question for Atiya Zaidi, i.e. How would you build Pakistan as a brand?

Having thus framed a country in business terms as a product, service, or company whose identity as a brand needed to be defined, Naveen looks at Atiya earnestly as the latter responds with serious assertiveness. Atiya defines Pakistan in terms of the resilient Pakistani people, taking her inspiration from the book, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, making me recall that I had often heard this book discussed in literary circles in Lahore when I visited Pakistan in 2018. Atiya describes the everyday troubles of the common man (conscientiously adding the word woman, as well), such as poverty, inflation, and lack of infrastructure, and lauds their capacity to show up despite these obstacles in everyday life. Unlike the first world, she states as she passes a knowing smile to Naveen as if acknowledging a public secret, the cost of living was a very real phenomenon for people in Pakistan (pointing to the difference in the consequential effects of fluctuations in the Pakistani rupee as compared to the US dollar). As Naveen shakes her head in awe and wonderment as to how the Pakistani people have the capacity to show up despite these constraints, Atiya places her hand on her chest in a gesture of incorporating the Pakistani people into herself and Naveen, thereby linking both their selves to the Pakistani public as 'our

people'. Atiya employs the term kinship to refer to the relational sociality that she recognizes as the foundation of the brand identity of Pakistan and its people.

Scrolling through the comments underneath the post on Instagram, I saw that while some people praised Atiya for her elevation of Pakistan and the Pakistani people, others were more skeptical of her narrative. Some comments figuratively rolled their eyes at the naïve celebration of resilience, and giving hardships faced by people in Pakistan a positive spin, almost like a cruel optimism of sorts. Other comments attacked Atiya and Naveen as 'liberal aunties' particularly distant from the realities of contemporary Pakistan. Still others lambasted the Pakistani people and Pakistan as a country, pointing out the negative characteristics of both place and people, constituting an affect that worked in opposition to the one produced in the video clip.

This video clip posted by VCast on 27th November 2024 draws our attention to the fraught relation between place, personhood, kinship, and affect, as constituted in a globalizing South Asia. This dissertation draws upon ethnographic methods to understand how people make meaning of place in a world where mobility is increasingly important to how we live our everyday lives. It explores the transformation of how people understand a world in transition, the place of Pakistan in that world, and their own positionality in relation to both. tries to understand how people's understanding of the world has transformed to thinking about it as a global place and how that is juxtaposed to newer understandings of Pakistan as place. It looks at how people maintain their sense of place even when they are not physically on the move but the coordinates that make up their sense of place seem to be rapidly shifting. How people make sense of place is closely tied to their personhood. This dissertation excavates the parameters of

personhood in a globalizing Pakistan that shape the aspirations and motivations of people functioning simultaneously as part of a local society and a global economy. It asks what are the culturally salient aspects of being a person in Pakistan? Similarly, what are the aspects of global personhood that people in Pakistan desire to attain? How do these parameters converge and where do they come into friction?

In centering how people make sense of place, this study questions the privileging of the nation-state as the frame for both scholarly – and popular – discussions of place, identity, and citizenship. In moving away from the framing of places as territorially bound nation-states, it brackets the focus on citizenship as the foundation of modern personhood and instead centers everyday cultural practices and ways of being. It asks how does the operation of kinship as a practice in everyday life enable people in Pakistan to make meaning of place and navigate personhood in more complicated ways, beyond the ossification imposed by the discursive regimes of kinship at the level of the nation-state and the global neoliberal economy?

This dissertation centers transnational social relations and asks how did the migration of relatives abroad affect people in Pakistan? How did global migration strain existing and produce new social relations? How did new forms of communication and material exchange, result from and contribute to such relations? In investigating these questions, this dissertation tries to understand how globalization is working in Pakistan via migration, commodities, and digital technologies. It asks how changing material realities have been incorporated into, and influenced, the practice of kinship in everyday life?

Lastly, in trying to understand globalization in Pakistan, this dissertation tries to understand the role of affect at both global and local levels. It looks at how affect works in the

global neoliberal economy to produce particular kinds of subjects. It also looks at what role affect plays in kinship as a cultural practice. It tries to map out what the generation and circulation of affect at multiple levels means for how people negotiate the global and the local.

From the global to the local and back again; building the conceptual landscape for an anthropology of global migration and transnational South Asia

Globalization, transnational migration, and US Empire

The popularization of the term globalization is credited to the German American economist, Theodore Levitt, in his 1983 article in the Harvard Business Review on '*The Globalization of Markets*' (Steger 2017). Levitt's article calling for the multinational corporation to orient itself as a global corporation by changing its focus on cultural difference to a focus on global standardization foreshadowed the changing conditions of the world that would shape the dynamics of late capitalism. The call for a change in the orientation of markets built on the idea that the economic realm was separate from the cultural and religious realm, and that despite cultural differences, people everywhere desired modernity in the form of access to the same products (Levitt 1983; Steger 2017). The period of late capitalism, therefore, that was signaled by Levitt's article, is associated with the resurgence of classical liberal ideas about how economy and society should work.

However, the term neoliberalism that is given to the ideology associated with late capitalism, encompasses a set of ideas that speak to a very different context than the context within which the free market principles of classical liberalism were born (Steger 2017). The geopolitical context for neoliberal ideas can be traced to the Washington Consensus, a set of economic policy recommendations made by Washington-based institutions such as the

International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Known as structural adjustment, these policy programs sought to align national economies, and global trade with free market principles that, according to supporters, would produce for optimal functioning of a global economy. The consolidation of the global economy, was buttressed with the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution in the 1990s which enabled the integration and financialization of global markets. In his short introduction to globalization, the sociologist Manfred Steger points to the ICT revolution and the deregulation of national economies as the signifying features of the beginning of a distinct era in the 1990s (Steger 2017).

Thus, scholars are, by and large, in agreement that globalization represents a step change in the state of the world today (Appadurai 1990; Castles 2010). Interactions in the past were restricted by time, distance, and the limitations of technology but advancements in transportation and communication technologies redefined the spatial and temporal coordinates of the world, a world that at the same time became more intensely and extensively connected. Globalization theorists claim that the change in the volume, velocity, and scale of such connections is what makes this era unique (Appadurai 1990; Castells 2010; Steger 2017). They outline the qualitatively different character of social and cultural life in the era of globalization where all the characteristic features of local life are differentially distributed across space, making the local a less privileged site of cultural process (Appadurai 1990; Hannerz 2001). For instance, Arjun Appadurai points out how it is not just mobile groups and persons such as tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, etc. who increasingly constitute and thereby effect the world, because even people who do not move have to deal with the realities

of having to move, or the fantasies of wanting to move. In this deterritorialized world of hyper flux, imagination becomes a dominant social practice that enables the formation of group identities and subjectivities. While Appadurai coins the word 'ethnoscapes' to refer to the global mobility of people, he delineates four other scapes that characterize globalization and illustrate the global flows of media, technology, capital, and ideas; 'mediascapes', 'technoscapes', 'financescapes', and 'ideoscapes' (Appadurai 1990;1991).

I take seriously Appadurai's argument about the centrality of mobility to the everyday lives of migrant populations as well as people who remain in their countries of origin. However, I find that Appadurai's theoretical framework does not take into account the power dynamics that structure global flows and connections and consequently set the discursive parameters for social imagination and practice. While Marxist theorists of globalization have demonstrated that the processes that constitute global social relations are far from neutral (Harvey 1989; Massey 1994; Wallerstein 1991), in centering migration as the lens through which to investigate the articulation between the global and the local in Pakistan, I build upon scholarship on transnational migration and globalization.

Contrary to earlier approaches in transnational migration that pronounced the transcendence of the nation-state and the unmooring of national identity so that it was no longer tied to a specific territory or citizenship (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1994), scholarship on transnational migration has illustrated the reconfiguration of the power of nation-states and the reinforcement of parochial national identities (Tsuda 2003; Mankekar 2015; Grewal 2005; Amrute 2016). In addition to demonstrating the reconfiguration of the power of nation-states and the identifications they engender, within studies of transnational

migration an influential body of work delineates the contours of US Empire as it plays out in the global migration and labor industries. These works illustrate the discursive regimes of US Empire that work via multiple actors at multiple levels, shedding light on imperial formations that emerge within transnational social relations (Grewal 2005; Rana 2011; Maira 2009; Durrani 2022).

Taking inspiration from literature on transnational migration and US Empire, I understand an imperial global neoliberal order as a shaping of the world in accordance with a hegemonic social and cultural value system that emerges from a particular place, i.e. the United States. I identify the working of the US Empire with an imperial global neoliberal order to underscore the manifold ways in which it works, whether through the US immigration apparatus, global labor regimes, the displacement of local economies by their integration into a global market system, the establishment of an international higher education industry, media images and narratives, and the many other myriad ways alongside direct military conquest in certain parts of the world. The reason for centering neoliberalism in the imperial global order in how I draw attention to US Empire is to highlight the specific concerns of this dissertation at the intersection of international migration and globalization in South Asia. I view the imperial global neoliberal order as a Bourdieusian social field in which each actor's configuration of capitals determines their social location in a field that is structured according to the neoliberal values of a late capitalist economy and the social and cultural hierarchies upon which they operate (Bourdieu 1977). The actors that operate in this social field are not just limited to individual persons, but also groups and collectivities at various scales such as the family, educational institutions, the nation-state, multi-national corporations, international development

organizations, etc. An individual's embodied configuration of capitals, and thereby an individual's standing in the imperial global neoliberal order is linked to the individual being part of groups, collectivities, and institutions that excel in operating according to neoliberal values and creating the conditions for their inculcation in individual dispositions.

I turn to scholarship on globalization that charts the cultural underpinnings of neoliberalism as the ideology of a global capitalist economy (Kingfisher 2002; Makovicky 2014; Brockling 2016; Christiaens 2021). These works trace the shift from western classical liberal to neoliberal conceptions of the person. The former understands a person as a free individual who has autonomy over the ownership of their own body and its capacity for labor (and consequently autonomy over whether to sell their labor power to the market), while the latter considers the individual's labor power in terms of human capital that needs to be nurtured and managed in line with market imperatives (Gershon 2011). Anthropological scholarship on transnational migration and neoliberal personhood has brought to the fore the valuation of attributes of flexibility, choice, and self-sufficiency in the global capitalist economy in its current formation and how it builds upon western neoliberal conceptions of the person (Freeman 2014; Fong 2011; Ramos-Zayas 2012; Gershon 2011). However, the structuring of the social field of the global neoliberal order is not a meritocratic structuring according to the distribution of neutral economic, social, and cultural capitals in line with neoliberal values, but is regulated via the classification of individuals, groups, and collectivities along lines of race, culture, class, gender, religion, nationality, etc. Hence, even as the global neoliberal order sets neoliberal values as the standard against which individuals, groups, and collectivities are judged, it simultaneously regulates access to the attainment of those standards based on social and

cultural characteristics such as class, race, gender, culture, etc. These social and cultural characteristics are defined via an imperial logic whose understanding of these characteristics emerges out of the specific social and cultural context of the United States as a colonial nation-state. In other words, the hegemonic ideas, standards, beliefs, and practices that structure society and culture in the United States also structure and dominate the imperial global neoliberal order (Grewal 2005; Rana 2011).

However, although scholarship on transnational migration and globalization has illustrated how US Empire and nation-states operate in the imperial global neoliberal order by producing new kinds of racialized, classed, gendered, and nationalist identifications, I look towards ethnographically grounded studies of globalization in the Global South to understand the tensions between older and newer forms of governmentality, and older and newer value systems. Both Aihwa Ong and William Mazarella elucidate the inequities and specificities of the articulation between the global and the local in different contexts (Ong 1999;2006; Mazzarella 2003). They show the changing relationship between states in the Global South and the people they govern as states articulate with global capitalism and reconfigure their position in a global political economy. Ong discusses the cooption of neoliberalism as a regulating strategy by the Chinese state to govern its population alongside tracking the movements of elite Chinese business families across the globe to illustrate their quest for a flexible citizenship to circumvent the strictures imposed by the Chinese state. Ong demonstrates how the financial and social capital of elite Chinese business families enables their global mobility even as they consolidate their cultural capital as a Chinese citizen via their perpetuation of an idealized and romanticized notion of the traditional Chinese family that succeeds in business because of its adherence to

Confucian ethics and filial piety. Mazzarella elaborates on the commodification of Indian culture and the formation of the citizen-consumer in the shift from a state led development-oriented governing strategy to the consolidation of the advertising industry and its power to define Indian culture and identity (Ong 2006; Mazzarella 2003).

These works fall in line with Anna Tsing's imperative to study the encounter of multiple actors at multiple levels in order to understand the friction among diverse, and at times conflicting, systems of value that animate the articulation between the global and the local (Tsing 2005). In particular, the work of these anthropologists proves insightful not only for thinking about the reconfiguration of state power to be an integral broker of the global and local, but also the involvement of other collectivities and actors such as the family and advertising and media professionals in shaping the global political economy.

Kinship and its entanglements in South Asia

To discern the intertwinement of multiple value systems and actors in the imperial global neoliberal order, it is important to understand how individuals and collectivities are also simultaneously participants in more localized social fields that are structured according to their own discursive regimes and valuation of capitals, but always in relation to other social fields with which they intersect. The principles and values that structure social fields and their distribution of capitals also set the standards for who counts as a person in that social field. Anthropologists have long pondered the concept of the person (Appel-Warren 2014) and how it varies across cultures, pointing to the specificity of the western conception of the person as a sovereign, autonomous individual. By delineating how the concept of the person is understood in other societies, they have illustrated how the basis of social and cultural recognition varies

across different societies and cultures (Dumont 1970; Mauss 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 2010). If we understand actors in a global neoliberal order to be embedded within multiple social fields, we need to think about the relational nature of personhood in terms of an actor's social location in a social field and how that determines the vantage point from which they act in the social field under consideration, as well as in intersecting social fields.

In trying to understand the parameters of personhood that structured the lives of my respondents and shaped their desires and motivations, I refer to Geoffrey Mead's elaboration of the concept in terms of symbolic capital that enables the recognition and legitimation of the existence of an individual in the societies/cultures of which they are a part of. The principles and standards of social and cultural recognition are also embedded within a hierarchy of moral valuations and are set by those who hold the most power in a particular society and culture. In his elaboration of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, Geoffrey Mead underscores the inherently relational character of personhood in that although the principles and standards for its attainment are set by the dominant forces in society, it is simultaneously dependent upon the recognition of those principles and standards by the less powerful. He cites the paradigm of the king, urging us to see how the presenting of the king is not a neutral piece of information or sensation that is passively perceived, and in linear fashion, subsequently classified as powerful king. The king is presented to the perceiver as a powerful king precisely because the perceiver is bound to the king in a specific relation, in this case a relation of subordination (Mead 2021).

Mead shows us that not only is personhood relational, but it is also embodied and thereby material. The king presents as powerful king not just through his own body and person, but via his relation to, and association with, other bodies and signs (for example, the multitude

of slaves working for him, the crown that he wears, the throne that he sits on, the subjects whom he rules over as sovereign, etc.). It is as if the king's person expands to encompass not just his individual body, but also other bodies and material artifacts, permeating the lifeworlds of subjects so that his power is realized even in the absence of a direct command as long as it is socially recognized (Mead 2021). Building upon Mead's conception of a relational personhood, I employ personhood to include not just the individual person who aspires to attain the standards and values of the social fields in which they are embedded, but also groups and collecitivities who strive towards the same ends in order to gain social recognition. Personhood, in a social field, is therefore dependent on recognition from other actors in a social field. Furthermore, personhood as social recognition is not just embodied by individual and collective bodies, but is also manifested in material artifacts such as commodities, buildings, digital artifacts, etc.

Early anthropological literature on South Asia delineated the formation of a relational person in contrast to the 'one body, one self' conceptualization of the person as individual in the west (Dumont 1970; Alvi 2001). This led anthropologists to theorize Indian personhood in terms of dividuals or partible persons i.e. individuals were subordinated to a collective characterized by hierarchy, and it was the latter that had value as the basic unit of society in South Asia (Busby 1997; Marriott and Inden 1977). This literature was critiqued for its reification of the self/collective binary (read west/east) and for occluding the significance of individual experiences and flexibility in navigating personhood in a particular society and culture (Mines 1988;1994; Mookherjee 2013). While I agree with the imperative to dislodge orientalist notions of a collectivist South Asian culture by demonstrating the mutual imbrication of the individual self and society (Mookherjee 2013; Thiranganama 2013), I see promise in the concept of

personhood for illuminating the discursive regimes and affective orders that structure and regulate experiences of the self. Personhood therefore enables us to get at the specific articulations of collectivity and individuality that are propagated by those in power in a particular social field.

Personhood in South Asia is intrinsically intertwined with kinship. Speaking to David Schneider's critique of the study of kinship in anthropology, older anthropological accounts of kinship in South Asia elucidated the conjoining of nature/substance and law/moral code in a cultural understanding of kinship that served as a blueprint for the biological, social, and material ways in which people related to each other (Alavi 1972; Alvi 2007; Daniel 1984; Dube 2001; Eglar 1960; Inden and Nicholas 1977; Marriot and Inden 1977; Schneider 1984). These works outlined the constitution of kinship networks and ties via the exchange and transfer of biological substances such as blood, milk, and semen (whether from parents to children or between sexual partners), as well as through the exchange of prestation/gifts among households that create ties of mutual dependence. While anthropological accounts of kinship in South Asia pointed to the variety of kinship systems and practices in the region, the contrast between kinship in North and South India by way of example, the patrilineal kinship system was considered as the predominant norm in South Asia (Alvi 2007; Busby 1997; Trautmann 1974). In the patrilineal kinship system, even though both the father and mother were considered participants in the process of procreation, the child was thought to be of the father's blood (the patriline). This was evident in the organic metaphors used for the process of procreation in North India where the man was understood to provide the seed that was nurtured in the field of the woman's womb, relegating the latter to a passive role in procreation (Dube 2001). The

confluence and interplay of vertical (hierarchical) and horizontal (affective) ties that characterized relations within the immediate patrilineal kin group composed of grandparents, parents, children, and the son's family by marriage was mirrored in the formation of differential ties with the wider kin group and with non-kin such as neighbors and friends living in the same locality (Alavi 1972; Inden and Nicholas 1977; Lambert 2000).

For example, Alavi differentiates between the 'biraderi of rishtedaar' and the 'biraderi of participation' among the extended kin network of villages in West Punjab in Pakistan. The former refers to the ties of kinship with households from the same descent group while the latter emphasizes the ties of kinship that are maintained among households that engage in regular and frequent exchange of gifts and services. The fraternal solidarity among the more restricted group of kin that form the 'biraderi of participation' can be extended to neighbors and friends living in the same locality but relationships with the latter are not circumscribed by the obligatory compulsions that structure relations with kin (Alavi 1972). Inden and Nicholas in their account of kinship in Bengali culture point to the flexibility and openness of kinship as a cultural practice which embraces all those with whom a person has a personal connection within the ambit of one's own people even if these connections are differentiated along lines of kin or fictive kin (Inden and Nicholas 1977).

The contextual flexibility of personhood and kinship in South Asia is demonstrated by Daniel Valentine in his ethnography of Tamilian personhood and its relation to place where a person's very substance was thought to be constituted from the soil they lived on. He illustrates a person-centric idea of place by showing how his interlocutors used the word 'Ur' contextually to refer to their ancestral village, area of residence, or destination of travel. 'Ur' then was an

indigenous term which located place in relation to a person's orientation to space, which in turn was dependent upon context. Valentine contrasts this with the term they used to describe the village district marked out by the government for revenue generation, as well as for the country as a whole. In using the term 'kirmamam' to refer to both of these, his interlocutors demonstrated that they understood this term to refer to a fixed, bounded, territorial space that was identifiable regardless of the context in which it was being used (Daniel 1984). The interplay among personhood, kinship, and place in anthropological accounts of South Asia illustrate the significance of kinship in how people in South Asia construct relatedness to other people that dialogically informs their perception of themselves, but also how the practice of kinship is integral to how they structure their relationship to space and place. This has repercussions for how people experience a changing sense of space and place in a globalizing South Asia with the emigration of kin abroad, the increased circulation of commodities, and the introduction of digital technologies. In listening to their narratives, observing their practices, and reflecting on my own experiences, I try to understand how people in Pakistan try to maintain their sense of place even as their place-world is violently unsettled.

Here I bring in Edward Casey's concept of place that privileges bodily perception in its theorization. He states that rather than understand space as a neutral, empty ground which appears in its secondary form as place when humans attach meaning to it, we might understand space and sensations as always already being emplaced. Human bodies are sensing bodies that move in a scene of sensations, sensations that are not free-floating sensory data, but which have depth and horizons and which are part of an already existing place-world. Our perception of these sensations enables us to place ourselves in this place-world. Hence, just as place is not

secondary to space, it is also not secondary to perception. Rather, place is an ingredient in perception itself, implying that cultural practices and social institutions constitute synesthetic perception as much as it is constitutive of them. The dialectic of perception and place, and both with meaning, implies that we are never without perception and hence never without emplaced experiences (Casey 1996).

Subsequent scholarship on personhood and kinship in South Asia has critiqued the closed, bounded, pristine structural accounts of kinship postulated by anthropologists and called for understanding the family in South Asia as being continuously shaped by historical, economic, and social forces (Uberoi 1993). The focus shifted to the nation-state in South Asia and the incorporation of kinship into a national register forming the basis for new identifications central to modern personhood (such as the person as citizen of a territorially bounded nation-state). Partha Chatterjee's argument called for understanding the emergence of nationalism in India within the context of colonization. Challenging Benedict Anderson's thesis on the cultural foundations of nationalism in Euro-centric contexts, Chatterjee points to the fragmented nationalism that emerged in colonial India. Chatterjee shed light on how the uniqueness of the Indian nation was constructed in the spiritual/cultural domain even as nationalist movements sought to coopt the western colonial institutional apparatus as the structural basis of the modern Indian nation-state (Anderson 2006; Chatterjee 1993). The community and the family (and the kinship and gender relations that constituted them) became the grounds for the enactment of an untainted traditional Indian culture, leading to the objectification, and thereby transformation, of precolonial cultural formations. Scholarship on post-colonial nation-states in South Asia has thus been preoccupied with addressing the reification and essentialization of

cultural formations, such as the religious and/or ethnic community, the family, and the ideal Indian woman, as they get taken up in the constitution of communitarian and national identifications (Butalia 2000; Chatterjee 1993; Das 1995; Khoja-Moolji 2018;2021).

The rise of ethnic, religious, and militant violence in South Asia relegated traditional anthropological concerns such as kinship to the background. Only recently has the subject of kinship come to be revived in the ways in which it intersects with the nation-state in South Asia, as well as the ways in which ties of filiation are reconfigured into ties of fictive kinship (Hashmi 2021, Khoja-Moolji 2021, Latif 2017; Taguchi and Majumdar 2021; Pande 2015; Taguchi 2021). With the increase in the scale, volume, and velocity of global connections, and Pakistan's integration into a global economy, the stuff of kinship, i.e. how people relate to one another in South Asia and in South Asian diasporas, is once more undergoing transformations. While older scholarship on Pakistani migrant communities in Britain has a robust history of mapping their transnational connections and maintenance of ties with kin back home, these works reflect the contours of transnational migration relevant to an older period and older diasporic communities (Werbner 1990; Ballard 2003; Shaw 2000).

Transnationalizing kinship

As an increasingly greater number of people from urban centers in Pakistan (and even from smaller towns and cities) seek to move abroad for education and work, we see the breakup of the spatially integrated family (joint or nuclear) in Pakistan, and the simultaneous emergence of the spatially dispersed, but networked, global family. Moreover, digital communication technologies do not just enable the maintenance of connectivity among people in Pakistan and their kin who move abroad in the contemporary period but also enable the

establishment and rekindling of ties among older diasporic communities and their kin in Pakistan. This has implications not just for the changes occurring in family structures in Pakistan via the global migration and dispersal of kin members living in the same house, but also for the widening of kin networks and the increased capacity of transnational kinship to incorporate ever more relatives into its fold. In other words, while there seems to be a thinning of the form of the physical family in Pakistan, it is simultaneously accompanied by the thickening of the form of the virtual family that is dispersed globally.

The change in the form of the family from being physically and spatially integrated to being virtually integrated and spatially dispersed is not to posit a binary between the real and the virtual. The virtual too has its own materialities and this dissertation takes up the task of investigating how kinship is changing in a globalizing, transnational world. Earlier anthropological theories of kinship have been critiqued for looking at the biological (substance) and cultural (code) aspects of kinship in binary terms and establishing a dichotomous view of western and non-western models of kinship as being mutually exclusive (Carsten 2003; Sahlins 2013; Schneider 1984). Carsten argues that while the separation between substance and code and the attendant binaries between western and non-western concepts of substance, personhood, and kinship are useful analytical strategies, they do not give a complete picture of how kinship works on the ground in both western and non-western contexts. She urges us to look for the potentials of kinship in both contexts of individuation and relational socialities. Thinking about how kinship is constructed culturally rather than as a fact of biology (Sahlins 2013), Carsten calls for distinguishing between the performative and ascriptive aspects of kinship (Carsten 2003). She also differentiates between literal and metaphorical acts of making

kin, pointing to the dangers inherent in the constitution of metaphorical kinship identifications at the level of the nation-state (Carsten 2003).

Carsten's distinction between ascriptive and performative kinship was echoed earlier by Pierre Bourdieu's exposition of kinship as practice and the varied social uses to which it is put (Bourdieu 1990). Bourdieu referred to the construction of kinship along genealogical ties as a strategy to order the social world and to legitimate its ordering by naturalizing these ties. He called these kinship rules as 'official kinship' and opposed it to 'practical kinship'. 'Practical kinship' encompassed the other kinds of practical uses that are made of kinship relations among kin who live in spatial proximity, echoing Alavi's distinction in the 'biraderi of rishtedaar' and 'biraderi of participation' in kinship in West Punjab in South Asia. By positing this distinction between official and practical kinship, Bourdieu reminds us that in assigning kinship the status of an objective social condition, we often forget that the kinship group is constituted based on the function it is to serve, rather than being constituted biologically and then being harnessed to serve certain functions. To reiterate, Bourdieu asks us to think about the constitution of the kinship group and kinship practices in terms of their mobilization towards the satisfaction of certain material and symbolic interests that are shaped by particular economic and social conditions (Bourdieu 1990). Furthermore, by adding a further distinction between kinship (official and practical) and practical relationships, Bourdieu draws attention to kinship as a particular type of relationship that may or may not overlap with other practical relationships engaged in by people living in close proximity for the purpose of the functioning of daily life.

In this dissertation, I conceptualize kinship in terms of Bourdieu's theory of practice which views practice as the mediating link between the individual and/or group and their social

environment, imbuing the individual agent's or group's actions with an unquestionable logic within a universe of shared understandings and harmonized experiences. A society or culture's ways of thinking, feeling, and acting are thus transmitted through practice. Bourdieu further expands on how practice works via his study of the Kabyle people, demonstrating that the transmission of culture, particularly in social formations where literacy as a symbolic technique is not privileged, occurs in the ways bodies inhabit a culturally, socially, and temporally structured space and their encounter with other tangible bodies and things in that space (Bourdieu 1977). Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' as durable, transposable dispositions generated by objective social conditions, and 'corporeal hexis' as the embodiment of these dispositions in schemes of thought, perception, and action, demonstrate how practice mediates between the individual/group and their social environment. In other words it is in and through practice that prior systems of relations come into encounter with newer systems of relations. For Bourdieu, to understand practice at a particular conjuncture as an intentional reproduction of lived experience or as an individual's intentional deployment of the body is to misunderstand the conjunctural interaction as a discreet event in space-time. An interaction at a particular conjuncture is never contained within the interaction alone and is never about individual interpersonal relationships (Bourdieu 1977).

The habitus is also the preserve of affective affinities that stem from historical objective conditions that structured the social field at the time of formation of dispositional orientations. Sara Ahmed theorizes affect to illustrate how emotions are more than just psychological states embodied by a bounded, individual subject. Nor does she understand affect in terms of emotions being manifested in a particular material object. Rather, she defines affect as what

accrues when emotions circulate between signifiers in relationships of difference or displacement. Furthermore, while affect can be contagious when it aligns with the affective atmospheres of an affective order, I reiterate Ahmed's emphasis on the contingency of affect where the circulation of affect is dependent on how we are affected at the moment of interaction (Ahmed 2004;2010). Thus, affective affinities are relational and have potencies so that some affinities are stickier than others and are accumulated as one moves through life's trajectory. As the individual's life trajectory plays out within changing social fields and their intersections, the individual's habitus, corporeal hexis, and their affective affinities encounter new affective orders. Affective affinities that converge can lead to the inter-subjective circulation of affect which can either result in convergence or dissonance (Threadgold 2020). Hence, it is in the encounter of the habitus and corporeal hexis with a changing or different social field that can elicit multiple practices and perceptions outside of the social field in which the disposition was formed (Bourdieu 1977).

Conceptualizing kinship in terms of practice, and differentiating the many different ways it is practiced (officially, practically, and fictively), makes it an especially potent site to understand the cultural and social changes that people are undergoing in the contemporary era of global mobility. Situating the study of kinship within the context of global mobility implies understanding what is happening to kinship as a result of the migration of kin abroad, but also how kinship shapes global mobility because of its inherent predilections for social mobility (Andrikopoulos and Duyvendak 2020; Carsten 2020). Furthermore, kinship's affinity with modes of national belonging, and the power of nation-states to regulate mobility across borders, makes kinship a useful object of investigation to understand the entanglement of the

governmentality of nation-states with the everyday lives of its citizens. By delving into the intersections of globalization and international migration, and taking South Asia as the case under study, this dissertation reveals what is happening to kinship in a world undergoing rapid social and material transformations.

Overview of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. These include an introduction followed by a chapter on research methodology, fieldwork experience, and my positionality vis a vis the research and the field. The main body of the dissertation consists of four data chapters that are organized thematically to portray the varied phenomena that I study to answer the theoretical interests and research questions of this dissertation. These chapters are succeeded by a conclusion which elaborates on this dissertation's contributions to literature.

In the introduction I have outlined the theoretical questions this dissertation seeks to address and have laid out the conceptual landscape through which it addresses these questions. The theoretical concerns of this dissertation revolve around the changing parameters of personhood in a globalizing world and how that is interconnected with changes in the way people construct their belonging in/to places. It tries to understand the role of affect in animating these new aspirations and motivations for achieving personhood, and in the shifting ways people make meaning of places, and construct their belonging to them, in a globalizing world. By choosing transnational migration from South Asia, particularly Pakistan, as the context through which to examine these theoretical questions, this dissertation illustrates the transformations in kinship as it becomes transnationalized. In the second chapter on positionality and methodology, I outline my personal background, and experience as a transnational migrant,

in forming the impetus for this research and inspiring my trajectory towards the pursuit of graduate studies in Anthropology. In this chapter, I also outline my research questions, methods of data collection and analysis, and provide a sketch of my fieldsite(s) and fieldwork experience.

Chapter three on going abroad and the quest for personhood looks at the aspirations and motivations of young college educated people in Lahore for pursuing higher education outside of Pakistan. By paying attention to their narratives, this chapter demonstrates their understandings of what constitutes abroad in juxtaposition with their experience of life in Pakistan. It sheds light on how young college educated urbanites engage in a complicated cost-benefit calculus when deciding upon destinations for higher education, and how this calculus is shaped by the exigencies of the global neoliberal economy and the situatedness of my respondents in the social and cultural context of Pakistan. The chapter reveals the hierarchies that structure the global neoliberal order and shape the contours of global personhood, and how higher education abroad is an avenue for young people in Pakistan to access the social, cultural, and economic capital that legitimates their belonging (symbolic capital) in a global economy and society. In this chapter, I also elaborate on conversations with young professionals from the new middle class in Lahore about their aspirations and motivations for going abroad. I show how a global Pakistani Muslim identity sanctions their aspiration to go abroad for earning money, pointing to class differences in the experience of global mobility. In addition to illustrating the segmentation of global mobility by class locations, this chapter demonstrates that class differences notwithstanding, the aspiration for global personhood for people in urban Pakistan is a means to achieve local personhood. Moreover, the experience of global mobility is not only affected by class but also by gender.

Chapter four on Pakistan as the place of kinship illustrates the scattering of the joint and nuclear family in urban Pakistan as family members living in the same house migrate abroad for education or work. It elucidates how the migration of relatives abroad significantly alters the everyday life and experience of space and place for those left behind. Despite the breakdown of the physically integrated or spatially contiguous family, people still considered Pakistan as the place which had their kin and which enabled the doing of kinship. This chapter illustrates how respondents explained this in terms of Pakistan being one's own country ('apna mulq') and the place of one's own people ('apnay log'), but on elaborating on what this meant they pointed to the more immediate, day to day relational socialities with family, friends, and neighbors. The data in this chapter shows that even as the family was undergoing transformation, and the material basis for its continuity in place was changing, people still held on to the idea of Pakistan as the place which not only had their kin but also enabled the doing of kinship. Hence, this chapter looks at the imbrication of the discursive regime of kinship that operates at the level of national identification with the much more open-ended working of kinship in the everyday lives of people in Pakistan. Interviews with diasporic return migrants illuminate the significance of building a house of one's own as a material foundation for practicing kinship in Pakistan to constitute their experience of it as the space and place of kinship. The chapter also sheds light on the discursive regimes of the imperial global neoliberal order which construct kinship to be at odds with global mobility and progress, consequently relegating the place of Pakistan and all who identify with it to a low ranking in the global neoliberal order of places. Overall, this chapter underscores the flexibility of kinship but also its simultaneous vulnerability to being mobilized in the interests of power at multiple levels, in varied ways, for upholding the dominant social order.

Chapter five on maintaining kinship via digital communication turns to the significance of digital technologies and digital communication in transnational social relations with relatives abroad. It describes the evolution of digital communication technologies in Pakistan and their capacity to enable cheap, frequent, readily available connection with kin abroad as a relatively recent development. The narratives and experiences of people in this chapter elucidate the ways in which they harness the affordances of digital communication technologies to experience the reintegration of the global family in virtual space. However, the reintegration of the global family in virtual space is dependent upon a host of factors such as digital literacy, attitude towards digital technology, international and national rules and policies, age, gender, and life stage to name just a few. Furthermore, this chapter shows that digital connectivity does not necessarily translate into deep emotional connections. It sheds light on digital practices, such as the sharing of digital artifacts, to establish bonds of affection among kin. In doing so, this chapter illustrates how the use of digital technologies to maintain connectivity with relatives abroad is shaped by cultural understandings of kinship, resulting in newer ways of doing kinship in the digital age.

Chapter six on maintaining kinship via consumption and material exchange turns to the importance of these practices in transnational social relations with relatives abroad. With the integration of the local economy into a global capitalist economy, this chapter illustrates the commodification of culture, and emergence of an imperial understanding of culture and cultural identity that is enacted via consumption. It points to the ways in which ideas about culture interlace with ideas about place in the global neoliberal order, and how these ideas and perceptions are shaped by the global circulation of commodities. By investigating material exchange among people in Pakistan and their relatives abroad, this chapter elucidates how

exchange practices with kin abroad are intimately tied to the politics of class. The sending of family members abroad and/or maintaining ties with diasporic relatives possesses the potential to enable access to material goods and class mobility and/or maintenance of class location in the global economy. Being able to access material goods from abroad serves to buttress the prestige of not only the giver, in this case relatives abroad, but also serves to increase the prestige of the receiver, in this case people and families in Pakistan. However, the development of a commodity market in Pakistan and its increasing segmentation by class points to the emergence of a third currency alongside prestige and consumer choice in practices of consumption and material exchange. This third currency is the affection associated with kin ties. In this chapter, I show how affect emerges as the new currency that eases the flow of material goods among kin while simultaneously enabling them to hold on to their dignity and sense of Pakistan as the place of kinship in a global neoliberal world.

CHAPTER 2: POSITIONALITY AND METHODOLOGY

Preamble

The impetus for embarking on this project is intertwined with my first encounter of America, and my journey of pursuing a doctorate degree in Anthropology from a university in the United States. Although I was born in the state of Delaware in the United States while my father was completing his master's in food science via a USAID scholarship, my first conscious experience of living in America did not occur till 2012. Encouraged by our relatives in the United States to avail my status as a US citizen, we decided to explore moving to the United States. This fearless decision was in line with our past experiences of circular migration to different countries and cities, wherever my father's work would take us. As a food technologist he had worked his way up to the position of General Manager by working for different multinational companies, as well as reputed local food companies, both in Pakistan and abroad. For the family this had meant living in places as divergent as different cities in Pakistan, Colombo the capital city of Sri Lanka, and a small city in Abu Dhabi called Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

My education in all these different places had occurred in private schools such as the Beaconhouse School System (BSS) in Pakistan, and the Colombo International School (CIS) in Sri Lanka. At the time we decided to move to the United States in 2012, I was in my sophomore year at one of Pakistan's prestigious private universities, the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), halfway through my undergraduate in a program that offered a joint degree in Anthropology and Sociology. I decided to freeze a semester here during our exploratory trip to the United States. There was a crucial difference between previous migrations and the one we undertook to the United States in 2012. The former always occurred within the context of my

father's employment, while the latter was undertaken with the goal of migration itself with the hope of finding work and continuing education once we were in the United States. Another crucial difference between these migrations was the presence of kin in the United States as opposed to no kin members living in Sri Lanka and the UAE at the time we moved there.

Although we had begun to form a closer relationship with our relatives from America in more recent years due to their return visits to Pakistan, it was not until we stayed with them in Michigan for an extended time that our families became closer. Even though my parents had lived in America before, when my father was completing his Master's degree in the early 1990s, coming to the United States this time without any employment or educational anchor meant that our relatives were our window into the American life. Having lived in the United States for almost thirty years, our relatives had spent a lifetime building and cementing their life in America, and despite their best intentions and support we could not be protected from the harsh realities of everyday life in the United States. Already having lived a privileged transnational life in the region of South Asia and the Middle East, we were not prepared for the financial, social, and cultural impoverishment that immigrants had to face to gain entry into society in the United States. Our funds from Pakistan started drying up, we found the cost of education insurmountably high, my parents faced the stresses of navigating the immigration process and the US job market at the same time, all while we tried to find our place within the culturally similar, yet different, limited social circle we had access to via our extended kin. After spending about eight months in the United States, we decided to return to Pakistan.

This initial encounter with America and my relatives in the United States had left in me deep consternation. Our departure from the United States had felt incomplete and without

closure as to why our moving there had not worked out. This was contrary to the vague image of America that resided in the depths of my mind, an image that surfaced to consciousness when I came to the United States for the first time. While parts of America lived up to its image in my mind (I remember being enthralled by the concrete jungle in New York), the everyday life of my diasporic relatives centered around work, and the insularity of their social life with its explicit emphasis on the maintenance of cultural and religious identity, was a far cry from the idea of life in America I had imagined. The unsettlement experienced by my family's visit to the United States had an indelible effect on my life trajectory as it stirred me towards specific questions that I sought the answer to in my desire for attaining higher education abroad after graduating from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). My desire to seek higher education abroad was not just influenced by my transnational experiences but was also part and parcel of following societal ideals and undergoing a rite of passage after undergraduate studies in Pakistan. Funding considerations, the presence of relatives in the United States, my legal status as a US citizen, and the prestige accorded to the United States as a place made America the obvious first choice for me to pursue graduate school.

Since starting my PhD program in Anthropology at Michigan State University (MSU) in 2016, I have been moving back and forth between the United States and Pakistan and engaging in participant observation of transnational relations from the vantage point of my own experiences and the experiences of others. Moving within the Pakistani diasporic community in Michigan, I came across a constant preoccupation with Pakistan as a country, and the way things were done there, as an active topic of discussion. Oftentimes, the overt denunciations of Pakistan that I witnessed in these conversations, and that I was hailed to participate in, felt to

be at odds with my sentiments and experience of Pakistan as place. The affective vigor with which these discussions and pronouncements were charged seemed akin to a personal affront as if the very place I was from, and my identity as Pakistani, were under assault. At the other end of the transnational dyad, whenever I returned to Pakistan, I felt exhilarated at the idea of meeting family and friends but found the pace of life there slow and stifling. Many of my undergraduate friends had moved abroad, or back to the cities they were originally from, and while I still had my maternal relatives in Lahore, I met with them only occasionally whenever they could take time out of their busy social calendar and work lives. Hence, on my return, my experience of Pakistan as place was also changing, and was often more subdued than I had imagined it to be.

To add to the dissonance of my experience of Pakistan as place was the emotional labor that was required to keep up digital communication and manage material exchange with people at both ends. On my trips back to Pakistan during the summer, I was faced with requests to please leave space in my suitcase for gifts that my diasporic relatives wished to send to relatives in Pakistan. Oftentimes, extended relatives also handed me small amounts of cash as remittances that needed to be delivered to family members in need. From the other end, relatives in Pakistan expected me to come bearing gifts on my return visits, regardless of my status as a graduate student with little money to spare. Aside from gifts, requests were also put forth for more expensive items they were willing to pay for themselves such as coveted electronic gadgets. On returning from Pakistan to the US, the inverse situation prevailed. Relatives in Pakistan requested me to take gifts for diasporic relatives on their behalf and diasporic relatives in turn requested for traditional clothes, food items, and other such cultural

commodities.

As I became more embedded within these transnational social relations and undertook frequent travel between the United States and Pakistan, I also took graduate courses on migration, transnationalism, and diasporic communities to help me think through my experiences through an academic lens. As part of my area specialization, I built my foundation in the anthropology of South Asia, to build more context for the research project I had started to envision. Initially conceived as transnational in scope, from the perspective of the figure of the migrant, my dissertation research was aimed at trying to understand how transnational social relations among people in urban Pakistan and their diasporic counterparts in the United States were reconfiguring local understandings of place and personhood. I also wished to understand the role of material exchange and digital communication in these transnational social relations. The covid 19 pandemic was in its second year when it was time for me to begin my fieldwork. I was in Pakistan at the time and did not know when I would be able to return to the United States due to lockdowns in the country and the international travel ban. Facing issues of mobility, access, and funding, I decided to recalibrate my research in line with the circumstances I was navigating at that time.

Previously, I had conducted a few preliminary interviews in Lahore in 2018 and had realized the prevalence of transnational families that had family members dispersed in different countries. Hence, the reality on the ground was not as neat as I had thought it to be with social relations encompassed within a transnational dyad. Rather it was more accurate to think of the transnational family in terms of a home base from which there was a dispersal of family members to different parts of the world. Moreover, I found myself intrigued by the many other

ways in which globalization manifested in Lahore, whether it was the inflow of affordable commodities from China, the spread and affordability of digital technologies, or the obsession with the commodification of culture that I witnessed during my time there. How could I make sense of what was happening here and capture the richness of the multifaceted context within which my research questions were embedded. In redrawing the boundaries of my research, I decided to limit my field site to Lahore, and to investigate how people in urban Pakistan were thinking about global migration and how it was affecting them.

Although during the covid 19 pandemic Michigan State University (MSU) had put stipulations in place to curtail international travel and research, with departmental support I was able to obtain permission to begin fieldwork in Pakistan in August 2021. The fact that I was already situated in the city of Lahore and did not have to travel to my field site helped my case. I also had to fill out lengthy paperwork where I provided detailed information about the precautions I would take during fieldwork to minimize the risk of exposure to the virus for myself as well as my research participants. I was required to provide a statement in writing to assume all responsibility (read liability) for conducting fieldwork in Pakistan during the pandemic. With the help of funds awarded by the department, opportunities provided by the department of anthropology and the department of religious studies to be a graduate assistant remotely, and the financial (and emotional) support of my parents, I was able to embark on fieldwork and complete it in June 2022.

Research Questions

As I tried to excavate how people in urban Pakistan were understanding global migration and how it was affecting them, my fieldwork revolved around trying to answer the following

research question:

1. How is the global mobility of people in urban Pakistan, in physical as well as virtual terms, changing their sense of place and personhood?

To anchor my larger research question, I chose to focus on how people in Lahore found meaning in going abroad or staying in Pakistan, and how they made sense of their transnational social relations with relatives abroad. To investigate this, I asked the following questions:

(a) What are the aspirations and motivations of/for people in urban Pakistan that shape their desire to go abroad or stay in Pakistan? How does the migration of relatives abroad affect my respondents in Lahore? How are transnational social relations affecting their sense of Pakistan as place, and consequently, their personhood?

(b) What type of material exchange occurs with relatives abroad? What does this material exchange with relatives abroad mean for my respondents in Lahore?

(c) How do my respondents in Lahore maintain contact with their relatives abroad via digital communication technologies? What type of digital communication takes place with relatives abroad and what does it mean for my respondents in Lahore?

Field site(s)

While the history of the discipline of Anthropology has been closely tied to the colonial encounter and its preoccupation with knowing the other and binding the other so as to make them knowable, contemporary anthropology has tried to redefine itself by bringing forth new concepts and methods with which to study the contemporary human condition (Asad 1995; Marcus 1995; Silverstein 2005). Anthropologists who study globalization and transnational migration have pointed to the need to question the assumptions and biases upon which our

worldview of nation-states is built to make sense of the contemporary conditions and forces of globalization that are shaping how we live in the world today (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1994; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Malkki 1997).

Taking inspiration from the new anthropology, although I conducted fieldwork in the city of Lahore, the specific parameters of my field sites were defined by my own social location, as well as that of my respondents and the networks within which we were situated. Working through these networks meant that I conducted interviews and participant observation in several sites in Lahore. I would often be invited by elder women to their houses to conduct my interviews, while my interviews with younger respondents often took place in public restaurants or cafes in different parts of the city, or at university campuses. At times I would meet respondents at their work offices. I was also successful in employing social media, Facebook in particular, to recruit participants by creating a page for my research and advertising a call for research participants through that page. My interviews with these participants were all carried out over the phone, and I did not get the chance to meet them in person. Hence, while I conducted my fieldwork in Lahore, and my observations of the local context were significant in helping me make sense of the social location of my respondents and the context within which they were embedded, the focus of my study was on their transnational networks. In other words, even though my ethnographic study was done in the city of Lahore in Pakistan, my field site and its boundaries were defined by the transnational networks within which my family and I, as well as my respondents, were embedded. Thus, this is not so much a study of the city of Lahore as a study of the transnational networks of people living in the city of Lahore. While my research aims to understand how people make sense of place today, it gets at their

understanding of their physical location by privileging their social location, and not the other way around. Nevertheless, there were certain sites in Lahore from where I drew many of my respondents. These included the Canal View Housing Society, the Information Technology University (ITU), and Facebook.

Figure 1. Arfa Software Technology Park that houses ITU, US Lincoln Corner, tech start-ups, and HEC office is an important symbol of globalization in Lahore

Data Collection

Before starting data collection, I bought a second mobile sim to have a second number that I could use exclusively for research purposes. A second mobile number not only enabled me to organize my communication with respondents, but it also helped to establish a boundary between my personal life and my life as a researcher in Lahore. I began data collection by leveraging my own, and my family's, transnational and local networks in Lahore to recruit respondents for my research. Thereafter, to move beyond the networks of which my family and I were already a part, I made use of social media, Facebook in particular, for recruiting research respondents. To establish newer networks in the city, I realized that I needed to be part of a setting which would align with the goals of my research project and enable me to meet new people. Thankfully, I came across a call for hiring visiting faculty in a semi-public university in Lahore. The university was a great fit for the type of project I was pursuing as it represented the amalgamation of globalization and higher education in Lahore and proved to be a great gateway to establishing newer connections in the city. I utilized a mix of snowball sampling and direct recruitment to field research participants. To ensure selection of appropriate participants, I established a recruitment criteria for respondents to be a resident of Lahore, to either have travelled abroad themselves or have relatives abroad, and to be in frequent contact with relatives abroad whether in person or virtually. I used a Sony recording device to record many of my interviews until I became aware of the conspicuousness of the device and switched to recording interviews on my mobile phone which proved to be less intrusive for respondents. I recorded participant observations in my field diary at the end of the day or week. When it became too exhausting to write down detailed field notes, I preserved insights from participant

observations via voice notes recorded on the Sony recorder device. I would only make field notes when I was by myself so that my note taking did not disrupt the interview or make my participants feel hesitant to share their stories with me. Overall, for this dissertation I was able to conduct 45 interviews. These included 16 women and 7 men in the 50-70 age range, and 12 women and 10 men in the 20-40 age range.

I began with recruiting respondents from my own, my parents', and my sister's networks in Lahore. My sister's network and my own included young university educated people from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and Forman Christian University (FCU), within the 20-30 age range, who resided in Lahore and had transnational linkages with relatives abroad. My network also included people I had met at Michigan State University (MSU) who were now residing in Lahore, or moved frequently between Pakistan and the US. My parents connected me with their acquaintances in the residential area where we lived as well as with people who were from among their professional acquaintances. This included people within the 40-70 age range who lived in a residential area owned by the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), and people who had active or former associations with multinational companies (e.g. Unilever) or private schools in Pakistan (e.g. Beaconhouse School System or The City School). While my parents circulated my call for research participants on their WhatsApp groups based on professional associations, recruiting research participants from my parent's network was only successful when my parents did the footwork of evaluating who was a good fit for my research, and who they could call to ask if they were willing to be interviewed. Likewise, participants from within my sister's network could only be recruited because I had a relational link with them, being the sister of their friend, illustrating the significance of relational connections in

how society operated in Pakistan. In the words of a respondent, if you needed to get anything done in Pakistan, it did not depend on "…what you know but who you know."

One of my mother's contacts from her WhatsApp group of women who had worked for Beaconhouse, Afreen Aunty, became one of my main informants for my research. She was an active 70 year old woman who, like my mother, had three daughters and had worked for Beaconhouse. All her daughters were now married and lived abroad. The fact that her second daughter and her husband were both published authors and in social science related disciplines, with her son in law being a graduate from LUMS like me, might have also contributed to Afreen aunty's sense of familiarity and comfort in being my informant. Afreen aunty lived with her husband, a retired Army officer, in their house in Canal View, a residential area home to established, upper/upper middle-class families in Lahore. Whether she felt deeply about the type of research I was doing, or whether it was in her personality as a caring, helpful person who gladly took on the responsibility of helping people and bringing them together, or both, Afreen aunty became my gatekeeper to respondents in the residential area of Canal View.

In my efforts to branch out of my existing networks and establish new ones, I tried to reach out to a wider audience via social media. My experimentation with circulating a call for research participants on WhatsApp groups had not been as successful as I had hoped. Maybe it was the influx of long forwards on WhatsApp groups, the way my message was crafted, or the effort required to contact me separately on a different number that made people disregard my message or be unresponsive to it. It could also have been the idea of WhatsApp as a more private, intimate forum of communication that prevented my call for research participants from yielding respondents on its own. WhatsApp was only successful in eliciting responses when

paired with a relational connection. Nevertheless, I was not ready yet to give up on exploring the potential of social media for my research and turned next to Facebook. I knew that most universities had student groups on Facebook. Using the call for research participants that I had drafted for circulation among WhatsApp groups, I posted on the university wide student Facebook group of the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). I also tried to gain access to wider audiences from other Facebook university groups.

Speaking to a good friend from LUMS about my research, I found out that her cousin was an alumni of the Information Technology University (ITU) located in the Arfa Technology Software Park. She connected me with her cousin who kindly agreed to post my call for research participants on the ITU student Facebook group of which he was a part. Looking over my call for research participants, he suggested that I shorten my academic descriptions of my research project, and instead formulate the post as a brief, exciting invitation for people to tell their stories about going abroad and about their relationships with relatives abroad. Considering that my long post on the LUMS Discussion Forum had not yielded any leads, I agreed to take his advice and drafted a post that would act as a hook for recruiting research participants. He warned me that people rarely responded to such posts on Facebook but we decided to still give it a try. I managed to get three leads through my post on ITU's Facebook group for students, and one of the respondents eventually became my main informant at ITU.

It was timely that I came across an ad on Facebook for hiring a visiting faculty member at ITU for teaching a course on an introduction to Global Studies. I saw this as the perfect opportunity to gain access to the Arfa Technology Software Park which could potentially become one of my major field sites in Lahore. The fact that this was a semi-public university

would help me get connected to a student demographic that was different from the type of university students I had access to in my networks through private institutions such as LUMS and FCU. To make sure that my research as an anthropologist did not jeopardize my responsibilities as an instructor at ITU, I only interviewed those people in ITU with whom I had no conflict of interest.

In employing Facebook for recruiting research participants, I had to navigate the structural limitations of the platform. I enlisted the help of a content creator, who was also a recent acquaintance, to get an understanding of the potential of Facebook for accessing research participants. To create a public page on Facebook as an individual academic researcher, I only had access to a generic template designed for either a business, content creator, or an organization. As I was neither a content creator, nor a business, I felt that the best way I could stay true to my situation was by modeling the page after that of an organization. I titled the page *'Migration and its Effects: Project Pakistan'* and accompanied it with a brief description which made the page look like it belonged to a research collective or organization such as an NGO or think tank. To publicize the page, I created the call for research participants as an advertisement for my research project and varied the terms and conditions for its audience as people aged between 18-65+ years, 18-40 years, and located in Lahore+25 miles. I set up the ad so that when people clicked on it, it would automatically reroute them to my WhatsApp business chat where they could correspond with me directly (see Figures. 2, 3, 4, and 5 below).

To channel responses from my page on Facebook to WhatsApp, I downloaded a WhatsApp Business application. The WhatsApp Business application enabled me to organize and separate Facebook responses from the communication I was undertaking on the regular

WhatsApp account (associated with the same mobile number) with respondents who had been recruited via other means. Creating a WhatsApp Business account with a profile picture and name associated with the Facebook page to which it was linked allowed me to maintain a degree of privacy with respect to my individual identity. Even though the mobile number associated with the WhatsApp Business account was visible and could give away my identity if someone had the resources to trace the number's association with my national identification number, the WhatsApp Business account afforded me a certain level of anonymity. As a researcher, and as someone who identified as a female, I felt more comfortable and confident in corresponding with people as a number associated with an image and name that did not give any clues with respect to my individual identity.

To afford a similar level of privacy to the other person, once someone sent me a message, I would ask them a few screening questions to determine their eligibility for participation in my research before moving on to introductions and details about the research project (see Figure.6 below). Sometimes I was able to explain my position as a PhD student and the specifics of my research via message on WhatsApp Business, while at other times I would have to have a phone conversation to clarify who I was and what I was doing. Only after clarifying my role, my research, and what an interview would entail, would I ask respondents for their consent to be interviewed. Interviews with respondents fielded via the Facebook page were conducted over WhatsApp, and in cases where there were Wi-Fi signal issues, over the mobile phone. Although recruiting via Facebook allowed me to reach out to a large audience and recruit many people in a short amount of time, the lack of in-depth context with these respondents meant that I conducted the phone interview as a semi-structured informal

interview. These interviews ranged from anywhere between 20-40 minutes and involved asking specific questions but allowing respondents to digress as they saw fit.

I conducted three rounds of boosting my call for research participants on Facebook via the page I had created. A lot of these responses were filtered out due to their non-eligibility for my research. Still others proved to be difficult to get in touch with. I would spend a few hours every day sending calls to the numbers that were shortlisted for participation and would consider it a successful day if I was able to get hold of even one person. Furthermore, I recruited via the Facebook page in the last 3 months of my fieldwork which meant that I was left with very little time to develop my relationship with these respondents. Surprisingly, majority of the responses I received were from men, illustrating the digital divide in the gendered use of digital technologies in Pakistan. Many respondents seemed to assume I was a man until I revealed my identity as a female researcher. Thus, through the Facebook page, I was able to gain access to a middle-class male demographic for my research which would otherwise have been difficult to access given my social location as a highly educated, upper middle-class female in Pakistan.

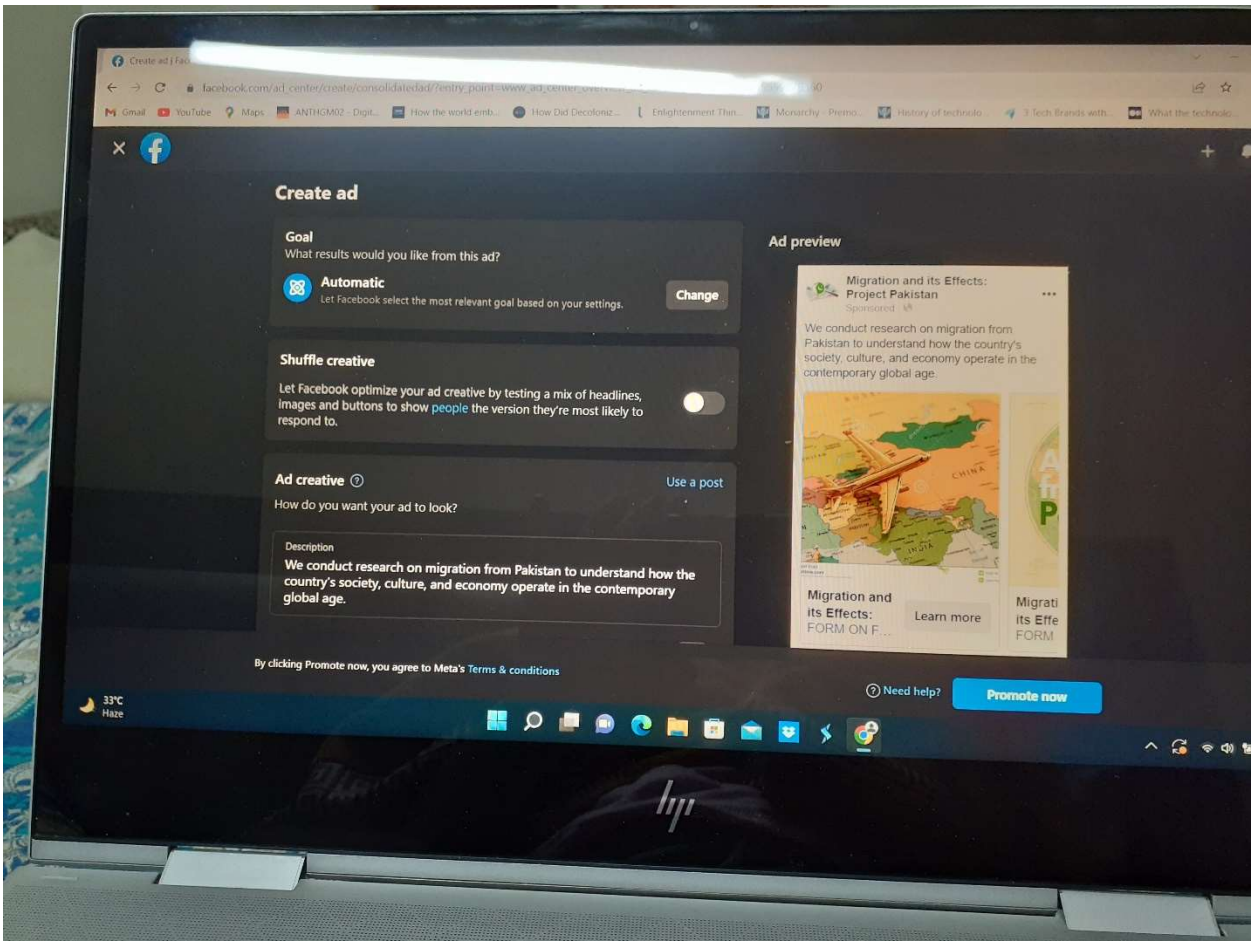

Figure 2. Generating ads for the call for research participants to be circulated on Facebook via the creation of a Facebook page titled 'Migration and its Effects: Project Pakistan'

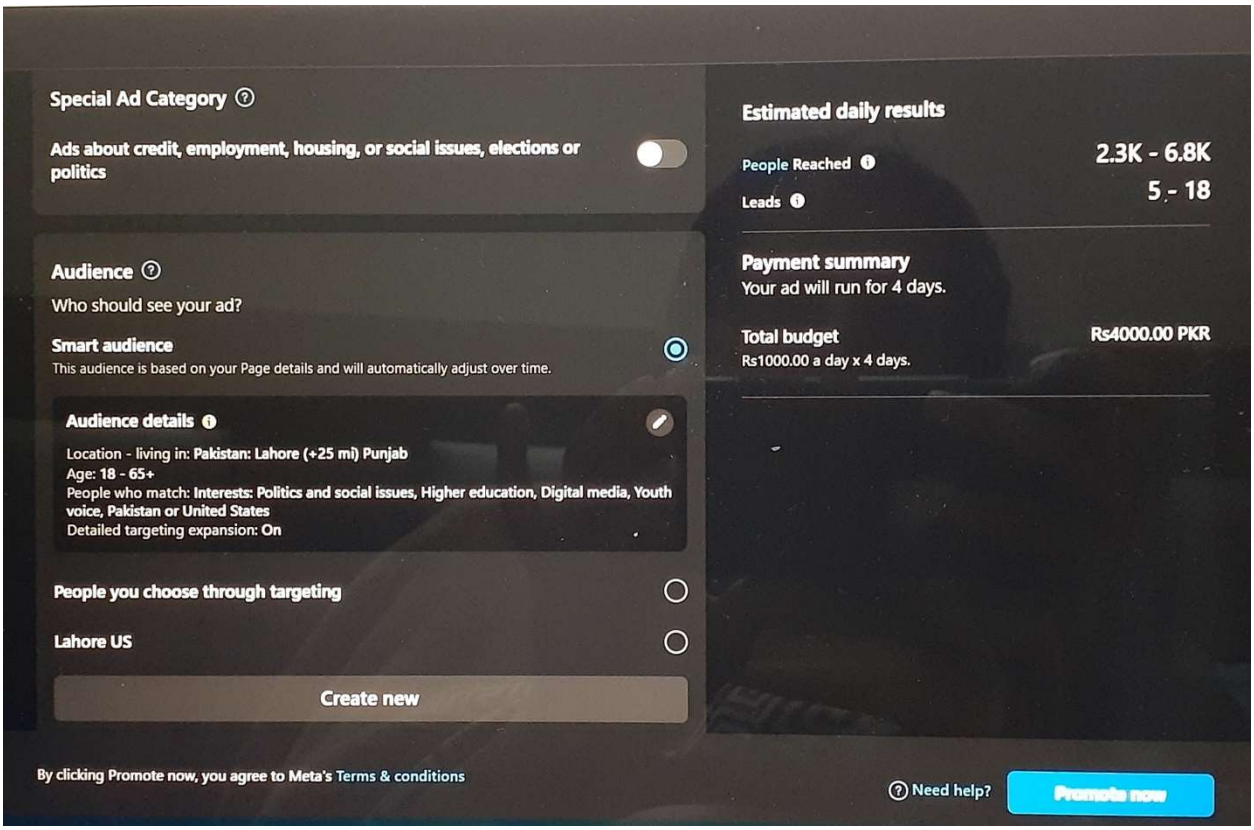

Figure 3. Details of target audience and payment for running the ads on Facebook for 4 days

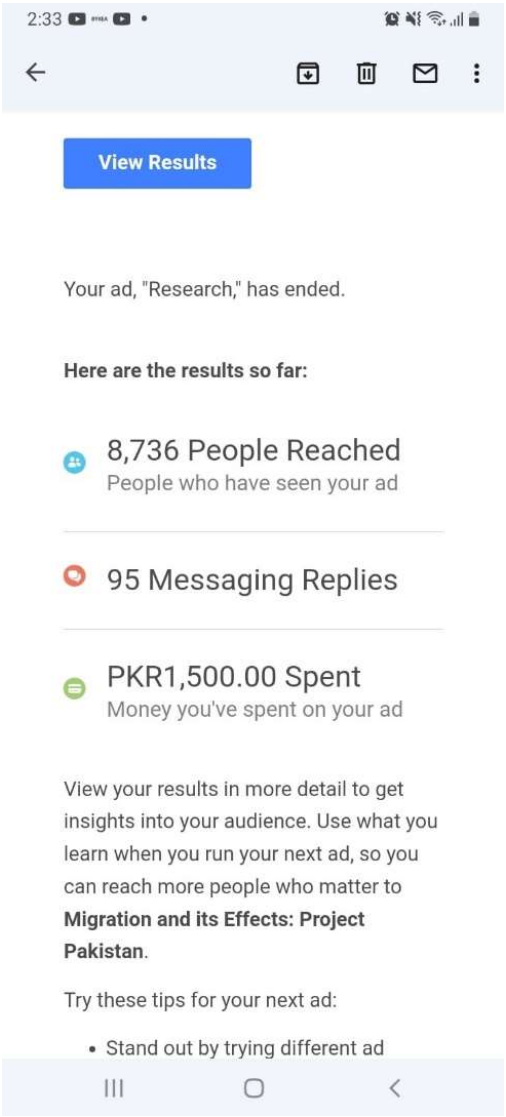

Figure 4. Statistics for the first trial ad run on Facebook

Figure 5. Comments on Facebook showing public responses to an ad designed as an image of the globe asking 'Are you from Pakistan?'

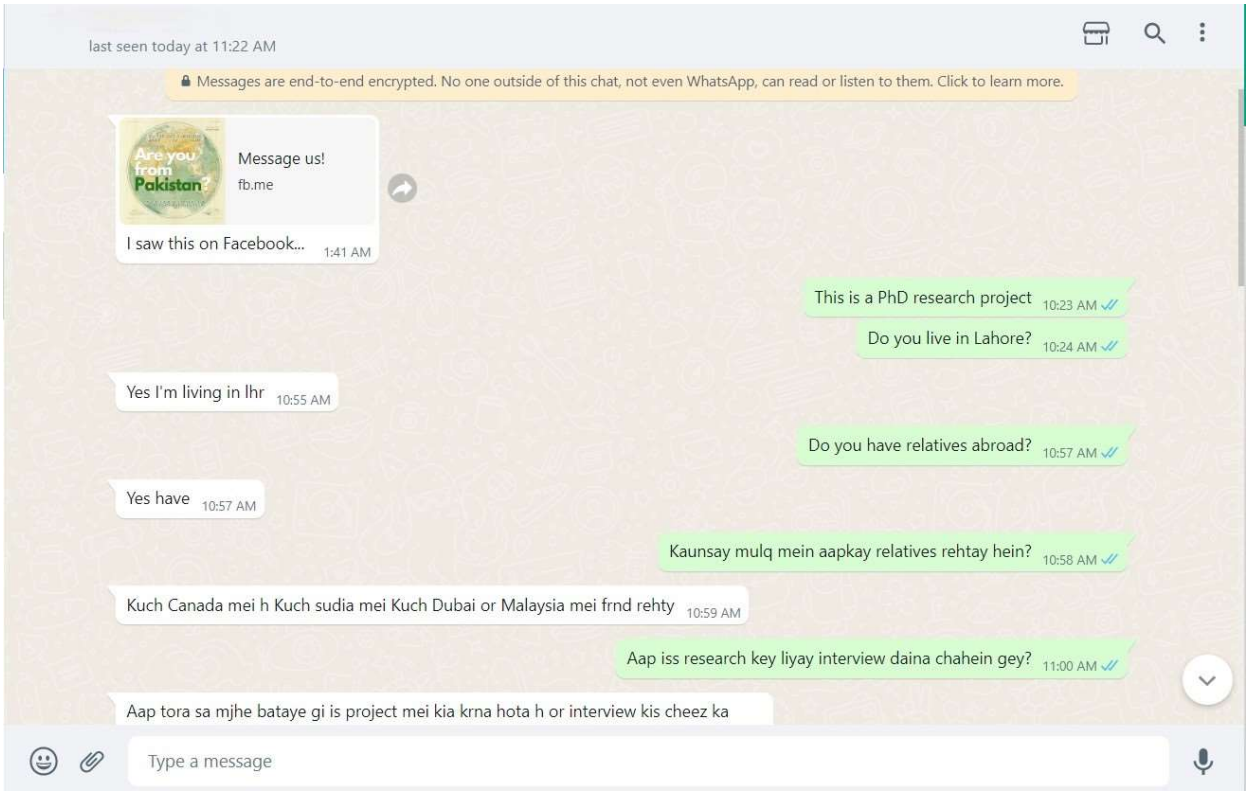

Figure 6. Conversation on WhatsApp Business with a potential research participant in a mix of English and Roman Urdu

Data Analysis

I transcribed, and simultaneously translated, the recorded interviews in word documents. Translating parts of interviews that were conducted in Urdu into English involved paying careful attention to the preservation of the meaning of respondents' words. This meant choosing appropriate words and forgoing the structural integrity of the sentence in English to preserve its meaning in colloquial Urdu, and to reproduce the conversational style of these interviews. Words and sentences in Urdu that were difficult to translate, were transcribed in roman Urdu to not lose sight of the meaning and context conveyed by respondents. To recreate the conversational context in the interviews, I have sprinkled contextual clues in brackets throughout the transcription, such as pertinent details about the setting, the body gestures or laughter of respondents. In trying to stay true to the conversational style, I have also tried to capture the emphasis put on certain words by playing around with their spelling or styling (e.g. by interjecting periods or by capitalization). Where I bring in another part of the interview, I separate the text by period marks.

After transcribing, I uploaded the interview documents into the qualitative analysis software, MaxQDA. I created codes by going through the text of each interview and coding for themes related to content. These codes included more expansive codes like 'reason for migrating' or 'communication with diaspora'. Whenever I came across similar themes in the content, I would code them with the same codes. Within the more generic codes, I also created sub-codes which fit in with the theme of the main code. Hence, for instance, a sub-code for the code 'reason for migrating' could be 'marriage', 'higher education', or 'business failure'. Similarly, for the code 'communication with diaspora', some of the sub-codes were 'sharing

memes', 'technology dependent', or 'lack of intimate connection'. Creating codes and sub-codes enabled me to break down the textual data from my interviews into identifiable, discreet units that made it easier to visualize and compare the themes that emerged within, and across, interviews.

I conducted a lateral analysis of the content of my data considering these themes, i.e. I looked at what different respondents in my study were saying with regards to the main codes to get an understanding of how my respondents were making meaning of phenomenon such as 'reason for migrating'. This helped me to become familiar with the specific concerns of my respondents and to map out the discursive context within which they were embedded. Thereafter, I circled back to making sense of these sub-codes within the context of my respondents' narratives and social location. To contextualize the narrative analysis of respondent interviews, I made use of participant observations recorded in field diaries or in voice notes on the recorder. For thin data, such as interview transcripts from semi-structured interviews conducted over the phone for which I did not have participant observations to supplement and contextualize interview data, I drew contextual details from the interviews themselves.

While the coding process itself is systematic and methodical, it must be expressed that the process of making sense of data involves a lot more than coding. The process of finding the connections between units of data is a lot more intuitive and involves a continuous effort of playing around with the data until it finds its place and emerges as a substantive research finding. It is akin to starting with a fragmented picture that does not make sense, by coding you break the picture into puzzle pieces, and then you rearrange the pieces to form a new, ideally

more legible, picture. What helps you rearrange the pieces to create something new is all the knowledge you have been exposed to, and ways of thinking you have been inculcated into. An integral part of the process of making sense of data is the writing process. The new picture you are creating is essentially being created in writing, a process that utilizes the tangibility and visuality of language to express the picture you have formed, and to share its expression with other people. Hence, anthropological research is as much a science as it is an art.

Positionality in the field

Conducting research and fieldwork among communities that you are a part of has its own advantages and disadvantages. Anthropologists have demonstrated over the years that it is more fruitful to think about one's position as an anthropologist in terms of degrees of insider and outsider status rather than as a native anthropologist versus a foreign anthropologist. In Pakistan, the city of Lahore has been my family's primary home in spite of our ancestral history of belonging to migrant communities from India whose spoken language is Urdu and who predominantly settled in the city of Karachi in Pakistan after the partition of the subcontinent. My parents had grown up in the heart of Punjab, in Lahore and neighboring Faisalabad, and so the ties of our Urdu-speaking family to these cities, which are home to large Punjabi populations, are at least two generations old. My maternal grandmother's house is in Lahore and my parents built our family house in Lahore in 2011. Moreover, I started school in Lahore and completed crucial parts of my educational journey in the city, such as my Cambridge O'Level examinations from Beaconhouse School System (BSS) and my undergraduate degree in Anthropology/Sociology from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS).

Part of the generation of children who grew up in Pakistan in the 1990s and early 2000s,

I was a witness to many of the early manifestations of globalization and emergence of urban city cultures in the country. This included the arrival and spread of American fast-food chains such as McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), and Pizza Hut, the arrival of communication technologies such as the internet, landline, and mobile phone, the connection to TV channels from around the world, the development of urban spaces for socialization, eating out, and shopping, and the emergence of a thriving local pop music industry. I witnessed this from my social location of being part of an upper middle-class family which could afford to send me to private schools and a private university and also enable my participation in the global consumer cultures prevalent in Pakistan at that time. However, my family's status of upper middle class was not an inherited status but was rather consolidated over time via education and work.

The social mobility that my family experienced went hand in hand with the physical mobility we undertook to different cities in Pakistan and to different countries. I spent an essential part of my childhood years in Colombo in Sri Lanka, my adolescent years in Multan in Pakistan, and my A Level school years in Al Ain in the UAE. Consequently, while I spent significant periods of time in Pakistan, I experienced different life stages in different places, leading to a more fragmented experience of Pakistan as place than majority of my peers who had lived in the same city throughout their lives. The mobility I experienced not only contributed to my personhood, but also influenced my experience of Pakistan as place, majorly affecting the contours of my insider and outsider status. By way of example, my frequent movement in and out of the city meant that my network of friends remained fragmented, compared to the age-old friendships and networks of people who had never left the city. Another example is the trouble I had with having to relearn Urdu upon my return from Sri

Lanka. To add to this repute of being in and out, I was now in Lahore from my vantage point as a PhD student from America. This implied being put on a pedestal in terms of being a highly educated person and as someone who lived in the United States of America.

To be a PhD student from America in Pakistan is one thing, to be an anthropologist and qualitative researcher in Pakistan quite another! The social sciences that have gained ground in Pakistan are those that tie in well with national development goals such as economics and sociology. While anthropology did have its moment in Pakistan in the 1980s, leading to the establishment of an academic department solely dedicated to the discipline of Anthropology in the Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) in Islamabad, the vibrancy of the discipline has only managed to survive today in a select few interdisciplinary departments. I became used to people asking me what I was doing my PhD in and finding their faces express confusion followed by inquiries about what the discipline studied. There was more than an instance when people explained anthropology to me as being the study of insects, confusing it with the discipline of entomology. I often found myself referring to anthropology as the sister discipline of sociology to help people in Lahore understand the type of study that I was engaged in. I became used to expecting the next question that people would ask once I had explained what anthropology was; what is its scope? In other words, how will this degree help you in the professional job market.

Not only was it difficult to familiarize people with anthropology, I found that very few people were familiar with the way qualitative research was done. When I explained that my research involved interviewing them and talking with them, people would become hesitant and scared as to what that would entail. Once, a respondent even asked me to email the interview

questions to them beforehand so that they could prepare their answers in advance. People would also ask me for the availability of tangible research tools, such as questionnaires or surveys, and it took some time for me to explain that I did not have any. When I asked my respondents if they would consent to an interview, they often become suspicious and wary. Asking to talk about their lives and their relationships felt like an invasion of privacy to some people. I remember I was cut short while explaining to a potential respondent what I would like to interview them about by their response that this was highly inappropriate and that I should avoid calling them (see Figure.7). I appreciated the honesty of this potential respondent, for oftentimes I found people unwilling to say no directly and conveying their anxieties and fears about being interviewed in indirect ways. For instance, when I asked a relative to connect me with a friend of theirs for a possible interview, they jokingly said, *"what are you going to ask them anyway, don't go getting them thrown out of the US now"*. Conversely, sometimes people felt flattered and proud to have been asked for an interview, making me feel like I was contributing to inflating their sense of self-importance and expectations of what this interview would, or could, do for them. It almost felt like I was perceived as someone from the media coming to hear their story and relay it to the world.

I experienced the misunderstanding of my role as an anthropologist and academic researcher in multiple contexts in the field. The Facebook page I had created for recruiting research participants was a customization of the generic template for creating a page on Facebook which was based on the assumption of the page belonging to a business or organization. Often, people did not give me a chance to clarify my research and my role, and tried to evaluate if this would be worth their time by asking me questions like 'do you offer any

compensation?', and requests for help with the emigration process itself. Even when I clarified to potential respondents that I was a PhD researcher gathering data for my dissertation, people still had trouble comprehending who I was and what I wished to do, the dissonance being caused by the format of the Facebook page and the impression it gave of an organizational entity, such as an NGO or an immigration agency, behind it. One of the respondents who agreed to participate belonged to a local journalist collective and he urged me to join this collective and to work with them on raising the issue of the plight of labor migrants. When I clarified that I was a PhD student from America, he stressed that I use my platform to raise awareness about the dangers of unskilled people migrating to the Middle East and getting stuck there in exploitative and fraudulent employment arrangements.

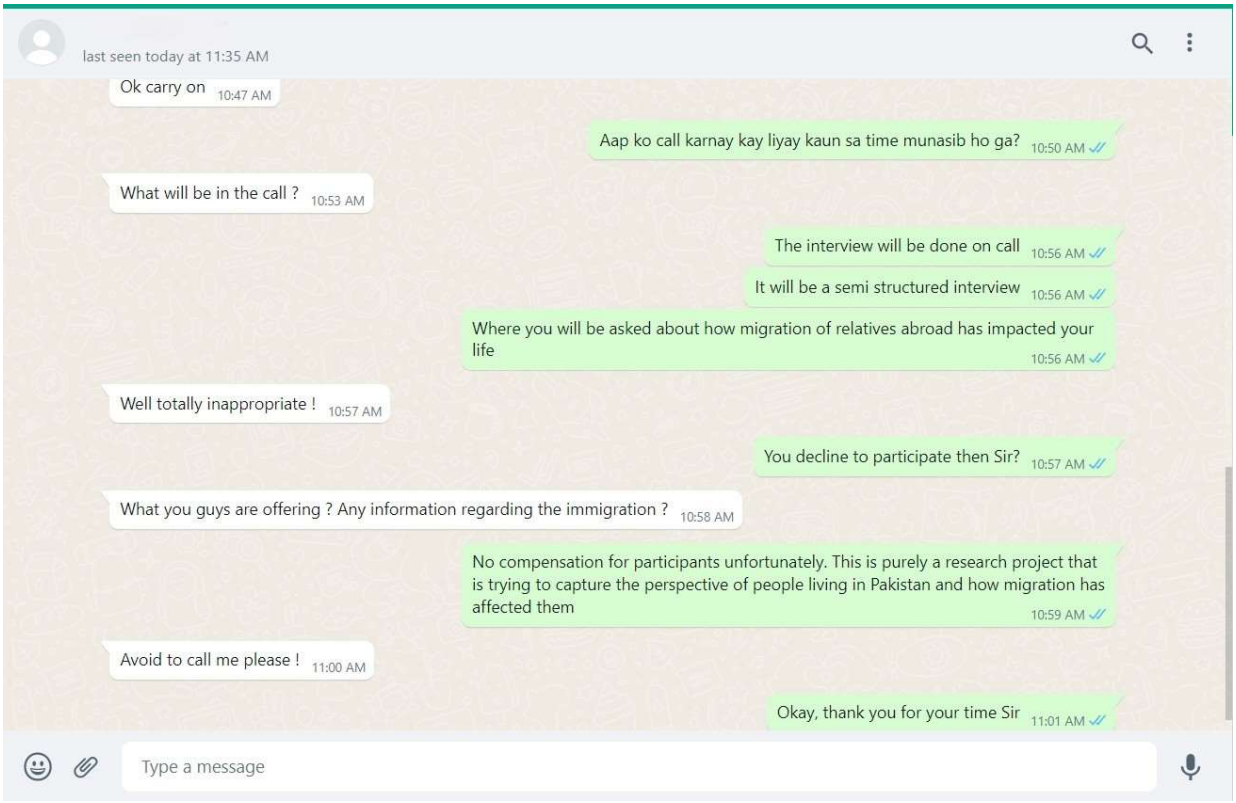

Figure 7. Conversation on WhatsApp Business in English and failure to recruit a research participant

Furthermore, not always was I hailed as an ally or someone in a position to help but rather was seen as potential competition. During fieldwork I tried to get in touch with the owners of a store that exclusively sold imported groceries in Lahore. The store was famously known for being the place to get grocery items from a global supply chain, items that were in demand globally such as matcha powder, lotus Biscoff paste, and high-quality imported chocolates. I got the number of the store's administrative office from the person at the counter and coordinated with the store's HR manager for an appointment day and time. The office was located on the top floor of a commercial building in the area of Defence and seemed like an office designed on an ad hoc basis, very different from the upscale corporate style office I had imagined. The HR manager was a brusque woman, sharply dressed, her foundation covered face sweating in the heat of Lahore. She seemed to be the only woman in the office, surrounded by the hustle and bustle of men hurriedly entering and leaving a reception like area to drop off supplies. The woman questioned me, with a brashness almost bordering on hostility, about my purpose for coming there. I tried to explain to her that I was a researcher from a university in America and wished to talk with the owner about his inspiration for his store and business model. The HR manager refused to listen to me and kept on insinuating that for all she knew I was working for someone else who was trying to steal their business model. Exasperated, I tried to reassure her that I had no such intentions, and if she wanted, I could ask for an official letter from my university or professor to vouch for my status as an academic researcher. She refused to budge and kept on insisting that I was there with other designs. Meanwhile, a member of the family that owned the business arrived and sat in upon our meeting. I waited for him to speak so that I could address him directly and assure him of my role as a researcher and the purpose

of my visit. He just sat there, letting his manager do all the talking, the manager acting like a figurative wall blocking my access to the owner even though he was sitting in front of me in plain sight. This felt strangely similar to the frustration you would often face in government offices where no matter how much you tried to reason with the official, they stuck to their narrative and refused to yield to your pleas. Infuriated, I decided to leave.

Even when people understood my research and role, they still had questions which were difficult to answer. During a telephonic interview when I started wrapping up the conversation by asking if my respondent had any questions, the respondent stated that he did have a question for me. He asked me what I was planning to do with my research. I was caught off guard with this question, and as I fumbled through vague statements of advocacy and policy making at governmental and international levels to fill the silence, the respondent's lack of affirmation made me feel the emptiness of my words, and the difficulty of translating the worth of qualitative academic research to the everyday lives of people.

My status as a US citizen also proved to be a tricky situation to handle during fieldwork and beyond. Studying the experiences of young college educated people from Pakistan like myself, and their ambitions to go abroad and the obstacles they faced in a global political economy, my respondents thought I was one of them. While I certainly had many commonalities with them, my legal status as a US citizen marked a major difference in my experience compared to theirs. On some level, I was also aware of this, and just like I felt uncomfortable in declaring myself as a doctoral student, I also felt awkward in revealing that I had citizenship of the United States of America. I would try to let that detail about myself slide unless it organically emerged in conversation with my respondents. Whenever it did, I would

feel terribly embarrassed at the revelation and at the reaction I received from respondents. Upon finding out, some respondents who had been talking to me animatedly suddenly became quieter and it felt like they were dismayed at finding out that I was not in the same situation as them. Sometimes respondents expressed surprise and amusement at finding out. During an interview when a respondent found out, he blew through his fist in a gesture that expressed a feeling of shock on the revelation. In colloquial Urdu he made a statement that can be roughly translated as *"So you are someone who is coming from above (to app uper se aa rahi hein)"*. This phrase is often used to refer to someone who has little insight into themselves and their actions, who enjoy playing the victim and putting the blame on other people to draw attention away from their own contribution to the situation. For my respondents, my privilege as a US citizen in the global political economy gave me little right to complain about the difficulties of navigating a global economy, and shaky grounds for empathizing in their experiences as citizens of Pakistan whose opportunities abroad were severely limited and highly regulated.

Conclusion

By providing an exposition of the inspirations and motivations for this research, and a detailed overview of the research process, I hope to have communicated the factors that shaped this research and consequently its limitations. My social location as an upper middle class female from Pakistan who was also a citizen of the United States, role as an academic researcher in Anthropology, individual experiences of transnational migration, and individual traits and skills such as the extent of familiarity with social media, all shaped the project in decisive ways, as did circumstantial events such as being hired at ITU and conducting fieldwork during the covid-19 pandemic. In the chapters that follow, I turn to the main subject matter of my research.

CHAPTER 3: GOING ABROAD AND THE QUEST FOR PERSONHOOD

Introduction

This chapter illustrates how going abroad is imagined by my research participants as an avenue for achieving mobility within Pakistan and the global neoliberal economy. It excavates the aspirations and motivations of young college educated people in Lahore for going abroad for higher education and their preference for studying in the United States. Moreover, this chapter also utilizes interviews with people from the new middle class in Lahore, as well as recent internal migrants to the city, to try and understand how international migration from Pakistan is understood and given meaning by people from different demographics. In trying to demonstrate how people in urban Pakistan make sense of going abroad, this chapter draws attention to the classed and gendered differences in experiences of mobility in a globalizing world.

Going abroad for more than just higher education and the United States as the ideal destination

When I spoke with young college educated respondents about higher education abroad, I found that they did not limit themselves to a specific country. They compared their options to pursue higher education in countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Hungary, Canada, Australia, and at times even non-western countries such as China, Thailand, and Japan. A look at the website of the Government of Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) shows a list of countries where scholarship opportunities are available for international students from Pakistan. However, out of the 14 countries where HEC offered scholarships, whether through partnerships with governments or specific universities, 10 of those options

pertained to western countries. Only 2 of my college educated respondents mentioned the presence of opportunities for higher education in countries such as China, Thailand, and Turkey, and even they did not consider these opportunities worth pursuing.

In deciding upon the future course of their lives with respect to higher education, young college educated people in Lahore engaged in a careful cost-benefit analysis, weighing the pros and cons of different options available to them. This cost-benefit analysis was a complicated calculus that involved trying to predict which opportunity would afford the best possible configuration of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital that would yield the most profit for navigating a global neoliberal economy. These considerations included things like financial cost of tuition, lodging, and mobility, the family's financial resources, familial relational considerations and context, the desire to study in a particular country, visa regulations and restrictions, the presence of supportive kin in that country, the ranking of the institute and program, among others. This illustrates the evaluation of a configuration of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital that was associated with each opportunity.

However, even though my respondents weighed different factors in their decision to pursue higher education abroad, there was a general understanding that going abroad to a western country yielded the greatest profit for enabling them to navigate a global neoliberal economy. Oftentimes, they would justify their desire to go abroad to a western country for higher education by pointing to the discrimination in Pakistan's professional job market where only those applicants with a degree from educational institutes abroad, or from elite universities in Pakistan, were shortlisted as possible candidates and employed at higher salaries. Acquiring a degree from a western country did not just improve your professional prospects and

socio-cultural capital in Pakistan, but also granted you entry into more global social networks, opening further opportunities for employment, better wages, and travel at a global scale.

Vanessa Fong in her ethnographic study of Chinese international students points to their understanding of abroad as primarily referring to developed countries such as the United States, Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan, Singapore, New Zealand, and other western European countries. The developed world was imagined as a single community that shared a single culture, system, and citizenship status thereby enabling the ease of mobility of people, money, jobs, goods, and media between developed countries, especially among the elites of these countries. Fong underscores that the ease with which international Chinese students elided the differences between developed western countries was not just due to inadequate knowledge but also due to the very real similarities in their cultures, laws, and orientation and policies towards international migrants like themselves (Fong 2011). Scholarship on international student mobility (ISM) and/or international higher education (IHE) has looked at the imaginative geographies of international students and the multiple sources from which they are constructed (Beech 2014; Bal 2014; Lee 2020; Phan 2018; Waters and Brooks 2022). In interviews with international students at three universities in the UK, Beech illustrates how students' perceptions of the UK as a place were constructed over a long period of time by sources as varied as television advertisements of higher education in the UK, dissemination of information via experiences of prior international students in the UK, and the historical social and cultural imaginaries formed as a result of former colonial ties with the UK. Beech's study shows that ideas about place are central to student decision making, thereby revealing that choosing a university for study abroad is about much more than the pursuit for higher education (Beech

2014).

I connected with Saim, a graduate of Information Technology University (ITU) in Lahore, via my call for research participants on the university's student forum on facebook. He shared that growing up he had been obsessed with going abroad to study in the United States. He had even gotten the opportunity to visit the United States as part of a program through his Church in Pakistan and had formed a goal to return there for higher education. He had applied for the Fulbright scholarship but had unfortunately been rejected. Thereafter, he had pivoted to looking for scholarship opportunities in Germany where he had come across complications regarding his bank statement and show of funds. He had then applied to the Hungarian scholarship but since they had only 100 seats worldwide, he was unable to get that as well. When I asked him whether he would consider looking towards Asia, this is how the exchange unfolded;

> *ST: "I don't know, so now for instance, a lot of people go to China, they go like on the side of Asia as well, Thailand….not interested in all these?"*
> *[SM clicks tongue to signal not at all]*
> *ST: "Why?"*
> *SM: "I mean if you have to stay within Asia, not only in Asia, but also like in Pakistan, if you have to live outside of Lahore, faaarrr from family meaning faarrrr from parents, that's not worth it. I believe that isn't worth it (clicks tongue)."*
> *ST: "And what makes it not worth it, and makes the other uhhh, you know, for example the places you applied to, worth it to pay..that..price?"*
> *[western music playing in the background]*
> *SM: "If I got the Fullbright or if…I got the Hungarian scholarship, then, I believe that a degree is not everything. I have a very flexible personality, because of that wherever I will stay, I will adopt that culture. So if I live in the US, I will adopt their culture. I believe that there the situation about individual values, I am not talking about social values here, individual values that are more prevalent there, they provide an environment in which one is able to develop one's personality in a good way."*

Recent scholarship on international student mobility has begun to address the significance of studying intra-regional student flows to understand how the global educational landscape might be changing (Phan 2018; Yang 2018). In his study of Indian students from Tamil

Nadu who go to China to pursue medical degrees, Yang points to the compromises and complicities engaged in by the students and their families in a context where education is the only avenue that provides hope for social mobility, however slim that hope may be. He argues for studying these cases of intra regional student mobility to shed light on how geographical location and social class operate to create new mobilities and their experiences in relation to their emulation of more elite forms of educational mobilities and subjectivities dominated by Anglophone countries (Yang 2018). In the different context of a prominent regional university located in Vietnam, Phan shows us that even universities in Asia market themselves along terms set by the dominance of western universities in the global neoliberal economy. Her study outlines the strategic positioning of a university in Vietnam to market itself as a regional hub of high-quality English language education and curriculum styled on the model of a US education. Phan shows how the university does this by establishing educational alliances with neighboring Philippines, a former US colony, as a source of English language education expertise and recruitment ground for desirable English-speaking student demographics (Phan 2018). The scholarship on international student mobilities, therefore, illustrates the construction of 'international space' in a global neoliberal order as delimited to developed western countries and its regulation by factors such as nationality and class (Waters and Brooks 2022).

My respondent, Saim, was from a middle-class family in Lahore and even though his experience in trying to get into a university in the UK had not been successful thus far, he was still trying to go abroad to a university in a western country for higher education. His exposure to the US via previous travel through his Church had contributed to his desire to study in the west but he told me that his obsession to study abroad (synonymous with the west) had begun

from an early age ever since he had learnt how to use the internet and been exposed to information from around the world. I later realized that one of the reasons Saim had probably agreed to meet with me was because he knew I was studying at a university in the US. At the time we met, he had been unsuccessful in getting admission into a US university but had managed to apply for a short-term leadership exchange program which would enable him to spend 3 months working with different organizations in the US. Saim's example sheds light on a hierarchy of places in the global neoliberal educational landscape, its regulation according to factors such as class, nationality, and religion and the multiple sources that contribute to the imagination of specific places and attachments to them. The predominance of the west as an object of aspiration and desire among young college educated people in Lahore should also be seen in the context of a history of western colonialism and imperialism in the region which was central to the shaping of social structures and projects of education, development, and modernity and the hierarchies upon which they operate (Khoja-Moolji 2018; Mitchell 1988).

Alongside the implicit assumption that going abroad to western countries for higher education was the best option, my respondents, through their narratives, also demonstrated that the United States had the pride of place as the premier destination for higher education. Although the UK offered global scholarship programs such as the Commonwealth and Chevening scholarships, these scholarships were highly competitive, and difficult to navigate in terms of the expenses they covered. I often heard of people getting admitted into a UK university but not being able to go because (a) they were unable to secure funding, (b) they were unable to get a visa, and/or (c) they had gotten a scholarship that did not cover board and lodging and they could not afford living expenses in the UK. In some cases, where people had

relatives in the UK willing to support them, for example letting them live with them so that they would not have to afford rent, or where students were able to secure part time assistantships to keep themselves afloat, students were able to make it to the UK. However, relatives were not always supportive, provided you had some living in Europe in the first place, and in terms of the employment market, Europe was considered to be a smaller market than the United States. In addition to the educational and living expenses in Europe, some countries in Europe also had the added obstacle of a language barrier. Given all these constraints to studying in Europe, the Fulbright Scholarship program for studying in the United States was considered the obvious best choice for pursuing higher education abroad. Fulbright program in Pakistan details and citation. As a respondent expressed, she had six siblings, and her parents could not afford to fund her higher education in any way. Therefore, her only option for studying abroad was the fully funded Fulbright program. The fact that there might be options for fully funded scholarships in other areas of the world did not even cross her mind.

This illustrates that alongside the practical considerations of going abroad to study, due to which the Fulbright program offered by the United States was considered the best option, there were also other ideas that influenced the worldview of my respondents. I had met Noor in my first year as an undergraduate at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), one of Pakistan's most prestigious universities known famously as 'the Harvard of Pakistan'. Having recently moved from the UAE to Pakistan, both of us formed an immediate bond over our common experiences of feeling slightly like a fish out of water. After graduating from LUMS, Noor had applied for the Fulbright scholarship to pursue a master's degree in the US. Since her return to Pakistan, she had been working with different non-governmental organizations and

her most recent employment was with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the capital city of Islamabad. While Noor was initially dismissive of the motivations that had shaped her decision to apply for the Fulbright as just something that she had done under peer pressure, her subsequent confessions revealed to me that she had put much thought into the decision. In addition to the multiple factors that shaped her decision, she added that one of the most obvious motivations for going abroad for education was to have the opportunity to live abroad and experience living in the United States. When I reminded her that she already had had the opportunity to live abroad with much of her life being spent in Dubai, she laughed and asked me with a smile if Dubai was "really abroad". With such large diaspora communities from South Asia in Dubai, it did not feel too far removed from her own cultural and religious background.

Noor's sideways smile and question of whether we could really consider Dubai 'abroad' is further evidence of the tenacity of the hierarchy of places in the global neoliberal educational landscape with the United States and other western countries occupying the top. Vanessa Fong's ethnographic study showed that Chinese international students did not consider even countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, or Qatar as part of the developed world community because they lacked the prestige, power, and geopolitical alliances of the developed world even if they had per capita GDP levels similar to developed countries (Fong 2011). In the context of Pakistan, a Muslim majority country, even though countries like the UAE or Saudi Arabia occupied a significant place in the transnational imaginary due to geographical proximity, association with Muslim identity, and as a hub for South Asian labour migration, these countries were not considered as ideal destinations for higher education. Even though countries in the Persian Gulf had invested in setting up knowledge cities and branches of American universities

called satellite campuses, the education provided at these locations was considered sub standard in comparison to the education you received at universities in the United States.

I prompted Noor to further elaborate on what she meant by Fulbright offering her the opportunity to experience living abroad in America. She explained that more than anything else, it gave her a chance to live life on her own terms. After graduating from LUMS she had found a job in Dubai and returned to live with her family. Her job in a marketing consultancy firm was not something she was passionate about, and she felt that it was far removed from the type of career she wished to establish for herself. Moreover, having lived away from family during her undergraduate studies at LUMS, she wished to have the freedom once more to live life according to her own rules and preferences. Therefore, even though she had access to a super glossy and fancy life in Dubai, something that people associated with the United States, she had still wanted to go to America as she thought that would afford her a very different experience.

This was strikingly similar to what I heard from another respondent when he described his motivation to pursue a PhD from the United States. I had met Latif, a Fulbright PhD student in Planning, Design, and Construction at Michigan State University while I was pursuing my doctorate in Anthropology there. During my fieldwork in Lahore, I found that he was also residing in Lahore at the time to fulfill his 2-year home residency requirement for Fulbright. Latif confessed that even though his elder brother had gotten his PhD from Japan, and he had the opportunity of a scholarship from the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Thailand, which was a reputable institution, he had desired to go to America for his PhD. He reasoned that this was because he wished to get a more wholesome experience than just academic advancement. Even though he had precedents in his family of people going to places like Japan

and Spain for higher education, he desired to go to America. When I inquired as to why he wished to go to America in particular, he replied;

> *LK: "I wanted to go to America, I had other options and more scholarships, but America attracted me I don't know why. Again, maybe because of Hollywood..... There were many implicit reasons or drivers you can say. For example, the faculty members in our university, who were American graduates, apparently looked better, than others. They were better teachers, they were better researchers, they were more uhh presentable. Then America is always thought of as the leader in almost everything. Epi.tome of what you say research, specially in construction they are leaders, so that's another reason. But those are implicit drivers, the only real reason I can think of is that I was pulled towards the culture."*

On investigating further what my respondents meant by the United States offering them a different experience, or an experience more than just higher education, they employed terms in English such as freedom and professionalism to explain what was distinctive about the United States. My respondents used the term freedom to refer to various aspects of their lives. Some used the term to imply freedom from family, especially if they had grown up in large or overprotective families, while others used it to describe the freedom to move about globally, to pursue job opportunities they liked, and to earn enough to have the freedom to do whatever they wanted to do. Oftentimes both ways of using the term freedom to reveal the context specific ways in which my respondents understood freedom. The use of the term freedom by my respondents also needs to be seen in connection with their frequent use of the English word exposure. My respondents implied the word exposure to refer to how going abroad to a western country would enable them to have a different experience. In South Asia the English word exposure is often associated with new experiences, whether it involves going to college or going abroad. Depending on the context, the word exposure is used in multiple ways and implies encountering new ideas and witnessing other ways of living, while it simultaneously

refers to the vulnerability one experiences in feeling exposed without the protection of one's family or the familiarity of one's surroundings. Experiences such as attending university and going abroad were discussed in terms of exposure and were thought to mark rites of passage to their transformation as a person.

Going to western countries that were geographically and culturally distant from Pakistan, particularly the United States, provided the ideal circumstances for gaining distance from family and to therefore experience life without any familial protection and surveillance, and to gain a temporary distance from familial obligations. It was thought that living on one's own abroad in a western country would force one to gain self-sufficiency, not just in financial terms, but also in terms of becoming a responsible adult. Being away from family gave one a chance to experience life on one's own terms and enabled one to grow as an individual. In western countries you had to do everything yourself to function as a responsible adult; you had to cook your own food, clean your own space, earn money to get by, etc. There was no house help to take over the daily labor of cooking and cleaning. If you happened to be someone who did not have family or close friends in these countries, you knew there were no parents to coddle you, no extended family members or friends to come forth in the hour of need. Having to fend for oneself not only helped one to attain maturity but also enabled one to discern one's own likes and dislikes, one's way of doing things, and to think about one's individual dreams and goals in life.

The United States housing majority of the top universities in the world, having an outstanding reputation for being the world leader in higher education, and offering greater opportunities for scholarships and funding, was thereby associated with conferring greater prestige, financial leeway, and thereby social mobility than even other western countries. Its

reputation for being the world leader in scientific research and rigor, and technological innovations, meant that gaining entry to the United States conferred greater prestige compared to other western countries. However, it was not just exemplary higher education that the United States offered but also the possibility of transforming educational credentials into the status of a professional. While other western countries afforded that possibility too, the United States with its reputation of a fast-paced, efficient, ruthless work culture, represented a paragon of professionalism. My respondents, those who had visited the United States and those who had not visited but were contemplating going there, confessed that one of the things that impressed them about the United States was its standard of professionalism. Professionalism meant a 'can do' attitude that put work above everything else. It meant doing whatever it takes to get the work done, making getting the work done the priority, against all other obstacles such as office politics among colleagues and between subordinates and superiors, a lack of institutional resources, encroachment of family life on one's work life, etc. It also implied meritocratic standards for performance evaluation and promotion in the workplace rather than personal connections etc.

Attaining the status of a professional seemed like the natural next step in the journey towards exposure that was initiated for young urban Pakistanis in university/college. Even though my respondents had put much thought into planning for going abroad for higher education, they found it difficult to pinpoint a specific reason which led them to apply. They mentioned that it just seemed the natural next step in life as their peers around them were doing it too. Indeed, it was social media networks such as Facebook university forums and WhatsApp university alumni groups that facilitated the place of my respondents as part of

institutional networks whose members resided in Pakistan as well as abroad. Going abroad for higher education to the United States gave them the opportunity to become financially independent, mobile, and self-sufficient, with the possibility of transforming their educational credentials into the status of a professional. Taking this as a for granted next step in life and dividing their life experiences into before exposure and after clearly signifies how my respondents viewed going abroad as a rite of passage. Going abroad was understood as the gateway to specific experiences that would inculcate in them specific attributes that would enable them to navigate the global economy, whether in Pakistan or abroad. As my respondents emphasized going to the United States was about much more than just academic advancement; it was about individual development and growth and becoming a professional. It was about accessing personhood in a global neoliberal economy i.e. financial independence, flexibility, ease of mobility, self-confidence, individual autonomy, and self-sufficiency;

> *FA: "The reason why I do want to pursue a masters from abroad is 1. because I do want the exposure, my brother went there, a lot of my friends are in foreign universities, and I have actually seen the difference in them. I won't say thinking wise, because like I would say even my thinking is different from a normal Pakistani, an average Pakistani, because I am very privileged because of the sort of schooling that I had, the grooming that I had and the exposure that I had, but I don't think that my thinking has changed too much due to that, but I think the sort of opportunities that come your way and the type of earning that they are doing and I am doing, one conversion itself screws the comparison but even overall if I see,- .....*
> *..... Me, personally, I like my life here, I would just want to have the opportunities and the privilege and the money to do whatever I want and to be able to travel and come back to Pakistan, because I think I am very happy here. So for my masters it's just that I want to get the exposure and I actually want to come back and work in Pakistan. Maybe like if I get to work there and have the experience, sure why not, that would be a good opportunity."*

Scholars writing on global neoliberal personhood have identified the subjection of labour to capital in neoliberalism so that the classical liberal idea of the person as an individual

being a property owner and the owner of his own labour power is now extended to a conception of the individual itself as human capital that needs to be developed, managed, and nurtured (Kingfisher 2002; Makovicky 2014; Brockling 2016; Christiaens 2021). Anthropologists, among other scholars, have pointed to the foundation of the conception of neoliberal personhood as resting on western ideas about the individual as a bounded, self-contained, autonomous, and atomistic element of society (Mauss 1985; Dumont 1970; Alvi 2001), thereby underscoring the emphasis of neoliberal personhood on flexibility, choice, and self-sufficiency (Freeman 2014; Fong 2011; Ong 1999). While we might be tempted to understand the aspirations of young college educated people in Pakistan for the attainment of a global neoliberal personhood in terms of blindly following the west or as a colonization of the mind, interviews with my respondents revealed a more nuanced picture. Not only did my interviewees navigate the demands of a global neoliberal economy in complex ways, but they did so from their situatedness within local and individual contexts and social relationships.

Anthropologist Vanessa Fong identified a similar pattern among Chinese international students and the complex ways they navigate the gain and loss of varied and mutually exclusive 'freedoms' in the developed world and China through transnational migration. Fong highlights the dissonance in the protected and privileged upbringing of the singleton generation in China imbued with developed world aspirations and the immense pressure they face as they are expected to go abroad to advance the family's situation, take on filial care taking obligations, and adhere to the norms and standards of Chinese relationships simultaneously. Thus, the 'freedom' that they desired from the politics and stifling aspects of Chinese relationships by going abroad was offset by the distance, lack of warmth, depth, and support of relationships

abroad (Fong 2011). Like Fong's interlocutors, young college educated people in Lahore desired to go abroad for higher education to gain freedom, not as an abstract philosophical western ideal of the inherent freedom of an individual, but in terms of a certain distance from family and a respite from familial surveillance, protection, and obligations. Most respondents who expressed going abroad to gain freedom from family, however, talked about it as a temporary situation.

This further underlines the concept of going abroad as a rite of passage. Anthropologist Victor Turner's foundational study of the ritual processes of the Ndembu in Zambia outlined rites of passage of a society as being antithetical to normative societal structures. He showed how rites of passage involved the subject living through a liminal period that was marked with ambiguity and transformation, with the subject emerging at the other end as having transitioned from one social status to another (Turner 1995). Thus, going abroad provided temporary freedom, i.e. space from the overbearing family and allowed the individual to take precedence and to learn the capabilities needed to function as a responsible adult. These capabilities involved learning how to function as a self-sufficient adult, the parameters of which were financial stability, emotional resilience, professional status, the capacity to make your own decisions, and the capability to live on one's own. While these capabilities of adulthood in a global neoliberal economy were sought after, they were pursued for the end of being able to take on their role as full persons in the family.

A respondent linked his motivations to go to America for higher education to his life story of growing up with very low self-esteem due to an overprotective environment at home. By way of explanation of how overprotective an environment he had grown up in at home, he

gave the example of his time in college when his classmates would go out to McDonalds together and he would not be allowed to accompany them. Not having much exposure therefore meant that he had very little self-confidence and thought very low of himself, so much so that even though he desired to go to America for higher education, he thought he would never get a scholarship to go study there. After graduating from college, he explained to me that he felt like he was leading an aimless life like the young men in the Pakistani movie *'Slackistan'*. Directed by a Pakistani filmmaker in London, *'Slackistan'* was released at a time when local cinema was being revived in Pakistan. Predominantly known for its popular television drama serials and pop music scene in the region, Pakistani filmmakers began releasing cinematic films to infuse new life into Lollywood as the Urdu and Punjabi language film industry in competition with India's global phenomenon of Bollywood. An Indie genre film, *'Slackistan'* was a story about Islamabad's privileged, westernized youth from elite families that were caught in between their ambitions and desires for developed world lifestyles and careers, and their disconnect from societal issues in mainstream Pakistan. While the film was not popular among Pakistani audiences like other releases of the time, Latif's connection to the film was indicative of the experience that was characteristic of young college educated people in Pakistan whose global desires and ambitions far exceeded what was available to them locally, not least in terms of systematic career counselling and guidance and the difficulty of finding fulfilling employment opportunities in the country. In such a context, therefore, going abroad was necessary for a generation whose access to the very preconditions of adulthood, and by extension the attainment of the status of a full person in the family, was blocked in a global neoliberal order.

Gendered implications for transition to local personhood in a global South Asia

These parameters of global neoliberal personhood encounter the cultural marker of personhood in South Asia: marriage. Culturally, in South Asia, heteronormative marriage forms the basic foundation of a kinship system that is a blueprint for the biological, social, cultural, and material reproduction of society. While historically in the Indian subcontinent, indigenous ideas about sex and gender were much more fluid and accorded space to third gender people, such as hijras, by ascribing them social roles and incorporating them into ritual processes, the inroads made by colonial modernity and the codification of religious traditions in the region, such as Hinduism and Islam, at the level of the nation-state resulted in their marginalization and abuse in society (Nanda 1999). The sex and gender binary is of great significance to normative prescriptions in both Islam and the kinship system and is the basis for patterns of sociality oriented towards gender segregation and homosociality that are intertwined with religious and cultural values such as modesty, sex after marriage, the practice of arranged marriages, etc. Heteronormative marriage, therefore, is not just about gender relations but is the basic foundation for the social and religio-cultural reproduction of society, albeit in gendered ways. Heteronormative marriage in South Asia is therefore a rite of passage for achieving full personhood for both men and women. Once married, young men are allowed to take decisions as they are now considered the patriarch of their new family. Domestic responsibilities and the management of kinship relations are gradually passed down to young married women so that they begin gaining control over integral social structures. However, the institution of marriage in South Asia consists of certain preconditions that need to be met before young people can be considered eligible for marriage. Men should be able to demonstrate that they can provide for

the young woman they are going to marry, and the young woman that she has the capability to undertake domestic duties and the nurturing of familial/kinship relations.

Given that the path to achieving global neoliberal personhood was littered with obstacles and could often become long drawn out, college educated women in Lahore who were contemplating on going abroad for higher education, expressed considerable consternation when trying to chart out their future. After completing her Masters in Development Studies from Information Technology University, Seher recalled how she felt that for the next major step in life, she could either gain further higher education by pursuing a PhD or she could get married and settle down. She recalled how she felt stuck between these two options. Seher's dilemma is emblematic of the consternation of many young college educated women I spoke with during my research. Education as an ideal in South Asia and as a gateway to achieving global personhood in the contemporary neoliberal economy, seemed to be in friction, particularly for women, with the attainment of the foundational cultural marker of personhood in South Asia, i.e. marriage. It was her sister who helped her think through her approach to this dilemma by advising her to work with what she had available to her right now. Applying for graduate school was within her reach and so she should continue to work on that while her parents could continue to work on finding a good match for her.

The concern regarding higher education and marriage was echoed by another young woman respondent in Lahore in her mid-twenties. Faiza, majoring in economics from Forman Christian College (FCC), was a good friend of my younger sister from her days in school and college. I had met Faiza at various times, but the meeting had always been fleeting or under different contexts such as her visit to our house to meet my sister, or her attendance at the

wedding of our elder sister. After graduating from FCC, Faiza was now working at a human rights start up organization that was run by a team of young professional lawyers. This time, with the understanding of meeting for an interview for my research, Faiza and I decided to meet at Johar Town, a popular commercial area known for its markets and restaurants catering to residents of Lahore at this end of the city. I was surprised to find that Second Cup, a Canadian restaurant and coffee shop chain, had now opened a branch at Johar Town, a commercial area known to be frequented by people from the middle class in Lahore compared to more elite areas like Gulberg or Defence.

While talking with Faiza, I asked her to describe her experience of getting rejected by the Fulbright program. She revealed that the rejection had not really bothered her that much as she felt that her current status as employed and work with a human rights startup was meaningful enough for her to feel like she was living a fulfilling life. She confessed, though, that if she got a rejection from Fulbright a second time, she would be affected much more as many of her friends had now gone abroad and pursued higher studies and progressed in their professional careers. She illustrated the mismatch between her parent's expectations for her to attain a Master's degree, even if from Pakistan, and ideally before marriage, and her own desire for pursuing a Master's Degree from abroad even if she had to wait longer to pursue that path. If she got rejected by Fulbright a second time, she knew that the pressure to get married would mount.

The education of women has always been a much-deliberated concern in South Asia and can be traced to the colonial era and the tightening of British rule over the subcontinent. Drawing upon a wide variety of archival sources from colonial India, Shenila Khooja-Moolji

illustrates the centrality of education to the British colonial project (Khoja-Moolji 2018). Education was instrumental to the formation of a workforce for an expanding British bureaucracy, and the creation of a native elite who would serve as the middlemen between the British rulers and the people they governed. This class of people were defined by Thomas Macauley, the British politician known for making the case for western education in the subcontinent, as "...a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." (Khoja-Moolji 2018) With the replacement of Persian and Urdu with English as the administrative language, and the marginalization of the ruling Muslim nobility in the public sphere, the home and family became a site for the reconfiguration of Muslim identity and the norms of respectability that characterized 'ashraf' (Arabic word translated as most honorable one, noble one, or distinguished one) Muslims. Furthermore, the focus of the British on saving Muslim women from their own backward traditions and culture, as an integral rationalization for the colonial mission, defined the parameters of the discourse with which Muslim social reformers, both men and women, then engaged and negotiated in their efforts to redefine their place in the new social order (Khoja-Moolji 2018).

As Muslim men ventured forth to attain western education and to participate in the new ruling structure of the British Raj, the onus of reproducing the community, biologically and culturally, fell on Muslim women. The education of Muslim women, therefore, became an important social project within Muslim communities which deliberated on what Muslim women were to be educated about, how was this education to be imparted, where was this education to take place, and to what ends was this education to be directed (Khoja-Moolji 2018). While varied positions were taken by different social reformers, some advocating for western

education while others calling for women to be educated in the religious sciences, and still others requiring only basic literacy and domestic skills, there was an overarching sentiment that the goal of education for Muslim women was to be able to put that education towards the service of the family and community.

After the partition of the subcontinent into modern nation-states, the education of women became tied to the agenda of reproducing (biologically and culturally) the national community and the creation of a workforce for the expansion and development of the national economy. The creation of a workforce for national development in the race to gain international prominence meant the explosion of educational institutes across South Asia/Pakistan oriented towards the formation of a unified population educated in basic literacy, western sciences, the basic tenets of Islam, statist narratives of the country's history, and the official languages of Pakistan; Urdu and English. In creating the discursive conditions for the Muslim worker as citizen-subject, Shenila Khan Moolji draws attention to the differentiated terms in which this subject position was articulated by the Pakistani state for middle class women. The explosion of educational institutes and the initiation of women into the workforce was justified in the cultural and affective registers of a statist discourse on kinship which circumscribed and regulated their entry into the public space, giving meaning to their work lives outside of the house only in terms of its use to the family or country (Khoja-Moolji 2018).

This does not mean that young men were free from the imperatives of duty to family and country, but rather that the ways in which duties to the family and country came to be defined were in highly gendered ways, indicating the differential positions allotted to women and men in the reproduction of society and subsequently the differential consequences faced

by them during times of societal and cultural transformations. Going abroad for higher education made the road to an arranged marriage also difficult for young men. Even if they happened to be on a fully funded program, the stipends provided for higher education were scarcely enough to sustain a family. In cases where there was an expectation for men to support family members in Pakistan, it became all the more difficult for men to have sufficient income to support their family by marriage. Nevertheless, gaining higher education abroad bestowed them with a favourable estimation different from that accorded to or expected from women, as it signalled future/deferred financial success.

Going abroad to earn money; changing class configurations in Lahore and varied orientations to global neoliberal personhood

In addition to in-depth interviews that I was able to conduct with college educated men and women within my personal and professional networks, I was also able to gain insights from a very different demographic via Facebook. Through the Facebook page advertising a call for participants for my research, I was able to get connected with people who hailed from various parts of Pakistan but were now living, studying, and/or working in Lahore. Moreover, my interaction with these participants was limited to a short semi-formal interview on the phone. I was surprised to find Junaid, belonging to the village of Ghotki in Sindh, studying so far from home at Leeds University in Lahore. When I inquired why he had not decided to study closer to home in the metropolitan city of Karachi, he replied that although he had been able to secure admission in a university there, Leeds University in Lahore was giving him a 50% scholarship which made it the obvious first choice. He confessed that although he had initially not been interested in studying, as he had wanted to play cricket and make his way into professional

sports, he wanted to honor his father's wish that he pursue formal education. His father's business selling wheat in Pakistan had suffered a huge loss due to which his father had gone abroad to work as a laborer in Saudi Arabia to earn money to support the family. Now, he too, wished to go abroad and hoped to bring education to his village in Sindh. I was surprised at how quickly his orientation towards formal education had changed despite his earlier confession of being passionate about professional sports. He now considered formal education and the provision of health services as a foundation of everyday life, and explained to me how these were out of reach for the common man in Pakistan. To access these facilities in Pakistan, he reasoned, the common man had to go abroad to earn money.

Bilal, a 23 year old economics student at Forman Christian College (FCC), belonged to a landowning family from the village of Hafizabad. When I asked him why, despite possessing land, people in his family felt the need to go abroad to earn money, he elaborated on the various circumstances that had led his uncles abroad. One of his uncles belonged to a family of four brothers, and since 3 of them were taking care of the land, he felt that he was free to take up the opportunity to go abroad to earn some money. Another uncle, my respondent explained, had only limited acres of land from which to earn a living. Moreover, he had been unsuccessful in finding people to farm the land for him, leading him to give the land for rent and endeavor to try his luck abroad. Despite his family having land, and gaining a subsistence living from it, it was not sufficient to access the modern everyday needs of education and health. Like Junaid, Bilal reasoned that it was necessary for people to migrate from Pakistan to sustain their families back home and enable their access to good universities and health services. Indeed, a respondent who was originally from Jhelum but was now studying in Lahore stated that in his

village there were three main pathways to earning a comfortable income: getting into the Army, securing a government sector job, or going abroad.

'Aam aadmi' (an Urdu term translated in English as the common man) is a popular trope in political discourse in Pakistan that indexes the ordinary, honest, hardworking, pure citizen who has no influential connections to leverage benefits and protection from people, groups, and institutions in power. The figure of the 'aam aadmi' is used as a foil against the corrupt political government and elite, and works to unite the citizenry into a collective body obscuring distinctions of class, ethnicity, religion, caste, etc. (Glegziabher 2016). Hence, political discourse in Pakistan revolves around addressing elite capture of the nation-state, critiquing dynastic politics and the amassment of wealth by a few prominent families. These families, in partnership with each other, maintain a strong hold on the government, industry, and even the military, thereby effectively taking control as the ruling elite. Marxist models of class politics still reign supreme in political and social discourse in Pakistan, whereby the common man has characteristics of the proletariat class as a class of people devoid of access to the means of production and only having their labor power to sell. While political discourse in Pakistan often centers on the laborer and farmer as the common man, i.e. 'aam aadmi', of the country in need of state protection, the term 'aam aadmi' in public discourse has increasingly come to encompass citizens of Pakistan for whom it is a struggle to gain access to the central means of production, as well as safeguards, for workers in the global neoliberal economy i.e. education and health. Land not being sufficient as a means of production points to the diversification of the country's economy where going abroad becomes necessary to earn the economic capital needed to access formal education in Pakistan. Admittance into formal educational institutes

serves as a guarantee of becoming a skilled person, the degree received on graduation as a legitimation and proof of one's skill, securing entry into the global neoliberal economy. Access to health services was also a significant concern as the skilled worker needed to be in good health to be a productive force in the global economy.

Many people whom I was able to connect with through Facebook had experienced the effects of migration via their father's migration to places like Oman and Saudi Arabia to find work as labourers or construction workers. From this I surmise that many of my respondents belonged to families which made up a significant part of Pakistan's transnational working class. In addition to respondents whose families lived in smaller towns and villages outside Lahore, and who had moved to the city in recent years to pursue education, my respondents from Facebook also included those who hailed from areas outside of Lahore but were nevertheless settled and working in the city for a long time. Respondents from this latter demographic were working professionals in Lahore and explicitly identified themselves as people belonging to the middle class. This fits with Ammara Maqsood's study of the emergence of a new middle class in Lahore. Maqsood sees the new middle class as comprising families that belonged to other areas but had settled in Lahore only a generation ago. With the retreat of the older established middle class, known as the upper or upper middle class in local parlance, into the privatized sphere, the new middle class took up salaried positions in the government sector and found their way into jobs such as university professors, engineers, technicians, and smaller businesses. Maqsood elaborates on how this new middle class constructed a global Muslim personhood to bypass the influence and global linkages of the upper class to claim their belonging in Pakistan (Maqsood 2017).

Regardless of the specificity of their background as recent migrants to Lahore belonging to rural families, or as people who considered themselves as middle class, my respondents from Facebook spoke about their motivations for earning money abroad more generally in terms of supporting their families. My respondents from Facebook, being from very different socio-economic backgrounds compared to respondents I had fielded from my own limited in person network in Lahore, illustrated the differences in life experiences and concerns around going abroad for different classes. One did not go abroad to gain temporary distance from family for the sake of individual improvement, but rather went abroad to earn money to support family in Pakistan. Furthermore, going abroad was articulated in terms of 'majboori' (an Urdu word translated into English as force of circumstances). Going abroad therefore was given meaning in terms of the failure of the state in Pakistan to provide a basic living to its citizens and forcing them to seek their livelihoods elsewhere. Despite seeing going abroad in terms of the failure of the state, it was still seen as a temporary endeavor which would enable them to return with capital to put towards the service of family and nation. Hence, it was not just for supporting family that one went abroad in the imaginary of this group of respondents, but one went abroad also to earn money that one could then invest in business in Pakistan upon return. Whether in service of family or nation, these respondents justified going abroad in terms of a cause larger than themselves. Furthermore, as they recounted their thoughts about going abroad, they often emphasized their identity as Muslims and employed religio-cultural ideas to sanction their motivations for going abroad to non-Muslim western countries. Thus, among my Facebook respondents going abroad was not about reaching for a global neoliberal personhood. Rather it was about making it in the global neoliberal economy to access resources that would

enable them to achieve local personhood.

Ammara Maqsood in her study of the new middle class in Pakistan draws attention to the emergence of a new demographic, which due to a limited disposable income, is able to gain a foothold in modern urban life in Pakistan. Through her ethnographic study of this demographic in Lahore, she outlines local class politics in urban Pakistan where this new middle class tries to construct belonging in a globalizing world in relation to the established old middle class. With the shrinking space of the established old middle class in the country's public sphere, the old middle class known as the upper middle class in local parlance, participated in a collective discourse of nostalgia about Pakistan's golden past. This nostalgic version of the country's past was a sanitized vision that was contrasted with the religious intolerance and extremism of the present, a decline they traced to the period of Islamization during the rule of the military general Zia-ul-Haq. To bypass this narrative and to claim their growing space within urban life in Pakistan, the new middle class drew upon a global Muslim identity to display their connections to the outside world and to craft a competing moral claim to belonging within Pakistan. Although the new middle class centered religion in their identity, Maqsood urges us to understand the aspiration towards a global Muslim personhood within the context of local class politics and a history of colonial modernity. Hence, being a global Muslim, for the new middle class in Pakistan, was inflected with modernist ideals as they emphasized rationalism, education, progressivism, and the search for an authentic/true Islam (Maqsood 2017).

Ahsan, a man in his late twenties who had graduated with a degree in Pharmacy, informed me that he had several relatives abroad in different countries such as the US, Canada, UK, and Norway. His cousins in Norway and the US were both pharmacists like him and had

gone abroad on the basis of their professional career, a route that allowed for easier access to going abroad than the actual immigration process. He illustrated knowledge about the process for pursuing a profession in pharmacy in different countries, comparing the language requirement in Norway to the lack thereof of one in Canada where you had to go through the tougher path of obtaining a relevant Masters degree before you could become a professional. I was amazed at his in-depth comparative knowledge and assumed he had obtained this knowledge in the hopes of moving abroad himself. I inquired what going abroad meant for him, and he responded that it meant to go somewhere, like the US or UK, for some time, to earn some money. He went on to further qualify that from a religious and political perspective, places like the US and UK were not safe for Muslims in future. Therefore, one could only conclude that we go abroad, earn money, and then return to Pakistan and put our portion towards serving the country. When I followed this up with why he was only considering going to western countries, there were Muslim countries he could look towards as well, he emphatically explained that he had first considered going to Turkey, but they had rejected his visa. He recalled the humiliation he had felt when Turkish state officials had stamped a rejection on his green passport;

> *AA:* "*I felt so much sorrow that see we love Turkey so much but today they refused me just because of a spelling mistake. I felt so angry at our foreign ministry that what type of policies they have made. There used to be a time when the Usmani sultanate ruled much of the world, no one dared refuse an Usmani entry into their country. So foreign policy should be such that even if you are taking a green passport to the US, no one dare even question you. So our foreign policy should be made by a think tank who work day and night to make Pakistan stable and to make it a big power*."

My respondent's narrative unravels the multiple discourses within which he finds meaning and lives out his life. His first preference of moving to a Muslim country was shaped by

his identification as a Pakistani Muslim linked to a global community of Muslims. He imagined this global community in terms of a nostalgia for the time when Muslim empires ruled the world (even though he had never experienced it directly). As a Pakistani Muslim, his identification with a global Muslim personhood had been shaken when his entry had been barred by a fellow Muslim country such as Turkey, leading him to a realization that being Muslim was not sufficient to access a global Muslim personhood. Being a Pakistani Muslim meant that you were still at a disadvantage in a globalizing world. He expressed his anger at the country's foreign policy and its failure to enable Pakistan to garner a respectable reputation on the global stage, contrasting this with the power of the Usmani Muslim sultanate and the ability of its residents to move without hindrance around the world. Even though his visa to Turkey had been refused, he spoke with a sense of the west vs. Muslims, stating that Pakistan's foreign policy should be such that even if you took a green passport to the United States, no one dared question it.

Now that his visa to Turkey had been refused, the next option was to look for where his degree had the most scope. In South Asia, the English term scope is commonly used to infer the employment possibilities related to a specific degree/field of study. Canada was his choice of destination now as the daily wage for pharmacists in Canada was more than what pharmacists were earning in other countries. When I followed this up with the morally laden question of whether people should go abroad, he replied that people were compelled to by force of circumstances. He used the Urdu term 'majboori' to indicate a lack of choice. Therefore, it was imperative to go abroad to earn well and there were even Islamic injunctions that deemed it justifiable to travel the world to find one's livelihood/sustenance. It was because this was a belief ingrained into Muslims that anyone who went abroad from Pakistan worked hard and as a

result earned good money. He gave the example of a cousin who wasted his time and his father's money loitering around when he was in Pakistan but became very hard working abroad to the extent that he was now able to run the expenses of the household himself! Hence, going abroad was religiously sanctioned and it was due to this Islamic belief that people who went abroad did well.

The Encyclopedia of Islam defines the literal meaning of the word 'rizq' in Arabic as "anything granted by someone to someone else as a benefit", hence "bounty, sustenance, nourishment"(Bosworth and McAuliffe 2012). As a theological concept in Islam 'rizq' is understood as that which sustains life and health, in other words it is thought of as sustenance that is a provision from God. In the Quran, the work 'rizq' or God's sustenance refers broadly to general good things or provisions or more specifically to things like fruit and livestock. It is significant that Ahsan used the concept of 'rizq' in relation to migration, a narrative that seems at odds with the discourse of the global racial system/global neoliberal order. Junaid Rana in his book *'Terrifying Muslims; Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora'* sheds light on a global racial system in which the trope of the Muslim is a racial trope that not only fixes the Muslim extremist in place but also subsumes the transnational working-class laborer with the referent/signifier migrant. He states that migrant laborers are the foremost commodity traded in the global economy. Transnational workers are part of an imperial global economy where their value depends on where they are from and who they are as a population (e.g. working class laborers or professional workers) (Rana 2011). Although we can see how the discursive conditions of the global racial system reify and fix Ahsan's identity as a Pakistani Muslim migrant, he employs a more capacious religious understanding to find meaning in the act of

going abroad.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how college educated women and men in Lahore see going abroad for education as enabling their ability to experience life in the west, ideas about which were shaped by their encounter with different actors and images that represented life in the west in Pakistan. They frame going abroad as the gateway to attaining the status of adulthood and the status of a professional by gaining temporary distance from familial protection and obligations in Pakistan. For middle class respondents in Lahore, going abroad for financial earnings is justified via religious injunctions and is seen as a means to an end, the end being to better the lot of one's family and country. However, despite these differences across socio-economic groups, both my middle class and upper middle class interviewees consistently discussed going abroad in terms of a temporary endeavor; they claim that returning to Pakistan is the desired end point for the sake of kin and one's obligations towards kin. This ambivalence about settling abroad demonstrates the dissonance people feel in their quest for global and local personhood across class-based groups in contemporary Pakistan.

CHAPTER 4: PAKISTAN AS THE PLACE OF KINSHIP

Introduction

This chapter begins by looking at the experiences and narratives of people in the city of Lahore whose relatives had moved abroad. It illustrates how the departure of kin abroad altered the experience of place for people living in Pakistan and the strategies they employed to reconfigure their relationship to Pakistan as place in the absence of kin. It demonstrates how people in Pakistan make meaning of it as the place of kinship, and craft their relationship to it via a logic of kinship that speaks to the social, cultural, biological, and material aspects of everyday life. The chapter also narrates the experience of attaining and surrendering a green card for the United States of America to evoke a visceral encounter with US Empire and underscore the place of Pakistan in a global neoliberal order. Thereafter, this chapter turns to the narratives and experiences of diasporic visitors and return migrants to Pakistan to illustrate how they make their place in Pakistan as a result of the social and cultural isolation they experience in western countries.

Holding on to personhood and place in a globalizing world

Maryam was a Masters in Philosophy (MPhil) student studying political science at the University of the Punjab in Lahore. An acquaintance at Information Technology University (ITU), the institute where I was teaching for a semester, had referred her to me after hearing about my research project. Maryam had given me specific directions to find my way around once inside the premises of the University of the Punjab. With Fayaz uncle driving the car, we entered through gate number three, the security guard at the entrance giving us a swift nod to go on ahead after the generic response Maryam had directed me to give in response to his inquiry

about where we were going; “To the department of political science”. We stopped in front of a blue building which Maryam had said was the education department and where she would be waiting to walk me over to her own department. I called her as I got out of the car and noticed a woman dressed in a black abaya heading towards me. It was exceptionally hot in Lahore that day and I was glad to find respite from the scorching heat as we entered into the shaded hallways of the political science department. Maryam located a small empty classroom where we grabbed a table and two chairs to sit down to talk. With the university experiencing load shedding, government regulated power outages to manage electricity supply during hot summer months, our voices echoed in the absence of background noise save for the distant clamor of students talking and laughing together.

I found Maryam to be a driven 23 year old woman focused on achieving her goals for attaining a higher education and a lively, forthcoming person to speak with. Originally from Gujrat, she lived with her family in Lahore in a joint family system with her two younger paternal uncles and their families. However, her paternal uncles had now moved abroad, one now lived in Dubai and the other in Germany. Her maternal grandmother’s house was also in Lahore where they would visit frequently and stay overnight when her maternal aunt and uncles visited from abroad. Her maternal aunt lived in Dubai, while her maternal uncles lived in South Africa. She considered her family to belong to the middle class as her father’s carpet business was only seasonally profitable and had suffered during the Covid-19 pandemic to the point that they were only able to afford the expenses for her own and her brother’s education because her brother had recently begun working.

I was surprised to find that despite relatives moving abroad and experiencing the

breakup of the joint family system she used to live in, she clung to the idea that what set Pakistan apart as a place was its family system and its family values. By family system, Maryam was referring to the joint family, a family configuration popular in particular classes in South Asia emerging from patterns of patrilocality where the husband and his wife live with, or close to, his family by blood. Although she did not refer to the family system in these specific technical terms, she described what a family system meant to her in terms of her experience of living with her paternal uncles, and her observations of the care extended to her maternal grandmother by her maternal uncles. The family system was for her a system in which relatives living together were a source of mutual support and care for one another in the intricacies of everyday life. For example, my respondent stated that she missed having her paternal uncle around ever since he had moved abroad. He used to live with them and would be there for little things like taking her to the doctor when she felt ill, especially if her father was busy with something else at that time. Furthermore, she explained how her maternal uncles living in South Africa alternated living every other year with their mother in Pakistan so that one of them could manage their business in South Africa while the other was in Pakistan with their aged mother.

She confessed that digital media had made it easier to stay connected with family members who had moved abroad so that you did not feel their daily absence too much. Furthermore, when it was time for family members abroad to visit Pakistan, there was a lot of excitement and preparation in anticipation of their arrival and the time that would be spent together. Whenever her uncles, aunts, and cousins visited, the whole house felt like it was alive with the comings and goings of people. It was only when the time came for them to leave again

that you acutely felt a melancholic atmosphere descend. This atmosphere lingered in the house long after they were gone so that the house felt lifeless and empty until a return to daily routine life dulled the sadness. However, even though you became busy in daily life, it was on occasions such as Eid or a wedding in the family that you acutely felt the absence of family that was abroad. When I inquired whether she herself would ever like to go abroad, Maryam explained that she would do anything to progress in her education, but with the condition that she was able to return to Pakistan where she had her family and friends. Although she did not see settling abroad as a goal in her life, if she did settle abroad, she would want to have her family near her, especially those family members that meant a lot to her like her father and mother.

In talking about the migration of relatives abroad and the possibility of settling abroad herself, Maryam moved from a valuation of the joint family as a cultural ideal in Pakistan to the togetherness of the immediate natal nuclear family as a necessary basic condition of living abroad. She, therefore, moved from a nostalgic yearning for the joint family in Pakistan to expressing a hopeful desire for the presence of immediate family members near her if she happened to settle abroad. In South Asia, personhood is predicated upon an individual being part of a family. In other words, an individual can only be considered a person in society (i.e. be socially recognized) through their relation, quite literally, to other individuals with whom they share a common substance. The preservation and maintenance of these familial relationships and 'the family system' that they form is therefore an integral social and cultural value, and ideal, in South Asia. By referring to the family system and family values in Pakistan, therefore, Maryam meant being obligated towards people to whom you are related and taking care of them and vice versa. In lamenting the breakup of the joint family in Pakistan and pleading for

the presence of her immediate family abroad, Maryam was not just moaning the loss of a family system or family values. Rather she was attempting to define the conditions, in a globalizing world, for the fulfillment of an integral part of her personhood.

This association between feeling happy when relatives from abroad came to Pakistan for a visit, and feeling sad when they left, was echoed in conversations with other respondents as well. With my mother's help, I arranged a meeting with Nadia aunty, the mother of my younger sister's friend from her time at university in Lahore. Nadia aunty had four children, the eldest two daughters were studying and working abroad, one in the UK and the other in the US, while the younger son and daughter lived with her in Lahore along with her husband and mother-in-law. Despite the absence of people who were the connecting link between the two families (her daughter in the UK and my sister in the US completing their masters degrees), Nadia aunty and my mother met with great fondness and chatted enthusiastically about their children. By their lifestyle, the size of their house, and a glance at the residential area where they lived, I judged their family to be a middle-class family whose fortune varied according to the profitability of the business that Nadia aunty's husband managed.

In recounting the different factors that had led to her daughters going abroad, Nadia aunty confessed that she had been greatly encouraged by her sisters who lived in the UK and US to let her daughters go abroad for higher education. Her sisters had reassured her that they were there to support her daughters if they needed help with anything. Persuaded that her daughters would not be alone abroad, Nadia aunty had reinforced their desire to go abroad for higher education. She explained to me that she had done this for her daughters' betterment as by studying and working abroad they would gain self-sufficiency and would learn how to live

as independent, financially stable adults. However, Nadia aunty had underestimated how much she would miss her daughters. Her daughter, Maham, had returned twice to Pakistan in the first year that she had left for the United States because the family had been very sad without her. Thereafter, Maham continued to visit at least once a year. Every year when the time came for her to visit, the whole family felt elated and excited as they awaited her presence:

> *ST: "What happens when she comes?"*
> *NA (smiling): "She is also very happy, over here the countdown begins, and the entire family is very excited, like my youngest daughter Fatima here, and it feels like in our house, in the real sense, some Eid or time of happiness is now coming. The time that she is here, I don't even feel it, I do not even feel moody or angry, only the happiness of her*."

Eid in Islam is a festival which commemorates the end of Ramadan, a month where Muslims engage in the practice of fasting, abstinence from food, drink, and sex, from dawn to dusk every day. While Ramadan is considered a blessed/sacred month in the Islamic calendar, it is also recognized as a strenuous month which not only alters sleep and dietary patterns, but also requires the stringent practice of religious rituals and adherence to Islamic codes of conduct for everyday life. The coming of Eid signals the end of a tough month and is traditionally celebrated as a day spent visiting family and friends and eating together. Comparing her daughter's return to the coming of Eid illustrates how her absence proved to be a trial for the whole family, her departure bringing in a season of heartache and her return bringing a season of joy, ease, and satisfaction. When I asked Nadia aunty what happens when she leaves, she confessed that a sort of *emptiness* did seep in, but she dealt with it by reasoning with herself that daughters had to leave home after getting married anyway. Daughters upon marriage were expected to become absorbed into the husband's family and to live with them, leading Nadia aunty to reason that facing this separation with her daughters was inevitable. Hence, not only did the

presence of supportive kin members abroad persuade her to send her daughters abroad for higher education, but she also rationalized the separation from her daughters that this decision would entail via a logic based on kinship.

During the interview, when I tried to explore whether the migration of her sisters had had an effect on her life, she responded:

> *NA: "There was. There was because over here you visit your sisters, if she has any problem or you have any problem, you share with each other, so these things do come in. The house of your near and dear blood relations- the other relatives you only meet them sometimes right whether at a function or if there is a special gathering and everyone gets together- but relations like brother and sister are those where your coming and going is always there. So this difference has definitely come in, but even then I say when I talk to my sister or when she comes and stays over, recently my sister from London came and stayed for 2 months, that is a very good time, we enjoy a lot. Maybe then you get that tonic for the whole year*."

As her sisters lived abroad, for most of the year she incorporated them into her daily life by chatting with them on WhatsApp after dinner every day. When they came to visit, she tried to make the most of the time she had to spend in the physical presence of her sisters. Like most of my respondents who relayed their experience of the time when their diasporic relatives would make return visits to Pakistan, Nadia aunty also recalled this time with her sisters as a time of great enjoyment and fun. They would go shopping together, eat out at restaurants, have sleepovers at their parental home, gossip about family politics, and share and listen to each other's troubles. Although digital media enabled Nadia aunty to practice kinship in virtual space, the physical presence of her sisters allowed her another modality of doing kinship that was experienced more vigorously than their interactions online allowed. Hence, she described being with them during the time they visited Pakistan as a time when kinship bonds were reinvigorated, renewing her strength and energy to carry on for the rest of the year till the time

came for her sisters to visit again.

Even as Nadia aunty described how the minutiae of everyday life had changed for her since her sisters' migration, she claimed that for herself she found it difficult to leave Pakistan as it was the place where she had her relatives and where her everyday social life revolved around visiting them every other day. I was surprised to hear this considering she was one of three sisters and the only one now left in Pakistan. I prodded her to further explain why she found it difficult to leave Pakistan:

> *ST: "What do you mean by one's own country?"*
> *NA: "Pakistan. One's own Pakistan."*
> *ST: "What do you associate with that?"*
> *NA: "For me, maybe it's the feelings that we associate with this, with our relatives and the love that is spread with meeting each other and all the comings and goings, these things, maybe we are a sensitive people that we consider these things more like meeting with each other, staying connected to each other. But the kids from their point of view say that meeting each other can happen over there as well. The friends circle, you have that over there as well. On the weekends when everyone is free, you can meet each other there as well. Maybe this is something about owning it, once you own this…but with me this experience has not yet happened, maybe when I go there and live and see, maybe my perspective will also change. But for the time being, I am happy in my Pakistan only. I miss kids also, sometimes I also think why did I send them, but then I think no I think I did good, I am not going to stay with them all my life, that for the future maybe these are better decisions. The rest whatever Allah does, may He do it for the better."*

Although both her sisters were abroad, I found out that her mother lived just a few streets away and Nadia aunty paid her a visit almost daily. Moreover, many of her relatives from her family by marriage also lived in Lahore and they all got opportunities to meet each other at family events and dinners. Hence, in making meaning of Pakistan as place and constructing her relationship to it, Nadia aunty considered Pakistan as the place where she had relatives, and where meeting each other and staying connected to each other, regularly and frequently, was practiced and valued. While her daughters argued that meeting each other frequently was also a possibility

abroad where your friends were like your family and got together on the weekends when everyone gained a respite from the daily grind, Nadia aunty admitted that she had not yet experienced this abroad. Maybe her perspective might change if she lived abroad for a longer time but for now she was happy and content with living in Pakistan. Her daily social life in Pakistan was also punctuated with the exceptionally busy time periods when her sisters would visit from abroad and meeting relatives and spending maximum time together would take priority over everything else. The time of diasporic return visits can therefore be understood as a suspended time period when kinship practices went into overdrive and people experienced a euphoria associated with the coming together of family members. Thus, her daily social life in Pakistan ordered around kin who were still in Pakistan, and the affect of family generated during her sisters' and daughters' return visits enabled Nadia aunty to construct a meaningful relationship to Pakistan as a place. For her, Pakistan was not only a place where she had her kin, it was also a place that enabled the doing of kinship.

The place of Pakistan in a global neoliberal order

Ideas about Pakistan as the place of kinship were reiterated by other people I spoke with during fieldwork. My father connected me with the daughter of a professional acquaintance, someone who I found had graduated from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) like myself. On meeting Aima, I found another point of connection in that she was also the best friend of my brother-in-law's cousin. Aima's story of giving up her green card resonated with the story of my own family where my parents had gotten a green card after I had sponsored them, but had then decided to surrender it due to the expense involved in trying to keep it validated if you were unable to settle permanently in the United States. Aima explained

how her paternal aunt had sponsored them from the United States when she was little and how they had always known that someday their green card would come. However, the arrival of their green cards had always remained a thought in the background as it was never explicitly spoken about or discussed in the family. Nor had it ever, Aima stated, factored in any major life decisions they had taken as a family.

When their green cards had come through, they had gone to visit their relatives in the United States, and stayed there for two months. However, they had treated it more like a vacation rather than going with the intention to settle down as they were doing well in Pakistan. Her father's business was based in Pakistan and it was running well. At the time their green cards arrived, she was in the middle of her Cambridge O Level education and her brother was completing his degree in electrical engineering from FAST National University, a well renowned IT university in Lahore. Therefore, at that time they had not had any reason to consider moving to the United States. For the sake of maintaining their green cards they had made another visit to the United States, but thereafter upon returning to Pakistan had decided to give them up. Only her brother, who at that time was about to graduate from university, retained his green card and moved to the United States to pursue a master's degree.

A green card refers to the document that grants you legal status as a permanent resident in the United States. Depending on the specific context, to transform this legal status from a permanent resident to a citizen of the United States requires a certain time period of continuous residence in the country. It can take anywhere between 3 to 5 years to be considered eligible to apply for citizenship. To maintain a period of continuous residency on a green card, you are not allowed to stay outside the United States for more than 6 months. For

families like Aima's, therefore, maintaining their green cards meant spending on 4 roundtrip flight tickets from Pakistan to the United States every year, a considerable expense that could only be borne if you had sufficient financial capital. In addition to the expense of maintaining their green cards, other factors at the time also led Aima and her parents to decide to turn in their green cards. Given her father's age and settled business in Pakistan, he was not prepared to leave everything in Pakistan and start from scratch in the United States. Aima also confessed that although she had many extended relatives in America and had spent time with them during her visits there, she had not been able to form strong bonds with her cousins, aunts, and uncles in the United States as there seemed to be little common ground between them. Furthermore, she had her ALevel exams just a few months away and with her brother planning to go to the United States for his master's degree, she felt that at least one child needed to stay with the parents, a kinship duty she professed that she had taken upon herself without anyone having asked. The lack of connection with relatives abroad, the difficulty in going to the United States for a visit with her A Levels exams just around the corner, her brother's impending departure to the United States for higher education, and her parents deciding to stay in Pakistan were the circumstances that converged at that point in time, resulting in her decision to surrender her green card.

As I spoke with Aima about handing over her green card to the US consulate in Pakistan, I realized that both of us discussed this experience in terms of giving up or surrendering her green card, illustrating the discursive conditions which structured the acquisition of a green card. Indeed, as she narrated her experience of surrendering her green card, the embodiment of these discursive conditions came through in full force in many different forms. First, it was

the female immigration officer at the US consulate who had asked her parents to step back as she tried to investigate if Aima was being pressured to give up her green card. Aima's description of the time at the US consulate evoked parallels with a hostage situation where her parents were treated as if they were holding Aima against her will. The discursive conditions under which immigration to the United States operated could only be expressed in the language of wanting a green card, it was unthinkable that someone would want to return it, and if someone did, they were not doing it of their own free will. The female officer offered to extend the date of entry for her by a month to give her time to reassess her decision, telling Aima that she had kids her age and therefore knew the kind of opportunities that a green card would open up for a young person like her from a country such as Pakistan. Migrating to the United States could only affect her life in positive ways, providing her with greater and better opportunities than she could ever dream of as a young woman in a third world country such as Pakistan.

Lila Abu-Lughod has pointed to the imperial discourse espoused by the United States about saving Muslim women to justify the military invasion of Afghanistan (Abu-Lughod 2002). Aima's encounter with the immigration officer brings forth the omnipresence of this global imperial discourse in not just framing military conquest by the United States, but also setting the terms in which immigration to the United States is considered permissible. Even though she knew that the female immigration officer was speaking with good hearted intentions and watching out for her interests as an individual, the officer's patronization of Aima's relationship with her parents and her foregone conclusion that Aima was being forced by them to give up her green card had seemed like an affront. The officer's demeanor had insinuated that the kinship bond between parents and children in Pakistan was necessarily authoritarian and that

children did not have a voice of their own. This had greatly troubled Aima, and she recalled how at that time standing at the window in the American consulate had suddenly made her doubt her own decision for a moment. She shared with me how no one understood the choice she had made. Her decision had even seemed odd to her peers at LUMS who had said that she was *insane* to have given up her green card, demonstrating the internalization and active reinforcement of an imperial discourse by even those whom it subjugates so that it becomes mere common sense.

While her encounter with the female immigration officer had been short lived, the rebuke that she faced from her uncle in the United States had been relentless. When her uncle in America found out that she had surrendered her green card, he had been exasperated with her parents for letting her do this. He had blamed them for letting her quit, telling them it was easier for women to make their careers in America than in Pakistan. His emphasis on Aima's gender as a woman, disapproval of her parents' acquiescence to her decision, and positing America as a place where it was easy for women to build their careers in contradistinction to Pakistan as a place where it was not, underscores the imperial nature of the discourse of the global neoliberal economy structuring his worldview. The line of reasoning followed by this discourse was that it was difficult for women in Pakistan to build their careers because of the discrimination they faced in a patriarchal society which saw a woman's place to be in the domestic sphere, and their primary responsibility the reproduction and maintenance of kinship relations. Therefore, the justification for the participation of women from Pakistan in a global neoliberal economy could only be articulated in terms of freeing them from the constraints of kinship. Aima's story demonstrates the embeddedness of gender relations within kinship

structures in Pakistan so that addressing one without the other is to arrive at a reductive and decontextualized understanding of both. Hence, imperial discourses of gender and/or kinship espoused at the level of the Pakistani state and the global neoliberal economy inevitably have repercussions in both domains of social life in a globalizing Pakistan.

Aima's uncle's insistence that a green card was her ticket of entry into a global economy had put her parents in a dilemma as to whether they had done right by their daughter. Hence, even as Aima employed kinship logic (the need to take care of her parents) to make meaning of her decision to give up her green card, the kinship logics of her parents (are we doing right by our daughter) worked to resist her decision. Ultimately, Aima's decision prevailed. Her story highlights the insidiousness of a global imperial discourse on kinship which posits kinship concerns to be incommensurate with the global economy when kinship concerns can often align with the dictates of the global neoliberal economy. Feeling cornered from all sides and with her uncle being relentless in his efforts to persuade her, Aima felt that even though she had made the decision and remained firm in it, this situation had left a deep imprint on her self-esteem.

Caught between the imperial discourse of the global neoliberal economy and her parents' concern for her and vice versa, Aima tried to make sense of her decision and articulated her own relationship to Pakistan as place. She explained that she understood when you viewed Pakistan as a place from the outside, as someone who did not live in the country and whose predominant experience of it was a mediated one, you could only arrive at a negative valuation of it. In talking about this mediated experience, Aima referred to international and local news media and what they reported about Pakistan's economic, political, and social situation. Thus, mediation here was taken to mean the ways in which different forms

of mass media influence our perception of society. By way of an example about the effects mass media could have on a person, Aima talked about how she had been greatly affected by the news of a woman being gang raped on the motorway in Lahore and the country wide outrage that had followed on social media. She would drive herself to work every day via the motorway and felt afraid to go to work after hearing about this incident. She would follow updates about the case on social media and she recalled that this became so overwhelming that she remembered stopping her car one day and just crying for no reason. This anecdote about how she had been affected by news media was relayed as evidence that she was aware of what was going on around her and that her decision to remain in Pakistan was not unrealistic or made from a naïve understanding of Pakistan as a place. This demonstrates the increasing mediatization of society in Pakistan whereby media is used as a tool to understand the world around you and to affect change in it. Mass media, therefore, was no longer just about representations and narratives of the powerful, but a tool through which every person having access to the internet could partake in the construction and experience of society.

Aima assured me that she understood that people who lived abroad and could only experience life in Pakistan via mass media (whether the news media or social media) found it difficult to comprehend the positive aspects of the lived experience of people living in Pakistan as only its dismal conditions dominated global and local media. She gave the example of her brother who had moved to the United States 7 years ago and with whom she now had a difference in opinion about what Pakistan was like as a place. Whenever he read the news regarding Pakistan, he would worry and pronounce it as the worst place to live in, whereas for someone like her who was living in Pakistan and had to contend with its material and social

realities, that same conclusion amounted to a complete denouncement of her place and personhood. Therefore, she reasoned, the basis of her decision to stay in Pakistan were the relationships that she had there. The presence of her parents as well as extended family members she had grown up with, and was emotionally attached to, weighed more for her in constructing her relationship to Pakistan as place than her experience of it as a place via mass media.

> *A: "I know that when you are on the outside and hearing all that kind of news about Pakistan, you are hearing about the situation in Pakistan, its very easy for you to forget about the possible pros of living in that place. Or why someone who has lived all their life in that country would want to continue to live there. Because for us, at least for me, yes I am aware that the situation economically, politically, everything wise is horrible, but when I look at Pakistan, I will look at the relationships I have, which are really important to me. Yes its not like I don't care about anything else in the world except that, and not just like my immediate family but my friends, my family, everything is here right, this is my comfort zone, so I will look at that. But somebody who is looking from the outside, even now when I look at my brother who has lived there for 7 years now, his perspective has also changed because he is looking in now from the outside in a lot of ways right. From the outside when he reads the news, when I will read that news yes it will worry me but I have to live through that. But when it will worry him, he will be like oh my God Pakistan is the worst place to live in right."*

The spaces of diaspora in Pakistan the place of kinship

The struggle for legitimating one's relationship to Pakistan as place, and therefore one's personhood, was apparent in the stories of other respondents as well. At the time I was conducting fieldwork, my mother was working at the headquarters of a popular network of private schools known as The City School. She managed to introduce me and my research to Fatima, a woman in her forties working in the curriculum development department at The City School. During my interview with her, Fatima relayed her story of being born in Saudi Arabia, moving to Minneapolis in the United States when she was 12 years old, settling down in Houston, Texas, and finally moving to Pakistan to take care of her aging parents suffering from

illness. Fatima explained that she had spent a significant part of her life in the United States. She had grown up there, had gone to college, and even started her career there. She had begun her married life in the United States and had lived with her husband for 7 or 8 years even as her siblings and parents had gradually moved back to Pakistan. Due to her mother's failing health and her father's cancer diagnosis, she had moved back to Pakistan to take care of them for some time. The stress that this put upon her marriage had led to divorce, and after her parents passed away, she had decided to remain in Pakistan where she could meet her siblings at least a few times a year.

Her decision had been the target of immense disapproval by her paternal uncles who lived in the United States and the United Kingdom, and she shared with me the vehemence with which they spoke about Pakistan as a place. She told me that when they remembered their childhood, they recalled it in terms of hating growing up in Pakistan. This was confusing to Fatima as she thought her uncles had lived a decent life when they were in Pakistan. One of her uncles was a doctor and had even graduated from a prestigious medical school in Lahore. The hate with which he remembered his life in Pakistan, however, was very intense, and she reasoned that maybe this was because her uncle had migrated a long time ago and wished to detach himself from his culture. When I asked her to elaborate on what her uncles disliked about Pakistan, she said that they did not like the way things were done here. She followed this up with a rhetorical question she wished she could ask of her uncles; where is it a perfect place? By way of example, she stated that when her family was living in Saudi Arabia at one time, they had faced discrimination even over there. Her parents had been stopped by the police and asked to present their marriage certificate as proof that they were in a legal union and therefore

authorized by Islamic law to accompany each other. Hence, even in a Muslim country such as Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and a place considered sacred and visited by Muslims all over the world, discriminatory practices against varied communities and people were at play.

In crafting her own relationship to Pakistan as place, Fatima contended with her uncles' ideas about Pakistan as place as well as her own ideas about other places like Saudi Arabia. Having grown up and spent most of her life in the United States, she articulated her understanding of different places in a language that was familiar to her, attaching terms like culture and discrimination to describe the characteristics of different places. While it was kinship as lived practice that prompted her return to Pakistan, in terms of returning to take care of her father and continuing to live there because she had a strong support system due to the presence of her siblings, the language in which she made meaning of her decision to stay was specific to her context as a return migrant from the United States. Skin color is an essential boundary marker for different communities in the United States where racial categories form the foundation of integral social structures. Hence, the widespread and expansive usage of the term discrimination to advocate for social justice and inequities based on ascriptive qualities such as race. Similarly, the term culture is an integral part of the everyday language of sense making in the United States as well and is used to mark minority communities as well as to distinguish between them. The script of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the United States ascribes culture as a quality to non-White minority communities and employs it in conjunction with other descriptors to classify and rank them against normative hegemonic standards that are associated with the racial signifier White. Therefore, not only do diverse communities have

culture, but brown or Indian culture is different from Chinese culture or from Hispanic or Mexican culture, illustrating the multiple (racial, national, regional) levels at which the term culture is deployed.

Therefore, Fatima narrated her experiences of moving from Saudi Arabia to the United States to Pakistan in terms of the multiple cultures she had to navigate. She described the fast-paced life in the United States which revolved around work and making money, telling me how she had taken up a managing job at jewelry stores to keep her household afloat alongside pursuing a university degree in biotechnology. She continued to work at jewelry stores after graduation because she earned more money from these jobs than she was being offered for jobs in her field. In the meantime, her parents and siblings had moved to Pakistan as her father's grocery store business in the United States had gone into financial loss. For a long time, she was separated from her parents and siblings, and when they would tell her about their lives in Pakistan, she wished she could have those experiences with them. She felt that her life in the United States had become empty and stagnant, and when she moved to Pakistan to take care of her parents, she decided to stay there and not return to the United States. In Pakistan she had to reorient herself to a very different culture and job market. Finding it difficult to get into the retail sector in Pakistan, which according to her was because of its unprofessional environment (read different work culture compared to the United States), she had leveraged her skills in the English language and pivoted to the education sector. Working in English language development at the regional office of the Beaconhouse School System, one of Pakistan's most highly ranked network of private schools in primary and secondary education, she confessed had felt like she had found her niche.

Not only was the work environment in the education sector more professional than other sectors of the job market in Pakistan, working in education also fulfilled the void she had constantly felt in the United States that there was something missing from her life. Describing the culture of everyday life in the United States, Fatima expressed that the fast-paced, work centric routine in the US ends up feeling like an empty life because work is understood as an end in itself. She stated emphatically that she had never been afraid of work, as long as she was doing it for somebody in the community and she could see that she was making a difference in someone else's life. However, work in the United States was so individualistic in nature, and such a central part of everyday life, that it encroached upon all other aspects of life as well, leaving little space or time to engage in different types of social intercourse. To clarify what she meant by this, she gave the example of how she would have to set her schedule two weeks in advance when she was working at a jewelry store and given that the day of Eid was only determined a day before as it was dependent on the sighting of the moon, she could never get time off to celebrate Eid. Over time, Fatima revealed that her family stopped celebrating Eid altogether because there was no point in cooking food and rejoicing when there was no one available to do it with.

Taking a cue from her lamentation about the miseries of living in the United States, I inquired eagerly if she met her siblings frequently now that she was in Pakistan. I was caught off guard when she replied loftily *"No, I am too busy for that"* and followed that with a quick laugh, giving away her own imbrication in hegemonic neoliberal discourses about work in the United States as well as globally. Realizing that she had just contradicted herself, she clarified that while it was often difficult to take out time to meet her siblings in Pakistan, she and her siblings did try

to meet, and at the very least, they did manage to get together every Eid. Hence, Fatima implied that life in Pakistan was different enough for it to qualify as a place which enabled the doing of kinship. Considering that Fatima had no sibling in Lahore (the nearest one living a 2-hour drive away in the city of Faisalabad), lived on her own, and spent her time outside of work socializing voraciously with friends and co-workers, it was perplexing why her limited meetings with her siblings took center stage in making meaning of Pakistan as place. As our interview ended, Fatima retreated into a pensive mood. I felt her forty years' worth of transnational life experiences of being jostled about in Saudi Arabia (the place of discrimination), United States (the place of professional work), and Pakistan (the place of kinship) flash before her eyes as she offered a final contemplative conclusion:

> *FS: "So that's what life is about, I think, at the end of the day its about family. People don't realize it; they are running after things."*

Fatima was one of my several return migrant respondents who were (figuratively and literally) trying to find a stable middle ground upon which to land. While it seemed like Fatima had arrived at a meaningful closure to her transnational life, being able to reconcile her aspirations for a professional work environment with her desire for meaningful relational socialities, the struggle for a conclusive reconciliation seemed much more evident in my conversation with another respondent named Sameen. Sameen lived in Canal View Society, a gated residential area alongside a canal that ran through the city of Lahore and was considered one of its landmark features. Now in her early fifties, Sameen had lived most of her life in the United Kingdom but had returned to Pakistan in what seemed like a permanent move a few years ago. Since the death of her parents, she was living alone in the family house they had built in Lahore, while her brothers resided in the United Kingdom and Dubai with their families.

Sameen was part of the residential neighborhood community that Afreen aunty, my main gatekeeper, belonged to. As Afreen aunty accompanied me for my first meeting with Sameen, she told me Sameen's house was conspicuously identified in the neighborhood as 'the English house'. Indeed, as we came to a stop at its wrought iron front gates which were barred by a chain and an old-fashioned lock, it felt like we were about to enter an English manor, an image of which I had only ever seen on television. The grand columns adorning the verandah of the house, its manicured lawn with its intricately designed garden bench, its towering front doors opening to a circular lobby with a winding staircase, a massive tapestry hanging down from the ceiling in the sitting room, all evoked an old-world English aesthetic.

During one of our interviews, Sameen shared that her parents had left the construction, design, and decoration of their family house in Pakistan to their children. Since her brothers did not live in Pakistan, she had been the most involved and active participant in the entire process. Proudly, she showed me around the house and admitted that one of the major considerations that had shaped the way the house was designed and decorated was her desire to recreate some aspects of her life in London which she missed. In addition to this, during my visits there, I noticed that the house was also embellished with flashy golden objects that Sameen had purchased during her travels to and from Dubai. Another characteristic feature of the house were picture walls which included portraits and framed photographs of Sameen's immediate and extended family. Adorning the wall behind the winding staircase were photographs as old as those of her great grandfather, displaying evidence of the influential status of her forefathers and ancestral family from times as early as British rule in the subcontinent. While these old photographs and portraits traced Sameen's kinship ties to the distant past, the pictures that

adorned the wall in the intimate space of her bedroom exhibited her kinship ties with her immediate family, ties that remained the center of her world even as she lived a transnational life.

Both her parents belonging to a well-established Punjabi Arain family in Lahore, Sameen explained how she had been visiting Pakistan and staying with extended blood relatives in Lahore since she was 5 years old. Not only did she have an abundance of relatives in Pakistan, but her strong family background in terms of also belonging to a socially, politically, and economically influential family in Lahore meant that she was always well looked after during her stay and had access to luxuries that she could not even dream of in her life in the UK.

> *SA: "But to be honest, Sara, the main reason, and the difference is, it depends on your family background. When you're working it backwards, from London back to Pakistan, you have to look at it this way because that's the way I am dealing with it right, you might have been dealing with it the other way around, but this way. If your footing is strong in Pakistan, then Pakistan is like wow for you..... When the footing on that front is on the stronger side, then a lot of doors open for you. When we use to come, we use to go to really nice places, and we would get protocol everywhere, we used to think we are something and have a really good time. So I used to absolutely love it."*

She recalled how she had loved visiting Pakistan when she was younger as they would stay at the ancestral manor in the village with all their relatives. She had been apprehensive at her first visit to the ancestral manor in the village, imagining that she would have to sleep under the stars and would have to adjust to a lack of amenities. To her surprise, she had found life at the manor to be a grand affair with plenty of rooms, beautiful architecture, hanging chandeliers, the availability of sumptuous food, and people to wait on them. In the daily run of things with so many people living together, the hustle and bustle at the manor meant that there was always something or the other to do. With child-like laughter, she told me that she would go back to the UK and tell all her friends there that in Pakistan she lived in a castle whose high walls had

slits through which you could shoot arrows. This exaggerated portrayal, she said, was meant to convey to her friends the sense of grandeur she felt when she was in Pakistan as if she was part of something larger than herself. Being part of a large extended family that had a history and status in Lahore afforded her life experiences that were the opposite of the anonymity and isolation of her life in London. Sameen explained the contrast between her life in London and Lahore in the following words;

> *SA: "I have a whatsapp group with all my white friends and they have been trying to get together since December and I looked at the messages and now they're saying January and then someone else was saying let's do it in February. But over here if somebody says Sameen, come, I will grab my bag right now and go. Here you can take the time out because you want to take the time out. Over there even if you want to do it there will be something holding you back. There will be your work, or you will have to get ready for tomorrow. I have to cook food, I have to iron my clothes, it's a one man show."*

Over time, due to frequent visits and meeting different people via her cousins, Sameen was able to make her own social network of family and friends in Lahore. However, it was only when they built their own family house in Lahore, that was she able to partake in that network more fully as she now had a space where she could invite people over and engage with them on her own terms.

> *SA: "Then come some 25 years ago we decided that we need to have our own house so that we can like stay, and come and go. I'll tell you the reason behind that as well. When we would come to Pakistan, MA the family lived very well and we used to have a very good time. But as you get older, you make your own friends, and those friends are because of you, they are not your friends for any other reason, they are not your friends because the mill is attached to you or something, it is because of your own personality and they become your friend! So I was like oh we need to entertain people. Everybody was very happy that you come to our house, but we wanted our own personality, do you understand? Even though their houses were beautiful and all, but you still want your own space. And you realize that more as you get older."*

In revealing the motivation for building their own house in Pakistan, Sameen's narrative drew attention to the dissonance she felt as a diasporic return migrant in trying to find her place in

Pakistan. The diasporic context in which she had been raised marked her social location in the UK as a brown, Muslim, Pakistani female, marginalizing her on multiple fronts and forcing her to struggle for the preservation of her cultural and religious identity. The sobering effect of living a diasporic life seemed to her at odds with the sense of entitlement with which people in her social circle in Pakistan operated. While the flamboyance of her social network in Pakistan had impressed her as a child, as her social life in Lahore deepened, she found her diasporic vantage point to be morally different from other women who frequented the same social circles as her. While she understood the allure of a glamorous life when you were young, she did not understand the competition among older women in Pakistan who belonged to upper middle class and elite families and were obsessed with outdoing each other in their pursuit of glamor, beauty, and excitement.

> *SA: "I remember looking at the culture here in Pakistan and I was shocked, because I had never attended so many parties in London even compared to what I was attending here, valentines party, I have danced here, I have danced all night here, I've never seen so many people drink that I have here, and I just think the reason for that is that they are doing things at the wrong time of their life. What people were doing at age 16, they are doing at age 50. And they have got too much and they feel like time is very little and we have to do all of this. And when they talk to us they are like [using mock voice] oh are you really from London, doesn't seem like it, only when you open your mouth then one can see that."*
> *ST: "What did you mean about age?"*
> *SA: "I am sure you must have seen the fashion of women here, why are they dressed like as if they were 16 years old. I cant recall my mother going to have her hair blow dried every day, why would she do that? And yet I have personally seen women who are older than me whom you are inviting on a Quran recitation and they are coming with their hair styled and wearing false eyelashes."*

The proliferation of consumer items in Pakistan and the commodification of culture has led to the commercialization of the food, textile, and beauty industries in the country. Given these trends in commercialization alongside the competitive nature of kinship relations,

therefore, it is not surprising that for certain classes, the pursuit and maintenance of the high life in Pakistan is their social raison d'etre. The very same entitlement which Sameen had been happy to partake in to maintain her sense of place as a lonely child living in London now seemed to be at loggerheads with her spartan, individualistic personhood that made her out of place now that she was living in Pakistan. While maintaining her personhood and sense of place in London required frequent travel to Pakistan and prolonged visits, i.e. was dependent on her ease of mobility, maintaining her personhood and sense of place in Pakistan was predicated upon substantial material investment, i.e. building and furnishing a house and hiring people for its upkeep. A house of one's own was thus the basic material structure that was required to enable one to claim space for oneself and to transform its potentiality into a relational sense of place, and by proxy, a relational personhood.

The significance of building a house in Pakistan for diasporic transnationals also came to the fore in my encounter in Lahore with a student I had come to be acquainted with at Michigan State University. Upon viewing his Instagram story, I found that he was in Lahore at the time I was doing fieldwork. With the ongoing pandemic and feeling isolated during fieldwork myself, I excitedly reached out to him to meet. I found out that he was visiting from the United States with his family, and they were currently living in their house at Bahria Town, a residential area which as luck would have it was just a twenty-minute drive from my own house. Upon arriving, I was ushered into the house as a formal guest and led to the drawing room. My acquaintance's mother and younger brother accompanied us during our meeting, and I got the chance to engage with his family. My acquaintance, his younger brother, and I then sat down to tea at a heavily laden table that made me feel embarrassed at the lengths to which they had gone to

host me. In customary fashion, I protested at their having done so much, to which they responded in customary fashion that this was nothing at all.

A family of four, Ahmed let me in on their immigration journey to the United States. His maternal aunt in the United States had sponsored his mother, leading to her immigration in early 2000s. Thereafter, the harrowing incident of 9/11 in 2001, and the global war on terror which followed it, had led to a delay in the visa processing time for him and his father. Meanwhile, his mother tried to set up base in the United States. She worked several jobs in order to earn enough money to travel to Pakistan, and to provide evidence to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that she had enough funds to support her children. His younger brother, who was an infant at that time, got his visa earlier, and his mother took him with her to America. It took around 8 to 9 years for Ahmed and his father to arrive in the United States and for all four of them to be reunited as a family.

Originally from the rural town of Okara in Punjab, Ahmed and his family had intermittently been in and out of the city of Lahore before migrating to the United States. While many of his extended relatives on the maternal side now lived in the United States, most of his paternal relatives were now based in Lahore. Whenever Ahmed and his family visited Pakistan, they would stay at a relative's house in Lahore. While this was a time of great fun and enjoyment, Ahmed recalled that it restricted their experience of Pakistan as a place as they had to be respectful of their hosts and had to abide by their values and priorities. In particular, due to their upbringing having taken place predominantly in America, Ahmed and his brother felt a cultural difference with their relatives that made them feel as if they were not quite at home. Furthermore, his parents wanted his brother and him to experience living in Pakistan, but they

did not want to impose too much on their relatives who had different considerations and family situations to take into account when hosting them. Hence, they decided that they needed their own space so that their family could experience Pakistan on their own terms, and not under the watchful gaze of extended relatives.

It was not surprising that when his parents visited Pakistan in 2015, they decided to make Lahore their home base and initiated the plan to build a house in a thriving residential area. Their house was completed in 2018 and since then Ahmed and his family had visited as frequently as twice a year. The house had made it possible for them to have a space of their own which enabled them to engage with people on their own terms rather than staying at a relative's house and inviting people over there. When I asked Ahmed how he and his brother spent time in Pakistan, he responded that they would go out and about familiarizing themselves with all the delicious food their residential area had to offer, speak with their neighbors and get to know them, and spend time with their relatives. One visit to Pakistan, therefore, was for the purpose of rekindling ties with extended relatives and neighbors and experiencing the local life. The vicissitudes of the immigration process and work life in the United States had fragmented their time together as a family. Their house in Pakistan also provided them with a home base through which they could achieve their goal to spend time together and bond as a family. The second visit to Pakistan was then made with the intention for the four of them to spend time together, for example, by getting comfortable in their house in Lahore and making travel plans to see other areas of Pakistan.

> *AD: "After that out visits to Pakistan were quite frequent, twice or thrice a year, because in a way our base had been made in Pakistan. We had our own house, and it was more convenient to just go to your own house and not live with anyone else. Because when you are living with someone, you have to go along with their principles and rules. I gave*

you an example like last time too right, if you are living with someone you then you can't stay out too late right because then they will be worried about you and stuff like that. That's what happened in 2018 when we were promised our house will be done but it wasn't done so we had to live with our family relatives for 3 months and you know how 3 months goes right. I mean the experience was nice that we were able to meet with more people, give people time, but it wasn't under the conditions how you wanted it to be. You wanted to invite people to your own house, that was something we wanted to do but we weren't able to, and that limited our experience of our first trip. But after the house was completed, then we started making more frequent visits to Pakistan. One visit would be just dedicated to rekindling and reforming our own bonds with our neighbors and family. One visit would be strictly for that. This visit would be anywhere from 3 weeks to 6 weeks. Just getting in touch with your family relatives, and spending some time with them, and doing whatever the hell they want, we just go with it. The second visit would be us, as a four family, if we want to go travel somewhere else we do it together as a family, and this visit wasn't about getting in touch with anyone."
ST: "So what were the motivations behind building this house in Pakistan? You guys are settled in the US, why build a house in Pakistan?"
AD: "Oh, that's quite simple, because my parents when they went for umra in 2013 and then went to Pakistan, guess who they stayed with, they stayed with my dad's side right. And obviously you can feel right that there is going to be a disparity of cultural values. There is an upbringing of American values and then there is an upbringing of Pakistan values, right, these two values in a similar household you will see things differently and eye to eye right. And because of that, my dad was like, you know sometimes we might agree to things, we might disagree to things, and I think it's just better that we need to have our own place, we need to have our place for our kids. It doesn't mean necessarily for our sake because the thing is if its just the two of them like it was in 2013, they don't mind living either with my dads or my moms side of the family, they don't mind that. But if it's the two of us right, if the kids are also going, which they will in future right, then we are gonna be needing our own place. The other thing is that the kids are also two boys and imagine going into a family where there are more girls, then it just creates a weird dynamic."

It was interesting that both my diasporic respondents mentioned the need to have their own space from which to build their relationships and social networks when I inquired about their motivation for building a house in Pakistan. The fact that they chose to find that space in Pakistan and lay claim to it by building a house in Pakistan underscores the significance of how Pakistan was seen as the ideal place for forging relational ties while abroad it was difficult to form them. Therefore, by juxtaposing abroad to Pakistan, my interviewees made meaning of

Pakistan as place by authenticating it as the place of kinship. In addition to seeing Pakistan as the literal place where their family resided or in other words as the place which had their kin, it was also imagined as the place which enabled the doing of kinship.

Pakistan as one's own country and the place of one's own people

In the interviews that I did over the phone with respondents I had fielded from Facebook, many people used the Urdu phrase 'apna mulq' when talking about Pakistan. When I tried to get an understanding of what they meant by 'apna mulq', they defined it as referring to Pakistan as a country of one's own and one's own people. By calling it a country of one's own, a respondent clarified, they meant the place where they had their home, lifestyle, and culture. He stated that it was only natural, then, for people to love their country because it contained within itself all that a person was familiar with. When I tried to investigate how my respondent had arrived at this conclusion, he said that it was his own personal experience that even when he stepped out of his own house, he was reminded of how much he loved it and missed it. This slide between one's country and one's house caught my attention as it emerged in another conversation with a 30 year old man as he recounted his experience of trying to get a visa to enter Turkey;

> *ML: "My experience in Turkey was just like when you leave your home and go to someone else's, they treat you very nicely, they ensure good hospitality, provides you with all good things, but you are unable to sleep immediately on their bed, you try to sleep but even then you feel restless. When you leave from there and come back home, you fall asleep immediately on your own bed. So this difference between your house and someone else's house, I felt that difference over there."*

He stated that it had caused him great humiliation when the Turkish authorities had rejected his visa over a minor spelling mistake. Even though Turkish officials had dealt with him nicely and his visit had been smooth except for the visa rejection itself, he felt ill at ease throughout this

encounter. He contrasted this to his experience in dealing with officials at a government office in Pakistan where even if you had activities like bribery going on you still felt mentally at peace because there was this sense that these were still your own people and you were on familiar terrain. In trying to articulate the sense of mental satisfaction and safety one felt in one's own country, a peace that you could not find in any other place, he explained in the following words;

> *ML: "So I read about an incident that there was a girl sitting at the airport in the US, she was waiting for her flight to another state, there was an announcement that your flight is a bit late and will leave so and so time in the morning. So this girl kept her bag under her head and went to sleep on the bench. She woke up in the morning, got on the flight, and left. In listening this sounds like a normal story but the writer asks you to just think how much trust that girl must have had that I am in America and I am safe. So in Pakistan also we feel this safety."*

In sliding between country and house, I found my respondents to be using the phrase 'apna mulq', i.e. one's own country, amorphously. This was accompanied by the amorphous use of the phrase 'apnay log', i.e. one's own people, to refer to varying levels of signification. I had the opportunity to speak with a woman who had moved from Peshawar to Lahore after her marriage and ask her about what she thought about life abroad given what she heard from a dear friend who had moved to the UK. She responded in a matter-of-fact tone that everybody knew that to attain a good life abroad required a lot of effort and struggle, especially because over there people did not have their own people to support them or take care of them. Each person was on their own and had to manage everything by themselves from preparing one's own food to nursing oneself back to health when one fell ill. This was in contrast to Pakistani people who valued their guests more than themselves, especially the Pathan community that was famous for its ethic of hospitality. In comparing life abroad and life in Pakistan, the woman

referred to the different levels of community within which she lived out her life and which for her formed the basis for relationships of care; one's family, ethnic community, as well as national community.

Anthropological work on South Asia has demonstrated how the ties that bind family members and people in a community, e.g. people living in the same village, are predicated on there being a shared substance among them. For example, we all eat from the same soil which ties us to the land we live on and to each other, or we all share the same blood which ties us all to each other. Kinship in South Asia as predicated upon a shared substance is thus defined in terms of an organic connection to people and places. However, a shared substance is not sufficient for the establishment and maintenance of kinship ties, and is dependent upon regular social interactions and material exchange among people who are linked by shared substance (Alavi 1972; Alvi 2007; Daniel 1984; Dube 2001; Eglar 1960; Inden and Nicholas 1977; Marriot and Inden 1977; Schneider 1984). Older anthropological accounts of kinship were critiqued for propagating the biological/cultural divide in their analytical separation of biological substance and moral code as two integral, yet distinct, aspects of kinship. Subsequent scholarship on kinship illustrated how ideas about what constituted the biological and cultural aspects of kinship were socially and culturally constructed (Sahlins 2013; Carsten 2003), positing a new framework for studying kinship by distinguishing between ascriptive and performative kinship and tracing their convergence and divergence (Bourdieu 1990; Carsten 2003). This new framework widened the horizon of kinship studies to include an investigation of the dangers of the transplantation of kinship logics and biological metaphors in identifications of belonging to the nation-state (Carsten 2003; Malkki 1977).

Benedict Anderson demonstrated the significance of understanding the cultural foundations of nationalism, cultural developments that enabled people to imagine community with people they had never met (Anderson 2006). Shenila Khoja-Moolji showed us how the Pakistani state legitimizes its sovereignty over the Pakistani nation by enabling Pakistani publics to imagine their relationship to the state and nation in terms of cultural and affective registers of kinship such as those of father, mother, sons, and daughters writ large (Khoja-Moolji 2021). In shifting focus from how people identify with Pakistan as a nation-state to how they make meaning of Pakistan as place, I found that my respondents articulated more open-ended possibilities of identification present within kinship logics. The open-ended possibilities of kinship lie in its shifting nature and its ability to appear in many guises; the family house, the sharing of food, the exchange of gifts (McKinnon 2016). The ease with which my respondents identified a country, a territorially bounded space, with a house, a space bounded by a physical structure with a clearly delineated interior and exterior, illustrates the significance of kinship in constructing their relationship to (and experience of) space and place through its capacity for forging relational ties based on literal and metaphorical shared substances.

Conclusion

As the migration of relatives abroad altered their everyday life, elder women in the 50-70 age range and college-educated women in the 20-30 age range from the upper middle and middle classes in Lahore paradoxically made meaning of Pakistan as the place of kinship. Even as their everyday life had changed with the departure of kin abroad, the continued presence of extended family members and friends and a societal orientation towards social gathering, made Pakistan for them not only the place of kinship but also as the place that enabled the doing of

kinship. Diasporic counterparts who were settled abroad but had a house in Pakistan, returned frequently, and stayed for long periods of time also partook in making meaning of Pakistan as the place of kinship. Making meaning of Pakistan as the place of kinship also came forth in phone conversations I had with respondents fielded from Facebook, all of whom identified themselves as belonging to the middle class in Pakistan. In conversing with them about global migration from Pakistan, I found them referring to Pakistan in terms of the Urdu phrase 'apna mulq' (translated in English as one's own country) and as the place of 'apnay log' (translated in English as one's own people). They conflated country with house, spoke of fellow citizens as one's own people, and considered one's country as the place where one had one's way of life. In elaborating on what they meant by one's way of life, they pointed to overt cultural artifacts such as traditional food and clothes and a house of one's own, but their narratives also revealed the nontangible aspects of kinship as a social and cultural way of life.

This articulation of the meaning of Pakistan as the place of kinship came into friction with other articulations of Pakistan as place stemming from the narratives of global and local mass and digital media and diasporic views from a distance. While my respondents made meaning of Pakistan as place by privileging their lived experiences, whether in the past or present, the narratives of global and local media and diasporic Pakistanis intertwined to privilege representations of Pakistan as an objective place with fixed negative attributes. Pakistan was the place of discrimination, the place of human rights violations, the place of the subjugation of women, the place of patriarchal men, the place of authoritarian parents, the place of voiceless children, the place of forced marriages, the place of Islamic fundamentalism, the place of poverty, the place of corruption, and the list goes on. Media and diasporic locations

were not the only sites where imperial discourses of Pakistan as place were perpetuated. As the analysis of the experience of a respondent of surrendering a green card illustrates, these imperial discourses were embodied by the female immigration officer at the US consulate in Pakistan, her uncle in the United States, her peers at the Lahore University of Management Sciences, and even in the hesitation of her parents in Pakistan. This points to the convergence of the US immigration regime, educational institutes in Pakistan, and even kinship concerns and logics with media and diasporic narratives in their contribution to upholding the imperial discourse of a global neoliberal order.

CHAPTER 5: MAINTAINING KINSHIP VIA DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Introduction

This chapter investigates how kinship is practiced despite the breakup and scattering of families in a globalizing world. It looks at the role of digital connectivity and communication in the lives of people as they strive to maintain connectivity and deepen connections with their relatives abroad. This chapter unearths the varied ways in which people relate to digital technologies, and how that is informed by wider societal transformations and cultural values. In addition to my respondents being situated within the broader contexts of a global capitalist economy, and a transnational prestige economy, the stories of my respondents reveal the emergence of an affective economy which shapes the way people in Pakistan use digital technologies to engage in digital communication with relatives abroad.

Using digital technologies to maintain the global family

During my time in the field, I came across the mention of family WhatsApp groups quite often and soon realized that this was a common digital practice in Pakistan. My respondents spoke of WhatsApp groups where extended family members were added, and where people would drop life updates, birthday or anniversary wishes, pictures of children, and pictures of family dinners. Oftentimes, people would engage in friendly banter with each other on WhatsApp, recreating the euphoria of a sense of community and/or intimacy with other family members. Additionally, WhatsApp was also a platform where family members would get into heated debates about politics and/or religion. Sometimes people had separate groups for the paternal and maternal sides of the family, especially if the parents were not related in any way and belonged to two separate ancestral families. Even if some people did not have an extended

family WhatsApp group, they often had a group for immediate family members to facilitate communication amongst themselves, whether it was with respect to everyday things, the sharing of pictures of memorable moments, engaging in emotional support talk, joking around with each other, or debating about societal issues. In addition to family groups, my respondents also had smaller WhatsApp groups with select relatives, and these were often relatives they were particularly close to. For example, separate WhatsApp groups of siblings or even of cousins who were more attached to each other were quite common and were used to vent frustrations with other family members or to gossip about family politics. This corroborates studies on the use of WhatsApp that have illustrated its everyday mediation as a social 'technology of life' and its role in sustaining and shaping quotidian activities from the personal to the economic or political (Cruz and Harindranath 2020). The use of WhatsApp as the preferred application for creating family groups also fits with studies that have demonstrated how WhatsApp is integral to the constitution of 'everyday dwelling' and how its affordances enable people to experience a felt-life of being together (O'Hara et al 2014).

Kanwal aunty lived in the house in front of ours. I had often seen her walking their family dog in the lane, opening the gate to let her husband's car in, or parking her car under the tree in front of their house when she returned from dropping and picking her children from school. Amongst our neighbors, she was one of the younger female residents, around 40 years old, and my mother kept in touch with her about what was going on in the neighborhood. Since she fit the criteria for my research respondents, my mother asked her if she would be willing to be interviewed. One day, while her father-in-law and husband were away at work, she called me to her house so that we could talk at length. Her mother-in-law was in her bedroom in the inner

portion of the house, and so Kanwal aunty and I had the privacy needed for her to answer my questions with as much ease as possible without being interrupted.

Kanwal aunty was one of four sisters, and although she was born in Lahore, she had lived much of her life before marriage in Saudi Arabia where her father had worked as an accountant in the Aramco oil company. She had got married when she was relatively young, in her early 20s, to her cousin in Lahore. Although she had completed a bachelor's degree from Lahore College in psychology and English literature, Kanwal aunty had found it difficult to study further after her marriage due to household responsibilities and had decided not to pursue further education. Her husband was a doctor, her father-in-law now a retired army brigadier with his own business. Together with father in law and mother in law, Kanwal aunty lived in a house in Phase 12 of the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) with her husband and two sons. While she had moved in with her in-laws and husband in Lahore, her parents and sisters had immigrated to Canada from Saudi Arabia. Her parents lived in Canada for most of the year but would visit Pakistan for 2 to 3 months to escape the harshest period of winter in Canada. Therefore, Kanwal aunty got to meet her parents in person almost every year, and while they were in Canada, she stayed connected to them via WhatsApp. When I inquired about the role WhatsApp played in her life, she told me about the various family groups she was a part of and how she would coordinate her routine with that of her parents to find the perfect time for them to be able to talk every day.

> *ST: "How do you use WhatsApp to keep in touch with your parents and sisters?"*
> *KL: "I use WhatsApp so much that today because our internet is not working, I don't know who to talk to! (laughs). Our internet is not working today because our dog had bit the cable, and after having registered a complaint, we are now waiting for the person to come fix it. In my opinion, the role of WhatsApp has become a lot, quite a lot. I mean my children are connected with everyone else's children, with their grandparents, everyone*

has their own groups, and everyone is connected all the time, I like it very much, it has a big role to play today."
ST: "So in your everyday routine, how often do you connect in this way? As soon as you wake up, before sleeping at night…I mean what is your routine?"
KL: "So I definitely connect in the evening because at that time it is the time of morning over there and I can connect directly. But throughout the day, whatever thoughts I get, I just write them then at the moment (laughs), that when they will get up, they will see it. But it is absolutely necessary to connect in the evening, absolutely must. My father gets up early, my mother has a very good and deep sleep. Because he gets up early for Tahajjud or Fajr, I talk with him early, so like at even 3 or 4 here I know he will be awake and so I will do a video call. My mother likes her sleep so she keeps sleeping, but yes this is there all the time, as soon as I wake up, at any time during the day whenever I think of something, definitely in the evening. Even with my sisters this is the same."
ST: "Is there a specific time at which you video call?"
KL: "Uhh…I think its in the evening because it is daytime there then."
ST: "And you call everyday?"
KL: "Even if the video call is not everyday but every other day, we are still always in contact via chat and voice notes."
ST: "What is the dynamic with WhatsApp groups? What happens in there?"
KL: "So I have groups for both sides of my family, my immediate family and that of my in laws. So in my immediate family one, it is just us, my sisters, mother, father, while in my in laws group we have my mother in law, father in law, sister in law and brother in law and their spouses."
ST: "Do you have a sister's only group?"
KL: "Yes (laughs), in that we are always gossiping. So like something is happening over there and simultaneously we start getting messages in the group that look this person said this, that person said it like this, so at the same time this also starts to happen (laughs).....in this group we have our own conversation, like look I went here, that person did this, for example my sister had gone to Switzerland and she said to me that guys here are so wonderful, they are so hot (laughs), and I said send me pictures. So nonsensical stuff like this that occurs among siblings. Reminders like it was mother's birthday yesterday, did you wish her, so stuff like this happens in this group."

As digital media enabled Kanwal aunty to stay connected with her parents and sisters who were abroad, it also helped Huma aunty and Afreen aunty stay connected with their children who were abroad. Both women were within the 65-75 age range and considered the internet and digital applications, such as WhatsApp and Facetime, as God's blessings in this day and age which helped them to deal with sending their children away. They used the Urdu word 'naimat' (translated in English as God's blessing/favor) to refer to the internet and

communication technologies that enabled them to maintain connectivity. They compared it to the days of their mothers where the only ways of keeping in touch was via writing letters, a correspondence that would take approximately a month, or to wait in line to access the exchange telephone which charged exorbitant rates for even a quick 3-minute international call. Afreen aunty expressed that witnessing her grandchildren's lives via digital media was like seeing them grow up in front of her very eyes, and when they visited her it did not feel like she did not know them. Indeed, as I spent time with Afreen aunty, I noticed that she would often excuse herself and step away to take a call from one of her daughters. They had developed a system where each daughter had chosen a specific time each day, considering their daily routine and the time difference with Pakistan, to call and check up on their mother. This meant that Afreen aunty received 3 calls daily and felt like she was a part of her daughters' lives, and they were a part of hers. This digital connectivity supplemented the travel that Afreen aunty and her daughters were able to undertake to meet frequently in person and thus enabled them to maintain kinship at a distance.

> *AN: "Now there is so much ease, you can see faces, my daughter brought her 1.5 yr old son but it doesn't seem like we didn't see him because we saw him everyday! He played in front of us, he stood for the first time in front of me, also walked for the first time in front of me. So now there is a lot of ease as well, and strength/patience/courage also increases because of this ease today."*

While family Whatsapp groups had been there since before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, during fieldwork in 2021-22, my respondents pointed to the explicit intentionality and increased regularity with which they connected with family members via digital apps/platforms? during the pandemic years. The frequent lockdowns and regulation of social interactions, the halting of international travel and mobility, and the precarity and uncertainty

of life that had been suddenly brought into focus by the Covid-19 pandemic had been a stressful time for everyone. The absence of the physical presence of family members had been felt even more acutely. It was a time when everyone had needed support and wished to be in frequent contact with each other, resulting in an increased usage of digital media to communicate with each other, particularly applications/platforms such as WhatsApp, Skype, and Zoom that enabled the experience of visual copresence. When I inquired what they would do on these family virtual group calls, they stated that it was mostly just asking after each other and engaging in banter to the point that it became difficult to tell who was speaking with whom. In the liminality that people had suddenly been thrown into by the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for social structure was felt painfully, leading my respondents to harness digital media for recreating and reliving the family and its affect all the more intensely in virtual space.

AL: "Nowadays there are a lot of ways, there is zoom, all my brothers and sisters, my siblings, every Saturday my mother and my siblings and me have a zoom meeting."

ST: "Every Saturday?"

AL: "Every Saturday. This started during corona. Before we used to talk individually to this or that person, but during Corona we felt life is so uncertain, this should be a regular practice. Its been now 1 and a ½ year or so. The conversation easily takes an hour or more. So we coordinate a time right, that England it is this, America it will be this time, here it will be this time, and so we manage it that way. Whoever feels like using whichever device for this meeting, my mother does it on her laptop, I do it on my phone."

In their efforts to transcend the obstacles presented in a globalizing world to practicing kinship in the absence of kin, my respondents made use of digital media in a variety of ways to bridge the gap between presence and absence. The kinship practices that my respondents engaged in via digital communication technologies involved establishing co-presence, engaging multi-sensorially (multi modal digital communication) with an emphasis on being able to see and hear the other person, connecting frequently, and establishing reciprocity. Hence, digital

practices that afforded the practice of kinship in these ways formed the blueprint of doing kinship in the virtual realm. These best practices included, for example, establishing presence by trying to connect in real time, reinforcing virtual presence by sharing intimate details about everyday life as well as sharing visual materials such as intimate pictures and videos, and taking care to establish reciprocity by connecting regularly and responding to the other person.

The development of communication technologies and the pre-conditions of digital connectivity

Figure 8. A huge billboard at Liberty Chowk advertising data packages for a telecommunication company Zong titled 'Lets get Digital'

However, while access to digital media for my respondents in Lahore was ubiquitous at the time I was conducting fieldwork, many respondents highlighted the fact that the development of the digital media landscape in the country had come about only in the last decade or so. One of my respondents from Facebook was originally from Jhelum, a city famous for being a hub of transnational labor migration in Punjab. He explained that his education in Lahore was only possible because his father had emigrated to Oman to work. When I asked him

how he had kept in touch with his father during all these years, he gave me an insightful account of the changes in communication technologies that he had grown up with and witnessed.

> *MA: "Uhhh..I was very little at the time (laughs). I remember that at that time there were no telephones in our village, very few PTCLs also, PTCLs could be found in only some of the houses. So I remember the first time we got a letter from our father. We were so happy that father had gone and written us a letter (smiling). So this kept on going for like the first 2 to 3 years, then PTCL became quite common. Our village got a PTCL, PTCL used to be in the village next to us but not in our village. So when PTCL came, after that also came the internet. So first got fixed the PTCL, then the internet, and first I think it used to be viber etc. and then whatsapp etc. began to be used and so that's how we kept in contact with him. In the start, it was letters, for like 2 to 3 years or maybe even more. It took almost 1 month for the letters to come and go, 15 days his letter used to reach us and 15 days our letter would take to reach him, there would be a gap of 1 month. After PTCL came, we started talking on the phone. Whatsapp used to be banned there, I think it still is, so first there would be only messaging, I think first there wasn't even an option for calling on whatsapp, for calling we used to use viber. Then EMO came, and now I think even on whatsapp etc. VPN and all must be being used. Now its online calling so now its more easier. We used skype for quite a while as well. Now we have calls daily almost. Voice messaging, text, and video calling. Whenever one is free, we just send voice messages, deliver voice messages, and whenever one gets time then one replies. Otherwise, obviously, when he gets free after duty time, our time gap with there is 1 hour, we are 1 hour ahead, they are GMT plus 4, Pakistan is GMT plus 5, our 9 o'clock is their 8 o'clock. So around this time his 8 p.m. when he comes back from duty and sits down to eat dinner, he calls. Facebook is not used that much, over there WhatsApp and EMO is used more."*

Naila, an MPhil student at Forman Christian University belonging to an upper middle-class family, told me how it had been difficult to maintain connectivity with her maternal aunt after her migration to Dubai in 2008. Naila had been little at the time her aunt had migrated and had therefore been unbothered about maintaining connection with people who were no longer around her. Furthermore, and this is the significant point here, her house did not have an internet connection till 2011 that would have enabled her to maintain connectivity. They only had a telephone line and could only get in touch with her maternal aunt through a brief phone call because of the high cost of international calling at that time. While her aunt visited them in

Pakistan every year, the time they were able to spend together had been too short for them to establish a deep emotional connection. Hence, till they got the internet connection, in the intervening years an insurmountable sort of distance had crept into their relationship. Reminiscing about her first mobile phone, Naila recalled that even when they had an internet connection and digital applications, their communication with their maternal aunt in Dubai had not been smooth due to the UAE's ban on WhatsApp. There were alternatives such as using a VPN to connect via WhatsApp or using other applications such as Skype, but the fact that you had to go through so many hoops to get connected, deterred them from being in frequent contact with her aunt in Dubai.

Hailing from a middle-class family with both her siblings having moved abroad, Faiza told me that she had what she referred to as traditional minded parents who were not that tech savvy, even in comparison to other people in their age group. Her parents thought that technology was a waste of time and money and did not like how everyone today was on their phones 24/7. This is a very common generational discourse on technology in Pakistan where young people that have grown up with the development of the internet and communication technologies are reprimanded for their excessive use of technology to the detriment of in person presence and social relations. This discourse constructs young people as glued to their screens and losing their ability to participate in real life. The online world is seen as fake, while the offline world is considered real, creating a hierarchy between the tangible and the virtual, the elder and the younger generation. This discourse establishes a hierarchy by moralizing the use of technology along generational lines, thereby enabling the elder generation to maintain their authoritative power. Such a discourse obscures the fact that virtual space has its own

materialities (algorithms, etc.) and that in a globalizing world the online world intersects with the offline world and is part and parcel of how people live out their social and cultural lives in the current day and age.

Thus, despite their espousal of this discourse, Faiza's parents were forced to reckon with digital communication technologies and gain some level of digital literacy. Her mother knew how to make a call, and send a text message on a cellphone, but she could not engage in the rapid text culture of WhatsApp. Her father was better than her mother at using the phone and would occasionally send forwards or a meme relevant to them as a family on their family WhatsApp group. Sometimes this would instigate her and/or her brother to begin a long discussion on the family WhatsApp group, while at other times she would let her father and brother argue amongst themselves and she would take it up with her brother in the sibling's WhatsApp group. Her father was the most active member of the family WhatsApp group but he used it only occasionally. Hence, not only was the possibility of maintaining more frequent digital connectivity with relatives abroad relatively new, but it also relied on a host of factors such as access to internet and communication technologies, national and international rules and regulations, the life stage, age group, and digital literacy of the people trying to connect.

Digital communication with relatives abroad and best practices

Not only was the ability to establish connectivity via digital media affected by a multitude of factors, even if you were able to establish connectivity, it did not necessarily translate into deep, emotional connections with family members. Faiza told me about the communication and emotional gap that had emerged with her brother who had moved to the United States to pursue a master's in law and was now working there. Even though he had a

mobile phone and access to an internet connection and was digitally literate in how popular communication applications worked, he would not establish connectivity with them as frequently as she would have liked. Furthermore, he had exited out of many of their common family WhatsApp groups and hardly ever shared details or pictures of his daily life in America. It also took a lot of persuasion by their mother to make him call someone for condolences or congratulatory purposes. He had become so distant that he had had a major medical procedure, and he had only called them right before he went into the hospital. Their mother had been so worried that she had contacted his friends in the United States and asked them to go check in on him. With a hint of indignation in her voice, Faiza told me that instead of feeling grateful he had been angry at their mother for making such a big deal about this!

Research on transnational migration has demonstrated the remote sensing and emotional labor that is undertaken by family members who have emigrated, as well as those who remain in the home country, to keep abreast with each other's well-being.(Berg 2015; Madinou and Miller 2012) It has illustrated how family members, abroad and at home, share only selective aspects of their lives, censoring out those details which they think might worry the other person. Furthermore, it has also illustrated how work schedules, in countries such as the United States, and time differences between places, makes it difficult for people in different locations to maintain constant connectivity. Due to her brother's lack of sharing intimate details about his everyday life in America, Faiza felt that her deep connection with her brother had become attenuated. She felt like she had an idea of the big things going on in his life but was clueless about the everyday particulars that were part of how he lived out his daily existence. She expressed that it felt like they were all living a very scattered life with just enough

connectivity to maintain their relationship at a surface level, but not enough to be able to maintain a consistent deep emotional connection. The inability of digital technologies and digital communication to fulfill the demands of presence that kinship requires complements studies on the use of the internet and digital media technologies which illustrate how connecting online supplements connecting offline, rather than virtual networks replacing social networks in the real world (Castells 2010; Uimonen 2013).

Resentful towards her brother for being unable to practice kinship properly via the use of digital communication technologies, Faiza shared with me her surprise at the intensity of his reaction towards their niece during a video call. They had a sister who lived in Germany and who had recently had a baby daughter. Faiza kept frequently in touch with her sister in Germany, who not only reciprocated in their online communication, but also visited Pakistan more frequently than her brother. Her brother had been unable to meet their niece in person till now and had only seen her on video call. During one such video call, their niece gestured as if trying to take him out of the phone, and he started to cry! Faiza had been astounded by this reaction as her brother rarely became emotional when he was talking to them and was usually irritated by the constant attention demanded by family groups on WhatsApp. He had been asked by their sister in Germany if he wanted to be removed from all family WhatsApp groups since they disturbed his peace so much. Even though he was not active on them, he had requested to be allowed to stay a passive participant as he wanted to retain his access to pictures and videos of his niece.

The underlying principle that shaped the blueprint for practicing digital kinship, therefore, was the recreation of kinship affect. This was most effectively engendered by real

time presence, consistent connectivity, the sharing of intimate and visual details about everyday life and establishing reciprocity in digital communication. These were the normative ways of practicing digital kinship, and anyone unable to keep up with these standards or reciprocate similarly was resented for their lack of effort towards maintaining kinship. Faiza's brother could not keep in touch in these ways, and it felt as if he was disregarding his kinship duties and obligations. His unstable digital connectivity with his family was considered one of the many signs of his laxity in his care towards them. For example, Faiza complained that even though he contributed to household expenses, he would send varying amounts every month instead of a fixed monthly sum, adding to their perception of him as an inconsistent and unreliable source of support. Relating to me how her brother had promised to send her on a trip to Turkey as a thank you for all that she did for their parents, Faiza told me how she had jokingly admonished him for trying to buy her services in taking on the care taking responsibilities for their parents, a responsibility that was supposed to be primarily shouldered by the son in the family. By refusing to see her brother's proposition of sending her on a trip to Turkey as a thank you gift for taking care of their parents, Faiza refused to see the gift in terms of its affective value and instead saw it as a commodification of her labour towards the family. By declining her brother's offer, she underscored the indispensability of her brother's kinship obligations towards the family.

Sharing digital artifacts to express affection

However, although Faiza was critical of her brother's efforts at maintaining kinship via digital communication, she also recognized that the norms of maintaining kinship via digital communication were changing. Sharing memes was also a way for Faiza to connect with her siblings abroad. Whenever she came across a relatable meme on the internet, she would share

it on the siblings WhatsApp group. Recalling the communication and emotional gap that had emerged with her brother, she confessed that even though her brother would often not reply or react to the memes she would send, she still considered sending memes to him as a way of communicating with him. Her parents, who complained about her brother's lack of effort at staying connected with the family, did not understand that there were different ways of communicating. For her, just the act of sending a meme was communication, as it implied that she had thought of the person to whom she sent it, and trusted that they had seen it. Although her brother's lack of reciprocity in reacting to the memes she sent, and more generally her siblings' lack of effort in initiating contact bothered Faiza, the act of sharing a meme with her siblings still made her feel emotionally connected with them.

Limor Shifman defines internet memes as "……(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance; (b) that were created with awareness of each other; and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the internet by many users." (Shifman 2014, 8). While I did not get the opportunity to collect specific memes from Faiza, being privy to some of the popular digital content circulated in the mediascape of people who associated with Pakistan, I often came across memes that were a way for people to engage in social commentary. A screenshot from a series of images shared on Facebook by an acquaintance in Lahore illustrates a popular meme in circulation at the time I was conducting fieldwork. I came across a similar meme being shared on WhatsApp as well, as a tweet rather than as an image, pointing to the meme's variability and circulation on multiple platforms. The meme juxtaposes the US flag with the flag of Pakistan and accompanies that with the juxtaposition of one-line sentences that illustrate how the same thing is expressed in different

ways in the two countries owing to cultural and contextual differences. However, the meme does not do this in a benign way, but rather its structural format carefully renders a hierarchy between the culture of the US and the culture of Pakistan, rendering a comical commentary on the latter. It situates the US flag above the Pakistani one, and establishes the statement related to the US as the normative one, with the statement related to Pakistan attempting to convey the absurdity of how things worked in Pakistan. One of the variations of this meme, for example, juxtaposes how a real estate agent in the US is a real estate agent, whereas in Pakistan most real estate agents are retired army officers revealing the unfair monopolization of land ownership by the Pakistani military. Likewise, another variation comments on the ease of direct communication among the sexes in the US, where a girl will say 'I don't like you' in a straightforward manner to a boy she is not interested in, while in Pakistan a girl will assign the kin category of 'brother' to communicate her disinterest in a boy (see Figure.9).

Figure 9. Memes in circulation comparing culture in the US and Pakistan

Another example of a popular meme in circulation at that time is an image that looks like a screenshot of Donald Trump's twitter account (see Figure.10). Donald Trump had won the 2016 US presidential elections, shaking the liberal democratic image of America. Trump was known for his antagonism towards immigrant populations, Muslims in particular, via his

campaign speeches and initiation of a ban on immigrants from Muslim countries. Globally, the election of Donald Trump in the United States had been met with smugness, as his election was thought to bring out into the open the hypocrisy of American imperialism which touted America as the land of the free and as a country for immigrants. The meme depicts Trump's twitter account with the handle titled @realDonaldTrump, with an invocation from the Quran in Arabic which translates to 'with help from Allah, let victory be near'. The meme can be read in a variety of ways depending on the context of reception. From a diasporic Muslim location, it can be read in light of the terror faced by Muslim communities in the United States at the election of an anti-Muslim president, employing humour to make light of the situation by positing Trump in actuality as a convert to Islam who relied on Islamic invocations to God to win the election. The meme, from this point of view, conjures a world where the power dynamic is reversed by enfolding Trump into the Muslim community. From the location of people residing in Muslim majority countries that have suffered from American imperialism, it can be read as a triumphant celebration of the unveiling of the true face of the United States whereby Trump's election is a victory for Muslims worldwide by exposing American imperialism and hypocrisy.

Figure 10. Meme depicting the US Presidential race with candidate Donlad Trump's twitter handle tweeting a popular Quranic verse in Arabic that prays for victory

Sharing memes is an integral part of digital culture in a globalizing world. Their malleability, ability to distil complex issues, communicative efficacy by using devices such as humor and sarcasm, interpretive openness, visual potency, and shareability, make internet memes a special type of digital artifact. All these qualities enable memes to be widely circulated, helping people living in different physical locations experience communitas in the virtual realm via the sharing of a digital artifact. The sharing of memes with larger audiences, such as posting on your profile on Facebook or on a WhatsApp group, enables people to enact their identity and participation in global digital cultures. For my respondents, however, the act of sending a meme to specific people in their network operated in terms of strengthening already existing bonds. Memes were sent to only those people with whom one had a close relationship, whether they were family members or friends. My respondents explained that they sent memes to those people whom they knew intimately enough to be aware of their interests and type of humor. Not only did my respondents state that they shared memes with people they had a close relationship with, but they also stressed that they shared those memes that had some relevance for the other person or for their relationship with the other person. Thus, for example, the sharing of a political meme with another person could be because of your shared political ideologies or even a shared interest in debating/following politics.

Naila, an Mphil student at Forman Christian College, explained how her relatives had moved abroad while she was still young, and when the internet and communication technologies were not as widespread as they were today. Due to these limitations, it had been difficult for her to stay in touch and establish a deep emotional connection with her relatives abroad. However, over the years as her cousins from Dubai had visited Pakistan frequently, and

she had gotten to witness her younger female cousin grow up, she had managed to form a bond with her by sharing memes. As her younger cousin had grown up, Naila had found it easier to connect with her over pop culture like K-pop, in addition to assuming the role of an elder sister with whom one could discuss concerns related to university life and boys. Whenever Naila came across a meme that she thought her cousin would relate to, she would send it to her, and upon her reply would feel good that her cousin had enjoyed it. When I asked her what sharing memes meant for her relationship with her relatives abroad, she responded:

> NS: "*For me as a person I don't associate meaning to my relationships based on how much I talk to them. It is not like I will only become friends with you if I am talking with you 24/7 365 days, that is not my criteria. But you know when I see a meme and I think that Alizeh would find it interesting or that Alizeh would have a laugh on it, I think and just share it. And then she likes it and she replies me back so I feel oh she liked it, she had a good time, so that's just how it happens, I feel like the thought…the value I have when it comes to an exchange of memes is that I think of her or she thinks of me. If she finds something relevant that Sherry apa (Urdu term for elder sister) would like this, it's just the thought that counts*."

It was not just memes that were shared by my respondents but other digital artifacts as well. Seher, a thirty-year-old woman working as a research assistant at Information Technology University, had an elder sister living in the United States. She told me that she talked to her sister frequently via WhatsApp, and that her communication with her sister was integral to helping her make major life decisions. For example, after completing her master's in development studies from Information Technology University, Seher shared feeling paralyzed as she tried to decide her next major step in life. She could either gain further higher education by pursuing a PhD, or she could get married and settle down. She expressed how she felt *stuck* between these two options. During the time I spent with her, she shared her fears with me about entering her 30s and going for a PhD abroad which was sure to delay and complicate her

marriage prospects. It was her sister who helped her think through her approach to this dilemma. Since she did not yet have a concrete acceptable marriage proposal within reach, her sister advised her to work on things that were in her control, i.e. her career. Since Seher wished to do a PhD and work in academia in future, her sister advised her to focus on applying for PhD programs rather than deferring applying in anticipation of coming across a suitable marriage prospect in Pakistan. It was in light of this conversation that Seher shared with me the digital artifact she had shared with her sister a few days ago.

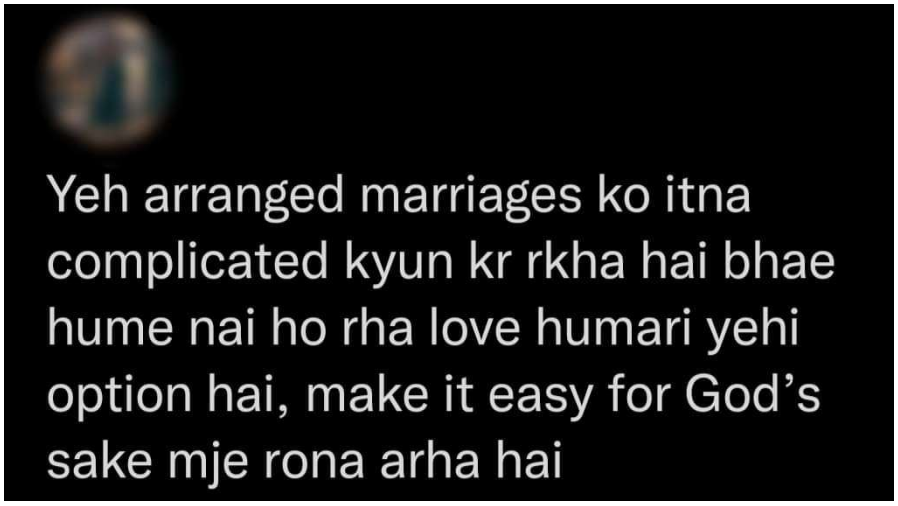

Figure 11. Tweet in Roman Urdu expressing frustration at the difficulties of entering into an arranged marriage or falling into a love marriage, for young people in South Asia

The digital artifact was a snapshot of someone's tweet on their twitter account commenting on the social and cultural issue of arranged marriages in Pakistan while simultaneously critiquing the western concept of love marriages. The image I collected displayed the twitter handle and name of the person who wrote the tweet, but the image associated with the person's account was blurred. As this was the account of a young woman, the blurred picture indicates the value of female purdah that must have been important to the

person who originally produced this digital artifact by taking a snapshot of this tweet and sending it into circulation. In Roman Urdu, the text image questions why arranged marriages have become so complicated that they make the object of marriage itself difficult to attain. With a hint of satire, it also criticizes the concept of love marriage, stating that for God's sake please stop complicating the process for arranged marriages because I do not seem to be falling in love with anyone, thereby ruling out the option of a love marriage as an alternative. In the end it communicates desperation and frustration at this situation where one just ends up feeling stuck and wanting to cry.

The internet is an inventive space where people who do not hold institutional hegemonic power can express themselves and criticize the structures and systems which are shaping their lives. By way of example, the digital artifact Seher shares with her sister communicates the tensions young people from Pakistan are facing with regards to living their lives within the friction of the global and the local. Local cultural dynamics, such as arranged marriages, have been upset and become more difficult to achieve in a globalizing world, and the global alternative in its place of a westernized concept of love marriage does not hold much promise as it is entirely dependent upon chance. Thus, the digital artifact communicates not only the imperial discourses of global culture, but also the rigidity and fixity of discourses in local culture, and the stagnation this can cause for young people from Pakistan as a result of their imbrication within both these discourses. By sharing this digital artifact with her sister abroad, Seher was able to communicate her emotional state to her sister with very little effort due to its visual nature, use of satire, and concise wording. Furthermore, her sister's experience of divorce and a second marriage that had been contracted transnationally made this digital

artifact well suited for sharing with her sister who would be able to empathize with the situation this digital artifact was trying to communicate.

While speaking with Rabia, a recent graduate from LUMS and a Research Assistant at Information Technology University, I asked for examples of the types of digital artifacts that circulated between her and her cousins in the United States. She showed me an image of a Facebook post from a global public news broadcasting channel with the headline 'A 'bored' security guard destroys a $1 million painting by drawing eyes on it'. She explained how her cousin shared this with her as it seemed like the kind of nonchalant thing Rabia might do when she was bored without realizing the disastrous consequences of her actions, illustrating that the cousin knew Rabia at the level of the idiosyncrasies of her individual personality. Rabia's cousin could have shared this digital artifact with her for a variety of reasons. It could have been that Rabia and her cousin shared a common interest in the work of the artist to whom this painting belonged, or it could have been their shared interest in following the news page of TRT World. However, both Rabia and her cousin found meaning in the exchange of this digital artifact by relegating its original context into the background and recontextualizing it within the context of their relationship, illustrating how affective kinship was at work.

Figure 12. A screenshot of a Facebook post from an infotainment news agency in which a respondent's cousin had tagged her

Maryam, an MPhil student at the University of Punjab, shared with me that even though she had several relatives abroad, she was closest to her younger paternal uncle and his wife in Dubai. Her uncle was deeply concerned about her education and would involve himself in asking about her progress and encouraging and supporting her in her pursuit of higher education. His wife had gone to the University of Punjab for her Masters in Education, the same university Maryam was now attending, and this common ground helped her and Maryam to form a strong bond as well. Furthermore, his wife was very friendly and stayed frequently in touch, and Maryam and her would connect almost every day, sharing mundane details as well

as significant ones about their lives with each other. To help me get an idea of what this everyday connectivity looked like, she showed me how just the other day her aunt had been grocery shopping and came across an oil brand that had the same name as her, Maryam. She immediately took a picture and shared it with her. Not only had this made Maryam laugh but it showed that her aunt had remembered her upon seeing this.

The phrase 'it is the thought that counts' is often used in relevance to the exchange of gifts. Whether employed by the giver in search of an appropriate gift, and/or the receiver in acknowledgement of receiving a gift, the phrase emphasizes the affective value of gifts over their material or use value. By doing this, the phrase redirects the focus of the gift exchange from the material object being exchanged to the relationship between the giver and receiver. Furthermore, my respondents also used the phrase when conversing with me about what the exchange of material objects with their relatives abroad meant to them. The exchange of memes among my respondents and their friends and family members, therefore, can also be understood in a similar manner. My respondents sent memes as digital artifacts to people with whom they had a close relationship. The norms which structured this exchange of memes were like those that structured the exchange of gifts among people who had close relationships, such as among kin, among good friends, or even among people of the same village or neighborhood. These norms were structured according to the values of reciprocity, maintaining regular exchange and contact, and fostering intimacy among those who participated in the exchange.

Conclusion

The exigencies of kinship as a cultural practice connecting people living near each other shaped the use of digital technologies and digital communication with relatives and friends

abroad. These best practices included, for example, establishing presence by trying to connect in real time, reinforcing virtual presence by sharing intimate details about everyday life as well as sharing visual materials such as family pictures and videos, and taking care to establish reciprocity by connecting regularly and responding to the other person. Digital communication with kin and friends was understood as embedded within kinship relations, and the exchange of digital artifacts with kin or friends was understood in the logic of gift exchange. The exchange of digital artifacts took place with people one knew and was close to, and digital artifacts were seen in terms of their affective value for kinship. This sometimes meant a decontextualization of the visual digital artifact and its recontextualization within specific relationships to make it do the work of kinship. However, digital connectivity alone with relatives abroad did not lead to strong emotional connections. The practice of kinship via digital communication technologies had to be supplemented with in person interactions for long periods of time to establish deep emotional connections.

CHAPTER 6: MAINTAINING KINSHIP VIA CONSUMPTION AND MATERIAL EXCHANGE

Introduction

This chapter shifts the lens to the workings of a global capitalist economy in Pakistan which is accompanied by the commodification of culture as a counter-commodity. It looks at how the commodification of culture in Pakistan enables local businesses to carve a niche in the global capitalist economy by the production and circulation of cultural commodities, particularly in the circuits established with diasporic communities from Pakistan. The hyper production, circulation, and exchange of cultural commodities builds, and reinforces, a global neoliberal perception of Pakistan as the place of culture among diasporic communities. Next, this chapter explores what global consumption practices, and the circulation of commodities, mean for the politics of place in a global neoliberal order. Lastly, this chapter looks at gift exchange between people in Lahore and their relatives abroad to understand the emergence of an affective economy of kinship.

Globalization in Pakistan and the commodification of culture

With globalization imploding in Pakistan through the inroads made by the global capitalist economy, and the emergence of local retail brands and shopping malls, the way people in Pakistan relate to material things has also undergone transformations over the years. Over time, developments in the global capitalist economy, whereby production became outsourced to developing countries, has led to the dominance of multinational companies and an influx of commodities in local markets. In more recent years, the mushrooming of Chinese low-cost retail stores, such as Miniso, and the opening of small-scale local businesses have made commodities increasingly accessible to a growing new middle class in South Asia. In the

shopping malls of Lahore, where the older established upper and upper-middle classes come to shop, it is an interesting sight to witness people from even lower socioeconomic classes roaming around and thus partaking in the experience of shopping as leisure even if they cannot afford to buy anything. The development of a commodity market in Pakistan has therefore brought with it the values of a global capitalist economy centered around individual choice and consumption as an end in itself.

William Mazzarella's work on consumerism and advertising in India demonstrates how this has stimulated local producers to develop culture as a counter commodity to maintain their edge in a global capitalist economy where they must compete with giant multinational corporations (Mazzarella 2003; 2004). Hence, we see the precipitation in Pakistan of certain types of industries such as large-scale retail brands for traditional clothes, restaurants and businesses related to food, and businesses providing beauty services such as salons (known as beauty parlors in local parlance). The development of culture as a counter commodity in a globalizing Pakistan implies the commodification of those aspects of culture that are tangible and easily objectifiable, such as clothes, food, language, etc. The commodification of culture in Pakistan results in the accelerated production, purchase, and exchange of cultural commodities, reifying and reinforcing the perception of Pakistan as the place of one's culture. The commodification of certain aspects of culture not only enables local businesses to create a niche for themselves in the global capitalist economy, but also facilitates participation in the culture of global consumerism alongside the reenactment of cultural identity via the consumption of culture.

Moreover, in a globalizing economy, the sphere of influence of cultural commodities is

not just limited to people in a particular place. Rather it expands to cater to the needs of diasporic counterparts around the world. Over the years, brand names in Pakistan such as Junaid Jamshed or Shan have developed product lines for export, opened global branches of their store in different countries, or established international shipping rates to cater to people living abroad. However, access to these cultural commodities from Pakistan is regulated by factors, such as the price at which they are sold abroad, which vary from country to country. Hence, only people from a specific socioeconomic class, in a specific place, can afford these commodities.

Purnima Mankekar has discussed the reification of Indian culture and identity via people's association with affective objects sold in Indian grocery stores in the San Franciso Bay area. She states that in a diasporic setting, even a mundane everyday object, such as a shampoo from India, can enable people to live out their identity as Indian and feel closer to their culture. In India, a shampoo is just a shampoo, but abroad it is the very symbol of one's identity as Indian and one's participation in Indian culture (Mankekar 2015). When I asked my respondents in Lahore what type of things their relatives took with them when they came for a visit to Pakistan, they named cultural commodities such as traditional clothes and jewelry, traditional footwear, as well as cultural foodstuff. I remember a friend of mine at Michigan State showing off a 'kurta' (Urdu word for traditional long shirt) emblazoned with a sentence in the Urdu script. Laughing, she told me that she had requested her parents in Pakistan to send this to her, and they had been horrified at this new trend in clothing! Indeed, once I liked a page on Instagram advertising traditional clothes, my newsfeed became flooded with Pakistani models decked in the most beautiful outfits, making me want to buy them even if I did not usually

spend on such consumer items. This illustrates the significance of cultural commodities for diasporic communities in reenacting their cultural selves via consumption.

The politics of place and consumption in a global neoliberal order; changing regimes of value and friction in a globalizing world

I met Naila during my time as visiting faculty at the Information Technology University (ITU) in Lahore. During one of our chats as we waited for students to show up, I told her about my research project and its criteria for selecting research participants. An introverted personality with a bold sense of style and curly brown hair made her conspicuous and appear as an undergraduate student, I found Naila to be a kind and understanding soul who empathized with my research troubles. To my surprise, I found out that she was an MPhil student at the Forman Christian University (FCU), and in her early 30s like me. She immediately agreed to an interview. On the day we had scheduled the interview, she led me to a quite spot in the university parking structure to make sure that we would not be interrupted and would be able to get a clear recording. Standing, we leaned against the concrete, and looked at the road far down below us, as an occasional light breeze swept our faces as they sweat in the dry Lahore summer heat. I found Naila to be a forthcoming respondent with keen observations and an ability to articulate them well.

Naila had several relatives abroad, a maternal aunt and her family in Dubai, a paternal uncle and his family in Australia, and a paternal uncle who had migrated to Italy. Speaking of her maternal aunt living in Dubai, Naila stated that sometimes relatives abroad had a superiority complex. When I prodded her as to what she meant by that, she clarified that although it was not generalizable across all her relatives abroad, she did get this feeling of being patronized

from her maternal aunt and cousins in Dubai. If they were able to afford designer clothes from Pakistan, like those designed by Sania Maskatiya (a high fashion brand), and she chose to wear clothes from retail brands like Khaadi or Sapphire, they would make her feel as if she was not as elite as them. Similarly, if she had a cellphone from another brand that was not as prestigious or expensive as their Apple Iphone, her cousins thought she was not 'cool' enough. When I asked her what exactly they would say to her, she explained that they never said these things explicitly, but their insinuations were present in the offhand comments they made, and the intense reactions they had on visiting Pakistan and encountering the difference in lifestyle there. Her maternal aunt's family would comment on how poor Pakistan was, on the shortage of electricity in the country, its lack of development, its lack of cleanliness, and so on and so forth. Naila related to me how over time she had come to make peace with their attitude as something stemming from their lack of awareness of how things worked in a third world country such as Pakistan. The early years of her relationship with them, however, she confessed, had been sacrificed to their condescension and the damage it had done to her self-esteem.

Naila shared that even her not being able to gain acceptance at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), one of the country's most prestigious universities, was seen as a mark of her lack of distinction. Her maternal aunt and her kids in Dubai seemed to have this idea that you could not be elite unless you went to LUMS, never mind that she had only applied there under peer pressure from her friends who were trying to get admitted there. Furthermore, she could only apply in economics at LUMS, as that was the only major the university offered which was remotely connected to her interest in public policy. In Lahore, only Forman Christian University (FCU), another well-known university but lacking the prestige that

was accorded to LUMS, offered a major in public policy. Naila told me that she was glad that she got admitted at FCU rather than at LUMS. Her aunt and her cousins, however, failed to see this as a matter of her choice and instead linked it to her failure to measure up to elite standards. Naila, thereby, countered her aunt's judgment by emphasizing the primacy of her choice and autonomy as an individual, values associated with a global neoliberal order and capitalist economy.

Her relatives' condescension of everything she did, from the type of clothes she wore to the university she attended, seemed to her to blend seamlessly with their contempt for Pakistan as a place. Spaces within Pakistan such as LUMS and designer brands such as Sania Maskatiya were so far removed from the global consensus on Pakistan as a place that they were seen as spaces of exception and often associated with diaspora/global space/abroad instead. Similarly, her relative's sense of superiority aligned with the conceptions of a particular class about what Dubai was like as a place, a place where her relatives now lived and which they could now lay claim to. Judging by the way Naila dressed, and following her wedding pictures on Instagram, I concluded that her family would classify as upper middle class. I asked her if there really was a huge financial difference between her family and her maternal aunt's family in Dubai? She responded that more than economic difference it was just that they lived in Dubai, and that too in a villa, that made them feel as if they were superior. They had the label of being from Dubai and that gave them the impunity to act this way.

This example illustrates the prestige value associated with going abroad to places such as Dubai which is associated, for specific classes in Pakistan, with ideas about the good life in terms of high living standards accompanied by the comfort and familiarity of religious and

cultural similarities. Going abroad to such places provided an opportunity to earn prestige and transform one's social rank among relatives in Pakistan. Indeed, work on the circulation of capital, gifts, and offerings among the Pakistani diaspora in Britain and their relatives in Pakistan has indicated the operation of a prestige economy where migration entails access to economic capital and higher quality consumer goods (Werbner 1990). In response to her cousins' condescension for Pakistan as a place, Naila responded with her own judgment of their ignorance about how things worked in third world countries, taking ownership of a global imperial discourse that divides the world and ranks its different parts according to a linear scale of progression based on the degree to which a country has achieved the markers of development; provision of infrastructure, scientific and technological achievements, reduction in poverty, etc. By employing the language of a global imperial discourse about the third world and employing it as an attack on the naivety of her cousins from the first world, Naila made use of the discursive regimes in a global neoliberal order to defend herself. It is interesting that Naila used the term first world to apply to the UAE, which although associated with the good life in the imagination of particular classes in Pakistan, is still not considered at par with western countries in the global neoliberal order that remains indeterminate about whether to place it in the first or second world category. Moreover, what made the UAE characteristically first world for Naila was the ability of her cousins in Dubai to afford and access American brands such as Apple. This illustrates the hierarchies that structure perception of places in the global neoliberal order. The fact that Naila felt a judgment of her consumer choices and choice of university as an attack on her personhood and sense of place by her relatives in Dubai points to how the politics of place are intertwined with the politics of the circulation of commodities in a global capitalist

economy.

Hence, the type of commodities that people prefer to buy from different places plays an integral role in making meaning of that place in a globalizing world. In other words, how we make meaning of a place in a globalizing world affects our perception of things from that place, and consequently what we buy from that place. Consumption practices in the global neoliberal order are thus influenced by (and also influence) people's ideas about different places. However, the relationship between commodities and ideas about place in the global neoliberal order intersect with other social factors such as class. The UAE, particularly Dubai, is associated with a luxurious life for certain classes in Pakistan, which correlates with the most popular types of commodities that people buy from there such as luxury consumer items like electronics, perfumes, chocolates, jewelry, and international brand name clothes. America is associated with technological prowess, consumerism, and ideas about the American life. Hence, the global predilection for Apple products, and the popularity of distinctly American products such as the Betty Crocker pancake mix or American chocolate brands such as Hershey, are especially desired. Pakistan is associated with Pakistani culture, therefore cultural commodities such as traditional clothes and jewelry are generally valued, but items like truck art that embody subcultures within Pakistan, are considered more distinctive.

This illustrates the changing ways in which people construct their relationship with commodities and place in a global neoliberal order. Following Purnima Mankekar's study of the global consumption practices of the Indian diaspora in San Francisco, my research also finds that in a world where an increasing number of people have access to commodities, commodities start to be desired in terms of their affective value (Mankekar 2015). The higher the market

value of a commodity, the higher its affective value, and vice versa, i.e. the higher the affective value of a commodity, the higher its market value. Thus, buying an Iphone is not the same as buying a Betty Crocker pancake mix, although both embody the affective value of the American life. Likewise, buying clothes from Nishat Linen is not the same as buying clothes from Sania Maskatiya, although both embody the affective value of Pakistani culture. The ability to afford high market value commodities in the global neoliberal order is therefore tied to class. In the example of Naila's story above, her relatives from Dubai could access high market brands in the global neoliberal economy regardless of the place from where these commodities were bought. They could claim not just global neoliberal identifications of Dubai as place, but also simultaneous global neoliberal identifications of Pakistan as place of culture and Pakistan as place poverty, etc. Naila skillfully navigated her relatives' attempt to claim prestige over her family by giving primacy to global neoliberal values of individual consumer choice and autonomy, demonstrating the varied regimes of value operating in a global neoliberal order and the frictions they can cause.

Gift exchange with diaspora and affective kinship

Alongside the spread of a global culture of consumerism, exist other ways in which people relate to commodities. This becomes apparent in gift exchange among people in Pakistan and their diasporic relatives abroad. As our conversation progressed, I turned to inquiring about the type of gift exchange that occurred between Naveen aunty's daughter in America and herself. I asked if her daughter in America had ever given her something she valued. She responded with enthusiasm that there was one thing that she would like to show me, it was a very little thing, but she valued it very much. In her dowry, she told me, she had

received a Samsonite vanity box, alongside a matching set of suitcases bought from New York. Her vanity box had been stolen and she had searched all the markets of Lahore to find one in the same color and design. Although she had found other options, she was not satisfied with them and had requested her daughter in America to look if the Samsonite model was available there. Her daughter had been exasperated with the request, as she thought the model was so old it seemed like a distant possibility for it to be available even in the market of the United States. Lo and behold, upon searching online, her daughter had been able to find the exact model and color and had surprised her with this gift on one of her return visits. Her voice laden with affection and nostalgic emotion, my respondent told me that this gift was for her more valuable than even a piece of jewelry!

Figure 13. Respondent showing me her valued Blue Samsonite vanity box gifted to her from her daughter in America

Figure 14. The vanity box gifted to respondent by her daughter as the same Samsonite model and color the respondent had been gifted decades ago in her dowry

Jewelry, especially gold jewelry, has immense cultural value in Pakistan as a liquid asset that is gifted to the bride from both her natal family as well as the groom's family. It is valued as a gift higher than cash, as it embodies not only generational and familial transference in terms of jewelry passing down generations, but also as an asset providing a modicum of financial security for the bride in case the couple, or the bride herself, face difficult times. How was it that a banal material object such as the sky-blue Samsonite vanity box was more valuable for my respondent than gold jewelry? The value of the vanity box that was a replica of the one she had received in her dowry was in its ability to elicit a powerful nostalgia for days long gone by. The fact that the vanity box had been made by an American brand and had been brought from America signaled the class, status, and prestige of her natal family. The fact that she had received it in her dowry was reminiscent of her early days of marriage when her husband and her had been at the prime of their life as a married couple; getting to know each other,

socializing with family, friends, and colleagues. With her husband now retired, one of her daughters living far away in America, and being tied down by the added responsibility of having to take care of not just her husband but also her eldest daughter and grandchildren who were now living with them, life was very different than what it had been when she was young.

Serematakis has written about how meaning endowed material objects bear within them emotional and historical sedimentation that can provoke and ignite gestures, discourses, and acts which open up these objects' stratigraphy (Serematakis 1994). Sara Ahmed and Purnima Mankekar have written about the affectivity of objects and how particular emotions become congealed around specific objects (Ahmed 2004; 2010; Mankekar 2015). The worth of the Samsonite vanity box as a material object, therefore, lay not so much in its material worth but in its affectivity. For my respondent it was the Samsonite vanity box around which her nostalgia for a world of prestige and kinship congealed, marking it as even more valuable than gold jewelry that was typically associated with such emotions. The fact that her daughter had put in effort to obtain this for her was evidence of the strong bond between daughter and mother. The fact that a banal object such as this was considered so valuable, even at a time when it was of little practical use, was evidence of the criteria for judging the worth of a material object in terms of its capacity to elicit sentiments and feelings related to prestige and kinship.

The affective value of gift exchange with diasporic relatives also came to the fore in my interactions with another respondent who also lived in Canal View Housing Society. All Huma aunty's children now lived abroad in different countries while she and her husband lived in their palatial house in Lahore. Built on a large plot of land, the outer walls of the bounded and gated

area encompassed not just the imposing building of the main house, but also a spacious garage and an enormous lawn with a smaller house-like structure. I was to find out later that the smaller house like structure that stood in the lawn adjacent to the main house was for the residence of the house help which tended to all affairs of the house while its masters were away for long periods of time living abroad with their children. It was a clear spring afternoon when Afreen aunty, my main informant, and I were led inside by the house help and seated in a sitting room to await the arrival of Huma aunty. The sitting room was in an alcove to the side of a cavernous main lounge, the arrangement and details of the latter were difficult to make out as we walked past given that it was obscured in shadows. The house help drew the curtains of the sitting room, letting in light from the window which immediately lit up the smaller space giving it a warmer and cozier look. Huma aunty emerged from what seemed like a bedroom on the ground floor, ordered the house help to bring in the tea trolley, and came over to greet us.

Hailing from an Urdu speaking family in Karachi, Huma aunty had moved to Lahore upon her marriage with Aslam uncle who belonged to a Punjabi family. Aslam uncle was a civil services officer in customs at the time and had recently retired from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) at a very high grade. Together they had four children, two boys and two girls, all of which had gone to the best private schools and universities in Lahore and had thereafter won prestigious scholarships to attend some of the top universities in the US and Europe. Now most of her children were married and settled in either US or Europe, except for one son who lived in Oman with his family. For 5 to 8 months of the year, Huma aunty and Aslam uncle would live abroad with their children and their families, splitting their time between Oman, Europe, and the United States. The remainder of the year they would live at their house in Lahore, and

during this time their children would visit them in Pakistan.

I asked Huma aunty what sorts of things she exchanged with her children abroad. She laughed out loud, saying that I could not imagine the types of things she took for her children from here. She mentioned ground spices, her own special spice mixes, and frozen homemade kebabs for her son and his family living in Muscat, Oman, where cooked and raw food was allowed via customs. Indeed, when her children came to visit them in Pakistan, the kitchen suddenly became more alive as the family's favorite dishes were prepared and her children frequented the fridge in hopes of finding something good to eat like they did when they were younger and living with their parents. One of the ways in which kinship is practiced is via the sharing of food. Sharing food with another person not only establishes communion with that person at the bodily level in terms of a sensorial experience involving smell, taste, touch, sight, and at times even hearing, but also in terms of a spiritual level where handmade food made by me is akin to a giving a gift that embodies my spirit/substance which I now wish to transfer to you. Food acts not just as a medium of transference but also as a medium which enables sociality, particularly as communities have specific foods that are part of their gastronomic history at both the bodily level and at varying levels of collectivity (family, ethnic community, national community, regional). The potency of food in terms of its powerful multi-sensorial capacities, as well as its capacity for sociality, makes it an especially appropriate affective substance for embodying the feelings of kinship and effecting their transfer.

For her 6-year-old granddaughter in the UK she liked to buy jewelry, such as lockets and bracelets, from one of Lahore's upscale bazaars in Gulberg. This time, however, said Huma aunty, she had bought gifts for her granddaughter from the Sunday bazaar nearby that operated

on a weekly basis and was filled with cheap export goods from China. Excitedly, she got up and rushed inside, running back with her arms full of little trinkets. These included fake pearl necklaces and rings, fancy hair ties and hair clips, and jewelry adorned with characters of the hit Disney film Frozen. As she showed me these gifts, she marveled at how inexpensive they were, displaying her astonishment at how accessible consumer products, that were once open to specific classes, had now become in Pakistan. The cheaper quality of these goods did not seem to perturb Huma aunty, what mattered more for her was the fact that her granddaughter would like these things as she enjoyed adorning herself with accessories to appear glamorous.

Figure 15. Respondent showing me the artificial jewelry and other ornamental trinkets she bought from the Sunday Bazaar for her granddaughter abroad

Already having reached 70, in more recent years she had begun to distribute/pass down household items to her children. As Huma aunty and her husband spent 6 to 8 months every year circulating living with their children abroad, she felt that the house remained shut and the things inside gathered dust for most of the year. Furthermore, with her husband's retirement and her children having moved abroad, parties for colleagues, friends, and family had ceased with the drastic reduction of avenues for professional and familial socialization. Having travelled abroad extensively, their house was a collection of items gathered from around the world and was reminiscent of the cosmopolitan lifestyle of an older upper class in Pakistan. Huma aunty recalled with fondness how she had given away to her daughter the crystal vases she had

ordered from Belgium, and the expensive crockery she had amassed since her marriage. She also expressed delight at how her daughters had liked these two lamps with hanging green crystals that she had bought at an auction in America so much that they each took one and set it up in their own house. These household items not only recalled the high prestige and status that she and her husband had held in society, but by passing them down to her children, Huma aunty was in effect conferring her children with the inheritance of that status and prestige that they had enjoyed as a family.

While Huma aunty got the chance to spend extended time with her children abroad and had begun to distribute the things she owned amongst them, Afreen aunty did not go abroad as often to visit her three married daughters, and instead filled her house with their possessions and their pictures. Afreen aunty confessed that she terribly missed having her daughters in her house. At one point in time, she said, the house would be ringing with voices of 'mama' from all sides that she would have to figure out which daughter to attend to first. During one of our meetings, as she gave me a tour of her house, I couldn't help but feel how the house throbbed with the aching absence of her daughters as their things and pictures filled up every corner. Afreen aunty confessed that she put a lot of her energy into redecorating the house or switching things around to keep herself busy. Under the stairs to the second floor was a table set with picture frames displaying her daughters' childhood pictures. In a corner of the house, she had filled up the empty space with a beautiful wooden carved chair and a gigantic painting hanging over it, both of which she explained belonged to her youngest daughter. They had been part of her daughter's room but when she moved out Afreen aunty had held onto them. She had used them to decorate an alcove under the stairs where they remained more visible as she

passed by that area frequently on an everyday basis. As Afreen aunty showed me her daughters' possessions and pictures, it seems as if there was a deep yearning tinged with melancholy hovering in the air around us, a wistfulness that was contagious as I felt my own heart sink and ache for her.

Figure 16. A table, under the stairs of the respondent's house, displaying pictures of her daughters who were abroad

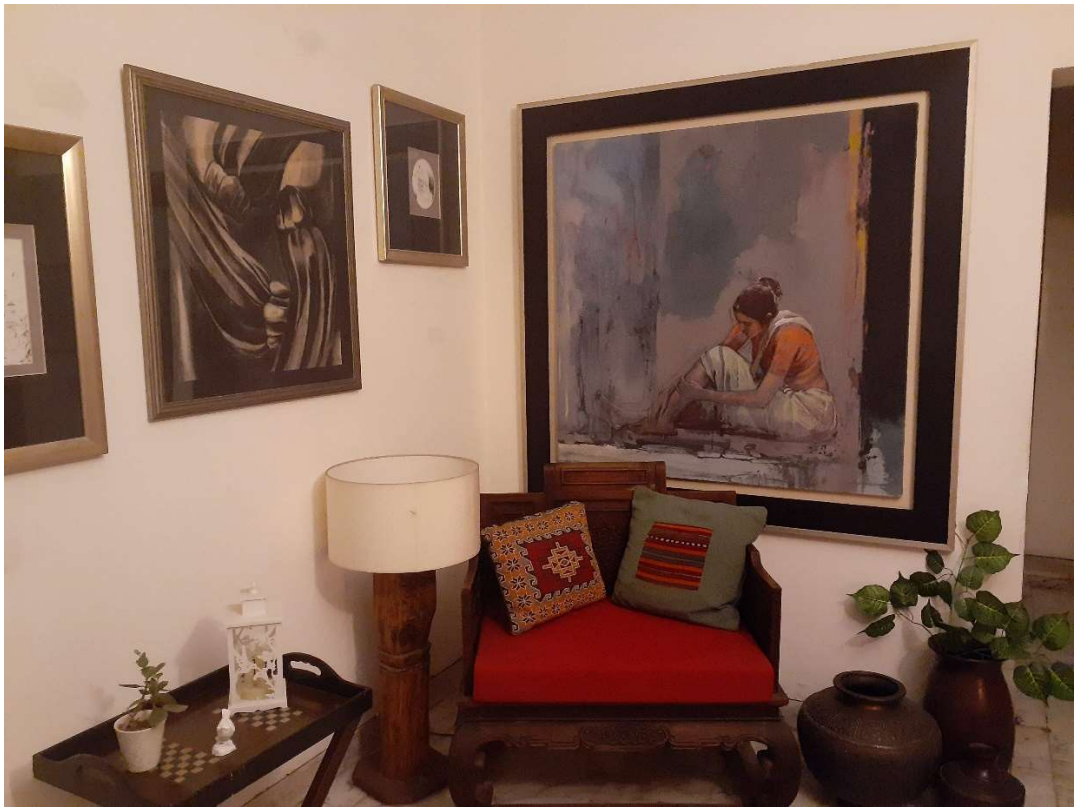

Figure 17. Corner of respondent's house displaying an antique chair, and gigantic painting, that used to decorate her daughter's room when she lived at home

As we stepped out to the garden, however, the energy changed. Afreen aunty perked up as she shared with me her love for gardening. Smiling, she showed me all the little trinkets with which she had decorated her garden, taking great care to point out each one and give me a detailed account of where she had acquired them. Her favorite were the little bird statues that her daughter had bought from the dollar store in Canada and had sent to her as a gift. Once more, I was surprised to find how banal commodities of cheap monetary value such as garden trinkets bought from the dollar store were valued by my respondent. The bird statues were valued as something given by her daughter who knew her mother's love for her garden, as evidence of her daughter's intimate knowledge of her and thereby her daughter's acknowledgement of her personhood.

Figure 18. Bird statues gifted by respondent's daughter from the Dollar Store in Canada adorning the respondent's house garden

Valuing the exchange of material objects with diasporic relatives in terms of its affective value was not just restricted to my upper or upper-middle class respondents. The affective value of material objects was also brought home in my meeting with Nadia aunty, who belonged to a different socioeconomic class compared to my upper-class respondents from Canal View Housing Society. Nadia aunty identified her family as belonging to the middle class and this fit in with my observations about their situation as a family when I went to interview her. The size of their house and its locality, the way it was furnished, the size of the household which included 4 children and 1 elderly person alongside her and her husband, and the varying fortunes of her husband's business, all pointed to the comfortable yet precarious lifestyle they

enjoyed. Nadia aunty had 2 sisters, both of whom lived abroad, one in the UK and the other in the US. Her eldest two daughters now lived abroad as well, one was settled in the US while the other had very recently gone to the UK. When I asked her what the exchange of gifts with her daughters and sisters meant to her, she responded;

> *NA: "See, things…in the real sense meaning resides with a person, the real thing are human feelings. Just like my sister got things for me, I had also gotten her clothes ready from before, her kids clothes as well. This is maybe like they say right that the Prophet (PBUH) said that keep on giving gifts to each other because with those the love increases/spreads. So those were her feelings, in return there were my feelings. Especially now Maham's feelings, she is my daughter, if she brings something then in that for me liking it or not liking it is not even an option for me. My daughter has worked a job and earned that money and whatever she brings for me with that money that is highly valued, that for me is an emotional issue, that whatever my daughter does for me."*

The meaning of gift exchange in terms of the affective value of material objects was underscored by Nadia aunty bringing out a giant Mother's Day card as something she particularly valued among the things gifted to her by her children. With two butterflies adorning the front and a generic message inside expressing appreciation for a mother, each child had handwritten personalized messages and signed off individually to add to the affective value of the card. In their messages they expressed love for their mother, gratefulness for her guidance and support, and prayers for her long life, health, and happiness. These personalized messages and the giant size of the card had affected Nadia aunty so much that she had even held on to the gigantic pink envelope in which it had been delivered.

Figure 19. A giant Happy Mother's Day card and the pink envelope in which it was delivered to respondent from her daughters abroad

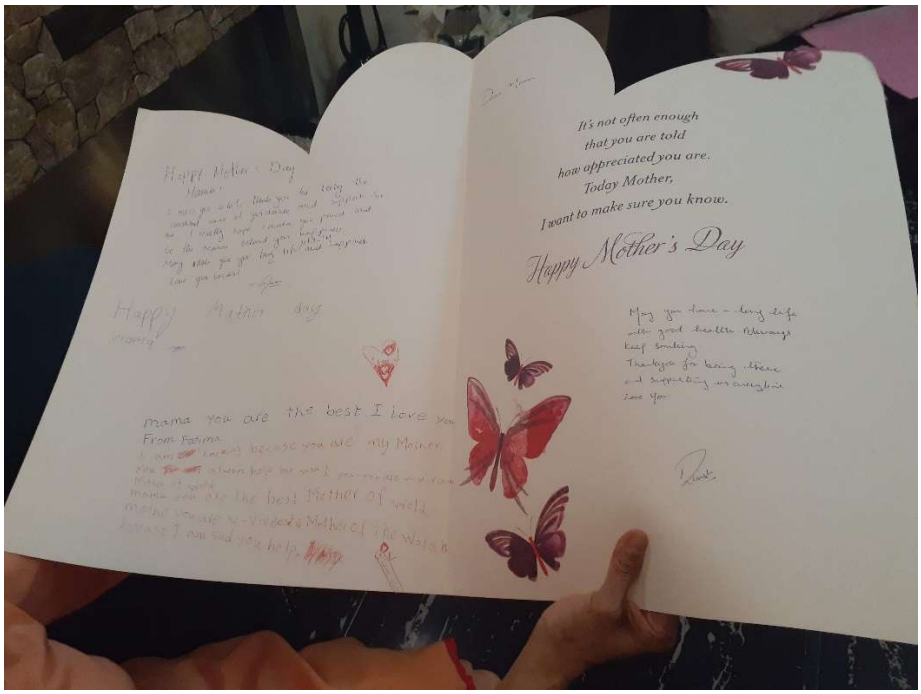

Figure 20. My mother, who had accompanied me to this interview, holding the card so that I can take pictures of the respondent's daughters' handwritten messages of affection inside the card

The changing relationship to material things in terms of their affective capacity for feelings of kinship is not to say that this was the only way in which people related to material objects or that this was the only role played by material exchange in relations with diasporic relatives. While material objects and their exchange had the capacity to affect kinship, kinship relations also had the capacity to influence material exchange and provide access to high value market goods. During our conversation, I asked Nadia aunty if she could show me some of the things her daughters and/or sisters had given her. In her enthusiasm, she called for the house help and asked her to bring a multitude of things which included Guess handbags, DKNY sandals, and Gucci perfumes, among other things of everyday use. Once considered exclusive luxury brands that only the rich could afford, brands like Guess, DKNY, and Gucci have over the years become more democratized as they expanded their product lines to make their products more accessible to a variety of consumer bases. Furthermore, counterfeit products displaying brand logos have enabled a rising middle class in Pakistan to display their membership of a global, mobile world where people now have disposable incomes to spend on consumer items.

Figure 21. Taking a picture of the DKNY sandals gifted to respondent by her daughter abroad

Nadia aunty related an anecdote about a time when she had liked a pair of sandals online in terms of their comfort, and how her daughter had immediately ordered them for her and got them delivered to her as a gift. She related this story proudly as evidence of her daughter's general love, care, and concern for the family as she spent her hard-earned money to buy gifts for all family members. This illustrates the fact that although their daughter abroad contributed to the family's aspiration to maintain its status as a global middle class by providing family members access to consumer goods from the United States, this material exchange was assigned meaning in terms of gift exchange and the feelings of kinship. Nadia aunty emphasized that material things were not significant in and of themselves, in terms of their physical attributes or use value, but rather stood in as symbols of the real thing, which were human feelings. In this social and cultural context, those human feelings were inextricably associated with maintaining kinship. For Nadia aunty, the fact that it was her daughter or sister who gave her a gift was sufficient for it to function as a meaningful symbol of kinship ties. It did not matter to her what the gift in question was, as its primary purpose in her eyes was to safeguard feelings of kinship among kin.

Similarly, I witnessed the presence of high market value items at Afreen aunty's house, albeit items that were a different class of market goods than the ones I had seen at Nadia aunty's house, hence reflecting the difference in class of my two respondents. Afreen aunty drew my attention to the smart TV and Apple watch that her daughters had given her. Although their utilitarian qualities were discussed in terms of making it easier for her to count her daily steps to stay fit or making it possible for her to watch Netflix shows at night to while the time away, she always emphasized these gifts as evidence of the care and attention shown to her by

her daughters who lived abroad. During my visit to Huma aunty's house, I remember how she urged Afreen aunty and I to try the 'gajrela' (the name in Urdu for a sweet dish made from carrots and dried evaporated milk solids) that she had made for the first time in her Instapot brought while visiting her daughter in the UK. Her voice ringing with fascination and awe, she exclaimed she no longer knew what life had been like before she had had the Instapot which made cooking so easy that it was difficult to believe unless you tried it yourself. The Instapot is a kitchen appliance that has become a much-coveted market good as it has revolutionized cooking by making it a low involvement endeavor and optimizing it for convenience and efficiency. The instapot is therefore the quintessential consumer item for the type of individualistic lifestyle supported and propagated by a capitalist economy, a lifestyle that was very different from the slow-paced life that Huma aunty and her retired husband were living in their house in Lahore, Pakistan. Nevertheless, by cooking traditional food in it for the purpose of serving her guests, Huma aunty incorporated the Instapot into a value system centered around a relational sociality.

These examples illustrate how the encounter of a global capitalist economy with local economies such as those of gift exchange lead to the formation of new regimes of value, not least in terms of how people relate to material objects. During fieldwork I observed the presence of high value market goods and popular consumer items in the houses of my respondents who were elderly women belonging to the upper middle and middle class in Lahore and whose children lived abroad. This was clearly evidence of the instrumental aspect of kinship relations where these relations were the means via which people in Lahore gained access to high value market goods and consumer items from abroad. However, when accessing

these consumer items was embedded within exchange relationships with kin, for my respondents the instrumental value of these commodities was overshadowed by their affective value as material objects embodying the care and love shown to them by their kin. While the use value of some consumer items lent them more easily for use in a socio-cultural context of relational sociality (e.g. the Instapot), even those consumer items that lent themselves to individual use alone (e.g. Apple watch, Gucci perfume, branded handbags) were incorporated into a value system centered on kinship by assigning them an affective value of kinship.

Sometimes the valuation of material objects in terms of prestige came into friction with the valuation of material objects in terms of their affective capacity for kinship. More than once, I witnessed a relative abroad expressing their disappointment with the traditional clothes brought as a gift for them by relatives from Pakistan as the clothes did not match their expectations in some way or another. Maybe the color was not exactly the shade they had wanted, or the quality of the cloth was not what they had imagined, or the design was not as beautiful as they had thought it was when they saw it online. The subsequent hurt the giver felt in the gift not being recognized as a symbol of kinship ties was expressed as resentment against their relative abroad who did not value all the effort and thought they had put into giving them this gift.

When I asked Naila what material exchange with her relatives abroad looked like, she explained that when they were deciding on gifts for relatives abroad, they found it easier to just ask them what they wanted. This was because they appreciated those gifts that added the most value to their life. For example, since they were unable to replicate the type of community they had in Pakistan, they valued traditional clothing because it enabled them to reenact their

cultural selves abroad. In relationships among people in Pakistan and their relatives abroad, therefore, we see that values of all sorts slide into one another, sometimes fitting neatly while at other times causing friction. Alongside the operation of the capitalist consumer economy as an affective order, we also see the more local economies of prestige and affective economy of kinship at play. The tension among these diverse meanings attributed to gift exchange came through in my conversation with Naila about what material exchange meant for her relationship with her relatives abroad.

> NS: "*So in terms of the things we give them, our dynamic with them is such we ask them what they need, it is about value addition for us, instead of giving them random things that they would never use or they would not [value?] them, we think it is better to ask them what they want. In both there is a commonality that they miss the sense of community that we have in Pakistan. So like they wish to wear fancy clothes on Eid, Eastern clothes, clothes with embroidery, that they don't get over there.... so they try to replicate the community model that we have here. So they want to have those ghagra choli, suits with dupattas, chiffon dupattas, khussay, dupattas with tillay work etc. So both (relatives in Dubai and relatives in Australia) have this commonality that both want traditional stuff. And in terms of me attaching value or uhhh meaning to these material things, I don't think I attach anything. I mean sure they give me material things and they give me like branded and imported and expensive stuff, sure, but I think it doesn't mean anything to me, if they give it to me than I am grateful, if they don't then it is not a problem, they are kind and gracious enough to think of me every time they come.*"

Conclusion

The production, exchange, and circulation of cultural commodities in Pakistan and among diasporic communities abroad reifies the perception of Pakistan as the place of culture. This enables people in Pakistan and diasporic communities from Pakistan to partake in cultural identity via the consumption of culture, while simultaneously enabling their participation in the culture of global consumerism. In the global neoliberal order, the production, circulation, and exchange of commodities, therefore, is also central to how people make sense of place(s),

particularly places they have never been to or no longer visit. In addition to the operation of a global neoliberal economy, this chapter also highlights the operation of other economies at play. While gift exchange with diasporic relatives enabled access to high value market commodities that were tied to class identity, research respondents emphasized the meaning of material exchanges with diasporic relatives in terms of their affective value for kinship.

CONCLUSION

A globalizing world and the mobilities that accompany it are changing the way people in Pakistan and abroad relate to it as a place. While kinship as an everyday cultural practice permits flexibility in terms of the possibilities it embodies for the formation of new relational ties and new attachments to place, the unraveling of older dispositions is keenly felt as if one's very cultural being is under assault. Therefore, in reconfiguring their relationship to Pakistan as the place of kinship and the place that enables the doing of kinship, my respondents are not just calling for holding onto a place but for holding on to a way of life. In wrestling with the many faces of the neoliberal empire, both at home and abroad, they are trying to hold on to kinship as a normative social and cultural practice in a globalizing world.

Chapter three turns to the experiences and narratives of young college educated people in Lahore in their quest for higher education abroad. It delineates how the global neoliberal order shapes their conception of abroad as pertaining to western countries, and how that shapes their ideals to attain higher education from western countries. The chapter shows how the United States is the topmost preferred destination for higher education, indicating the significance of young college educated people's ideas about place in their decisions about higher education abroad. Young college educated people in Lahore cited Hollywood movies, interactions with US-trained professors, encouragement from diasporic relatives, and visits to the US on educational or cultural exchange programs as having formed their image of the US as place. Furthermore, they expressed the desire to go abroad for higher education as being more than just about academic attainment. Going abroad to a western country for higher education was understood by young college educated people in Lahore as a rite of passage to attaining

attributes such as professional attitude and ethics, financial independence, flexibility, ease of mobility, self-confidence, individual autonomy, and self-sufficiency. All these attributes are championed by the global capitalist economy that operates according to neoliberal values which are part of an economic and political ideology of a free market that emerged in the United States and was imposed globally. The United States, being a paragon of these attributes and affording a distinctive cultural experience, was therefore the ideal destination for young college educated people in Pakistan to attain a global neoliberal personhood. Moreover, there was an understanding among young college educated people in Pakistan that these attributes could only be attained by effecting a temporary distance from familial protection, surveillance, and obligations in Pakistan. This underscores their quest for a global neoliberal personhood in relation to local social relations and not an unanchored, blind following of the west.

Further evidence of the embeddedness of research participants in their local social and cultural context is provided by their gendered experiences and frictions with local personhood in embarking on the quest for a global neoliberal personhood. As the path to attaining higher education abroad could often be long drawn out, it endangered the prospects of entering an arranged marriage for young men and women which required in person meetings to vet the union of the potential spouses and their respective families. However, it was young college educated women who expressed the friction between having to choose between going abroad for higher education or marrying and settling down in Pakistan. Young college educated men, on the other hand, expressed feeling stuck in having to choose between earning a sufficient income to support family or to spend on higher education abroad and live in financial precarity on student stipends. This discrepancy in their experiences illustrates the gendered ways in

which the dictates of local and global personhood converge and come into friction for people occupying different social locations. Class location and family situation also played a significant role in opening or obstructing the path to global mobility through higher education.

To show how class shapes the experience of mobility in a global neoliberal order, chapter three turns to the experiences of the new middle class in Lahore and their quest to go abroad to earn money. Ammara Maqsood has elucidated the characteristics of a new middle class in Lahore as relatively recent migrants to the city who have taken up work as teachers, engineers, and government service workers in the city. She claims this new middle class differs from the established middle and upper middle classes in Lahore in terms of their increased religiosity and emphasis on religious rationalization (Maqsood 2017). Unlike their college educated counterparts, whose desires for going abroad were geared towards western countries and justified on grounds for attaining a global neoliberal personhood, professionals from the new middle class in Lahore desired to go abroad to earn money for family and investing in business in Pakistan upon return. However, given that higher education abroad was only a means for young Pakistani urbanites to attain the status of a United States professional that would enable them to earn enough money to support a family, their aspirations for the maintenance of family actually converged with their middle-class counterparts. What did differ between these two sets of respondents was the orientation in the middle class to a global Muslim personhood. However, these respondents subscribed to a global Muslim personhood from their vantage point of being a Pakistani Muslim, expressing solidarity with other Muslim majority nation-states and employing their interpretation of religious injunctions to justify emigration from Pakistan and the desire for global mobility. The obstructions they faced in global mobility to

both Muslim and non-Muslim nation-states provides further evidence of the operation of an imperial global neoliberal order that regulates movement according to class, race, nationality, religion etc. For example, respondents mentioned the obstruction posed to the global mobility of Muslims by western immigration regimes and stated their desire to move to Muslim countries like Turkey. A respondent's experience of dissonance at the Turkish embassy where his visa was refused due to a minor spelling mistake sheds light on the ways the imperial global neoliberal order regulates the movement of individuals by their segmentation according to factors such as religion, nationality, race, and class.

Chapter four illustrates the changing experience of place for people in Lahore whose relatives had moved abroad. It shows their nostalgia for an ideal joint family system and family values which structured kinship relations, and the emotions associated with them, and provided a supportive social network for living out their everyday lives. The chapter then turns to how, despite the breakup and scattering of the joint family (co-residence of brothers, their wives, and children with their parents and grandparents) and nuclear family, developments in communication technology and transport enable the re-establishment of ties between kin relations in different places. It follows the story of a young woman from an upper-middle class family in Lahore as she tries to navigate the experience of her family being sponsored for an American Green Card by her paternal aunt in the United States. Her experience of giving up her Green Card at the US consulate in Pakistan and facing patronization from actors as diverse as a US immigration officer, her uncle in the United States, her parents, and her peers at university in Pakistan reveal the convergence of global and local personhood in maintaining the hierarchies that structure a global world. Her story illuminates how discursive regimes of US immigration

and its ideas about Pakistan as place works together with the striving for social mobility inherent to kinship practices to propel people towards emigrating from Pakistan. These discursive regimes work via language and its embodiment, and the generation and circulation of affect by multiple actors at both global and local levels. The migration of relatives abroad, and aspirations to migrate from Pakistan for education or work, operate to produce people's relationship to Pakistan as the place of kinship. The latter half of this chapter delineates this relationship to Pakistan as place through the experiences and narratives of return migrants in Lahore by delving into how people in Pakistan relate to place through a logic of kinship. The chapter shows that despite articulating their relationship to the place of Pakistan in terms of the nationalistic discourse of kinship, respondents pointed to the everyday relational socialities with family, friends, and neighbors living close by to explain their attachments to Pakistan as place. This finding demonstrates the need to privilege experiential relations of place, and to investigate the extent of their imbrication with national modes of belonging to a territorial nation-state.

Chapter five traverses the emergence and development of communication and digital technologies in Pakistan as a relatively recent phenomenon that enables connectivity among relatives scattered around the world. Contrary to popular global discourses about the availability of digital technologies having democratized access to communication technologies, this chapter sheds light on the many barriers to digital connectivity. Digital connectivity depends on governmental regulations and policies, life stage, age, individual ease with the use of technology, digital literacy, and cultural factors such as gender and generational hierarchies affecting the use of technology. The predominant generational discourse on digital technologies

among respondents in Lahore in the 50-70 age range varied between labelling them as a blessing or a curse. Even as they harnessed the affordances of digital communication technologies to establish and maintain connections with relatives abroad and social networks in Pakistan, older people continued to view the use of digital technologies by younger people with suspicion. The affordances of digital communication technologies were harnessed to engage in kinship practices with family and friends abroad, and in Pakistan. For example, WhatsApp family groups were a ubiquitous occurrence among research participants. However, establishing and maintaining digital connectivity with relatives abroad took on greater significance because digital connectivity was one of the few ways to attenuate the gap of physical presence.

The exigencies of kinship as a cultural practice connecting people living near each other shaped the use of digital technologies and digital communication with relatives and friends abroad. Certain ways of using digital communication technologies became widespread and were understood as the normative ways of maintaining kinship via digital technology. These practices included, for example, establishing presence by trying to connect in real time, reinforcing virtual presence by sharing intimate details about everyday life as well as sharing visual materials such as family pictures and videos, and taking care to establish reciprocity by connecting regularly and responding to the other person. Digital communication with kin and close friends was harnessed to establish affective bonds of kinship, and the exchange of digital artifacts with them was structured according to a logic of gift exchange. The exchange of digital artifacts took place with people one knew and was close to, and digital artifacts were seen in terms of their affective value for kinship. This sometimes meant a decontextualization of the visual digital artifact and its recontextualization within specific relationships to make it do the work of

kinship. However, digital connectivity alone with relatives and close friends abroad did not lead to strong emotional connections. The practice of kinship via digital communication technologies had to be supplemented with in person interactions (past or future) for long periods of time to establish deep emotional connections.

Chapter six looks at globalization in Pakistan through the lens of the commodification of culture and material exchange between people in Pakistan and their relatives abroad. The production, exchange, and circulation of cultural commodities among people in Pakistan and diasporic communities abroad contributes to the reification of Pakistan as a place of culture. This enables people in Pakistan and diasporic communities to partake in cultural identity via the consumption of culture, while simultaneously enabling their participation in the culture of global consumerism. In the global neoliberal order, production, circulation, and exchange of commodities also shapes people's general perceptions about places they have never been to or no longer return to. Furthermore, the reverse is also true; people's general perceptions of places in a global neoliberal order shapes the way they relate to commodities from that place. In the material exchange that occurs among people in Pakistan and their relatives abroad, this chapter finds the operation of a politics of place and consumption.

For example, the chapter explores the story of an upper middle-class woman in her early thirties in Lahore and her relationship with her relatives in Dubai. Her relatives' access to prestigious consumer goods in Dubai enables them to display and establish their prestige in relation to her own family via affective reactions to her material possessions and their expression of ideas of Pakistan as place. She counters their affective reaction by an affective embodiment of the language of a global neoliberal economy about individual (consumer)

choice, autonomy, and convenience, stating that her choice to buy retail rather than designer brands was willfully made and was not a reflection of her family's economic status vis a vis the status of her aunt's family in Dubai.

Chapter six also delineates how the politics of place and consumption entered the exchange of gifts among people in Pakistan and their relatives abroad, elucidating the complicated relationship between class and kinship. While gift exchange between relatives abroad and people in Pakistan provided access to high value market commodities and the associated class identity, respondents in Lahore found meaning in the gift exchange in terms of its affective value of kinship. The meaning of gift exchange with relatives abroad in terms of its affective value of kinship could be mobilized by people in Pakistan to gain access to social mobility, to maintain class status in Pakistan, or to outmaneuver the efforts of relatives abroad to claim prestige over them.

Contributions to literature

By focusing on the motivations of people in Pakistan for migrating/going abroad, and their transnational social relations with relatives abroad, this dissertation sheds light on the maintenance of kinship as a central aspiration that structures the way people in Pakistan, and even some of their diasporic counterparts, find meaning in global mobility. This is indicative of the changing material realities in a globalizing world where the material basis for engaging in kinship as a practice that maintains a social support network based on genealogical ties is undergoing transformation. While people in South Asia have always been mobile, emigrating to various corners of the world and forming diasporic communities as early as the colonial period (Amrith 2011), and while families in South Asia have historically experienced ruptures as in the

case of Partition (Zamindar 2007), the current transformations of the family in South Asia are occurring in a new context and have different repercussions. The contemporary period is characterized by an increase in global migration, the development of communication technologies and transport, the integration of a global commodity market that is structured according to a capitalist system, and the consolidation of the nation-state as a governing entity and basis for modern identity. All these developments facilitate the working of a new global order that is organized hierarchically according to the interests of global imperial power. By conceptualizing the imperial global neoliberal order as a Bourdieusian social field, this dissertation illustrates the working of this global social order via discursive regimes and the generation and circulation of affect in the embodiment of discursive regimes by various actors at different levels.

A significant actor in this global neoliberal order is the family. This dissertation employs Bourdieu's insight into thinking about the family as a group formed by a system of relationships that are mobilized to satisfy symbolic and material interests shaped by wider social and economic conditions. Therefore, contrary to the moral panic of the breakdown of the family in the contemporary period, this dissertation elucidates how the family is being reconfigured as it is constituted by, and participates in, wider social and economic transformations. By illustrating how digital communication and gift exchange with relatives abroad are harnessed to practice transnational kinship, this dissertation points to the emergence of an affective kinship network in the form of the global family. Even as increased global mobility and connectivity engenders a new formation of the family, and new ways of doing kinship, the deterritorialization of the kin network alters the very experience of space and place for individuals and families in South Asia,

and those who have emigrated. The scattering of the spatially integrated family i.e. the family in place has also led to the fervent formation of practical relationships with non-kin who live within spatial proximity and contiguity. These practical relationships or practices of fictive kinship are also affective in nature, contributing to the hypostatization of kinship locally, and enabling the circulation of kinship affect among the spatially dispersed kin network. This enables the affective experience of Pakistan as the place of kinship, and the formation of affective attachments to the place of Pakistan, that exert a pull on people living there and their relatives abroad.

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